UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN A SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANIZATION:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

BY: RUWAYDA CHANTELLE PETRUS

SUPERVISOR: MRS. SHANYA REUBEN

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social

Science (Industrial Psychology) in the School of Psychology in the Faculty of

Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, November 2011

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. All borrowed ideas, citations and references have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the partial fulfilment of the degree Master of Social Science (Industrial Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

………………………………….   ………………..………

Ruwayda C Petrus   Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to firstly like thank God for giving me the strength to complete this dissertation and for seeing me through this year of Masters. Next I would like to thank those who have contributed in varied ways to the completion of this study.

To my supervisor, Shanya Reuben, for your time, patience, and guidance. I could not ask for a better, competent, or a more supportive supervisor. You have taught me valuable lessons this year and have contributed tremendously to my academic and intellectual development. Your insights have made my study so much better and your ideas have helped to enhance my study.

To my family for all their support and prayers during this year. Without their support I would not have been able to complete this year.

To Professor Joey Buitendach for encouraging me to do my Masters and for assisting me throughout the year with adjustments to this new chapter in my life. I am eternally grateful for all that you have done for me and taught me about research.

To the Ramchunder family for all their support and help in gaining access to the Organization for my research for just welcoming me into their family and being a support system and to Lance Pillay for making himself available to drive me to the places I needed to be to conduct my interviews. I really appreciated it.

To all my friends and loved ones, thank you for being there for me through all my trials. Your encouragement kept me going. To my fellow Masters students, the class of 2011,

thank you so much for the laughs and the caring and for being a source of strength when it felt like the year was just too much. We have made it!

Last but certainly not least, I wish to extend my gratitude to the willing participants of this study. It was not an easy topic to talk about, but they were helpful and willing to assist me in any way they could.

ABSTRACT

The current study explored the perceptions and experiences of employees in a South African organization in Kwa-Zulu Natal in relation to Affirmative Action (AA). The study used a qualitative research design and was approached from the theoretical background of social constructionism. The focus was on highlighting the experiences of employees from different racial backgrounds and uncovering how they perceived and experienced AA. Sample size(n = 9) which consisted of both men and women from all the race groups were interviewed between August 2011 and October 2011. By making use of thematic content analysis eight main themes were identified. Overall the findings suggested that the majority of participants experienced AA negatively but that they perceived it do have been developed for the greater good. There were strong feelings on the subject of AA and the principle of meritocracy. Overall AA is viewed as something positive that has been burdened with negativity due to general perceptions of it. The study contributes to the evolving body of knowledge on AA and provides a unique context specific perspective to understanding how government employees perceive and experience AA.

Key Words: Affirmative Action, Social Constructionism, Race, Apartheid, Discrimination, South Africa, Qualitative, Thematic Content Analysis, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

South Africa introduced Affirmative Action (AA) in 1993 as a means to help South Africa redress the imbalances caused during apartheid. AA was introduced to redress the imbalances caused by apartheid in terms of access to resources as well as in terms of job allocation. Due to the contentious history of South Africa during apartheid, government came to the realization that legislation was needed to level the playing field. From the need to 'compensate' previously disadvantaged groups stemmed the concept of AA (Mhlongo, 2001).

Despite this vast amount of research efforts our understanding of AA is still limited. Research regarding AA is mixed as are the feelings related to it. A paper written by Coetzee and Vermeulen (2003) stated that the perceptions that employees have on the fairness of AA was one where they visualized a more prosperous future for themselves, and many Africans were hopeful for the new legislation (Jeffrey, 1998). However, throughout the years, this hope has been diminished by the misconceptions that plague AA.

Although AA was introduced to stop discriminatory practices in the work place in an effort to create a more diverse workplace (Chen & Kleiner, 1996), this has not been the case according to some. Misconceptions plague the celebration of this policy as a

progressive piece of legislation that promotes diversity in the workplace (Jeffrey, 1998; Durivage, 2008).

Discrimination in South Africa was based on racial categories and as such race becomes an important lens through which society viewed people (Mhlongo, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993). Racial segregation dictated how the people of South Africa lived during apartheid and it was one of the ways that Whites held on to power for as long as they did (Leonard, 2005). The Population Registration Act provided the power the Whites needed to convince everyone that Whites were superior to Africans and as such, Africans were forced to carry "dom passes" that restricted their movements in their own country (Leonard, 2005).

Given this history of South Africa, it is only natural that legislation that aims to remedy the past mistreatment of the majority of South Africans will be met with some apprehension. In the context of AA, some view it as reverse discrimination, while others feel it is only giving back what was wrongfully denied to Africans, Indians and Coloureds during apartheid (Mhlongo, 2001; Son Hing, Bobocel & Zanna, 2002; Nxumalo, 2010).

AA has achieved a lot in the work place as more organizations are becoming more diverse and representative of the different races in South Africa, however despite its achievements AA is not celebrated by all (Leonard, 2005). A disparity exists in the experiences of AA where some proponents are for the policy and others against it. Thus to understand this disparity the researcher makes use of the social constructionism as a theoretical approach to provide a clearer understanding as to why people perceive AA the way they do.

AA was created to redress past imbalances created during apartheid. The goal of EAA was to increase the number of underrepresented groups in organizations and give previously disadvantaged groups opportunities to advance in the workplace (McMillan-Capeheart. Grybb & Herdman, 2009). AA programs do this by regulating the allocation of scarce positions in education, employment, or business contracting so as to increase the representation in these positions of persons belonging to certain population subgroups (Fryer and Loury, 2005).

Proponents of AA request that employers look beyond traditional criteria and reflect on those characteristics that directly impact on the job performance. They should look at merit when looking to hire from the previously disadvantaged groups as this would then be seen as fair in the eyes of fellow employees. In doing so they would be able to identify people from previously disadvantaged groups that had the potential and ability to succeed and thus promote them. Ex-President Mandela summed up support for AA by stating the following: "…*it is not the aim to ensure the advancement of unqualified persons, but to see to it that those who have been denied access to qualifications in the past can become qualified now and that those who have been qualified all along, but overlooked because of past discrimination, are at least given a chance.*" (Mandela, 1991). Thus the aim of this research was to go beyond the surface and getting to the heart of how people perceive AA and what they feel needs to be improved with regards to AA.

1.2   STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In South Africa, AA has been met with conflicting feelings. People are still divided on this issue. Little research has been done on employees (who are the people that are

affected at ground level) experiences of AA, particularly from a qualitative perspective. AA has been around for 17 years and it is still a 'hot' topic that sends tempers into a flare at the mention of it. The research done on AA has not given adequate credence to the experiences of the masses of AA, with most of the research focusing on 'quotas' and how well it is being implemented (Chen & Kleiner, 1996; Heller, 1995). Given the disparity in the views and lack of research on employee experiences and perceptions, the researcher undertook to study the above in a Government Organization.

1.3   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Even after seventeen years of democratic government, South Africa remains an unusually unequal society. Inequalities in the distribution of incomes both reflect and reproduce inequalities of opportunity. Yet surprisingly little research has been done on what South Africans think about inequality and specifically AA. In 1993 South Africa introduced AA to restore the imbalance caused by many years of apartheid amongst the workforce. AA, which is based on the principles of social good, compensatory justice and the ideal of equality aims to redress disadvantages that designated groups suffered under apartheid discrimination (Nxumalo, 2010). For many however, this is not the case. Some view AA as 'reverse racism' while others sees it as a way to diversify the conglomerates in South Africa and Africa which have been predominantly white owned. Given the disparity in experiences of AA, where some celebrate the policy and others criticize it, the following subject matter proves to be one that is particularly important, especially within the South African context.

1.4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The current study is interested in exploring employees' perceptions and experiences associated with AA.

Research Aims:

To conceptualize AA and Social Constructionism from a literary point.

To explore employees perceptions of AA in a South African organization.

To explore employees experiences of AA in a South African organization.

Research Questions:

1. How do employees perceive AA in a South African organization?
2. How do employees experience AA in South African organization?

1.5   CHAPTER OUTLINE

The first chapter of this paper will provide the reader with an introduction to the research paper by providing an overview of the research problem and the rationale for the study. The researcher will also provide the reader with an understanding of the context in which the research took place. The research objectives will be highlighted for the reader and what the researcher hopes to achieve out of the research study.

The second chapter will provide the reader with a well structured literature review. This chapter will discuss the current and past literature on AA as well as provide a historical

background to discrimination in South Africa. The legislation will also be briefly discussed that relates to the concept of AA. The various areas that AA impacts, such as justice and meritocracy, will also be given attention to in this chapter. Additionally, the researcher will explain why research in this particular topic is necessary.

Chapter three discusses the theoretical approach that the researcher used. The researcher will show case how the approach is applicable to the current research problem.

Chapter four will provide the researcher with a detailed description of the research methodology the researcher used. The chapter will describe in detail the operations performed by the researcher in terms of sampling, data collection and data analysis. It will also cover the research design, a description of the participants and the organization that they were selected from, which instruments the researcher used and how they were constructed. In addition, this chapter will discuss the procedures followed by the researcher in obtaining ethical clearance as well as permission from the organization. Furthermore this chapter will discuss the limitations of the research study. The ethical considerations will also be discussed briefly.

Chapter five is the presentation of the results and a discussion of these results. In this chapter the researcher will highlight the themes found in the data and link these themes to what has been written in the literature on AA. In this chapter the researcher will show case how the theoretical approach is used to understand the data.

Finally the last chapter will provide the reader with a summary of the research study in terms of the aims, desired outcomes of the study and the findings. Conclusion will be

drawn from the results and finally the researcher will give recommendations for future

research on this topic.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

AA is embraced by some and opposed by others. AA is a measure which addresses the disadvantages caused by poor education, segregation, lack of resources, lack of political rights, racism and unequal distribution of wealth (Crosby, 1989). AA aims to redress past imbalances and improve the conditions of groups who have previously been disadvantaged based on their race, gender or disability by providing designated groups with ample opportunities to be advanced in their respective careers in organizations in South Africa. It also identifies positions which have previously been inaccessible to the disadvantaged groups, positions like management or upper management positions, and thus provides training and development for these groups as well as recruitment opportunities that benefit previously disadvantaged groups (Crosby, 1983).

In South Africa the AA policy was developed after democratic elections in 1994, because leadership realized that the globalization process was unstoppable and if South Africa wanted to continue to compete on an international front, new human resource developments were needed (Mhlongo, 2001). The most important reason for developing legislation was because there were issues about apartheid that had to be dealt with and the historical imbalance created by apartheid had to be redressed. Given the imbalances of the past, it was only fair to assume that previously disadvantaged groups should become an integral part of the new movement.

The main areas of the AA debate range from it being viewed as 'reverse discrimination' to a policy that promotes Africans only. Race is another contentious issue when it comes to the literature on AA as well as how people view the policy in terms of justice, fairness and meritocracy. There has also been some link made between AA and identity and this will also be addressed in this paper.

The dominant national context of South Africa had for a long time upheld inherent racial inequality as the basis for apartheid. Although South Africa is much different than it was 25 years ago, disparities still exists in social and educational opportunities between Black and White citizens (Africa, 2006). Thaver (2006) provides an example of this by stating in his paper that Black citizens make up 76 % of the total population and account for 90 % of the unemployed number in South Africa; less than 1% go on to obtain higher education. Thus within the ambit of AA, race and gender is used as primary category for advancing those who previously would not have advanced due to not being given the opportunity (Badsha & Harper, 2000).

AA and especially the disparity in access to employment is a defining feature of the South African labour market (Roberts, Weir-Smith & Reddy, 2010). Apartheid produced a huge gap between the Whites and other race groups in South Africa. The government of South Africa sought to correct this and minimize this gap but developing policies aimed at promoting the interest of minority groups. Programs aimed at creating jobs, progressive legislation and legal reform was the mantra of the new government. The Employment Act No. 55 of 1998 was one of the pieces of progressive legislation that obliged employers to implement AA measures to ensure equal representation of

designated groups (Roberts, Weir-Smith & Reddy, 2010). The EEA 55 of 1998 prohibits discrimination by race and established AA in work place (Dupper, 2004).

Despite the achievements, AA it still remains an area that is highly controversial. I was interested in studying the controversies surrounding AA using social constructionism as an approach. Social constructionism according to Burr (1995) states that the way we construct our world is historically and culture specific and that we are influenced by the past. Social constructionism provides a context that goes deeper than the surface in understanding how we construct our world. Social constructionism offers an alternative view to understanding human beings and their social interactions; it makes us conscious of the diversity and difference in humanity (Burr, 1995). It maintains that history and knowledge is culture specific and the concept of reality and the world is constructed through language and social experiences. It attaches meaning and importance to social relations that help humans form their reality and perceptions (Burr, 1995). Burr (1995) further states that social constructionism cautions us against making assumptions about people and speaking on their behalf, as this leads to creating collective identities for people which may not be in their best interest and which they may wish to resist as is the case with AA, where due to the Whites having had the power during apartheid to speak on behalf of every other race, identities were formed and assigned to Africans, Indians and Coloureds which were not necessarily positive. Social constructionism offers a new, critical and reflexive way to making sense of social life and social phenomena (Burr, 1995). Thus, given what has been stated about social constructionism it proves valuable as a theoretical/contextual tool in unearthing the experiences and perceptions that people hold with regards to AA.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Discrimination is any treatment, restriction of opportunity or differentiation based on race, gender, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religious conviction, disability or disadvantaged background (Abercombie Hill & Turner, 1984). The EEA define discrimination as follows in Chapter 2 of the Act:

Section 5 states that it every employer must take steps to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice. Section 6 states that no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee in any employment policy or practice, on one or more grounds including race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language, and birth. It goes on to state that it is not unfair discrimination to promote affirmative action consistent with the Act or to prefer or exclude any person on the basis of an inherent job requirement. Lastly this section states that harassment of an employee is a form of unfair discrimination and is prohibited on any one, or a combination of grounds of unfair discrimination as listed above (EEA, 1998, p.7).

The aim of the AA policy is to redress discrimination in South Africa. The basis for racism in South Africa is based on racial categories, and how people are classified in South Africa. This system of classification had its roots in the colonial conquests and became the official ideology of the state after the National Party won in 1948 (Mhlongo, 2001).A series of White leaders from Hertzog to PW Botha who based themselves on all social classes and sectors of the Afrikaner segments almost cemented an ideological and

political system based on "race" and racial classification and purity (Wolpe, 1988; Stadler, 1987).

Looking at South Africa and its history, one sees how the principle of racial segregation dictated the development of six human capital eras; paternalism (1652 – mid-1970's), Equal Opportunity (Late 1970's – early 1980's), Black advancement (early 1980's – late 1980's), Black Economic Empowerment (late 1980's – current), AA (1994 – current) and Diversity Management (1994 –current) (Leonard, 2005). From the timeline one can see that both AA and diversity management falls under the umbrella term Black Advancement (Leonard, 2005). For the purpose of this paper however, focus will be on the AA movement. It is very important to note that race played a major role in how resources and economic capital were distributed in South Africa during the time of apartheid. One of the ways in which the "Whites" held on to power and control during the apartheid regime was through the formulation of the racial classification system through the creation and implementation of the Population Registration Act of 1950.

2.2.1 Population Registration Act

The racial classification system was manifested in the creation of the Population Registration Act of 1950. This Act required that every person living in South Africa be classified and registered according to their race as part of the system of apartheid. Given which group you belonged to; social rights, political rights and educational opportunities were afforded to you. Under the law, there were three basic racial classifications: Black, White and Coloured. Indians were only added later on as a separate classification as they

were previously seen as having "no historical right to the country" (Population Registration Act, 1950).

The Population Registration Act that was introduced by the apartheid regime imposed restrictions on movement of Africans within South Africa. The act consisted of laws which pertained to carry a "dom pass" and it in itself was oppressive to Black people. This act regulated the movement of Black people in a bid to suppress the African population of South Africa. Black people had to carry this booklet around which stated where they were allowed to work and which areas of South Africa they were allowed to occupy, among others this was just one of the historical imbalances and wrongs that AA tries to redress (Mdeni, 2011).

Since the racial classification system in 1948, many people have referred to 'race' as the basis of colour and other physical features. Race in South Africa is divided into four categories – Whites, Indians, Africans and Coloureds. However, given the AA policy wording and EEA No 55 of 1998, 'Black people' is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indian and designated groups mean Black people, women and people with disabilities (EEA, 1998, p.3)

2.3 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

2.3.1   Introduction

In 1996 South Africa introduced AA to restore the imbalance caused by many years of apartheid amongst the workforce. Government had realized that legislation was needed to guide organizations in promoting justice in the workplace and thus AA as a measure of

redress was enacted in 1996. In 1998 President Mandela introduced this concept to South Africans to try and bring equality amongst the workforce in South Africa. As Jeffrey (1998) states in her article, many Africans were hopeful for the new legislation. However, this hope has somewhat been diminished by years of misuse, misinterpretation or just plain misunderstandings among the average employee regarding this policy.

AA was first established in the United States in the mid-1960s when the then current president introduced it as a policy that would redress racial imbalances that existed in the United States. Due to pressure from civil rights groups President Johnson's administration issued an Executive order that put AA into motion (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). It focused specifically on education and employment in terms of levelling the playing field so that Africans and other minorities enjoyed the same opportunities that had been afforded to the Whites for so long. Much of the discourse around the need for AA during South Africa's transition was similar. In South Africa AA was introduced to counter the effects of apartheid. Not everyone views the effects of AA as positive. The policies, although implemented for an admirable purpose, have done the economy and moral of the country's citizens more harm than good according to Msimang (2007), however this is only one side of the argument as others say it is a good thing.

2.3.2 South Africa and Affirmative Action

South Africa's response to the growing concerns over the social inequality amongst the work force was that of AA and this was introduced by means of the Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998 (Mhlongo, 2001). AA was introduced to counter the effects of apartheid. It was to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups had

employment opportunities and were equally represented in all occupational categories and levels in the organization. Many laws and initiatives were specifically designed to provide equal opportunity and mobility for traditionally disadvantaged groups. But this change came with controversy, frustration and even anger (Adam, 2000).

AA is a very controversial subject in South Africa, as well as in the rest of the world (Durivage, 2008). AA has been used as a tool to redress racial imbalance but it in itself is viewed as a tool with which organizations commit racial profiling. It is seen by many as legislation that only benefits one part of a nation and ultimately promotes racism as it discriminates between Whites and Africans. To others however, AA is seen as a just system that rightfully corrects historical injustices. Thus, AA can be understood as a system that is somewhat paradoxical in that while it is seen as beneficial to some, it is by others, shot down as a system of reverse discrimination.

The question one needs to ask of AA is whether it protects minorities or does it doubt the true ability of the minorities (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). As a policy that is being used to grant previously disadvantaged groups opportunities to advance in the workplace, begs the question of whether these groups would not have been able to advance on their own merit without this policy?

There exists much controversy over the nature of South Africa's ethnic or racial categories given South Africa's history (Adams, 2000). Whites comprise of 13% of the population are defined as South Africans of various European backgrounds. Coloureds who make up 9 % of the population are people of mixed origins. Indians or Asians comprise of 3% of the population and are defined as decedents of migrants from the

Indian sub-continent. Lastly Africans or Africans are the indigenous majority of the population making up 75% of the population (Adam, 2000). In AA policy the political label "Black" is meant to be inclusive of the three non-White groups who were discriminated against during apartheid. Given these numbers, South Africa's aggressive AA policy which requires companies to give preferential hiring treatment to the country's 90 % Black population, Coloured community and Indians as well as women has been met with both success and criticism (South Africa's AA Not Affirmed by All, 2008).

AA is said to stigmatize minorities, particularly Africans by implying that they simply cannot compete on an equal basis with dominant groups, especially Asians and Whites. Moreover, the shadow cast by preferential treatment is feared to be pervasive, hovering over Africans who have attained positions without the aid of AA as well as over those who have been accorded preferential treatment (Chen and Kleiner, 1996).

Another questioned posed by Chen and Kleiner (1996), is that of when does AA become reverse discrimination? The fact of the matter is that White males and females view AA as a policy that offers them little to no advancement in their professional careers. To better grasp the context of AA, attention should be given to the legislation that was responsible for this change in workplace practices, the EEA.

2.3.3   The Legislation

The concepts of AA and Black Economic Empowerment is often confused and used synonymously. Both pieces of legislation were introduced to level the field more in terms of employment amongst the various ethnic groups. AA came into effect with the

implementation of the EEA No. 55 of 1998 and the Black Economic Empowerment

Charter was only introduced later in the Government Gazette. There is however a big

difference between the two concepts. According to the Government Gazette of the 9th

February 2007 which introduces the Black Economic Empowerment Charter states the

following reason for creating this charter; "despite significant progress since the

establishment of a democratic government in 1994, South African society remains

characterized by racially based income and social services inequalities. This is not only

unjust, but inhibits the country's ability to achieve its full economic potential." Whereas

AA is a "policy designed to redress past discriminations against woman and minority

groups through measures to improve their economic and educational opportunities" (p.4).

2.3.3.1 Employment Equity Act (EEA)

Chapter 3 of the EEA No. 55 of 1998 outlines AA measures in section 15. AA measures

are measures intended to ensure that suitably qualified employees from designated groups

have equal employment opportunity and are equitably represented in all occupational

categories and levels of the workforce. Such measures must include; (i)identification and

elimination of barriers with an adverse impact on designated groups; (ii) measures which

promote diversity; (iii) making reasonable accommodation for people from designated

groups; (iv) retention, development and training of designated groups (including skills

development); and (v) preferential treatment and numerical goals to ensure equitable

representation. This excludes quotas. Designated employers are not required to take any

decision regarding an employment policy or practice that would establish an absolute

barrier to prospective or continued employment or advancement of people not from designated groups.

The AA policy protects designated groups. Designated groups being defined in the policy as "Africans, women and disabled" (p.5). This definition has caused some controversies about whether Indians and Coloured's fall under the protection of this act or not. Heller (1995) iterates a statement made by Faye J Crosby where she states that conflating AA with quotas and preferential hiring is misleading and as such it is effective in creating opposition for a policy that makes sense.

AA programmes also extends educational and employment opportunities for these "protected" groups by enmeshing them into the organization. This enables the organization to develop a diverse workforce that is competent and able and thus being in line with the ambit of the act. According to Klinger and Nalbandian (1998) political power and legal protection from these designated groups have evolved as a result of a :three-tier process; equal employment laws, AA laws as well as diversification programs and as such hold both good and bad feelings associated with it.

Given what was discussed above with regards to the measures of AA as stated in the EEA one notes that the emphasis is on creating a diverse work force. With a diverse work force comes the problem of culture clashes and identity. Reading the above one can conclude to say AA was developed to give a "voice" to the previously voiceless races in South Africa whose identity as rightful South African citizens were never acknowledged. How groups and individuals classify themselves lends importance to how better to understand

perceptions different groups may hold collectively of AA (Moolman, 2010). Thus it is fitting to partition off a section of this paper to discuss social identity and AA.

2.3.4   Social Identity and AA

Social identity is defined as "A social psychological theory of identity formulation that privileges the role of large group identities in forming individual concepts of self" (Calhoun, 2003, p.5)

Social identity has a link to AA in the sense that AA is all about targeting groups. In the ambit of AA there are four groups that are affected by AA; Africans, Coloured's, Indians and Whites. To better understand how groups and individuals classify themselves it is imperative to discuss the social identity theory in relation to AA. Given the social identity of each group, it is useful to discuss how and why members identify with their group and how this identification potentially affects or impacts their view and subsequent experience of AA.

Tajful (1981), defined social identity as the part of a person's self concept which is as a result of the person's knowledge of their membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership.

Booysen (2007) describes Social Identity Theory (SIT) as a cognitive theory which holds that people tend to classify themselves and others into social groups, and that these groups have a significant effect on intergroup attitudes and interactions. SIT is concerned with the psychological and sociological aspects of group behaviour and explains the

psychological basis for group behaviour, group association and intergroup discrimination. SIT is composed of 3 elements; categorization, identification and comparison.

Categorization refers to how individuals place themselves and others into categories. Attaching labels like Coloured, Indian or Gymnast are for example ways of describing defining features of a person. *Identification* deals with how individuals associate with certain groups or with their own groups which in the end serves to improve their self esteem. Lastly *comparison* refers to the fact that individuals cannot help but compare their group with other groups for example Africans compare themselves to Whites and how the individual favours their own group above the other group and competes with the other group (Booysen, 2007).

Given what has been said about SIT, it indicates that individuals are motivated to defend or promote the interests of the social groups to which they belong regardless of whether these actions will benefit them personally (Dietz-Uhler & Murrel, 1998). This theory can be applied to how group members draw motivation from other members in the group and how group think develops. AA has sparked group think in the various race groups that it affects (Moolman, 2010).

Research in South Africa has found that race is the most important categorization in the South African workplace (Booysen, 2007) he further goes on and argues that being a member of an ethnic or cultural group is shown to be one of the major sources of societal identification and identity formation. In the context of AA, some view it as causing people to experience a crisis in their social identity (Ivanova, 2005).

Andreeva (in Ivanova, 2005, p.72) defines the crisis of social identity "as a state of consciousness in which most of the social categories by means of which an individual defines himself and his place in society, seem to have lost their boundaries and their value". Given the complexity and diverse nature of the South African society, identities are embedded in its societal fabric and as such one cannot discuss AA without understanding how people identify themselves as. Research shows that the most salient social identity groups in South Africa are race, gender, ethnicity and language as South Africans are classified by population group and membership to a racial group is based on self-perceptions and self-classification (Bornman, 1999; Cilliers & May, 2002). This is unlike in the past where the Whites classified and identified people as they saw fit.

According to Vedina and Baumane (2009), we all categorize our social relationships and ascribe certain characteristics which lead to the formation of both personal and group identity. Identity therefore reflects an individual's association with a collective or social category and enables a feeling of belonging to a particular group (Vedina & Baumane, 2009). In the context of AA, it caused a power shift, whereas previously all the power in the workplace and in South Africa in general, was held by the historically privileged, AA has now levelled the playing field. In relation to AA, SIT explains how the in-group might hold negative preconceptions over those perceived to be in the out-group. An example would be that with the implementation of AA, Whites may view Africans as being incapable of advancing on their own without the help of AA (Booysen, 2007).

How people perceive certain actions to be fair or unfair depend on how the classifies and identifies them. Within the context of organizations, there are also certain areas that AA

impacts in the eyes of groups. In organizations how people perceive a policy or program is reflected in how **fair** they view the policy, program or procedure being, how it relates to **justice** and how it upholds the principle of **meritocracy** (Padayachee, 2003). Thus the following section will deal with common areas related to AA namely fairness, justice and meritocracy

2.3.5   Affirmative Action, Fairness and Justice

Padayachee (2003) questions whether AA as a method of redress is just in a society such as South Africa, where discrimination and exclusion have left a legacy of political, social and economic injustice. The word "justice" is used in several different ways. Justice is understood as moral permissibility, legitimacy, comparative fairness as well as it is sometimes understood as what we morally owe each other (Vallentyne, n.d). Previous research has shown that people tend to be resistant to the implementation of AA policies (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Lipset & Schneider, 1978) and as such what was meant to be as something positive has more negative implications for all parties concerned. Fairness is defined as "treating people equally, just or appropriate" according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2006, p.511). Justice is defined as "just behaviour or treatment…the administration of the law or authority in maintaining this" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.722). The words justice and fairness are used interchangeably as when people perceive something to be fair; they perceive it to be just.

One of the main reasons AA is being viewed more negatively than positively is due to the perceived fairness of the policy. According to Dietz-Uhler and Murrel (1998) the perceived fairness of a procedure has a direct influence on how an individual evaluates

that procedure. Given what has been found in the literature, fairness is viewed in terms of how just a procedure is by those affected by it. Thus in the ambit of AA, a discussion of the different types of justice that relates to AA needs to be discussed. The two types of justice that has relation to AA are that of; distributive justice and compensatory justice as they lend valuable insight into how AA affects perceptions and experiences of the employees. Justice is a concept that falls under procedural fairness in terms of organizations and thus a brief description will be offered of the concept of procedural fairness before moving on to distributive and compensatory justice that fall under this concept.

2.3.6   Procedural Fairness

There are two conceptions of procedural fairness. The first places a high premium on the creation and application of general rules. The second conception emphasizes the value of individualized treatment, highly attentive to the facts of the particular circumstances. Political theorists identify these two kinds of justice as distributive justice and compensatory (corrective) justice (Sunstein, n.d). AA is seen to contradict the goal of equal treatment in the eyes of some people and at the heart of their argument lays issues of social justice. (Bobo & Kleugel, 1993). Fairness has provided a useful conceptual lens through which to view AA (Bobocel et al., 2001),

 According to these two principles of justice, resources should be distributed evenly among everyone and corrective justice states that if someone has been done wrong, it should be corrected and the person compensated. An example offered by Goldman (1979) with regards to distributive and compensatory justice is the following; say for example a

violation of equal opportunity rights in the case of job allocation might have to be compensated by giving the victim a subsequently available job even at cost of depriving someone else who is not a victim of his/her equal right to equal opportunity related to the job. Goldman justifies this by stating that unless compensatory claims are given precedence over distributive claims those who originally violated the victim's rights could continue to undermine the legitimate distributive principle. Given what has been said, one can see that in terms of AA it may seem that by applying principles of compensatory justice (which is what the government is trying to do) one violates the principle of distributive justice by not distributing goods or jobs equally to everyone.

With relation to AA, Goldman (1979) argues that when the need for compensation arises out of a violation if a distributive norm there is a solution to the dilemma, posed by the fact that distributive and compensatory aims could be mutually contradictory. He proposed a solution that held that compensation for past violations of the principle of distribution should take precedence over distributive considerations even though it may entail temporarily suspending the application of the distributive principles.

2.3.6.1 Distributive Justice

Distributive justice according to Vlastos (1984) involves the fair distribution of goods, offices, honours and burdens among citizens of the state. A definition offered by Lamont and Favor (1996) states that "principles of distributive justice are normative principles designed to guide the allocation of the benefits and burdens of economic activity". Adams (1965) defines it as referring to perceptions of fairness of the distribution of outcomes.

Lynch and Beer (1990), two very noteworthy critics of AA, believe that treating people differently because of their race or gender or origin violates the law of distributive justice.

What all the above have in common is that there is agreement that distributive justice has to do with fairness of how goods (pay) are distributed. Lynch and Beer (1990) explain the concept of distributive justice as follows; "According to this principle, people feel that their rewards should be proportional to their investments – educational level, grades, test scores, seniority…measurable qualities" (p.67). This links to the principle of meritocracy which will be discussed later in more detail.

Vlastos (1984) lists the following as principles of distributive justice; to each according to his need; to each according to his worth; to each according to his merit; to each according to his work; and to each according to the agreement he has made (Vlastos, 1984, p.44).

Distributive justice is closely linked to the concepts of human dignity, the common good and human rights. It is seen as an ethical principle and refers to what society owes its individual members in proportion to the needs of the individual, contribution and responsibility as well as the resources available to the society and the society's responsibility to the common good (Vallentyne, n.d). Contrary to what was said above about AA violating the principles of distributive justice when it looks to compensate victims of past discriminations, some people also view the distributive principle within AA to be unfair in how jobs are distributed within the ambit of AA (Son Hing et al., 2002).

2.3.6.2 Compensatory Justice

According to Coleman (1983) compensatory justice may be seen as an independent principle of justice. Under the ambit of compensatory justice, if one person wrongly commits an injustice to another person, the person who committed the injustice is obligated to compensate the 'injured' party so as to restore the equality that existed prior to the wrongful injury. AA is seen as a measure that "compensates" previously disadvantaged groups by giving them opportunities in the work place to advance. Yet this measure of compensatory justice is in itself causing an injustice to another party namely the White male and others too in the workplace (Crosby & Franco, 2003). In a study done by Leck et al. (1996) it was found that AA programs can lead employees to report less procedural and distributive justice. Meaning that the employees saw AA as not being fair in terms of the procedures followed in allocating jobs or resources. This feeling of injustice was also shown to further impact how a female or minority employee was treated by his co-workers.

2.3.6.3 Justice

Broadly put both distributive justice and compensatory justice falls under the umbrella term justice. Justice means giving each person what he or she deserves or, in more traditional terms, giving each person his or her due. Justice and fairness are closely related terms that are often today used interchangeably. However there is a distinct difference between the two terms. Justice has been used mainly with reference to a standard of rightness while fairness has often been used with reference to an ability to judge without reference to one's feelings or interests. Fairness is the ability to make

judgments that are specific to a particular case (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks & Meyer, n.d). However, justice and fairness are areas that AA has been found to have an impact on. For example in a study of workplace fairness done by Skarlicki and Folger (1997) and Goldman (2003), it was maintained that what you receive (distributive justice) has stronger or weaker effects depending on how you are treated (interactional justice) and on the allocation process (procedural justice and this was similar as to what Brockner (2002) as well as Cropanzano and Schminke (2001) found in their studies.

Justice perceptions have been examined by various authors such as by Leck et al. (1996), Singer (1993) and Bies (1987) but most of their research focused on global perceptions and thus a current study that was conducted by Cropanzano, Slaughter and Bachiochi (2005) aimed to study distributive, procedural and interactional justice. This study lends support to the argument that AA impacts perception of justice in an organization. As hypothesized they found that distributive, procedural and interactional justice perceptions were relayed to organizational attractiveness and intention to apply. This meant that when employees perceived a process to be fair, they had no problem applying and if they did not get the job, there were no negative feelings towards whoever got the job and towards the organization (Cropanzano et al.,, 2005). Similarly Bobecel et al., (1998) found in their research suggestions that AA policies violate procedural justice beliefs because minority of gender status is advantageous for some members of groups but a disadvantage to others. Meaning that for Black women the policy is more advantageous than for Coloured or Indian women.

Connerly (1995, 2000) made the following statement with regards to AA and justice. "Most of us want to think of ourselves as fair-minded people. We want an equitable and inclusive society. We want to stamp out racial and gender discrimination. We want to expand opportunities and we want those opportunities to be equally accessible to all. AA has become a major detour in our journey to a fair and equitable society" (p.29). Thus it is important to give credence to how AA "derails" this journey to a fair and equitable society. Some propose that it does this by not following the merit principle (Crosby & Franco, 2003).

The relationship between perceptions of AA being unfair and opposition to AA has been well documented and researched. People who view AA as unfair have been thought to do so because in their eyes it violates procedural justice principles (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Standley & Zanna, 1998). Another aspect of justice that needs to be discussed is that of meritocracy – the principle of merit. A discussion of how AA relates to the issue of meritocracy will be presented below.

2.3.7   AA and Meritocracy

Another area that is often debated on in the implementation of AA comes in the form of meritocracy. Meritocracy has to do with merit; it is a widely known and widely endorsed ideology. Meritocracy is a principle that prescribes that only the most deserving individuals are rewarded. Thus, meritocracy can only operate on an unbiased system, (Clayton & Tangrim 1989; Smith-Winkelman & Crosby, 1994). Critics have claimed hat AA has led to the lowering of appointment and promotion standards (Padayachee, 2003). People who believe in the merit principle and believe that outcomes like promotions

should be given to those who deserve it the most oppose AA simply on the basis that AA programs violate this principle. (Son Hing et al., 2002). In light of the above it becomes thus necessary to discuss AA and merit.

Levinson and Sadovnik define meritocracy as "the conceptualization of merit in terms of tested competency and ability, and most likely as measured by intelligence or standardized achievement tests" (2002, p.436). Young (1958) defined meritocracy in his book as a system of government or other administration where appointments and responsibilities are objectively assigned to individuals based upon their "merits". Merits were things such as intelligences, credentials and education determined through evaluations.

According to Rudman and Glick (1999) discrimination against minorities in hiring evaluation and promotion continues to contribute to their underrepresentation in certain occupational areas and at higher levels of management. (Rudman & Glick, 1999). AA is a policy designed to deal proactively with the problems of discrimination and under-representation. With such laudable goals, it is not surprising that AA, as a general policy, is supported by most people (Kluegel & Smith, 1983). However, as noted in the past specific AA programs are often criticized for their violations of the merit principle and are met with opposition even though the people who favour the merit system do not always agree on what constitutes as merit(Bobocel, Davey, Son Hing, & Zanna, 2001; Bobocel, Son Hing, Holmvall, & Zanna, 2002). Critics claim that AA and merit are antithetical (Fleming et al., 1978).

Furthermore the merit principle, also known as the equity principle, is a distributive justice rule that prescribes that an individual's relative outcomes (e.g., pay) should be allocated in proportion to his or her relative inputs like effort (Deutsch, 1975). The equity principle is the preferred norm for situations that require allocation of resources or for decisions involving promotion in an economic setting (Wagstaff, Huggins, & Perfect, 1993). Some forms of AA, such as preferential treatment programs, consider target-group status in the selection criteria and thus might allow for the hiring of a less qualified target-group member (e.g., a woman or visible minority) over a more qualified White man. Such programs may be construed as violating the merit principle. Meritocracy is thus seen as a screening tool in the workplace. In the workplace people who view merit as important for career advancement, view discriminatory practices as violating the merit principle, and as such AA is viewed in a negative light.

Studies have revealed that people evaluate AA programs more negatively to the extent where the programs place less emphasis on merit and more on target group status in the decision making progress (Kravitz, 1995; Nacoste, 1985). This was found to be the case in a study done by Crosby in 2000. *In this study a male manager in the company criticized AA for the way it influenced his career. The man acknowledged that women had been disadvantaged by the promotional system at the organization. The man stated he was aware of how things worked at the organization in terms of advancement, thus he played by the rules. After 15 years of excellent service at a certain rank, he had seen himself as the candidate most likely to be promoted to the next level on the retirement of his boss. AA was implemented and suddenly the rules changed so that all of a sudden education counted as much as job seniority in determining promotions. The job that*

should have been his, went to a woman with an MBA. The man stated that had education always been important, he would have obtained an advanced degree. What upset him was the shift in procedure (Crosby & Franco, 2003). In this example, one can see that when the company implemented AA, they did so to the letter by promoting "suitably qualified people from designated groups" and thus whereas previously the promotion procedure entailed that experience and seniority was the criteria for promotion, it changed when AA was implemented.

Individuals who endorse the merit principle believe that the only things that should impact hiring and promotion decisions are that qualifications and ability (Aberson, 2007). Support for the merit principle has been found in several studies that have examined the role of merit beliefs in predicting support for AA and perceptions of affirmative beneficiaries. Bobocel et al, (1998) found in their study strong belief for the merit principle as people believed that people who do their job well ought to rise to the top. Studies that have been done on how recipients of AA is received in the workplace has found that they are perceived to be less qualified by their colleagues which indicates that some people view AA as incompatible with the merit principle (Garcia, Erskine, Hawn & Casmay, 1981; Heilman, Battle, Keller & Lee, 1998).

Proponents of AA assert that existing criteria are culturally biased and should, therefore, be reviewed to cater for the changed circumstances. They also maintain that one cannot apply universally based standards to all individuals equally as this is a mechanism designed to ensure that the racially privileged remain as such. Thus for AA to be

successful, the proponents claim that the traditional view of meritocracy should be challenged.

Given all that has been said about AA and justice and meritocracy, it is only fitting that a section of the paper discusses how employees perceive and experience AA in the workplace. There seems to exist a general belief of contradiction amongst employees regarding the AA policy and the EEA due to the fact that AA is seen as only favoring African people in the workplace and it seems to exclude Coloureds and Indians (AA Files, Independent Newspapers Library). Another source of confusion according to Mhlongo (2001) regarding AA is that many African people believe that Coloureds and Indians benefited during apartheid by having more access and freedom in South Africa. In the context of AA, there are people who view it as synonymous with the word discrimination as it is now singling out one group that does not benefit in the job market – White males (Son Hing et al., 2002). Mhlongo (2001) is of the opinion that AA is only new in South Africa in terms of the groups that are now beneficiaries. During apartheid the White population were beneficiaries of the ideology and practice of separate development, now it is the "Black" population. Thus perceptions and experiences of employees in the workplace are vital to the research literature on AA.

2.4 Attitudes and Perceptions of AA in the Workplace

Attitudes have been defined as "a settled way of thinking or feeling" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.84). Perceptions have been defined as "the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something though the senses…a way of regarding, understanding, or

interpreting something" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.1063). Both these concepts will be used interchangeably to largely refer to perceptions employees have.

Coetzee & Vermeulen (2003, p. 17), state in their paper on the perceptions employees' have on the fairness of AA, that the government's AA policy enabled workers to visualize a more prosperous future. Yet, not everyone views AA through rose coloured glasses (Leonard, 2005).

AA, which is based on the principles of social good, compensatory justice and the ideal of equality aims to redress disadvantages that designated groups suffered under apartheid discrimination (Nxumalo, 2010). It was a way to put into place laws that would stop discriminatory practices in the workplace and create a more diverse workplace (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). For many however, this is not the case. Some view AA as 'reverse racism' while others sees it as a way to diversify the conglomerates in South Africa and Africa which have been predominantly White owned.

The goals of the Employment Equity Act are to provide for employment equity amongst South Africans. The Act recognises that as a result of apartheid and other discriminating lawas and practices, disparities still exist in terms of employment, occupation and income withing the national labour market. One of the ways the Government seeks to redress these disparities that are creating severe disadvantages for certain categories of people is through policies like AA (EEA, 198, p1).

AA in the workplace is to increase the numbers of underrepresented groups in the workplace. It requires organizations to take steps to improve the employment

opportunities of different demographic groups. Since its implementation in 1994 many misconceptions still exist. One of these misconceptions is that it involves strict quotas and the hiring of unqualified individuals. Despite the good intentions of AA programs, research thus far suggests that such programs are met with hostility and are perceived to be unfair (Kravitz & Platania, 1993; McMillan-Capehart et al., 2009).

Given the disparity in experiences of AA, where some celebrate the policy and others criticize it, the following subject matter proves to be one that is particularly important, especially within South Africa. According to Chen and Kleiner (1996) given the amount of negativity grouped together with the words AA, "there exists a need to move away from emphasis on meeting perceived quotas to a clearer focus on the original intent of AA (p.28). Furthermore, there seems to be limited qualitative research done in South Africa in this area from the employees' perspective.

Psychology is all about trying to understand people's behaviour and experiences. According to Wimalachandra (n.d) "Psychology is the exploration into and the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes of all concerned species from developmental stage to end of life cycle" (p.1).

It is interested in what human nature is as well as what it is to be a person. In addition, it attempts to offer possible answers to the questions about why people do, say and feel the things they do (Burr, 2002). Given the ambit of psychology this research was interested in finding out -what employees really think about AA programs and secondly, about how they actually experience it in their everyday lives.

Based on the above, the current study was interested in looking at employees' experiences and perceptions of AA by making use social constructionism as an approach so as to gain an understanding of how people engage in the concept and practice of AA in a manner that accounts of historical and cultural specificity. The attitudes and perceptions that employees harbour with relation to AA has contributed significantly to the views on AA, be it positive or negative. Thus firstly, positive views on AA will be discussed before moving on to the negative views.

2.5 Positive Views on Affirmative Action

AA can be justified only in those socio-political contexts which embrace the ideal of equality and opportunity according to Rosenfield (1991). According to Thomas (1991) in Mhlongo (2001) AA is a policy that can be viewed as a proactive development tool aimed at overcoming constraints and mobilize latent resources more effectively. Although many are of the view that AA is advancing the interests of designated groups at the expense of the White male, it is a means of overcoming barriers to equal employment opportunity in South Africa (Mhlongo, 2001).

AA has been hailed by some as a way to level the playing field that was previously dominated by Whites. With the introduction of the policy, more women are being seen in high ranking positions as well as the number of Africans in the work place have increased tremendously. AA combats racism and racial inequality and although the critics try to distract from the positive aspects of AA, it does not decrease the impact it has had on many of the lives of South Africans, who without this policy, would never have been

given an opportunity to develop their potential and showcase their abilities (Farhana, 1997).

Another positive aspect of AA is that it lifted the status of the underclass and addressed past wrongs in an effort to restore equal access to the benefits of society to all race groups (Degeneer, 1980). Prior to 1994, Whites held all the power as they were the dominant group and as such wielded political, managerial and social power. By default White women also held some of the power as they belonged to the dominant group. Africans, Indians and Coloureds had no voice. Political power was held by Whites but with the introduction of AA, this caused a shift in power dynamics and access to resources of society (Booysen, 2007).

Research supports to some extent the positive views on AA. For example in studies conducted by the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) it was found that there was strong support for AA as a form of redress in the labour market (Roberts et al., 2010). In another South African study conducted during the period of 2003 – 2009, it was found that between 60 – 70 % of South Africans supported AA. It was also found that the beneficiaries of AA viewed the policy more positive than those belonging to the non-beneficiary group. Support for the policy was higher among Africans (76%) as opposed to Whites (22%), and women were more supportive of the policy than their male counterparts (Roberts et al., 2010).

Another positive aspect of AA is that it is contributing to developing a more skilled workforce and support for this view was shown in the national survey, which found 68%

of respondents agreeing that the policy was creating a society that was more unified and just (Roberts et al., 2010).

AA is one of many policies and programmes developed to redress past imbalances and works together with a number of other policies. However, misconceptions still exist regarding AA which leads to negative views on this progressive measure to help promote equality amongst the work force (Adam, 2000). These negative views will be discussed in more depth below.

2.6 Negative Views on AA

The criticisms labelled against AA far outweigh the positive but one should note that most of the claims that are made by critics can be dispelled by the evidence of the positive effect AA has had on society (Berry, 2004). Despite widespread fear among many respondents a study conducted by Raymond Taylor in 1991 found that the majority of all employees groups reported generally positive attitudes toward AA. White males were the least supportive and this was understandable given that they are in the eyes of AA at the bottom of the food chain so to speak, they were not as hostile as expected. Also, although the goal of the agency was perceived to be "quotas" 62 % of the White males believe that AA is "morally" right and only 7% reported that such policies are wrong and should be disobeyed (Hays, 1993).

Various criticisms are spoken against AA, the most popular one being that it encourages "reverse discrimination" (Berry, 2004). It is seen as being unfair to the White population especially to males as legally they have done nothing wrong but they are at the bottom of

the chain when it comes to promotion. Many view this as illegal discrimination on the part of the organization (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). Similarly, AA has been viewed as being against one group specifically – White males and as such has clouded the policy with negativity. However, in the context of it being a form of illegal discrimination, there has been a counter argument that states it would only be true if no discrimination had existed prior to the creation and implementation of AA, thus because of the discrimination experienced during apartheid by the designated groups, to redress this, a form of discrimination in terms of AA is needed to correct this imbalance (Human, 1993; Sikhosana, 1993).

Critics challenge the fairness and appropriateness of procedural issues related to AA (Glazer, 1988). As stated in the beginning, many people feel that AA gives jobs to people who are less deserving of them. This brings us to a second major criticism of AA, in that it is seen as reducing standards. Many feel that to comply with the requirements of AA does not mean one has to lower the existing qualification standards to accommodate the minorities yet some organizations do this in an effort to meet quotas and hire from the previously disadvantaged pool of people (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). It has been criticized with establishing a quota system which leads to disregard for merit as a job criterion and in general lowering of standards so that previously disadvantaged groups can be placed into certain jobs (Sikhosana, 1993). This perception that AA is establishing a quota system and focuses more on target group status as proposed by Kravitz (1995) and Nacoste (1985) is what has led proponents of the merit principle to view AA in a negative light.

Another criticism has to do with discrimination towards the beneficiaries of AA.

According to Berry (2004) equal employment opportunity initiatives were seen as ways

to prohibit discrimination in the work place. However by introduction of this policy,

minorities still face some sort of subtle discrimination in the work place as they now have

to deal with either feelings of self-doubt stemming from having to prove to everyone they

deserve their promotion and even from rumours at the office that the only reason they got

the job was because of AA (Chen & Kleiner, 1996).

Birch (1993), states that "AA is seen as costly to members of the majority who may be

passed over in spite of having better qualifications than some members of the minority

who are appointed or accepted" (p.126 – 127). An often overlooked caveat of AA is that

the premise of AA has always rested on the notion that all members of the designated

groups who are considered for employment or promotion are suitably qualified and are

the best candidate for the position (Berry, 2004). Another criticism labelled against AA is

that it affects the self worth of both the groups that benefit and those that do not. Many

African people may wonder whether they are successful for their skills or for their color,

whilst White people are frustrated by a narrow window of opportunity. Morale is thus

low in South Africa (Farhana, 1997).

According to Padayachee (2003) critics oppose AA because they feel you cannot reward

people on the basis of their race, ethnicity or gender. Doing so would lead to the

destruction of the foundation of a democratically just society.

Bell (1972) makes the following statement with regards to the principle of equality:

"…equality of opportunity denies the precedence of birth, of nepotism, of patronage or

any other criterion which allocates places, other than fair competition open equally to talent and ambition. It asserts…universalism over particularism, and achievement over ascription" (p.41).

Given what the above, one would think that if AA is viewed so negatively, why it has not been abolished. The simple answer is that although there are more negative views than positive, it is a policy that helps those who have been disadvantaged during apartheid. For it to redress the past issues, it needs to level the playing field. The nature of AA is a contentious one, and many disparities still exist with regards to it.

2.7 Conclusion

Variously understood and often misunderstood, AA remains among the most controversial personnel policies facing organizations in South Africa. Over the years AA has been introduced in an effort to eliminate discrimination in the work force and increase the representation of disadvantaged groups in occupations where they have been historically underrepresented (Beaton & Tougas, 2001). Since its implementation AA has received mixed reviews from the public. Some people approve of AA while others show strong opposition to it (Tomasson et al., 1996; Tougas & Beaton, 1993).

The history of South Africa as stated by the literature, was one that was clouded by disparities in how resources were allocated during apartheid. Imbalances existed in the social order of the people of South Africa, as Whites were seen to be the "cream of the crop" and as such got all the benefits during apartheid. Not only were Africans and other races subjected to carrying around passports which told them where they could work and

where they were allowed to walk and during which time, it was also an era characterized as one where women were seen as beneath men and as such was not given the same rights as their male counterparts. In an effort to compensate for the past discrimination against both women and all other races that were not White, the government created AA as a policy of employment equity.

Based on the literature, it would seem that there are more negative views than positive views on AA but this does not distract from the benefit of having such a policy in place to help create and equal and just society. The numbers indicate that there is more than adequate support for the policy, yet some people are still unhappy with its implementation.

Support for AA is evident in numerous studies. Positive attitudes (Hayes, 1993; Roberts et al., 2010) towards AA have been found in numerous studies as well as negative attitudes (Crosby, 2000). Given the above, the meaning of AA differs from person to person. Every person is unique and therefore their experiences and perceptions are unique to them. As human beings everyone constructs their version of reality differently based on their social experiences. It is because of this that no one person experiences and event in the exact same way as the next person. Given this disparity in how people feel about the policy, social constructionism as a theoretical context is fitting as it presents a critical reflexive movement to how individuals experience events and in this case AA. Thus social constructionism proved valuable in unearthing the different experiences and perceptions related AA.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifteen years there has been a gradual emergence of a number of alternative approaches to the study of human beings as social animals (Burr, 1995). Approaches such as critical theory, discourse analysis and deconstruction to name a few have come up as an alternative to the age old theories like humanistic psychology and positivist psychology. The umbrella term that encompasses all these "new" theories is that of social constructionism. It offers an alternative to psychology and social psychology in that it is a critical and radical way to approach the study of human beings (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism represents a critical reflexive movement away from mental activity in each individuals head towards a socially mediated and historically situated study of action and experience (Parker, 1998). Thus given the ambit of social constructionism, it proves to be useful in providing a new, critical and culturally appropriate perspective to how AA is viewed.

Social constructionism makes it possible for us to conceptualize human psychology as an 'ensemble' of social relations and the turn to discourse helps us to reflect on the discipline as part of the powerful 'psy-complex' in modern culture, which helps constitute and regulate subjectivity (Burman et al, 1996). Social constructionism is powerful in the sense that it "deconstructs categories and classifications and urges us to recognize the diversity, fragmentariness and localness of experience and subjectivity"

(Burr, 1995, p.17). In relation to AA, social constructionism provides us with rich analysis of discourse associated with this phenomenon. It is a theoretical context that attaches meaning and importance to social relations regarding perceptions and feelings associated with AA. For the purpose of this research, the views of Vivienne Burr are going to be used in terms of how she conceptualized AA.

3.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

According to Tiling (2008), social constructionism is currently understood as a meta-theoretical alternative to positivism .It serves as a point of reference for many social and cultural scientists. There is no single definition of social constructionism as many authors define it differently however many of the definitions have a similar theme. Burr (1995) identifies four basic assumptions of the social constructionist position. In her book she highlights that social constructionism takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge. This means that the world is not as objective as we would like to think. Rather it is constructed and influenced by our human experiences and language.

Social constructionism has been used as an approach in a number of studies conducted. In a study done by Kravitz and Platania (1993), insight was offered into possible reasons for the attitudes, perceptions and feelings people may have towards AA. Their research looked at the effect of the (i) respondents race, (ii) respondents gender, (iii) respondents knowledge about AA programmers and (iv) target (race, gender or handicap) of AA programs on attitudes.

In their study they found that misconceptions exist about the legal status of AA programs. Legal status refers to beliefs that quotas are required and this belief is one of the many that contribute to the negative attitudes towards AA (Little, Murry, & Wimbush, 1998). The study also found that women and racial minorities viewed the policy in the same light; however women did exhibit more favourable attitudes toward AA than the men (Little, Murry & Wimbush, 1998).

In a similar study done by Graves and Powell (1994) and Tougas, Beaton and Veilleux (1991), they also found that women viewed the policy more favourable than men did. Given the disparity in views attached to AA, social constructionism provided a useful framework in which the researcher could explore the reasons behind these feelings.

Social constructionism encourages individuals to not accept things at face value but to be critical in their understanding of how things are socially constructed. Thus it made logical sense to use social constructionism as a theoretical approach to not only understand the discourse related to AA but also in unearthing how race is socially constructed in the context of AA. Foucault defined discourse as follows in Weedon (1987), "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern" (p.108). Discourse is defined as "written or spoken communication or debate" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.409). Thus discourse in relation to AA is what has

been written in the EEA, newspapers, books, articles and so forth as well as debates and talks on it and how people feel and think about it.

Social constructionism is not an explanatory theory but rather has its origins in epistemology. This approach focuses on meaning and due to the fact that its epistemological position dictates that these are all that we can really claim to know about. The aim of social constructionism is to account for the ways in which phenomena are socially constructed. Bruner (1990; p.34) proposes "…that it is culture, not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action by situating its underlying, intentional states in an interpretive system".

Social Constructionism is of the same opinion that what we know is constructed by our social experiences and we can never really know anything to be real as everyone constructs their reality differently as they experience events differently. Social constructionism is made up of four major principles which are crucial to understanding the concept. These will be discussed below.

3.3 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Sociologists see "reality" as a social construction: a process by which what is "real" is created, commonly agreed upon, learned, maintained, and changed by the members of society. Perceptions of truth and reality are products of social contexts, particularly culture and history. Reality is not inherent in the world but is a product of agreement (Newman, 2010). The first major principle of social constructionism is that it takes a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge. The key theme in social

constructionism is that we as humans take a "critical stance" towards how we understand the world and ourselves. It posits that we must be critical of the "idea" that our observations of the world yields its nature to as. It also argues that out view of the world and what we know is not as unbiased as we would like to believe. What we believe to be real may not refer to real divisions (Burr, 1995). Our knowledge is not a direct perception of reality according to social constructionists. They postulate that we construct our view of reality collectively as a society. Given that reality and divisions is not constructed without bias, one cannot view AA as a policy that is unbiased in nature.

The second principle relates to the way we understand the world, which according to Burr (1995) is historically and culture specific. We build our version of the world and how we understand it, based on how we were brought up as well as in the culture that we grew up in. Culture plays a huge role in how we construct our version of the world, how we view other people and even how we think. Social constructionism involves challenging our common sense knowledge of ourselves and the world we live in.

According to Burr (1995), seeing as how knowledge is historically and culturally specific it is only natural that the knowledge generated by the social sciences are also historically and culturally specific. The theories and explanations of psychology are culture-bound as well as time-bound and thus one cannot take what is known thus far as the alpha and omega of human nature. Where one lives and where one grew up, affects and influences how one understands the world. Burr (1995) highlights an example of this: "The notion of childhood has undergone tremendous change over the centuries. What has been

thought 'natural' or children to do has changed, as well as what parents were expected to do for their children" (Burr, 1995, p.4).

The above example is a classic indication of how ways of understanding are historically and culturally specific. Up until recently, children were only seen as needing to be protected because this is what was passed down from generation to generation and child rearing ways were also seen as culture specific. The way the Chinese raised their children are different to how Africans raise theirs. Yet given all that is known about how knowledge is historically and culturally specific, it begs the question of how much 'truth' is in what we know to be true. All knowledge is derived from viewing the world from one perspective of another and as such within a social constructionism framework there is no such thing as an objective fact (Burr, 1995).

The third principle claims that knowledge is sustained by social process. This means that people construct knowledge between them. The daily conversation that people are exposed to in the course of their social lives is what constructs each person's reality. This proves to be very true in how people socially construct race and how they define gender roles with regards to AA. "People communicate to interpret events and to share those with others. For this reason it is believed that reality is constructed socially as a product of communication. [. .] Our meanings and understandings arise from our communication with others. [. .] How we understand objects and how we behave towards them depend in large measure on the social reality in force" (Littlejohn, 1992; p.190-1).

Our social world and who were are all results of social processes, thus there cannot be any given determined nature to the world or people according to Burr (1995). Thus, the

last principle claims that knowledge and social action go together. What we know inspires how we act. This is very true in the case of how we socially construct race. What we know about race has been handed down through history and how society divided and defined racial lines back in the day when African-Americans were servants to White Americans. One cannot help but think slavery when we think of African Americans or when we think of Africans in general. History has biased us to how we view race and the racial lines that divide us.

The ambit of social constructionism provides the theoretical approach that is helpful in unearthing how people construct their reality around AA. It stands to give rich contextual meaning to the perceptions of people on AA and how history and culture has influenced these perceptions and shaped the attitudes that exist with regards to AA. One important contribution of social constructionism is that it provides a lens (language) with which one can look at race in terms of AA and how people socially construct the term race. This point is elaborated on below.

3.4 LANGUAGE AND REALITY

"When people talk to each other, the world gets constructed" (Burr, 1995, p.7). Everyday interactions between people produce knowledge and given this link, language is seen as something more than simply a way for us to express ourselves. Symbolic interactionism proposes that reality is socially constructed and maintained through interactions, language, and so forth. The language we speak as well as linguistic categories we use determine the reality we experience (Newman, 2010).The tie between language and reality arises from experiences that involve *the felt expression of an actual fact that is*

being experienced. This is true in the case of AA. How people perceive AA and how they feel about it, is largely influenced by how they have experienced it. Dialogue is viewed by many social psychologists and educators as a primary means towards rectifying social inequalities (Jackson, 2008). AA being seen as a system that promotes social justice, it is important to discuss how language plays a role in this.

Language opens up reality to social beings in so far as reality teaches us about language as it language gets its meaning from the world outside it (Burr, 1995). Due to the history of South Africa and society in general, inequalities exist in language. Power inequities ensure that no all voices carry the same weight and this is where inequality comes into play with regards to language (Jackson, 2008). During apartheid, the people that were linguistically talented were Whites in South Africa and thus they set the rules and ultimately defined what reality was and what was socially acceptable and what was not acceptable (Jackson, 2008). We construct our world through language, so constructs such as race and racism are constructed by how we communicate with each other. Given that our knowledge stems from dialogue, it is important to look at how people came about constructing race as a definitive feature of who benefits in society and who does not. Race is embedded in AA as it is viewed as the balancing scale that society uses to decide who benefits and by how much (Wolpe, 1988). Given the importance of race in the context of AA, it will be discussed as a social construct below.

3.5 RACE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Our daily lives are affected by race whether we are aware of it or not. We see the world through a racial lens that colours our world Black, White, Coloured, minority, Indian or

"other". How we see others and how we are seen by others, according to Frankenberg (1993), affects our lives profoundly. Our entire social structure is affected at least one social construction – race. Even though there is this acute awareness of how race affects us, there has been little dismantling of it. Understanding what is meant by race as a social construct is critical to understanding the capacity race has to intersect and affect other aspects and domains of life and society. It is also helpful in dismantling the concept of race. Race has become crucial to the social structure of societies according to Smedley and Smedley (2005) thus given this importance of race, it is important that for the purpose of understanding the perceptions and experiences on employees, that one looks at race briefly. By understanding the concept of race and how people define it, will hopefully lead to a greater understanding of perceptions and experiences people have in relation to AA.

Our society and work places have become more diverse since the implementation of AA and as a result it appears that we have become more race and gender tolerant and that racism and prejudice is a thing of the past like apartheid (Little, Murry & Wimbush, 1998). However, some (Kleugel, 1985; McConahey, 1982) believe that our prejudice has just become more subversive. Studies done by Kleugel (1985), McConahey (1982) and Jacobsen (1985) state that they believe we have exchanged the past for what they term "modern", "symbolic" and "new" racism.

So what exactly is a social construct? According to Frankenberg (1993) a social construct is ontologically subjective, but epistemologically objective. It is ontologically subjective in that the construction and continued existence of social constructs are contingent on

social groups and their collective agreement, imposition, and acceptance of such constructions.

Takaki (1993) posits that race is a social construct produced by the dominant group in society and their power to define. Meaning that the dominant group which was the Whites in society imposed the boundaries of group membership by defining race in terms of biology (which race was superior). For example if you were Black then you were biologically inferior to a White person. It is this unfair classification which led to the unfair treatment of the designated groups and thus AA aimed to correct this unfair treatment.

Race is seen as a means of creating and enforcing social order and has served as a lens through which differential opportunity and inequality have been structured. Given this construction of race, it proved valuable to unearth how South Africans constructed race in terms of the AA policy. The policy states that designated groups are "Africans (Africans, Indians, Coloureds and women and the disabled, yet for many South Africans Indians and Coloured aren't "Black" enough. (Farhana, 1997).

Race is an indicator of difference although it does not identify differences in culture. The difference is more likely one of status. This makes sense in the context of AA as the policy was designed to redress the unfair treatment towards people of colour that were seen as being of a lower status and class than the Whites during apartheid.

Social construction theorists posit that there is nothing absolute about social construction if compared to things like rocks, rivers, mountains which are absolute and real. The

existence of something absolute like a rock does not depend on collective acceptance on the part of humans that rocks exist as it will exist regardless of what people think, agree or accept. However, the existence of race is a social construct that requires people to collectively agree and accept that it does exist (Frankenberg, 1993).

Fannon (1952) posits that in order for racism to end, society must abandon the notion of race. His belief was that if society can realize that race is not real it could overcome racism. His argument is logical but his assumption is too simplistic by assuming that race is not real and that removing the racial lens through which people view the world can be removed.

The following is what is known about race from the literature. First, race is a social construct contingent on collective acceptance, agreement, and imposition. Second, race has always been defined by the dominant group in society. Third, race indicates differences in status. The status indicated by which race you are, either includes or excludes one from broader social constructs, and disables or enables certain powers. Fourthly and most important how one socially constructs race, impacts perceptions one may have on policies or measures that promote certain race groups. Thus race is very important when one looks at AA, as race has for years been the measuring stick for who gets what in society.

3.6 CONCLUSION

AA has got different meanings to different people based on the fact that not everyone experiences it in the same way. Culture and upbringing, it is argued affects the way

people view the policy. Given the nature of social constructionism, it proves a valuable tool in understanding the intricate nature of AA. Social constructionism makes it possible to conceptualize human psychology as an 'ensemble of social relations' and the turn to discourse helps us to reflect on the discipline as part of the power 'psy-complex' in modern culture which helps constitute and regulate subjectivity (Burman et al., 1996). Social constructionism helps uncover the deeper meanings associated with race, racial lines and AA. It is given the critical stance of social constructionism that lends meaning and understanding to a construct like AA which is contradicting in its very nature.

Language and race also affect how people perceive and experience AA. Due to the history of South Africa, the designated groups that AA seeks to protect and promote, have been unfairly disadvantaged simply due to the fact that the dominant group (Whites) used their superiority in language skills to develop and implement legislation that kept the masses at an arms length from progressing and developing. Thus in the context AA, social constructionism lent valuable insight into understanding the past literature and research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The methods used in this study will be discussed below. They include the type of
research design, instruments used, the size and composition of the sample, and the
procedure that was followed. The researcher will start off by stating what the objectives
of the study were and then explaining what type of research design was used to conduct
the study. A brief description will be provided on the research participants and a
background to the organization from which the sample came. A step by step guide will be
provided of how the researcher gained access to the organization and set up the
interviews needed for data collection. This will be followed by a more descriptive take on
the data collection techniques with focus on the type of interview design used, the
instruments and how they were constructed and then the procedure followed once
interviews commenced. Then a brief explanation will be given on how the recorded
interviews were transcribed. The researcher will also discuss ethical considerations that
were important to consider in the context of conducting this study. To round off this
chapter, the researcher will provide a description of the data analysis technique used to
analyze the data and then the conclusion will follow.

4.2   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to gain a deeper understanding into the perceptions and experiences
that employees had with regard to AA measures at a South African Organization. The

researcher also aimed to understand how AA and social constructionism was conceptualized in the literature by conducting a thorough literature search on both these concepts. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

How do employees perceive AA in a South African organization?

How do employees experience AA in South African organization?

4.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

This study followed a qualitative research design, as qualitative designs offer more descriptive and rich data about people's lived experiences (King, 1998; Patton, 1990). Qualitative design was more suited to this kind of research as the researcher was interested in unearthing the perceptions and experiences associated with AA. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured. They also state that Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.

4.4   RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study not have to a specific gender or race, the only criteria that the researcher used was that participants had to be in a managerial position – this could have been lower management or upper management. The logic behind this was that people who had been promoted in the last 5 years would be more knowledgeable on AA

legislation and policies in the organization than those who just entered the organization. The participants were representative of the four race groups in South Africa and comprised of both gender groups as it was a general perception that women were more positive towards AA than men. The sample consisted of 9 people; (6) women and (3) men.

4.5   ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The organization that was used for this study is the South African Police Service. The work environment is highly stressful. The employees are diverse and come from various backgrounds and have different educational levels. This organization provides a much needed service to the South African community and do not receive recognition for it according to some participants. This organization has been characterized by departmental changes and restructuring since the implementation of EEA and more specifically with the implementation of AA. Thus it was a rich source for finding out how employees perceive and experience AA in a South African government organization.

4.6   ACCESS

The first step was to gain ethical clearance and to have the proposal approved by the Faculty Research Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct the research. Once the researcher obtained ethical clearance and approval, the next step was to contact the Human Resource Department at the Government organization to gain access to the organization by sending a letter stating what the aim of her research was and asked for permission to conduct her research at that organization. Next, the researcher had HR set

up possible interviewees who fit the sampling criteria. Human Resource then contacted the potential participants on behalf of the researcher and set up the interviews.

4.7   TYPE OF SAMPLING

For the purposes of this study, the researcher made use of purposive sampling method as the research focus was very specific therefore the sample must be specific to the goals of the research. As Silverman (2000) states "purposive sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample carefully on this basis". (p.104) For the current research objectives the sample will be made up of 9 racially diverse employees at an organization to research the feelings and experiences different racial groups as well as gender groups have towards AA

4.8   DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The data was gathered using a biographical questionnaire (Appendix B) and a semi structured interview schedule (Appendix C) with questions that were related to AA.

4.8.1   Interviews

According to Bates et al.,(2008), semi structured interviews are "asymmetrical in structure and the interviewer initiates questions and probes in response to the interviewee's descriptions" (p.2). The researcher used the questions as a framework to guide the interview process with the interviewee. Patton (1990) postulated that the

purpose of semi structured interviews is so that the researcher can "access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (p. 278).

The biographical questionnaire was constructed in such a way that it allowed the researcher to gather the participant race, age and years of service even after the interview was completed.

Semi-structured interviews involves asking the interviewee a set of predetermined questions (Berg, 2001). The structure of the questions format differed slightly at times from one interviewee to the next, so as to provide the researcher with some flexibility in the interview process. However all the predetermined questions were asked of each interviewee so as to allow for consistency in the results whilst still allowing the researcher to probe (Berg, 2001; Patton, 1990, Huysamen, 2001). According to Gordon (1980), "Probing is a way to motivate the respondent and steer him towards giving, relevant, complete and clear responses to meet the objectives of the interview" (p.368).

The value of in-depth interviews are that they provide the researcher with a way to obtain a deeper understanding of the individuals "experiences in their own words and from their own perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and are thus useful in the sense that they allow the "…researchers to formulate their research problems in a variety of different ways" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 201). Open ended questions do present a problem when it comes to scoring but their value of allowing respondents to tell their story as they like makes up for this, as it provides the researcher with rich information which to use in analysis (Huysamen, 2001). Each interview lasted for about 15 to 30 minutes depending on the knowledge and experiences each participant had of AA. Some participants

answered the questions more quickly than others because they did not have a problem with the policy or had limited knowledge of what the policy entailed.

4.8.2   Instrument Development

The biographical questionnaire was developed by researching past thesis papers and then just using what was needed for the current research objectives. The interview schedule that the researcher used was constructed using what was found in the literature on AA as well as by adopting the social constructionism approach. This means that the researcher tried to construct the questions in such a way that the discourse that emerged from the interviews was culturally and historically specific to the context of AA. The literature on AA highlighted areas that were unexplored in the past research and also provided insight that was useful for developing a questionnaire that targeted perceptions and experiences of employees with regards to AA. The interviews were recorded using a digital tape recorder. One of the disadvantages of using a digital recorder was that participants may feel anxious about giving confidential information in the interview (Blaxter, Hughs & Tight, 1998). Transcribing and analyzing the digital recordings is also very time consuming (Blaxter et al., 1998). On the plus side, using a digital recorder allowed for the researcher to pay full attention to the process of the interview and observe body language as well as concentrates on non-verbal communication and maintains eye contact throughout the interview. It was also a measure to ensure that the interviewer did not miss out on any important information (Blaxter et al., 1998).

4.8.2.1 Interview Process

The interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants at a time that suited each one of them, and these times were communicated to the researcher by Human Resources. Once the researcher met with the participants, they were welcomed and thanked for volunteering their time. The researcher briefed them on what the research was about and gave them a letter with a consent form to sigh (Appendix A). In addition the researcher assured the participants that participation as voluntary and they could withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable, as well as that their identities would be protected so they could be free and honest in their answers. The researcher also asked the participants to consent to being tape recorded so as to allow the researcher to not miss anything. Once again they were assured that the tapes would not be heard by their fellow colleagues or bosses. After the interview was conducted, the researcher thanked the participant for their time. The collected data was transcribed and the participants were each given the opportunity to check the data themselves. This is called member checking and is a form of validation (Creswell, 1998). The data was then analyzed.

4.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee from the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences. Permission was also obtained from the participants at the Government organization through the Human resource department.

In order to ensure the ethical requirement of informed consent, the participants were informed that this was a confidential research project and that pseudonyms would be used

to ensure anonymity. They were also asked if they would consent to being recorded. . The participants were told that participation was voluntary and should they wish to withdraw from the study at any point in time they were free to do so. Participants were also informed that should they have any questions, they could contact the researcher or her supervisor at any time. The researcher also told participants that the completed research paper would be forwarded to them should they wish to read it. The researcher also informed them that the interview data would be stored in a safe place for 5 years before it would be destroyed.

4.10   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis deals with meaning and as such the researcher made use of thematic content analysis to analyze the data (Dey, 1993). The researcher approached the analysis from the broader perspective of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to really uncover the personal experiences and perceptions of each individual participant. The analysis process in IPA is "bottom up" meaning that the researcher generates codes from the data as opposed to using pre-existing theory to identify codes that might be applied to the data (Reid , Flowers & Larkin, 2005). In light of this, it proved to be appropriate for the current study to make use of IPA and more specifically Thematic Content Analysis when the researcher looked at analysing the data.

The researcher had to first established themes from the interviews. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews, word for word, with the consent of the interviewees. The transcribed interviews were then used for detailed in depth analysis by using thematic content analysis.

4.10.1 Transcription

After the interviews were recorded, the researcher had to transcribe the interviews, word for word. The researcher loaded the digital recordings onto a lap top and by listening to the interviews repeatedly, transcribed the interviews in such a way that provided coherence and structure to the study. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings again while reading the transcription to ensure that she did not miss anything important.

4.10.2 Thematic Content Analysis

The researcher approached the interpretation of the results from an Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) and thus used thematic content analysis to analyze the data. IPA aims to explore in detail how participants make sense of their world. Thus by using IPA as a broader approach to analysis, the researcher was concerned more with the individual participants personal experiences and perceptions of AA as opposed to producing an objective statement about AA perceptions.

Thematic content analysis was used as it is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data as opposed to discourse analysis which is the norm when one uses social constructionism. However for the current study, the researcher had not used social constructionism in the traditional sense as a methodological approach but rather as a theoretical approach to interpret the results using thematic context analysis. Thematic content analysis makes use of identifying common themes in the texts that the researcher uses for analysis. The researcher creates names for the themes from the actual words of participants and groups

them in a manner that directly reflects the texts as a whole. Interpretation on the part of the researcher is kept to a minimum and the feelings and thoughts of the researcher make little difference in thematic content analysis (Anderson, 2003).

Thematic content analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data through the search for themes and patterns in content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. Argument has been made that from all the qualitative approaches to data analysis, thematic content analysis should be seen as the foundational method for qualitative analysis (Holloway & Todress, 2003). Thus it is postulated by Braun and Clarke (2006) that it should be the first method of qualitative analysis that students and researchers should learn because it provides core skills that will be useful for future use in conducting qualitative analysis.

The skills used in thematic content analysis, is applicable across the board as most methods of qualitative analysis deals with "themes". Thematic content analysis is flexible and this is one of the major benefits that researchers draw from when using this approach to analyzing their data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in rich detail (Boyatzis, 1998). Given this description, in the context of the current study, thematic content analysis provides the researcher with the flexibility of interpreting the data in such a way that highlights the aims and objectives of the study. By using thematic content analysis, the researcher can draw the necessary information needed to answer the

research questions as well as make inferences on where the limits of the study were. Thematic content analysis also complimented the theoretical framework used by the researcher as its flexibility allowed for a critical and reflexive integration with the data from the perspective of the researcher. Social constructionism calls for people to be critical and to not just accept things as they are but to rather question and probe and try and gain deeper meaning from discourse (Burr, 1995), thus social constructionism and thematic content analysis were perfectly matched to compliment the research objectives.

The researcher started off by first reading through the interview schedule and writing down possible themes that would answer the research questions as laid out in chapter one. The researcher then read all the transcribed interviews and noted down the common themes that emerged from each participant's responses to each question. The researcher then grouped the themes into two categories; main themes and sub-themes. This was followed by highlighting parts of the transcribed interviews from each participant that substantiated the theme in terms of direct quotes. After which the researcher examined all of the attributions under each main theme and identified the general orientations of each participant. Finally the general attributions were indentified and conclusions were drawn from them based on what the literature and research had to say about each theme (Hayes, 1997).

4.11 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The traditional criteria for validity and reliability have no bearing on qualitative research. There are alternative criteria upon which qualitative research is judged. They are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmabilty. Credibility meaning

establishing that the results of the qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants of the research. The participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. The traditional quantitative view of reliability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability. The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The research is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study. Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2006).

Validity was achieved in this study by asking the participants to give an honest account of their experiences and feelings associated with AA. Member checks were used in order to validate the information received by emailing each participant a copy of their transcribed interview as member checks involves taking the analyses and conclusions back to the participants and allowing them to check whether the researcher's account was accurate and true (Cresswell, 1998).

Unfortunately due to time constraints follow up interviews could not take place. According to Neuman (2006), the use of an interview schedule helps to increase the reliability of research as all of the participants are asked the same questions in the same order, thus showing consistency in how they make their observations.

4.12   LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was limited by time constraints, which did not permit follow up interviews to explore any questions that might have emerged during data analysis. Another limitation was that some of the interviewees were reluctant to speak our negatively on AA for fear of getting into trouble. No clear relationship could be gleaned from respondents race, sex and attitudes towards AA as the respondents were from various races and some shared similar views. This could be a point for future research as it may lead to a clearer understanding of why current attitudes and perceptions prevail after so many years regarding AA.

Kravitz and Platania (1993) suggested in theirs study that a possible area for future research should be the study of psychological bases like self esteem and symbolic prejudice underlying attitudes of AA.

Thus given the current research scope, there are plausible areas for future research so as to broaden the knowledge on AA.

4.13   CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of how employees perceive AA in their organization. The study was based on a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions centred on AA. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants which came from all four main race groups. The interviews lasted approximately between 15 and 30 minutes. Once the interviews were completed they were transcribed and then analyzed using thematic content analysis.

The next chapter will deal with the findings from doing thematic content analysis and link it to the literature and research on each theme. It will also aim to answer the following research questions as presented in the initial chapter of this study. **How do employees perceive AA in a South African Organization and how do employees experience AA in a South African organization?**

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions that employees have in relation to AA in a South African organization. The sample of the study was made up of nine people from various racial backgrounds and comprising of both male and female. In the presentation of the results, the researcher will quote the participants verbal responses verbatim where necessary to substantiate the various themes that emerged from data analysis. The researcher will start off by explaining each theme either how it has been formally defined or explain what the theme means. The responses of the participants are organized under main headings and subheadings and are presented below. The researcher will link the themes to what was found in the literature review and where possible will substantiate her findings with those of studies that have previously been conducted. The researcher will also highlight how the research questions were answered by making use of the themes. Some of the themes have overlapping research findings and thus the researcher will conclude after each main theme where there are subthemes, what the literature and research has found. The researcher also answered the research questions by using the theoretical approach of social constructionism where applicable to interpret the results. Lastly after a discussion of the results, the researcher will present a short summary of findings with recommendations for future research.

5.2   PERCEPTIONS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Perceptions have been defined as "the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something

though the senses…a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something"

(Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.1063). All of the participants in the study had a

unique way they perceived the policy. Some shared the same perceptions or similar

perceptions whereas others saw AA in a different light. The theme and subthemes helped

the researcher to answer the research question: **How do employees perceive AA in**

South African Organization? The answer that emerged from the themes was that

employees perceived AA to be something that was righting a wrong and in a way

restoring the balance to society. Some saw it as part of the movement towards freedom

and equality which is what independence represented for many, others could not help but

see it in a negative light as their experiences had led them to regard it in a negative light.

These subthemes will be discussed in more detail below and substantiation will be drawn

from the literature on AA and what studies have found with regards to peoples' overall

perceptions of AA.

5.2.1   Righting a Wrong

The participants perceived AA was one of the ways the government was righting the

wrongs of the past. As Participant Four put it ""*The word itself means setting something*

right that was wrong. That is what comes to mind for me" and similarly Participant Five

also felt that AA was righting the wrongs of apartheid. As she stated, *"Well to me it is*

sorting out the things that in the past were wrong. In other words where White people

had all the advantages and the other races not, now they are trying to redress all of that

and make it right". In their opinion it was righting the wrongs of the past that were

caused by apartheid. Social constructionist posits that perceptions of truth and reality are

products of social contexts especially those of culture and history (Newman,2010). Given

this, form a social constructionist perspective, people believed apartheid was wrong and

this was accepted as a universal truth. As stated by Mhlongo (2001) AA was South

Africa's response to the growing concerns over the social inequality amongst the

workforce. During apartheid, Black South Africans were subjected to carrying 'dom

passes' as well as they were only allowed to perform unskilled labour and as such, as a

race were oppressed during apartheid (Mdeni, 2011). Social constructionism is currently

understood as an alternative to positivism and as such in the context of AA, it helped to

understand that although something is introduced or created for positive reasons, it does

not mean that it will be perceived in a positive light (Tiling, 2008).

5.2.2   Creating a Balance by Equal Representation

A few of the participants perceived AA as creating a balance, however the way the

balance is being brought about was viewed in a somewhat negative light. As Participant

One put it; "*...it is basically replacing all other race groups with Africans and probably*

bringing it to a balance..." On the one hand Participant One is stating that in his eyes,

AA is a replacement measure and on the other hand he contends that it is a tool used by

government to bring about a balance (Chen & Kleiner, 1996).The balance according to

some was bringing equality and freedom into the work place. As Participant Six stated

"Everyone has to be represented" so in the eyes of this participant, AA was bringing

about equality. Another participant had an interesting and different take on how she

perceived AA. Participant Seven said *"I think everybody is free. It makes everybody free. They are all free irrespective of their race whether they are Coloured or what they are free"*. As the literature states, the legislation was introduced to level the field in terms of employment amongst the various ethnic groups. The reason for introducing legislation was despite the significant progress since South Africa become a democratic society, there still existed inequalities in terms of race and incomes and social services (Government Gazzette, 2007).

5.2.3   Negative Thoughts

The majority of the participants did not have positive perceptions of AA, however only two explicitly expressed this. One participant saw it as only employing Africans and replacing all other race groups and another only said that the first thing that came to his mind was not positive, *"I would straight away say that you are talking about employing Africans, replacing all other race groups in lay men's terms…"* is what Participant One had to say about his perceptions towards AA. Despite the advancement that AA has made in terms of increasing the number of Africans in organizations, some people still hold negative feelings towards AA and view it as reverse discrimination (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). Participant Three put it this way when asked about perceptions of AA; *"I will put it this way; it is not a positive thought when it comes into your head"*. However not one of the participants started off with a negative view of the policy. As stated by some of the participants, they did not start off having negative feelings towards AA. *Participant One stated: "At first I must admit that I was very satisfied with the application of AA, but over the years, I have seen it and it is just not working"*. In the beginning workers envisioned

a more prosperous future (Coetzee & Vermeulen, 2003) but that not everyone viewed the policy to be positive (Leonard, 2005). A study conducted Raymond Taylor (1991) found that the although people had negative perceptions of AA, the majority of employees reported positive attitudes towards AA (Hays, 1993).

5.2.4   Concluding Remarks Theme One: Perceptions of AA

All these subthemes fall under the main theme of perceptions of AA, which is what the second research question – **How do employees perceive AA in a South African Organization?** - sought to answer. The literature on perceptions of AA provided together with the theoretical framework provided some much needed insight into understanding the differences in experiences. Thus what will follow is a brief iteration of what more the literature had to say on perceptions of AA as well as what research studies conducted on this have found.

AA was a tool that government wanted to use to create balance among the different races in South Africa by increasing the number of underrepresented groups in the workforce. For many of the participants they saw AA as righting a wrong by creating a balance and placing everyone on equal standing in the eyes of the law, however for some this is not so "equal". Some people still hold negative feelings towards AA and view it as "reverse racism" while others see it as a way to diversify the conglomerates in South Africa which have predominantly been White owned (Chen & Kleiner, 1996).

The literature states that although AA is a tool that is being used by government to redress racial imbalance, some view it as a tool with which organizations commit racial

profiling (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). People understand the policy as benefiting one part of the nation while overlooking the others, however to many it is seen as a just system that rightfully corrects historical injustices.

Research thus far suggests that despite its good intention, AA is still being met with hostility and is perceived to be unfair (Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Gryubb & Herdman, 2009). This is in line with social constructionism position that people construct their reality according to their history, culture and social influences. Our perceptions are never free from cultural and historical bias (Burr, 1995). Although studies on the perceptions of AA have yielded positive results (see Kravitz and Platania, 1993), disparities still exist on how people personally perceive AA. Their attitudes and feelings are important it is influenced by how they have experienced it. Insight was offered by social constructionism when it was used as an approach to a study conducted by Kravitz and Platania (1993) into possible reasons for the attitudes, perceptions and feelings people may have towards AA. They found that misconceptions still exists about the legal status of AA programs and this influenced peoples' perception of AA. Women also viewed the policy in a more positive light then the men. Given the importance of experience the second theme that the researcher looked at was at personal experiences of the participants in relation to AA.

5.3   PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

When asked about their personal experience with AA, the participants were first hesitant to open up. Burr (1995 states that in the context of social constructionism the way we understand the world is historically and culturally specific and given how we were

brought up we construct our version of the world. Thus it was important that the researcher give credence to how people had experienced AA thus far. The feelings that emerged from the interviews regarding the experiences had by employees in relation to AA, was more negative than positive. Thus the answer that to the third research question; "**How do employees experience AA in South African organization?**" was mostly negative although some positive experiences did emerge. Even though there were feelings of negativity, none of the participants allowed their negative experiences with AA to discourage them or make them bitter. The experiences that the participants had in relation to AA caused them to be resentful and feel victimized although one participant exhibited remorse for what the other race groups had to go through during apartheid and lastly there were some who felt that they had positive experience with AA.

5.3.1 Resentment and Victimization

Resentment is defined as "bitterness [or] indignation" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.1223). Victimization is defined as "a person who has come to feel helpless and passive in the face of misfortune" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.1610). Resentment and feelings of victimization was evident throughout most of the interviews as many saw AA as being the cause of stagnation in their careers. Participant Three shared how AA stagnated his career, *"…I started off at a very young age…I studied, I spent five years as a Sergeant, and there after there has been a lot of changes, my actual career stagnated horribly…there are no equal opportunities when other people are being promoted so you are stuck…"*

A majority of the participants had been in a rank for quite a number of years before they were promoted. The majority of the participants had negative experiences where they were either passed over for a promotion, received different treatment than Africans or were not even considered for a post. Participant One said *"Well, I have had a bad experience; a very bad experience…my first interview for promotion was in 2007 and in the interview I was recommended as the number one candidate…unfortunately when it went to the National Office my name was taken out… [Reason] AA"* and Participant Eight said that in her case "…I have been shortlisted, I have qualifications higher than most people, however because I am Indian it [AA] does not apply to me". As stated by Birch (1003) in the literature, "AA is seen as costly to members of the majority who may be passed over in spite of having better qualifications than some members of the minority who are appointed or accepted" (p.126 – 127). Similarly Participant Nine had a similar experience where she was passed over for promotion and only received it because she contested it, *"I waited for 14 years before I was promoted....I applied for various posts and one of my direct experiences was where I qualified or was the number one candidate in an interview and they gave it to a black male and they said it was equity and that's the reason why I didn't get the post."* However, even the negative experiences that employees had with regards to AA did not get some down as Participant Two was a testament of. *"…I am not the type of person who would let that get me down because I have a passion for my job…I personally feel I could have been further than the rank I am now, but I say thank God that I have a job anyway".* Social constructionism offers reasoning for the differences in experiences by postulating that since what we know is constructed by our social experiences and we all experience events differently, it means

that even if people are of similar race, they will experience something similar differently (Burr, 1995). Given what Africans, Indians and Coloureds went through during apartheid; it was interesting that only one Participant expressed remorse over how the Whites treated the other race groups.

5.3.2 Remorse

One of the participants expressed remorse for how Africans were treated during apartheid and felt that AA was a start for correcting this. Africans dignity were violated and their basic human rights (Vallentyne, n.d). *Participant Five, "In some ways I think it's a good thing I feel that people were treated unfairly in the past but I feel that there are a lot of people that are in higher posts that cannot do the work"*. The literature states that Africans were subjected to the Population Registration Act which limited their movements in their own country. Whites made them carry 'dom passes' which allowed them access to certain areas at certain times. This inhumane treatment of the Black population was what sparked remorse and ultimately led to the creation of legislation like the EEA and BEE to redress historical imbalances (Leonard, 2005). However although the above highlighted the negative aspects of experiences, some of the participants have had positive experiences and this will be iterated below.

5.3.3 Positive Experience

Not all the participants had a negative experience with AA. *Participant Five, "I don't thinks it's because I am White…if you apply for a post which I have done according to the equity the people that they want are Black females and no matter how well you do on*

the interview you won't get the job if they don't want you". It was interesting that regardless of the fact that AA did not benefit Whites, they still had a positive outlook and did not blame AA for them not being chosen when the odds were stacked against them.

*Participant Six, "I can say that I am also one of the AA because I was promoted last year..."*AA was developed to give a "voice" to the previously voiceless races in South Africa whose identity as rightful South African citizens were never acknowledged (Moolman, 2010). According to social constructionism language plays an important role in how reality was constructed as it opens up reality to social beings (Burr, 1995). Due to the history of South Africa, the reality for many Africans were constructed by the Whites as they were linguistically gifted and held all the power (Jackson, 2008). The feelings that AA elicit nowadays are that of resentment, remorse and victimization but it also has its positive connotations. The participants all had experienced AA in one way or another. For some the experience was positive Participant Six*: "I can also say that I am also one of AA because I was promoted last year"* to feelings of victimization Participant Two*: " …when I had joined in 1988, and in those days you could not fall pregnant without being married and I did two years later, I took leave for 5 years not knowing whether I could get reinstated…I battled for 5 years to get back, but there were many, there was an Indian female and I think four or five Black females at the same time [that were pregnant] and nothing happened to them…so I felt a victim at the time".*

5.3.4 Concluding Remarks Theme Two: Personal Experiences of AA

AA was originally designed to compensate for historical discrimination and to counteract on going discrimination (Rubio, 2001). It is not perfect but has done some good in the

eyes of some of the participants that feel it has given them a chance at a better future as can be inferred from the responses from Participant Six and Seven. A study conducted by Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie and Lev-Arey (2006) tested a hypothesis of whether AA attitudes are positively affected by the extent of personal employment discrimination experienced by the perceiver. They found that there was a positive relationship between AA programs attitudes and personal self-interest as well as collective self-interest (Harrison et al., 2006).

Research thus far has shown support for the positive views people held with regards to AA. In studies conducted by the South African Social Attitudes Survey it was found that strong support for AA existed in the labour market (Roberts et al., 2010). Roberts (2010) found in another study that he done that the support for AA was higher amongst the beneficiaries of AA than those who did not belong to this group. The out group held more negative views and were not in support of AA due to their personal experiences.

These experiences of resentment, victimization and remorse are what led us to the next theme. The next theme deals with how they feel or what they think of the implementation of AA at their organization.

5.4   THOUGHTS ON IMPLEMENTATION IN ORGANIZATION

The thoughts of the participants with regards to AA implementation at their organization ranged from satisfaction to dissatisfaction. Some thought it was being implemented unfairly and was a tool used for discrimination and nepotism. Nepotism is defined as "the favouring of relatives or friends, especially by giving them jobs" (Oxford English

Dictionary, 2006, p.960). All the participants had varying views on how they rated the implementation of AA within their own organization. These thoughts were a direct result of how they viewed and perceived AA which is in line with the research questions as outlined earlier. The subthemes that emerged from this main theme will be discussed below and then at the end linked to what research found on what are some of the general thoughts people hold with regards to AA implantation in general.

5.4.1   Level of Satisfaction (Satisfaction to dissatisfaction)

A minority of the participants claimed satisfaction with how AA was being implemented in their organization. Participant Five *"…I attend a lot of meetings and statistics are being made available. During these you can see percentage wise we are….doing very well. If you look at the people as well, previously where there were only Whites in high authority that has changed now, there are more women and there are more other races now.* They maintained that they were satisfied because they could see the results of AA and that change was happening. They viewed the fact that the number of women in power positions was an indication of this change. Participant Six *"…for the first time we have a boss who is a female. It is for the first time...yes it is [working] but it is not 100 percent…"*

The majority of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with how AA was being implemented in their organization. *Participant One: "No, not at all…at first I must admit that I was very satisfied with the application of AA, but over the years I have seen it and it is just not working…there are certain positions that females cannot just hold in this organization…"*and *Participant Two, "I am dissatisfied absolutely…and it is not being*

racists…”. The feelings associated with this dissatisfaction ranged from you cannot view men and women in the same light to you have to look at what is good for the whole of society and not only at the individual. *Participant Three, “Not very satisfied…to put a person in charge of any department where there are other better qualified people with more experience as such does have a detrimental effect on the public that we are actually serving…you cannot look at the individual, here you must look at the good of the whole country”*

5.4.2 Discrimination, Nepotism and Unfair Implementation

An overlapping theme in the answers of many of the participants, when asked about implementation in their organization, was that they labelled it as a "buddy system" and that is was "discriminating". The fairness of how the policy is being implemented was also one of the points that many of the participants expressed concern over. *Participant Two, "…there is no fairness in this organization truly speaking".*

They expressed that there was little fairness in how AA was being implemented in the organization. Thus a valuable sub theme that emerged was nepotism and discrimination in how people viewed the implementation of AA. They saw it as promoting or excusing nepotism and discrimination in the work place towards certain race groups and treating others unfairly. Participant Three *"…the right people are not always placed in the right position"* and as Participant Four put it *"Because I know you, you my connection we worked together at some stage so I will consider you above the person I don't know even if we have noticed that the person is more qualified"* and he went on to state that in the

organization it has become *"…a buddy type of thing where people promote people they know…its happening even in the government where they are helping their buddies"*.

5.4.3   Concluding Remarks Theme Three: Thoughts on Implementation of AA

Since its implementation AA has been plagued with misconceptions, the strongest one being that it involves strict quotas and hiring of unqualified individuals. People also viewed it as being unfair given that it seen to benefit only one race which were Africans (Gryubb & Herdman, 2009). This was evident in what Participant Eight had to say about implementation of AA at the organization. "I have had a few incidences where I have worked in other departments…where black females were promoted…however the knowledge that they have is limited and you find that the junior members could very well have that post and do a better job…" Society and work places have become more diverse since the implementation of AA and with this change in the workplace, has come a lot of thoughts and preconceptions that are not necessarily reflective of AA (Little et al., 1998).

A general consensus exists in the literature that AA was to be implemented to level the playing field so that Africans and other minorities can enjoy the same opportunities that had previously only been available to Whites (Chen & Kleiner, 1996). In this way the feelings that strongly came across was that AA is being implemented in such a way in the organization that it is promoting nepotism and discrimination for those people who do not know "the right people". The participants were divided on their levels of satisfaction with implementation as each one felt that there were one or two things that needed changing at the organization. Social constructionism argues that our daily conversations constructs our reality, and this was evident in how the majority all felt about AA

implementation, because the organization that they work in, people talk and as Participant Four stated in his interview his personal experience has been fairly ok with AA but based on what he has heard he formed an opinion that it was not working. "What I am speaking about is from what I have seen and heard, my own deductions, I have not personally experienced it".

Previous research has shown that people tend to be resistant towards the implementation of AA policies (Kleugel & Smith, 1986; Lipset & Schneider, 1978) and thus no matter how positive something is meant to be perceptions do play a vital role in how it is viewed. The participants generally felt that it implementation was unfair at their organization in terms of procedural and distributive justice. Fairness is the ability to make judgements that are specific to a particular case according to Velasquez et al. (n.d), and in the opinion of the majority, implementation was not fair. The following theme to be discussed is change in terms of what people felt needed to change with regards to AA at their organization

5.5   CHANGE IN THE ORGANIZATION

Change is defined as "make or become different" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.236). The participants had interesting views on what they felt should change at their organization in terms of AA. They felt that in order for AA to be implemented fairly it should see to equally represent all races that were disadvantaged during apartheid as well as candidates that are chosen based on AA should be suitable. Participant Five said the following, *"Think more suitable people should be placed in the jobs"* and Participant One said that change should occur at the interview level to ensure suitability, *"…when*

you do the interviews, they must be suitable candidates as well, you are not going to have five Africans and one Indian candidate for the interview". The majority of the participants felt that AA should be focused on creating more equal representation in the workplace of all races. Participant Five *"...everyone should get the same opportunities; I am not only talking about Whites but Indians and Coloureds because they do not get the same opportunities as the Black people might get..."* and experience was another point that was raised when looking towards instigating change at the organization. Participant Three said that *"they should look more at experience, irrespective of which cultural background you are from...they must look at....and not only a matter of representation of certain ethnic race groups".*

One participant stressed that suitability starts at the screening process. *Participant Two"...need to start screening the people properly...the best candidate should be getting the position..."* to avoid the problem of not having a pool of suitable employees when it comes to promotion time. The participants were all very passionate about the fact that if change was to happen, it should start at the bottom of the organization. Social constructionism proposes that in order for change to occur, more importance should be given to dialogue and how things are communicated as the language we use determine the reality we experience (Jackson, 2008; Newman, 2010).

Research has found that when employees perceive something to be fair, they do not object who gets the job in an organizational setting (Cropanza et al., 2005) thus a subtheme that emerged was how the employees felt the organization needed to change in terms of objectivity, fairness and merit.

5.5.1   Objectivity, Fairness and Merit

Objectivity is defined as "*not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts*" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.985). A very important subtheme that emerged was that of objectivity, fairness and merit. Participants felt that these three things should be present when management makes their decisions on promotion. Dietz-Uhler and Murrel (1998) postulate that the perceived fairness of a procedure has a direct influence on how an individual evaluates that procedure. So in the context of AA, for something to be seen as positive, employees have to perceive it to be fair. Participant Two posited that panels should be objective; "*...the panels...have to be objective and fair; the best candidate should be getting the position...*" When implementing AA, it is not only race that should be looked at but also the person's experience and track record and educational level. As Participant Six stated *"They should look at your personal record more and in depth as to what you have done. It should go with your track record, where do you come from, what you have done before, would you be suitable for that..."* Regardless of AA, many of the participants did not let it deter them from pursuing an education. The participants also felt that education was an important measuring tool for who gets promoted. Participant Three studied and felt that education should be looked at when considering someone for promotion.

5.5.2   Concluding Remarks Theme Four: Change

Almost all participants felt that something had to change at the organization in terms of AA. Whether it had to do with how the policy was being communicated to how it was implemented. Language is one of the ways in which sociologists proposes change occurs

in society. Discourse is the tool that we use to put change into motion and thus what each participant had to say on change, could be used as a means for change to start happening at the organization. Most of them agreed that the organization should look more at merit and suitability when looking to hire or promote someone. Participant Four said that *"Promote the person who is most qualified, who has experience in that field, who has studied…"* The literature highlights that although members of society would like to think of themselves as fair-minded people and want an equitable and inclusive society where racial and gender discrimination does not exists, AA is viewed as derailing this dream by not following the merit principle (Connerly, 1995).

Discrimination still exists however in the hiring and evaluation and promotion of some of the minorities at management level according to Rudman and Glick (1999) and this was also some of the feelings of the participants as although Africans were now more in management, minorities such as Coloureds and Indians were under-represented. Participant Five stated that *"…previously where there were only Whites in high authority that has changed now, there are more women and there are more other races*." AA changes the way procedures are followed and hiring is done at organizations and some feel that this is not always a good thing. Hiring and promotion should be fair and objective and based on merit. Everyone should also be aware of what the requirements are to advance and it should not be changed to suit one race or gender over the other. Participant Three had the following to say: *"…I do not want to sound negative, but a lot of focus is on women empowerment…basically where the requirements of a male is to serve a certain period in a rank [before being promoted] a female is required to serve half of that, that to me is unfair"*.

In a study done by Crosby (2000), it was found that a male manager was passed over for promotion and a female that had half of his seniority was promoted because she had an MBA. The male employee was very upset because he had followed all the rules and knew that in terms of the company policy, he was due for promotion. He saw AA as changing the rules and if he had known that education was important all along, he would have studied. What upset him was the shift in procedure (Crosby & Franco, 2003). Thus one can see from the interviews and literature and research, that it is not so much AA that people have a problem with, but how it changes things which affect their chances of advancement at the organization. Advancement is a very important theme that emerged from the interviews and as such will be discussed next.

5.6   ADVANCEMENT

Advancement is defined as "the process of promoting a cause or plan" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, p.18). This theme related to the research questions regarding both the perception and experiences that employees have had in relation to AA as this directly affected how they responded to the question about advancement. When asked about how each participant felt about their opportunities to advance in the organization, many saw it as bleak and hopeless. Participant One stated that in terms of Indians, the future looked bleak. *Participant One "It looks very bleak for the Indians…in fact there are positions advertised now, I have not even applied for one because I do not think that we even stand a chance…"* The feelings that were missing were those that the literature showcases as "low self-esteem' among beneficiaries of AA. *Participant Four "…I am not holding out*

any hope for the future, if it comes and I apply then I will take it as it comes. Amidst the

negativity some participants exhibited positivity; they were optimistic but were realistic.

Very few of the participants were optimistic about their opportunities to advance within

their organization as they were realistic about what the chances were that they would be

promoted above Africans. Participant Two realised that although she was a woman, being

Coloured was not always an advantage. *"As a woman nowadays yes it does have an*

advantage…" and another female participant had the following to say although she was

white, *Participant Five "I have just applied for a post…I am waiting for them…but I*

know the procedure…I know that I can apply my chances are even if I am White there is

only one post and there are like 50 applicants only one person can get the job…".

There were only two participants that were extremely confident and positive anout rtheir

chances for advancement. Participant Seven *"Even though I am African at the same time*

you must have qualifications.… [Positive about advancement] yes" and Participant Six

said *"I can see myself in higher positions so I have to study, I have to improve…but I can*

see that I am going up, I can see that I can go far"

5.6.1   Concluding Remarks Theme Five: Advancement

AA is said to stigmatize minorities, particularly Africans because it implies that they

cannot compete equally with other groups – mainly Whites (Adam, 2000). The

beneficiaries of AA may come to question their self-worth and wonder if they made it on

their own or were they promoted because of race or gender. In this study it was clear that

none of the participants wanted to be promoted simply because they were the right race or

gender. Participant Two *"As a woman nowadays yes it does have an advantage…I do not want to be chosen because I am filling in that gap, I want to be chosen because I can do the job…"* The literature highlights the plight of the White male within the ambit of AA, they see it as offering them little to no advancement in their professional careers simply because they are now the minority (Chen & Kleiner, 1996).

Littlejohn (1992) posits that people communicate to interpret events and to share those with others and thus reality is constructed socially as a product of communication. Within the context of AA and the theme of advancement, what has been said thus far about AA within this organization has led to many of the participants having little hope for their own future and that of their children based on race.

An interesting point that did emerge from those who felt more positive about their chances of advancement was that they were acutely aware that without the right qualifications, they could not advance in their careers even if the policy favoured them based on race or gender. Thus the next theme to follow is that of meritocracy and fairness.

5.7   MERITOCRACY AND FAIRNESS

Meritocracy is defined as "the conceptualization of merit in terms of tested competence and ability, and most likely as measured by intelligence or standardized achievement tests" (Levinson and Sadovnik, 2002, p.436). The theme of meritocracy relates to the research question; **How do employees perceive AA in a South African organization?** as meritocracy has been shown in the literature to have an effect on how people view

procedure. When applying AA, the participants were adamant that it should not overlook or discard the merit system. Choosing who to promote should be a fair and just process in the eyes of the participants. Meritocracy is a principle that prescribes that only the most deserving individuals are rewarded. If the procedure is fair and just and is based on merit, the employees will not oppose who gets promoted regardless if it is another race above their own. Participant One said that, *"…if there is somebody more qualified than me, then be it…"* and similarly Participant Two also stated that *"…the panel or panels, however they decide to choose, they really have to objective and fair…"* and they should also look at a person's record as stated by Participant Three *"They should look at your personal record…"*. Thus the one can see that the majority of the participants are of the opinion that as long as something is fair it will be just and right. The literature states that some forms of AA consider target group status in the selection criteria and this may allow for hiring of less qualified people (Wagstaff et al., 1993).

The merit system is very important in how employees view certain policies or procedures to be fair or unfair. As Participant Two puts it *"…if the correct procedures are followed.…if the correct people are selected on merits…"* In this study, many of the participants stressed that when implementing and applying AA, one should not overlook the merit system. *Participant Seven "…you must have qualifications, they first look at the qualifications and if you are suitable for the job…"*. Studies have found that people evaluate AA programs more negatively when they seem to place less emphasis on merit and more on target group status in the decision making process (Kravitz, 1995; Nacoste, 1985).

When people view something as "just" and based on merit they will have less resistance towards it (Crosby, 2000). Meritocracy is a form of justice in organizations. In this study it was clear that merit played an important role in how the participants viewed AA. Participants were adamant that as long as the organization hired or promoted people based on merit, and the procedure was fair, they had no problem with who got the job. Individuals who endorse the merit principle feel that qualification and ability are the only things that should impact hiring decision (Aberson, 2007).

Research has suggested that justice is an important factor in the attitudes towards programs like AA (Nordstrom et al, 1998). Studies have revealed that when a program violates the merit principle or places less emphasis on it, people evaluate it more negatively (Kravitz, 1995; Nacoste, 1985). Support for the merit system has been found in many studies. Bobocel et al (1998) found in their study strong belief for the merit principle as people believed that people who do their job well ought to rise to the top. So irrespective of what race you are, there is a strong belief that hard work pays off in the end. Another aspect that is of utmost importance to this study was how people constructed and saw race. Race has historical significance in how society was divided into different classes and as such still serves as a line of division for some.

5.8   RACE

An interesting theme that emerged from the interviews was how the participants constructed race. How they viewed race in terms of the policy. As social constructionism explains, individuals are encouraged to not accept things at face value, and to be critical in their understanding of how things are socially constructed (Burr, 1995). The emphasis

on who is actually Black in terms of the policy is a point for further research. As stated by the literature, race is a construct that is of importance in the AA context.

What emerged from this theme was the fact that a lot of confusion existed about who was protected under AA. Participant One *"...I think the biggest concern at the moment which no one wants to answer is or Indians are we regarded as Africans in AA...I think that needs to be clarified"* and he was not the only one as others also admitted that confusion existed about who was protected under AA. Participant Two felt that Coloureds were not black enough in the eyes of the law. *"Where they say Black it means Coloured, Indian and Black...Coloureds are not Black enough sometimes..."*. Participant Five stated that *"They should address, if they say Africans, the Indians and Coloureds were also previously disadvantaged, so in that way I think that should be addressed as well."*

Our daily lives are affected by race whether we are aware of it or not. We see the world through a racial lens that colours our world Black, White, Coloured, minority, Indian or "other". How we see others and how we are seen by others, according to Frankenberg (1993), affects our lives profoundly. Our entire social structure is affected at least one social construction – race. Even with this awareness of race and how it affects us, little has been done to dismantle this concept. Understanding what is meant by race as a social construct is critical to understanding the capacity race has to intersect and affect other aspects and domains of life and society. According to Smedley and Smedley (2005) race has become crucial to the social structure of societies thus given this importance of race, it is important that for the purpose of understanding the perceptions and experiences on employees, that one looks at race with relation to AA.

Literature indicates that one of the ways in which Whites held on to power during apartheid was to formulate a racial classification system which required every person in South Africa to be classified and registered according to their race. During this time Indians were considered to be non-South African, and today some still feel that Indians are not really South African as Participant Eight stated she felt that being Indian meant nothing in the eyes of AA "…because I am Indian it does not apply to me". Participant Two stated, she felt that being a Coloured woman was not racially advantageous *"Coloureds are not Black enough sometimes, so as a Coloured female that is why I am speaking, you are not Black enough so to me it is not fair at all.*

The Population Registration Act of 1950 imposed restrictions on the movement of Africans within South Africa. Given this history, some Africans today feel that they were treated worse than other races during apartheid (Mhlongo, 2001).

What was clear from the start was that Indians and Coloureds felt that they were not "Black" enough and that AA was catering only to Africans. They felt that during apartheid they were grouped with Africans and now, a time when they are supposed to also be given the same opportunities that were kept from them, they are once again not the right colour.

According to the participants, clarity was needed in who falls under the ambit of AA and who is considered to be Black. The policy protects designated groups and from the literature designated groups are defined as "Africans, women and disabled and under Africans falls Indians and Coloureds. From personal experiences, the participants stated that Coloureds and Indians were not Black enough in the eyes of those who enforced AA.

There is a growing fear that was evident in the interviews that Indians and Coloureds that they are not Black enough and that AA is solely aimed at "real" Africans. Some companies feel like they have achieved something if they promote a Black male or female (Adams, 2000). Indians and Coloureds, although they are provided for as falling under the term "Black" they are seen as second choices in the absence of suitable 'real' Black candidates (Adams, 2000).

In a research study done by Adams (2000) he asked participants whether they think that business is directing AA programs mainly at Africans at the exclusion of Coloureds and Indian employees. The respondents were divided in their answer as there existed some confusion. One respondent however stated that businesses differ in their approach to AA and some think that Africans were deprived more than Coloureds or Indians during apartheid. Not only does research show case that Africans outnumber other race groups thus it is normal for more Africans to benefit than other race groups (Adams, 2000), but it also highlights that people still view Indians and Coloureds as not having been previously disadvantaged. It is not only disparity that exists between the different races but also between men and women. Gender roles have been changed with the implementation of AA and as such women are now doing jobs that were previously seen as a 'mans' job.

5.9   GENDER ROLES

Social constructionism encourages us to take a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge (Burr, 1995). Thus suitability of women in certain positions was an interesting topic for discussion as history has dictated that women were supposed to be "pregnant, bare feet and in the kitchen" and this was sort of taken for granted throughout the years.

Although during apartheid women were seen as below men, there was consensus among all participants that women were capable but some positions in the organization was not suitable for **all** women. Below is what some of the participants had to say about working with females or placing females in certain positions. Participant One said *"...I am not saying that females are not capable, but in this organization you have got to understand, the chances of a male working with a female at a crime scene…the reaction is not the same…females are to be given a chance…but that must also be suitable positions…"* and even though Participant Two was a woman, she had the following to say; *"I am one of those women who feel that they are really equal to men, but I will be very honest in the Township, it is very difficult to expect a woman to be a backup, this is one time when we are the weaker sex out there…"*. During apartheid women were disadvantaged and many are quick to admit to that, but some reservations still existed on the part of men who felt that women were not as 'good' as men (Crosby & Franco, 2003).

Some had personal experiences working with females and shared the general perceptions that males had regarding working with females. Participant Four, *"They don't feel that they will be safe because they are working with criminals out there because they do not know if this person will be there for them, watch their backs. I have had my own personal experience but I have also worked with some good females who I will choose above some males.*

The participants all felt that women should be given an equal chance to advance in the workplace however, that there were certain jobs that were just not suited for females.

They also felt that gender should not play a role in determining who gets promoted and it should be based on what you have done and your personal track record.

Research has indicated that AA raises social justice concerns and justice concerns in general among people. In a study conducted in a large organization, male managers felt that AA policy gave women underserved advantages at the expense of men (Tougas & Beaton, 1993).

5.10   CONCLUSION

All the participants thought of the policy of AA as it was on paper was well structured and if implemented in that way would make a more positive effect. The participants all perceived it to be a measure that was created to right the wrongs of the past and redress past imbalances. They were all in favour of some things changing when it came to how the measure was implemented in their organization and agreed that merit and qualifications should be looked at first before looking at race or gender. The personal experiences of AA ranged from positive to negative, where some felt that they were unfairly treated based solely on the colour of their skin. Feelings related to gender roles were present and most of the participants felt that anything males can do females can do as well. All participants exhibited strong feelings of joy and satisfaction with their current jobs and despite AA enjoyed working for the organization. Participants were also confused about the terminology "Black" in the Act as to Coloureds and Indians, they were not Black enough and as such advancement at the organization for them was limited.

In a social constructionist theoretical context, it was found that people did construct their reality historically and culturally as many iterated how apartheid treated the different race groups. It was also found that people held preconceived notions of men and women in a society that has worked hard to put everyone on equal footing. Thus given what the study found, the next chapter will present a summary of the findings as well as provide a conclusion to the study with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCE LIST

6.1   CONCLUSION

AA remains among the most controversial personnel procedures facing organizations in South Africa. Over the years AA has been introduced in an effort to eliminate discrimination in the work force and increase the representation of disadvantaged groups in occupations where they have been historically underrepresented (Beaton & Tougas, 2001). Since its implementation AA has received mixed reviews from the public. Some people approve of AA while others show strong opposition to it (Tomasson et al., 1996; Tougas & Beaton, 1993).

The history of South Africa as stated by the literature, was one that was clouded by disparities in how resources were allocated during apartheid. Imbalances existed in the social order of the people of South Africa, as Whites were seen to be the "cream of the crop" and as such got all the benefits during apartheid.

Based on the literature, it would seem that there are more negative views than positive views on AA but this does not distract from the benefit of having such a policy in place to help create and equal and just society. The numbers indicate that there is more than adequate support for the policy, yet some people are still unhappy with its implementation.

Support for AA is evident in numerous studies. Positive attitudes (Hayes, 1993; Roberts et al., 2010) towards AA have been found in numerous studies as well as negative attitudes (Crosby, 2000). Every person is unique and therefore their experiences and perceptions are unique to them. As human beings everyone constructs their version of reality differently based on their social experiences. It is because of this that no one person experiences and event in the exact same way as the next person. AA has got different meanings to different people based on the fact that not everyone experiences it in the same way. Culture and upbringing, it is argued affects the way people view the policy. Social constructionism helped to uncover the deeper meanings associated with race, racial lines and AA. Language and race also affect how people perceive and experience AA.

The theoretical context that the study used was social constructionist perspective as this provided the researcher with a clearer picture of how people constructed their realities. AA has got different meanings to different people and in the context of social constructionism; this is as a result of how someone was brought up. Culture and upbringing, it is argued affects the way people view the policy. Given the nature of social constructionism, it proves a valuable tool in understanding the intricate nature of AA

This study followed a qualitative research design, as qualitative designs offer more descriptive and rich data about people's lived experiences (King, 1998; Patton, 1990). Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. The aim of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of how

employees perceive AA in their organization. The study was based on a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions cantered on AA. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants which came from all four main race groups. The interviews lasted approximately between 15 and 30 minutes. Once the interviews were completed they were transcribed and then analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis. Thematic content analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data through the search for themes and patterns in content (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The current study found that with regards to the first research question; how are AA and social constructionism conceptualized in the literature that there were still disparities that existed with regards to AA. The findings also suggested that in relation to the second research question; how do employees perceive AA in a South African organization that people had different perceptions and experiences of AA and this led them to feel hopeless and resentment towards a policy aimed at redressing past imbalances. Employees experienced the policy more negatively than positively and the research question of how employees experience AA in a South African organization was answered by the majority of the themes. The majority of the participants expressed their opinion on introducing merit based promotions back into the organization as they felt that this was being neglected. There was also general consensus that AA was being used to promote a "buddy type of system" and that it was discriminating against Coloureds and Indians.

6.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

For future reference an interesting research point would be to improve on the limitations of this study by exploring the differences in perceptions and experiences of men and women and comparing them with the perceptions they hold about AA. A study should also be done on how Government organizations implement and train their HR staff on AA measures and how the screening process works in the organization.

6.3   REFERENCES

Abercombie, N., Hill, S., & Turner, B. (1984). *Dictionary of Sociology.* London: Penguin

Adam, K. (2000*). Affirmative Action and Popular Perceptions: The Case of South Africa. Culture and Society*, 48 – 55.

Adams, J.S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed). *Advances in experimental social psychology,*(Vol. 2, 267 – 299). New York: Academic Press.

Anderson, R. (2004). Intuitive inquiry: An epistemology of the heart for scientific inquiry. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 32*(4), 307-341.

Bates, C., Droste, C., Cuba, L., & Swingle, J. (2008). *One-on-One Interviews: A Qualitative Assessment Approach.* England: Wabash College.

Beaton, A. M., & Tougas, F. (2001). Reactions to Affirmative Action: Group Membership and Social Justice. *Social Justice Research* , 61-78.

Berg, B.L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bies, R. (1987). The Predicament of Injustice: The management of moral outrage. In L. Cummings & B. Staw (Eds.). *Research in Organizational Behaviour* (pp.289 – 319). Greenwich: JAI Press.

Blaxter, L., Hughs, C., & Tight, M. (1998). *How to Research.* Buckingham: Open

University Press.

Bobo, L. (1998). Race, interests, and beliefs about Affirmative Action. *American Behavioural Scientist, 41*, 985 – 1003.

Bobo, L., & Kluegel, J. R. (1993). Opposition to race-targeting: Self-interest, stratification ideology, or racial attitudes? *American Sociological Review, 58,* 443–464.

Bobocel, R., Son Hing, L., Davey, L., Stanley, D., & Zanna, M. (1998). Justice-based opposition to social policies: is it genuine? *Journal of Personality and Social Science, 75*(3), 653 – 669.

Bobocel, D. R., Davey, L. M., Son Hing, L. S., & Zanna, M. P. (2001). The concern for justice and reactions to affirmative action: Cause or rationalization? In R. Cropanzano (Ed.), *Justice in the workplace: Volume 2. From theory to practice* (pp. 121–143). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bobocel, D. R., Son Hing, L. S., Holmvall, C. M., & Zanna, M. P. (2002). Policies to redress social injustice: Is the concern for justice a cause both of support and of opposition? In M. Ross & D. Miller (Eds.), *The justice motive in everyday life* (pp. 204–225). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Booysen, L. (2007). Societal Power Shifts And Changing Social Identities in South Africa: Workplace Implications. *Sajems NS* .

Bornman, E. (1999) "Predictors of ethnic identification in a transitionary South Africa," *South African Journal of* Psychology, 29(2), 62-72.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development*. California:Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative research in Psychology, 3*, 77 – 101.

Brockner, J. (2002). Making sense of procedural fairness: How high procedural fairness can reduce or heighten the influence of outcome favourability. *Academy of Management Review, 27*, 58 – 76.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of Meaning.* Harvard University Press.

Burr, V. (2002). *The Person in Social Psychology*. USA: Psychology Press.

Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism.* London: Routledge.

Chen, W., & Kleiner, B.H. (1996). Who's the real victim? *Equal Opportunities International*, 15(5), 28 – 35.

Cilliers, F. & May, M. (2002) "South African diversity dynamics: Reporting on the 2000 Robben Island Diversity Experience, a group relations event," *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, 26(3): 42-68.

Clayton, S.D., & Tangri, S.S. (1989). The justice of affirmative action. In F.A. Blanchard and F.J. Crosby (Eds.), *Affirmative Action in perspective* (p.177 – 192). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Coetzee, M. & Vermeulen, L. (2003). When will employees perceive Affirmative Action as fair? *Southern African Business Review 7*(10), 17 – 24.

Coleman, J. (1983). *Moral Theories of Torts: Their Scope and Limits*. Holland: Reidel Publishing Co.

Connerly, W. (2000).*Creating Equal: My Fight against Race Preferences.* San Francisco: Encounter Books.

Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Cropanzano, R., Slaughter, J.E., & Bachiochi, P.D. (2005). Organizational Justice and Black Applicants' Reactions to Affirmative Action. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90(6),* 1168 – 1184.

Cropanzano, R., & Schminke, M. (2001). Using social justice to build effective work groups. In M. Turner (Ed.), *Groups at work: Advances in theory and research* (p. 143 – 171). New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Crosby, F. J. (1989). Preface. In F. A. Blanchard & F. J. Crosby (Eds.), *Affirmative action in perspective* (pp. vii-viii). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Crosby, F. J., & Franco, J. L. (2003). Connections Between the Ivory Tower and the Multi-colored World: Linking Abstract Theories of Social Justice to the Rough and tumble of Affirmative Action. *Personality and Social psychology review, 7(4),* 362 – 373.

Denzin, N.K, & Lincoln, S. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: a user friendly guide for social scientists* . London: Routledge.

Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice? *Journal of Social Issues, 31*, 137 – 149.

Durivage, S. (2008). *Affirmative Action is Racism*. Retrieved December 4, 2010, from http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1270548/reverse_discrimination_affirmative.html

Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998. Retrieved on June 5, 2011, from www.labour.gov.za/.../**legislation**/**acts**/**employment**-**equity**/**Act**%20-%20**Employment**%20**Equity**.pdf

Farhana, G. (1997). *A Critique of Affirmative Action*. Retrieved on September 24, 2011, from

http://ccms.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=683&ltemid=86

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Garcia, L.T., Erskine, N., Hawn, K., & Casmay, S.R. (1981). The effect of AA on attributions about minority group members. *Journal of Personality, 49*, 427 – 437.

Glazer, N. (1975). *Affirmative discrimination: Ethnic inequality and public policy*. New York: Basic Books.

Gerson, K., & Horowitz, R. (2002). Observation and interviewing: Options and choices in qualitative research. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative Research in Action* (pp 199-244). London: Sage

Glazer, N. (1988). The future of preferential affirmative action. In P. A. Katz & D. A. Taylor (Eds.), *Eliminating racism: Profiles in controversy* (pp. 329-340). New York: Plenum.

Goldman, B.M. (2003). The application of referent cognitions theory to legal-claiming by terminated workers: The role of organizational justice and anger. *Journal of Management, 29,* 705 – 728.

Goldman, A. (1979). *Justice and Reverse Discrimination*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gorden, R.L. (1980). *Interviewing: Strategy, techniques and tactics*. Illinois: The Dorsey Press.

Government Gazzette (2007). *Broad-Based Black Empowerment Act, 53 of 2003*.

Graves, L.M., & Powell, G.N. (1994). Effects of sex based preferential selection and discrimination on job attitudes. *Human Relations*, 47, 133 – 157.

Hayes, N. (1997). Theory-led thematic analysis: Social identification in small companies.

In N. Hayes (Ed.). *Doing Qualitative Analysis in Psychology* (pp. 93-114). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

Hays, S.W. (1993). Affirmative Action at Work: Law, Politics, and Ethics – Aff. *Public Administration Review, 53(2),* 175 – 176.

Heilman, M.E., Battle, W.S., Keller, C.E., & Lee, A. (1008). Type of Affirmative Action Policy: A determinant of reactions to sex based preferential selection? *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 190 – 205.

Heller,S. (1995). Defining Affirmative Action: What you think it is affect how you feel about it. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 42* (12)

Holloway, I. & Todres, L. (2003).The status of method: flexibility, consistency and coherence. *Qualitative Research 3*, 345_ 57.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. London: Sage Publications.

Human, L. (1993). *Affirmative Action and the Development of People: A Practical Guide.* Cape Town: Juta.

Huysamen, G.K. (2001). *Methodology for the Social and Behavioual Sciences.*

Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ivanova, N.L. (2005) "Social identity under various socio-cultural conditions," *Russian Education and Society*, 47(11): 71-87.

Jackson, L. (2008). Dialogic Pedagogy for Social Justice: A Critical Examination. *Studies of Philosophy and Education 27*, 137 – 148.

Jacobsen, C. (1985). Resistance to affirmative action: Self-interest or racism? *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 29,* 306-328.

Jeffrey, A. (1998). *South Africa tries Affirmative Action*. Retrieved December 10, 2010, from http://articles.cnn.com/1998-10-8/world/9810_08_safrica.affirmative.action_1_affirmative-action-blackowned-anthea-jeffery?_s=PM:WORLD

King, E. (1998). The use of the self in qualitative research. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.). *Handbook of Qualitative research methods*, (pp 175-188). Leicester: The British Psychological Society.

Kleugel, J. R., & Smith, E. R. (1983, March). Affirmative Action Attitudes: Effects of Self-Interest, Racial Affect, and Stratification Beliefs on Whites' Views. *Social Forces* , 797-824.

Kravitz, D.A. (1995). Attitudes toward affirmative action plans directed at Africans: Effects of plan and individual differences. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 25*, 2192 – 2220.

Kravitz, D.A., & Platania, J. (1993). Attitudes and beliefs about affirmative action: Effects of target and of respondent sex and ethnicity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78* (6), 928 – 938.

Lamont, J., & Favor, C. (1996). *Distributive Justice*. Retrieved on October 16, 2011, from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice-distributive/.

Leck, J.D., Saunders, D.M., & Charbonneau, M. (1996). Affirmative action programs: An organizational justice perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour, 17*, 79 – 89.

Leonard, A. (2005). *Affirmative Action in South Africa: Development approaches and Legislative requirements.* Pretoria

Lipset, S.M., & Schneider, W. (1978). The Bakke case: How would it be decided at the bar of public opinion? *Public Opinion, 1*, 38-44.

Little, B.L., Murray, W.D., & Wimbush, J.C. (1998). Perceptions of workplace Affirmative Action plans: A psychological perspective. *Group and Organization Management, 23*, 27 – 47.

Littlejohn, S.W. (1992). *Theories of human Communication* (4th Ed.). Wadsworth.

Lynch, F.R., & Beer, W.R. (1990). You ain't the right color, pal: White resentment of affirmative action. *Policy* Reviews, 51, 64 – 67.

Mandela, N. (1991). *Statement on Affirmative Action.* Conference Proceedings University of Cape Town. Cape Town.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research*. London:

Sage.

McConahay, J. B. (1982). Modern racism, ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale.

In J. F. Dovidio & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism* (pp. 91–

125). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Mdeni, L. (2011). *Population Registration Act of 1950*. Retrieved on October 15, 2011

from http://ndr.org.za/indigenous-knowledge/stories/243.

McMillan-Capehart, A., Grubb, W.L., & Herdman, A. (2009). Affirmative action

decisions: when ignorance is bliss. *Equal Opportunities International, 28*(5), 415 – 431.

Moolman, J.F. (2010). *The role of threat on Afrikaner attitude towards affirmative action

and its beneficiaries.* University of Pretoria.

Msimang, S. (2007*). Affirmative Action in the New South Africa: The Politics of

Representation, Law and Equity*. Retrieved on October 8, 2011, from

http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=644&ltemid

=200

Nacoste, R.W. (1985). Selection procedure and responses to affirmative action: The case

of favorable treatment. *Law and Human Behavior*, 9, 225 – 242.

Neuman, W.L. (2006). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative or Quantitative

Approaches*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Nxamulo , F.(2010). *Affirmative Action symposium aims to build social cohesion.*
Retrieved December 10, 2010, from http://www.hsrc.ac.za/News-document-1203.phtml

Padayachee, P.G. (2003). *A study of affirmative action and employment equity in Higher Education Instituitions in Kwa-Zulu Natal.* University of Pretoria.

Parker, I. (1998). *Social Constructionism, Discourse and Realism*. London: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Reid, K., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience: An introduction to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. *The Psychologists,* 18(1), 20 – 23.

Roberts, B., Wier-Smit, G., & Reddy, V. (2010). *Affirmative Action*. HSRC Review 8(3), Retrieved October 8, 2011, from http://www.hrsc.ac.za/HSRC_Review_Article-205.phtml

Rudman, L. A., & Glick, P. (1999). Feminized management and backlash toward agentic women: The hidden costs to women of a kinder, gentler image of middle managers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77,* 1004–1010.

Sikhosana, M. (1993) Affirmative Action: Its Possibilities and Limitations. *EPU Working Paper No. 1*. Education Policy Unit, University of Natal, May

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook.* London: Sage Publications.

Singer, M.S. (1993). The effect of information frame and informant gender on judgements of merit versus gender-based employment selection. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment 1*, 143 – 152.

Skarlicki, D.P., & Folger, R. (1997). Retaliation in the workplace: The roles of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82, 434 – 443.

Smedley, A. (1999). Race and the construction of human identity. *American Anthropologist, 100,* 690–702.

Smedley, A. & Smedley, B.D. (2005). Race as Biology is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem is Real. *American Psychologist 60*(1), 16 – 26.

Smith-Winkelman, C., & Crosby, F.J. (1994). Affirmative action: Setting the record straight. *Social Justice Research*, 7, 309 – 328.

Soanes, C. & Stevenson, A. (Eds.)(2006). *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (11th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Son Hing, L.S., Bobocel, D.R., & Zanna, M.P. (2002). Meritocracy and opposition to Affirmative Action: making concessions in the face of discrimination. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 493 – 509.

South Africa's Affirmative Action Not Affirmed by All (2008). Retrieved on October 4, 2011 from http://www.tressugar.com/South-Africas-Affirmative-Action-Affirmed-All-1818634

Stadler, A. (1987). *The Political Economy of Modern South Africa*. Cape Town: Ravan.

Sunstein, C.R. (2006). Two Conceptions of Procedural Fairness. *Social Research, 73*(2), 619 – 646.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Takaki, R. (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Tomasson, R. F., Crosby, F. J., and Herzberger, S. D. (1996). *Affirmative Action: The Pros and Cons of Policy and Practice*, The American University Press, Washington, DC.

Tougas, F., & Beaton, A.M. (1993). Affirmative Action in the workplace: for better or for worse. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 42*, 253 – 264.

Tougas, F., Beaton, A.M., & Veilleux, F. (1991). Why women approve of affirmative action: The study of a predictive model. *International Journal of Psychology*, 26, 761 – 776

Trochim, W.M.K. (2008). *Qualitative Validity.* Retrieved March, 12, 2011 from http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php

Valesquez, M., Andre,C., Shanks, T., & Meyer, M.J. (1990). *Justice and Fairness.*

Retrieved October 4, 2011, from

http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/justice/html.

Vallentyne, P. (n.d). *Distributive Justice*. Retrieved on October 4, 2011, from

http://www.klinechair.missouri.edu/on.../**distributive**%20**justice**%20(h**and**book).

Vedina, R., & Baumane, I. (2009). The construction of national identity among minorities

and its manifestation in organizations. *Baltic Journal of Management* , 94-105.

Vlastos, G. (1984). Justice and Equality. In J. Waldron (Ed.) *Theories of Rights*. New

York: Oxford University Press.

Wagstaff, G. F., Huggins, J. P., & Perfect, T. J. (1993). Equity, equality, and need in the

adult family. *Journal of Social Psychology, 133,* 439– 443.

Wolpe, H. (1988). *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*. London.

Young, M. (1958). *The rise of meritocracy*. England: Thames & Hudson.

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Ruwayda Petrus and I am a Masters Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study on Affirmative Action and Employee Well-Being in a South African Organization. The study will be focusing on how employees perceive and experience Affirmative Action in their work place.

My study is interested in Affirmative Action as it is very prominent in South Africa.

The current research intends to explore employees' understandings of Affirmative Action and whether people have a basic understanding of the policy from a theoretical perspective. With regards to understanding, the current study is also interested in exploring employees' actual experiences of the policy, as experienced in their workplace. Therefore the current study is interested in exploring employees' perceptions of the policy in relation to their subjective well-being. Subjective well-being meaning how satisfied the employee is with their life and various aspects of it.

The researcher holds a B.Psych Degree from the University of Namibia and is currently in her 1st year of Masters Degree in Industrial Psychology. The research will be undertaken for a Masters Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. For reference the research supervisor can be contacted. Her name is Mrs. Shanya Reuben and she can be contacted at 031- 260 1249 as well as reached on email Reuben@ukzn.ac.za.

The research is focused on employees who have had experience with Affirmative action, whether it is positive or negative. Participation is voluntary. If you decide to partake, you will be required to offer up approximately an hour of your time, where you will be interviewed. The questions will center on Affirmative action legislation and your work and subjective well being.

The interview will be tape recorded to enable the researcher to not miss anything. All that will be required of you is to sign a consent form, granting permission for the researcher to record the interview and use the information provided. All sessions are private and

confidential and your identity will be protected when the final report is typed up. You have a right to stop the interview at anytime should you feel uncomfortable and wish to withdraw from the study.

Your participation will yield valuable insight into the perceptions and experiences of Affirmative action in the work place and will help fellow researchers to identify gaps in the studies done on Affirmative action thus far.

The study is voluntary and as such yields no financial gain for the participants.

All written and recorded material will be kept safe and will only be used for purpose of the research. After which they will be destroyed. The data will be disposed of after 5 years, as this is the required time after which research can be incinerated.

As mentioned before the researcher assures complete confidentiality and anonymity to participants of the study. You will not be disadvantaged should you wish to not participate.

If you wish to obtain information on your rights as a participant, please contact Ms Phumelele Ximba, Research Office, UKZN, on 031 360 3587.

DECLARATION
I………………………………………………………………….(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE
………………………………………
………………………

Biographical Questionnaire:

Please complete the following questionnaire by providing the required information. Thank you for answering all the questions.

1. Age   _____

2. Gender   _____

3. Race   _____

4. Home Language   _____

5. Marital status   _____

6. Number of children   _____

7. Ages of children   _____

8. Type of Organization   _____

9. Job title/Level of employment   _____

10. Highest level of education/qualification _____

11. On average, how many hours do you work during the week (incl. evenings)?

_____

12. On average, how many hours do you work over the weekend?

_____

13. For how long have you worked these hours?

APPENDIX C

<u>**Interview Schedule:**</u>

The interview will start off with the researcher providing the participant with a brief introduction to the research topic, the history behind it and the reason for the study. The researcher will once again ensure the participant that the interview is confidential and anonymous. The participant will then be asked to fill in the biographical questionnaire and sign a consent form for the interview to be tape recorded.

1. Can you tell me about your job? You have been working here for years, can you tell me a little about your job? What do you enjoy about it?

    a. How long have you worked for the organization?

    b. What are your daily tasks?

    c. Do you enjoy it?

2. What is it that you like most in your job right now? If you had to pinpoint one thing about your job that you really enjoy, what would it be?

3. What do you understand under the term affirmative action. Imagine you were walking down the street and I were to come up to you and I tap you on the shoulder and say AA, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

4. How satisfied are you with your organization's employee policy regarding affirmative action? (read up on affirmative action and tell them about their organization's policy) I have been reading up on your organization's policy on AA, this is what it basically says on paper, what do you think about it?

    a. Do you think it is being implemented correctly?

    b. Do you think it is working?

    c. Can you describe your feelings associated with affirmative action?

5. How has your experience been with affirmative action? (only ask if not getting enough info from previous question)

6. How satisfied are you with the opportunities to advance in the organization? (Being a female/black/Indian the legislation and policy of your organization gives preference to previously disadvantaged groups, how do you feel the opportunities are for you as a female/Indian/black to advance in this organization?

7. What are the three things that you feel needs to be improved the most at this organization in relation to AA?

8. 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

    a. Do you feel your work is meaningful?

    b. How content are you with your life right now?

    c. Do you feel anything is lacking in your life? Can you tell me a little about your interests outside of work? What are your hobbies?

9. If you could change one thing right now what would it be?

    a. Why?

APPENDIX D

Letter from Organization

SAP 21

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS　　　　**SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE**

Privaatsak/Private Bag　X94

Reference Nr Verwysing	3/34/2
Navrae Enquiries	Col J Schnetler Lt Col GJ Joubert
Telefoon Telephone	012-393 3177 012-393 3118
Faksnommer Fax number	012-393 3178

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COMPONENT

HEAD OFFICE

PRETORIA

2011-12-07

The Provincial Commissioner　　　　(For att: Col van der Linde)
KWAZULU NATAL

RE: RESEARCH REQUEST: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EMPLOYEE WELL BEING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANIZATION; MASTERS DEGREE: UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL : RESEARCHER: RUWAYDA PETRUS

1. The research proposal of Ms Ruwayda Petrus pertaining to the above mentioned topic refers.

2. The research will be focussing on how employees perceive and experience Affirmative Action in their work place.

3. The Police Stations that will be included in the study are Wentworth, Chatsworth and Lamontville. The researcher is requesting permission to interview approximately 20 employees from various demographic backgrounds, working at the mentioned stations.

4. The interviews will take approximately one hour per employee. Participation in the study will be voluntary.

5. In accordance with National Instruction: 1/2006 Research in the Service, this office has perused the proposal and recommends it, subject to the approval of the Provincial Commissioner: Kwazulu Natal.

With kind regards

_____MAJOR GENERAL
HEAD: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT
GE MOORCROFT