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Justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action: The role of locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities among final year university students.

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2006-11-03T12:15:55Z
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a result of apartheid and its plethora of discriminatory laws and practices, there are disparities in employment, occupation and income within the South African labour market. These disparities have created pronounced disadvantages for certain groups, to such an extent that they cannot be redressed simply by repealing discriminatory laws. One of the major tasks of the post apartheid democratic government was to institute measures to counter some of the effects of apartheid, especially in the work place. In relation to this in 1998 various policies and legislative measures, including black economic empowerment and employment equity were implemented.

Employment equity/ affirmative action aims to achieve equality in the work place by promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups[1] specifically women, Africans, Coloureds Asians and people with disabilities, in an effort to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the work place (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield, 2002). However, employment equity and affirmative action have been perceived by past research to be controversial in nature, (Falconer, 2000, Katz, 1999) due to the policies being associated with stigmatisation of beneficiaries, tokenism and reducing job opportunities for non-beneficiaries.

[1] Employment Equity Act (no. 55 of 1998) which was approved by cabinet on 12 October 1998, aims to achieve equality in the work place by implementing affirmative action measures in an effort to redressing disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups. The act defines designated groups as: Women; Africans; Coloureds; Asians and people with disabilities. This terminology will therefore be used throughout this research report.

Given that there is controversy surrounding employment equity and affirmative action, there appears to be a need to examine perceptions of affirmative action, especially among a group of people who are arguably most affected by these policies, specifically those entering the job market for the first time. Therefore, it is deemed apt to conduct this research bearing in mind that affirmative action was implemented six years ago, and research has largely neglected to examine final year university students, who are considered to be most affected by affirmative action, as they are likely to be looking for employment in the near future.

In order to address and understand issues relating to the way in which job applicants experience affirmative action, a model of the possible connections between the primary variables was developed for the purposes of this study. The model comprises the variables attitudes towards affirmative action; perceptions of job opportunities; justice perceptions of affirmative action and locus of control, and is presented at the end of the literature review. The aim of the study therefore, is to explore the relationship between the variables. The model depicts the relationship between the variables in the following manner: locus of control is expected to impact on perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action which together are expected to influence attitudes towards affirmative action. Further justification for the model is presented in the literature review which follows. Therefore, in the following chapters a description of each of these variables is provided, followed by a rationale for the study, methodology, data analysis, discussion and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter a review of the literature regarding the primary variables: attitudes towards affirmative action; perceptions of job opportunities; justice perceptions of affirmative action and locus of control will be presented. The variables will be discussed in the above order starting with attitudes towards affirmative action.

Attitudes towards Affirmative Action

Affirmative action, aims to achieve equality in the work place by promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination (Employment Equity Act No. 19370, 1998; Kravitz & Platania, 1993). The implementation of affirmative action measures endeavour to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups i.e. (Africans, Coloureds, Asians, Women and people with Disabilities) and to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the work place (Grobler; Warnich; Carrell; Elbert; Hatfield; 2002; Mwaba& Simbayi, 1998; Kravitz and Platania, 1993).

It has been argued that details of the affirmative action policy will influence attitudes toward affirmative action, with attitudes becoming increasingly negative as more weight is given to demographic status rather than merit (Nacoste 1987; Kravits and Platania, 1993). Furthermore, beneficiaries might have a more positive attitude towards affirmative action than non-

beneficiaries (Parker, et al, 1997; Kravits and Platania 1993). The reasoning behind this is due to the fact that beneficiaries are perceived to be on the receiving end of policies and would by implication suffer less discrimination. They are perceived to profit more from preferential treatment and have better opportunities in general due to affirmative action and employment equity.

According to Kravitz and Plantania (1993) research conducted on 349 undergraduate students at Florida International University indicates that opposition towards affirmative action policies is due to the perception that these policies give beneficiaries an unfair economic advantage. However, research documents that, although non-beneficiaries support equal opportunity, they generally oppose affirmative action (Kravitz and Plantania 1993).

The research conducted by Kravitz and Plantania (1993), also found that non- beneficiaries respond least favourably to affirmative action, whilst beneficiaries respond most favourably. Specifically non-beneficiaries oppose quota hiring and preferential treatment for unrepresented groups.

It has also been argued that if policies and programmes are deemed unfair or unjust, the affected groups may experience anger, outrage, and resentment (Skarlicki and Folger 1997). Individuals who do not agree with affirmative action may engage in behaviours such as withdrawal from the work place, resentment, and anger, in view of the fact that they perceive their chances of obtaining a job as less than probable. Therefore reactions to affirmative action may differ with respect to whether they are deemed fair or unfair.

Attitudes towards affirmative action vary from being perceived as a conscious process of eliminating discrimination and being a process of furthering the interests of a particular group (Charlton and Van Niekerk, 1994); as opposed to affirmative action being reverse discrimination and tokenism, as well as being demeaning for beneficiaries, who are labelled affirmative action candidates or hirees. On the one hand, a non-beneficiary employee may see affirmative action as the end of their career, whilst on the other hand a beneficiary employee may see it as necessary to redress past wrongs (Jefferey, 1996).

Researchers such as Shubane (1994) and Caldwell (1992) state that affirmative action can be likened to apartheid, as it shows a preference for one group at the expense of another, with the groups being defined in terms of race or ethnicity (cited in Falconer, 2000). In addition, affirmative action can also be accused of stigmatising those it aims to assist (Heilman, Block, and Lucas, 1992). This aspect will therefore be elaborated upon for further understanding.

Paradoxically, resistance to affirmative action has increasingly been voiced by members of groups, who should have the most to gain by its existence (Heilman, Block, Lucas, 1992). Many of these individuals argue that affirmative action policies stigmatize their intended beneficiaries by causing inferences of substandard competence (Arvey & Campion 1982). Research has indicated that beneficiary groups are of the opinion that affirmative action policies give the impression that beneficiaries have not been employed based on merit, but rather on employment equity basis and that non-beneficiaries may view them as incompetent. Moreover, the employees

may be assumed to have been hired only because of their beneficiary status, and qualifications may have been irrelevant in the selection process. This leads to another assumption that the job incumbent is not competent (Garcia, Erskine, Hawn & Casmay 1981).

A study conducted on 64 male and 76 female undergraduates, between the ages of 18 to 22 years, serving as task leaders at a New York university, revealed that when selected based on preferential selection, beneficiaries of affirmative action devalued their leadership performance, took less credit for successful outcomes and reported less interest in persisting as a leader. They also characterised themselves as more deficient in general leadership skills (Heilman, Simon, and Repper, 1987). Furthermore, it was also found that when respondents were led to believe that a woman was an affirmative action hiree, both male and female subjects rated her as less competent than women not associated with affirmative action. According to the researchers, these findings suggest that when individuals have doubts about their competence to perform a job effectively, non-work related preferential selection, such as race and gender, is likely to have adverse consequences on how beneficiaries of affirmative action view themselves and their performance (Heilman, Simon, and Repper, 1987). Moreover the research advocates that previously disadvantaged preferential selection can trigger a vicious cycle of attitudes of negative self regard for those targeted for beneficiary treatment (Heilman, Simon, and Repper, 1987).

According to Heilman, Block and Lucas (1992) the widely shared view of affirmative action seems to be that beneficiaries are selected because of who they are and not because of what they can do. This is termed tokenism (Heilman et al, 1992; Innes, et al, 1994). Therefore, past

research supports the idea that a stigma of incompetence arises from the affirmative action label (Heilman, & Herlihy 1984). Thus there seems to be a constellation of negative inferences associated with affirmative action. This affects the impression of an individual's work orientation and effectiveness. Beneficiaries, according to research, (Heilman, Block and Lucas, 1992), are aware of the stigma that is attached to them, which may result in their having less than positive attitudes towards affirmative action, simply because they feel that they are assumed to be affirmative action hirees and as a result perceived incompetent, despite the fact that they may have been employed based on merit.

Therefore, previous research has provided evidence of the positive and negative attitudes towards affirmative action. However it must be noted that most of the research has been conducted in the United States and South Africa's circumstances are completely different. The context which affirmative action was implemented in the United States was vastly different from the South African scenario, firstly black Americans were not nearly as disadvantaged as the South African black population and secondly the black American population had not just emerged out of arguably one of the most discriminatory periods in history- Apartheid.

Thus, in view of the fact that research conducted in the United States may not be relevant within the South African context, there is a necessity to investigate attitudes towards affirmative action within the South African context. Moreover, simply looking at the frequencies of positive and negative attitudes towards affirmative action is not sufficient and limits one to a restricted investigation. It is thus more beneficial to extend the study by including some underlying perceptions which may impact on attitudes towards affirmative action. Some of these may be

circumstantial or environmental, such as the perceived likelihood of finding employment, perceptions of job opportunities and the role that cognitive consistency plays in the manner in which perceptions of job opportunities impacts on attitudes towards affirmative action. In addition previous research has found that one of the key issues relating to attitudes towards affirmative action is justice perceptions of affirmative action. Therefore justice perceptions of affirmative action presents another underlying construct worth investigating. Finally, individual psychological constructs may also have an impact on attitudes towards affirmative action, and thus locus of control both internal and external locus of control will be included in this research.

Having looked at attitudes towards affirmative action, this review will now explore perceptions of job opportunities, which is expected to influence justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action.

Perceptions of job opportunities

Affirmative action legislation, as discussed earlier, has been said to be controversial in nature (Falconer, 2000) partly because of its impact on job opportunities for non-beneficiaries. As mentioned previously, employment equity and affirmative action might reduce the amount of jobs open to non-beneficiaries of affirmative action, and in addition possibly will also not guarantee beneficiaries jobs. Therefore the issue of perceptions of job opportunities is regarded as an important variable to be assessed in a study of this nature.

It has argued previously that one of the reasons that affirmative action is regarded as controversial, and may be regarded negatively by non-beneficiaries, is because it may impact on their ability/ opportunities to find employment. In addition, however, affirmative action does not guarantee beneficiaries' employment, as often they have to overcome a legacy of apartheid which still remains in terms of possible continuing of discriminatory attitudes, combined with vestiges of disadvantaged backgrounds which have impacted on educational attainment and language proficiency and which together may inhibit their job opportunities in a competitive job market. These latter factors may continue to hinder previously disadvantaged individuals from obtaining employment, especially in a limited job market. Thus there is a need to examine perceptions of job opportunities for both non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries of affirmative action. The current study aims to do this.

Moreover, perceptions of job opportunities is a variable that has not been previously examined but is nevertheless considered fundamental to this research. It is therefore expected that perceptions of job opportunities will have a direct or at least an indirect impact on the other variables. Perceptions of job opportunities is expected to impact on attitudes towards affirmative action as well as justice perceptions of affirmative action. Organisational justice which is discussed in the following section introduces organisational justice theory and provides the foundation for understanding justice perceptions of affirmative action.

Organisational justice

Organisational justice is a concept that has been examined extensively within organisational behaviour, human resource management and industrial psychology (Katz 1999). It deals primarily with people's perceptions of fairness in the occupational context. Organisational justice is the term broadly used to describe the role of fairness as it directly relates to the work place and work related issues (Moorman, 1991; Paterson, Green and Cary, 2002). Organisational justice is concerned with the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which those determinations influence other work related variables (Moorman, 1991). It has been suggested that organisational justice research may potentially explain many organisational behaviour outcomes. Organisational justice theory supports the belief that, if employees are treated fairly, they will be more likely to hold positive attitudes about their work, their work outcomes and their supervisors. In fact research indicates that employee job performance may increase or decrease in relation to perceptions of inequitable outcomes (Organ, & Konovsky, 1989). Within the concept of justice there are three distinct aspects that have been identified, namely: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Falconer 2000). Justice perceptions of affirmative action stems from organisational justice theory and is primarily concerned with the perceived fairness of affirmative action therefore distributive, procedural and interactional justice are important concepts within organisational justice theory.

Distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice will be discussed in turn, but should not be considered as independent of each other, as they are interconnected.

Distributive justice

Distributive justice is primarily concerned with individual perceptions of what is fair and/ or unfair regarding how resources or rewards are distributed (Nunns, 1994). It therefore describes the fairness of the outcomes that a person receives. Furthermore, distributive justice draws on equity theory, which proposes that people compare the ratio of their own inputs and outcomes with those of relevant others, and judge the outcome of fairness according to the match between inputs and outcomes of each party (Paterson, Green, Carey, 2002). When an exchange occurs there is the possibility that one of the parties may perceive the exchange as being inequitable in terms of the outcomes that they receive (Adams, 1963). It has been demonstrated that negative distributive justice perceptions may result in behaviours such as poor performance, turnover and absenteeism (Paterson, Green, Carey, 2002).

However criticisms have been voiced about this particular aspect of justice theory, asserting that individuals may not have access to information pertaining to the outcomes of referent others and thus individuals may not be able to compare their rewards against others (Van den Bos, Vermunt & Wilke 1997). In fact Van den Bos, Vermunt & Wilke (1997), suggest that procedural justice is a far more useful tool in the analysis of justice. Procedural justice takes into account the procedure that is used to determine the distribution of rewards of which may potentially affect the individual's justice perceptions.

Procedural justice

The introduction of the concept of procedural justice indicates that there was an identification of the need to examine the process of justice perceptions as well as the outcomes. Procedural justice perceptions according to Nunns (1994) assesses the individual's perceptions of the procedures which are used to distribute rewards and organisational resources. Therefore, procedural justice describes the fairness of the procedures used to determine those outcomes. In fact the procedural justice approach focuses on process and the influence processes have on fairness perceptions (Katz, 1999). Procedural justice is important because it offers some control over the process and outcomes of decisions, thereby reassuring individuals about the likely fairness of their long term outcomes.

With regard to procedural justice a distinction has been made between two types of control that occur at two stages in any given procedure, namely process control and decision control (Falconer, 2000). Process control refers to the participant's control over the presentation of facts, information, and evidence and is often equated with indirect control. Decision control refers to the participant's control over the actual decision and can be equated with direct control. Process control has been shown to be more important than decision control (Falconer, 2000), for the reason that, studies have indicated that the opportunity to have control over the decision making process influences individuals perceptions of procedural justice. Moreover perceived fairness has been found to be strongly associated with reactions to process variables. Thus in the case where an individual has the opportunity to be active in the process which determines his/her out comes ,

he/she is more likely to perceive the out come as just and fair, even if the eventual out come is in fact negative (Falconer 2000).

Paterson, Green, Carey, (2002) proposed that fair procedures include:

(1) consistency of implementation,

(2) impartiality,

(3) basing decisions on accurate information,

(4) mechanisms to correct inappropriate decisions,

(5) representativeness- opportunities that allow employees to have input into decisions or have their concerns represented, and

(6) compatibility with current ethical and moral standards

Although distributive and procedural justice are distinctive in their own right and function independently from one another, one aspect should not be considered more important than the other. Rather they operate in unison, and therefore should be considered in a holistic manner (Katz, 1999). The third and last aspect of organisational theory, interactional justice will be discussed.

Interactional justice

Interactional justice distinguishes between the nature of the formal organisational procedures and the way they are enacted. In particular interactional justice assesses the perceived fairness with which outcomes are communicated to employees on an interpersonal level (Katz, 1999). It also proposes that employees consider how fairly they are treated by decision makers (Paterson, et al 2002). According to Paterson (2002), truthfulness, honesty, avoiding deception, courtesy, respect for individual rights, propriety of behaviour and justifying decisions typify fair treatment (Paterson, et al 2002). Interactional justice is achieved if individuals believe they are treated fairly. They then will be more likely to hold positive attitudes about their work and work related outcomes (Moorman, 1991).

Interpersonal justice is considered a relatively new concept, since justice perceptions research has generally in the past focused on distributive and procedural justice (Nunns, 1994). The lack of emphasis placed on interactional justice may be due to interactional justice being viewed as an aspect of procedural justice rather than a separate dimension of justice. However it is suggested that interactional justice be considered as separate from procedural justice on the grounds that it represents the enactment of procedures rather than the development of procedures themselves (Falconer, 2000).

Two factors have been identified as central to interactional justice, namely: (1) that the reasons for the decisions made be clearly explained to all affected parties and, (2) that those who are

responsible for the decisions/ the decision makers, treat all parties that are affected with respect and dignity (Greenberg, 1990).

Organisational justice theory as discussed above is a well researched area within organisations and has been used to explain many organisational behaviour outcomes. For example a study conducted on 270 employees drawn from two firms in Midwestern USA, found that employees who perceive unfairness within their organisation may reduce the frequency or magnitude of their organisational citizenship behaviours, whereas employees who believe that they are fairly treated will perceive continued organisational citizenship behaviours as a reasonable contribution to the system (Moorman, 1991). Thus fairness may influence citizenship to an organisation, given that employees who believed that they were treated fairly appeared to be more likely to exhibit citizenship behaviours (Moorman, 1991).

The research carried out on 240 employees of a manufacturing plant in the United States, investigated the relationship between organisational justice and organisational retaliation behaviour (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Organisational retaliation behaviour was defined by the researchers as: adverse reactions to perceived fairness by disgruntled employees toward their employer. The study suggested that reasonably fair procedures moderate an individual's retaliatory tendencies that would otherwise be maximised by the combination of having both low levels of both distributive and interactional justice (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). The study further revealed that unfair procedures can set the stage for an increase in the retaliation for unfair outcomes (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). When practices are perceived to be unfair,

undesired behaviours such as theft, sabotage, and decreased job performance may result (Leck, Saunders, Charbonneau, 1996).

Thus the preceding discussion has shown that organisational justice is a well researched topic which has been found to be related to many organisational relevant variables such as employment policies and procedures. Indeed organisational justice has also been applied to affirmative action and given its relevance to the literature as well as the current study, justice perceptions of affirmative action will be discussed below.

Justice perceptions of affirmative action

Various justice perceptions of affirmative action are evident when looking at the way in which affirmative action is perceived by various authors. For example, Innes (1994; P.4) defines affirmative action as "a set of procedures aimed at proactively addressing the disadvantages experienced by sections of the community in the past… their aim is to overcome discrimination and to achieve equality." Other researchers such as Parker, Baltes and Christiansen (1997) point towards the inherent unfairness of practices and procedures, which give preferential treatment to certain groups of people on the basis of their gender, race and ethnicity. In addition according to Falconer (2000) and Shubane (1994) people tend to view affirmative action as showing preference to one group at the inevitable expense of another group. Furthermore, Falconer (2000) indicates that some authors view affirmative action as being similar to apartheid. In light of the fact that affirmative action is considered controversial, due to opposing views as to how fair the policy actually is, much research has been conducted in the area.

Justice perceptions in relation to affirmative action policies have been studied in the past by numerous researchers, such as Leck, Saunders, and Charbonneau (1996); Parker, Baltes, Christiansen, (1997); Katz, (1999) and Falconer (2000). In particular Leck, Saunders, and Charbonneau examined the perceived fairness of affirmative action and the effects on employee attitudes and behaviours. They advocated that perceptions of fairness in relation to affirmative action are generally described as a function of two primary concepts in organisational justice theory namely distributive justice and procedural justice:

(1) distributive justice, the perceived fairness of organisational outcomes.
(2) procedural justice, the perceived fairness of the process of distributing organisational outcomes (Leck et al, 1996).

Leck, Saunders, and Charbonneau (1996), used a model proposed by Gilliland (1993) where employees' perceptions of fairness of selection systems, such as affirmative action, are proposed to be influenced by six factors:

(1) belief that outcomes will be divided equitably, based on ones input relative to others;
(2) belief that all individuals should be rewarded equally regardless of individual input;
(3) belief that rewards should be based on need;
(4) belief that the decision making process is structurally sound, consistent and accurate;
(5) belief that the individual can influence or control the process; and
(6) the equality of information provided about the process (Leck, et al, 1996).

The above six factors are proposed to impact on the perceived fairness of affirmative action which in turn is expected to directly impact on attitudes towards affirmative action.

The first three factors describe facets of distributive justice. The last three factors focus on facets of procedural justice.

The model of employee perceptions of fairness of affirmative action is presented in figure1.

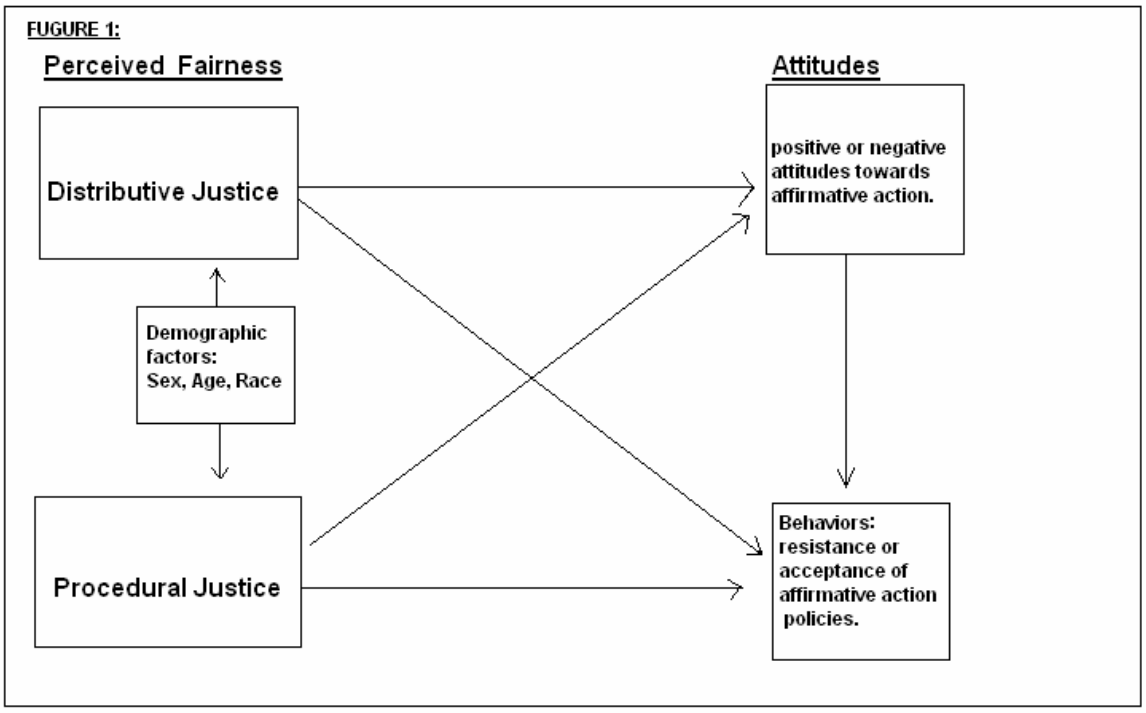


Figure 1: A model of employee perceptions of fairness of affirmative action programmes. (Leck, Saunders, and Charbonneau, 1996).

The model was tested on a sample consisting of 620 white males and 792 white females employed at a large printing and publishing company in Canada, (Leck, et al, 1996). The

researchers found that employees, especially white males, were more likely to resist affirmative action when they perceived that: notions of equity and equality were violated (distributive justice); and employment related decisions were inconsistently applied (procedural justice). The results of the study, demonstrated that perceptions of distributive justice plays an important role in how the fairness of affirmative action can influence employee attitudes (Leck, Saunders and Charbonneau, 1996). Employees who believed in the equitable allocation of rewards were less likely to resist affirmative action and more likely to engage in desirable attitudes and behaviours. On the other hand when perceptions of equity were violated, employees were more likely to resist affirmative action and less likely to engage in desirable attitudes and behaviours (Leck, et al, 1996). Perceptions of procedural justice was also found to have an important effect on employee attitudes, as employees who believed that employers had the right to make inconsistent decisions were also more resistant to integrating beneficiaries into their work groups (Leck, et al, 1996).

Attitudes towards affirmative action are thus related to judgments of the extent to which legislation/policy consists of fair procedures and results in a fair distribution of desired rewards. The perception that affirmative action is unfair has been found to predict resistance to efforts to diversify the work place (Leck, Saunders, Charbonneau, 1996). Moreover, the perceived fairness of affirmative action has proven to be a robust predictor of beneficiaries' attitudes towards affirmative action and their favourability ratings, in terms of whether or not they are in favour of affirmative action.

In addition, research on justice perceptions of affirmative action suggest that members of beneficiary and non- beneficiary groups will not react in the same manner towards affirmative action, specifically due to beliefs regarding the fairness/justice of affirmative action programmes. In a study conducted on four groups of federal employees, comprising 4919 white men; 1622 white women; 492 blacks and 195 asians, found that blacks had more positive reactions towards affirmative action and generally viewed affirmative action as fair compared to other employee groups (Parker, Baltes and Christiansen, 1997).

Given the important role that justice perceptions of affirmative action has been found to play in previous research on affirmative action this research, will examine the perceived fairness of affirmative action and the resulting effect on individuals' attitudes towards affirmative action. Moreover this research will also examine beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries attitudes towards affirmative action. In addition, this study aims to examine the underlying psychological constructs which may have an impact on attitudes towards affirmative action. For this reason the role of locus of control will be considered next.

Locus of control

Locus of control is a widely explored concept across many areas in psychology (Maram, 1996) and is based in the social learning theory of personality, which represents a generalised expectancy concerning the determinants of rewards and punishments in one's life (Pervin, 2001). Locus of control is divided into internal and external locus of control. Individuals with an

internal locus of control will attribute success in a situation to their own ability, whilst individuals with an external locus of control will attribute success to external factors such as luck, chance or fate. At the one extreme are people who believe in their ability to control life events. At the other extreme are people who believe that life's events, such as rewards and punishments, are the result of outside influences (Pervin, 2001).

Locus of control therefore, is related to an expectation of success or failure in a particular task. The theory states that human behaviour is not only a function of reinforcement, but also depends on people's internal or external locus of control. People will attribute the reason to why something happens, either to themselves or to the external environment. Those who appear to have control over occurrences have an internal locus of control and are referred to as internal. People who seem to think the control over what happens is situated with external forces have an external locus of control and are referred to as external. (Rotter,1966). Rotter's theory (1966), goes on further and states that "Internals" see rewards as contingent on their own actions, while, "Externals" believe that unpredictable complex forces outside of their own actions determine the outcome of events (Rotter,1966). Thus, internally and externally directed people can encounter identical situations, yet perceive that their actions will have quite different impacts on their lives.

People who present external locus of control personality characteristics, exhibit a certain amount of learned helplessness, whilst persons rated high on internal locus of control, believe that events tend to be caused by their own actions and are quite confident in that way. Moreover, persons exhibiting characteristics synonymous with an internal locus of control, deem that they have

personal control over their own rewards (Lam and Schaubroeck, 2000). Overall, individuals are said to develop generalised expectations of whether or not success in a particular situation is due to their own ability or due to external forces (Reed, Krutchman, Stawser, 1994). Locus of control as such is said to develop over an individual's life time by the continuous reinforcement of expectations.

Past research has examined the impact of internal and external locus of control in a variety of different contexts, ranging from adolescent school children to employees of multinational organisations. A brief review of this research is presented in order to introduce locus of control and the various contexts in which it has been studied. A study of 42 male students ranging between the ages of 11 to 16 years, from a rural community in the USA, found that locus of control can be linked to academic achievement (Enger, Howerton, and Cobbs 1994). The study revealed that students who believe they have control over what happens to them tend to have better grades and score higher on tests than do other students (Enger, et al 1994).

Locus of control has also been found to be correlated with self-esteem, which is believed to influence an individual's perception of whether or not they can achieve a desired outcome. This is demonstrated by Enger's (1994) study, which indicated that students who score higher on internal locus of control tend to have higher self esteem. Self esteem can be described as the overall confidence and satisfaction in oneself. Individuals who are said to have high self esteem tend to think that they can achieve what ever they set out to do. In view of the fact that internal locus of control is positively linked to self esteem, it is possible that an individual with an internal locus of control will be more positive about the chances of finding a job and thus will

have less negative attitudes towards affirmative action. Whilst a person with an external locus of control is presumed to have less faith in their ability to obtain employment and will by inference have negative attitudes towards affirmative action and view it as some what unjust, which is to be investigated in the current research. An individual's locus of control internal or external has also been found to impact on their achievement.

Hansemark (1998) examined the change in achievement and locus of control of individuals in a 9 months entrepreneurship programme. The experiment comprised of two experimental groups (n = 10 and n = 9), and two control groups (n = 19 and n = 32). All groups consisted of male and female students. All groups were at similar educational levels, age, and area of study. A statistically significant increase in achievement and in internal locus of control was detected as a result of participation in entrepreneurship education, while the control group showed no change. The result supports the hypothesis that participating in an entrepreneurship programme should increase need for achievement and internal locus of control. These results indicate that achievement and internal locus of control are related. Having control over a particular situation and achieving the desired outcomes, appears to be related to an increase in ones internal locus of control. Therefore it is possible that perceived control over ones employment opportunities is related to internal locus of control. Thus students, who have an internal locus of control possibly, feel that achieving the out come of finding employment is a matter of applying their inner control to the situation. Moreover they will probably also feel that despite affirmative action they will still find employment possibly because they are more inclined to believe that success is based on their own input and effort.

Another study conducted on 360 employees at a large international bank in Hong Kong found that individuals rated high on internal locus of control believe that events such as employment promotions tend to be caused by their own actions (Lam and Schaubroek, 2000). Thus being promoted is said to engender positive beliefs about having control over life events. These positive beliefs have been found to be reflected in organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement (Lam and Schaubroek, 2000). Locus of control has also been linked to employee attitudes about their work environment (Lam and Schaubroek, 2000). Therefore since locus of control has been shown to relate to a number of organisationally relevant variables (Spector, 1982), it would be logical to presume that there is a relationship between locus of control and perceptions of justice, perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action.

Given the literature locus of control is believed to be an important variable to be studied within this study, the reason being that it is a facet of personality, which is enduring and impacts on the way in which the world is viewed, interpreted and construed. Therefore, it is assumed that locus of control, being a personality construct and by inference enduring in nature, will influence justice perceptions of affirmative action, attitudes towards affirmative action and perceptions of job opportunities.

However previous research has not been extended to explore the role of locus of control, with regard to attitudes towards affirmative action, perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action. Therefore this study will incorporate this new angle. In

addition, locus of control may help to explain final year university student's perceptions of job opportunities.

Model of attitudes towards affirmative action

A model of the relationship between the variables, locus of control; justice perceptions of affirmative action; attitudes towards affirmative action and perceptions of job opportunities, is proposed in figure 2.

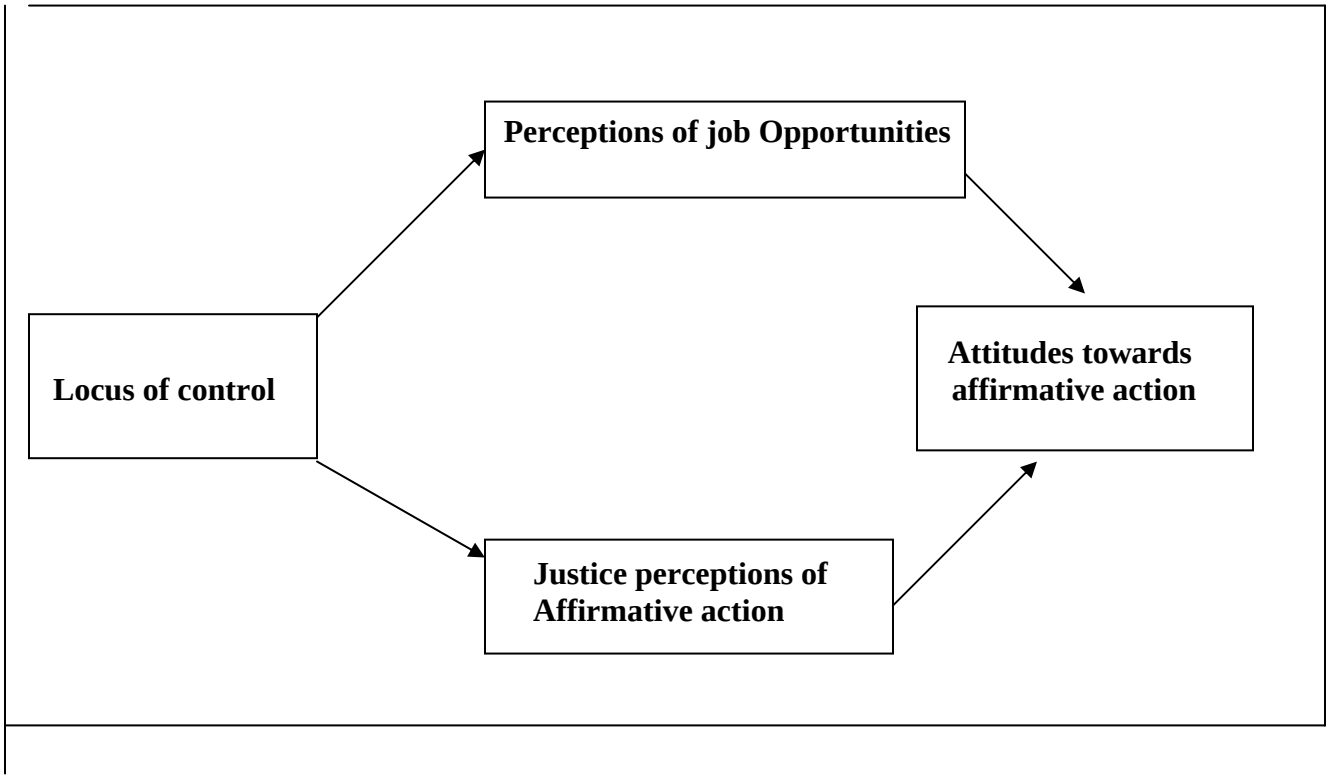


Figure 2: Model of attitudes towards affirmative action

A brief explanation of this model, essentially comprising a summary of the literature just reviewed will now be presented. Locus of control is an important variable to be studied in this context. As discussed previously locus of control is a personality construct which differentiates between individuals with an external locus of control from those with an internal locus of control. An individual who has a belief in external control perceives reinforcement and rewards to be as a result of chance or fate (Rotter, 1966). On the other hand, a person who perceives reinforcement as contingent upon personal characteristics and his/ her own behaviour is

characterised as having an internal locus of control. Owing to locus of control being a personality construct it is believed that it will influence an individual's perceptions and attitudes. Internal or external, locus of control is assumed to influence perceptions of the environmental context, such as job opportunities and employment policies, which impact on the job market. Therefore it is expected that locus of control will influence perceptions of job opportunities, in terms of the likelihood that individuals will find employment based on their own internal control or external influences. In addition it is expected that locus of control will also impact on justice perceptions of affirmative action. More specifically an individual's locus of control in terms of the manner in which they perceive the environment as contingent on their own personal control or outside influences is expected to influence justice perceptions of affirmative action. Both perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action are expected to impact on attitudes towards affirmative action. This is because it appears logical that whether an individual deems affirmative action as fair and just coupled with whether they believe they can find adequate employment will impact on their attitudes towards affirmative action.

Having described in detail the variables to be used in the study, the rationale for this study will now be presented, followed by the methodology to be used.

RATIONALE

The rationale for the study was borne out of the need to investigate final year university students' perceptions of affirmative action. In particular, there is a need to study their justice perceptions of affirmative action and their attitudes towards affirmative action, in view of the fact that affirmative action is perceived as controversial (Falconer, 2000). Affirmative action has been accused of promoting inherent unfairness of practices and procedures that give preferential treatment to certain groups of people based on gender, race and ethnicity (Parker, 1997). Affirmative action has also been accused of reducing job opportunities for non-beneficiaries, as well as being blamed for stigmatising those it aims to assist (Kravits and Plantania, 1992). Thus there arises a necessity to explore justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action. The necessity to explore the justice perceptions towards affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action is further justified by the obvious differing opinions towards affirmative action. Affirmative action is not only perceived in a negative light but also positively. Affirmative action is an essential tool to redress the ills of the past by achieving equality in the work place; the promotion of equal opportunities; fair treatment in employment and the elimination of unfair discrimination in South Africa.

Furthermore, it is necessary to improve and extend research by examining a group of people, such as final year university students, who are likely to be most affected by affirmative action, as they seek job opportunities. In addition, final year university students have yet to be studied within this context. This research also aims to broaden past research by assessing the impact of locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities on justice perceptions of affirmative action

and attitudes towards affirmative action. The current research also examines the differences between beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries attitudes towards affirmative action.

HYPOTHESES

1. Attitudes towards affirmative action differ between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of affirmative action.
2. There is a relationship between locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities.
3. There is a relationship between locus of control and justice perceptions of affirmative action.
4. There is a relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action.
5. There is a relationship between justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter presents information regarding the research design, sample, procedure, measuring instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter gives a description of the manner in which the research was carried out and the research tools used.

Research Design

The present research is quantitative in nature and makes use of a non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational research design. The research design is non-experimental, as there is no control or manipulation of the independent variables, and moreover there is no control group. Non –experimental research nevertheless allows systematic, empirical enquiry, from which inferences about the relationships between variables can be made (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991).

The quantitative paradigm in social sciences places an emphasis on the quantification of constructs, by measuring the properties of phenomena, in this case the final year university student's attitudes towards affirmative action, justice perceptions of affirmative action, perceptions of job opportunities and locus of control. This research design assigns numbers to the perceived qualities of aspects of our environment (Babbie and Mouton,1998). A cross sectional quantitative approach (Rosenthal and Rosnow 1991) was deemed most appropriate, since it involves the observation of the variables at the same point in time, and it is mostly concerned with measurement. The study was a between-subjects comparison (Howell, 2000), as

a comparison was made between the beneficiary final year students and the non-beneficiary final year students.

Procedure

Upon receiving ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand ethics committee, a self- administered survey package was handed out to all the final year bachelor of accounting students within the bachelor of accounting discipline at an extra- accounting institution with in the Johannesburg area, after an accounting lecture. The package included a covering letter; a biographical form; a questionnaire consisting of 4 scales, namely: Attitudes towards Affirmative Action scale (Kravitz and Plantania 1992), Justice Perceptions of Affirmative Action scale (Katz 1999), Locus of Control scale (Collins, 1974) and Perceptions of Job Opportunities scale (self-developed).

The nature of the study was explained to the final year students, by means of a covering letter detailing the reasons for the research and the focus area. The covering letter explained the purpose of the study, stating that participation was voluntary, and that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all times. The covering letter invited participation in the research. Those who volunteered to take part in the study were asked to answer a questionnaire which included –The Attitude towards Affirmative Action scale(Kravitz and Plantania 1992), Justice Perceptions of Affirmative Action scale(Katz 1999), Work Locus of Control scale (Collins, 1974) and Perceptions of Job Opportunities scale (self developed). The students who

volunteered to participate in the study completed the questionnaire and then placed their completed questionnaire in a sealed box which was provided by the researcher, before they left the lecture room. Once all the students had left the lecture room the researcher collected all the completed questionnaires from the sealed box. This ensured that no one had access to the completed questionnaires and thus maintained confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account. Anonymity with regards to the quantitative research was maintained in view of the fact that participants were not required to submit any identifying information. Therefore trends that were identified were reported in group format. The covering letter, which was handed to the participants before the research took place stated the purpose and the nature of the research and invited the reader to participate. It also assures the participant that the research was totally voluntary. Consent to participate in the research was assumed if the respondents filled out the questionnaire and handed it back to the researcher. A great deal of care was taken in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the entire process. Data will be kept in a secure place by the university. The results will be reported in a research report.

Sample

The sample comprised 93 final year students studying a Bachelor of Accounting degree. Final year accounting students were chosen as the most suitable sample, since they have to find employment for the following year. Failing to obtain a suitable placement in an accounting firm will hinder their accounting career. Therefore it is paramount that they obtain a trainee contract in an accounting firm. The sample was thus purposively selected, from an institution that offers extra accounting tuition to fourth year students who are in their final year of bachelor of accounting.

There are 120 students attending the extra- accounting institution, therefore 120 questionnaires were distributed, however only 94 questionnaires were returned. This represents a 78.2% response rate. Of the 94 questionnaires returned only one questionnaire was omitted due to incomplete data. A line was drawn through the incomplete questionnaire, labelled incomplete and placed in a sealed envelope. Therefore a total of 93 responses were used in this research. This represents a usability rate of 77.5%.

The sample was made up of 59 beneficiaries of affirmative action (63.44%) and 34 Non-Beneficiaries[2] of affirmative action (36.56%). The sample thus was made up of 45 Blacks (48. 39%); 2 Coloureds (2.15%); 12 Indians (12.90 %); and 34 Whites (36.56%). Ages ranged from 19 – 35, with a mean age of 21.8 and median age of 22. There were 35 male participants

[2] The sample was divided into two groups' beneficiaries of affirmative action and non-beneficiaries of affirmative action. Beneficiaries being blacks, coloureds and Indians. Non- beneficiaries being white males and females. Throughout the research the groups will be referred to by their beneficiary status as either being beneficiary or non-beneficiary.

(37.63%) and 58 female participants (62.37%). The biographical data for status, race and gender is reflected in table form below.

TABLE 2.1: Frequency table of respondents

Status/ race/ gender:	**Frequency:**	**Percent: %**
Beneficiary	59	63.44%
Non - Beneficiary	34	36.56%
Total	**93**	**100%**
Blacks	45	48.39%
Coloureds	2	2.15%
Indians	12	12.90%
Whites	34	36.56%
Total	**93**	**100%**
Males	35	37.63%
Females	58	62.37%
Total	**93**	**100%**

With regards to the language spoken by the respondents, 1 individual spoke Afrikaans, 48 respondents spoke English, 5 individuals spoke Sepedi, 5 respondents spoke Sesotho, 8 spoke Setswana, 1 person spoke Sinsinati 1 person spoke Tsonga, 4 people spoke Venda, 7 people spoke Xhosa and 13 people spoke Zulu. More than half the sample spoke English, 51.6 %, and 47.3% of the sample spoke an African language. (Refer to table for language data below).

TABLE 2.2: Respondent's languages

Language	**Frequency**	**Percent %**
Afrikaans	1	1.0%
English	48	51.6%
Sepedi	5	5.3%
Sesotho	5	5.3%
Setswana	8	8.6%
Sisinati	1	1.0%
Tsonga	1	1.0%
Venda	4	4.3%
Xhosa	7	7.5%
Zulu	13	13.9%
Total	93	100%

The respondents were divided up according to whether or not they were beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries of affirmative action. The beneficiaries of affirmative action group comprised of Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. The non-beneficiary group comprised of white males and females. The reasoning behind including white females into the non-beneficiary group is primarily because white females are no longer considered a group that has suffered in the recent South African past. Moreover during apartheid white women were not subjected to discriminatory treatment. In addition organisations are becoming less inclined to consider white women as beneficiaries and as a result white women are not afforded beneficiary status in the same way as blacks, coloureds and Indians. In the near future it is expected that white women will be excluded from affirmative action and will not be recognised as beneficiaries (Personal communication: Anonymous - Employment Equity department of the Department of Trade and Industry). In fact legislation may change to the above mentioned approach in the next four years.

Measures

The measures used in this study took the form of a questionnaire, which comprised of a biographical information form followed by a questionnaire comprising 4 scales. The Attitude towards Affirmative Action scale (Kravitz and Plantania 1992), Justice Perceptions of Affirmative Action scale (Katz 1999), Work Locus of Control scale (Collins, 1974) and Perceptions of Job Opportunities scale.

Biographical information questionnaire

The questions asked in the biographical form had the purpose of helping the researcher effectively describe and characterise the sample, as well as assist the researcher to identify and accept the respondents that meet the inclusion criteria. Moreover the questions asked in the biographical form assisted the researcher in dividing up the respondents into their respective racial and beneficiary status groups, as well as the appropriate gender group. Therefore questions in the biographical form asked respondents to indicate their age, race, gender and language, as well as to verify that they are a fourth year/ final year accounting student.

Measurement scales

Attitudes towards Affirmative action

Attitudes towards affirmative action were measured using Kravitz and Plantania's (1992) scale. The Questionnaires consists of 6 items, where the respondents have to indicate their agreement on a 5 point likert scale, which ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Attitudes towards Affirmative Action Questionnaire is reported to have an internal reliability score (Cronbach's alpha) of .86 (Kravitz and Plantania, 1992), which is deemed as satisfactory. The reliabilities yielded in the current study for the attitudes towards affirmative action scale was 0.81.

Justice perceptions of the employment equity act

The questionnaire consists of three sub-scales, which measure three different aspects of justice perceptions in relation to employment equity, namely distributive, procedural and interactional justice perceptions (Katz 1999). The total scale consists of 18 items, of which 5 examine distributional justice, 9 examine procedural justice, and 4 examine interactional justice, (Katz, 1999). The overall internal consistency reported on the justice scale is .94 which is high. Both the procedural and interactional sub-scales had cronbach alpha's over .90 (.91 and .93 respectively), the distributive scale had a cronbach alpha of .77 (Katz, 1999). A principle component analysis of the scale measured three factors with eigenvalues greater that 1, indicating that the scale does indeed measure the three aspects of justice. This scale was used previously in a study conducted in South Africa. Although distributive, procedural and interactional justice are distinctive in their own right and function independently from one another, one aspect should not be considered more important than the other. Rather they operate in unison, and therefore should be considered in a holistic manner (Katz, 1999). Therefore, for the purposes of this study the scale was used in its entirety as a measure of overall justice perceptions of affirmative action. Thus analyses were conducted and reported on the scale as a whole. The reliabilities yielded in the current study for the justice perceptions of affirmative action scale was 0.93.

The Locus of control

The locus of control scale (Collins, 1974) consists of 46 items and measures locus of control on a five point likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The total scale consists of 46 items, of which half (23 items) examine external locus of control, and the other half examine internal locus of control (Collins, 1974). The overall reliability reported on the scale is .75 which is deemed as reliable and thus satisfactory. The external locus of control sub scale yielded an internal reliability of .73. Internal locus of control sub-scale yielded an internal reliability of .70. The reliabilities yielded in the current study for the locus of control scale was 0.75.

Perceptions of job opportunities

Perceptions of job opportunities were assessed using a scale developed by the researcher specifically for the current study. The scale comprised of 6 items. The scale measures job opportunities on a five point likert scale. Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements presented. Strongly disagree 1 – strongly agree 5. An example of the items presented in the scale are for instance: It will be difficult for me to find a job; Employment legislation assists me in finding a job; I feel that employment legislation makes it harder for me to find a job; There are plenty of jobs available for people like me. The researcher constructed positive and negative attitude statements towards job opportunities that

might be displayed by final year university students. In order to ensure that the questionnaire items were short, focused, to the point, clear and unambiguous (Babbie and Mouton, 2001) the researcher piloted the questionnaire on two university students both 21 years old, this ensured that the two students used in the pilot study had a mean age of 21 years in order to match the expected mean age of the proposed sample. The aim of the scale was not to examine underlying psychological constructs, therefore the scale represents a checklist rather than a psychological instrument. Nevertheless to ensure its suitability to statistical analysis indications of the reliability and validity of the scale was assessed as part of the study and can be found in the statistical analysis chapter. The reliabilities yielded in the current study for the perceptions of job opportunities scale was 0.76.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the biographical questionnaire to ensure accurate classification of the sample as well as to effectively describe the sample.

Assessment of the Perceptions of Job Opportunities scale

An evaluation of the perceptions of job opportunities scale in the current study was necessary before any results could be established. Therefore the reliability and validity of the measuring

instrument has to be calculated. Reliability refers to the extent to which the scale is consistently measuring what it intends to measure. Validity, on the other hand refers to the extent to which the instrument is measuring what it is supposed to measure (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991).

Validity: Factor Analysis

Validity refers to the extent to which a scale measures what it is supposed to measure. Construct validity is the extent to which the scale actually captures the theoretical construct that it intends to measure (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). Factor analysis is used as a statistical measure to establish construct validity. Factor analysis describes the relationship between the variables in terms of factors. Factors are groups of variables which have a high correlation with each other but have a low correlation with variables in other groups (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). A factor analysis was conducted on the perceptions of job opportunities scale, namely principal component analysis. Principle component analysis provides some indication of the validity.

Internal Reliabilities: Cronbach Correlation Coefficient

Internal reliabilities assess the extent to which items in a scale correlate with each other. The higher the inter item correlation, the more consistently the scale is measuring the same construct (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). A Cronbach correlation coefficient of .70 is deemed satisfactory

by most researchers. The internal reliabilities of all the scales and subscales in the present research were calculated using the Cronbach Correlation Coefficient in order to establish the internal reliability.

Correlations Pearson's product – moment correlation coefficient (r)

Correlation research is based on testing a null hypotheses, the actual measuring of the degree of association between two sets of scores (Bless and Kathuria, 1993). Correlations therefore allow the researcher to assess whether there is a relationship between the variables as well as how strong the relationship is. The correlation coefficient is a number that reflects the degree of the relationship between two variables. Correlations between variables can be linear or not, and they can be positive, negative or non existent (Bless and Kathuria, 1993). A linear relationship is described as where a fixed change in one variable is always associated with a fixed change in another variable (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). Therefore correlations suggest association rather than causality. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was conducted as the data that was yielded was interval in nature and thus could be examined using a parametric test (Howell, 1997).

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

ANOVA is regarded as one of the most frequently used statistical technique in psychological research, the popularity and usefulness of this technique can be attributed to two sources. Firstly, analysis of variance deals with differences between or among sample means, it imposes no restriction on the number of means (Bless and Kathuria, 1993). Moreover ANOVA allows one to deal with two or more independent variable simultaneously. With regard to the present research one –way –analysis of variance was employed, since differences were examined by race or beneficiary status. A one- way ANOVA was used to compare the mean scores of two or more groups on a dependent variable. One- way ANOVA's were calculated in an effort to determine whether there was a significant difference between the means of two or more groups, such as Asian, Black, Couloured, Indian and White; Beneficiary status or Non-Beneficiary status.

Linear Regressions

Two characteristics or variables often seem to be related to one another without one necessarily being the cause of the other. Regression analysis relies on the assumption that the relationship between two variables is a systematic one, which can therefore be depicted or approximated mathematically. The simplest form of such a relationship is a linear one.

CHAPTER 3: STATISTICAL RESULTS

Introduction

The following chapter presents the results of statistical tests that were undertaken to obtain some indication of the validity of the perceptions of job opportunities scale, as well as to assess reliability of the other scales and to test the five hypotheses which are central to the research. The factor analysis procedure will thus be discussed first, because it is imperative to first establish the validity of the perceptions of job opportunities scale, which was developed by the researcher for this particular study, before any analysis of the results are discussed. Following the factor analysis, scale reliabilities and the statistical results will be presented. Therefore scale reliabilities will follow the factor analyses, followed by ANOVA's, correlations and regressions.

Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was conducted on the perceptions of job opportunities scale to determine the factor structure. The principle component factor analysis of the scale indicated that there were 2 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Therefore as indicated by the Eigenvalues there were two factors. However the scree plot clearly demonstrates that there is one dominant factor. In addition items 1,3,4,5, and 6 load onto factor 1 with the exception of item 2 which loads onto factor 2. Moreover the factor analysis procedure indicated that 48% of the variance is explained

in factor 1, suggesting that there is only one factor, this can be seen in the table below of Eigenvalues under proportion of variance explained.

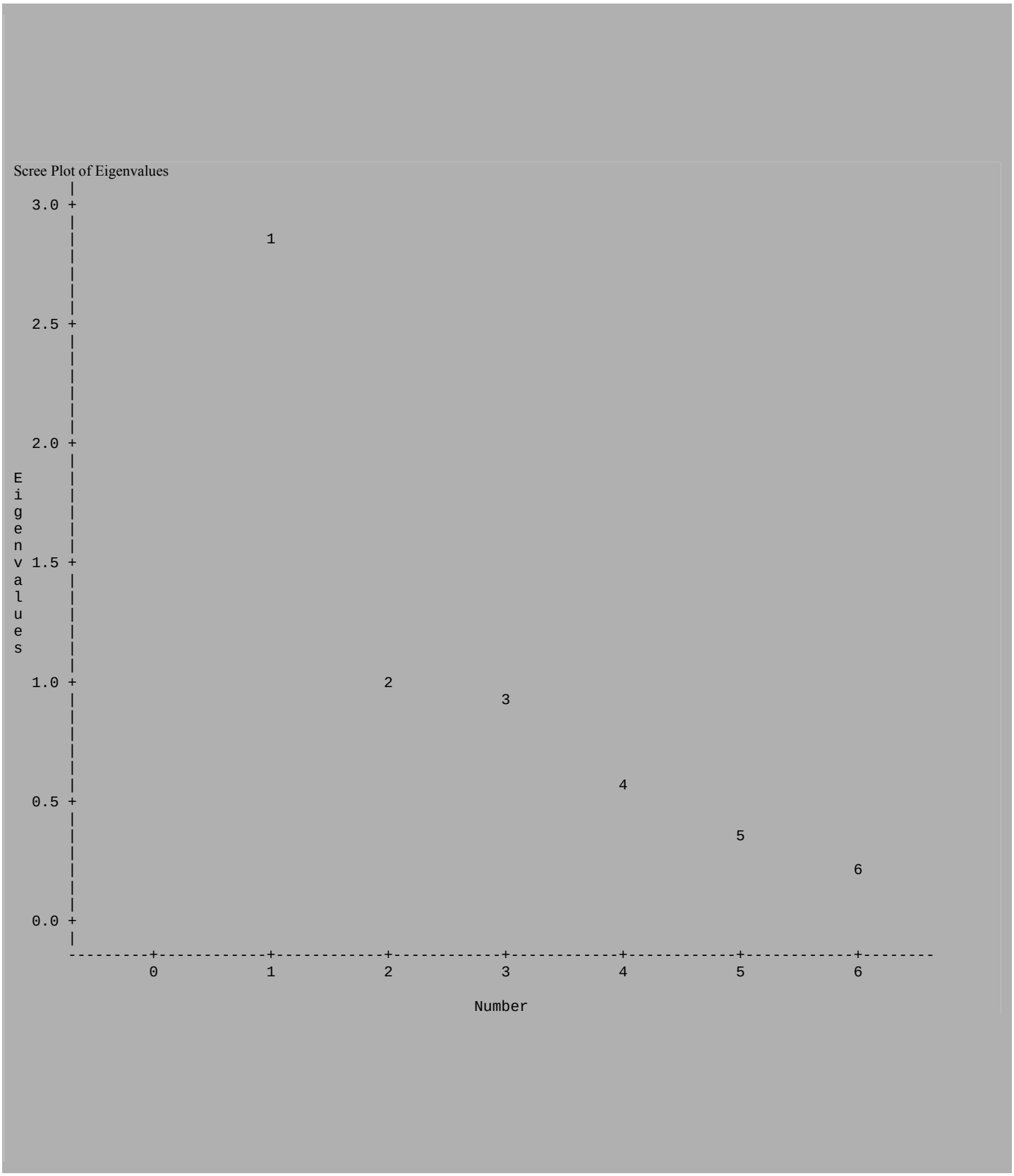
TABLE 3.1: Eigenvalues of the correlation matrix

Item	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	cumulative
1	2.89176785	1.87446408	0.4820	0.4820
2	1.01730378	0.09841064	0.1696	0.6515
3	0.91889313	0.35874544	0.1531	0.8047
4	0.56014769	0.19197509	0.0934	0.8980
5	0.36817261	0.12445767	0.0614	0.9594
6	0.24371494		0.0406	1.0000

TABLE 3.2: Factor Pattern

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Perceptions of job opportunities		
1	0.79380	0.01596
2	0.31578	0.83335
3	0.75368	-0.02316
4	0.79513	0.33758
5	0.70600	0.32389
6	0.68060	-0.32119

3.3: Scree Plot of Eigenvalues



Scale Reliabilities (Cronbach alpha)

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to examine the internal reliability of the scales. It is suggested by Rosenthal and Rosnow (1991) that a reliability of at least .70 indicates that the scale is a reliable psychological test, and can be regarded as reliable and credible.

Perceptions of job opportunities yielded a reliability score of 0.76 .

Attitudes towards affirmative action scale yielded a reliability score of 0.81 which is deemed satisfactory.

Justice perceptions of affirmative action yielded a reliability score of 0.93.

Locus of control yielded a reliability score of 0.75. The external locus of control subscale yielded a reliability of 0.73. The internal locus of control subscale yielded a reliability score of 0.70.

Table 3.4Scale reliabilities -Cronbach coefficient alpha

SCALE	RAW SCORE
Perceptions of job opportunities	0.764264
Attitudes towards affirmative action	0.810222
Justice perceptions of affirmative action	0.933982
Locus of control	0.751592
External locus of control	0.731540
Internal locus of control	0.708134

Therefore all the measures and their respective sub scales were deemed to have satisfactory internal reliability and thus are considered reliable for the purposes of this study.

ANOVA

ANOVA's were calculated in order to determine whether attitudes towards affirmative action differ between beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries of affirmative action. Therefore one –way ANOVA's were conducted on the respondent's beneficiary status (beneficiaries and non beneficiaries).

The ANOVA results for beneficiary status indicate significant differences between status and attitudes towards affirmative action at the 0.05 significance level, as indicated in table 3.10. Beneficiaries of affirmative action have a higher mean score on attitudes towards affirmative action than non beneficiaries (M = 24.49 and M= 18.64 respectively), indicating that they tend to agree with affirmative action and are more in favour of affirmative action than non beneficiaries.

Significant differences were detected between beneficiary status and justice perceptions of affirmative action at the 0.05 significance level. Beneficiaries were found to have a significantly higher mean score on justice perceptions of affirmative action than non-beneficiaries (M= 40.45 and M= 26.47).

There are significant differences between perceptions of job opportunities and beneficiary status. Beneficiaries score higher means on perceptions of job opportunities than non beneficiaries ((M=18.01 and M= 15.20 respectively) indicating that they agree that they are likely to find a job relatively easily and that affirmative action policies make it easier for them to obtain employment. Non beneficiaries seem to be less optimistic about the availability of employment.

TABLE 3.5: ANOVA table for status – Beneficiary / Non- Beneficiary

Variable	Sum of Squares	Mean square	F - stat	Pr > F Sig.
Attitudes towards affirmative action	1550.51	17.03	43.24	<.0001**
Perceptions of job opportunities	1520.54	16.70	10.20	0.0019 **
Justice perceptions of affirmative action	5243.11	57.61	73.24	<.0001**
Locus of control	19569.02	215.04	6.68	0.0114*

* $P \leq .05$

** $P \leq .01$

TABLE 3.6: ANOVA table of means for status beneficiaries and non beneficiaries

Level of status	Attitudes towards AA	Perceptions of job opportunities	Justice perceptions of AA
1 N=59	24.491	18.016	40. 457
2 N=34	18.647	15.205	26.470

Correlations

Correlations were undertaken to establish whether the scales / variables in the study have a relationship to one another. More importantly correlations were calculated in order to establish whether there is a relationship between locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities (hypothesis 2) and an association between locus of control and justice perceptions of affirmative action (hypothesis 3). In addition correlations were undertaken to determine whether there is a relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action (hypothesis 4) as well as a relationship between justice perceptions of affirmative action and

attitudes towards affirmative action (hypothesis 5). Correlations from the Pearson's correlation coefficient table indicate the following significant relationships.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis stated that there is a relationship between locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities. The correlations however indicate that there is a non significant relationship $r = 0.01132$; $\alpha = 0.9143$, refer to table 3.8.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis points towards a relationship between locus of control and justice perceptions of affirmative action. The correlation procedure however indicated that there is a non significant relationship between locus of control and justice perceptions of affirmative action $r = 0.15164$; $\alpha = 0.1468$, refer to table 3.8.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis stated that there is a relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action. Support was found for hypothesis 4 indicating that there is a significant relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action $r = 0.45171$; $\alpha = 0.0001$, refer to table 3.8.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis five suggested that there is a relationship between justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action. Strong support was found for hypothesis five indicating that there is a significant relationship between justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action, $r = 0.70086$; $\alpha = 0.0001$, refer to table 3.8.

TABLE 3.7: Table of Pearson's correlation coefficient

	Attitudes towards Affirmative action	Perceptions of job opportunities	Justice perceptions of affirmative action	Locus of control
Attitudes towards affirmative action	1.00000			
Perceptions of job opportunities	0.45171 <.0001	1.00000		
Justice perceptions of affirmative action	0.70086 <.0001	0.44981 <.0001	1.00000	
Locus of control	0.04897 0.6411	0.01132 0.9143	0.15164 0.1468	1.00000

Linear Regressions

The tables on the following pages details the regression analyses undertaken to further examine the impact of the independent variables: perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action in combination on the dependent variable attitudes towards affirmative action (hypothesis 4 and hypothesis 5). No other regressions were calculated because the correlation procedure found non significant support for hypothesis 2 indicating that there is no relationship between locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities. In addition the correlation procedure found non significant support for hypothesis 3, indicating that there is a non significant relationship between locus of control and justice perceptions of affirmative action.

The linear regression indicated that perceptions of job opportunities, and justice perceptions of affirmative action are significantly related to attitudes towards affirmative action in beneficiaries $\alpha = 0.0001$. Thirty four percent of the variance is explained (R-Square = 0.3432; $\alpha = .0001$; Bo= 17.46868). Thus the model was found to be significant. However perceptions of job opportunities is non- significantly related $\alpha = 0.1486$. Justice perceptions of Affirmative action however is significantly related to attitudes towards affirmative action $\alpha = 0.0001$. It is expected that perceptions of job opportunities has turned out non significant because all the variance has been taken up by justice perceptions of affirmative action.

Table 3.8: Results of the regression analysis in beneficiaries

Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Square**	**F Value**	**Pr>F**	**R- Square**
Model	3	379.19602	126.39867	9.58	<.0001	0.3432
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimates**	**Standard Error**	**T Value**	**Pr>/t/**	
Intercept	1	17.46868	5.63342	3.10	0.0030	
Perceptions of job opportunities	1	0.16161	0.11031	1.47	0.1486	
Justice perceptions of affirmative action	1	0.23680	0.05619	4.21	<.0001	

With regards to non- beneficiaries, as can be seen by the table below, perceptions of job opportunities, and justice perceptions of affirmative action $\alpha = 0.0163$ are significantly related to attitudes towards affirmative action. 28% of the variance is explained indicated by R-Square = 0.2864. Bo= 7.34942. However perceptions of job opportunities is non-significantly related ($\alpha = 0.3951$) to attitudes towards affirmative action. While justice perceptions of affirmative action is significantly related to attitudes towards affirmative action $\alpha = 0.0234$ in non beneficiaries.

Table: 3.9: Results of the regression analysis in non- beneficiaries

Source	**DF**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Square**	**F Value**	**Pr>F**	**R- Square**
Model	3	127.65755	42.55252	4.01	0.0163	0.2864
Variable	**DF**	**Parameter Estimates**	**Standard Error**	**T Value**	**Pr>/t/**	
Intercept	1	7.34942	6.68034	1.10	0.2800	
Perceptions of job opportunities	1	0.19933	0.23103	0.86	0.3951	
Justice perceptions of affirmative action	1	0.36451	0.15262	2.39	0.0234	

DISCUSSION

In the following chapter the findings of the research will be discussed. Thus the statistical results will be analysed in relation to the hypotheses and previous research conducted in the area. The discussion of the results will be followed by a discussion of the practical and theoretical implications of the current study, limitations of the study and finally a conclusion. The aims of the discussion chapter are to systematically tackle each hypothesis in sequence and discuss the findings in relation to past research and identify the implications for the current South African context.

Hypothesis 1: Beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries attitudes towards affirmative action

Affirmative action has been accused of being a controversial policy, which can be likened to reverse apartheid (Falconer, 2000), as well as stigmatising those it aims to assist (Heilman, Block and Lucas, 1992). It has been argued that non- beneficiaries of affirmative action respond least favourably to affirmative action, whilst beneficiaries respond most favourably (Kravitz and Plantania, 1993). In fact non- beneficiaries according to Kravitz and Plantania (1993) oppose quota hiring and preferential treatment for beneficiary groups. Parker, Baltes, and Christiansen (1997) found than beneficiaries have more positive attitudes towards affirmative action than non – beneficiaries, the reason being that beneficiaries are perceived to be on the receiving end of policies and by implication suffer less discrimination, they profit more and have better opportunities. In the current research differences were found between beneficiaries and non-

beneficiaries of affirmative action, however the differences were small indicating that on the whole both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries both tend to have positive attitudes towards affirmative action. This is in contrast to the research mentioned previously, and it would seem that in South Africa affirmative action is indeed not as controversial in nature as previous research has described. The findings of the current study indicate that non-beneficiaries do not respond negatively to affirmative action as found in the Kravitz and Plantania (1993) study, in fact in the current South African context there are small attitude differences but they are largely positive attitudes towards affirmative action. A possible explanation for the findings is that in South Africa the policies are deemed just and fair in light of past discrimination.

An alternative reason why small differences were found between the two groups is that the sample is a relatively young student group, with the average age being 21.8. Therefore the student sample, used in the current study, have not really felt the full brunt of affirmative action because they have been studying accountancy since they left high school. Thus this is possibly the first year that they have truly been exposed to affirmative action in the work place, as they have had to seek a three year articles contract for 2005. Moreover the student sample, although multicultural have had similar experiences, in view of the fact that they have been studying together in the same context for the past four years. Therefore their responses would be similar and not vastly different and which explains the small differences between the two groups.

As mentioned previously the overall attitudes towards affirmative action of both groups is largely positive, which points towards both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries having positive attitudes towards affirmative action. However, an alternative explanation may be that social

desirability played a role and respondents were less inclined to be honest about their true attitudes, in an effort to present themselves as politically correct. It can be understood that people will dilute their true attitudes towards affirmative action to a more politically acceptable response, given that affirmative action has in the past been described as a controversial policy (Falconer, 2000) and thus individuals may be less inclined to respond controversially for fear of coming across as racially intolerant.

Despite the fact that the differences between beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries were small, as discussed above, statistical support was found for hypotheses 1, indicating that attitudes towards affirmative action differs between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of affirmative action. There were significant differences detected by the one-way ANOVA procedure between beneficiaries and non beneficiaries and attitudes towards affirmative action. The one- way ANOVA indicated that attitudes towards affirmative action is significantly related to beneficiary status ($\alpha = .0001$) with beneficiaries ($M= 24.4$) scoring significantly higher means than non – beneficiaries ($M=18.6$). This demonstrates that beneficiaries tend to agree more than non-beneficiaries that affirmative action is a good policy, and that the goals of affirmative action are good. It is presumed that from the issues measured in the attitudes towards affirmative action scale that these results also imply that beneficiaries of affirmative action are more likely than non- beneficiaries of affirmative action to be willing to work at an organisation with an affirmative action plan. It can also be further assumed from the results that beneficiaries are less likely to oppose affirmative action than non-beneficiaries. These results are consistent with past

research which found that non- beneficiaries respond least favourably and beneficiaries respond most favourably (Kravitz and Plantania, 1993).

Despite the fact that there are significant differences between the two groups, the means on attitudes towards affirmative action for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are relatively high indicating that, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries tend to agree that affirmative action is a necessary policy. This can possibly be explained in light of South Africa's political apartheid past. South Africans are aware of the need to promote and value diversity as well as the necessity to afford previously disadvantaged groups opportunities and empowerment, as a means to eradicate vestiges of discrimination.

It is expected that the results would emerge in this way, and is quite logical that beneficiaries are more positive about affirmative action than non-beneficiaries. This is possibly due to the fact that beneficiaries have suffered many years of discrimination and finally affirmative action will begin to heal the ills of the past and accord them opportunities which they have never experienced before. It is also reasonable that non-beneficiaries are slightly less positive in their attitudes towards affirmative action, purely because non-beneficiaries may feel threatened by affirmative action and the likelihood that they will not enjoy the same opportunities they are used to and have become accustomed to receiving.

Hypothesis 2 and 3 – locus of control in relation to perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action

In the literature review locus of control was defined as a psychological construct which is part of social learning theory of personality, which represents a generalised expectancy concerning the determinants of rewards and punishments in one's life (Pervin and John, 2001). As discussed in the literature review, locus of control is related to an expectation of success or failure in a particular task. People are said to attribute the reason to why something happens, either to themselves or to the external environment (Lam and Schaubroek, 2000). Those who appear to have control over occurrences have an internal locus of control, while people who seem to think that control over what happens is a result of external forces are referred to as externals and have an external locus of control (Rotter 1966).

Lam and Schaubroek found in their (2000) study, that individuals rated high on internal locus of control believe that events such as employment promotions tend to be caused by their own actions. In addition they found that locus of control is linked to employee attitudes about their work environment (Lam and Schaubroek, 2000). Therefore the literature review presumed that a relationship between locus of control, perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action exists. The literature review thus argued that locus of control would impact on perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action, because locus of control is an enduring personality construct which impacts on the way in which the world is viewed and interpreted. Thus the literature review proposed that in view of the fact that locus of

control is a personality construct it will influence people's perceptions of job opportunities as well as their justice perceptions of affirmative action. However, the current research findings contradict the research presented in the literature review. Thus a non- significant relationship was found between locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities, and in addition a non-significant relationship between locus of control and justice perceptions of affirmative action was detected. Locus of control according to the current research findings does not impact on perceptions of job opportunities or justice perceptions of affirmative action.

These findings contradict what was expected as well as previous research conducted in the area. A possible reason for these results may be that although locus of control is a stable personality trait it might be overridden by situational and environmental influences that prove to be dominant. Therefore the fact that locus of control has been found to have no relationship to perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative can be understood from the point of view that, possibly situational or environmental influences dampen its effect and may override the personality trait in certain extreme circumstances. Situational influences such as the nature of affirmative action and its associated policies, as well as the resulting effect it has on job opportunities may be more dominant in influencing perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action, than a personality trait such as locus of control. However locus of control should not be disregarded totally, because it remains to be a stable personality trait that has on many previous occasions proven to influence individual attitudes and perceptions (Pervin and John, 2001). In this study however, other contending situational variables such as political employment policies have reduced its effect. Thus it may be in a

situation where dominant rigid political policies prevail, locus of control can be overpowered and its effect reduced.

An additional reason why locus of control turned out non- significant may be due to a small sample size. Sample size seems to have a great deal to do with whether or not an 'acceptable' level of statistical significance is achieved (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). Therefore the small sample size may have reduced the power of the statistical locus of control scale. Moreover, the lack of a significant locus of control effect may possibly be due to the sample that was used. It is possible that students studying a professional degree such as accounting may all tend to have an internal locus of control and attribute their professional success to their own ability. Possibly a sample with similar locus of control traits, such as the sample used in the current research, may be one of the reasons why locus of control did not have a more dominant affect or influence on perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action. In future research a more diverse sample should perhaps be conducted to assess the affect of locus of control in relation to perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action.

Hypothesis 4 – Perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action

In the literature review it was argued that perceptions of job opportunities will likely impact on attitudes towards affirmative action. Research conducted by Kravitz and Plantania (1993) maintain that attitudes towards affirmative action will be influenced by the availability of jobs

for both beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries of affirmative action. Parker, Baltes and Christiansen, (1997) maintained that beneficiaries of affirmative action will have more favourable attitudes towards affirmative action because they are on the receiving end of job opportunities, while non- beneficiaries may exhibit less than favourable attitudes towards affirmative action, because affirmative action reduces the number of job opportunities available to them. Kravitz and Plantania (1993), maintain that attitudes towards affirmative action will be influenced, with attitudes becoming increasingly negative as more weight is given to demographic status rather than merit when employment decisions are made.

Support was detected for the fourth hypothesis which stated that there is a relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action. The Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a strong significant relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action. This finding was expected because affirmative action is largely an employment policy, which aims to institute measures to counter some of the effects of apartheid, especially in the work place. Therefore the primary endeavour of affirmative action is to provide previously disadvantaged groups i.e. beneficiaries, job opportunities in the work place. Therefore the relative availability of jobs or the lack there of for one or the other group will impact on attitudes towards affirmative action.

The regression model used to test the relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action revealed a significant association, therefore indicating that perceptions of job opportunities is significantly related to attitudes towards affirmative action.

However much of the variance in the model was taken up by the other independent variables which resulted in perceptions of job opportunities having a less significant association to attitudes towards affirmative action than the other variables. Moreover perceptions of job opportunities and the other independent variables are highly correlated with each other, which explains why perceptions of job opportunities has not turned out to be more significantly related to attitudes towards affirmative action in the regression equation.

It is logical that perceptions of job opportunities is related to attitudes towards affirmative action, since people are likely to form attitudes towards affirmative action based on whether they can obtain employment. Therefore depending on whether an individual is able to attain employment will impact on whether they have positive or negative attitudes towards affirmative action. According to the results of the regression analyses, perceptions of job opportunities is related to attitudes towards affirmative action in beneficiaries of affirmative action. A logical reason explaining this out come is that beneficiaries are on the receiving end of employment opportunities, and relate this increase in job opportunities to affirmative action. Thus, beneficiaries attribute their increased job opportunities to affirmative action, since prior to the implementation of affirmative action beneficiaries did not enjoy the same opportunities that are afforded to them now, as a result of affirmative action. As a consequence beneficiaries base their attitudes towards affirmative action on their perceptions of job opportunities available to them. They are thus more likely to hold positive attitudes towards affirmative action, if they perceive that there are ample job opportunities open to them.

However as indicated by the variance explained in the regression model non-beneficiaries tend to base their attitudes towards affirmative action on their perceptions of job opportunities available to them, to a slightly larger extent than beneficiaries. This is logical and makes practical sense considering that, the primary aim of affirmative action is to afford previously disadvantaged groups employment opportunities. Thus, it is natural that non- beneficiaries will form attitudes towards affirmative action based on their perceptions of job opportunities open to them and others like them. The possible decline in job opportunities for non- beneficiaries, as a result of affirmative action will naturally impact on their attitudes towards affirmative action. Kravitz and Plantania, (1993) maintain that for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries attitudes towards affirmative action will be based on perceived preferential treatment and the impact that it has on job opportunities.

An alternative reason may possibly be that the simple awareness of the aims of affirmative action and the measures that have been implemented may impact on perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action. Therefore the sheer knowledge that affirmative action affords beneficiaries preferential treatment may impact on both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action, irrespective of whether they have actually experienced any personal consequence of affirmative action.

Hypothesis 5: Justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action

Leck, Saunders and Charbonneau (1997) examined the perceived fairness of affirmative action and the effects on employee attitudes. In their study they found that non-beneficiaries were more likely to resist affirmative action when they perceived that notions of equity and equality were violated (Leck, Saunders and Charbonneau, 1997). Moreover the results of their 1997 study demonstrated that justice perceptions of affirmative action play an important role in and directly influencing attitudes towards affirmative action (Leck, Saunders and Charbonneau, 1997). The literature review thus argued that attitudes towards affirmative action are influenced by perceptions as to whether affirmative action legislation consists of fair and just policies and procedures.

According to Kravitz and Plantania (1993) opposition towards affirmative action policies is due to the perception that affirmative action gives beneficiaries of affirmative action an unfair economic advantage, and therefore may be deemed unjust. Moreover, Sharlicki and Folger, (1997) argued that if policies and programmes are deemed unfair or unjust, the affected groups may experience anger, outrage and resentment as well as exhibit negative attitudes towards affirmative action. Therefore justice perceptions of affirmative, whether affirmative action is deemed fair and just will impact and influence attitudes towards affirmative action (Kravitz and Plantania, 1993).

The results yielded in the current research were consistent with research cited in the literature review. Strong support was thus found for the fifth hypothesis which stated that there is a significant relationship between justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action. Therefore, justice perceptions of affirmative action as to whether affirmative action is deemed fair or unfair impacts on attitudes towards affirmative action. It can be assumed that if perceptions of affirmative action are fair and just they will be linked to positive attitudes towards affirmative action, while negative justice perceptions of affirmative action will be associated with negative attitudes towards affirmative action.

According to the regression results there tends to be a stronger association between justice perceptions of affirmative action in beneficiaries than in non-beneficiaries. A possible reason for this may be because beneficiaries view affirmative action to be fair and just to a larger extent than non- beneficiaries and are therefore more positive about its implementation. Beneficiaries may view affirmative action as a policy that can enable them to heal the damage caused by apartheid, and thus deem that affirmative action is fair and just in that regard. Beneficiaries most probably feel stronger about affirmative action as it is a form of justice and equalising the playing fields.

On the other hand non-beneficiaries may possibly feel that affirmative action is to a certain extent unfair as it restricts their opportunities, they therefore may exhibit negative justice perceptions of affirmative action which will result in them having negative attitudes towards affirmative action. This is consistent with research conducted by Kravitz and Plantania (1993)

which found that whites support equal opportunity, but oppose affirmative action, because they oppose quota hiring as it is deemed unfair.

Thus the results of the current study are consistent with previous research which documents that justice perceptions of affirmative action impact on attitudes towards affirmative action (Leck, Saunders, Charbonneau, 1996).

Conclusion

Affirmative action has in the past been described as a contentious policy (Heilman, Block and Lucas 1992), which evokes controversial attitudes. However the results of the current research seem to provide evidence that in fact affirmative action is not as controversial in South Africa as previous researchers have suggested (Katz 1999, Falconer 2000). The overall statistical findings reveal that although beneficiaries of affirmative action tend to be more in support of affirmative action, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries seem to agree that affirmative action is a good policy and which should be implemented to eradicate the ills of the past. The results of both groups indicate that they have favourable attitudes towards affirmative action. Although it is however understandable, that beneficiaries are slightly more positive than non-beneficiaries as they have the most to gain from affirmative action. Moreover these findings are in keeping with past research (Kravitz and Plantania, 1993, Parker, et al, 1997), which documents that although non-beneficiaries support equal opportunity they are generally less positive about affirmative action, due to the perception that the policies give beneficiaries an unfair economic advantage.

Locus of control however did not relate to any of the variables, indicating that the effect of locus of control in this context seems to be reduced. Three of the five hypotheses were found to be significant, while two of the five hypotheses were not confirmed.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

In the literature review chapter 1, a model of attitudes towards affirmative action was proposed. This model highlighted the probability that locus of control impacts on perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action, which in turn both impact on attitudes towards affirmative action. An argument was presented in the literature review indicating that it is likely that the way in which a person attributes punishments and rewards in life to their own or out side control will naturally impact on whether they think there are job opportunities available to them as a result of either their own attributes and internal control or as a result of outside influences and the degree to whether they deem affirmative action fair and just. However locus of control was found to have a non-significant impact than what was thought demonstrating that locus of control's effect is some what reduced in the context for which it was evaluated. It was explained that the other variables such as perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action may override locus of control and dampen its effect. Moreover the context in which the research was conducted is also possibly over powering and which gives reason for the dampened effect of locus of control. It is expected that outside of the South African affirmative action context locus of control may prove to be a more dominant predictor of perceptions of job opportunities. It is recommended that further research be conducted to investigate whether significant results emerge in the future. Perhaps in future research a broader more varied sample should be used to examine the impact of locus of control. Moreover possibly a shorter more succinct locus of control scale should also be used. Should non-significant differences arise again, it can be taken to mean that locus of control indeed does not impact on

justice perceptions of affirmative action, perceptions of job opportunities or attitudes towards affirmative action

As demonstrated by the current literature review much research has been conducted on affirmative action, but in the United States (Kravitz and Plantania, 1993; Parker, Baltes and Christiansen, 1997; Scharlicki and Folger, 1997; Heilman, Block and Lucas, 1992; Leck, Saunders and Charbonneau, 1996; Arvey and Campion, 1982), which is not considered applicable to the South African context, for the reason that our history and political past is vastly different. Furthermore our population is diverse with many cultures and languages and therefore South Africans can not be compared to Americans. In addition affirmative action affects all South Africans and as a result more emphasis should be placed on this area. Further research on affirmative action in South Africa should be conducted bearing in mind that affirmative action is expected to have a significant impact on the South African population.

This research has also highlighted that affirmative action is not as contentious as previous research has suggested (Falconer, 2000), in fact the current research results show that both beneficiaries and non beneficiaries of affirmative action have favourable attitudes towards affirmative action. Affirmative action can largely be said to be a policy that is accepted by both beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries of affirmative action. Thus, primarily positive attitudes towards affirmative action were found for both groups, although non-beneficiaries were slightly less positive about affirmative action than beneficiaries. This can be understood, since non – beneficiaries do not stand to benefit from the policies and therefore are slightly less positive for that reason.

Even though this research found mainly favourable attitudes towards affirmative action, it is felt that affirmative action is a policy that should receive much attention and should be continuously monitored, because attitudes could become more negative as time passes and the momentum of affirmative action increases. Affirmative action is gaining force, and the full brunt of affirmative action and its affect will soon be wide spread. It is expected as more pressure is placed on organisations to come up with figures that reflect increased black empowerment, non beneficiary attitudes will become increasingly negative primarily because more weight will be placed on quotas.

Another possible reason why vast differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were not found may be due to the student population that was used for this research. The final year bachelor of accounting students used are a group of people who have had only a limited amount of exposure to affirmative action and may not have fully experienced the force of affirmative action, and thus their attitudes may not be based on direct experiences, and as a result may not be a true reflection of attitudes towards affirmative action. A varied sample should be used in future research in order to ascertain attitudes towards affirmative action.

The current research has also highlighted perceptions of job opportunities, an issue that has not received enough attention. The relative availability of job opportunities for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries is an issue that needs to be further addressed in light of affirmative action.

Theoretically perceptions of job opportunities should receive more attention primarily because it has strong links to the success of affirmative action. Attitudes towards affirmative action will differ based on the perception of job opportunities available. Perceptions of a lack of job opportunities will result in negative attitudes towards affirmative action for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, while perceptions of job availability may cause attitudes towards affirmative action to be positive for both groups. Therefore perceptions of job opportunities should receive additional attention as it has practical implications and impacts on people's perceptions and attitudes within the current context.

Much more research is needed as this information is essential if attitudes towards affirmative action are to be understood and also if public policy is to be adequately guided. Moreover, information about expectations must be accompanied by information about how the public evaluates affirmative action. Despite the immense importance and potential controversial nature of affirmative action, too little empirical work on this subject has been reported. Public policy should be informed by empirical data. When public reactions to policy are as important as reactions to affirmative action, it is especially important that relevant data be obtained and made available to policy makers. The present research is a step in that direction, however further steps should follow.

LIMITATIONS

A primary limitation of the current research was the sample that was used. Fourth year accounting students are not representative of entire South African population. Thus generalisability to the rest of the South African population is not possible, moreover generalisability to the rest of the student population is also not possible. It is suggested that in the future a more diverse population in terms of demographic as well as occupational fields should be used.

However the advantage of using final year bachelor of accounting students is that they are a group of people who are largely met with a great deal of competition as it is necessary for them to compete with their fellow students for a three year articles contract and places are limited. There is thus a lot of pressure on this group to find employment in a short space of time. In addition these students are the future professionals of South Africa and their perceptions and attitudes are valuable.

The sample size of 93 respondents also proved to be a limitation, although this was due to limited access to fourth year students. Sample size seems to have a great deal to do with whether or not an 'acceptable' level of statistical significance is achieved (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). Therefore the small sample size may have reduced the power of the statistical scales. In addition to a small sample size, there were unequal group sizes, as there were more beneficiary students than non-beneficiary students, therefore comparisons between the groups should be

made with caution. Possibly in future research equal sample sizes should be used to obtain equal representation.

Affirmative action is a contentious topic and the researcher has not ruled out the possibility that the "good subject effect" impacted on respondents answers to certain touchy questions. It is possible that respondents answered in a politically correct manner and may not have been totally truthful in their responses towards affirmative action (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). Social desirability may, therefore have been a factor, especially given that affirmative action is a controversial topic. It is possible that students tried to present themselves in a favourable light in relation to affirmative action, which is viewed as a politically correct policy.

An additional limitation to this study is that it does not directly explore the psychological bases underlying attitudes. Therefore such research should be conducted if one is to understand attitudes towards affirmative action. Psychological explanations have included traditional and modern racism, belief in the dominant ideology of opportunity, self interest, fairness and other concepts (Kravitz, 1993; Nacoste, 1987). Thus future research should provide information about the relative importance of these factors.

CONCLUSION

Affirmative action has been accused of promoting inherent unfairness of practices and procedures that give preferential treatment to certain groups of people based on gender, race and ethnicity (Parker, 1997). Affirmative action has also been accused of reducing job opportunities for non-beneficiaries, as well as being blamed for stigmatising those it aims to assist (Kravits and Plantania, 1992). Thus considering the litigious nature of affirmative action , it was deemed appropriate to conduct research on affirmative action with in the South African context, furthermore research that has in the past been conducted on affirmative action has been done in the United States. The South African context is vastly different from the American context and thus it is deemed essential to investigate affirmative action within South Africa, since research conducted on American soil can not be applied to the South African environment.

The current research was conducted to investigate final year student's justice perceptions of affirmative action, attitudes towards affirmative action, the role of locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities. The research was undertaken at a private extra accounting institution and conducted on 93 final year bachelor of accounting students. The research was conducted on this group since failing to find employment for 2005 would hamper their professional advancement. In addition this group, final year students are considered to be most affected by affirmative action as they enter the working world.

Five hypotheses were tested. The results indicted that support was found for three of the hypotheses. Therefore, indicating that attitudes towards affirmative action differs between beneficiaries and non – beneficiaries of affirmative action. Statistical confirmation was also found, demonstrating that there is a relationship between perceptions of job opportunities and attitudes towards affirmative action as well as a relationship between justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action in both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

However no support was found for locus of control, thus the statistical results did not confirm that there is a relationship between locus of control and perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action.

It can be concluded that attitudes towards affirmative action differ between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of affirmative action, however in general terms both groups do indicate a more positive attitude and perception towards affirmative action. Thus affirmative action is generally accepted by both beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries. It can also be concluded that perceptions of job opportunities is related to attitudes towards affirmative action in both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of affirmative action. However locus of control does not seem to be a dominant factor and does not significantly impact on perceptions of job opportunities or justice perceptions of affirmative action.

This research has effectively highlighted the potential contentious nature of affirmative action as well as successfully investigating the underlying constructs which impact on attitudes towards

affirmative action. The current study has aptly demonstrated that perceptions of job opportunities and justice perceptions of affirmative action can influence attitudes towards affirmative action in both beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries. The degree to which affirmative action is perceived fair and just has attitudinal consequences and thus there is a direct link between justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards affirmative action, the same is for perceptions of job opportunities which also influences attitudes towards affirmative action. It is therefore critical that the impact of affirmative action be recognised and that better efforts to understand the implications of attitudes towards affirmative action be made. This research is just one step in that direction.

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Subject Information Sheet Quantitative research- Appendix A

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My name is Janine Claire Grasslin, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is that of Affirmative action, and its impact on final year university students. The research aims to explore final year university student's justice perceptions of affirmative action and attitudes towards Affirmative: In addition to this the research will explore the role of locus of control, which is a personality variable, which assessed to what people attribute their good and bad fortune to, and perceptions of job opportunities. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this research will entail completing the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and no student will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to complete or not complete the questionnaire. While questions are asked about your personal attitudes, no identifying information, such as your name or I.D. number, is asked for, and as such you will remain anonymous. Your completed questionnaire will not be seen by any person in this University at any time, and will only be processed by myself. Your responses will only be looked at in relation to all other responses. This means that feedback will be in the form of group responses and not individual perceptions.

If you choose to participate in the study please complete the attached questionnaire as carefully and honestly as possible. Myself the researcher, will provide a sealed box in which you may place your completed questionnaire as you leave the lecture room. Once all the students have left the lecture room I will immediately collect all the questionnaires from the sealed box. This will ensure that no one will have access to the completed questionnaires, and will ensure your confidentiality. If you do return your questionnaire, this will be considered consent to participate in the study.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute both to a larger body of knowledge on attitudes towards Affirmative Action and job opportunities. This can help to inform the future development of policies and procedures.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, it is greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards,

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Appendix B

Attitudes towards Affirmative Action Questionnaire

Biographical Information (For descriptive purposes only)

Please fill in the following information or make a cross over the appropriate box:

Age _____

Race

Black	Coloured	Indian	White

Gender

Male
Female

Mother tongue (language) _____

Are you studying a Bachelor of Accounting degree?	YES	NO
Are you in your final year of study?	YES	NO

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: answer as honestly as possible, by making a cross over the appropriate box:
Please note*:* the term 'beneficiaries' is, according to the Affirmative action policy, a general term referring to Blacks; Coloureds; Indians and Asians, Whilst the term non-beneficiaries refers to whites.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Affirmative action is a good policy					
2	I would not like to work at an organisation with an Affirmative Action plan					
3	The goals of affirmative action are good.					
4	Employees should be actively involved in attempts to improve the affirmative action conditions at their place of employment.					
5	I would be willing to work at an organisation with an affirmative action plan.					
6	All in all, I oppose Affirmative Action in industry for beneficiaries of the policies.					

Justice perceptions of affirmative action Questionnaire

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

		Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree
1	Past discrimination in the work place must be redressed.			
2	Equality in the work place must be promoted through this act			
3	It is important to achieve a workforce representative of our population			
4	Procedures out lined in affirmative action are free from all forms of unfair discrimination.			
5	Affirmative action policies take in to account all parties interests			
6	Affirmative action policies allow for decisions to be based on accurate information			
7	Policies of Affirmative action are designed to favour certain groups			
8	Policies of Affirmative action allow for incorrect decisions to be changed			
9	Policies of Affirmative action apply equally to every one			
10	Policies of Affirmative action are just and fair			
11	Policies of Affirmative action allow for all parties concerns to be heard			
12	Policies of Affirmative action allow for all parties to have a say in how decisions are made			
13	Affirmative action reflects respect for all parties			
14	Affirmative action considers all parties view points			
15	Affirmative action values all parties as important in the work place			
16	This act Allows for all parties to be part of the affirmative action process			
17	Affirmative action promotes reverse racism			
18	The affirmative action act is a fair and just one			

Locus of control questionnaire

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.					
2	Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.					
3	Most people don't realise the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.					
4	Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.					
5	Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.					
6	Many times I feel that I have little influence over the thing that happen to me					
7	Unfortunately, an individuals worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he tries					
8	Most students don't realise the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.					
9	I have often found that what is going to happen will happen					
10	With out the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader.					
11	Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.					
12	People's misfortunes result from mistakes they make.					
13	Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities					
14	The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.					
15	In the long run people get the respect that they					

	deserve this world.					
16	In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test					
17	What happens to me is my own doing.					
18	People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.					
19	Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.					
20	In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.					
21	People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.					
22	There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades that I get.					
23	In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.					
24	There is really no such thing as "luck"					
25	It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life					
26	Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.					
27	Getting people to do the right things depend upon ability, luck has little or nothing to do with it.					
28	Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.					
29	Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.					
30	By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.					
31	This world is run by a few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.					
32	With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption					
33	The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions					
34	It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.					
35	As far as world affairs are concerned, Most of					

	us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control.					
36	In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.					
37	One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't enough interest in politics.					
38	There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.					
39	No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.					
40	It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune any how.					
41	It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.					
42	There is not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.					
43	Most of the time I cant understand why politicians behave the way they do.					
44	When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.					
45	How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.					
46	Many times we might as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.					

Perceptions of job opportunities

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	It will be difficult for me to find a job					
2	There are not many jobs available in South Africa					
3	It will take a long time before I find a job in the field that I have been studying					

4	I feel that employment legislation makes it harder for me to find a job.					
5	There are plenty of jobs available for people like me.					
6.	Employment legislation assists me in finding a job					