



**STRESS EXPERIENCED BY WHITE MALES AS A RESULT OF
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: AN ALTERNATIVE STORY.**

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ABSTRAK

Hierdie skripsie fokus op die stres wat blanke mans ervaar as gevolg van regstellende aksie. Die outeur het besluit om hierdie navorsing van regstellende aksie en stres te bespreek vanaf 'n post-moderne, sosiale konstruktivistiese perspektief.

Die doel van hierdie studie is:

Om die sosiale konstruktivistiese perspektief toe te pas op die kwessie van stres wat verwant is aan regstellende aksie, om te bepaal of die konstruksie wat blanke mans het oor regstellende aksie hulle ervaring van stres sal affekteer.

Om die doel van hierdie studie te bereik, het die navorser van kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe ondersoek metodes gebruik gemaak. Die kwalitatiewe ondersoek sluit in die gebruik van 'n geformuleerde vraelys tesame met onderhoude wat met die respondente gevoer is. Hulle reaksies is bespreek vanaf 'n sosiale konstruktivistiese perspektief om sodoende ondersoek in te stel na hoe die individu sy realiteit gekonstrueer het met betrekking tot regstellende aksie.

Sosiale konstruktivisme suggereer dat die manier waarop die individu sy konstruksie van regstellende aksie formuleer, 'n belangrik rol kan speel in die individu se ervaring van stres. Die implikasie hiervan is dat dit nie noodwendig regstellende aksie per sé is wat na stres kan lei nie, maar dat die konstruksie van regstellende aksie iets is wat tot stres kan lei. Deur die bogenoende in gedagte te hou, kan dit moontlik wees om die negatiewe konstruksie van regstellende aksie af te breek deur middel van de-konstruksie, om sodoende 'n meer positiewe konstruksie te vorm. Deur 'n persoon se konstruksie sodoende te verander, kan meegebring word dat stres dalk sal verminder en selfs geëlimineer kan word.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the years of apartheid in South Africa, people of colour were prevented from sharing in equal opportunities as afforded to their white counterparts such as equal access to education, training and being equally represented in industry. However with the political and socio-economic changes that took place in the country in the early 1990's, efforts were made to redress the discrimination and injustices of the past. These changes included that business in South Africa wanted to and needed to tap into a range of employment talents that were needed to broaden and extend business capability beyond the white minority, especially that of the white male (Thomas, 1996:1).

Therefore with the inception of our democratic society in 1994, affirmative action has become a core issue in the recruitment of all personnel in South Africa. According to Hermann (2000:5) and de Bruyn (1996:5) affirmative action can be defined as the selection and recruitment of employees from the previously disadvantaged groups. It aims at redressing the imbalances of the past and would typically include the employment and advancement of Blacks, Coloureds, Indians, White women and the disabled. Lussier (2000:234) substantiates this by maintaining that affirmative action was created to correct the past exclusion of women and majorities from organizations in South Africa. Hermann (2000:10) concludes that the government's policy of equal employment and the removal of discrimination will not automatically lead to the progression and development of groups who did not enjoy equal opportunities in the past. Therefore definite measures for creating equal opportunities such as affirmative action are needed to ensure that equality is not just a formality but that it is accomplished in a notable way.

Thomas (1996:6) and Pillay (1998:1) state that affirmative action has been seen not only as a means of correcting past historical injustices but also as an attempt to create level playing fields where everyone can compete based upon equal access to education, training and other opportunities formerly restricted to the white population.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the implementation of affirmative action there have been advantages as well as disadvantages. One of the disadvantages as stated by Lussier (2000:234) and Muller and Roodt (2000:11) is that with the inception of affirmative action, percentages and quotas were delivered until it came to a point where reverse discrimination came into being. Many organizations started to employ people of colour, paying little attention to qualifications and / or experience. As a result of this situation, the white males in South Africa may often feel threatened. The consequences of affirmative action can therefore cause a great deal of stress for the white males, depending on how it is experienced by those who do not form part of the targeted group. Therefore the focus of this stress would be particularly on the white male in the work environment.

The type of stress emanating from the work environment can be experienced in a number of ways. Davies (1999:44) maintains that definitions of job stress vary but tend to focus on the reaction that people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them. An important consequence of these pressures and demands of job stress is the fact that it produces negative effects for both the organization as well as the employee. For the employee the effect of this consequence is three fold:

- Increased physical health problems.
- Psychological distress.
- Resulting behavioural changes.

Behavioural changes affect employees both in their productivity in the organization as well as their life style outside of the work place. For the

organisation the results are disorganization, disruption in normal operations, lowered performance and a decrease in profit margins. Behaviourial changes in life style include an increase in stress which can manifest itself in one's career and personal life (Davies, 1999:45).

Some of the modernist approaches regarding affirmative action and stress would suggest that affirmative action and stress can be studied objectively so that a diagnosis can be made. Some modernist approaches try to explain affirmative action and stress as sharing a relationship whereby affirmative action may be seen to cause stress. It is thought that stress is dependent on a stimulus. Taking this into account would suggest that affirmative action might be seen as this stimulus. However, this modernist approach (which will be discussed in depth in chapter 2 and 4) has shortcomings in that it is limited in it's explanation or view of how affirmative action may or may not affect an individual's experience of stress.

An alternative approach to the modernist one is a postmodern approach. This (postmodern) perspective regarding affirmative action and stress would suggest that affirmative action in itself does not cause stress, but that it is rather the manner in which individuals come to define and interpret affirmative action that will cause stress.

1.3 GOAL STATEMENT

As stated above, the modernist approach to affirmative action and stress would suggest that the stress that the white males experience is as a result of the affirmative action that they are being exposed to. Some modernist opinions hold that affirmative action and stress share a relationship where the two components are dependent on each other. In other words, for there to be stress the white males would have to be exposed to affirmative action. However, the problem with this view is that it is limited

in its explanation of how the stress that is being experienced can be as a result of affirmative action.

A postmodern approach views affirmative action and stress differently. The reason for this is because postmodernism takes the individuals' constructions of these terms into consideration. Unlike the modernist approach which maintains that research can be conducted objectively, postmodernism approaches research subjectively. This means that postmodernism takes into consideration that people view affirmative action and stress differently. This is because they have different constructions of these terms which may result in them having a particular perception and experience of affirmative action and stress. In other words, the way in which people have constructed their idea of affirmative action and stress (i.e. the manner in which they have defined and interpreted it) will result in how they react to it, be it in a negative or positive manner.

Bearing this in mind, if one considers the implications of the postmodern perspective (which will be discussed later in this chapter) with regards to affirmative action, then it would suggest that a person can change his experience of affirmative action by changing his perception or construction of it. Another implication of the postmodern approach is that affirmative action in itself is not viewed as the central factor in causing stress but rather that a person's construction of affirmative action will be the main problem. An important implication of this is that a person's construction of affirmative action may be changed which could result in the better experience of stress.

The goal of this study can be summarized as :

Applying the social constructivist perspective to the issue of affirmative action related to stress as a means of exploring whether the manner in which white males construct their reality of affirmative action will affect their experience of stress.

1.3.1 EPISTEMOLOGY

It is the author's intention to work from a *postmodern and social constructivist approach* in discovering how an individual's construction of affirmative action may or may not lead to the experience of stress.

According to Kotze (1995:21) postmodernism is an approach to research whereby objective knowledge is viewed as impossible. The reason for this is that in postmodernism more than one reality or multiple realities are preferred in conducting research. It is the writer's opinion that by doing this a more balanced and open view to research can take place.

According to Freedman and Combs (1996:22) some of the main ideas surrounding postmodernism are that:

1. Realities are socially constructed.
(By reality, the writer means that which the individual knows to be true.)
2. Realities are constituted through language.
3. Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.
4. There are no essential truths.

The social constructivist approach that is utilized in this dissertation ties in closely with the subjective view that postmodernism holds with regard to research as it takes each individual's interpretation and experience of events into consideration. Therefore it can be deduced that the white males concerned in this study will describe affirmative action and stress subjectively as it is based on their experiences of these terms.

The writer chose the postmodern approach for this dissertation as she feels that it offers a useful approach to research where the experiences of the respondents are noted without trying to objectify their experiences and perceptions. This is important

as the writer wishes to reflect the respondents' experiences as unique to each individual.

The social construction discourse is also made use of in this research as the writer feels that it offers a viable alternative in the explanation of how people come to construct their meanings around important issues (such as affirmative action and stress) as opposed to using some of the modernist discourses.

This approach (social constructivism) as well as postmodernism as a whole will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

1.3.2 METHOD OF RESEARCH

1.3.2.1 Research Orientation

For the purpose of this dissertation a literature study will be one of the sources of information gathering on affirmative action (Thomas 1996; Madi 1993; Hermann 2000; Mdhuli 2000) and stress (Scott 1992; Brewer 1997; Sutherland and Copper 2000; Aldwin 1994). The types of literature that will be consulted will include books, journal articles and the legislative Employment Equity Act 66 of 1995. The literature utilized clarifies the theories that will be applied in this research as it defines, broadens, clarifies and elaborates on them.

This study will also make use of qualitative as well as quantitative research methods from which conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made with regard to how individuals have come to construct their perceptions of affirmative action and stress.

The qualitative research conducted includes information and data that will be obtained by means of interviews in conjunction with the use of a carefully formulated

questionnaire. The interviews are made use of as there is limited information available on how stress as a result of affirmative action affects the white male. The interviews and accompanying questionnaires are used to explain the differences amongst white men concerning their experiences about affirmative action, diversity and stress.

1.3.2.2 Subjects

- The subjects chosen for this research are white males working in a large industrial environment that are influenced by the application of affirmative action.

These respondents were randomly selected from an organizational structure that was drawn to ensure diversity with regard to age, job level, level of management and experience.

1.4 PROCEDURE

The type of methodological research utilized in this dissertation incorporates qualitative and quantitative research as a tool for the gathering of information. The qualitative research used comprises of a literature study, interviews as well as an analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires. This information will then be interpreted to see how the white males have reacted to affirmative action.

According to Godsell (1983:10) research that involves direct contact with respondents (such as interviews), means that “ involving participants in discussions at all stages of research will confirm their status as part of a team trying to shed light on certain phenomena, rather than passive objects to be manipulated by the researchers in pursuit of goals”.

Looker et al (1989:314) supports the use of one on one interaction with the subjects to gather information by stating that “ Its strength is in getting the richness of information in the respondents own words, not some preselected and potentially artificial categories”.

Quantitative research is also utilized in this study by statistically reflecting the responses of white males. A summary of the similarities and differences in the experiences of the respondents with regard to affirmative action and stress will also be undertaken.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The writer wishes to familiarise the reader with some of the most important terms in this study in an attempt to prevent any confusion or misunderstanding that may occur.

1. Modernism:

Modernism can be defined as an approach to research that views the world as existing independently of experts so that it can be studied objectively. Key words that are associated with modernism include: rationalization, objectivity and neutrality (Ubbink, 2000:48).

2. Postmodernism:

According to Kotze (1995:21) postmodernism is an approach to research which views the objective description of the world and its events as impossible. This approach prefers to adopt a more subjective approach to research. This will be greatly elaborated on in the following chapter.

3. Realities:

In the context of this dissertation, realities refer to that which the individual believes to be true. In other words it is the manner in which he experiences the environment that he functions in and the world in which he lives.

4. Discourse:

According to Kotze (1997:28) discourse has become a central concept in postmodern thought. It is therefore used as a “process of conversation” where meanings are constituted and made sense of (Kotze, 1997:28).

5. Stories:

White and Epston (1990:10) maintain that people arrange their experiences of events in sequences across time so that they arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them. These accounts that they have of themselves can be defined as stories.

1.6 AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement

In this chapter the author wishes to orientate the reader as to the content of the dissertation. This would include the problem being researched, i.e. the effect of stress on the white male as a result of affirmative action. It identifies the goal of the dissertation as well as the procedure to be followed.

It also serves as a general introduction for the forthcoming chapters.

Chapter 2: Theories

This chapter focuses on the postmodern approach to research. The goal of this chapter is to discuss the modernist theory, postmodernism as well as the social construction theory as it will serve as a backdrop for further discussions in later chapters.

Chapter 3: Affirmative Action – An Overview

Chapter 3 focuses on the various definitions and aspects of affirmative action. It also gives an historical overview of affirmative action and reflects it from a South African perspective.

Chapter 4: Stress

Chapter 4 defines and discusses stress and the effect that it has on people as reflected from a modernist view. This will serve as a backdrop for further discussions in chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 5: Method of Research

This chapter will focus on the various research methods used in this study and will discuss them in depth. Particular attention will be given to the qualitative and quantitative methods of research that are utilized.

Chapter 6: Integration and interpretation of the empirical research

Chapter 6 will discuss the results of the research conducted. Attention will be given to the manner in which the white males interviewed have constructed their views on affirmative action and stress.

Chapter 7: Summary and implications of the study

Chapter 7 aims to summarise and reflect on the study as well as provide implications for further study.

CHAPTER 2: THEORIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the epistemology of this research, the writer wishes to work from a postmodern and social constructivist perspective which adopts a different approach to affirmative action and stress. It does not reflect the modernistic cause and effect stance but adopts an approach whereby attention is given to how individuals actually construct their reality regarding affirmative action. In other words, how they have experienced and lived their knowledge of it.

However, to be able to understand the postmodern discourse, one firstly needs to define and describe modernism as it forms a backdrop against which post modernism can be discussed. Secondly, postmodernism and the social construction theory will be discussed in depth. This is done to provide the reader with a more detailed understanding of these terms, where in further chapters they will be linked to affirmative action and stress as experienced by the white males interviewed.

2.2. MODERNISM

In the writer's opinion, one of the most important beliefs of the modernistic approach as echoed by Ubbink (2000:48) is that the world exists independently of experts and that it can be studied objectively. It is believed that reality is described exactly as it is seen. McLean (1997:9) elaborates on this premise by stating that the modernist approach is an attempt to objectify knowledge, whereby the rationale is that knowledge enables society to make accurate predictions about cause and effect relations and this results in mastery over the future. This is how many of the individuals that were interviewed view affirmative action and stress. Many of the

white males see the application of affirmative action in the workplace as having a direct link to stress, i.e. affirmative action causes stress.

Therefore in this epistemology lies the belief of an objective world where the essential and universal truths are exposed. According to Van Heerden (1996:28) modernism holds that people can describe reality as it is seen through certain scientific methods. Empirical research principles will be the same everywhere, regardless of the identity of the researcher, time and various situations.

According to Swanepoel (1999:21) scientific and social sciences share a general logic and methodology that assures the validity of knowledge and that excludes subjectivity. It states that if knowledge is obtained in this manner then the investigation of an epistemology is unnecessary. McLean (1997:10) elaborates further by stating that modernist presumptions about psychology include a belief in a basic subject matter and this matter is thought to possess universal properties so that it is possible to discover principles or laws governing it. Pauw (1997:70) substantiates this by stating that modernism can be linked to a time period where the fundamental rise in industrialisation and technology led to people being filled with great optimism. The universe was considered as a logical law and there was a feeling that the underlying principles of these laws could be discovered by man. Scientific rules and procedures were laid down and these scientific methods were accepted and applied by all disciplines. According to McLean (1997:10) this belief results in the world being experienced as knowable and that through the use of diagnostic tools and controlled experiments, a systematic study can reveal the true status of the world in which we live.

However there has been criticism for using the modernistic approach to research as it is seen as being unfair and biased, particularly towards marginalized groups such as lesbian groups that are considered to deviate from the norm. From this point of view there has been a growing belief that "truth" is a matter of perspective and that we do

not improve our knowledge of the world through systematic study but by the way we shift our way of seeing the world. Dill (1997:2) emphasizes this by stating that post modernism is a reaction to the standard scientific method. According to McLean (1997:10) this has become the postmodern turn.

Doherty (1991:40) states that while modernism comprises an aesthetic of purity, clarity, order and analytical abstraction, postmodernism tends toward elaboration, eclecticism, ornamentation and inclusiveness. It is concluded then that by adopting a postmodern stance to research and therapy, a rich blend of perspectives and a pluralistic approach to theory is achieved in contrast to the more exclusive modernistic focus.

2.3 POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is difficult to describe. Geertsema (1989:10) states that due to its complexity it is not easy to define. This view is supported by Kotze (1995:19) who states that postmodernism is described by various authors as being controversial, ambiguous and difficult to pin down. The author goes on to state that postmodernism emerged as a reaction to the modernistic idea of committedness to the use of a language of objectivity, empirical observation, quantitative measuring, reductionism, representation as well as truth as facts and knowledge that can be verified.

Lax (1992: 69) summarises postmodernism as focusing on ideas regarding text or narrative, with attention given to the importance of dialogic / multiple perspectives, self disclosure, lateral versus hierarchical configurations and attention to process rather than goals. Freedman and Combs (1996:21) state that postmodernists believe that there are limits on the ability of human beings to measure and describe the universe in any precise, absolute and universally applicable way. They go on to say that they differ from modernists in that exceptions interest them more than the rules and that they are concerned with meaning rather than facts.

Hoffmann (1992), Kotze (1995:19) and Dill (1991) state that postmodernism, which is also known as the postmodern discourse, is where objective knowledge is seen as impossible. If one takes this into consideration, it could mean that postmodernism views affirmative action and stress as subjective. This is because these terms (affirmative action and stress) are described differently by various people according to their experience of it. The implication of this is that more than one or multiple realities will be preferred in research.

According to Freedman and Combs (1996:22), postmodernism is based on four ideas. They are:

- Realities are socially constructed.
- Realities are constituted through language.
- Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.
- There are no essential truths.

These will now be discussed in further detail.

Realities are socially constructed

According to Freedman and Combs (1996:23) a central aspect of postmodernism is that beliefs, laws, social customs etc – “all the things that make up the psychological fabric of reality”- arise through social interaction over time. In other words, people together construct their realities as they live by them. This is how many of the people interviewed, experienced affirmative action. In their opinions, what they understood by affirmative action was as a result of the manner in which they were socialized and “taught” by peers, family and society as a whole. This view on how affirmative action is constructed is supported by McLean (1997:11) who states that our realities are constructed by what our society and culture hold to be true so that our society’s beliefs, values systems and customs help to constitute ourselves.

Realities are constituted through language

Postmodernists focus on how the language that is used constitutes the world and its beliefs. It is in language that societies construct their views of reality. To postmodernists the only world that people can know is the world we share in language. Language is an interactive process, not a passive receiving of preexisting truths (Freedman and Combs, 1996:28). This view that reality is constructed through language is substantiated by Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) when they state that : “language does not mirror nature, language **creates** the **natures** we know.”

Realities are organised and maintained through narratives

According to White and Epston (in Freedman and Combs, 1996:31) if the realities we inhabit are brought forth in the language we use, they are then kept alive by being passed along in the stories that are lived and told. In striving to make sense of life, people face the task of arranging their experiences of events in sequences across time in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them. This account can be referred to as a story or self narrative. The success of this storying of experience provides persons with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives and this is relied upon for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences (White & Epston, 1990:25).

There are no essential truths

Freedman and Combs (1996:33) summarise this best when they state that there are many possibilities for how any given experience may be interpreted, but no interpretation is “really” true. Where a modernist worldview would close down options and work methodically to identify a universally applicable interpretation, postmodernism would celebrate diversity. This view of postmodernism is supported if one considers that many of the white males interviewed, each have a different interpretation of what affirmative action and stress is.

According to Ubbink (2000:49) another characteristic of postmodernism is that there is an attempt to move away from diagnosing and labeling of individuals so that one can rather focus on and accentuate the potential to manage problems, which in the case of this dissertation is affirmative action and stress.

Kotze (1995:23) states that it must be borne in mind that by using the term postmodern discourse, an attempt should be made to avoid an ideological and exclusive connotation while at the same time opening space for the possibility to respect and include modernistic paradigms within the post modernistic discourse. Therefore a both/and rather than an either/or stance is preferred. Lax (1992:72) emphasizes this by stating that in the interplay of the said versus the not-said and the present versus the not-present, there is the potential of another position or perspective which has not yet been distinguished to emerge.

Lax (1992:69) concludes that postmodernism is also characterised by the following:

- That the self is conceived not as a reified entity but as a narrative.
- Text is not something to be interpreted but is an evolving process.
- That the individual is considered within a context of social meaning rather than as an intrapsychic entity.

Therefore taking the above into account would mean that the individual is affected by exposure to social processes in the development of his beliefs, attitudes and experience of life. Social processes therefore have an important impact on how people construct the world and come to experience it. This will be elaborated on in the following section.

2.3.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY

The writer feels that it is important to discuss the social construction theory as it forms part of the postmodern paradigm as well as the author's chosen epistemology.

According to Kotze (1997:30) the social construction theory does not view knowledge as an objective reflection of external reality but rather as the social construction of people in their attempt to live together. Burger (1999:74) substantiates this by stating that the world is seen as a social construction which is the product of a historical interaction between people. This means that the knowledge and ideas that people have about the world are viewed as being socially constructed. Knowledge is therefore controlled by the values and normative rules of the community (Burger, 1999:74).

The social construction theory is further defined and elaborated on by the following authors who state that :

Social construction is that which is concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live (Gergen,1985:3).

McLean (1997:11) goes on to say that the social construction theory means that our realities are constructed by what our society and culture hold to be true so that our society's beliefs, values systems and customs help to constitute ourselves.

For Kotze (1997:27) the social construction discourse or theory is a means whereby language or conversation is made use of as a means to help people, while for Hoffman (1990:2) the social construction theory places emphasis on social interpretation and the inter-subjective influence of language, family and culture.

From the above it can be concluded that knowledge, which in this case is that of affirmative action and stress, is seen as the result of social processes and not as a result of the objective description of realities. Taking this into consideration, the

social construction perspective would suggest that the white males interviewed would have constructed their perceptions of affirmative action as a result of the social processes that they have been exposed to. This could include the social processes of education, political stances, monetary issues, family and social interaction and pressures and personal values and convictions. However one must not forget the importance that language plays here as social interaction cannot take place without language. This is substantiated by Kotze (1995:32) when she states that knowledge, which in the case of this research concerns affirmative action and stress, is negotiated meaning which occurs within the context of linguistic interaction. In other words affirmative action and stress get their meaning from being able to articulate them in language. The social construction of this knowledge (of affirmative action and stress) emphasizes the importance of language as a social phenomenon through which individuals live. Anderson (1997:30) agrees with Kotze when she states that the postmodern perspective of language and knowledge is intertwined: people generate meaning with each other through language. The importance of language and the social construction theory will now be discussed.

2.3.2 LANGUAGE AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY

Gergen (1985:266) maintains that social constructivism views discourse about the world not as a reflection of the world but as an artifact of communal interchange. In this sense, science is no longer a reflection of the world but a reflection of the social processes through which it is constructed. Hence, for there to be social interchange, there would have to be language.

According to Kotze (1995:33) language can be defined as the transportation or transferring of thoughts, meanings, processes, knowledge and information from one person's reality to another. Within the social construction theory language is seen as more than just a way of connecting people. It is through language that a social identity

is established / formed and that people can live together in a community. Language is therefore the manner in which people come to develop and experience their world and this places people in the domain of dialogue (Kotze, 1992:57).

Engelbrecht (1999:16) elaborates on this by stating that people's knowledge and ideas about the world are considered as social creations and that this affects the structure of language as individuals are imbedded in language. Ideas are formed in language constructs. People communicate with themselves and others by means of symbols and language is a symbolic communication method. Therefore people live in the domain of symbols and language.

McLean (1997:13) emphasizes that postmodernists consider language to be a socially interactive process and that language is seen as the carrier of meanings.

In other words it is through social processes that people come to define and construct meanings of affirmative action and stress. This takes place by means of the exchange of ideas and thoughts which occurs through language. Therefore it could be deduced that language constitutes our beliefs and world.

Meaning and understanding therefore come about in language (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988:37). Understanding occurs in context and does not last through time. This can be further clarified by Shotter (1993:183) who states that understanding is always a process on the way and never fully achieved: "Every way of speaking embodies a different evaluative stance, a different way of being or position in the world." In other words what one person says and understands about affirmative action and stress might not be how another would view it. In this manner then, understanding is a continuous process and never fully achieved.

Misunderstandings are therefore likely to occur. Kotze (1995:34) even goes as far as to say that misunderstandings are more likely to occur than understanding for the very reason that language does not carry meaning but brings forth meaning. The relationship between meaning and language is therefore of utmost importance.

Anderson and Goolishian (1988 :371) see the social unit as a linguistic system distinguishable by those that are “in language” about a problem.

2.3.3 LANGUAGE AND MEANING

As stated above, human systems are seen as existing only in the domain of meaning or intersubjective linguistic reality. In the domain of meaning, social systems are communication networks that are distinguished in and by language. That is, they communicate with each other, they are in conversation with each other. This domain of meaning is referred to as a linguistic or conversational domain. Meaning (understanding) within a particular social context is evolved through the dynamic social process of dialogue and conversation. We live with each other and we love with each other. All this occurs through language (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988:377).

The relationship between meaning and language is best described by Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) when they state that meaning and understanding do not exist prior to the utterances of language but come into being within language. Language therefore constitutes meaning. Life is experienced within language and how we experience it is given meaning within the parameters of our language. The language we grow up and live within in a specific culture, specifies or constitutes the experiences that we have (Kotze, 1995:35). This is how people construct their reality and more specifically how white males construct their perception of affirmative action.

From a social construction viewpoint the focus is not on the individual person but rather on the social interaction in which language is generated, sustained and abandoned. In this way language and meaning constitutes people’s lives. Anderson and Goolishian (1998:391) go onto say that the systems that they work with can be conceptualized as existing in language and therefore the problems that people have

can be thought to exist in language.

From the above discussion it can be seen that language forms an important component of the social construction discourse and therefore attention should also be given to the role that it plays in the deconstruction of realities. This will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.4 DECONSTRUCTION

According to Kotze (1995:38) radical skepticism about the dominant discourses in life as “regimes of truth” bring about an analysis of the gaps, silences, ambiguities and power relations implicit within these discourses. This general strategy is often referred to as deconstruction.

Deconstruction can be defined as “taking apart the interpretative assumptions of a system of meaning that you are examining so that you reveal the assumptions on which the model is based. As these are revealed you open space for alternative understanding.” (Anderson & Goolishian in Kotze, 1995:40)

According to Lax (1992:71) deconstruction seeks to distance people from and make them skeptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self and that are often taken for granted.

To listen for what was not said does not refer to the unconscious in a psychodynamic sense but to the opposite meaning within what was said, to validate and to question what was said and what was not said. The multiplicity and difference stemming from these activities are used in such a way that the possibilities of new meanings and realities are opened up and space is created for new ways of thinking.

One of the methods that may be used in opening up space for new ways of thinking is externalization. This is a technique that forms part of deconstruction and is used to

separate the problem that an individual may be experiencing from himself so that the problem is not seen as part of his identity (Doan, 1997:132).

According to Ubbink (2000:58) people may feel that they are part of the problem that they are experiencing and that this takes away their uniqueness. Externalisation is therefore seen as a practical method that can be used to separate the problem being experienced from the individual. The use of externalization will be discussed in more depth in chapter 6.

However, once a problem has been deconstructed by means of externalization, reconstruction will have to take place. Taking this into account one can conclude that deconstruction and reconstruction therefore go hand in hand.

2.4 CONCLUSION

According to the social construction theories discussed in this chapter, individuals develop their realities regarding issues that are important to them through the social processes that they have been subjected to as well as the storying or “linguaging” of their problems with others. Louw (1991:45) emphasises this by stating that it is the public process of conversation through which meanings are constituted. Applied to this dissertation it may refer to the meanings that are constituted about affirmative action and stress. It also refers to the systematic and institutionalized ways of speaking and writing or otherwise making sense through the use of language. It is an attempt to approach knowledge from the perspective of the social processes through which it is created (Kotze, 1997:29).

The stories or constructions that people have regarding affirmative action and stress influences the manner in which they respond to change. This is because each

individual's story shapes how he perceives, reacts to and experiences affirmative action and stress.

In the following chapter affirmative action will be discussed and explored as reflected by various South African authors.

CHAPTER 3 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION - AN OVERVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of the chapter is to create a context or a background understanding for the rest of the study. It aims to discuss affirmative action from a South African perspective by paying particular attention to how white South African males experience and view it.

The writer also wishes to explore affirmative action in terms of the various definitions that it holds as reflected by some authors, examine the origins of it as well as to reflect the various views that different race groups have regarding affirmative action.

3.2 DEFINITIONS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Herholdt and Marx (1999:14) define affirmative action as processes applied by organizations to enhance equity, correct past discrimination and development and empower members of the disadvantaged groups to create a diverse yet effective workforce which will strive to achieve organisational goals.

Mdhluli (2000:8) goes on to define affirmative action as the deliberate attempt to redress the inequalities in the working environment created by previously held ideologies, while Thomas (1996:6) considers affirmative action to be synonymous with the development of blacks and women in an attempt to counteract historical disadvantages and to create a skilled labour force.

The writer defines affirmative action as an attempt by the government to correct past racial and sexual discrimination and to allow the country to reap the benefits of

having a diverse workforce which can positively contribute to the economy of the country.

The writer wishes to note that by taking the above definitions of affirmative action into consideration, it can be deduced that white males will not form part of the group of people who are envisaged to be empowered in the labour force. This may lead white men to believe that they are now threatened in terms of job security and advancement. A possible reason for this could be because the recruitment process that is followed by many organisations gives people of colour important consideration in employment, promotions and career development (Kruger and De Klerk, 1995:417). This view that white males have that their job security is negatively affected as a result of affirmative action could possibly lead them to experience stress.

3.3 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Madi (1993:3) affirmative action has been part and parcel of modern day South Africa, having started after the 1922 white miner's strike and the subsequent "civilized labour policy" instituted by the government at the time. This labour policy was soon formalized through the passing of the 1925 Wage Act which set up wages that were in favour of white miners and the Mines and Works Act of 1926 which reserved certain jobs for whites. From the early fifties to the seventies the majority of apartheid laws that were passed were in favour of whites in general and Afrikaners in particular.

Within the context of black advancement, affirmative action can be traced back to the mid- to late seventies. The 1976 Soweto riots led companies (particularly multinationals) which endured pressure from their countries of origin to either disinvest in South Africa or embark on intensive black advancement programmes. This pressure evolved into the Sullivan Code of 1977. With the legalisation of black

trade unions after the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission in 1979 as well as their rapid growth during the eighties, the pressure was high. The political revolts of the eighties, the imposition of the state of emergency and the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 in the USA led to affirmative action gaining impetus in the South African private sector. However once the political crisis seemed under control and black aspirations were in check, affirmative action activity lost its momentum as a corporate identity (Madi; 1993:5).

However, on 2 February 1990, the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political organizations such as the ANC and PAC occurred. This led to intensive affirmative action drives. With the advent of the new South Africa in the 1990's and the speed with which president De Klerk moved the pillars of apartheid laws resulted in organizations embarking on affirmative action with ferocious zeal (Madi, 1993:6).

In the following section the views that different race groups have towards the implementation of affirmative action is reflected.

3.4 VIEWS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BY RACE

Mthluli (2000:16) points out that whites and blacks have different perspectives regarding affirmative action. Some Blacks see it as contributing towards their development while some Whites see it as threatening their careers and income. Many white males also regard affirmative action as a counterproductive and a racist policy resulting in discrimination against them (white men).

The table below reflects the nation wide survey conducted for Business Day by Market Research Africa in 1997. In this study Blacks were found to be strongly in favour of affirmative action as a policy for South Africa. Coloureds had doubts and

Whites and Indians generally opposed it (Mthluli, 2000:16).

Table 1:

Views on Affirmative Action by Race

Viewpoint	National Average	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
Good Policy	54	74	40	26	16
Bad Policy	26	7	32	59	62
Neither	10	8	15	11	14
Don't Know	11	12	13	4	8

From the above table it can be deduced that many whites (62%) view affirmative action as a bad policy. This is indicative that the majority of the whites surveyed have a negative construction of affirmative action.

3.5 THE EXPERIENCE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BY SOUTH AFRICAN WHITE MALES

According to Mthluli (2000:18) many white workers have gradually gained an understanding that although affirmative action represents a promising future to thousands of their co-workers, it can also be a double-edged sword destroying their rightful expectations of the future. For millions of black South Africans it has become a beacon of hope and a better life while for many white South Africans it is seen as a sign of a new form of discrimination and a threat to their future. According to Botha (1997:14) white South African men cannot be blamed for feeling disillusioned and concerned about their career opportunities and job security as these people often hold

the perception that there is no future for them in South Africa. It is as a result of these and other connotations of affirmative action that white males may often feel negative. Affirmative action can therefore often be experienced in such a way that it contributes to employees, especially white males, to experience a feeling of being threatened in the workplace. They might then resist the implementation of affirmative action. If the needs and aspirations of white men are ignored it can lower morale, develop a negative attitude towards other workers and exercise a negative influence on productivity. According to Hermann (2000:10) affirmative action leads to the marginalisation of minority groups which is being seen as one of the causes of alienation in modern society. Affirmative action often leads to people saying that they see no future for themselves in the workplace. Hermann (2000:10) maintains that individuals who experience feelings of discrimination gradually develop a feeling of inferiority, preventing them from reaching their full potential. This could lead to a drop in standards, loss of productivity and an increase in labour turnover. This has led to many white males defining affirmative action in a problematic manner where such a definition could lead to an increase in the experience of stress.

Kruger and de Klerk (1995:417) maintain that affirmative action can undermine the achievement that was accomplished with much trouble and on merit before the establishment of affirmative action. Botha (1997:14) maintains that the following perceptions and feelings exist among whites:

- There is no future for whites in South Africa.
A strong perception exists that there is no future for whites, especially in the civil service. White people in particular find it difficult and it will become even more difficult in future. Young whites do not even apply for bursaries because they are not earmarked for affirmative action. Young people are looking for alternatives abroad.

- Skills are being lost.

There is a feeling that qualified, experienced personnel are being replaced by inexperienced, unqualified people who in the process of training make unaffordable mistakes at the cost of the company, stakeholders and economy.

Upwards mobility in a company is linked to race and gender rather than skills and merit. Affirmative action can therefore be seen as a kind of punishment because you have been born with the wrong colour skin.

- Productivity decreases.

Many Whites feel that productivity will be lower because some of the affirmative action appointments will not have the necessary skills to do the job. As a result affirmative action can also be demoralizing to people who now have more than one person's job to do as end up "carrying" the person that does not have the necessary skills.

Affirmative action candidates may also feel demoralised as they may be of the opinion that they would not have been appointed or promoted had there not been affirmative action.

- Under achievement due to stress.

Some White employees feel that their fear of unemployment results in them not reaching previous performance levels due to stress. This stress can manifest itself in many ways which will receive further discussion in the following chapter.

From the above discussion it can be seen that many white males hold negative perceptions of affirmative action. This may be as a result of the white males perceiving that their needs and aspirations are not taken into consideration with the implementation of affirmative action. It may also be due to feeling threatened in the

workplace. These negative feelings and perceptions that many white males hold may lead them to experience stress.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of affirmative action is to provide people from previously disadvantaged groups with equal opportunity. However, South Africans have experienced this in different ways. On the one hand, people of colour experience it as empowerment, an opportunity to share in the wealth of the country and the business sector.

While on the other hand white South Africans, especially white males have experienced it as a threat. Many white males view it negatively and experience stress as a result of it. This may hold negative consequences for the:

- Company.

Employees that experience stress may undergo behavioural changes that may affect other employees in the workplace. This results in the organization experiencing disorganization, disruption in normal operations, lowered performance and a decrease in profit margins (Davies, 1995:45).

- Individual.

The experience of stress that may result from being exposed to the implementation of affirmative action can manifest itself in health problems such as increased blood pressure, ulcers and even heart attacks (Scott, 1993: 34).

It follows from this that the stress related to affirmative action has a very negative impact on the above individuals and any attempt to understand and manage this stress should be welcomed.

Various approaches to understanding and managing stress have been developed and the next chapter will examine the most prominent modernist theories in this regard.

This will set the scene for an exploration of an alternative understanding of stress as inferred from an application of the social construction perspective in chapter 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 4 STRESS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Quick et al (1993:ix) “stress is a natural and inevitable characteristic of work and life. It is neither inherently bad nor destructive. It is in fact, one of a person’s best assets for achieving peak performance and managing legitimate emergencies. However it does have the potential for turning into distress, or strain, due to a variety of reasons. It is this latter manifestation of stress that is individually and organizationally destructive.”

The general purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the above extract thereby providing the reader with an overview of the available literature and theories related to stress. The specific purpose of this chapter is to discuss stress as reflected by several prominent modernist perspectives. In other words the writer wishes to explore stress in terms of how some modernistic authors define, view and discuss it.

In keeping with the epistemology of this research, discussing some of the modernist views on stress may serve as a backdrop against which the postmodern approach to stress can be discussed in a further chapter. This is because the writer feels that postmodernism is a viable alternative to research as it does not seek to objectify people’s experiences. It allows the individuality and uniqueness of the individuals’ realities to be explored.

4.2 DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

According to Brewer (1997:10) stress can be defined as the way we react, both physically and emotionally to change. Stress can be both positive and negative. Positive stress is seen as stress that helps us to concentrate, focus and perform. It often

leads us to reach peak efficiency. Negative stress occurs when we stay aroused or excited (such as the anxiety experienced on missing out on a promotion in favour of an affirmative action candidate) and we won't or can't relax after meeting a challenge. Negative stress has been linked to physical ailments from tension headaches to heart attacks.

This definition of stress is supported by Vorster (2000:9) and Selye (1976:40), who state that stress can be divided into 2 categories, namely eustress and distress. Eustress is positive stress experienced which results in feelings of happiness and satisfaction, while distress is negative stress experienced and is associated with feelings of fear, anxiety and worry.

Other definitions of stress include the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant (Scott, 1993:16).

Aldwin (1994: 22) goes on to define stress as that quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction that through either overarousal or underarousal results in psychological or physiological distress. This ties in closely with Bellaby's (1999:18) definition when he states that stress is thought of as a state of mind, which may have secondary consequences for the body.

As can be seen from the above, stress can be defined in many different manners as reflected by the various authors. In order to describe and illustrate stress in more depth as well as to gain a better perspective on the modernist approach to stress, the writer wishes to discuss some of the most influential stress models.

4.3 MODERNISTIC MODELS ON STRESS

As indicated earlier, one of the goals of this chapter is to discuss stress as reflected by some of the most prominent modernist perspectives thereby allowing an exploration of how some of these modernist authors have come to define and view stress. In order

to accomplish this, the writer wishes to discuss three models of stress, the first being the Dimension of Stress Model.

4.3.1 DIMENSIONS OF STRESS MODEL

According to Sutherland and Cooper (2000:150), the Dimensions of Stress Model has six different stressor categories which are clearly distinguished. A stressor can be defined as those situations that trigger stress. The writer wishes to discuss this model in her discussion of stress as it specifically relates to stress in the work place which is a central theme of this dissertation. The stress areas that have been identified in the work place include the following:

- Stress inherent in the work.

This includes the stressors that are intrinsic to the work itself. This relates to the workload, physical working environment, working hours, decision making etc.

- Role based stress.

This includes stressors such as conflict, role ambiguity and work responsibility. An employee or individual may experience role based stress when he is exposed to conflict in the work place. An individual may experience stress as a result of losing a job due to an affirmative action candidate.

- Stress related to the changing nature of relationships with people at work.

Relationships with managers, supervisors, employees and colleagues are included here. The writer feels that it is important to build strong relationships with colleagues and management as poor relationships could result in stress, especially when it involves sensitive issues such as affirmative action,

- Career stress.

These types of stressors are associated with the lack of opportunity for career advancement, promotion and job security. Affirmative action and stress could possibly be linked here as some individuals may feel or perceive a lack of career advancement and promotion in favour of affirmative action candidates. This lack of advancement / promotion due to affirmative action could lead to the experience of stress.

- Stress related to organizational structure and climate.

This includes stress that goes hand in hand with organizational politics and culture and the restriction on certain behaviours. In short it can be summarized as simply “feeling part of the organisation.”

As organisational structures and climates are continuously changing, people may feel displaced. This may occur with the implementation of new organisational drives such as aggressive affirmative action implementation. People may no longer feel part of the organisation.

- Stressors associated with the interaction of home and work situations / circumstances.

This includes conflict in loyalty, the transfer of demands from the work or home environment to other individuals, life events and life crises and this may result in stress being experienced.

From the above it can be seen that stress has been discussed with particular reference to the work place. According to Sutherland and Cooper’s (2000:150) Dimensions of Stress Model, it is suggested that individuals may come to experience stress as a result of affirmative action. For example, an individual may experience role based stress where he feels “stuck” in a position (role) that has no scope for growth and where the work has actually become monotonous and boring. This could be due to the fact that

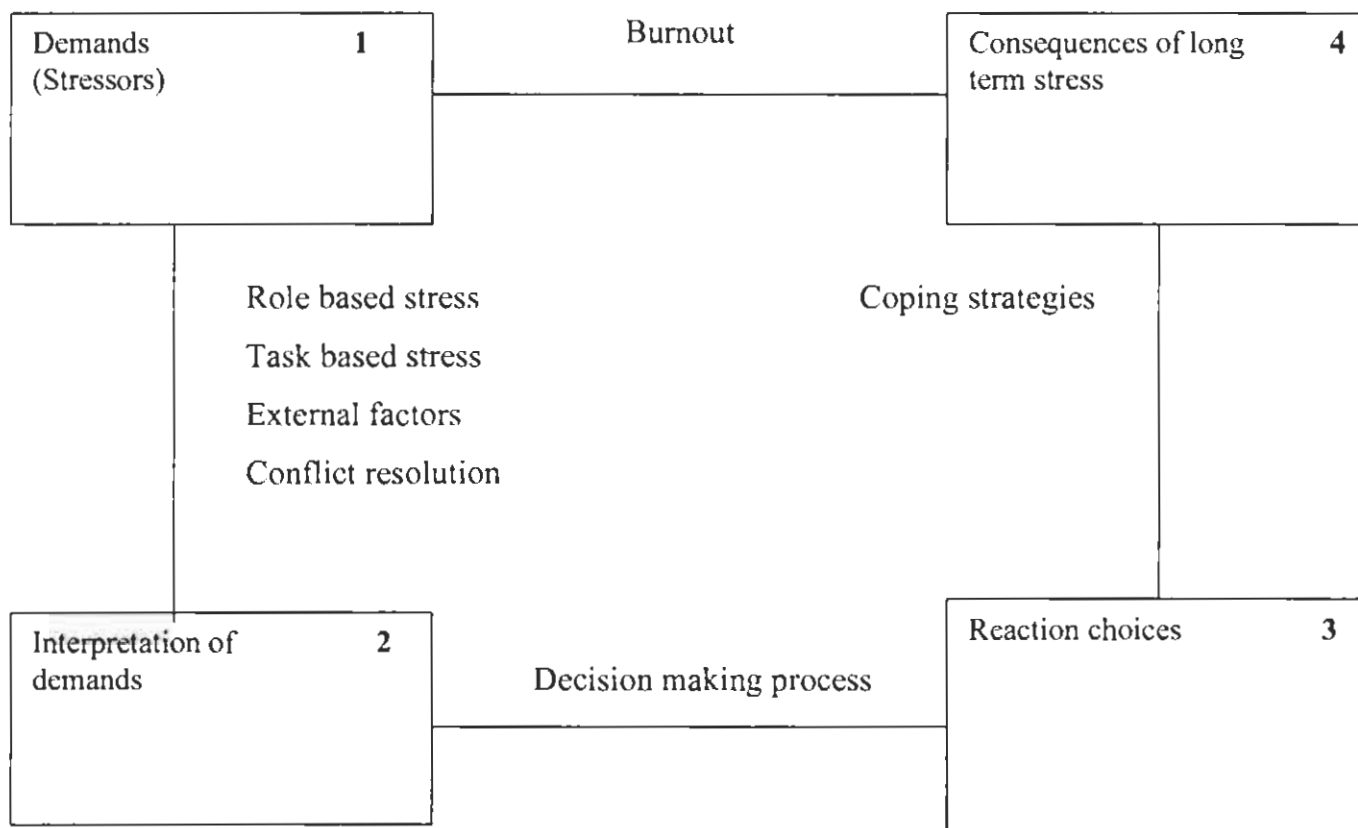
Blacks may have been favoured over Whites as far as promotability is concerned. Such an individual may experience role conflict in terms of his responsibilities and output. This may also result in career stress.

In a bid to discuss various stress models, the writer wishes to discuss Torelli and Gmelch's model on stress in the following section.

4.3.2 TORELLI AND GMELCH'S STRESS MODEL

According to the model of Torelli & Gmelch (1992:2) stress is viewed as cyclical process consisting of four phases.

Figure 1 : Torelli and Gmelch's model on stress



In the first phase, individuals experience certain demands. Applied to this study, the demands or stressors could include exposure to the implementation of affirmative action. This may result in the following demands being experienced:

- Role based stress.

An individual may experience role based stress as a result of feeling threatened in the workplace due to the application of affirmative action.

- Task based stress.

An individual may experience task based stress where he is required to do the work of more than one person. This could be as a result of a tokenism appointment where that person cannot cope with the demands of the job and is appointed on the grounds of race rather than on competencies. Another person usually has to “carry” such an appointed person.

- External factors.

External factors such as financial and social issues can play a role here.

- Conflict resolution.

This can be the manner in which management tries to address the issue of affirmative action and the problems that may result from it.

According to Torelli and Gmelch the four elements discussed here form part of the types of demands / stressors that people may experience in the first phase of their model on stress.

The second phase of this model is concerned with the interpretation of stress by the individual. A person may experience stress to such a large degree that it may result in ill health. Where an individual feels that he cannot react successfully to the demands, it will result in the experience of stress.

During the third phase, the individual reacts to the stressor being experienced by exercising choices in response to the stress. Here coping strategies will be exercised if it is thought that they may combat the stress.

During the fourth stage the long term effects of the stress come to the fore. This will include the physiological symptoms of stress such as ulcers, increased blood pressure, headaches and other physiological reactions. These symptoms of stress will be discussed further in the chapter. Exposure to long term stress can result in:

- Emotional exhaustion.

This is where the individual feels that he cannot work to previous standards or deliver the same high outputs because his emotional reserves have been depleted.

- Depersonalisation.

This is where individuals feel negative and affirmative action is viewed cynically.

- Personal effectivity.

This is where the individual's work performance has decreased and he views himself in a negative light and does not see himself as making a positive contribution.

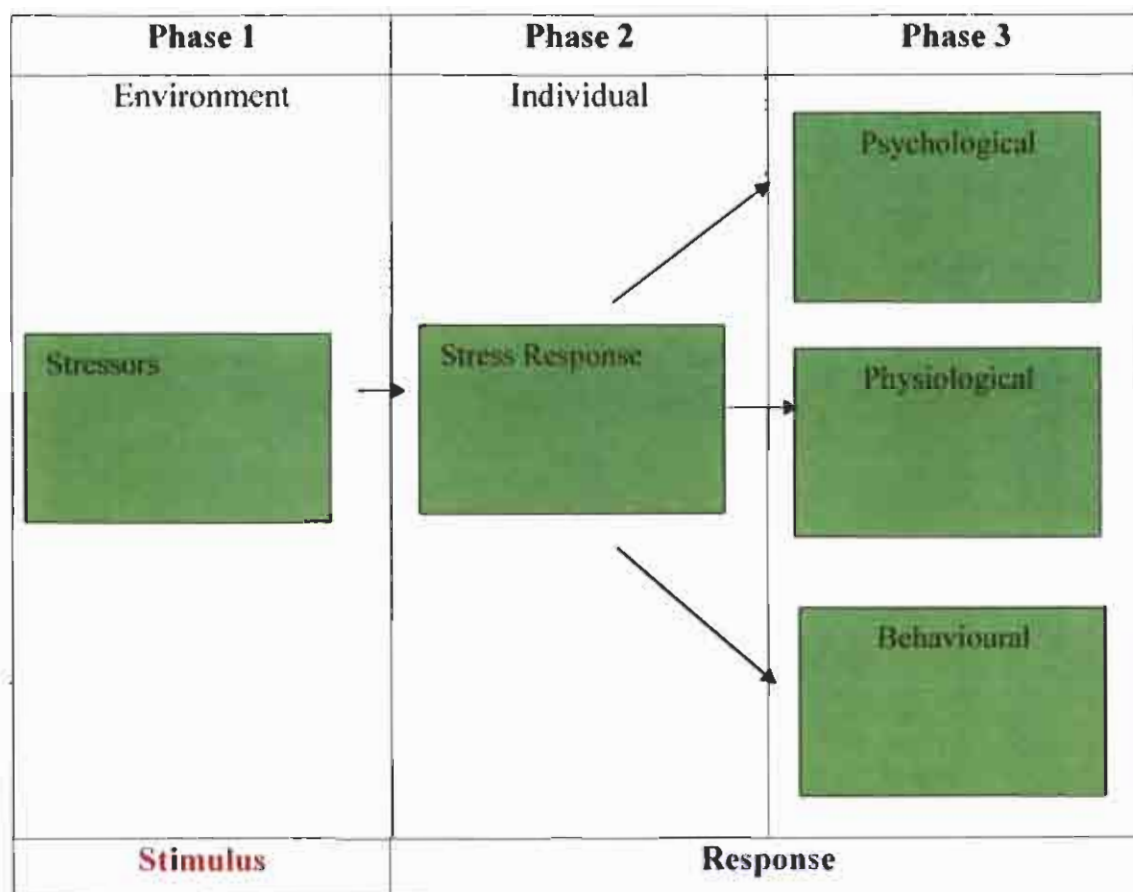
From the above it can be seen that Torelli and Gmelch (1992:4) have defined their model on stress in terms of the cyclical stages that it (stress) occurs in.

In order to present the reader with an additional modernist theory to stress, the writer wishes to discuss the Stimulus and Response Model of Stress by Sutherland and Cooper (1990) in the following section.

4.3.3 THE STIMULUS AND RESPONSE MODEL TO STRESS

This modernist view of affirmative action and stress is illustrated in figure 2 by making use of Sutherland and Cooper's (1990:95) stimulus and response based model.

Figure 2 : Stimulus and Response Model



Phase 1 of Sutherland and Cooper's Model on stress includes stressors (which can include but are not limited to issues such as affirmative action, tokenism, job security, job conflict etc.) that are found in the individual's environment and which place a large demand on his / her sources of support.

Phase 2 of the illustrated model reflects the general stress response of the individual.

Phase 3 represents the specific symptoms of stress which can manifest itself in either one or more of the following symptoms of stress i.e. psychological, physiological or behavioural symptoms. These will be discussed in more depth in section 4.7.

In this theory, stress may also be viewed as being caused by certain events, which in the case of this dissertation could include affirmative action. According to Sutherland and Cooper (1990:96) this is because individuals may experience stress as a result of the interaction between the person and the stressor or event (affirmative action). Where the individual feels that he has an inability to cope with this interaction of affirmative action, stress could be the response. Therefore this modernistic theory of stress would lead one to believe that affirmative action causes or can lead to the experience of stress.

In the following section attention will be given to the various aspects of stress such as the types of stress, causes of stress, responses to stress and symptoms of stress as reflected from a modernist perspective. The writer feels that it is necessary to discuss these aspects as reference is made to some of them (such as the symptoms) in the questionnaires and interviews that were conducted and applied to this study.

4.4 TYPES OF STRESS

According to Brewer (1997:11) stress can be broken down into 2 types, namely:

- Physical stress and
- Emotional stress

Physical stress can be caused by a threat to our physical well being such as car accidents, being high-jacked etc.

Physical stress triggers the body's "flight or fight" biochemical mechanism.

Released adrenaline tenses our muscles, dilates our pupils and increases our heart rate. Once the stressful situation is overcome, our body returns to normal and we stop producing adrenaline.

According to Brewer (1997:11) emotional stress is more complicated than physical stress because:

- It is harder to identify.

- It usually involves complex issues that are compounded by behaviours and emotions that are difficult to view objectively.

- It often involves other people and their emotions, values and behaviours.

4.5 CAUSES OF EMOTIONAL STRESS

According to Brewer (1997:12) people, situations or events cause emotional stress for one of four reasons:

- We feel threatened.
Something threatens our beliefs, values, personal or financial security, our well-being or other aspects of our lives. These are pressures from which we may feel there is no escape. An example of this could be the manner in which some individuals experience the implementation of affirmative action and feel that it is a threat to their job security or career mobility.

- We experience change.
Regardless of whether the change is positive or negative, major changes in our lives are usually experienced as stressful.
- We lose our sense of control.
People associate work with money and when they feel that their jobs are under threat, it could result in them feeling a sense of helplessness and vulnerability as they may lose a certain degree of control i.e. over financial matters. This aspect may possibly be a contributor to the stress experienced as a result of losing a promotion, transfer or job opportunity due to the application of affirmative action principals.
- Our expectations are not realized.
All people have expectations, especially with regard to their job and work. These expectations could be as a result of training and development or the attainment of a special task or project and may result in the expectation of a promotion for the individual or assist in the attainment of career aspirations. However, regardless of whether these expectations about jobs and situations are realistic, when they are not met, a great deal of mental stress is experienced. For example experiencing a change in career aspirations due to the implementing of affirmative action might lead to the experience of stress.

4.6 RESPONSES TO AND MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

4.6.1 RESPONSES TO STRESS

According to Gerber et al. (1998:492) people respond to stress in 3 basic ways:

- Resistance.

In the case of stress originating as a result of an external source (such as affirmative action), people may respond defensively.

This includes resistance and fight to maintain the status quo. This reaction requires a great deal of energy and time and produces on going stress.

- Avoidance.

We can bury our heads in the sand and hope whatever is making us feel bad will go away. A common avoidance technique is overindulgence in alcohol and drugs.

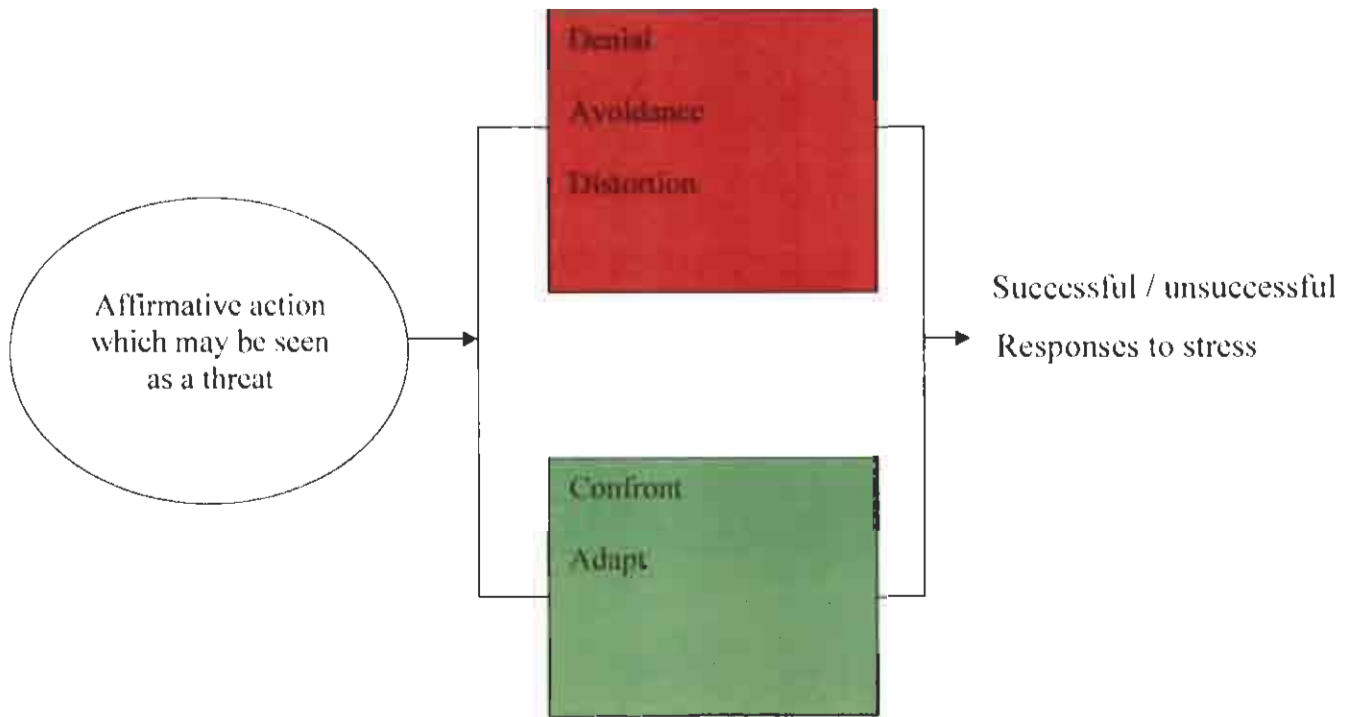
Brewer (1997:27) supports this by stating that this is where most people turn to medication, alcohol, drugs or other means to numb themselves against the unpleasant physical or mental discomforts of stress.

- Confrontation / adapting to stress.

According to Anthony et al. (1993:532) adapting to stress could include the use of stress reduction techniques. These stress reduction techniques could include discussion groups, programs on stress education, relaxation techniques and physical fitness programs. Besides the use of these stress reduction techniques, trying to adapt to stress can also include discussing your feelings with a spouse or close friend who can help you to gain perspective as well as seeking professional counseling.

The responses to stress are illustrated using the diagram as adapted from Gerber et al. (1998:493)

Figure 3 : Responses to stress



4.6.2 MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

According to Brewer (1997:34) people experience and manage their stress based on three fundamental elements of their lives:

- Priorities
- Expectations
- Coping with change

Priorities and stress:

Priorities help to avoid stress by:

- Providing people with a way to evaluate a potentially stressful situation.
- Providing people with the means to make difficult decisions in stressful situations.
- Providing people with a valuable sense of perspective when stress threatens to overwhelm them.

According to Brewer (1997:34) without priorities people are not firmly grounded and day-to-day stability is threatened. That is why people are easily overwhelmed by stressful events that erode their sense of confidence and certainty.

Expectations and stress:

When people decide that they are going to behave in a particular way and make decisions based on this assumption, they can experience tremendous disappointment if their behaviour fails to live up to their expectations.

People can avoid stress in dealing with others by establishing realistic and mutually compatible expectations. This is done through clear communication:

- Identify expectations and how we see others meeting them.
 - Determine if the other person is capable of meeting the expectations
Discuss our expectations with the other person and determine if they are interested in meeting them.
 - Get the other person to summarise the agreement. This feedback could avoid misunderstandings on both parts.
-

- Agree to a deadline for fulfilling the commitment.
- Evaluate, if necessary, to determine whether the commitment was fulfilled.

Change and stress:

As discussed earlier, when change is encountered, there are three ways of responding (Gerber et al., 1998:492):

- Resisting change.
- Avoiding change.
- Confronting and adapting to change.

Taking the above into consideration, Brewer (1997:27) maintains that people can manage their stress by doing the following:

- Identify the source of the stress.
- Having a stress management strategy in place that offers a step by step method to relieve the symptoms and, if possible, eliminate the cause.
- Having outside support (family, friends, counselors) available.

4.7 SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

The writer wishes to discuss some of the possible symptoms of stress that may be experienced by individuals as reflected by various authors. The reason for this is that reference is made to symptoms of stress in the questionnaires and interviews that were conducted. This was done to determine if any of the white males interviewed may have experienced any of the symptoms listed below.

According to Scott (1993:34), Venter (2001:65) and Anthony et al. (1993:530) common stress symptoms include:

- Insomnia / sleep disorders
 - Sexual dysfunction
 - Indigestion / vomiting
 - Ulcers / diarrhea
 - Headaches
 - High blood pressure / heart attack / stroke
 - Chronic illness (flu, colds etc)
 - Hives
 - Communicating less
A person with this signal may say less at meetings. He might feel dismayed when the phone rings. Rather than talking to his family at breakfast, he reads the cereal box.
 - Feeling less energetic.
 - Experiencing lower productivity.
The person with lower productivity usually notices it long before anyone
-

else. He might go home at night and ask himself “what did I accomplish today?” and is hard pressed for a good answer.

- Late more often for work or appointments.
- Excessive use of sick leave
- Sleep disturbance.
This can take on many forms. The person may have difficulty falling asleep and then wake at 3:00 am and not be able to fall asleep again or a person may want to sleep all the time.
- Appetite disturbance.
This can also take on one of two forms. Either the person experiences unplanned weight gain or loss.
- Preoccupied with health and body and
- Decreased wants.
This could be related to sexual wants or materialistic needs.

According to Ellis et al (1997:3) psychological aspects of stress include feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, guilt, hurt, shame embarrassment and envy. Both the physiological and psychological reactions to stress react upon one another and therefore complicate the stress experienced. According to Ellis et al. (1997:3) prolonged or ongoing stress includes the following symptoms:

- Isolation from family and friends
 - Drug / alcohol abuse
 - Increase in smoking
-

- Depression / anxiety
- Irritability / rapid mood swings
- Compulsive eating / dieting
- Child / spouse abuse

From the above it can be concluded that the experience of stress can result in various symptoms of stress being experienced. This may range from physiological ailments to behavioural and psychological aspects, which may be more complicated and dangerous to the individual. It could also have a negative spin off for the economy as there will more sick leave taken and this in turn could affect productivity.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The general purpose of this chapter was to provide the reader with an overview of some of the available literature and theories related to stress, while the specific purpose was to discuss stress as reflected by several prominent modernist perspectives. This was done as the writer feels that it may serve as a backdrop against which the postmodern approach to stress and affirmative action may be explored as an alternative to the modern approach.

In the following chapter the research methodology utilized in this dissertation will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5 : METHOD OF RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to discuss the methods of research that are used in this study. Therefore the chapter will focus on such issues as which types of research methods are utilized, how the research sample was selected, the measuring instruments utilized as well as the methods of information gathering that is used.

5.2 RESEARCH METHODS

For the purpose of the dissertation the writer wishes to make use of the following research methods:

- A quantitative study and a
- A qualitative study

The writer feels that by using these research methods, it will allow for a more comprehensive study to take place as it will statistically reflect the responses of the white males as well as qualitatively discuss the responses.

5.3. QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Although the use of a quantitative study only forms a small section of this dissertation, the writer wishes to discuss this type of study as it is made use of in this dissertation by means of the questionnaire that was utilized. The writer would like to note that the questionnaire is utilized for both a quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. Questions 1 and 7 – 14 will be used quantitatively to statistically reflect the responses of the individuals interviewed.

Pauw (1997:55) summarises a quantitative study as research that occurs in a highly controlled environment where there is the manipulation of dependent variables by changing or adding independent variables. It is purely an experimental design which requires a highly structured environment. There is also an attempt to exclude disruptive factors. As a result of this, the research does not occur in natural circumstances. Goals and variables of the research are clearly defined and operational.

According to Ubbink (2000:81-82), a quantitative study can be defined as having the following characteristics:

- Reality is seen as a simple one that is broken down into different parts or areas when research is being done. This results in dealing with fragmentation which means that facts are atomized. Details are broken down into small areas or bits.
 - Quantitative research has to do with context free, general facts that are brought to the fore.
 - Quantitative research is of the opinion that it has to do with a “true” reality that exists independently of the researcher. This “true” reality is simple, stable and predictable.
 - Quantitative research is seen as reliable when research methods are strictly applied.
 - This type of research has to do with the quantifying of statistical entities.
 - Quantitative research has to do with a clear and specified procedure that has to be adhered to at all times.
-

- Research usually occurs in a controlled environment such laboratories. In other words it occurs in an unnatural environment.
- The goal of quantitative research is the explanation of phenomena.
- The researcher is separate from his research. Research can therefore be done in an objective manner.

Taking the above characteristics into consideration, it is clear that by utilizing a questionnaire and doing a statistical analysis of it based on the respondents answers, that this type of research forms part of a quantitative study.

The following section will discuss qualitative research which the writer feels forms a large portion of the empirical study of this research.

5.4 QUALITATIVE STUDY

The writer endeavours to gain information regarding affirmative action and stress by doing a literature study. This is one of the methods of gathering information that forms part of a qualitative study.

In conducting the literature study, the type of literature that was consulted includes books, journal articles and the legislative Employment Equity Act 66 of 1995. The literature utilized clarifies the theories that are applied in this research by as well by defining, broadening, clarifying and elaborating on affirmative action and stress.

In addition to the above, information and data will also be obtained by means of interviews in conjunction with the use of a carefully formulated questionnaire. The interviews are made use of as there is limited information available on how white

males view affirmative action and stress. The interviews and questionnaires are conducted on a one on one basis. Together they will be used to explore the differences amongst the respondents concerning their experiences about affirmative action, diversity and stress.

In conducting the interviews, the writer chose to work from the postmodern approach. This is because she feels that it offers a more viable approach to this research as it reflects the experiences of the respondents without trying to objectify their experiences and perceptions. Pauw (1997:56) substantiates this by stating that the aim of qualitative studies is to determine the uniqueness and complexity of a determined issue and to try and understand the nature and workings of it.

A qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires will also take place. The aim of this analysis is to explore how the various individuals have constructed their perceptions of affirmative action and stress. From this analysis one may be able to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

5.4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES

The qualitative methods that are utilized for this study include the interviews that were conducted on a one to one basis as well as the qualitative analysis of responses derived from the questionnaires.

Pauw (1997:56) states that qualitative studies can be described as the study of a phenomenon in the natural context, especially when a clear division between the phenomenon and the context cannot be drawn. Often multiple sources of information are utilized for these types of research. An attempt is made to get as close as possible to the topic of importance and to have access to subjective knowledge such as feelings, thoughts and needs. This is one of the primary reasons why this dissertation

focuses more on a qualitative study in determining how white males feel about affirmative action and stress.

According to Ubbink (2000:84) a qualitative study has the following characteristics:

- That the researcher accurately reports the person or system being studied. Details must be as accurate as possible and have logical reasoning and arguments.
- Aims and goals which are clearly defined.
- The research has to have an evaluation to determine if the goals are reached.
- The researcher has to be trained to be able to deal with the emotional intensity of the research in case it concerns issues that are of emotional importance to the respondent. The researcher tries to obtain information about the respondent's feelings, thoughts and needs. Where research involves emotional issues, there has to be enough time allocated to allow a report of trust building and to allow time for the effect of the happenings to be evaluated.
- Good interview and listening skills are necessary.
- The individual should not be seen outside of his ecological context. In other words all events and circumstances must be taken into consideration. The focus must not only be on the individual but also focus on him within a specific context. The cultural context of the person needs to be taken into consideration as well as his value systems. This ties in with the idea that our stories are socially constructed.

- The research must be documented in clear and concise language without being unsympathetic towards the individual.

Burgess and Bryman (1994:218) add the following characteristics to qualitative research:

- The researcher tries to disrupt the process of social life as little as possible.
- Research occurs within a theoretical framework.
- Research includes fine detail and intensive work.
- The research report analyses the information given by the subjects without losing any of its importance. It keeps account of ethical problems that might confront the researcher and the research being conducted.

As can be seen from the above, a qualitative study encompasses many elements. It takes the respondents' feelings and perceptions into account as well as the impact that their environments have on them in determining their responses to certain events. Taking the fact that what and how people feel with regard to certain issues is not just based on the individual themselves but also on the specific contexts that they have been subjected to, indicates that people's social, cultural and personal values help in determining their feelings towards certain issues. This also ties in with the writer's postmodernist epistemology.

Therefore for the purpose of this research, the qualitative study that was utilized includes the use of one on one interviews as well as a section of the questionnaire that was applied. These types of qualitative research methods will be discussed and elaborated on in the following section.

5.4.2 RESPONDENTS

For the purpose of this study, the respondents that are selected include:

- White males working in a large industrial environment (that are influenced by the application of affirmative action).

The interviews in conjunction with the questionnaire were used on a one to one basis with the various respondents. The total number of respondents interviewed was 10. It was the writer's intention to obtain as diverse a selection as possible. This is to minimize the chance of the respondents reacting and experiencing stress in the same manner as well as to explore how the respondents relate to affirmative action and stress according to their level of seniority. Respondents were randomly selected by drawing a report. This report was drawn of one business area and employees were selected numerically i.e. choosing every 10th employee on the report. This ensured diversity with regard to age, job level, level of management and experience.

5.4.3 INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

To determine how the individuals in this study have constructed their views on affirmative action and stress, it was thought appropriate to make use of questionnaires and interviews in this research. This is done in order to elicit the relevant information and data needed as well as to unearth the respondents' feelings, perceptions and constructions of affirmative action.

In the following section, the different types of questions used in the questionnaire will be discussed.

5.4.2 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

The writer feels that it is important to pay attention to some of the different types of questions that exist as use is made of a selected few in the questionnaire that is applied to the white males in this study.

Some of the types of questions that exist can be illustrated by referring to Tomm's (1988:11) description of questions as these form part of the writer's questionnaire.

Tomm (1988:11) distinguishes between different questions on the basis of the assumptions and intentions of the researcher. These types of questions consist of the following:

- Lineal questions.

These questions are based on a lineal assumption about the nature of the problem with the intent to investigate. Basic lineal questions include: When? Where? Who and Why? Efforts are made to tease things apart.

An example of a lineal question is: *"When were you first subjected to affirmative action?"*

- Circular questions.

These are based on the circular assumption that problems are part of the greater interactive patterns. These questions are predominantly exploratory.

Circular questions are formulated to bring forth the patterns that connect people, objects, actions, perceptions, ideas, feelings, events etc. An example of a circular question is: *"How have you managed to keep the stress from adversely affected you in this area of your life?"*

- Reflexive questions.

These are based on the circular assumption while the intent may be predominantly facilitative. Reflexive questions have a generative effect on the client. An example of a reflexive question is: *“How do you feel about affirmative action?”*

Attention should also be given to some of Berg and Miller’s (1992:75-82) different types of questions as they are also utilized in this dissertation. The types of questions utilized include the following:

- Scaling questions.

An example of a scaling question is: *“On a scale of 0-4, what degree of stress would you say you have experienced as a result of affirmative action?”*

0	1	2	3	4
None	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

- Exception finding questions.

These types of questions tend to focus on alternative constructs of an event. An example is: *“If you feel that you have not been strongly affected by stress as a result of affirmative action, what do you think sets you apart from those that have been strongly affected by it?”*

In compiling the questionnaire that is used in this research, the writer makes use of many of the above-mentioned types of questions. Particular usage is made of scaling questions as the writer sees it as a means of assisting in the statistical break down of

the respondents' answers. Although scaling questions form a large part of the questionnaire, exception finding questions also play an important role as the writer feels that these questions may provide important information on how individuals have come to construct and experience affirmative action and stress. It also assists by highlighting the positive constructions that some of the respondents may have.

An example of the questionnaire that was used in this research follows below.

5.4.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE USED TO CONDUCT THE INTERVIEWS FOR THIS DISSERTATION.

Interview questionnaire used to explore the effects of affirmative action and stress on white males.

1. What are your personal feelings with regard to affirmative action and why?
2. Have you ever applied affirmative action in your area of responsibility?
3. To what extent, if at all have you been personally affected directly or indirectly by affirmative action?
4. How do you feel about this?
5. Has affirmative action ever hindered your career aspirations?
6. How did you feel about this?
7. On a scale of 0-4, what degree of stress would you say you have experienced as a result of affirmative action?

0	1	2	3	4
None	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

8. Using the same scale of 0-4, to what degree has stress effected your job satisfaction?

1	2	3	4	5
None	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

9. Your career aspirations?

0	1	2	3	4
None	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

10. Your personal life?

0	1	2	3	4
No at all	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

11. Your social life?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

12. Your health? (i.e. energy levels, blood pressure, sleeping patterns, concentration etc.)

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

13. Other? – Specify.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered 0, 1 or 2 in the above questions, how did you manage to keep the stress mentioned above from adversely affecting you?

14. To what extent has the above affected your outlook on your job?

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all	Very Low degree	Low degree	High degree	Very high degree

If you answered none, very low or low – how did you manage to not let the stress mentioned above affect you?

15. If you feel that you have not been strongly affected by affirmative action, what do you think sets you apart from those that have been strongly affected by it?

16. Do you think that other people could learn how to deal positively with affirmative action?

17. If so, what advice would you offer?

5.4.4 DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The writer feels that the general aim of the questionnaire utilised in this research is that it is a tool that can be used to obtain information from the white males interviewed with regard to affirmative action and stress. More specifically, it is an attempt to explore the constructions that these respondents have toward affirmative action and stress and this is the reason why these specific questions were chosen.

The first section of the questionnaire (questions 1 – 6) is for information gathering purposes. These questions endeavour to establish if affirmative action has affected any of the people interviewed as well as to determine how they feel about it.

The second section of the questionnaire (questions 7 – 14) deals specifically with stress and the degree with which it has been experienced. Where stress is not experienced to a large degree, a follow up question is asked in an attempt to determine how these individuals are prevented from being affected by stress.

The last section of the questionnaire (questions 15 – 17) aims to elicit responses that may reflect a positive experience of affirmative action and stress.

The writer made use of the questionnaires as an instrument to try and explore how the white males interviewed, constructed their stories or realities with regard to affirmative action and stress. The writer also views it as explorative in the sense that it is endeavoured to determine what the discourses are that the respondents have with regard to affirmative action and stress. The questionnaire is also used to discover whether the manner in which the respondents view affirmative action may result in the experience of stress and therefore ties in with the writer's goal.

The answers that the various respondents have to the above mentioned questions will be quantitatively analysed to determine how many white males interviewed have negatively as well as positively adapted to affirmative action. An attempt will then also be made to determine what separates the men that have a positive experience of affirmative action and stress from those that have a negative experience. This will be followed by a qualitative discussion of the responses.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of using the above mentioned research methods is to gain as much information as possible with regards to how the white males concerned have constructed their perceptions of affirmative action and stress.

While use is made of a literature study as well as case studies (the use of questionnaires and interviews), the predominant approach to this research is qualitative. This is because it forms part of the writer's chosen epistemology as well as forms the backdrop in which the analysis and interpretation of the study can occur in.

In the following chapter, the outcomes, integration and implications of the research (questionnaires and interviews) will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6: INTEGRATION OF THE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the epistemology of this research, this chapter will focus on how the respondents interviewed experience stress and affirmative action. This will be accomplished by statistically reflecting the respondents' responses to affirmative action and stress as well as by a qualitative discussion. This discussion will be approached from the postmodern social constructivist perspective.

The writer wishes to approach this chapter by discussing affirmative action and stress in two separate sections, namely Part 1 and Part 2.

In part 1 a quantitative analysis will be undertaken whereby the respondent's answers are statistically reflected. It is the writer's intention to separate those individuals who have a positive perception and experience of affirmative action and stress from those that have a negative perception of it. The reason for this is to allow the writer to focus on each group and to accentuate their responses and attributes that allow them to have such perceptions and experiences.

In part 2 of this chapter a qualitative analysis will be undertaken as the aim is to determine the uniqueness of the responses of the white males interviewed as well as to explore how they perceive and experience affirmative action and stress. As suggested by Pauw (1997:56), the writer attempts to, as far as possible, obtain access to subjective knowledge such as the feelings, thoughts and needs that the respondents have regarding affirmative action and stress. These feelings, thoughts and experiences will be discussed as a means whereby the writer can explore the impact and influence that affirmative action and stress may have in determining how the individuals have

constructed their realities regarding these terms. This discussion will also be used to explore how the constructions that the individuals hold of affirmative action affect their experience of stress.

In the following section, the responses of the white males interviewed will be statistically reflected.

PART 1 : RESULTS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Part 1 will reflect the responses to the questionnaires and interviews statistically (questions 1- 17). This will be followed by a summary of the differences in the responses of the white males interviewed.

6.2.1 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

In this section a quantitative analysis of the white males responses in the interviews and questionnaires will be reflected. This will follow in chronological order as in the questionnaire utilised.

Question 1:

60% of the respondents indicated that their personal feelings towards affirmative action are positive, while 20% viewed it as unfair and unjust if not applied properly. 20% responded that they experience it as reverse discrimination.

Question 2:

80% of respondents have implemented affirmative action in their areas, compared to the 20% that have not.

Question 3:

60% of the respondents had responded being negatively affected by affirmative action to a high degree while 40% indicated that they had only been affected to a very low degree.

Question 4:

60% of the respondents feel negative about the effects of affirmative action.

Question 5:

60% of the white males responded that affirmative action has hindered their career aspirations while 40% responded that it has not.

Question 6:

60% of the respondents stated that they feel negative and frustrated about this. 30% of the respondents did not feel negative and 10% of the respondents did not respond to this question.

Question 7:

60% of the respondents indicated that they experience stress as a result of affirmative action to a high degree, 30% to a low degree and 20% to a very low degree.

Question 8:

60% of respondents have experienced stress as a result of affirmative action, which is adversely affecting their job satisfaction. It is interesting to note that this affected respondents from various levels of job categories, from lower levels to middle management. Only top management experienced a low level of stress.

Question 9:

60% of respondents indicated that stress as a result of affirmative action negatively affects their aspirations, while 40% indicated that it affected them to a low degree.

Question 10:

60% of the respondents noted that stress as a result of affirmative action affects their personal lives to a high degree, while 20% said that it affected them to a low degree and another 20% indicated that it had not affected them at all in this area.

Question 11:

80% indicate that their social lives were not affected by stress as a result of affirmative action, while only 20% were affected.

Question 12:

60% of respondents indicated that their health was affected by stress resulting from affirmative action to a high degree, while 20% were not affected at all and 20% to a low degree.

Question 13:

60% of respondents indicated that other areas of their lives (such as family) were affected while 40% responded that they were not affected. From those respondents that were affected, 40% indicated that they were affected to a very high degree.

Question 14:

60% of respondents indicated that the stress experienced did not impact their outlook or the manner in which they do their jobs, while 40% said that it did have an impact on their work.

Question 15:

Of the respondents (40%) that indicated that they were not affected by stress as a result of affirmative action in some areas of their lives, the following views (of affirmative action) set them apart from those that were affected:

- “To utilize the potential of affirmative action candidates – to view them as positively and effectively contributing to the bottom line (profit).”
- “To view them (affirmative action candidates) as individuals with the same goals and ambitions. We all do our work in the same manner.”
- “My attitude sets me apart. It (affirmative action) is something that we all have to accept – it is part of our country and we need it in industry.”
- “It is the ability to accept barriers that are thrown at us and to see them as challenges.”
- “I have a positive, optimistic and enthusiastic outlook. It is a decision that I have made – to reinforce the positive and to drive my decisions, else it won’t work.”

Question 16:

80% of respondents indicated that people could learn to deal with affirmative action.

Question 17:

When asked what advice those respondents that had positively adapted to stress and affirmative action would offer to help those that are experiencing it as negative, the following responses were given:

- “See it (affirmative action) as a separate issue. It is just another challenge – nothing is ever out of your control.”
 - “If you are seriously battling to come to terms with affirmative action, get help. Not for affirmative action but for *yourself!*”
-

- “Don’t let others shape your future (such as the government)”
 - “You have to start somewhere so start with yourself. Be the one to make the difference!”
 - “See it as part of your job. A diverse workforce is to everyone’s advantage because with diversity thinking becomes wider and broader.”
 - “The country is ruled by affirmative action. The majority of South Africans are people of colour – we cannot fight it”
 - “In the working environment one hand washes the other. If problems arise due to the inability of people being unable to work together, the company suffers. And if the company suffers, you suffer!”
 - “Focus on yourself – your internal locus of control”
 - “Don’t blame each other for the changes taking place”
 - “Learn to deal and cope with change. Become resilient”
 - “Have a positive outlook on life”
 - “You have to make changes internally. It can be done”
 - “Relax and accept the reality of it (affirmative action). Rationalise it for yourself. If you don’t it could result in anger and hate”
-

6.2.2 A LIST OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WHITE MALES' RESPONSES

This section will list and summarise the similarities and differences in responses between the white males that were interviewed. These responses will be broadly classified into negative and positive responses in order to focus on each group's reality of affirmative action and stress.

The responses will be reflected for question 1 and questions 7 – 14 as they can be divided between positive and negative responses. The preceding questions (2 - 6) and remaining questions (15 – 17) were for information gathering purposes and as a result could not be classified as either positive or negative.

Question 1:

When asked how affirmative action is viewed by the white males interviewed, the respondents that had a positive approach can be summarized as follows:

- Affirmative action is viewed as positive when it is applied correctly.

Responses of the white males that viewed affirmative action as negative can be summarized as follows:

- Affirmative action is viewed as reverse discrimination especially if it seen as window dressing
- Affirmative action is seen as unfair and unjust should tokenism take place in an attempt to adhere to legislation

Question 7

The respondents that positively responded to the question of whether they have experienced a degree of stress as a result of affirmative action, responded as follows:

- “ I have reached a level of education that justifies the occupational level that I’m on.” This candidate states that he feels comfortable in his position and does not experience stress as there are not many affirmative action candidates in his field.
- Another candidate responded that he applies personal psychology on himself. He accepts and manages the stress. He sees it as a challenge.

Respondents did not comment on the negative degree of stress experienced in this question as it is given attention in a later question.

Question 8:

Responses that reflected a positive view to the question of whether stress as a result of affirmative action has an impact on job satisfaction were as follows:

- “I am positive and therefore have a positive outlook on my job”
- “I view stress as a challenge and managed it”

Responses that reflect a negative view can be summarized as follows:

- Career aspirations have declined as career paths as seen to be narrowing.

Question 9

Responses of the white males that were positive regarding the question of whether the effect of stress as a result of affirmative action has on career aspirations are summarized as:

- Many respondents indicated that it was not an issue for them.

Respondents that replied negatively to this question can be summarized as:

- They view their career paths to be more limited and experience a decrease in career aspirations.

Question 10:

Responses of the white males that reacted positively to the question of whether they had experienced stress as a result of affirmative action in their personal lives can be summarized as:

- “It really doesn’t bother me” and
- “...generally believe that there is place for everyone under the sun.”

Responses of the white males that reacted negatively to this question can be summarized as:

- “I feel that the negative experiences are being taken home, and affecting my immediate family.”
 - One of the respondents indicated that he was concerned about his family, especially his child. He is concerned about his child’s future.
-

Question 11

Responses of the respondents that reacted positively to the question regarding the effect of stress on their social lives are summarized as follows:

- “It (stress) does not effect my social life”.
- “My social life is not effected as I try to relax and keep a balance in my life”.

Responses of the respondents that reacted negatively to this question are summarized as:

- Some of the respondents had stated that their “entertaining and socializing” had decreased as their negative experiences and stress were being taken home.

Question 12

Respondents that responded positively to the question of whether stress as a result of affirmative action has an effect on their health can be summarized as follows:

- Many respondents indicated that they switch off. They have different interests and hobbies.
- “Take time out”, exercise and balance your life. Try not to worry too much.

Respondents that responded negatively to the question can be summarized as follows:

- Respondents had indicated that their energy levels had decreased as a result of the stress experienced. Other areas that are affected include “sleeping patterns that are definitely affected.”
- It takes a lot of energy from them
- Many of the respondents indicated problems with sleeping

Question 13

Respondents that had negative responses to the question of whether other areas in their lives had been affected by stress as a result of affirmative action can be summarized as:

- They have made plans for the future and are investigating emigration as an option.
- Another respondent said that he did not want to expose his child to the difficulty of affirmative action and will also explore leaving the country. He responded that he is not a “true South African anymore.”

Question 14

The positive responses to the question of whether stress as a result of affirmative action had on their outlook towards their work can be summarized as follows:

- “I feel secure in my job at the moment.”

- “I make use of black empowerment in my field because there are not many in my field.”
- “I don’t feel that this has influenced me negatively.”

Respondents that responded negatively to this question can be summarized as follows:

- “I feel very insecure!”

6.2.3 CONCLUSION

This section broadly divided and summarized the responses of the white males into negative and positive responses.

In the following section, these responses will be discussed in more detail. A qualitative discussion will be undertaken in order to explore how the white males interviewed may have constructed their realities regarding affirmative action and stress as either negative or positive. This will be approached from a social constructivist perspective.

PART 2: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST VIEW ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND STRESS

6.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section aims to look at affirmative action and stress from the social constructivistic point of view as it not only forms part of the postmodern paradigm but also the epistemology of this research.

According to Sutherland and Cooper's (1990:95) modernistic Response Based Model on stress, affirmative action and stress are seen to have a cause and effect relationship. As discussed in chapter 4, this modernistic theory views affirmative action as the stimulus and stress as the response.

This (modernistic) approach to affirmative and stress is supported by McLean (1997:9) who states that modernism involves an attempt to objectify knowledge, whereby the rationale is that knowledge enables society to make accurate predictions about cause and effect relations and that this will result in mastery over the future. This is how many of the individuals that were interviewed view affirmative action and stress. Some of the white males see the application of affirmative action in the workplace as having a direct link to stress, i.e. affirmative action causes stress.

In the following section the writer will endeavour to explore and discuss how affirmative action and stress are constructed and experienced by the white men interviewed as suggested by both the modern and postmodern social constructivist perspectives.

6.3.2 A POSTMODERN VERSUS MODERN VIEW ON STRESS

In exploring how the respondents have constructed their realities regarding affirmative action and stress, the writer feels that it is important to first highlight the differences between the modern and postmodern approaches to these two terms. This will serve as a general backdrop for a discussion on how postmodernism approaches affirmative action and stress.

One of the modernist approaches to affirmative action and stress can be illustrated by using Sutherland and Cooper's (2000:152) model on stress. As discussed previously they view stress as the result of interaction between the person and the environment. In the case of this dissertation, if one takes the environment to be representative of affirmative action and the person holds a negative view of it, then it can be deduced that an imbalance will occur between the person and affirmative action. This may result in stress.

Sutherland and Cooper (1990:96) also view stress from a stimulus and response perspective. They maintain that stressors (such as affirmative action) place a large demand on the individual and that this will result in a stress response. This response may manifest itself in either a psychological response such as depression or anxiety or physiological responses such as a change in sleeping patterns, indigestion and ulcers or behavioural responses such as increase in smoking or drinking and spousal abuse. These responses to stress have been discussed in detail in section 4.7.

By taking the above into consideration it would lead one to believe that affirmative action causes stress. In other words, affirmative action is seen to be the stimulus and the stress is the response. However, many postmodern authors would disagree with this type of modernist view. This is because many postmodern theories share the opinion that an individual's construction (of affirmative action) will determine whether he will have a positive or negative experience of the event.

Freedman and Combs (1996:33) state that where a modernist worldview would invite us to close down options and work methodically to identify a universally applicable interpretation, postmodernism celebrates diversity. This is evident if one considers that many of the white males interviewed, each have a different interpretation of what affirmative action and stress is. Therefore postmodernism differs from modernism in its view on stress due to affirmative action in that it takes each individual's experience of the event of (affirmative action) into account. The individual's interpretation of affirmative action will be determined by his construction of it. Here the individual's attitudes and beliefs on affirmative action have a large influence on how he would interpret it and react to the exposure of it (affirmative action). In other words, a positive construction of affirmative action may result in a positive interpretation of affirmative action and this may lead to a positive experience and reaction to the exposure of it. As a result this individual may experience very little stress or no stress at all.

As this section has briefly discussed how the modern and postmodern perspectives view affirmative action and stress, the writer feels that a more in depth postmodern discussion on how the respondents have constructed their reality of affirmative action and stress should take place.

6.3.3 A POSTMODERNIST DISCUSSION ON HOW THE RESPONDENTS HAVE CONSTRUCTED THEIR REALITY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND STRESS

As previously discussed, the social processes that one is exposed to will have an impact or influence on how individuals come to describe and interpret the world in which they live. Therefore due to these social constructions, a multitude of different interpretations and experiences of affirmative action and stress is seen to exist.

It is the writer's intention to discuss just two of these interpretations, namely those individuals that generally reflect a positive interpretation of affirmative action and those that generally reflect a negative interpretation.

The responses of the individuals who generally viewed affirmative action as positive, can be summarized as follows:

- a. "It is good. Equal opportunities must exist. Apply the principle of the best person for the job."
- b. "There is place for it – no doubt."
- c. "It (affirmative action) is viewed as positive if applied correctly."

Attention will also be given to those responses of the individuals that generally reflect a negative interpretation of affirmative action. This can be due to it being seen as unfair and therefore being experienced as a threat (as reflected in section 6.2.2). To be able to discuss these two opposing interpretations of affirmative action and stress, the writer feels it is necessary to make reference to the postmodern terms of landscape of action and landscape of consciousness as it is felt that it may contribute towards the understanding of how an individual may construct his view of stress.

According to White (1998:184) the landscape of action can be defined as the actual event/s that have taken place.

For example the landscape of action could refer to a person losing a job or promotion in favour of an affirmative action candidate.

White (1998:184) also goes on to define the landscape of consciousness as the individual ascribing meaning to the event that he has been subjected to. Where the person views the events in the landscape of action as being justified or acceptable, it could result in a positive outcome such as further education, training or development to better himself in the workplace and so stand a stronger chance of attaining a promotion when the opportunity arises again. This is because the individual may interpret and therefore experience affirmative action differently from an individual who views the event of affirmative action as unacceptable. As reflected in the interviews, individuals that generally view affirmative action as negative and unacceptable responded by stating the following:

- Affirmative action is seen as narrowing their career paths now more than it was in the past and that career aspirations have decreased.
- Affirmative action is perceived as using a lot of energy. People now have to re-shape how they operate which means that they have less time available to concentrate on other important issues. This contributes to their stress experienced.
- As indicated by some of the respondents, affirmative action has lead them to experience a feeling that they are “endangered” (in terms of job security) and that they have to look at other forms of “survival”. This also contributes to the stress experienced.

Therefore due to the construction that these individuals have regarding affirmative action, they may ascribe negative meaning to losing a job or promotion to an affirmative action candidate. This could be because the individual's construction of affirmative action is centered around:

- Fear of being unable to support himself and his family or
- Because of holding racist political views or
- Because of feeling threatened in the workplace or
- Feeling that affirmative action is reverse discrimination or
- Believing that affirmative action will lead to a lack of opportunity in the work or
- Feeling that the application of affirmative action will lead to the employment of people of colour and not people of a needed skill
- There may be many more other reasons why affirmative action is seen as unacceptable. These are merely some of the possibilities.

As a result of these beliefs and interpretations of affirmative action, an individual may experience stress as a result of being subjected to it (affirmative action). The stress experienced could manifest itself in various areas within a person's life. According to Aldwin (1994:23), emotional reactions to stress generally refer to negative feelings such as anxiety, anger and sadness. Although shame, guilt or feeling bored may also be considered stress reactions. Other areas of a person's life that can be affected by stress include physiological reactions such as insomnia, a change in eating patterns, an increase or decrease in weight, headaches, ulcers and high blood pressure. Also included are behavioural reactions such as an increase in smoking and / or alcohol consumption, feeling more irritable, child or spousal abuse and isolation from family and friends. These reactions to stress are validated / supported by the white males interviewed as they indicated that :

- Affirmative action and stress had affected them in their personal lives in the sense that their negativity around affirmative action was being taken home.
- That their social lives had changed. Their “entertaining and socializing” had decreased as they were feeling stressed about affirmative action and as a result did not want to interact with other people.
- That their health had been affected. Their energy levels had decreased as a result of the stress experienced and that they were experiencing problems with sleeping.

However just as one individual may be negatively affected by affirmative action, so another may not be. An individual may respond in a positive manner to the application of affirmative action because his perception of affirmative action is that it is a necessary part of our society. This might be due to the social processes that he has been subjected to. There could be many reasons for such an individual to view affirmative action as necessary and acceptable. It could be due to:

- Being raised in a liberal household where fairness and equality are highly regarded or
- It could be due to wanting to assist in correcting the past exclusion of other races and sexes from the workplace or
- It could be due to religious reasons.
- It may even be acceptable to lose a promotion to an affirmative action candidate because the individual is in a “comfort zone” and does not to be challenged and experience new levels of work stress again. In this scenario, his interpretation of affirmative action will not be experienced as negative.

- There may be many other reasons that an individual may hold to be valid and acceptable for implementing affirmative action. These are merely some of the writer's thoughts.

From the above it can be seen that individuals have different constructions or realities about affirmative action and therefore construct their interpretation of it accordingly. For example, an individual who views affirmative action as necessary (as reflected by some of the respondents who said that it is good and that equal opportunities must exist) will interpret it (affirmative action) as part of our country and society and would view it as acceptable.

Therefore a person that views affirmative action as necessary, may therefore not experience much stress – especially if it is something that he strongly supports and believes in.

6.3.4 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND STRESS

Since the goal of this study is to explore whether the experience of stress related to affirmative action will be influenced by how white males have constructed their views on affirmative action, one needs to determine how the construction of affirmative action occurs in the first place.

To enable one to do this, the writer feels that it is important to summarise the most important aspects of the social construction theory as it plays an important role in the explanation of how individuals construct their realities.

As explained in chapter 2, the social construction theory states that individuals develop their realities regarding issues that are important to them through the social processes that they have been subjected to. These social processes could include education, religion, values and norms, family and social interaction as well as

personal values and convictions. This is supported by Burger (1999:74) who states that the world is seen as a socially constructed product of the interaction between people. Stated another way, it could mean that the knowledge and ideas that people have about the world are viewed as being socially constructed. Knowledge is therefore controlled by the values and normative rules of the community (Burger,1999:74).

From this it can be deduced that the knowledge that people have regarding affirmative action is seen as the result of the social processes that they have been subjected to and not as the result of the (modernistic) objective description of realities. Therefore due to people being subjected to different social processes, they will experience affirmative action in different manners. This can lead one to believe that the application of affirmative action will lead to different interpretations and experiences of it – some of which may be negative and others positive.

In the social construction of affirmative action and stress, the importance that language plays should not be forgotten. According to Kotze (1992:57), within the social construction theory, language is seen as more than just a way of connecting people. It is through language that a social identity is established whereby people can live together in a community. Language is therefore the manner in which people come to develop and experience their world.

Taking the above into consideration one can conclude that language and social construction play an important role in how an individual constructs his reality regarding affirmative action. Therefore people will have different realities that have been formed through language and the social processes that they have been subjected to. As a result, one individual's construction of affirmative action and stress may be very different from the next.

This may be due to the individual's exposure to certain social processes and interactions that have resulted in him having a specific view on affirmative action and stress. If an individual's perception of affirmative action is that it is necessary, whether it be to correct the past exclusion of certain race groups, equality, diversity or for whatever reason that he may hold to be true, then his interpretation and experience of it will be different from an individual who might view affirmative action as unfair. Where an individual might view affirmative action as unfair it could result in the experience of affirmative action as being threatening and this may contribute to the experience of stress.

As was indicated in the interviews and questionnaires, this feeling or perception of affirmative action being perceived as unfair was as a result of the white males feeling that:

- "Affirmative action is viewed as reverse discrimination and that many positions are filled by people that are not qualified."
- "It (affirmative action) is unfair and unjust if it is just a case of chasing numbers so that the company can comply with statutory requirements."
- Some respondents indicated that affirmative action candidates "climb the ladder quicker. Sometimes they do not have the necessary experience which leads to you carrying them. This leads to a lot of frustration."
- Another respondent indicated that his enthusiasm is dampened by affirmative action and that the executive road he is on is disappearing. He feels that it is becoming narrower because he is white. The respondent feels hurt by this because of the manner in which affirmative action is applied. He feels that his career aspirations "have gone out the window."

- A respondent applied for another position, was successful and subsequently made an offer. The offer was then retracted so that an affirmative action candidate could be appointed. The respondent was “angry and disappointed. I understand that affirmative action has to be implemented but it does not have to result in being unethical.”

Due to these perceptions that the respondents hold, which could be as a result of the individual’s experience, socialization and social construction, it could contribute or result in them experiencing affirmative action as negative and threatening.

6.3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING: DECONSTRUCTION

By taking the above into consideration, it can be deduced that a person’s reality regarding affirmative action is based on the manner in which he has constructed it. This would imply that if realities are constructed, then they can be deconstructed in order to re-construct a more positive view of affirmative action. This would be particularly beneficial to those individuals that have a negative construction of affirmative action (especially when it is perceived to lead to the experience of stress).

Deconstruction and re-construction have been discussed and defined by many authors (Doherty, 1991; Kotze, 1995; Kotze, 1997; Lax, 1992; Anderson and Goolishian, 1991) in chapter 2. However, the writer would like to summarise the most important aspects of deconstruction in this chapter as it has important implications in the discussion of affirmative action and stress further in the chapter .

According to Doherty (1991:38), the goal of deconstruction (and reconstruction) is to “shake people out of their usual roles thereby opening space for alternative constructions”. It can therefore be seen as a means to assist people in “seeing” that a

different view of a perceived problem is possible. Related to this dissertation, it would mean that deconstruction will allow the respondents that have a negative view of affirmative action to “see” that there is a different or alternative view of affirmative action that is possible.

Once again language plays an important here as deconstruction can also be thought of as “dissolving” problems through the process of articulation (Doherty, 1991:40). The goal of using language in deconstruction is to assist people in finding new meanings in their life situations. This will allow them to re-story or reconstruct their problems in ways that free them from the dominant story (of affirmative action being experienced as having a negative effect on them).

Since postmodernism holds that multiple realities exist (Doherty, 1991:40), language can be used to try and uncover themes in the realities that are held – in other words to deconstruct the (negative) meanings that the individuals have regarding affirmative action.

Most of the white males interviewed see affirmative action as part of their lives. To be able to see themselves separately from the negative constructions that they have of affirmative action, Doherty (1991) and Kotze (1995) make reference to the deconstructivist technique of externalization. This is a method used to separate the individual from his problem. Externalisation is used to see the problem as the problem and not the person as the problem (O’ Hanlon, 1994:24). By applying this technique, the respondents can now view affirmative action as well as the stress that emanated from it as separate from themselves. Since the effects of affirmative action are internalized and have resulted in stress, the writer feels that it would be beneficial to externalize stress. To be able to do this, a respondent may be asked to describe stress as something that is external or separate from him. “How would you describe stress - what name would you give it?”. A respondent may reply anything from – he sees it as a high wall that prevents him from seeing and enjoying the beautiful things in life to

seeing it a parasite that is draining all energy from him. By using externalisation, the respondent no longer views himself as part of the problem. The problem can now be viewed as an entity on its own that can be dealt with (like overcoming the high wall or destroying the parasite).

According to Ubbink (2000:58), a feeling of relief and freedom encompasses a person when the problem is seen as the problem and not the person. This results in the person feeling empowered and he therefore sees chance to work on the problem. This may offer the person an alternative method for dealing with his negative view or construction of affirmative action.

6.3.6 CONCLUSION

It is quite evident from this research that many of the South African white males interviewed (60%) are still struggling to accept and come to terms with the implementation of affirmative action and as a result may experience a high level of stress. These people also have a negative perception of the implementation of affirmative action and this impacts negatively on their lives – both personally and career wise. However, these negative constructions that they have can be changed by means of deconstruction and reconstructed. This may result in positive consequences.

As reflected from this study, forty percent (40%) of the white males that were interviewed view affirmative action as positive and have a positive experience of it. Although these respondents did not experience affirmative action as positive in all areas of their lives, the majority of their responses were positive. The construction of the realities that these individuals have regarding affirmative action sets them apart from those that were negative and this has resulted in them experiencing a much lower degree of stress that could be associated with affirmative action.

Therefore the manner in which an individual may construct his reality concerning a certain event, such as affirmative action, has a bearing or impact on the experience that he has regarding it. Should an individual's perception of affirmative action be viewed as something that is needed in society, then his construction of stress would be different from an individual that has a negative view of it.

Taking this into consideration deconstruction would suggest that where an individual has a negative experience and construction of affirmative action, this construction can be deconstructed to open space for different or alternative constructions to take place. A negative construction can therefore be deconstructed to create a more positive reconstruction. This positive reconstruction and experience of affirmative action may lead to a decrease in the experience of stress. This may result in positive implications not only for the individual but for the organisation and economy as well as the individual will experience a lower degree of stress and this may result in less time taken off work and therefore less unproductivity.

The following chapter will provide the reader with a summary of this research.

CHAPTER 7 : SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of the study undertaken. It will also ascertain whether it's goal has been achieved. Finally the shortcomings and implications of the study will also be discussed.

7.2 OVERVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The writer wishes to give a brief summary of the preceding chapters which will serve as a backdrop for discussing the implications of the study.

In the first chapter, the reader was introduced to the aspect of affirmative action in South Africa. The consequences of this were discussed which seemed to affect some white males in a negative manner. This consequence can be summarized as:

- Stress may be experienced as a result of affirmative action.

As a result of this, the writer set the following goal:

To apply the social constructivist perspective to the issue of affirmative action related to stress as a means of exploring whether the manner in which white males construct their reality of affirmative action will affect their experience of stress.

In subsequent chapters, the social constructivist approach (chapter 2), affirmative action (chapter 3) and stress (chapter 4) were discussed. This was done as it serves as a backdrop for more detailed and integrated discussions on affirmative action and stress to be undertaken in further chapters. Chapter 5 dealt with the research

methodology that was undertaken for this dissertation. In further chapters, the manner in which individuals construct their reality of affirmative action and stress was also discussed. According to some modernist thinking, affirmative action and stress are seen to share a cause and effect relationship i.e. stress will be experienced if individuals are exposed to the implementation of affirmative action.

However, the (postmodern) social constructivist approach rather views the manner in which affirmative action has been constructed as perhaps resulting in stress. Therefore an individual that might have a negative construction of affirmative action may experience some degree of stress while another individual that has a positive construction may experience little or no stress.

By taking the above into consideration, the writer concludes that it is not necessarily affirmative action per se that causes stress but rather the particular construction that the individual has of it that may result in stress being experienced. Based on this, by deconstructing a negative view of affirmative action and re-constructing a more positive one may result in a decrease of the stress experienced.

7.3 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

The epistemology of this research was to work from a postmodern and social constructivist perspective while the goal of the study was summarized as:

To apply the social constructivist perspective to the issue of affirmative action related to stress as a means of exploring whether the manner in which white males construct their reality of affirmative action will affect their experience of stress.

The writer feels that by discussing affirmative action and stress from the social constructivist perspective, it has illustrated that people construct their reality of affirmative action in many different manners.

It was discussed that some of the white males interviewed had a positive construction of affirmative action and experienced little or no stress while the opposite was true for the individuals that had a negative construction of affirmative action. Therefore the manner in which affirmative action was constructed by these individuals did have an influence in whether stress would be experienced.

Based on this, the writer feels that the goal of the study has been achieved.

7.4 SHORTCOMINGS

The writer wishes to point out the following shortcomings in conducting this research:

- In keeping with the postmodern approach to research, it would have been desirable to use a larger sample population of approximately 100 white males. This would have ensured more diversity which postmodernism celebrates. However, this was not permitted for various reasons such as financial and time constraints.
- All the respondents are from a single area within a company. A more diverse sample population originating from various industries in the geographical area would have been more desirable.
- It would have been good if deconstruction could have been applied to the respondents in more detail and depth. However this was not feasible due to financial and time constraints.

7.4 POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As stated above, it would have been ideal to explore deconstruction and reconstruction in more depth. Therefore a future study may explore the possibility of deconstructing and restructuring those realities of the white males that may have a negative perception and experience of stress related affirmative action.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This research was concerned with the stress experienced by white males as a result of affirmative action. In dealing with this, the writer chose to work from a postmodern social constructivist approach in discussing affirmative action and stress.

In order to achieve the goal of study, namely:

To apply the social constructivist perspective to the issue of affirmative action related to stress as a means of exploring whether the manner in which white males construct their reality of affirmative action will affect their experience of stress,

the writer conducted quantitative as well qualitative research. The qualitative research included the use of a carefully formulated questionnaire together with personal interviews conducted with the respondents. The responses were then discussed from the social constructivist perspective as a means of exploring how individuals may have constructed their realities regarding affirmative action.

As discussed earlier, social constructivism views the manner in which an individual actually constructs his view of affirmative action as something that may lead to the experience of stress. The implication of this is that it is not affirmative action per se that might lead to the experience of stress but rather, it is the particular construction of

affirmative action that may lead to stress being experienced. Taking this into consideration, changing a negative construction of affirmative action by means of deconstruction, an alternative and more positive re-construction can be created. This may result in a decrease of or elimination of stress that was experienced.

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