1996

The perceptions of African-American males on affirmative action in education and employment

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

A Project
Presented to the Faculty of California State University, San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Social Work

by Art Clark Annette Weathington

June 1996
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ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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Approved by:

Dr. Morley G. Chicken, Project Advisor,
Social Work

Dr. Teresa Morris, Chair of Research
Sequence, Social Work
ABSTRACT

Affirmative action was designed to increase the population of minorities and women in education and employment. However, it continues to be a controversial issue in society. This study utilizes a Post Positivist design and explores the impact affirmative action legislation and laws have had on African-American males in education and employment. Purposive convenience sampling was utilized to interview fifty African-American males, 18 years and older, in the cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Riverside, Moreno Valley, and San Bernardino. Face-to-face, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted by the student researchers. The findings in this study may be interpreted for their value to administrative planners, educators, employers, governmental legislative bodies, and students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research project writers express our deepest gratitude to all of the African-American men who selflessly participated in this study. Your candor in sharing your experiences, your cooperation and the time you so willingly provided us, proved to be invaluable.

We, also, express our sincere thanks to Dr. Morley Glicken for his guidance, support and encouragement in facilitating the completion of this project. Also, special thanks to Dr. Arthur Fletcher, member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Reverend Gridiron, Wilma Shepard, James Banks and Edward Williams for their assistance, and to our typist, Sharon Cady, for this final product.

Finally, thanks to our family members—Mattie, David, Joyce, David Jr., Joann, Matthew, Jamar, Tony, Malcolm, Thelma, Ernest, Ernest Jr., Reherbia, Connie, and little Art. You were patient with us, believed in us, encouraged us, supported us and suffered with us to make this an attainable and reachable goal.
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INTRODUCTION AND FOCUS OF INQUIRY

The phrase "affirmative action" appeared for the first time in Executive Order 10925, issued by the late President John F. Kennedy, and was retained in the present Executive Order 11246. The phrase itself has inherent dynamics. It requires far more than maintaining the status quo by removing the barriers of discrimination and placing minority persons, if at all possible, in the positions they would have been in had it not been for past discriminatory practices (Fletcher, 1994).

Robbs (1990) has defined affirmative action as an attempt to provide programs that afford women and racial minorities equality of opportunities not previously available to them in the employment sector and academic milieu. In other words, in its essence, affirmative action attempts to redress historical injustices.

The effort to uncover discrimination in employment has historical roots. The position of taking affirmative action can be traced back to the early years of our country. President George Washington's concerns for our country to have and maintain geographic balance led to the Senatorial Courtesy Convention, and the Pendleton Act gave statutory sanction to the tradition that civil servants in the national government come from all parts of the country.

In 1867, Solomon J. Johnson, according to record, was the first African-American civil servant in the Federal
government. Mr. Solomon J. Johnson's employment experience reversed the law in 1810 that expressed that a person had to be a free, white person in order to work for the government.

However, in a review of Federal Affirmative Action Programs, the Supreme Court ruled, in June of 1995, that Federal programs of affirmative action must stand up under "strict scrutiny," which shows that they are "narrowly tailored" to counteract previous, specific injustices. What this means is that programs must be able to empirically demonstrate that they are in place because of historical injustices that have taken place at the specific institution or place of business where they exist and to further show that the programs do, in fact, bring justice and equality to the institution or place of business.

This ruling, effectively ended most Federal affirmative action programs which, as pointed out by Sanchez (1996), contained no demonstrations that there had been injustices in the areas or occupations to which they applied, and had in place no evaluative mechanisms for showing that the existence of the affirmative action programs did, in fact, bring equality/justice to the situation.

Dunkel (1995) pointed out that a large part of the impetus for the Court's ruling had been the concern that rather than meeting their laudable and quite worthy goals and objectives, affirmative action programs (by omitting measurable, empirical documentation of both previous injus-
tice and correction of said injustice through the affirmative action program) amounted in many situations, to nothing more than "reverse discrimination," wherein one group was given preferential treatment over another.

An example of the kind of concern the Court had is provided by the Congressional Research Service (see: The Press Enterprise, March 13, 1996) in their discussion of affirmative action provisions. It is noted that the Small Business Administration, which annually dispenses about 4.3 billion dollars in 6,000 Federal contracts, gives about half of these to minority firms, while only about one percent are given to disadvantaged, white business owners.

The Court's ruling has been cheered by some and decried by others. Most liberal African-American leaders have been particularly vocal in their denunciation of the Court's ruling. For example, in an article written for The Chicago Tribune (Jan. 17, 1996), Clarence Page states that the whole argument against affirmative action is but a way for Anglos to do nothing to help African-American people, while still maintaining a clear conscience.

However, African-American conservatives see things differently. For example, Star Parker, a former welfare mother, and now, President of the conservative Coalition on Urban Affairs, has championed the decision. Like other African-American conservatives, Star argues that the sentiments voiced by people like Clarence Page are really the
continuation of policies and efforts attempting to get African-American people to rely on the state, thereby leading the minorities, "... down a path with no future." (In: Gribbin, 1995, p. 20).

Obviously, the views of Star Parker and Clarence Page are in direct conflict. It seems reasonable to ask whether either one truly expresses the views of minorities in general, and African-American men, in particular. Regarding the views of African-American men toward affirmative action, it can be noted that very little research has directly studied this topic; indeed, in this researcher's examination of several business and academic databases (ABI Inform, PsychInfo, Dissertation Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, etc.), very few studies could be found that specifically assessed the attitudes of African-American males toward affirmative action.

There are many spokespersons telling others what African-American men think or ought to think, but there is little empirical investigation into what African-American men actually believe. The research, which is focused upon collecting attitudinal data of African-American males toward affirmative action should, therefore, expand this area of the affirmative action literature.

Another reason that it is important to examine the attitudes of African-American men toward affirmative action is that it has been suggested (see: Sanchez, 1996; Konrad &
Linnehan, 1995) that, regardless of whether affirmative action programs have achieved their purposes, it remains crucial to keep the programs because they serve the symbolic value of helping African-American people believe that they are making progress in the work force toward true equality. Data collected in the research should help in determination of whether this claim is, in fact, true.

Review of the Literature

To add context to the study, this section presents a review of the literature. This review examines three areas of research: 1) Studies examining affirmative action programs and preferential treatment from a face-to-face interview with Dr. Arthur Fletcher, known as the "Father of Affirmative Action." Dr. Fletcher is a member, and former chairman, of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Dr. Fletcher implemented the first successful affirmative action program known as the Philadelphia Plan; 2) studies examining whether affirmative action programs have been effective; and 3) studies investigating the attitudes of African-American males toward affirmative action.

Dr. Arthur Fletcher and Preferential Treatment

A review of the literature indicates that the drafting of Title VII was a landmark of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It prohibits discrimination in employment in the private sector, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The literature points out that Congress did
not provide a legal definition of racial or gender discrimination. The same holds true for President Johnson’s Executive Order 11246 which mandated that all government contractors must be fair employment employers (Fletcher, 1994).

Employment practices utilizing affirmative action were voluntary with no legally binding compliance standards. The literature also notes that the Federal Government contractors, including construction, supplies, material, equipment, services, etc. all agreed that they would not try to determine what the government meant by equal opportunity or racial, gender, and ethnic discrimination (Fletcher, 1994).

Dr. Arthur Fletcher also indicates that without legal binding definitions and standards, the contractors and suppliers would not risk breaching a collective bargaining agreement with their respective unions nor violate state statutes or county/city ordinances.

Thus, we were in a "Catch-22," meaning that if there were no legal binding measurement standards in the law, nor any regulations designed to carry out the law, it was impossible to breach a contract. This meant that we had a fair-employment law that was unenforceable, and the contractors knew it. The same held true for procurement officials throughout the government (Fletcher, 1994).

Dr. Fletcher concluded that the only way to overcome this dilemma was to specify that reasonable percentages of the person hours (working hours) in a given contract would be earmarked for minorities and women. Thus, the revised
Philadelphia Plan that Dr. Fletcher signed didn’t specify the number of minorities and women to hire on a given contract. It only specified that a certain number of person-hours were to be worked. The contractor could hire as many, or as few minorities as he liked to perform the task in question (Fletcher, 1994).

The Federal District and Appeals courts agreed that the Philadelphia Plan did not violate the Constitution or the intent of Congress. The affirmative-action enforcement movement was thus launched for all government contracts, construction, services, and equipment, etc. (Fletcher, 1994). The standards set by the Philadelphia plan for affirmative action were not based on preferential treatment or quotas for minorities and women in education and employment (Fletcher, 1994).

The opponents of affirmative action, who address administration/policy issues, generally agree that the policies were adopted at the behest of a powerful civil rights lobby (Glazer, 1991). Glazer argues that social protest and urban violence played a critical role in transforming colorblind prohibitions of discrimination into color-conscious, preferential policies which became, "the origins of affirmative action" (Glazer, 1991).

The merit of preferential treatment of one class of employees over another in organizations has been extensively debated by legal experts, philosophers, and scholars, as
well as by the public at large (Crosby and Clayton, 1990). Preferential treatment of certain classes of employees may remedy discrimination-based inequities. However, it may have had other unintended consequences (Kleiman and Faley, 1988). In particular, it may have negatively affected the job attitudes of both types of employees: those who are perceived as having preferential treatment, and those who are thought of as having no preferential treatment. To date, there has been limited research on the consequences of preferential treatment (Kleiman and Faley, 1988).

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) state that although the media portrayed race-conscious programs favorably throughout the late 1970's, by the 1980's, the dominant way of presenting administration policy issues were through the use of a "no preferential treatment" package emphasizing the importance of ignoring race and ethnicity in administration policy decisions, and opposing the use of "goals" as covert quotas.

A New Statesman and Society article (April 15, 1994), states that Shelby Steele, Professor of English, San Jose State University, believes that affirmative action narrows African-American horizons:

Racial preferences send us the message that there is more power in our past suffering than in our present achievements. The power to be found in victimization is intoxicating, [creating] a new class of supervictims who can feel the pea of victimization under 20 mattresses.
The merit of preferential treatment of one class of employees over another in organizations has been extensively debated by legal experts (Crosby & Clayton, 1990). The literature points out that African-American men are still underrepresented in many professions. Between 1900 and 1982, the labor force participation rate for African-American men dropped more than 10% (from 84.8% to 73.5%), the greatest decline for any race/gender category (Herbers, 1983b, Koretz, 1986). Today, "African-American" is under fresh scrutiny and the Supreme Court, on Monday, April 17, 1995, left intact two court victories by white men who said they were victims of reverse discrimination" (Associated Press article by Laurie Asseo, April, 1995). The article further reported that the justice system let stand a lower court ruling that a plan for promoting African-American firefighters in Birmingham, Alabama, unlawfully discriminated against whites. Consequently, the justices allowed a white man to collect $425,000 from a Pittsburgh company that he accused of denying him a promotion, because of his race (Asseo, 1995).

The Supreme Court actions were not rulings. Instead, the court made no comment as it left intact a Federal Appeals Court decision in each case. The court action came after a growing debate in all three branches of government over whether affirmative action is still needed to help minorities and whether such aid is fair to non-minorities.
Although it is very difficult to gauge the amount of discrimination suffered by any group (Cain, 1986), most social scientists believe that employment discrimination against African-Americans has declined since the adoption of Title VII (labor market discrimination). Cain (1986) states that the significance of a racial gap in the earning of different groups of men is a matter of judgment, but no one suggests the gap is currently balanced to the point of insignificance. However, the gap narrowed during the 1980's. If African-American men still suffer from employment discrimination, do white men suffer similarly from reverse discrimination? Opponents of affirmative action claim that racial preferences favoring African-Americans are widespread (Glazer, 1978). To date, there has been limited research on the consequences of preferential treatment favoring African-Americans or how widespread racial preferences have been (Kleiman & Faley, 1988).

The literature also points out that some people believe that there should be compensation given to African-Americans for past discrimination and the preferential treatment given to Anglos. The people who think compensation should be given for such past doings must keep in mind that the list of protected groups in the United States that are beneficiaries of Federally-enforced affirmative action includes Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaskans, African-Americans and women. Some of these groups
can claim a history of discrimination and oppression, but not all have experienced the pains of slavery that African-Americans have. The compensatory programs appear to be indifferent to the degree of harm suffered. Preferential treatment is as likely to bring as much benefit to other groups as to African-Americans (Fletcher, 1994).

What, then, is the practical effect of preferential treatment and affirmative action on the opportunities of affected groups and their members? The beneficiaries of affirmative action programs in any particular group are those who gain a place in college or employment who otherwise would not have done so.

The literature also notes the alleged harmful aspects of preferential treatment and the beneficiaries of affirmative action are not empirically supported (Crosby and Clayton, 1990; Nacoste, 1989). Critics of affirmative action often use the argument that affirmative action has harmful effects on beneficiaries as a rationale against affirmative action programs (Crosby and Clayton, 1990, Nacoste, 1989).

The literature also points out that the standards set by the Philadelphia plan for affirmative action were not based on preferential treatment or quotas for minorities and women in education and employment. Given the controversy surrounding this subject, it is easy to become sidetracked with many different issues (Fletcher, 1994).
Effectiveness of Affirmative-Action

As noted previously, some authors, e.g., (Sanchez, 1996; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995), have suggested that regardless of their efficacy, affirmative action programs are effective because they serve the symbolic value of helping African-Americans believe that equality and fairness are being created in the American workplace. However, it seems reasonable to ask whether this perception is valid. Is affirmative action doing the job it was created to do?

Killian (1986) assessed the effectiveness of a wide variety of policies aimed at redressing ethnic inequities in the United States through a review of the literature from the 1970's and 1980's. In general, results proved to be largely mixed with the clearest gains in voting and lower-level political representation rather than in terms of workplace affirmative action programs.

At the same time, it was noted that policies had become the focus of intense controversy and had impaired relationships between ethnic minorities and Anglos. Killian (1986) concluded that affirmative action had largely been divisive rather than integrative in its social impact.

Stokes and Scott (1993) addressed the question of evidence regarding the effectiveness of affirmative action policy through a questionnaire survey of the public safety commissioners and/or police chiefs in the 26 cities included in the 1968 report of the National Advisory Commission on
Civil Disorders. Comparative analysis was said to indicate that some progress had been made since 1968. However, the majority of the police departments had either a moderate or a low level of compliancy; none failed to comply.

The Washington, D.C. Police Department was the only agency reflective of its African-American population; Baltimore, Maryland, had low compliance in terms of African-American representation. Stokes and Scott (1993) concluded that the lack of elected African-American officials, and the short duration of elected officials, contributed to the problem. Many municipal departments had made modest gains in terms of affirmative action.

In another study, Espinosa (1992) conducted a case study of a medium-sized city government in California to test affirmative action effectiveness with organizational compliance to affirmative action regulations. Goals were compared with outcomes using affirmative action progress reports and an employee database used to compile them. Espinosa concluded that, although few of the goals were met by the end of the set timetable, exaggeration of progress was found; this happened the most often when actual progress was weakest.

Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action

As noted previously, there has not been a great deal of research that addresses minority attitudes in general, or African-American male attitudes in particular, regarding
affirmative action programs. However, in one early study, Jacobson (1983) examined sociodemographic variables and a variety of attitudinal and experiential variables as predictors of African-American attitudes toward affirmative action programs.

Data were gathered from a national survey (Harris Poll) of African Americans (N = 732) conducted for the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Findings indicated that although African-Americans, as a whole, gave strong support for affirmative action programs, only occupation and education were significantly (though weakly) related to it.

The strongest predictors of African-American attitudes were feelings of powerlessness and views of the effectiveness of African-American leaders in achieving equality for African-Americans. Also significantly related were the amount of contact African-Americans had with Anglos, the amount of discrimination experienced by African-Americans, their support of integration in general, and their view of how much race relations have changed in the past and will change in the future. Neither self-interest nor vested interests were observed to be a strong determinant of African-American attitudes about affirmative action programs.

Earlier in this report it was noted that conservative African-American activists hold attitudes toward affirmative action that are radically different from liberal African-American activists. Simpson (1994) frames their views
...African-American conservatives argue that individual qualities such as education, hard work, and determination, more than race, determines life-chances. While some acknowledge that racism exists, and is a factor in the lives of African-Americans, they do not believe that racism is the cause of racial inequities. (Simpson, 1994, p. 1512)

In an effort to explore the salience of these conservative ideas among the African-American middle- and upper-classes and the working and lower classes, Simpson (1994) examined whether attitudes toward affirmative action programs were significantly related to differences in socioeconomic status and to strength of group identity. Survey data were said to indicate that a significant conservative constituency, even among middle-to-upper class African-Americans, was unlikely. This is the case because even African-American elites (upper classes) strongly support affirmative action, believe in governmental responsibility for the welfare of the poor, and feel that racism plays a strong role in determining the life-chances of African-Americans.

Triandis, Kurowski, Tecktiel and Chan (1993) examined the attitudes of African-Americans, Euro-Americans, Hispanics and non-Hispanic university students, faculty and staff regarding affirmative action programs. These data were then used to construct scenarios that captured the essence of the conflicts, problems, or issues mentioned by interviewees. A sample of students, faculty and staff (N = 149) were then
asked to react to the scenarios, each of which had four positions. Two were moderate and two were extreme. Two were pro affirmative action and two were against affirmative action.

According to Triandis et al. (1993) the findings indicated a variety of differences between groups based on gender and ethnicity. It was, for example, observed that minorities are more inclined than non-minorities to interpret ambiguous behaviors as prejudice. African-Americans were found to be very actively involved in dealing with prejudice.

Affirmative action was a strong point of disagreement among African-Americans, Euro-Americans and non-Hispanic. It was also observed that African-Americans are more critical of the establishment. Further, it was found that minorities oppose the melting pot idea more than do the majority.

Another study of college students' attitudes toward affirmative action and other racial equality issues was conducted by Martin-Stanley (1988). Data were collected by means of a ten-page survey instrument which was completed by 426 juniors and seniors at the State University of New York at Stonybrook.

The results were said to indicate that African-American and Anglo-American college students differ in their perception of racial inequality and support for affirmative action policies. Ninety-two percent of the African-American stu-
dents perceived racial inequality, while only 47.9 percent of the Anglo students did so (p<.001). Further, eighty-eight percent of the African-American students supported affirmative action policies, whereas only 48 percent of the Anglo students did so (p<.001).

Racial differences in attitudes were also observed for a number of other equality issues. These included: perceived intergroup conflict; perceived increased prejudice; societal explanations for inequality; and group identity.

Based on these findings, Martin-Stanley (1988) concluded that results suggest that differential perceptions of racial inequality might play a role in racial conflict. He also felt that differences pointed to the potential importance of perceived intergroup conflict in defining African-American/Anglo relations. Finally, perceptual differences were said to raise questions about future public support for affirmative action and other programs to promote equality of opportunity for all American citizens.

Conclusions

Based on the material reviewed, three conclusions may be drawn. First, the literature indicated that affirmative action programs, at best, are of only marginally assistance in terms of redressing historical injustices and giving African-American people equal opportunities in the workplace. Moreover, there is some research which suggests that they may be contributing to a marked level of division among
African-American and Anglo people.

A second conclusion of the study is that, as suggested by some of the reviewed research, affirmative action programs may indeed be of symbolic value to African-American people, because the attitudinal studies tended to show that African-American people, regardless of their socioeconomic status, support affirmative action programs. It should be pointed out here that none of the attitudinal studies specifically addressed African-American males but only African-American people in general. However, it could well be that the views in the existing research do generalize to African-American males.

The third conclusion of the study looks at the thoughts of Dr. Arthur Fletcher who devised the first successful enforcement plan for affirmative action. The study revealed the affirmative action program has no legal, binding, compliance standards. This means that we have a Fair Employment Law which is unenforceable, and the contractors involved knew it.

The Supreme Court ruling, in June of 1995, states that Federal programs of affirmative action must stand up under "strict scrutiny," shows that they are "narrowly tailored" to counteract previous, specific injustices. What this means is that programs must be able to empirically demonstrate that they are in place because of historical injustices that have taken place at the specific institution or
place of business where they exist, and to further show that the programs do, in fact, bring justice and equality to the institution or place of business.

This ruling, effectively ended most Federal affirmative action programs which, as pointed out by Sanchez (1995), contained no demonstration that there had been injustices in the area/occupations to which they applied and had in place no evaluative mechanisms for showing that the existence of the affirmative action programs did, in fact, bring equality/justice to the situation.

According to Dr. Arthur Fletcher, employment practices utilizing affirmative action were voluntary with no legally, binding, compliance standards, whatsoever. The literature also points out that the entire Federal government contracting universe, including construction, supplies material, equipment, services, etc. all agreed that they would not try to determine what the government meant by equal opportunity or racial, gender, and ethnic discrimination (Fletcher, 1994).

The recent Supreme Court rulings have little foundation due to the lack of clarity of the original intent of the law. This literature revealed that the evaluative mechanisms were never a standard to be implemented.
FIT OF PARADIGM TO THE FOCUS

The research orientation of this study followed the Post-Positivist research paradigm utilizing focus group interviews as qualitative data. In utilizing the Post-Positivist paradigm, the use of open-ended questions are valued for the purpose of discovery. The purpose of this study is focused upon collecting and analyzing attitudinal data of African-American males toward affirmative action since much remains to be known about the impact affirmative action has had on African-American males.

Affirmative action has long been the focus of political, social, and interracial strife. Opposition to affirmative action is mainly due to a misunderstanding of laws that were never clearly defined or established. Such opposition might be decreased through legalistic guidelines, clear policies, enforcement and an educational campaign. For example, Dr. Arthur Fletcher, a member and former chairman of the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights devised the first successful enforcement plan for affirmative action which was titled the Philadelphia Plan. It required employers doing business with the government to set goals and timetables for hiring minorities and women in 1966. However, the enforcement plan was voluntary and was not legally binding. The lack of clear affirmative action laws and policies has led to individual interpretations of what the law was intended to accomplish. Revisiting affirmative action laws to ad-
dress clarity and specific intent will do well to limit confusion and misunderstandings of affirmative action policies in education and employment.

This Post-Positivist study utilized face-to-face, in-depth interviews, because it is essential to learn what African-American males perceive about affirmative action, and whether or not they believe it has been beneficial. Consequently, the findings from this study may result in modified or new policies surrounding affirmative action that will benefit society as a whole.

This study responds to the limited research available about the perceptions and attitudes toward affirmative action by African-American males. The goal of the researchers was to assess participants' beliefs concerning the components of affirmative action policies.

Methods: Where and From Whom Data was Collected

Procedures involved the collection of data during a four-hour focus group with interactive interviews and discussion. The population studied was African-American men residing in the cities of Riverside, Moreno Valley, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Inglewood, California. The specific age sample drawn from this population were males 18 years and older.

This was a convenience sample including only those individuals who wished to take part in the study and who were willing to discuss issues surrounding affirmative
action. Study participants were interviewed by the researchers using an open-ended, interactive question format. The group process allowed for the participants to respond if they so desired. However, all participants agreed to a group consensus to each question. It is recognized that the group process may have influenced participants towards conformity in a majority consensus. The interview site was held at a central location convenient to the participants. The study was limited to African-American male participants in order to focus on the data which needed to be gathered. The sample size was 50 African-American males with diverse socioeconomic, educational and employment backgrounds. This sample was selected not only because it had the advantage of increasing the likelihood that attitudes would be representative (Kiess and Bloomquist, 1985) but also because it allowed the researchers sufficient numbers of subjects to "flush out" data by examining whether attitudes differ due to differences in several sociodemographic variables including respondents' ages, educational backgrounds, work experience, and income.

All data gathered was held in strict confidence with identifying information of involved participants appropriately secured. The interactive group process was videotaped with the approval of all participants. The video tape was transcribed and reviewed for data analysis. All participants signed a form consenting to their involvement in the
study prior to the start of the group interview. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without reason and without ramifications to them. Confidentiality was guaranteed throughout the study (see Appendix A).

**Determining Instrumentation**

The data collection instrument was the student researchers. The researchers developed the initial questions to be asked, developed a rapport to allow the group participants to share their experiences, recognized what was important in the data, and attempted to give it accurate meaning. In order to gain accurate information from the group participants, it was necessary for the researchers to prepare themselves to become sensitive to the data to be gathered and to the participants themselves.

This sensitivity was developed in two ways. First, the researchers had personal and professional experiences involving affirmative action programs which allowed an understanding of the data being studied. Being African-American student researchers increased the potential of developing feelings of trust with group participants. The researchers' experiences also aided them in being more aware of the significant data and how to better interpret it.

The second sensitivity strategy was becoming adequately grounded in the literature. A strong familiarity with relevant literature allowed for an appropriate understanding
of the subject which sensitized the researcher to the phenomenon being studied. It also allowed for a better understanding of the data and how to interpret it. A thorough review of the literature developed, not only a more sensitive approach to the experiences of the participants, but better understanding of the data as it was analyzed.

Planning Data Collection and Recording Modes

This exploratory study derived from a Post-Positivist paradigm utilized qualitative data. The use of this paradigm enhanced the forms and the exploration of this topic as the study progressed. This approach also enabled analysis and interpretation of data progressively throughout the study. It permitted the researchers the ability to continue the group interactive interview to the point when the data overlapped and no new significant data emerged. To focus the sample further, group participants were informed as to the purpose of the study and the expectations of the researchers.

The data was collected by interviewing a group of participants who were African-American men, 18 years and older. There were 50 group participants. The group interview process took approximately four hours. Purposive convenience sampling was utilized, because it involved cases that were rich in information and revealed issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. However, since purposive convenience sampling was utilized, the
sample size was not paramount. "Another aspect of Purposive sampling is sample size. The basic rule is, 'there are no rules for sample size.' In qualitative research, one is looking more for quality than quantity, more for information richness than information volume," (Erlandson, et al, 1993). Consequently, this data collection method is very time consuming due to the nature and sensitivity of this topic.

A few of the group participants were known as personal acquaintances of the researchers, but most were unknown. Those who were known to the researchers were asked to bring friends, relatives, or personal acquaintances to the group interview site to be included in the sample.

In preparation for the group interview, the research students preselected the theme or topics that were discussed to guide the group interview process. The topics pertaining to affirmative action are shown in Appendix B. In addition to the preselected topics, time was allocated for spontaneous discussion.

Role play between the two research students was conducted prior to the group interview to prepare for dialogue that might occur. Role play also prepared the research students for unexpected, emotional responses due to the nature and sensitivity of affirmative action today.

To ensure high fidelity in the data collection process, the two research students took notes, and audio and video recorded the group interview with the permission of the
As one researcher led the group interactive process, the second researcher assumed primary responsibility for the notes and the audio and video taping. However, as either researcher saw the opportunity to pursue unexplored emerging new information, he/she spontaneously guided and integrated the new information into the discussion. In addition, if certain responses lacked detail, participants were asked to elaborate. A number of researchers recommend the use of audio or video tape recorders, because it ensures that everything which is stated is recorded on tape. In addition, the research students utilized the tapes to critically analyze their interviewing skills for improvement purposes (Erlandson, et al, 1993). Consequently, the researchers examined the equipment prior to the interviews to ensure its operability.

Recognizing that participants might have been hesitant to discuss the issue of affirmative action because of the sensitive nature of the topic, the research students attempted to create a feeling of mutual respect and acceptance prior to the start of the group interactive interview process. This relationship was accomplished by allowing the participants time to relax and a warm up period to begin the interactive process. Non-threatening, open-ended dialogue included questions related to the project. The research students followed the lead of the participants. The researchers began the group interactive interview process when
the dialogue appeared to flow with ease and comfort. Open-ended questions facilitated the participants' sharing of experiences. Discussion started broadly and became more specific as the interview progressed.

Prior to conclusion of the group interactive interview, the research students reviewed and summarized what was stated by the participants. This allowed the participants the opportunity to correct or clarify what was stated to ensure accuracy of the data.

An "Application to Use Human Subjects in Research" was completed by the researchers and put on file at California State University, San Bernardino, to ensure the protection and confidentiality of the participants in the study. All participants signed a form consenting to their involvement in the study prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix A). Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time without reason or ramifications to them. Confidentiality was guaranteed throughout the study. Only those participants known to researchers can be identified. Notes, audio and video tapes have been secured. Its location is known only to the researchers. A debriefing statement (see Appendix C) was read to participants at the end of the group interactive interview, and they were each personally thanked for their participation.

Following the data collection, written notes were checked against the audio and video tape for fidelity, and
any necessary corrections were made. The data for the participants was then transcribed into a word processing program, which allowed for easier retrieval and manipulation of the data.

Quality Control

The fidelity of the data gathered was insured through the use of both written and audio and video tape recordings. The responses were reviewed by both researchers and the participants at the end of the group interactive interview process. This insured clarity of responses as well as clearer understanding of the respondents’ meanings.

During the open coding phase of data analysis, categories, properties, and dimensions were verified against the original data. The researchers’ assumptions about the data were validated against the assumptions of the research advisor.
DATA ANALYSIS

A qualitative procedure was utilized in this exploratory study. Questions were asked in an attempt to determine the attitudes of African-American males regarding affirmative action programs.

The concept of grounded theory was used to format the following major coding systems: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Grounded theory is also referred to as "the constant comparative method of analysis." The student researchers utilized the open coding system.

Like systematic observation, content analysis required the researchers to devise coding systems that were used to quantify the information in the documents of the interviews. The coding was occasionally quite simple and straightforward. The process of analyzing also involved a line-by-line analysis. This process required close examination, phrase-by-phrase, and was quite detailed.

The student researchers processed the information from the interviews by reviewing sentences or paragraphs so the information throughout was carefully scrutinized. In the affirmative action research project, very close examination and line-by-line review was used after interviewing.

The process of open coding that the student researchers used in the affirmative action research project broke down, examined, compared, conceptualized, and eventually categorized data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The process allowed
the student researchers to name the categories' phenomenon through close examination. The data from the interviews was broken down into fine parts. Each section was examined closely, compared for similarities, and differences were noted. The coding process used by the affirmative action researchers allowed assumptions about the issues to be questioned, thereby allowing data to promote change.

The open coding system used by the student researchers engaged the students in the process of open sampling. The objective was to point out all relevant categories that aided in the project outcome.

The coding system was written as precisely as possible to allow the researchers to easily categorize the issues. The precise coding was especially important for the student researchers, because the people being interviewed became highly emotional when discussing issues of affirmative action. The emotional responses of the participants were not the focus of the study. However, it should be noted that the responses emerged during the interviewing process. The open coding process allowed the researchers to analyze key words that were in the topic questions to determine the participants' response ranges (see Appendix D).

The open coding system that the student researchers used allowed them to point out categories, their properties, and dimensions that were pertinent to the study. The system promoted inductive and deductive thinking that involved
several steps.

The system coded the interactions and responses of the group and single persons. In this system, the four categories are age, education, work experience and income. The properties consist of the following interactions that reflect the dimensional range of responses: 1) Positive Social-Emotional, e.g., expresses agreement with issues in affirmative action; 2) Negative Social-Emotional, e.g., shows antagonism towards issues in affirmative action study; 3) Task-Related Answering, e.g., gives opinion; 4) Task-Related Questioning, e.g., asks for information. The group responses were examined and placed under the categories that reflected a positive or negative dimensional range.

1. Positive social-emotional, group interactive response (participants expressed having positive experiences surrounding the affirmative action research question).

2. Negative social-emotional (participants expressed having negative experiences surrounding the affirmative action research questions).

3. Task-Related answering (participants expressed opinions in group discussions).

4. Task-Related questioning (participants asked questions or made statements that allowed the group to develop the questions or issues that they felt were important.
FINDINGS

Question #1. Tell Me Your Opinion of Affirmative Action.

Consensus Response to Question #1

Majority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative Action goals attempted to promote equal access and opportunities to groups that have been historically and traditionally denied opportunities in the United States of America.

B. Affirmative action concerns are not issues that only focus on getting jobs, or college enrollment. The issues promote change that allows for empowerment that increase opportunities for moving up the economic steps of success.

C. The majority benefactors of affirmative action have been Caucasian women.

D. Affirmative action and the issues surrounding preferential treatment have lead many people to stereotype African-Americans as incompetent in employment and education.

Minority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative action does African-Americans more harm than good. It devalues their aptitude, competence and skills by the perception that affirmative action promotes incompetence.

B. Affirmative action programs were needed at one time. Traditional affirmative action policies
have attempted to attain its goals without great success. Today, African-Americans need to unite, as they did during the Civil Rights Movement, with or without affirmative action.

Question #2. What is Your Understanding for the Reasons to have Affirmative Action Laws?

Consensus Response to Question #2

Majority of Respondents:

A. There was a lack of opportunity for qualified African-American males, other minorities and women due to systematic discrimination in government and the private sector.

B. To force equal opportunity and promote fair hiring practices.

C. New laws required an equal percentage of minorities, representative of their population, in employment, to achieve equality.

D. Because the various branches of government failed to grant contracts to minority workers or firms, this was an attempt to ensure that minorities and women would receive an equal percentage of contracts.

E. There was a lack of higher educational opportunities for African-American males and other minorities due to systematic exclusion.
Minority of Respondents

A. African-Americans have been stigmatized, stereotyped, and viewed, historically, as second-class citizens.

Question #3. What Reasons Would You have to Justify Abolishing Affirmative Action?

Consensus Response to Question #3

Majority of Respondents:

Affirmative action should not be abolished. However, it should be revisited and rectified for the following detrimental reasons:

A. In order to justify abolishing affirmative action, a group must determine if the affirmative action policies have met the objective goals. If the group which benefitted from affirmative action policies believe that affirmative action must stay in place until they succeed, an attitude is created that promotes more dependence and less individual growth. For that reason affirmative action programs should be abolished.

B. Institutionalized racism and discrimination continue to be pervasive in the education and employment arena showing that affirmative action has not been as effective as it should have been.

Minority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative Action has resulted in a decline/loss
of generational virtues such as striving for academic excellency, reputable work quality, and positive attitudes. African-Americans should focus more on their accomplishments rather than obstacles faced in education and employment.

B. Affirmative action has resulted in complacency due to its long-standing existence. The threat of its demise should serve as a wake-up call to African-Americans.


Consensus Response to Question #4

Majority of Respondents:

A. Initially, affirmative action revealed biases against African-Americans. This lead to specific programs that were aimed at African-Americans. Many African-Americans were recruited and thrust into higher education and administrative jobs, often without proper qualifications, work experience or training, even though prior discrimination had prevented them from receiving adequate training and certification.

Without a doubt, affirmative action programs have opened opportunities in education and the work place for women, racial minorities, and the physically handicapped that would not have occur-
red in the absence of legal mandates.

Minority of Respondents:
A. Affirmative action has not been beneficial to many African-Americans because they have not been in a position to take advantage of the laws and policies of affirmative action.

Question #5. Tell Me Your Opinions Regarding Preferential Treatment of Minorities in Education and Employment.

Consensus Response to Question #5

Majority of Respondents:
A. Affirmative action is an opportunity to level the playing field by balancing a system of unfairness. It is needed because African-Americans have been legally cheated from fairness, opportunity and equality from the start to the present. Special treatment is needed to catch up. The use of the term preferential treatment is inaccurate if it implies that African-Americans do not have the right to legally correct an injustice.

B. African-Americans are not the only group "protected" by affirmative action. White women have been the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action programs, as well as other minorities including Hispanics, Native Americans, Filipinos, and applicants from low-income families and persons with
physical disabilities.

Question #6. Tell Me Your Thoughts About the Use of Quotas in Education and Employment.

Consensus Response to Question #6

Majority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative action was created primarily for African-Americans. It is almost synonymous with quotas because it is equated with preference to one group over another. Affirmative action has now been manipulated in such a way that African-Americans compete for jobs and higher education with women and other minorities included in the quota system. African-Americans are stagnated in advancement through affirmative action due to the inclusion of other groups in the quota system. In this respect, affirmative action is not working for African-Americans.

Minority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative action and quotas are not synonymous. Affirmative action addresses opportunity and equality in education and employment. Quota is a terminology used to manipulate and malign affirmative action laws.

Question #7. Tell Me Your Thoughts Concerning White Males and Reverse Discrimination
Consensus Response to Question #7

Majority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative action resulted in the breakup of exclusive networks, i.e., "the good ole' boy clubs." This created resentment in that it was believed by some Caucasians that African-Americans took jobs and positions that they believed were inherently theirs. Affirmative action was blamed, and thus, the claim for reverse discrimination. If unfairness, inequality and lack of opportunity weren't denied their ancestors, society would not be facing this issue today. More often than not, it is overlooked that African-Americans are over qualified for positions and must be twice as good to be considered equal. Even then, African-Americans are denied equal opportunity. Reverse discrimination is avoidance of the real issue in that racial discrimination remains prevalent among African-Americans.

B. White males have difficulty accepting that there are qualified minorities with better skills who can obtain a job or position over them.

C. What makes Caucasians believe they have the inherent right to any job? If African-American forefathers had been treated fairly and provided equal opportunity, reverse discrimination would not be
an issue. When you are addressing restitution, someone is going to feel slighted.

D. Those claiming reverse discrimination are afraid. When the opportunity presents itself, African-Americans and other minority groups excel in many areas, challenging stereotypes. Caucasians also fear that, soon they will become a minority, given the rise of all other ethnic groups collectively.

Minority of Respondents:

A. White males have become a new minority in the United States, the ones who no longer have an equal opportunity. Many white males have to compete for government as well as private contracts that are given to minorities because of affirmative action laws.

Question #8. Tell Me Your Thoughts Surrounding Statements From Mainstream Society that Discrimination in Education and Employment No Longer Exists.

Consensus Response to Question #8

Majority of Respondents:

A. Although African-American males have made some progress, the playing field remains unequal. In addition they are stereotyped and viewed as less than equal in most arenas.

B. The media distorts African-American males' true image. The elements of negativity, i.e., viol-
ence, criminality and incompetence permeates society. Thus, this carries over into the labor force and education creating and maintaining a fearful and discriminating environment.

Question #9. Tell Me Your Thoughts Surrounding Statements that Affirmative Action Laws Result in Unqualified Minorities Who are Given Jobs and Admission into College Over More Qualified Caucasians.

Consensus Response to Question #9

Majority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative action and equal opportunity have different goals and issues. In the USA today, every college and university says it is committed to equal opportunity in staff hiring and minority admissions.

Universities today do not turn down minorities who meet academic criteria. The difficulty is to convince the university that minority students will maintain high standards of student achievement subsequent to admission. These concerns have nothing to do with affirmative action admissions policy, but continue to reflect a negative perception of the abilities of minorities in education.

B. One cannot associate affirmative action and Afri-
can-Americans with incompetence. Generally, employers hire African-Americans who are capable of performing the job. African-American males believe they have to work harder than other groups to maintain employment.

C. Even though affirmative action has set aside programs to assist African-Americans in receiving parity in education and employment, African-American males have consistently shown a level of high intelligence. Furthermore, they have achieved their goals and met or exceeded expectations despite obstacles.

D. Instead of acknowledging the intelligence of African-American males when they accomplish a difficult task, they are said to be extraordinary as opposed to their Caucasian counterpart, whose intelligence is assumed. Society downplays the abilities and intelligence of African-Americans in education and employment as opposed to other groups.

E. The media does not report African-American successes in education and employment, leading society to a biased perception. Therefore, society does not know about the African-American males' virtues of outstanding qualifications and educational accomplishments. Society should be aware
that although African-American males are more qualified than others, they are denied the job or position due to their race.

F. Our country has a past history of turning down many qualified candidates because they were Catholic or Jewish and, in many cases, would not even consider African-Americans. Today, many minorities are protesting that while they have satisfied admissions standards, they are not getting the college slots. On the other hand, many whites are complaining that minorities with lower test results are given the slots sought by higher-scoring Caucasians.

Minority of Respondents:

A. Affirmative action is harmful to African-American males because it gives the perception that they do not make an effort. It is necessary that they instill in themselves the importance of excelling to their full potential and make an effort to achieve.

Question #10. What Do You Think Are the Solutions to Improving Affirmative Action?

Consensus Response to Question #10

Majority of Respondents:

A. The solution to improve affirmative action policy in education must move beyond major minority re-
cruiting drives and offers of financial aid. Too much attention has been placed on African-Americans having more opportunity than other groups. The outcome has caused a negative view of affirmative action. Affirmative action should take a new direction and start broadcasting the many students that have maintained the same standards as other students in the university system.

B. African-Americans need to establish their own businesses and hire African-Americans in key positions. In this way, if affirmative action is abolished, African-American males will be employed by African-American owned business establishments.

C. African-Americans should be cautious consumers and support their own. They need to curtail their support of mainstream businesses, if such businesses do not demonstrate support for the African-American community. African-Americans should spend their money where they receive the most support.

Question #11. Participants—Tell Me About Your Educational, Employment Background and Your Age.

There were a total of fifty African-American males interviewed. The mean age was 52 years old, half of them were in the 30-39 year-old range. The oldest male was 72 years old and the youngest was 18 years old.
Nine of the total African-American males were employed by fire departments, seven were probation officers, six were teachers, five were postal service workers, five were construction workers, three were shipping and receiving clerks, three were realtors, two were claims specialists, two were linemen at Pacific Bell, one was an investment broker, one was a funeral home owner, one was in advertising, one was a mechanical space craft designer, one was a hotel restaurant worker, one was a student, and two were unemployed.

The participants' educational accomplishments ranged from high-school diplomas to post-graduate degrees.

The average length of time in each employment field included: 26 years as a hotel restaurant worker, twenty years with the fire department, fifteen years with the probation departments and as construction workers, fourteen years as a funeral home owner and in advertising, ten years with the postal service, seven years as an investment broker, five years as teachers, three years as shipping and receiving clerks, two years as realtors, claim specialists, linemen with Pacific Bell, and the mechanical space craft designer had been on the job two months.

The education and employment history of the participants contributed significantly in category #1 "Positive Social-Emotional and #4 "Task Related" questions (the participants who worked for their agencies 5-27 years represented category #1 and #4.)
The age and income of the participants contributed significantly to Category #2 "Negative Social-Emotional" and #3 "Task Related Answering" (this category pointed out that the participants who were in the youngest age range (18-25) expressed negative experiences with other people's perceptions of African-American males' educational abilities. The participants who were in the mid-age group (25-45) expressed negative experiences with affirmative action laws and policies because the policies have done little to assist large numbers of African-American males.

The older age group (45-72) expressed negative experiences with affirmative action policies because of the pain they had to endure to reach their goals. The older group of men generally expressed that affirmative action helped them reach their goals, but were negative experiences for the generations below them.

The income rate of the men place the majority (99 percent) into the middle class. The majority statement of all the middle-class males was, "I'm middle class and sinking fast."

The participants' negative experiences with affirmative action policies were related to job dissatisfaction factors and consequent stress and strain for the middle class, African-American males. They speculated that role conflict, role ambiguity, and heavy work load appeared to be significant factors in job dissatisfaction.
The African-American men expressed that affirmative action laws may have helped them get the job. However, to keep the job, they felt that they had to work three times harder than other groups due to institutionalized racism and discrimination, as well as negative stereotypes.
SUMMARY DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed that the future of affirmative action in the United States is unclear. Clearly, politics will play a major role in future programs.

Affirmative action programs were established approximately thirty years ago, hoping to provide a measure of equality in employment and representation in areas where minorities were underrepresented.

The literature notes that Title VII was the landmark of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It prohibits discrimination in employment in the private sector on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. However, congress did not provide a legal definition of racial or gender discrimination. The same holds true for President Johnson's Executive Order 11246, which mandates that all government contractors must be fair employment employers.

Sadly, because no legal definition was established, the legislators and lawmakers decided that the category "minorities" would consist of women of all races, and everyone else except Caucasian men. Affirmative action programs were established as a result of an on-going plea for equality; and human beings have paid the price for this so-called "equality." A tremendous amount of suffering and confusion has resulted from unclear policies and standards in affirmative action.

Caucasian men, some being opponents of affirmative
action, do not see themselves as equality providers, but do see minorities and women as taking something from them. They see the treatment as preferential and themselves as victims. They refuse to recognize the need to create a truly level playing field, and since this has not yet been accomplished, they feel affirmative action should be abolished.

Frederick R. Lynch, associate professor of government at Claremont-McKenna College, an opponent of affirmative action, who authored the book, *Invisible Victims: White Males and the Crisis of Affirmative Action*, states that white males are being victimized by an unwieldy "social engineering program." According to Lynch the "program" that establishes hiring and acceptance "quotas" based on a person's color or gender is wrong. This type of system is not, and never can be, fair. The system has created an environment for bigotry and dissension between various groups of people. However, the opponents of affirmative action must keep in mind that the thirty-year "program" has not been established long enough to reverse an environment of bigotry and dissension between the various groups in the United States of America.

However, "quotas," and contemporary African-American experiences, in some respects have paralleled the experiences of American Jews during the 1940's and 1950's with regarding access to educational parity and representation as a
group in the "American way of life." It can be argued that African-Americans are still emerging as a socially and economically disadvantaged group similar to establishment of quotas set at major universities that ensured access to Jews. Thus, African-Americans have benefitted from affirmative action programs that act as "enforcers" to the provisions of existing constitutional laws on equality.
APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to address the issues and problems surrounding affirmative action issues impacting African-American males. This study is being conducted by Annette Weathington and Art Clark under the supervision of Dr. Morley Glicken. This study has been approved by the Social Work Department’s Human Subjects Committee of California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be interviewed by one or both researchers. The interview will last approximately one hour during which time you will be asked about your opinions or views as they pertain to affirmative action. Other questions will include your views about discrimination in education and employment, and your educational and employment background.

Please be assured that any information you provide will be held in the strictest confidence by the researchers. At no time will your name be reported with your responses. Data will be reported by identification numbers assigned to you at the time of your interview. If at any time, you have questions about your participation, or about the study, please call Dr. Morley Glicken or Dr. Teresa Morris at (909) 880-5501. At the conclusion of this study, you may receive a report of the results.

Please understand that your participation in this research is totally voluntary. You are free to withdraw without penalty at any time during your interview, and to remove any data derived from your interview at any time during the course of the study.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study; and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant’s Signature __________________________ Date ______________

Researcher’s Signature __________________________ Date ______________
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONS

1. Tell me your opinion of affirmative action.

2. What is your understanding for the reasons to have affirmative action laws?

3. What reasons would you have to justify abolishing affirmative action laws today?

4. Tell me how affirmative action has benefitted you in education and employment.

5. Tell me your opinions regarding preferential treatment for minorities and women in education and employment.

6. Tell me your thoughts about the use of quotas in education and employment?

7. Tell me your thoughts concerning white males and reverse discrimination.

8. Tell me your thoughts surrounding statements from mainstream society that discrimination in education and employment no longer exists.

9. Tell me your thoughts surrounding statements that affirmative action laws result in unqualified minorities who are given jobs and admission into college over more-qualified Caucasians.

10. What do you think are the solutions to improving affirmative action?

11. Tell me about your educational and employment background and age.
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to elicit your opinions and thoughts concerning affirmative action as it impacts the lives of African-American males in education and employment. It is hoped that information ascertained from the interviews will provide some insight to society as to the importance of affirmative action and its benefit to society as a whole.

Should you have any concerns or questions regarding your participation, you may contact the researchers, Annette Weathington or Art Clark, and the research advisor, Dr. Morley Glicken at (909) 880-5557. Any of these people may also be reached by phone through the Department of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino at (909) 880-5501. You may also contact the department by mail at 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397 or the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 624 Ninth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20425, phone (202) 376-7572. Should you wish copies of the study, they will be available by contacting any of the people listed above.
APPENDIX D: EMOTIONAL RESPONSE CHART

This chart reflects the dimensional range of responses of the participants.

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N=50 African American males responded to questions.

Note: Numbers in boxes relate to the number of participants that responded to each question.

Keywords for each question are as follows:

#1 - Opinion
#2 - A.A. Laws
#3 - Abolishing
#4 - Benefitted
#5 - Preferential Treatment
#6 - Quotas
#7 - Reverse Discrimination
#8 - No Discrimination
#9 - Unqualified Minorities
#10 - Solutions
REFERENCES


