

Literature Review about the use of Affirmative Action Programmes to Address Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Affirmative action programmes are workplace policies and practices that are purposed to help create an equitable and diverse workforce. They do this by offering assistance to historically disadvantaged groups, not to create an advantage but to eliminate or reduce the factors that maintain disadvantage. Although widely endorsed, this approach is highly controversial. Opponents argue that special treatment of disadvantaged groups perpetuates negative attitudes towards the social identity of those groups. Thus, affirmative action mandates the social categorizations and stereotypes that gave rise to discrimination in the first place. Despite the controversy, empirical evidence suggests these programmes may be highly effective when properly constructed and implemented.

There is a useful body of literature on the theory and practice of this approach, which may guide affirmative action officers in the New Zealand Police in their efforts to achieve equity and diversity. Researchers have identified a number of factors to programme success, a key determinant being the support for such action from all organisation members. Supportive attitudes are largely dependent upon a collective, definitive understanding of what affirmative action is and why it is necessary. This review establishes the goals and mechanics of affirmative action and explores the factors that influence programme success. The discussion focuses on the use of such programmes to address gender inequality, as the under-representation of women in policing organisations continues to be a universal issue. Some of the limitations of applying the research findings to the context of the New Zealand Police are discussed.

1 Purpose of Affirmative Action Programmes

Affirmative action programmes are workplace policies and practices that are designed to redress or reduce historical forms of discrimination based on demographic distinctions among employees (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie & Lev-Arey, 2006; Resendez, 2002). They serve to increase the number of individuals in traditionally disadvantaged groups in areas in which they have been underrepresented (Resendez, 2002). These programmes also enable organisations to detect ongoing discriminatory practices as they make individuals within an organisation responsible for monitoring the issue. This is done through systematically collecting relevant data, examining the aggregated data for trends, identifying the cause of the trend (the problem), and correcting the problem (Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006).

Affirmative action is considered to be an effective, superior way of eliminating or reducing the impact of discrimination (Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006; Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000; Harrison et al., 2006; Resendez, 2002). Without such a proactive approach, organisations are generally reliant on minority groups to advocate for themselves (Crosby & Ropp, 2002, cited Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen,

2006). Crosby, Iyer and Sincharoen (2006) assert that reliance on self-advocacy is problematic for a couple of reasons:

1. Many who are disadvantaged are not consciously aware discriminatory practices exist. A phenomenon known as “denial of personal discrimination” is well documented (Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006, p 592; Matheson, Raspopow & Anisman, 2012). It recognizes that individual members of minority groups come to believe they are personally less disadvantaged than other members of the group (Crosby et al. 2003, cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006).
2. When the group experiencing discrimination is conscious of it, they often feel that seeking redress would be detrimental or ineffectual rather than beneficial to their situation. They generally will not come forward until they are so angry that actions taken result in conflict that is potentially damaging to them (Crosby & Ropp, 2002, cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006).

2 Structural Features / Operational Definitions

Although there are numerous different methods of affirmative action, most programs and policies fall into one or more of the following general categories (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006):

Opportunity enhancement:

Beneficiaries are offered some assistance prior to undergoing a selection process, typically through targeted recruiting or training. No weight is given to demographic characteristics of the target group in assessment and selection decisions.

Equal opportunity: (also known as elimination of discrimination)

Assessment and selection decision-makers are forbidden from assigning a negative weight to the demographic characteristics of those in the target group.

Tiebreak: (also known as "weak preferential treatment")

Beneficiaries are given preference over other candidates if all hold the same level of qualification. Thus, a small positive weight is assigned to demographic characteristics of the target group.

Strong preferential treatment:

A large weight is assigned to the demographic characteristics of the target group, who are given preference over non-target group members even when their qualifications are inferior. This approach includes the "politically charged" method of filling quotas.

These different categories may be represented on a continuum (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000; Harrison et al., 2000). At one end, opportunity enhancement and equal employment are perceived as “soft” forms of affirmative action whereas tie-break and preferential treatment are mostly considered “hard” approaches. These differentiations have implications for the levels of support towards affirmative action that may be expected from both programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006). This point is elaborated in later discussion on factors that influence attitudes towards affirmative action programs.

3 Legal Justifications

In New Zealand, any of these affirmative action approaches may be legally justified in accordance with the following legislation:

The Human Rights Act

Section 73. Measures to ensure equality -

(1) Anything [...] which would otherwise constitute a breach of [...] this Act shall not constitute such a breach if -

(a) It is done or omitted in good faith for the purpose of assisting or advancing persons or groups of persons, being in each case persons against whom discrimination is unlawful by virtue of this Part of this Act; and

(b) Those persons or groups need or may reasonably be supposed to need assistance or advancement in order to achieve an equal place with other members of the community (applies to "community" of relevant employees)

Bill of Rights Act

Section 19. Freedom from discrimination:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom from discrimination...

(2) Measures taken in good faith for the purpose of assisting or advancing persons or groups of persons disadvantaged because of discrimination that is unlawful by virtue of the Human Rights Act do not constitute discrimination

Both Acts cover the same list of prohibited grounds of discrimination: sex, marital status, religious belief, ethical belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origins, disability, age, political opinion, employment status, family status, and sexual orientation (Magallanes, 2004).

4 Building a Business Case

Gender is a particular focus for policing agencies with regards to affirmative action programmes, as women have traditionally been and continue to be under-represented in such organisations (Silvestri, 2003). In the early decades since the 1970s women’s movement, gender equality advocates appealed to organisations’ commitment to

social justice in attempts to indoctrinate the male-dominated workforce with equitable ideologies. Although social justice remains an inextricable feature of gender equality campaigns, there has been a recent shift in the focus of arguments for a gender-balanced workforce, particularly in supporting the promotion of women to executive positions. Instead of pushing gender equality for the sake of human rights, advocates are arguing there is a business case for encouraging more women into traditionally male-dominated organisations.

Economists have shown strong macroeconomic reasons for a more robust representation of women at all levels of an organisation (Fitzpatrick, 2011), with some asserting that closing the gender gap would boost the level of New Zealand's GDP by as much as ten per cent (Borkin, 2011). Beyond this, many have specifically focused on closing this gender gap at executive levels. In 2008 the McKinsey Company (cited in Fitzpatrick, 2011) found that organisations with women at senior levels tend to perform better overall. This finding is supported by a growing volume of research (Australian Human Resources Institute, 2011; Borkin, 2011; The Director, 2012; Desvaux, Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, 2010; Whelan & Wood, 2012). There is evidence of significant gains made in organisational effectiveness, efficiency and profitability when women are appointed to executive levels (Borkin, 2011; Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger & Meaney, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2011). Women executives have been shown to facilitate economic growth by market expansion through diversification, as they offer expert insight into goods, services and marketing techniques that appeal to a large body of female consumers (Whelan & Wood, 2012). Some argue that as leaders, women are purported to deal with risk more effectively, and focus better on long-term priorities than do men, who tend to be more competitive and self-focused (The Director, 2012).

Using the business case frame-of-reference to consider female executives in policing, the most salient argument is that the increased visibility of women in greater positions of power will likely have the flow-on effect of encouraging more women into the frontline ranks (Borkin, 2011). This links back to the value of having female police officers more generally. There is a large body of evidence that supports the assertion that women are just as capable at core policing competencies as men are, including the traditionally gender-typed aspects such as weapons handling and physical demands (Prenzler & Hayes, 2000; Prenzler, Fleming & King, 2010). There is also evidence to suggest that women typically adopt a style of policing that is more conducive to maintaining public trust and confidence. They are more likely to employ a 'service-oriented' manner of communication with the general public (Prenzler, Fleming & King, 2010), which is a crucial element in building key partnerships and engaging with the wider community. This approach to dealing with the public is also less confrontational, meaning female officers are less prone to being perceived as abusing their authority (Breton, 1999, cited in Prenzler & Hayes, 2000). In this train, female officers are less likely to be complained about and investigated for allegations of excessive use of force. Their greater emphasis on verbal communication also means women can be more effective in diffusing potentially violent situations before having to resort to physical force (Austin, 1998).

These findings are not presented from an essentialist point of view. It is recognized that in some situations negotiation is unsafe or ineffective, and that a "hard line", more typically masculine approach may be necessary. The point is that the approach

of female officers is generally different but complimentary to that of male officers, and that a combination of these policing styles better equips a team of officers to reach successful resolutions in a greater range of situations.

5 The Stereotype Threat Effect

With the value of a female presence in policing agencies demonstrated, attention is again drawn to the underrepresentation of women, at all levels, in such organisations. Given that women have been shown to deal with the demands of policing as well as men, many argue that one of the biggest barriers they face is the monolithic stereotype that both police work and leadership are inherently masculine roles (Carlan, Nored, & Downey, 2011; Mossman, Mayhew, Rowe, & Jordan, 2008; Silvestri, 2003; Waugh, 1994). Role gender-typing creates unconscious biases that effect perceptions of persons in those roles (Block, Koch, Liberman, Merriweather, & Roberson, 2011). Women in masculine roles are seen as engaging in counter-stereotypic behaviour and are negatively stigmatized (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Islam & Zilenovsky, 2011). This stigma has been shown to undermine performance, motivation, and self-efficacy (Islam & Zilenovsky, 2011; Logel, Walton, Spencer, Iserman, Hippel & Bell, 2009). This is known as the stereotype threat in effect: “the expectation that one will be judged or perceived on the basis of social identity group membership rather than actual performance and potential” (Block, et al., 2011, p 570)]. This effect has been negatively associated with intentions to pursue promotion. Whereas, in general, men show a tendency to start applying for promotion when they meet sixty per cent of required competencies, women tend only to apply when they believe they are a hundred per cent competent (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Thus, the evidence suggests that if female representation is to increase at all levels of a heavily male-dominated organisation, women need encouragement and support to combat the unconscious biases that affect the way they are perceived in (and subsequently deter them from) these gender-typed roles. Affirmative action is one approach to providing this encouragement and support, and has been shown to be effective at doing so (Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006). However, it is not a problem free approach.

6 The Controversy of Affirmative Action

6.1 Fundamental problem: affirmative action treats discrimination with discrimination

Affirmative action has always been a highly controversial issue. Debates about the efficacy and need for these policies are growing steadily more heated. The controversy has arisen primarily because using differential treatment to manage the impact of differential treatment mandates social divisions along the same distinctions that caused the discrimination in the first place (Bell, Harrison & McLaughlin, 2000; Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006; Resendez, 2002).

6.1 Misconceptions

Evidence suggests that people continue to be misinformed about what affirmative action is (Arriola & Cole, 2001, Kravitz et al. 2000, Kravitz & Platania 1993, Schwindt et al. 1998, Zamboanga et al. 2002, cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006; Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000; Harrison et al., 2000). A common belief,

amongst both non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries, is that these programs are all about the preferential selection of under-qualified candidates on the basis of their demographic (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000; Harrison et al., 2000; Linton & Christiansen, 2006; Sowell, 2004, & Zelnick, 1996, cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006; Resendez, 2002; Review of the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force, *Australian Human Rights Commission*, 2012). This belief is fostered by the notion that if the beneficiaries had the necessary qualifications, they would not need special treatment. As a consequence of this belief, merit appointments (an equity based, distributive justice approach) and affirmative action appointments are often perceived as mutually exclusive events (Son Hing, Bobocel, Zanna, Garcia, Gee, & Oraziotti, 2011). As a result, the negative stigma associated with these programs has become pervasively entrenched (Resendez, 2002). The implications of this for the success of affirmative action are serious, as the effectiveness of these programs is largely dependent upon them having support from employees at all levels of the organisation (Golden et al. 2001, cited Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006).

7 Attitude Drivers

A number of variables have been shown to influence attitudes towards affirmative action. Although the relevant studies have widely differed in how they measure attitudes towards such programs (Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006), a meta-analytic overview reveals several key attitude drivers:

1. *Protection of self-interests*

Demographics (e.g. gender, race) and personal characteristics (e.g. general prejudice, political ideologies) of individuals affected by affirmative action play an important role in determining support for such programmes, or lack thereof (Beaton & Tougas, 2001; Bell, Harrison & McLaughlin, 2000). These characteristics essentially determine programme designations as ‘beneficiary’ or ‘non-beneficiary’, and therefore form a frame of reference for individuals’ perceptions of the impact of affirmative action on material self-interests.

Research suggests that the perceived impact of affirmative action programmes on individuals’ material self-interests has a significant effect on attitudes towards such programmes (Konrad & Hartmann, 2002; Linton & Christiansen, 2006). Those benefiting from affirmative action are more likely to demonstrate support for them. Conversely, if affirmative action is perceived to pose a threat to the material interests of an individual (e.g. chance of promotion), or group of individuals (e.g. status as the dominant majority), they are less likely to show support.

The vast majority of studies have found that women endorse affirmative action much more strongly than men do (Aberson & Haag, 2003; Bell et al. 1997; Golden et al. 2001; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995b; Kravitz et al. 2000; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Ozawa et al. 1996; Sout & Buffum, 1993; Summers, 1995; Truxillo & Bauer 2000 cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006). This finding is not limited to affirmative action programmes targeting gender inequity, but also those that target disadvantaged ethnic groups. Some propose this shows that members of disadvantaged groups are more likely to support

affirmative action not only because they are seeking to protect self-interests, but also because they are more likely to perceive discrimination more generally (Harrison et al., 2000; Linton & Christiansen, 2006).

2. *Perceptions of Discrimination*

Proponents of affirmative action programs generally believe that workplace discrimination on the basis of gender (or race) is common, and that these programs are necessary to eliminate or reduce the biases that perpetuate discriminatory practices. Conversely, opponents generally believe that no such discrimination exists and that affirmative action introduces bias therefore creates the discrimination (Linton & Christiansen, 2006).

Whether or not an individual or group of individuals believe that discrimination is occurring is associated with the protection of material interests, as discussed above. However evidence suggests that beyond the influence of self-serving unconscious biases, non-beneficiaries show a greater degree of support towards affirmative action programmes when they hold a genuine belief that the beneficiaries have been or are being disadvantaged (Harrison et al, 2000; Linton & Christiansen, 2006). This presents a challenge to affirmative action officers, given that affirmative action is primarily purposed to eliminate or reduce the impact of *past* discrimination. In the past, discrimination was salient by contemporary standards. For example, police women were not allowed to make an arrest unless in the presence of male officers (Waugh, 1994). The discontinuation of such policies is one step towards equal treatment; however it has not addressed the more latent (unconscious) effects of discrimination such as the stereotype threat. This issue of latency gives rise to epistemological concerns. While some might argue that it is possible to establish an objective, collective understanding of what constitutes discrimination, others might argue that what constitutes discrimination is oftentimes subjective.

Evidence suggests that male officers show a preference for being partnered with another male, as they perceive female officers to be less capable of “having their back” (Carlan, Nored & Downey, 2012). Male officers complain females are unreliable in a fight, yet they dislike it when female officers show aggression. These perceptions prevail in spite of the body of research which demonstrates no significant difference between the genders in coping with all components of police work (Lonsway, 2003; Prenzler, Fleming & King, 2010; Waugh, Ede & Alley, 1998). This distorted belief that female officers cannot cope as effectively has implications for the way they are valued by male officers, and also the way they perceive and value themselves. Studies have shown that the arrest behaviours of female officers often change in the presence of male officers (Novak, Brown & Frank, 2010). The change is observed as a loss of confidence, increased indecision and a deference of authority to male officers present.

Some of the efforts made to ease discrimination have fed perceptions such as these that lead to discrimination, whether consciously or unconsciously. The way physical competency screening is managed reinforces the idea that female

officers are inherently less capable of meeting the physical demands of policing. Despite being intended to eliminate discrimination based on biological differences in physical potential, allowing females a greater length of time in which to complete physical tasks perpetuates perceptions that they are physically inferior and therefore less competent (Gender Agenda 2, 2006). Assigning different cut scores to males and females raises questions about what competency level is necessary to do the job safely, irrespective of gender.

3. *Violations of Meritocracy*

A third major attitude driver is the extent to which affirmative action is perceived to violate systems of meritocracy. Research indicates that merit-based outcome allocations are strongly endorsed in the Western workplace, and by both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of affirmative action programmes. Meritocratic appointments are based on the distributive justice principle of equity, whereby an individual's outcome reflects their input. This contrasts with the principle of equality, which involves allocating the same outcome to everyone. Equity and equality therefore essentially represent opposing political ideologies. Of the two, an equitable approach is assumed to result in superior individual performance. It is also widely accepted (in the Western world) as a fairer way of allocating outcomes at work (Islam & Zilenovsky, 2011; Son Hing et al., 2011).

A recent study reviewing the “merit of meritocracy” (Son Hing et al., 2011) draws attention to some of the ways in which meritocratic systems reinforce discriminatory practice, by maintaining and legitimizing the status quo. Perceptions of what constitutes a merit-based appointment are often shaped by the dominant group, as they tend to control the evaluation process. Given the influence of self-serving biases discussed above, the implications of this on meritocracy are easy to deduce.

The fairness associated with meritocratic systems appears to rely on three fundamental assumptions:

- All individuals competing for a particular outcome have the same input capacity (for example, time, resources and development opportunities);
- These individuals have control over the factors that affect their input capacity; and
- Input capacity is a good measure of capability.

These assumptions can perpetuate the disadvantaged status of certain groups. For example, having children affects the input capacity of women at particular stages of their career. In policing agencies, frontline tenure is typically perceived to be associated with competency and credibility as a police officer (Rowe, 2006, cited in Andrescu & Vito, 2010). Competency and credibility are important attributes for leaders, thus frontline tenure has traditionally been associated with leadership potential. Female officers may be disadvantaged within their peer groups if they choose to have children. This means delaying time spent on frontline, or moving into roles that better accommodate the

demands of a young family yet carry less kudos than frontline experience, under the cultural tenets of the traditional promotional framework.

On the continuum of approaches to affirmative action mentioned above, the "hard" methods of tie break and strong preferential treatment are seen as much greater violations of merit-based principles than the "soft" methods of opportunity enhancement and equal employment (Harrison et al., 2006). The "harder" the approach therefore, the more resistance should generally be expected. The perceptions of how much these "hard" approaches violate systems of meritocracy are related to perceptions of discrimination, however. The greater the perception of discrimination, the less likely the "hard" approach, and indeed affirmative action more generally, is to be perceived as violating the merit-based approach (Harrison et al., 2006; Resendez, 2002).

8 Limitations

8.1 The Business Case for Women in Policing

Due to the nature of a policing organisation's function, it is more difficult to shift the focus of gender equality arguments from social justice to advantages gained when women are appointed to executive positions. The research discussed quantifies these gains fiscally therefore this evidence predominantly supports for-profit, 'business-oriented' organisations. There appears to be a dearth of equivalent empirical support for the value of female police executives. The lack of research in this area may be attributed to the fact that few women in international police history have served in executive roles. Thus, the value of having them in there has not yet been measured in the same way as it has in the corporate world. Furthermore, beyond the scarcity of subjects, the impact of a single leader or core leadership team in an organisation such as the police is not so easy to measure.

8.2 De-sensitisation and Rationalisation

Organisations engaging in affirmative action benefit by explicitly publicising the qualifying criteria for any position, and communicating how qualified all applicants are for the positions. This communication needs to be two-way. A study of three Arizona police forces highlighted the importance of upward communication (Allen, 2003 cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006). Successful integration of women at all levels of the organisation depended on the honest involvement of those on the frontline, and an open dialogue between such people and the policy makers.

The research conveys that obtaining honest accounts from these women can be difficult. A number of factors, such as a fear of the consequences of challenging the dominant majority, foster a conscious reluctance to speak out. Aside from this, research suggests that women on the frontline may also unconsciously rationalise discriminatory treatment and become de-sensitised to it. Thus, they do not report discrimination as they no longer perceive it to be occurring. It is suggested this may be a means of coping with the cognitive dissonance associated with being discriminated against by those they are loyal to.

Both these conscious and unconscious responses of women in policing agencies make it difficult to clearly identify the existence, prevalence and nature of gender discrimination in such organisations. This is problematic for affirmative action officers, who need to understand both the nature and extent of discrimination if they are to deal with it appropriately and effectively.

8.3 Contradictions to Research

Although the research over the last few decades suggests women are much more supportive of affirmative action than are men, more recent findings show that talented women are disengaging with affirmative action efforts as they are concerned about the threat of being seen to have achieved promotion due to gender rather than competence (Review of the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force, *Australian Human Rights Commission*, 2012; anecdotal evidence from the New Zealand Police). This has major implications for the success of such programmes, hence why it is important to measure current attitudes to gauge the effectiveness of programmes already underway.

9 **Conclusion**

Affirmative action programmes are controversial workplace policies and practices that proactively seek to eliminate or reduce the impact of past and ongoing discrimination. The controversy arises as affirmative action essentially mandates the same social divisions that gave rise to discrimination in the first place. Although highly controversial, many believe use of these programmes is an effective and necessary step to achieving equity and diversity in the workforce. Evidence suggests negative attitudes towards affirmative action are widespread. Given that the success of these programs is largely reliant on attitudes of support, it is important that the factors that influence the relevant attitudes are mitigated or eliminated. A number of variables mediate attitudes towards these programs: the level of threat to self-interest, the belief that discrimination is or has been occurring and perceptions of whether or not systems of meritocracy have been violated.

Affirmative action programmes have a number of implications for psychological and behavioural processes at work, such as self-efficacy, motivation, interpersonal conflict, and perceived fairness (Islam & Zilenovsky, 2011; Resendez, 2002). They also have implications for various human resources management functions, such as hiring, promotion, transfer, termination and training (Kravitz et al., 1997, cited in Bell, Harrison & McLaughlin, 2000). Consequently, real harm can be caused by affirmative action programs that are not properly constructed and implemented.

A number of factors that support the proper construction and implementation of affirmative action programmes have been identified here:

- Examine current attitudes and processes for evidence of discrimination

Clearly identifying where the problems exist, and what is causing them (for example, entrenched attitudes or a particular standard process) is the first logical step to success in affirmative action. This not only guides what course of action is taken (for example, opportunity enhancement, preferential

selection, development of alternative promotional pathways), but creates a clear justification for the use of such programmes. To simply recognize that an organisation is male-dominated is not sufficient to prove that discrimination is occurring. Measuring attitudes, examining them for discriminatory perceptions, and communicating this back may be a form of unconscious bias training (for both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries).

- Identify current attitudes towards affirmative action programs

Determining what people believe about affirmative action programs and how they evaluate those beliefs will provide information on where efforts should be focused (Bell, Harrison & McLaughlin, 2000). Measuring these attitudes would provide an indication as to the success of current programmes, and help establish what future action should be taken. For example, if current attitudes are overwhelmingly negative then efforts could be focused on influencing these attitudes before constructing and implementing new programmes.

- Obtain endorsement for the use of affirmative action from the executive level

Public support from organisation leaders is important to the success of affirmative action, as the visible commitment of highly ranked officers legitimates the programmes and draws the resources to them (Jones, 1991, cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006). A survey conducted on affirmative action officers showed that support from the top level was credited as being the single most important determinant of successful affirmative action programs (Berry, 2004, cited in Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006)

- Clear and persuasive communication

If organisation members understand what affirmative action is and why it is necessary they are more likely to support it Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006; Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000; Harrison et al., 2006; Resendez, 2002. Therefore the goals and the mechanics of affirmative action must be clearly communicated. Positive attitudes may be encouraged if prior and continuing barriers to the use of all talent are clearly identified, and if they are shown how aspects of affirmative action plans dismantle these barriers. Strong messages presented repeatedly through a rich medium (such as face to face) and by closer sources (for example co-workers, supervisors) may be more effective than indirect, written communication (Resendez, 2002).

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