

Inventing Equal Opportunity



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Equal opportunity in the workplace is thought to be the direct legacy of the civil rights and feminist movements and the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. Yet, as Frank Dobbin demonstrates, corporate personnel experts - not Congress or the courts - were the ones who determined what equal opportunity meant in practice, designing changes in how employers hire, promote, and fire workers, and ultimately defining what discrimination is, and is not, in the American imagination. Dobbin shows how Congress and the courts merely endorsed programs devised by corporate personnel. He traces how the first measures were adopted by military contractors worried that the Kennedy administration would cancel their contracts if they didn't take 'affirmative action' to end discrimination. These measures built on existing personnel programs, many designed to prevent bias against unionists. Dobbin follows the changes in the law as personnel experts invented one wave after another of equal opportunity programs. He examines how corporate personnel formalized hiring and promotion practices in the 1970s to eradicate bias by managers; how in the 1980s they answered Ronald Reagan's threat to end affirmative action by recasting their efforts as diversity-management programs; and, how the growing presence of women in the newly named human resources profession has contributed to a focus on sexual harassment and work/life issues. "Inventing Equal Opportunity" reveals how the personnel profession devised - and ultimately transformed - our understanding of discrimination.

作者介绍:

Frank Dobbin received his B.A. from Oberlin College in 1980 and his Ph.D. from Stanford University in 1987. Dobbin studies organizations, inequality, economic behavior, and public policy. His *Inventing Equal Opportunity* (Princeton 2009) shows how corporate personnel managers defined what it meant to discriminate. With Alexandra Kalev, he is developing an evidence-based approach to diversity management. Innovations that make managers part of the solution, such as mentoring programs, diversity taskforces, and special recruitment programs, have helped to promote diversity in firms, while programs signaling that managers are part of the problem, such as diversity training and diversity performance evaluations, have not. These findings have been covered by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *Le Monde*, CNN, and National Public Radio.

Professor Dobbin's work in economic sociology generally is both historical and contemporary. His *Forging Industrial Policy: United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age* (Cambridge 1994), traces nations' modern industrial strategies to early differences in their political systems. *The New Economic Sociology: A Reader* (Princeton 2004) assembles classics in economic sociology. *The Sociology of the Economy* (Russell Sage 2004) compiles research in economic sociology from leading scholars. *The Global Diffusion of Markets and Democracy* (Cambridge 2008) explores the rise of neoliberal policies in the post-war period. *Stanford's Organization Theory Renaissance, 1970-2000* (Emerald 2010) is a modern-day *Rashomon* about the revival of organizational studies in Palo Alto after 1970.

目录:

[Inventing Equal Opportunity_ 下载链接1_](#)

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书评

Frank Dobbin, documenting the entire transformation process of equal opportunity from law to practice, challenges conventional wisdom that it was politicians, activists and judges who brought equal opportunity in to being. Instead, personnel managers and pr...

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