DISCRIMINATION
WITHOUT PREJUDICE

A STUDY OF PROMOTION
PRACTICES IN INDUSTRY

The University of Michigan
Institute for Social Research
Survey Research Center
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Every minority which has suffered discrimination has dreamed of an end to it, of equality of opportunity. This ancient dream has taken many forms, but a common element is the moment of attainment—that proclamation, that election, that decision of justice or crossing of oceans which suddenly rights all the old wrongs. In comparison with such colorful and accelerated visions, the reality of social progress is pale and slow.

The gradual pace of change, the grudging concessions of the prejudiced, the incompleteness of every victory is most obvious in our time for Negroes, despite occasional accusations of undue haste. It is less generally recognized but no less true for Jews and other minorities.

The discrimination which they experience is small compared to that encountered by Negroes, but it is not trivial nor is it separate from the total pattern and problem of discrimination. As Negroes acquire the education, training, and technical experience which has been inaccessible to them in the past, issues of discrimination are not likely to vanish. They will be eliminated in some of their forms, but they will be encountered also at new levels and in new places.

In the United States, Jews are no longer disadvantaged with respect to education or income. Their training and educational background are conspicuously under-utilized, however, in the executive ranks of most major corporations. The evidence need not be recapitulated here; every serious effort to collect data on this subject has yielded the same general conclusions. In recent years, for example, Jews have comprised 12 to 15 per cent of the graduating classes of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, an institution to which the executive recruiters of many large companies regularly turn. Among the executives of such companies appearing at Harvard's seminars and training programs for businessmen, fewer than 0.5 per cent were estimated to be Jewish.*

* A summary of such findings is presented in non-technical terms by Vance Packard in The Pyramid Climbers.
Such findings, and the inference of discrimination which they compel, are inappropriate to our country and our time. They imply not only the psychological costs of discrimination which the minority must bear; they imply no less the social costs to the nation’s business and to the nation.

Moreover, the squandering of executive talent, wherever it may reside, is a form of waste we cannot well afford. The executive shortage has become an almost permanent characteristic of American industry, and in an attempt to minimize its local impact many corporations have established costly procedures of internal search and executive development. Indeed, one of the marks of the affluent society is its quest for innovative talent in all fields. Automation and technological change, even when they make other skills obsolete, intensify rather than reduce the search for executive and creative ability. Gerard Piel has argued most persuasively that the key to a corporation’s continuing success is now the innovative and executive ability of its staff, whereas in time past the success of an enterprise might have been assured by the holding of key patents, and in times earlier by the holding of machines or land.*

In one sense of the word, then, every organization must discriminate—that is, it must be able to tell the difference between people who are richly endowed with executive and innovative abilities and those who are not. No organization can escape the necessity of choosing some of its members for advancement over others, and no organization can avoid risking its corporate success and survival on the quality of those discriminating judgments. At issue, of course, are the bases or criteria on which such judgments are made, and the usual meaning of discrimination is that they are made on the basis of race or religion rather than on the basis of ability. It is in this sense that we will use the word discrimination hereafter.

There are many ways in which the phenomena of discrimination can be studied. Their economic and social bases were researched upon in Myrdal’s classic study, *An American Dilemma*; their existence as expressions of deep lying personality traits was demonstrated in *The Authoritarian Personality*, one of the series of *Studies in Prejudice* supported by the American Jewish Committee some years ago.

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* See *Consumers of Abundance*, published by The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, June 1961.
On what bases are executives actually chosen? What are the criteria for filling executive positions, and how are these criteria actually applied to produce inequalities among religious groups?

The present research attempts to answer these questions for two plants of a large manufacturing company. Moreover, we have attempted to answer them in terms which have meaning for business as a whole, although the answers must be tentative until they are tested in other companies.

In choosing a company for this research, we did not seek a case of extreme discrimination against Jews. For the completely closed corporation, questions about the promotion and importing of minority members to executive positions have little meaning; the choice does not come alive until some degree of openness has been achieved and minorities are already present in the lesser organizational ranks. Moreover, as so often happens, companies which are most acutely in crisis regarding minority relations are least willing to scrutinize their procedures of executive selection in these terms.

For both these reasons, the company chosen is one which has in recent years put particular emphasis on the recognition of ability in executive selection. It was therefore a particularly good place to ask whether a policy of rewarding merit and ability was being put into unvarying practice, and to inquire whether discrimination can occur in spite of policy. The amount of discrimination in this company, which we suspect to be relatively small, is not the point of the research. The whole purpose of the research is to probe the ways in which the principle of promotion on the basis of ability, which is essentially nondiscriminatory, can be diluted by criteria for promotion which become the vehicle of discrimination.

We offer our thanks to the American Jewish Committee, which supported this research under a grant from The Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation of Pittsburgh—however, the Foundation is not to be understood by virtue of the grant as endorsing any statement made or view expressed herein—and to that management which had the courage and the conviction to offer two of its plants as the first subjects of this research. We wish to acknowledge also the innovative suggestions and continuing interest of Dean William Haber, Mr. James Marshall, and Mr. Jacob M. Kaplan.
THE PROBLEM

An organization with explicit, emphatic nondiscriminatory personnel policies may nevertheless engage in discriminatory hiring and promotion practices. Recent studies in the public utility and automotive industries found certain minority groups to be under-utilized in managerial ranks—even in those companies where personnel policies were unequivocally nondiscriminatory. Many managers in these companies were puzzled to find that their companies' personnel practices had diverged so far from corporate policies and from their own personal feelings that the companies were now being held up to public criticism. How, they wondered, could this have happened?

The easiest answer to this question is a cynical one—namely, that managers in these organizations gave undercover support to discriminatory practices and regarded formal nondiscriminatory policies only as fictions necessary for public relations. The present study will attempt to provide an alternative answer to this question. Hopefully this answer will be less cynical and better attuned to the subtle realities of modern industrial personnel practices.

But in order to cast this question into a more explicit and a more researchable form, it is first necessary both to narrow and to enlarge the scope of the question.

NARROWING THE SCOPE--PREJUDICE, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

Suppose that several observers set out to assess independently the degree of anti-Semitism prevalent in a particular company. Each of these observers might concentrate on a different aspect of anti-Semitism, for example:

—the attitudes of those in management positions toward Jews
—the attitudes of nonsupervisory personnel toward Jews
—statements in the company's formal personnel policy regarding hiring and promotion on the basis of religion
—the extent to which Jews are promoted within managerial ranks in the company
—the extent to which Jews are promoted at lower levels in the company
Still other observers might focus upon unconscious rather than conscious prejudices. Others might explore attitudes and behaviors in particular functional divisions in the company or at particular hierarchical levels.

As a result of having observed different aspects of anti-Semitism, each of these observers might have come away with a different estimation of the degree of anti-Semitism characterizing the company. The observers would be in agreement only at the extreme where organizational members at all levels were prejudiced against Jews, where these prejudices were translated into formal company policy, and where this policy was effectively implemented through concrete discriminatory practices—or at the extreme where the opposite of each of these conditions was the case.

Three major aspects of organizational discrimination may, therefore be usefully distinguished: prejudice, the attitudes of employees either favoring or disfavoring certain classes of individuals; policy, the personnel procedures publicly endorsed by management; and practice, the actual hiring and promotional behaviors of organizational members.

With regard to matters other than religious or racial discrimination, it is not uncommon for personal prejudice, formal company policy, and employee practice to be at odds. Organizational policy does not always reflect the personal feelings of the bulk of organizational members, and at times it even deviates from the feelings of many members of management as well. Even more frequently company policy is not transformed into day-to-day practice.

This lack of correspondence between prejudice, policy, and practice often exists as well in matters of organizational discrimination. To some extent, of course, discriminatory acts stem from attitudes of prejudice and are more likely to occur under conditions of prejudice. It is also true that prejudiced attitudes are learned and intensified from engaging in and witnessing acts of discrimination. Moreover, persons who are prejudiced do not necessarily commit such acts; they can be inhibited from doing so. Nor do persons without prejudice invariably refrain from discrimination; under certain circumstances many such people practice discrimination.

But it is the practice of discrimination which constitutes the immediate social problem, for it is this practice which deprives some individuals of the rights, rewards, and privileges which would otherwise be theirs. It is acts of discrimination which are therefore the immediate targets for change, although the sources of these acts are the ultimate targets. Consequently, the present study concentrates not upon personal prejudice nor upon formal policy statements, but upon discriminatory practices and the way these practices are regarded by organizational decision makers.
Colloquially, “discriminatory” decisions are those which evaluate individuals on religious or racial grounds. Yet such decisions are seldom condemned when made by the clergy considering candidates for the novitiate or by the casting director of “Porgy and Bess.” Such extreme examples as these illustrate what is meant by a “discriminatory” organization—one in which certain classes of individuals are denied organizational status on the basis of considerations other than their abilities to implement the goals of the organization.

By this definition, nondiscriminatory promotional practices in an industry are those which promote an individual solely on the basis of his estimated ability to perform a specific job. Certain promotional criteria are obviously ability-oriented: a worker’s past record of job performance, formal education, mechanical skills, intelligence, creativity, business knowledge, and so on. On the other extreme, certain factors are markedly less concerned with ability: religion, race, sex, age, social background, personal connections, lodge membership, marital status, family background, and personal friendship. Such criteria as a worker’s personality or appearance are more difficult to classify; while not generally ability criteria, these characteristics may nevertheless be critical for the performance of many types of jobs. While irrelevance to job performance is the single most important defining characteristic of a non-ability promotional factor, many of these factors have certain other common characteristics as well: the factors are often conferred by an individual’s social background; they are frequently publicly acceptable bases for forming off-the-job social relationships; and they usually cannot be modified either by vocational training or job-related experience.

Religious discrimination in industrial personnel practices is, therefore, but one case of the intrusion of non-ability considerations into a situation where ability considerations are supposedly predominant. In addition, the line which demarcates ability from non-ability criteria is not always clear and is likely to differ from job to job. For these two reasons the present study was designed not to focus upon religious discrimination alone, but upon the more general problems of the influence of non-ability factors on personnel decisions.
THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the scope of this study thus both enlarged and narrowed, a series of five specific research questions was formulated with regard to the promotional process of two plants in a single industrial organization—

1. To what extent are promotional decisions strictly ability-oriented?

2. Along what basic dimensions do supervisors organize their perceptions of promotional criteria?

3. Do those making promotional decisions view the promotional criteria they employ as differing from those used by others in the company?

4. Which functional divisions in the company are seen by supervisors as being most influenced by non-ability considerations in promotional decisions?

5. For what hierarchical levels are non-ability criteria seen as most influencing promotions?

Answers to these five questions will be presented on the following pages. After each question there will be a description of the research methods used to answer the question coupled with statistical summaries of the major findings. Each set of findings will be reviewed briefly and its implications discussed. Although the findings are relevant to many aspects of organizational performance, our discussions of them will emphasize primarily their relevance to problems of organizational discrimination. These discussions will indicate the many ways in which non-ability considerations intrude on the promotional process and will suggest the manner in which discriminatory behavior becomes admissible and plausible in this process.

THE RESEARCH SITE

The major research questions were answered through a study of two divisions of one of the major industrial corporations in the United States. Several years before the introduction of the study, the company had undergone an extensive reevaluation of its policies of promotion within the organization and had introduced a number of procedures oriented toward explicating and rationalizing promotational criteria. The company had no special concern with the issue of discrimination, but was very interested in the general problem of fostering the utilization of “ability” criteria in the promotional decisions being made in the company.
The two company divisions where the interviewing was done are situated in different cities, one in the Northeast and one in the Midwest area of the country. One is engaged in the development and manufacture of a diversified line of synthetic materials. About half of the people interviewed in this division were involved in research and development, and in many cases their educational backgrounds included Ph.D. degrees. The other division follows a more typical pattern. It is engaged in the manufacture of a consumer product and the people we interviewed were located in the types of jobs one usually finds at different hierarchical levels in production management.

The two divisions were chosen for study because, in their contrasting research and production emphases, they provided two settings that have traditionally differed very widely in the qualities demanded for successful performance and in the consequent criteria for selection and promotion. With specific reference to the issue of discrimination, for example, research and development positions have tended to be more open to representatives of ethnic and religious minorities, and this was true of the division in this study. The other division, the one manufacturing the consumer product, had a much less diversified ethnic and religious composition, although by virtue of being located in a predominantly Catholic community, it did have a large representation of Catholics in its management hierarchy.

These divisions were not chosen because they represented any special problems in the area of selection and promotion. On the contrary, they are among the most successful in the company and are viewed at corporate headquarters as being particularly alert to the issue of selecting and promoting the most qualified management personnel. This view was supported by the findings of this study, which indicated that the great majority of the people interviewed were satisfied with the promotional situation in the company. Divisions with more apparent management problems might have provided more variation on the issue of ability and non-ability criteria investigated in this study. However, the company was hesitant about adding the disruptive effects of a study to the problems that the less successful divisions were already facing.

THE RESEARCH METHODS

Personal interviews were conducted with 150 supervisors in the two divisions just described. These 150 respondents were drawn from five hierarchical levels, ranging from two divisional managers down to the level of first line supervisor.
Interviews were conducted by trained interviewers from The University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. These interviewers emphasized to respondents that their answers would be strictly confidential and that the study was initiated, designed, and conducted by the Survey Research Center rather than by company management. The study was introduced to respondents as being aimed at "getting a better understanding of the considerations and procedures that arise in decisions around promotions at managerial levels." The interviews contained two types of questions: open-ended questions to which the respondents' spontaneous answers were recorded verbatim by the interviewer; and fixed-alternative questions which respondents answered by endorsing one of a set of possible responses provided by the interviewer.

The following pages answer the study's five major research questions through the data provided by the 150 supervisory respondents.
THE QUESTION:

To What Extent Are Promotional Decisions Strictly Ability-Oriented?

The findings to be presented first set the stage for many of our subsequent analyses since they indicate the range of promotional criteria applied to personnel decisions. Of primary importance in this first set of findings are the relative frequencies with which various criteria are employed. Several additional questions may also be answered by the tables to be presented below: what is seen by supervisors as the characteristic balance between ability and non-ability factors in their company's promotional decisions? which abilities are most frequently rewarded by promotion? what particular types of non-ability factors most commonly influence the promotional process?

THE FINDINGS:

Early in each interview, all 150 respondents were asked the following open-ended question:

"What does it take to get ahead in this company—what are the kinds of things the company is most looking for? What type of person 'makes it' in this company?"

Here are the promotional criteria that were most frequently mentioned in response to this question, together with the percentage of the 150 supervisors who spontaneously mentioned each criterion. These criteria have been grouped into several broad categories ranging from ability-oriented to less ability-oriented.
### What It Takes to Get Ahead in the Company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Mentioning Each Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good record, past successes, proven accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience on a particular job, experience in the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TECHNICAL-INTELLECTUAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness, getting jobs done, completing assignments, following through on ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific skills, technical skills, mechanical ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originality, creativity, suggesting new and better ways of doing things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence, quick-mindedness, “analytic ability,” inquisitiveness, having an inquiring mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality, cost-consciousness, looking for commercial aspects of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERPERSONAL SKILLS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills, ability to express oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership ability, being able to motivate people, getting others to work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness, sociability, extraversion, affability, being a good mixer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL STYLE OF WORKING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressiveness, self-confidence, assertiveness, dominance, self-assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition, being a “go-getter” or “self-starter,” having drive and desire to get ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in the job, enjoying work, not being just a “nine-to-five” man, actively seeking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance, tenacity, being able to cope with failure, surmounting obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to the organization, personally involved with the organization’s development and growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence, self-sufficiency, making up one’s own mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pleasing personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good appearance, no unfavorable mannerisms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT THESE FINDINGS INDICATE:

1. Supervisors do not see promotions in their company as being based on ability factors alone.

2. Considerable importance is attached to promotional criteria which emphasize a worker's personal style of working or which attribute certain motives to a worker. Acting aggressively, assertively, and self-confidently is the characteristic most often mentioned as being rewarded by promotion; being motivated by ambition is likewise regarded as highly important. Inferences as to how "involved" a worker is with his job are also seen as substantially affecting his promotional chances.

3. Infrequent spontaneous reference is made to those promotional criteria which are more clearly matters of social discrimination. Only one per cent of the respondents mention workers' promotions as being influenced by their social characteristics—religion, social background, residence, social connections, and club memberships.

SOME ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

This failure of respondents to make spontaneous references to social characteristics with any great frequency may mean that—

—these characteristics are not significant in promotional decisions,

—these criteria are indeed significant, but they are not recognized consciously as such and are expressed only indirectly by those applying them,

—these characteristics are significant but of sufficiently low priority that respondents "just didn't think of them" or felt that they were not what was being looked for in the interview,

—respondents were reluctant to admit the importance of these criteria to the interviewers.

Therefore, two additional series of questions specifically introduced the topic of social characteristics and other non-ability factors into the interview. This introduction was intended to suggest the appropriateness of discussing such non-ability criteria and to overcome some of the resistance to admitting their use.

First, the 150 supervisors were given a list of 17 possible promotional criteria running the gamut from ability to non-ability considerations. These supervisors rated each criterion on a three-point scale as to the importance of the criterion "for promotion to a top management position in the company." The three scale points were "Counts a Lot," "Counts Somewhat," and "Doesn't Really Count."

Here are these 17 criteria, together with the percentage of the 150 supervisors who indicated that the criteria counted at least "Somewhat" for promotion.
### What Counts in Being Promoted to Top Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Counts in Being Promoted</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Saying That This Counts at Least “Somewhat”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing well</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively seeking responsibility</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting people to work together</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing costs and controlling expenses</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing a good job on many different assignments</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make up one’s mind</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing and explaining clearly</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with people</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting many new and better ways to do things</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to represent the company to outsiders</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good, clean-cut appearance</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting other people’s ideas</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the right people in the company</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudence, not taking big risks</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right social background</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being active in community affairs</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sizeable percentages of respondents also said that counting “A Lot” for promotion were several of the less obviously ability-based criteria:

- 80% said that ambition counted a lot
- 59% said that getting along with people counted a lot
- 33% said that a good clean-cut appearance counted a lot
- 25% said that knowing the right people in the company counted a lot

In addition to this list of 17 criteria, respondents were also given a list of eight promotional criteria in which non-ability considerations were dominant. For each of these criteria, respondents indicated on a four-point scale the degree to which the criterion made a difference in “a man’s promotional opportunities in the company.” The four scale points were “A Lot,” “Some,” “A Little,” and “No Difference at All.”

Here are these eight criteria, together with the percentage of supervisors* indicating that each criterion would affect a man’s promotion at least “A Little.”

### What Affects a Man’s Promotional Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Affects a Man’s Promotional Opportunities</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Saying That This Counts at Least “A Little”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A pleasant personality</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a college education</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance—whether one “looks like a manager”</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a “good” section of town</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being married</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having gone to a high prestige college</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to the “right” club or lodge</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious background</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The question on religion was not asked in one plant; percentages relating to this question are based on 75 rather than 150 respondents.
WHAT THESE ADDITIONAL FINDINGS INDICATE:

1. Many non-ability considerations are seen by supervisors as entering into their company's promotional process. Were this not the case and were there a complete commitment to the principle of promotion on the basis of ability alone, there would be zero entries next to all the non-ability criteria in the above tables. Many such entries are considerably greater than zero.

2. Among the non-ability considerations influencing promotional decisions, least, but still not negligible, weight is given to a worker's social characteristics—his religion, his activity in community affairs, his social background, his club memberships, and the status of his college.

3. Those non-ability criteria which are seen as most affecting the promotability of a worker are those which evaluate him in terms of his personal style of job performance, his personality, his appearance, his motivational orientations toward his work, and the effect of his behavior on his coworkers.

SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS--ESCAPE VALVES FOR DISCRIMINATION:

The findings presented so far should make it quite clear that promotional decisions are not made solely on the basis of well-defined ability factors. At the same time, those non-ability factors which involve a person's social characteristics (religion, residence, and so forth) are not seen by supervisors as entering directly into promotional decisions to a major extent.

Most strikingly, however, considerable emphasis is placed on criteria in which ability and non-ability considerations become intermingled in complex ways. These important "middle ground" criteria are those which—

—Characterize a worker's personality or appearance,
  for example, aggressiveness, independence, self-confidence, being clean-cut

—Attribute certain motives to a worker,
  for example, ambition, interest and involvement in one's work, commitment to the organization, seeking responsibility

—Evaluate a worker in terms of his effect on others
  for example, getting people to work together, getting along with others, being able to represent the company to outsiders, friendliness, sociability
Many criteria such as these are undeniably legitimate — at least to a degree. The use of personality tests in personnel selection testifies to management's recognition that certain aspects of an individual's personality may vitally affect his job performance. Considerable research has emphasized the critical role played by interpersonal skills in determining supervisory effectiveness.

But a worker's personality, motives, and interpersonal skills are not easy to assess when personnel decisions are being made. Certainly these criteria are more ambiguous than a worker's formal education or his scrap record; and, as is the case with other ambiguous objects, perceptions of these criteria may be unavoidably colored by the personal prejudices of the observer.

These criteria may serve, therefore, as "escape valves" for the application of discriminatory personnel practices. Suppose, for example, that a supervisor harbors a prejudice against a subordinate because of his religion or race. If this supervisor is constrained from expressing his prejudice either to himself or others, the prejudice may be expressed indirectly by affecting his perception of other characteristics of the subordinate; or the supervisor may overlook the subordinate's strong points and magnify the importance of his shortcomings. Such misperceptions as these may be summed up by the supervisor in some ambiguous phrase like "I just feel that he isn't management material," or "he might not have the right effect on the customers," or "he won't fit in with the other men," or "he doesn't have the right kind of attitude toward his work." Biased judgments concerning vaguely defined criteria may at times be further bolstered by conforming to common stereotypes of racial or religious groups —as, for example, when a Jewish subordinate is judged to be too aggressive or when a Negro subordinate is seen as reluctant to seek responsibility.

Judgments such as these may be either the unconscious product of unrecognized personal prejudices or deliberate cover-ups for the prejudices one is unwilling to admit publicly. Since they touch on matters that are plausibly job-relevant, however, they are within the realm of legitimate, publicly acceptable hiring and promotion criteria. Since they touch on characteristics that are ill-defined and not easy to evaluate, they are hard to refute. Their ambiguity, rather than making them suspect, makes them instead virtually invulnerable to contradiction.
THE QUESTION:

Along What Basic Dimensions Do Supervisors Organize Their Perceptions of Promotional Criteria?

The findings just presented have indicated the range of criteria applied to promotional decisions and have provided some idea as to the relative frequencies with which these criteria are applied. The findings below deal with the organization of these criteria. Repeated reference has already been made to the distinction between ability and non-ability factors. Do supervisors make a similar distinction? Or are supervisors' perceptions of promotional criteria organized along other lines? Within the broad classifications of "ability" and "non-ability," are there any identifiable subcategories and patterns of criteria?

THE FINDINGS:

To answer this question, the statistical technique of factor analysis was applied to the promotional criteria presented on page 14.

A factor analysis is a statistical treatment of data used to uncover fundamental theoretical dimensions or factors that underlie the pattern of responses to a series of separate questions. Factor analysis is based on the notion that each of a given number of responses—in this case the different characteristics viewed as important in promotion—may be imperfect measures of more general underlying ideas or categories. Factor analysis discovers the number of such underlying general categories that account for the total pattern of responses and also notes the contribution that each specific characteristic makes to each of the general categories.
In other words, factor analysis indicates which of the promotional criteria "go together"—go together not in the preconceptions of those who designed the study, but go together in the sense that they represent patterns that explain and integrate the actual responses of the supervisors interviewed.

This analysis indicated that six factors accounted for the supervisors' evaluations of the importance of the selected 25 criteria. Here is a description of each of these factors and a listing of those items contributing most to each factor. The figure after each item indicates the contribution of the item; this figure may run from .00 to 1.00. The closer the figure approaches 1.00, the greater is the contribution of the item to the factor.

**Factor I: Social Connections**

This factor is clearly a non-ability one. It is represented by these items:

- Belonging to the "right" lodge or club (.72)
- Religious background (.70)
- Knowing the right people in the company (.54)
- Having gone to a high prestige college (.44)
- Having the right social background (.38)

A worker denied promotion on the basis of not having these social characteristics is the victim of a form of social discrimination. He is not being evaluated in terms of what he can do on the job, but in terms of what his social connections are. In order to achieve promotion according to this basic factor, a worker must have the proper credentials of social contacts that make him acceptable to the organizational INs—the unspecified "right people" in the company.

**Factor II: Administrative Skills**

This factor is in striking contrast to Factor I. The representative items here are:

- Getting along with people (.65)
- Getting people to work together (.59)
- Describing and explaining clearly (.50)
- Making up one's own mind (.49)
- Doing a good job on many different assignments (.44)
- Promoting other people's ideas (.43)

Factor II represents criteria based on supervisory and other managerial skills. It does not, however, support the intuitive distinction between interpersonal supervisory skills and impersonal performance skills. These two types of skills are seen by supervisors as being closely related.
Factor III: Achievement Motivation

This factor is based principally on two criteria:

Ambition (.59)
Actively seeking responsibility (.53)

These two characteristics reflect a theme of inner-directed striving and would at first appear to be legitimate criteria. But these characteristics are not always easy to evaluate in particular individuals. They are, therefore, vulnerable to the personal biases of those making such evaluations and may as a result represent one type of ambiguous "escape valve" discriminatory criterion discussed earlier. Note also that this dimension plays a prominent role in the racial and religious stereotypes of two groups often discriminated against in industry, with Negroes being blamed for not having enough ambition and Jews being stereotyped as having too much.

Factor IV: Cost-consciousness

This basic dimension is definitely an ability one, reflecting immediate economic contribution to the organization. It is identified by a single item:

Showing an ability to reduce costs and control expenses (.60)

Factors V and VI: Public Image Considerations

Both these factors represent underlying non-ability dimensions. On Factor V the constituent items are:

Appearance—whether one "looks like a manager" (.64)
Living in a "good" section of town (.51)
Having gone to a high prestige college (.46)
A pleasant personality (.41)
Factor VI is identified by these items:

The right social background (.51)
A good, clean-cut appearance (.46)
Being able to represent the company to outsiders (.30)

The common non-ability emphasis of these two factors makes it difficult to distinguish meaningfully between them. Both factors weigh a worker's social characteristics and his personality, whereas non-ability Factor I was concerned exclusively with social characteristics.

Although “social background” is represented on both Factor I and Factor VI, its context on these two factors gives it two different meanings. Factor I emphasizes the importance of a worker’s having the “right” social background so as to ingratiate him with the company’s “in-group”; in contrast, Factor VI emphasizes the importance of a worker’s social background in terms of his impact upon individuals outside the company.

WHAT THESE FINDINGS INDICATE:

1. The use of a worker’s religion as a criterion of his promotability is not an isolated occurrence. Instead, it is seen by supervisors as occurring mainly within a promotional process which also acknowledges the importance of a worker’s social background and his present social connections. If a company is seen as being attentive to a worker’s religion, it is likely to be seen also as paying attention to his club, lodge, college, and other social characteristics.

2. The basic distinction made in the design of this study between ability and non-ability promotional factors corresponds empirically to distinctions made by supervisors closely involved in their company’s promotional process. The totality of supervisors’ perceptions of what it takes to get ahead in their company cannot be reduced to a set of ability dimensions alone.

3. Nor do non-ability considerations impinge randomly or idiosyncratically upon the promotional decisions made by supervisors. Several well-organized clusters of non-ability considerations are viewed by supervisors as entering into personnel decisions made in their company. The organized, systematic influence of these sets of non-ability considerations on personnel decisions cannot therefore be disregarded.
THE QUESTION:

Do Those Making Promotional Decisions View the Promotional Criteria They Employ as Differing From Those Used by Others in the Company?

The findings thus far have concentrated upon general trends in promotional decisions. But deviations from such general trends are both frequent and systematic. The remainder of the findings will, therefore, examine differences among promotional decisions with regard to the types of criteria employed. The first set of findings contrasts supervisors' criteria with the criteria supervisors see being used by their immediate superiors and by the company in general. Do supervisory respondents view their own promotional criteria as being more or less ability-oriented than those employed by others — particularly by their immediate superiors? How realistic are these views? What, if any, are the particular biases that respondents attribute to their superiors?

THE FINDINGS:

Promotional criteria used by the 150 supervisors were compared with the criteria these supervisors saw being used both by “the company” in general and by their own immediate superiors.
Data already presented on page 12 have shown that when supervisors were asked “What does it take to get ahead in this company—what are the kinds of things the company is looking for?” the most frequent responses were these:

- 42% said aggressiveness
- 33% said ambition
- 25% said involvement in the job
- 21% said effectiveness, getting jobs done
- 20% said a good record
- 20% said specific skills

By way of contrast, these same supervisors were asked the following open-ended question: “What kinds of things do you consider in deciding whom to push for a promotion?” Here are the most frequently mentioned criteria:

- 30% said a good record
- 25% said specific skills
- 20% said effectiveness, getting jobs done
- 19% said getting along with other people
- 18% said ambition

Supervisors were also given the list of 17 ability and non-ability criteria and were asked whether they felt that any of the criteria were counted too much or too little by the company. Here are the five criteria which most often counted too much and the five which most often counted too little:

- 33% felt that KNOWING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE COMPANY counted too much
- 18% felt that THE RIGHT SOCIAL BACKGROUND counted too much
- 11% felt that DOING A GOOD JOB ON MANY DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENTS counted too much
- 9% felt that PRUDENCE AND NOT TAKING BIG RISKS counted too much
- 9% felt that REDUCING COSTS AND CONTROLLING EXPENSES counted too much
- 14% felt that SUGGESTING MANY NEW AND BETTER WAYS TO DO THINGS counted too little
- 12% felt that PROMOTING OTHER PEOPLE’S IDEAS counted too little
- 12% felt that PLANNING AND ORGANIZING WELL counted too little
- 12% felt that BEING ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS counted too little
- 12% felt that GETTING PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER counted too little

Supervisors’ agreement and disagreement with the promotional criteria used by their immediate superiors were also assessed through this same checklist of ability and non-ability criteria. Supervisors were asked:

“For each item could you check whether your immediate superior—the man you report to directly—would count it more than you would in considering a man for promotion to a top management position, whether he would count it less than you would, or whether the two of you would count it pretty much the same?”

Here are the percentages of respondents feeling that their immediate supervisors would count each criterion either more or less than they would. The criteria have been categorized according to the factor analysis just reported in order to highlight more clearly the distinction between ability and non-ability considerations; criteria not associated with any of the factors have been omitted.
## Disagreements With Superiors Regarding Promotional Criteria

### What Counts in Being Promoted to Top Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SOCIAL CONNECTIONS</strong></th>
<th>Percentage Reporting that Their Immediate Superior Would Count This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the right people in the company</td>
<td>35% LESS 0% MORE 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right social background</td>
<td>- - + + + + + + + + + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS</strong></th>
<th>Percentage Reporting that Their Immediate Superior Would Count This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with people</td>
<td>- - - - - - - - - + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting people to work together</td>
<td>- - - - - - +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing and explaining clearly</td>
<td>- - - - - + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making up one's own mind</td>
<td>- - - - - - +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing a good job on many different assignments</td>
<td>- - - - - - + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting other people's ideas</td>
<td>- - - - - - - - - - + + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION</strong></th>
<th>Percentage Reporting that Their Immediate Superior Would Count This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>- - - - - + + + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively seeking responsibility</td>
<td>- - - - - + + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COST-CONSCIOUSNESS</strong></th>
<th>Percentage Reporting that Their Immediate Superior Would Count This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Showing an ability to reduce costs and control expenses</td>
<td>- - - - - - - - - - - + + + + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PUBLIC IMAGE CONSIDERATIONS</strong></th>
<th>Percentage Reporting that Their Immediate Superior Would Count This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A good, clean-cut appearance</td>
<td>- - - - - + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to represent the company to outsiders</td>
<td>- - - - - + + + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WHAT THESE FINDINGS INDICATE:

When supervisors contrast the promotional criteria they use with those they see being used by the company in general, the company's criteria are more often cast in an unfavorable light. The company's decisions are regarded as biased by two sets of non-ability criteria: a worker's social connections, that is, his social background and his acquaintance with the right people in the company; and a worker's aggressiveness and ambition.
When the company is perceived as emphasizing abilities, these abilities involve conservative, impersonal behaviors: reducing costs; controlling expenses; and acting prudently. These behaviors are stressed over such more adventurous criteria as “suggesting new and better ways to do things” and several interpersonal skills—being able to get along with other people, promoting other people’s ideas, and getting people to work together.

Supervisors also see their immediate superiors as being swayed more often by a worker’s social connections, as placing a greater premium on cost-consciousness and as more inclined to de-emphasize interpersonal supervisory skills.

Naturally, these same supervisors view themselves in a more highly favorable manner. Perhaps self-righteously, they regard others rather than themselves as practicing the more overt forms of social discrimination; others, not they, consider a worker’s social background and his social connections. They feel they are skill-oriented and make a sophisticated nod to the necessity — presumably more often neglected by others — of considering a worker’s interpersonal and supervisory abilities.

But who are these “others” in the company whose promotional criteria suffer so unfavorably when compared to those of our supervisory respondents? Management’s official policy is unquestionably an ability-oriented, nondiscriminatory one. With few exceptions the respondent’s superior also served as a respondent in this study. Since, therefore, all respondents are in effect discussing each other’s criteria, they are likely to be misjudging these criteria so that their own criteria might appear the better by comparison.

While self-assuredly disapproving of others’ social biases, these supervisory respondents may simultaneously be blinding themselves to the possibilities of their own covert implementation of discriminatory personnel practices through their emphasis on such ambiguous “escape valve” criteria as a worker’s interpersonal skills. Casting oneself as a bold knight crusading against a conservative managerial policy with its impersonal, production-oriented emphasis does not automatically make one’s decisions immune to personal biases. A liberal “human relations” approach to personnel policies need not eliminate discriminatory practices; instead, it may only alter the forms assumed by these practices, making them less easy to detect and more difficult to change. Paradoxically, by its tempering of a completely rationalized approach, the human relations approach may even introduce criteria (for example, personality, getting along with others) that makes discriminatory practices appear more legitimate.
THE QUESTION:

Which Functional Divisions in the Company Are Seen by Supervisors as Being Most Influenced by Non-Ability Considerations in Promotional Decisions?

The criteria by which a worker is evaluated are in general closely tied to the demands of his organizational position. Even the meaning of the term “ability” is contingent upon the peculiar demands of particular positions. While, therefore, promotional policies are generally enunciated on a companywide basis, functional divisions may vary considerably in terms of the specific criteria employed in promotional decisions. The findings below deal with reported differences in the promotional criteria employed in three major functional divisions, Sales, Production, and Research and Development. To what extent, it will be asked, are the criteria we have generally classed as ability factors more important in one division than in another? And which, if any, non-ability factors are most important in each division?

THE FINDINGS:

The 150 supervisors were asked this open-ended question:

"Let’s think now about three different functions—Sales, Production, and Research and Development. If you were recommending people for each of these three groups what special characteristics would you look for in each case? We’re not only interested in different abilities, but in the different personal or managerial qualities you might look for. In a way, we’re asking whether Sales, Production, and Research and Development demand different kinds of people in management jobs."
Here are the five criteria viewed as most important in each of these three divisions:

**Characteristics Necessary for a Managerial Position**

### IN SALES
Friendliness, sociability, extraversion, affability,
- being a good mixer ........................................ 40%
- A good appearance, no unfavorable mannerisms ........ 32%
- Communication skills, ability to express oneself .......... 30%
- Getting along with other people .......................... 29%
- Knowledge of the business world, the product, or finance . . . . . . . . . . 21%

### IN PRODUCTION
Leadership ability, being able to motivate people,
- getting others to work together .......................... 32%
- Getting along with other people .......................... 27%
Practicality, cost-consciousness, looking for
- commercial aspects of ideas .............................. 21%
- Delegating work, organizing work of subordinates, setting
  standards for subordinates, coordinating people .......... 17%
- Specific skills, technical skills, mechanical ability ...... 16%

### IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
Specific skills, technical skills, mechanical ability .......... 39%
Originality, creativity, suggesting new and
- better ways of doing things ............................. 32%
- Formal education ........................................... 17%
Perseverance, tenacity, being able to cope with failure,
- surmounting obstacles .................................... 17%
Intelligence, quick-mindedness, "analytic ability,"
- inquisitiveness, having an inquiring mind ............... 15%

In addition, supervisors were asked with regard to each of five non-ability criteria:

"In which of these three functions—Sales, Production, and Research and Development—would not meeting this criterion most handicap a man's promotional opportunities?"

The supervisors answered this question as shown in the following figure.
Promotional Criteria in Sales, Production, and Research and Development Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Connections</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to the “right” club or lodge</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious background</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Image Considerations</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance—whether one “looks like a manager”</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a good section of town</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pleasant personality</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Percentages of respondents naming no functional division or more than one are not included in this and the following figure; the percentages do not therefore add to 100%.)

When asked a similar question as to the function in which not meeting each of these same criteria would least handicap a man’s promotion, the supervisors responded as follows.
Promotional Criteria in Sales, Production, and Research and Development Divisions

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to the “right” club or lodge</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious background</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Prod.</td>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PUBLIC IMAGE CONSIDERATIONS

- Appearance—whether one “looks like a manager”
- Living in a good section of town
- A pleasant personality

WHAT THESE FINDINGS INDICATE:

1. When compared to Sales and Production, Research and Development is the division in which ability criteria are clearly the most dominant and in which non-ability criteria are seen as being used the least. The three most important criteria in Research and Development are seen as technical skills, creativity, and education. Respondents feel that the workers in Research and Development are those least handicapped by considerations of their religion, residence, or personality.

2. Non-ability criteria—including both social characteristics and personality considerations—are regarded as most critical for promotions in sales work.

3. When non-ability factors are considered in promotional decisions in Production, these factors do not involve a worker’s social characteristics (important in Sales) so much as those characteristics of a worker which might affect his dealings with his co-workers. Leadership and getting along with people are the criteria most frequently attributed to promotions in Production.
THE QUESTION:

For What Hierarchical Levels Are Non-Ability Criteria Seen as Most Influencing Promotional Decisions?

Managerial policy and employee practice are not always identical, and directives from the executive suite often fail to get translated into employee behavior. At times there is even a discrepancy between managerial policy and the behavior of the policy makers themselves. But effective managerial control is most readily obtainable when managers are observed by employees to act in accordance with their own directives. This is particularly the case with regard to personnel matters. The principles of selection and promotion employed at top management levels do not go unnoticed by others in the company; these principles may set precedents that will be followed at all levels.

The findings below are, therefore, concerned with supervisors’ views of the promotional criteria that are used at the company’s top management levels. What sort of example does the behavior of top managers set for others in the company? What do supervisors see as the major differences between those promotional criteria used by top managers and those criteria used by themselves? At what hierarchical levels are a worker’s social characteristics seen as most important?

THE FINDINGS:

With regard to each of five non-ability criteria, workers were asked:

"Do you think that this might make more difference if a man was being considered for a top management job in the company than if he was being considered for a job at a lower management level, or do you feel that the management level has nothing to do with this?"
Here is a summary table of answers to this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion for Promotion</th>
<th>Percentage of Supervisors Indicating That This Criterion is More Important at—</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to the “right” club or lodge</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious background</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **PUBLIC IMAGE CONSIDERATIONS**                 |              |               |
| Appearance—whether one “looks like a manager”   | 1%           | 61%           |
| Living in a good section of town                | 0%           | 52%           |
| A pleasant personality                          | 12%          | 39%           |

An additional open-ended question asked supervisors to name the criteria that were more important at a “top management” level in contrast to their own organizational level. Here are the five criteria seen as most important for promotion at top management levels. Next to each criterion is the percentage of respondents attributing the criterion to top management promotions and the percentage attributing the criterion to promotions at their own levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion for Promotion</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Saying That This is More Important for Promotion at—</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Their Own Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a long-range point of view, coordinating decisions with general company goals, seeing “the big picture”</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegating work, organizing work of subordinates, setting standards for subordinates, coordinating people</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the business world, the product, or finance</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to evaluate the performance of subordinates</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly defining the problems, going to the heart of difficulties</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT THESE FINDINGS INDICATE:

Non-ability criteria are seen as more influential at higher management levels than at lower levels. Both an individual's social characteristics and his personality are seen as affecting his promotional chances more when he is being considered for promotion within the strata of top management. Several supervisors explained this by noting that if a man is even considered for top management he must already have demonstrated his abilities. Competition at the top is keen, and marginal matters make more of a difference.

The most generally agreed upon characteristic uniquely demanded of individuals at higher management levels is being able to take a long-range point of view in decision making. This is unquestionably an ability criterion and is vital in evaluating one who is expected to make managerial decisions of far-reaching, long-term consequences. Note, however, that this ability criterion is much more difficult to evaluate than such an ability criterion as specific technical or mechanical skills. While specific skills were mentioned by 26% of the supervisors as being very relevant for promotion at their own levels, only 3% saw this as being relevant for top management promotions; conversely, only 11% of these respondents saw “taking a long-range point of view” as being vital at their own hierarchical levels.

The latter findings are only symptomatic of a widely discussed condition—that top management positions demand refined combinations of abilities which are often so broadly defined that they are virtually impossible to assess objectively. Such assessment may be supplanted by one's “feeling” that a worker does or doesn't have that “something extra” that makes him “top management material.”

But, as we noted earlier, to the degree that promotional criteria are ambiguous and hard to assess objectively, they provide open invitations for the application of any number of personal prejudices. Like the “good personality” of the salesman and the “leadership ability” of the production foreman, these vaguely defined managerial requirements may by virtue of their ambiguity serve to justify discriminatory promotion practices on presumably ability-oriented grounds.

SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS--
THE PROBLEM OF THIRD PARTIES

Increasing managerial sophistication has set in motion forces which, while perhaps lessening discriminatory personnel practices, may have altered unexpectedly the forms taken by these practices and compelled discrimination to “go underground.”
The logical conflict between overt discrimination and promotion on the basis of ability is being increasingly resolved in favor of the ability principle—at least in intent and on paper. Moreover, growing sophistication concerning the "corporate image" in an increasingly liberal society argues against discrimination as being bad publicity. Non-discriminatory practices, if not instituted in a company on the basis of personal belief, can at least be justified on the grounds of good business.

This sophistication in personnel policies dictates that a worker not be hired simply to perform a particular job with a limited time perspective. Instead, he is hired and promoted with an eye toward his "career" in the company. Where, it is asked, is he likely to move in the company—how high up and for how long? A successful record of past selling may not even be sufficient guarantee that a particular salesman will be hired. The impact of his personality upon the company's present customers must be considered. His prospects for short-term sales must be tempered by considering his ambiguous "future potential" for filling the position of a sales manager or some higher office. In the production end of the business, the human relations movement has for years stressed the importance of a supervisor's interpersonal behavior. The question of how well a prospect is likely to perform as a production supervisor is increasingly answered by references to his "leadership ability" or how well he can "motivate his subordinates."

Even in these oversimplified descriptions of hiring or promotional criteria it is clear that a worker is not likely to be judged solely on the basis of his recorded experience or his demonstrated ability to get an immediate job done. He is likely to be evaluated as well in terms of such vague commodities as his "potential," his "managerial capabilities," the impact of his "personality," or his "interpersonal relations."

Repeated reference has already been made to the possibility that the ambiguity of some of these characteristics makes them vulnerable to being twisted by the personal prejudices of those making promotional decisions. But this is not the only relevance of some of these characteristics to the problem of organizational discrimination. Of equal importance is their interpersonal emphasis. Along these lines, supervisors in this study reported that:

Personality and social characteristics are most important for promotion in the Sales division.

"Leadership ability" is most necessary for promotion in the Production division.

Non-ability characteristics are more critical for promotion at higher management levels than at lower levels.
When supervisors indicated that a non-ability criterion was important in Sales or Production or at higher management levels, they were subsequently asked why they thought this was the case. A common theme in supervisors' replies was that the effectiveness of a top manager or of a Sales or Production man was tied to the impression he made on others. Note, for example, the interpersonal emphasis in supervisors' verbatim replies concerning Sales promotions:

"In sales you come in contact with a lot of people of all types who could be prejudiced."

"Religion is most important in sales because of the nature of the sales business area. Sales has a lot to do with other people and religion could have some effect."

"When you're selling you must at all times keep the person engrossed in the commodity. If you are the type or there is something about you that distracts him, he's not going to give his full attention to your product."

"When you're in sales you need to transact business through social contacts. The right club or lodge gives you a good opportunity to socialize in the right strata."

"The social requirement is higher in sales. The status of your home is important to social acceptance."

"Clubs and lodges give you something in common with the customer."

"In sales it's important to associate with the right people intimately."

"A salesman has to entertain customers and live up to his station in life. Impressing people would help him in his work."

"In sales you come in contact with many types of personalities. You have to be pleasant or you could not accomplish your job in representing the company."

"A salesman has to be well known and create a likeness between himself and the people he comes in contact with."

Here are some statements about promotions in Production:

"In production it's better not to be considered in any upper social strata. He must be more earthy, down to the same level as those he works with."

"Living in the right section of town is least important in production. You have to establish rapport with line personnel."

"A production man would work with people that might resent his belonging to various clubs."

"In production there's no need to impress people. Better to stay on their level."

"A good residence is least important in production. A man has to be close to the working people."

But also:

"In production you've got so many people that work under you that a better house is insurance to protect the image. People look up to you and expect you to do certain things."
And here are some comments about promotions in higher management:

"The higher you go up the corporate ladder, the more your life revolves around social meetings with your counterparts from other companies."

"The company is rated by the social standing of those at its higher management levels."

"Religion might be important at a top level because he would be meeting people as a representative of the company."

"There are broader responsibilities in entertainment at higher levels. You are dealing with higher management executives in other companies."

"The higher you go, the more people you meet, not only in the company but outside in your daily activities. You're the image of the company to that person."

"Appearance is most important at higher levels because as you go up in the organization you come in contact with more important people in a business sense."

"The higher levels demand the social graces. The right lodge helps him meet other men at management level."

"At higher levels his world grows larger and so should his image."

"Marriage is most important at higher levels. Again, conformity with the usual social behavior."

"The right club or lodge helps him hob nob with others at his level."

All these statements acknowledge the importance of the opinions of third parties to the promotional decision. The decision, according to these statements, is not based solely on the behavior of the worker and the judgments of his superior; the second-guessed opinions and reactions of others whom the worker may encounter are also honored.

The identities of these third parties vary considerably depending upon the position for which the worker is being considered. For a salesman, the third parties presumably responding to his religion, appearance, club membership and so forth are mainly the company's customers. The parties supposedly attuned to a top manager's social characteristics form an even wider group, encompassing both top managers in general and all those who might be responsive to the company's "public image." In Production, where the third parties are the rank-and-file workers, a curious sort of reverse snobbery is found. When respondents report that social characteristics are of little importance in Production, what they mean is that high social status is not important. Only a handful of respondents suggest that a Production supervisor should have all the trappings of a high social status in order to impress his subordinates. Far more emphasize a supervisor's having characteristics which will help him "establish rapport" with his men by virtue of being similar to his men. His social standing should be good, but not too good.
The statements quoted above concerning Sales, Production, and higher management are based on personal prejudices, but not necessarily the respondents' own prejudices. Instead, they reflect prejudices attributed by respondents to various third parties. It was noted earlier how supervisors regarded both the company in general and their own immediate superiors as being more attentive than they to a worker's social characteristics. Here supervisors are seen as viewing additional parts of their organizational world—the company's customers, top managers in other companies, and the production rank-and-file—as more prejudiced than themselves. It is these groups of third parties more than the supervisors themselves who are presented as being responsive to a worker's social characteristics.

A critical issue may therefore arise in many promotional decisions: is it legitimate to honor the prejudices of others in making these decisions? While this issue is partly a moral one, its moral aspects should not obscure the fact that it poses a statistical question as well. In the present study we do not know what in fact were the personal prejudices of the groups of third parties to whom our respondents referred. We did not assess the opinions of the company's customers to find out how sensitive they were to the social standing of the company's salesmen; nor did we investigate the opinions of the production rank-and-file or of the top management in other companies.

But neither did our supervisory respondents have on hand much objective evidence concerning the opinions of most of the third parties whose prejudices they were acknowledging. This is particularly true with regard to the opinions of the company's customers since all our respondents were in Production and Research and Development rather than in Sales. In general, a respondent's estimation of the prejudices and probable reactions of these third parties—particularly third parties outside the company—is likely to be compounded of evidence from several sources: the respondent's possible past experience with these parties; second-hand reports of the parties' particular prejudices; and stereotypes of "the company's typical customer," "the line man," and "top management men." But stereotypes often change more slowly than does the reality that the stereotypes are intended to characterize. Obsolete stereotypes may be even further distorted by the prejudices of the respondent himself. Still the possibility that the respondent may be seriously overstating the opinions of some third parties apparently does not constrain him from implicitly honoring these opinions in the rationale he presents for certain promotional decisions.
CONCLUSIONS--ABILITY AND AMBIGUITY

At the beginning of this report we described a current problem faced by a number of industrial managers. These managers had formulated explicit nondiscriminatory personnel policies for their companies and believed that these policies were faithfully being carried out. In these same companies, however, censuses of the social characteristics of employees found minority groups conspicuously under-utilized in managerial ranks. Managers found their companies exposed to public criticism on issues which they thought their formal policies had already resolved successfully in favor of ability-oriented, nondiscriminatory hiring and promotion.

The present study was conducted in a single company where nondiscriminatory personnel policies were likewise affirmed by management and seconded by many other non-managerial employees. By viewing the promotional environment of this company through the eyes of its supervisory personnel we hoped to detect the ways in which discriminatory behavior could be made admissible and plausible in the personnel practices of this and similar companies.

We initially regarded discrimination on religious or racial grounds as instances of a broader problem—the influence of non-ability considerations on personnel decisions. While the distinction between ability and non-ability promotional criteria provided a convenient starting point, this distinction now appears greatly oversimplified. For studying organizational discrimination, the following set of distinctions among promotional criteria presently seems more useful:

1. Explicitly defined and objectively measurable ability criteria.
2. Abilities which are so broadly or vaguely defined that considerable personal judgment and individual opinion enters into their assessment.
3. Interpersonal skills, including leadership skills, by which a worker is evaluated in terms of his effect on others.
4. Criteria which refer to a worker's personality or appearance.
5. Criteria which inferentially attribute motives to a worker.
6. Criteria based on a worker's social characteristics.

A supervisor's promotional decision is easiest when confined to the first and last of these types of criteria. Information concerning a worker's
experience, education, and certain aspects of his past performance (for example, sales record, scrap record, cost record, record of assignments completed on schedule, patent counts) will often be found in the company files; also fairly accessible will be information concerning some of the worker's social characteristics (for example, place of residence, religion, club membership, college status). The supervisor's main problem in using criteria such as these is to devise a calculus which differentially weights each of these factors in keeping with his conception of what a particular job demands. Often this calculus may be provided by management, and the supervisor has but to apply it to the specific case. This approach to personnel decisions—let us for the moment call it the "hard" approach—is scarcely an imaginative one, and our caricature of it reduces the supervisor's function in the promotional decision to one that could be handled as well by an electronic computer. The approach is not without its advantages; it is unambiguous, objective, readily executed, and not likely to be distorted by those applying it. Moreover, with the "hard" approach there is likely to be a high correspondence between managerial policy and employee practice. It may or may not be discriminatory depending upon the weight assigned to a worker's social characteristics. When the approach is applied in a discriminatory manner, its discriminatory aspects will at least be observable.

This "hard" approach to personnel decisions is seldom encountered in the extreme form just described. It is particularly rare at management levels. More commonly, the "hard" approach is modified by supervisors' considerations of the other four types of promotional criteria listed above—vaguely defined ability criteria, interpersonal skills, personality or appearance, and motivational factors. We earlier termed these types of criteria as "middle ground" in that they are less obviously relevant to job performance than many "hard" ability criteria, while at the same time they are not necessarily indicative of discriminatory practices—as are criteria involving a worker's social characteristics. The present study found many of these "middle ground" criteria being used. For example:

—"Leadership ability" was regarded as the most important criterion for a managerial position in Production.

—All the supervisory respondents interviewed said that having a pleasant personality affects a man's promotional chances.

—"Taking the long range point of view" was regarded by respondents as the most important criterion for promotion to top management.

—Supervisors reported that the two most important things it takes "to get ahead in the company" are aggressiveness and ambition.

—59% of the supervisors said that "getting along with people" counted "a lot" for promotion to top management.

—96% said that whether one "looks like a manager" affects his promotional chances.
While the inclusion of many criteria such as these into the promotional decision may increase the effectiveness of the decision, a price must frequently be paid for this effectiveness. By the addition of these “middle-ground” criteria, promotional decisions become considerably more difficult than those made through the strict application of the “hard” approach. These added “middle ground” criteria are less precisely defined than the “hard” criteria and are markedly more difficult to measure. Human judgment is brought increasingly into play, and as a result the chances for discrepancies between company policy and employee practice become more likely.

Although the use of “middle ground” criteria is not by itself indicative of discriminatory practices, the application of these criteria may inadvertently encourage discriminatory decisions. The early steps in this process of encouragement were just noted. First, to the degree that these “middle ground” criteria are employed, the role of an immediate supervisor’s judgments in the promotional decision is increased, since a worker’s characteristics can no longer be assessed simply by a glance at available records. As the judgments of the individual supervisor are increasingly invoked, policy makers’ control over the promotional decision is correspondingly reduced. Secondly, as “middle ground” criteria enter more and more into this decision, the difficulty of the decision is considerably heightened by the requirement that supervisors make judgments about vaguely defined personal capacities which they are untrained to judge and which they may even think are irrelevant to a worker’s performance. More than one supervisor has grumbled when required by his personnel office to rate a subordinate on a checklist which might give even a psychiatrist difficulty.

The supervisor is vitally concerned with this difficult decision. Not only is his section’s output likely to be increased if he happens to promote an effective man into or within his section; but the supervisor is putting his own supervisory competence on the line as well, for he is in turn likely to be evaluated by his ability to judge others. In this regard, findings given on page 30 indicate that supervisors felt that among the most important criteria for promotion to a top management position was “ability to evaluate the performance of subordinates.” The supervisor is therefore doubly compelled to recommend for promotion people who both meet his own performance criteria and are not likely to fail either now or at a higher level to meet the criteria set up by others. The supervisor must, in short, pick a winner where the winning is determined by the standards of others in the company.
The introduction of ambiguous “middle ground” criteria, therefore, compels the supervisor to be successful in making very difficult personnel decisions which are intimately linked to his own career prospects. The easiest—and safest—course for him to pursue under these circumstances is to follow the decisional guidelines set by others. Numerous studies have demonstrated the close association between the degree of ambiguity in a decision situation and the extent to which an individual patterns his behavior after the behavior of others. But this is not the only reason why a supervisor dealing with “middle ground” promotional criteria should be especially attuned to others’ judgments. In addition, the quality of his promotional decision will be determined by how well the man he selects for promotion will be evaluated by others in the company, particularly those in higher positions.

At this point third parties become critical to the supervisor’s promotional decision. Faced thus with a difficult and personally relevant decision, the supervisor is likely to turn for guidance to the precedents set by his company’s top management, his immediate superior, or “the company” in general. He may also, as noted earlier, be attuned to the opinions of some other third parties as well—the company’s customers, the production rank-and-file, or his image of “top managers” in general.

Given these conditions, the supervisor’s decision will be free of non-ability considerations to the degree that he perceives these third parties as being wholly ability-oriented. But these third parties are not so perceived. Our data has indicated that each of these third parties is viewed by supervisors as deviating in some way from a full commitment to the principle that a worker should be evaluated solely on the basis of his demonstrated abilities. In spite of the fact that the supervisor reports that he sometimes disagrees with the opinions of these third parties, he may nevertheless find it hard to resist imitating their apparent actions—especially where the third parties are higher management or his own immediate superiors.

Through these processes a supervisor can find himself engaging in discrimination contrary both to official company policies and even to his own beliefs. We have just suggested that the source of this discrimination lies in two major conditions: an emphasis upon ambiguous “middle ground” criteria and recognition of the opinions of various third parties. We have, however, spelled out the possible effects of these two conditions only for those benign organizational environments where both employee opinion and company policy were unanimous in a disavowal of discrimination.
These same two conditions may also serve to reinforce discriminatory practices in less benign environments. In a company where supervisors are generally prejudiced against a particular minority group, ambiguous promotional criteria and the honoring of third party opinions may provide useful escape valves for the translation of personal prejudice into corporate practice. The prejudiced supervisor may capitalize on the ambiguity of promotional criteria by downgrading minority group members with respect to personal characteristics which are sufficiently difficult to measure that the supervisor’s word is regarded as definitive. If his description of the minority group worker corresponds to other supervisors’ stereotypes about the particular minority group, the description will appear all the more valid. Even if the supervisor’s prejudice is not shared by other supervisors, he has available an additional argument against accepting the minority group members. He may assert that they will not be readily accepted by various other third parties—the company’s customers, for example, or the production rank-and-file.

We have just traced out some of the implications of the dual conditions of ambiguous promotional criteria and third party opinions as these conditions affect personnel discrimination. At times, of course, these conditions may actually increase the efficiency of personnel practices. Where a worker must deal frequently with various third parties, his personal impact on them will clearly be tied to his effectiveness. Even ambiguous criteria may have their positive aspects. If performance standards are too exact, there may arise the temptation to do exactly enough and no more. To counteract this tendency, somewhat ambiguous standards are occasionally advocated in order “to keep workers a little hungry” in their quest for promotions.

Nevertheless, the conditions of ambiguous criteria and third party opinions can jeopardize the effectiveness of a corporation’s personnel procedures through a superficially plausible de-emphasis of the ability principle. Several other consequences of these conditions should also be noted. First, having to deal with ambiguous personnel criteria can make an already overburdened supervisor’s job even more difficult. Second, as we have reported in an earlier study, a worker’s relations with his co-workers are undermined to the extent that he is unclear about how his co-workers evaluate him. Third, unnecessary disagreements may arise among supervisors in their discussion of personnel problems since each may put his own interpretations upon the criteria under discussion. Fourth, repeated reliance on the opinions of others in personnel matters may discourage independent behavior by supervisors when they deal with non-personnel matters. Lastly, since management’s control over personnel practices is reduced, it may prove difficult for management to institute necessary changes in these practices in response to changing circumstances.
SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The lines of action proposed below stem directly from the major findings of this study. The recommendations for action are tentative, however, because the data are based on a study of only two plants in a single company. If, like our conclusions, our action recommendations appear oversimplified, it is because we have yet to discover how different company environments create subtle, but important, differences in promotional procedures. A comprehensive set of action recommendations must await the extension of the present research to a wider variety of corporations.

The recommendations are designed to attack discrimination which is largely unintended but is nevertheless encouraged by two conditions: (1) the emphasis upon "middle ground" promotional criteria which are frequently difficult to define and even more difficult to measure objectively; and (2) the honoring of third party opinions in promotional decision making.

Positive Assertion

by top management and its commitment to the ability principle in executive selection, with specific disavowal of non-ability considerations, including race, religion, social background, and the like. Silence is not enough with respect to the non-ability factors; in many companies discriminatory practices have occurred in the past, and employees persist in believing that such practices continue with the encouragement or tacit approval of top management—unless these practices are explicitly disavowed. Moreover, the disavowal of non-ability considerations must specify the full range of such characteristics. Religion intrudes with a whole cluster of other non-ability characteristics—residence, club membership, social background, and the like. Unless all these are disavowed, it is likely that discrimination will persist in effect although denied in principle.

The commitment to the ability principle and the exclusion of non-ability considerations must be made visible in practice, not only on paper. It is the promotion of qualified members of minority groups which constitutes the test of policy, not a statement of the intent to do so. Furthermore, such promotions should not be limited to those occasional members of minorities who closely resemble the majority in all respects other than the specific characteristics of religion or race.
Changes in formal policies, job descriptions, and procedures throughout the company (a) to make completely explicit the ability principle, (b) to either clarify or de-emphasize various ambiguous “middle-ground” criteria, and (c) to exclude non-ability considerations. Such changes should be written into the appropriate documents and policy statements from the top of the company to the first level of supervision and from the most central positions to the jobs at the outer boundaries of the organization, including personnel interviewers and college recruiters. Corporation policies should be particularly explicit where personnel are selected through employment agencies or management recruitment agencies.

Reevaluation of the need for certain “middle-ground” criteria. As the number of “middle-ground” criteria in the promotional decision increase, the danger of deviations from the ability principle is heightened. Each ambiguous “middle-ground” criterion should therefore be regarded as a “cost” to the promotional decision, and each should be examined closely to determine whether it is absolutely essential for this decision. Because a criterion sounds superficially relevant, because it is useful in other companies, because it is essential for one type of job in the company, because it is currently in vogue among personnel people—these are not sufficient reasons for regarding the criterion as necessary for all promotional decisions in the company. The importance of no criterion should be taken for granted.

Redefinition of “middle-ground” criteria in behavioral terms. Where it is decided that a particular “middle-ground” criterion is vital to a supervisor’s promotional deliberations, this criterion should be stated not in the form of an abstract trait but in terms of the specific behaviors to be observed by the supervisor. The supervisor’s energies should be used where they are most valuable. He should be spared the task of making sophisticated inferences about workers’ traits and motives and should be encouraged instead to be primarily a sensitive, accurate observer of behavior. It may even be revealed that many such inferences are not necessary.
Devaluation

of the necessity for being positive about personnel matters. We have noted that considerable pressure may be placed on a supervisor to make the "correct" personnel decision. Often no decision is regarded as worse than an uninformed decision. If a supervisor finds it impossible to make a global assessment of the "leadership ability" of a subordinate, he may even be viewed as less competent than a supervisor who under similar circumstances hazards a guess on the basis of fragmentary evidence. When supervisors are asked to assess various characteristics of subordinates, it might prove helpful were they encouraged to indicate how positive they were about each item in their assessment. If a supervisor feels incapable of making a statement about some aspect of a subordinate's behavior there should be no taboo against his saying "I don't know."

Open Discussion

of criterion issues. The data have suggested that each individual thinks of himself as unusual in his views of personnel matters, when in fact those around him feel much as he does. Serious and open discussions of criteria for hiring and promotion, including problems of discrimination, would in such situations highlight the importance of ability principle and indicate the degree to which it is supported by organizational members. Such discussions could have the effect of encouraging people to act in accordance with their own convictions of what is right and in the best interests of the company.

Discussions of criterion issues would be particularly useful in implementing a suggestion just advanced—namely, the re-definition of abstractly stated promotional criteria in behavioral terms. Since supervisors are to be the ones applying these criteria, they should be encouraged to develop among themselves "working definitions" of these criteria. Participation by members of the personnel department in such discussions might induce personnel people to alter some of their recommended evaluation procedures in line with supervisors' judgmental capacities; conversely, the personnel department can help supervisors to develop their observational skills and make supervisors aware of frequent judgmental pitfalls. Discussions of criterion issues among members of different departments can serve an educational as well as a problem-solving function since these discussions may correct one's stereotypes of the prejudices of "third parties" in other departments.
Distribution

of objective evidence concerning "third party" opinions. We have already suggested that many personnel decisions may be influenced by the second-guessed opinions of others. If a supervisor feels that his immediate superior, top management, the company's customers, and others inside and outside the company harbor prejudices, these perceived prejudices are likely to sway the supervisor's own judgments. The critical point is that although many of these perceptions of others' prejudices may not be accurate, their lack of accuracy does not diminish their influence. Frequently they are only stereotypes about others' stereotypes.

This sort of erroneous second-guessing can only be corrected by the spread of accurate information. Periodic attitude surveys could be quite useful in this respect, but the best of such surveys would be fruitless if its results were not widely circulated. That the results of such studies be shown to management alone is not sufficient. Management must not only make its own feelings known but must engage actively in correcting supervisors' stereotypes about the opinions of other third parties as well.

Initiation

of changes in personnel policies and practices on an industry-wide basis if nondiscriminatory practices endanger a company's competitive position. It was just suggested that the prejudices attributed to various third parties are likely to be exaggerated. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that these attributed prejudices may be accurate to some degree. Take, for example, the matter of the religious affiliation of salesmen. Forty-one per cent of the supervisors asserted that not being of the right religion might handicap a salesman. This assertion was defended by supervisors on the grounds that a salesman who was the member of a minority religious group might alienate customers who were prejudiced against this group. To the extent that these supervisors' views are accurate, the company sales may drop off if members of minority religious groups are employed in the company's sales force. The company's customers might be won away by a competing company which employs salesmen of a more "acceptable" religion. Similar adverse consequences might result from enlisting a salesman who had the "wrong" social background, who was of the "wrong" race, who didn't live in the "right" place, or who failed to belong to the "right" club or lodge.

When, therefore, nondiscriminatory personnel policies jeopardize a company's position in its market, the company should feel justifiably compelled to enlist its competitors into adopting similar policies. To this end
it should feel free to bring to bear all appropriate forces of public opinion. An economic disadvantage should not and need not be borne by the nondiscriminatory company. If competing companies are sincere in their public commitment to the nondiscriminatory ability principle, they should be encouraged to join in an industry-wide application of this principle. The common responsibility of these competing companies is to initiate an industry-wide covenant which affirms the ability principle and institutes nondiscriminatory practices. The industry composed of these competing companies should not penalize the company which practices that which its competitors only preach.

Managerial Review

of personnel decisions where discrimination is most likely. The supervisors interviewed in this study suggested that discriminatory departures from the ability principle are most frequent in particular functional divisions and at particular hierarchical levels. Similar departures might be expected under other conditions as well: where managerial control over the personnel decision is weak; where a supervisor is known to be prejudiced; where the person making the promotional decision has little information about the worker being judged; where the demands of the position for which the worker is being considered are difficult to assess; where the worker will be dealing with third parties who are commonly stereotyped as being prejudiced; where top management is dominated by members of a functional division in which discrimination is comparatively frequent. All these conditions constitute danger signals warning management that a decision may be made that departs from ability-oriented company policies. Moreover, policy makers might profit from a close scrutiny of the history of personnel practices in their particular companies. Such a review will suggest the conditions encouraging discrimination in the past and will indicate thereby the conditions which should be regarded as danger signals in the present. Where such danger signals appear, personnel decisions should be given more than perfunctory review. Where management does not revoke a discriminatory decision, it implicitly approves the decision and encourages others to decide in a similar fashion.

The formal policies and daily practices of an organization can therefore facilitate social change, ignore it, or retard it. Prejudiced people can act without discrimination if they are required to do so, and many unprejudiced people will carry out discriminatory practices if they believe that their organizational role requires them to do so. Indeed, it appears that many supervisors so believe and are following practices which are more discriminatory than their own values would indicate. The aforementioned proposals for executive action would reverse this process, and would use the legitimate authority of the organization to encourage adherence to the ability principle—even among those whose personal prejudices might dispose them toward discriminatory practices.