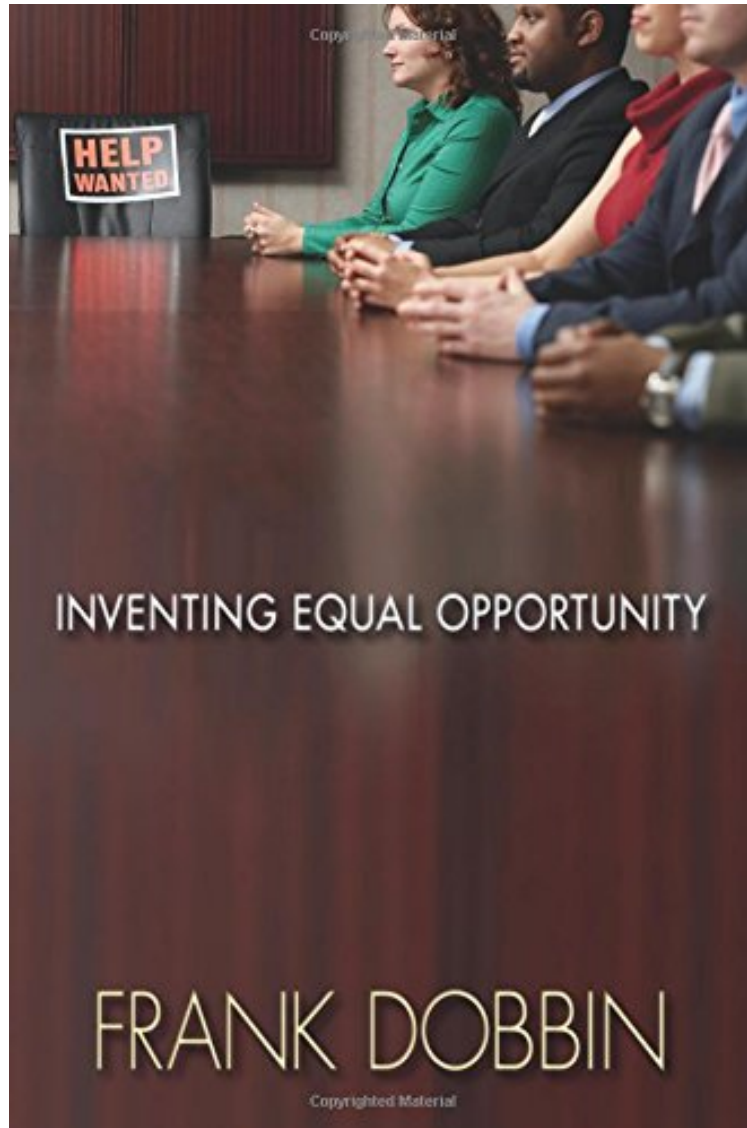


# Inventing Equal Opportunity

Frank Dobbin

ePub | \*DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#867149 in Books Princeton University Press 2011-06-20 2011-06-20 Original language: English PDF # 1  
9.20 x .81 x 6.10l, 1.05 #File Name: 069114995X360 pages | File size: 17.Mb

**Frank Dobbin : Inventing Equal Opportunity** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Inventing Equal Opportunity:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Compelling History and Exercise in Sensemaking By Robert D. Jones Dobbin presents a thorough and academically solid review of the relevant innerworkings of this thread of American history. He has carefully braided the strands of democracy, policy, law, capitalism and socio-economic histories into a powerful cord that binds together the pieces of iron and clay that comprise the realities of EEO as we

know it today. Dobbin had me anticipating his next book before I was done with section two of this one. Having lived much of the history he's reviewed, I readily recognized the picture he's painted. It makes sense. Whether you end up agreeing with his portrayals and perspectives or not, Dobbin presents a view that cannot be ignored for serious students of the "Diversity" game. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Frank Dobbin, documenting the entire transformation process of equal ...By FangFrank Dobbin, documenting the entire transformation process of equal opportunity from law to practice, challenges conventional wisdom that it was politicians, activists and judges who brought equal opportunity in to being. Instead, personnel managers and professionals were to be surveyed.????In a lengthy study of equal opportunity's evolution, Dobbin found that in a sweeping executive and legislative ban of discrimination, neither President John F. Kennedy nor the Congress or Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) bothered to clearly define the term (pp.23-35). Corporate executives, on the other hand, had to charge their personnel directors with the task of figuring out how to rule out discrimination in employment. They first attempted to expand the practice of union welfare policies and increased recruitment in historically black colleges (pp. 41-60) and led to an increase of black male workers in industrial plants. In the 1970s, to adapt to stringent requirements of federal contracts, personnel managers also began to produce more detailed outlines for practices, such as clear description of job skills required, job posting and new schemes of salary classifications. These practices, however, were mostly transformed from older customs (pp. 98-100), and were legitimized by courts only after they were produced, most typically in the case of grievance procedures (pp. 91-97).????In the 1980s, facing the Ronald Regan government and the "neoliberal" turn of American political economy, many of the racial-based practice were either abandoned or were given less attention from courts, legislatures and popular opinions. Hence personnel professionals not only transformed themselves into "human resources" professionals, but also switched the focus of equal opportunity to production efficiency and sexual/gender equality, under the name of "diversity management" (pp.143-158). Dobbin argues that since the 1980s, equal opportunity policies designed and diffused by mostly white female human resource profession tilted more towards sexual and gender equality (pp.161-166). Ironically, for Dobbin, the originally racial/ethnic-based civil rights movement eventually settled on sex/gender biases (pp.187-189).????All in all, for Dobbin, executive policies of equal opportunity did not automatically created equal employment opportunity, but they had to be adopted and invented by personnel experts in "wave upon wave of corporate programs" (p.13). Courts, EEOC and CEOs only confirmed the selections of such practices later, which became the common institutions in corporations. On the other hand, this whole historical process might have had the effect of circumventing the equal opportunity movement in to a mere question of certain types of equality, corporate practices and production efficiency, denying further moral and legal debates and popular supervision (pp.227-233). The book's combination of documentary research and data collection successfully combines sociological analytics with economic insights. This book not only reveals the interaction between social activism, bureaucracy, institutions and social practices, but also stirs reflections upon the operation of the hierarchical, highly mechanized and institutionalized democracy of America.??

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

Co-Winner of the 2012 Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award, American Sociological Association Winner of the 2010 Max Weber Award in the Organizations, Occupations, and Work Section of the American Sociological Association One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2009 "Frank Dobbin's impressive *Inventing Equal Opportunity* documents the crucial role played by the personnel profession in translating equal employment law into practice. . . . Dobbin makes a powerful argument about the importance of long-overlooked personnel managers in creating the legal environment that governs so much of an American's working life."--*Science* "In this superb book, Dobbin explains the process through which white males have now become 'victims' of a system intended to uplift disadvantaged groups; at the same time, it reveals the fallacy of judicial neutrality in civil rights cases. . . . Overall,

Dobbin tells a clear, well-documented, fascinating story about workplace relations."--R.L. Hogler, *Choice*"Inventing Equal Opportunity provides a much needed corrective to our understanding of the workings of corporate America in the face of external pressures surrounding inequality and law. . . . Consequent to [its] many strengths, I have no doubt that Inventing Equal Opportunity will find a welcome home on the 'must read' shelf among sociologists and graduate students of inequality, law, organizations, professions, and work."--Vincent J. Roscigno, *Contemporary Sociology*"Dobbin's book is an eye-opening account of how a professional group used demands for equal opportunity to expand its professional jurisdiction. . . . Through their policies and programs, these experts heightened expectations for fair treatment and promoted a more sociological understanding of racism and sexism inside organizations."--Christine L. Williams, *Gender and Society*"This impressive book makes a convincing case for human resources professionals as key players in the implementation of civil rights laws."--Edward Berkowitz, *Journal of Social History*"Frank Dobbin has written a careful institutional analysis of how human resource professionals invented equal opportunity. The book is a pleasure to read and a field guide for what historically careful institutional analyses should look like. For institutionalists and law and society scholars the book is necessary reading. Inventing Equal Opportunity is likely to become one of the definitive books on the history of equal opportunity law and corporate personnel practice."--Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, *American Journal of Sociology*"This is an excellent, smart book attuned to the implications its argument has for our understanding of social movements, racial progress, and federalism."--Jennifer Delton, *Journal of American History*From the Back Cover"Inventing Equal Opportunity is the most important work of organizational sociology of the last quarter century. Challenging many of our basic assumptions about social movements and organizational change, this book is a must-read for sociologists concerned with inequality and those attempting to influence corporate responsibility activities in corporations."--David A. Thomas, coauthor of *Breaking Through: The Making of Minority Executives in Corporate America*"Frank Dobbin offers a fresh interpretation of equal opportunity that emphasizes corporate personnel management rather than law. Grounded in original evidence, Inventing Equal Opportunity makes the important point that management professionalism--like other institutions of civil society--structures the space between markets and states. Dobbin's outstanding book should be read by scholars across the social sciences and by practicing attorneys and managers. It is erudite yet accessible."--Sanford M. Jacoby, University of California, Los Angeles"The book is key to understanding the transformation of American society in the late twentieth century. But it is also a more general study of the processes through which public policy becomes embedded in the economy and the society."--Michael Piore, Massachusetts Institute of Technology"Frank Dobbin demonstrates the central role that employers themselves have played in the evolution of the understanding of equal opportunity and discrimination in America. Drawing on decades of research and interviews with hundreds of corporate players, he brings an entirely new perspective to one of America's enduring challenges--ensuring that all Americans have equal access to job opportunities without regard to their color, gender, or age."--Barbara Reskin, University of Washington"Inventing Equal Opportunity is a marvelous book. It tells a major part of the story of the civil-rights revolution that--despite hundreds of books and thousands of articles--has been stunningly neglected. Its surprising protagonists are the personnel and HR people in firms across the United States who, through diligent if unplanned effort, created the meaning of equal opportunity. Dobbin is a masterful writer."--John D. Skrentny, University of California, San Diego"A major work of scholarship that addresses a long-standing lacuna in the field, Inventing Equal Opportunity represents a substantial intervention in the lively interdisciplinary debate over the origins of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. Marshalling a potent blend of original and secondary evidence, Dobbin tackles the crucial puzzle of corporate policies and programs, uncovering the overlooked role of personnel experts and drawing conclusions of broad theoretical importance for scholars from numerous fields."--Anthony S. Chen, University of Michigan

About the Author Frank Dobbin is professor of sociology at Harvard University. His books include *Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age*; *The New Economic Sociology: A Reader* (Princeton); and *The Global Diffusion of Markets and Democracy*.