THE EFFECTS OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVES ON THE DISTORTION OF
APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND DECISION STANDARDS

Jason S. Moore

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Committee:
Scott Highhouse, Advisor
Laura A. Sanchez
Graduate Faculty Representative
Dale Klopfer
Michael J. Zickar
ABSTRACT

Scott Highhouse, Advisor

It is common practice for organizations to implement policies to encourage race and gender diversity in the workforce. Do these initiatives influence hiring managers’ selection decisions and motivate hiring managers to distort their assessments of applicant qualifications and their interpretations of selection standards? The current study investigated these questions with an employee selection scenario; manipulating hiring policy (Diversity Initiative vs. Equal Opportunity), applicant sex (female vs. male) and the timing (predecision vs. postdecision) of respondents’ ratings.

Consistent with past research on dissonance reduction, respondents distorted their postdecision interpretations of the selection standard and their ratings of applicant qualifications for applicants that were not selected to align with their hiring decision. Contrary to expectations, among respondents who selected the applicant, those who rated qualifications prior to stating their hiring decision provided higher ratings than those who provided postdecision ratings.

Contrary to expectations, the diversity initiative did not motivate respondents to distort qualifications or decision standards prior to stating their hiring decision for applicants targeted by the initiative. The sole impact of the diversity initiative was its effect on selection decisions for applicants not targeted by the policy. While the female applicant (i.e., the target of the diversity initiative) was no more likely to be hired in the context of the diversity initiative than under the equal opportunity policy, the male applicant was less likely to be hired under the diversity initiative.
For Linda Davis
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INTRODUCTION

Recent political and legal developments have pushed affirmative action policies in both employment and college admissions to the forefront of public debate. As corporate America has recognized the need for increased workforce diversity, organizations have responded with diversity initiatives (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000) that call for managers to consider the demographic characteristics of applicants and personnel when making hiring and promotion decisions. Recently, the battleground for proponents and detractors of affirmative action was the Supreme Court, where the debate centered on the constitutionality of the University of Michigan’s consideration of race in making law school (Grutter v. Bollinger) and undergraduate (Gratz v. Bollinger) admissions decisions. With these cases, the Supreme Court returned to the issue of affirmative action in public universities for the first time since the 1978 Bakke case.

When the University of Michigan cases entered the courts, more than 60 companies in the United States submitted briefs in support of the University's position. In these statements, companies argued that the school’s policy of considering an applicant’s race leads to a more diverse student body, which, in turn, leads to a more diverse qualified applicant pool and enables companies to achieve more diversity in their workforce (Parker, 2003). In Grutter, the Court ruled that the university’s use of race as a “plus” factor in addition to traditional merit-based criteria (e.g., GPA, LSAT score) was constitutional, in effect broadening the definition of “applicant qualifications.”

As the population of the United States becomes increasingly diverse, leaders in corporate America have come to the consensus opinion that in order to remain competitive, increased population diversity necessitates increased diversity in the
workforce. As Wentling and Palma-Rivas (2000) discussed in a recent review, changes in the demographic makeup of potential customers and the general shift from a manufacturing- to a service-based economy have led to a new emphasis on workplace diversity. While the recent University of Michigan cases did not concern the consideration of an applicant’s race or sex in organizations’ hiring and promotion practices, in her majority opinion on *Grutter*, Justice O’Connor recognized the importance of diversity in today’s business environment: “American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today’s increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints.”

Corporations have addressed the need for diversity by implementing initiatives that serve to increase the racial and gender diversity of their workforce. In the face of such initiatives, it can be argued that managers may be motivated to relax selection standards when the applicant is a member of a target demographic (e.g., female, racial minority). The demographic status of an applicant could also serve as motivation to render that candidate the initially-preferred alternative or “tentative choice” (Svenson, 1992) against which all other candidates in the applicant pool are measured and differentiated.

Research in motivated reasoning (cf. Kunda, 1990) suggests that in an effort to justify hiring decisions, employers may distort relevant information about candidates’ qualifications. Previous research would also suggest that managers may distort the interpretation of criteria by which the hiring decision was made (Cuccia, Hackenbrack, & Nelson, 1995; Phillips, 2002). One might argue that affirmative action programs provide a strong context for the distortion of both applicant qualifications and selection criteria.
The current study is an investigation of information and criteria distortion in the context of diversity-motivated employee selection. Predictions are based upon findings from literatures on (a) attitudes and reactions toward diversity initiatives, (b) the effects of diversity initiatives on decision making, and (c) information and criteria distortion. Svenson’s (1992, 1996) differentiation-consolidation theory provides a framework for investigating these types of distortion in a diversity-motivated employee selection context. In addition to a test of the generalizability of the phenomenon, the study serves to clarify disparate findings from past research into the distortion of information and decision standards.

Defining “Affirmative Action”

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy first used the term “affirmative action” to describe his mandate that hiring and employment practices for federally funded projects should be racially unbiased. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, or national origin. President Johnson later extended the concept of affirmative action by asserting that equal opportunity is not sufficient to reverse the effects of generations of discrimination. In a speech to the graduating class at Howard University in 1965, President Johnson said that the then current policy of non-discrimination was analogous to taking a man chained up for years, unshackling him, and inviting him to compete in a race. Freedom alone, according to Johnson, is not all a person requires in order to be competitive. Johnson called for “opportunity – not just legal equity but human ability – not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result” (quoted in Brunner, 2002, ¶ 3).
In response to these mandates, and the increased desire for diversity in the workforce, corporations have implemented a wide range of affirmative action plans (AAPs). As Kravitz (1995) indicated, these AAPs can be characterized on a variety of dimensions, ranging from when in the recruitment, training, and selection process the organization considers demographic factors, to the emphasis each organization places on demographic characteristics in relation to merit (e.g., traditional qualifications and measures of performance). Kravitz (1995) provided a useful catalogue of AAPs; these include policies whose purpose is to eliminate consideration of race in selection decisions, also called a race-blind AAP. Other AAPs attempt to affect the diversity of the applicant pool through recruitment and training. Another class of AAP calls for the consideration of race in selection decisions. This version of AAP includes plans that address proportionality (i.e., a representation of minorities in the workforce that is proportional to their representation in the applicant pool). The final class of AAP described by Kravitz (1995) actually calls for preferential treatment. When presented with a minority candidate and a non-minority candidate, a hiring manager operating under a weak preferential treatment AAP would hire the minority candidate if the two were of equal qualifications. In the context of a strong preferential treatment AAP, the hiring manager would be expected to hire the minority applicant even if the non-minority applicant were somewhat more qualified. The current study is most concerned with the effect of weak preferential treatment plans that emphasizes the need for increased diversity, but do not call for the preferential treatment of applicants who fit some targeted demographic classification. Specifically, the current study addresses the possibility that weak plans may be turned into the equivalent of strong plans through
managers’ implicit motivated distortion of applicant qualifications and decision standards.

**Attitudes and Reactions toward Diversity Initiatives**

Investigations of the effects of affirmative action plans have focused primarily on the attitudes and reactions of applicants, employees, and hiring managers. In their review of the literature, Kravitz et al. (1997) concluded that favorability toward diversity policies is inversely related to the weight given to applicant demographic characteristics in a given policy. In general, people prefer merit-based personnel policies to those that grant preferential treatment based upon demographic classification. Some group differences, however, have been demonstrated. Though people generally prefer merit-based selection, self-serving biases render members of groups who would benefit by affirmative action policies more favorable to these programs than are majority members who would not benefit from such policies (Heilman, Rivero, & Brett, 1991). Kravitz et al (1997) reported that although affirmative action policies were originally developed to combat discrimination and to facilitate equality between groups, negative attitudes toward these policies stem from the perception that they may be unfair on an individual level, or when the outcome is perceived to be “reverse discrimination.” As Heilman (1994) indicated, the attitudes and reactions of non-target members to affirmative action policies are likely to be most negative if they perceive that such policies have caused them to lose out on an employment opportunity for which they felt qualified.

Although the Supreme Court has ruled against policies that would favor unqualified women and minorities over qualified men and non-minorities, organizations have implemented preferential treatment AAPs in which some unspecified weight is
assigned to the demographic characteristics of applicants when making personnel
decisions (Guttman, 1993). As Wentling and Palma-Riva (2000) reported, workforce
diversity initiatives have increased the pressure on managers to “incorporate and retain
a more diverse body of employees” (p. 36) and individual managers are held
accountable for their diversity performance. The number of women and minorities hired
are taken as quantitative indicators of diversity performance. Thus, in the current
corporate climate it is expected that a hiring manager would be under pressure to justify
hiring decisions not only in terms of the applicant’s traditional merit based qualifications,
but also with regard to the applicant’s fit with the diversity goals of the organization.

Diversity Initiatives and Decision Making

Though most of the research on diversity initiatives has focused on how these
policies affect attitudes and reactions, social psychologists have also been interested in
how these policies influence the behavior of decision makers. Rosen and Mericle
(1979) conducted a study on the effects of affirmative action statements that differed in
their strength, and how these differing statements affected subsequent hiring and salary
decisions. Participants assumed the role of a hiring manager and viewed a job
description followed by the organization’s affirmative action policy statement (strong vs.
weak). The “strong” statement emphasized the desire to increase diversity in the
workforce and the consequent need to consider demographic information when making
personnel decisions. The strong policy statement also noted that managers would be
held accountable for their compliance with the stated policy. The “weak” statement
merely noted that the organization was an equal opportunity employer, and that
managers should employ their best judgment when making decisions. Thus, the weak
affirmative action policy statement put much less pressure on the participant to consider non-traditional criteria in making their decisions. Rosen and Mericle (1979) found that subjects assigned relatively lower salaries to females in the strong condition and relatively higher salaries to females in the weak condition. The authors interpreted this pattern of results as consistent with the phenomenon of “psychological reactance” (Brehm, 1966) in which participants in the strong condition feel constrained in their hiring decision by the policy and subsequently exert control over the situation in the assigning of salary.

In an important extension of this study, Nacoste and Hummels (1994) employed the method used by Rosen and Mericle (1979) to conduct a further investigation of the relationship between the strength of a diversity statement and the sex of the applicant. In addition to these two factors, Nacoste and Hummels sought to link the hiring and salary recommendations to personal characteristics of the decision maker. Specifically, the authors were interested in how decision makers’ personal views on the procedural justness of affirmative action would affect their reaction to diversity statements of varying strength and to applicants of varying sex. The results of this study indicated that decision makers’ psychological reactance motivation, as indicated by salary recommendations, was affected by the participants’ own evaluation of the procedural justness of affirmative action, independent of the strength of the policy statement. Thus, Nacoste and Hummels (1994) illustrated the importance of examining individual differences that affect managers’ personnel decisions as they are made in the context of an AAP. Though these studies suggested several factors that affect managerial decision making in an affirmative action context, they fell short of examining the
processes of motivated reasoning by which a person’s mental representation of both applicant qualifications and decision standards may be distorted so as to justify the decision. A diversity initiative may motivate a manager to relax selection standards, a scenario in which the recall and interpretation of information and criteria are ripe for distortion.

Distortion of Attribute Information and Decision Standards

In a prototypical personnel selection situation, a hiring manager chooses from a set of applicants the candidate best qualified to fill an open position. Ideally, in the initial phases of decision making the manager should be unbiased in his or her processing of applicant information. However, in the context of an affirmative action plan the manager is arguably motivated to arrive at a particular conclusion, to select a candidate of minority status from the set of alternatives. This “directional motivation” may bias the processing of decision-relevant information (Festinger, 1957), and may even bias the information processing strategy employed to arrive at the decision (Boiney, Kennedy, & Nye, 1997; Kunda, 1990). However, in making a selection decision, an employer compares candidates on various attributes and also compares candidates against a set of standards. These selection standards may be either explicitly stated with numerical reference (e.g., the successful candidate will have at least three years of applicable experience) or subjective and vague (e.g., the successful candidate will have a track record of outstanding performance in previous positions). The mental representation of applicant qualifications and selection standards may be influenced by the diversity initiative, and motivation to comply with the diversity initiative may lead to biased
assessment of applicant qualifications and a biased interpretation of selection
standards.

Along these lines, it has been demonstrated repeatedly that people are biased in
the way they interpret ambiguous information, such that their interpretations support
preexisting attitudes and preferences (Darley & Gross, 1983; Gilovich, 1991; Russo,
Medvec, & Meloy, 1996; Russo, Meloy, & Medvec, 1998). For example, Darley and
Gross (1983) found that the ratings of a child’s ability were influenced by whether raters
had been led to believe that the child had a high- or low-status background. Even
though all subjects saw the same videotape of the child performing tasks, those who
had been led to believe that the child had a high-status background rated the abilities as
being above the child’s grade-level, and those in the low-status condition rated the child
as demonstrating abilities below the child’s grade level. Thus, it seems that people
interpret ambiguous information in ways that confirm their biases.

In addition to the biased interpretation of information, recall of option attributes is
often biased to be consistent with choice (Brehm, 1956; Davidson & Kiesler, 1964;
Mather, Shafir, & Johnson, 2000). That is, once people have made a decision, their
recall of problem information is often selective and biased in such a way that their
representation of the information confirms the rationality of their choice. When
Davidson and Kiesler (1964) instructed participants to choose between two job
candidates based upon eight attributes, participants were more likely to recall those
attributes on which the chosen candidate was more qualified. Thus, it seems that
decision makers may ignore or change their mental representation of information that
challenges the utility of their choice. Given these general findings, it is expected that
hiring managers’ will relax their interpretation of selection standards and align their assessment of applicant qualifications with their hiring recommendation to provide justification for their decision.

*Distortion of attribute information.* Festinger (1964) claimed that in the first stages of decision making, people objectively evaluate alternatives, and that biases occur only after the decision maker has made a public commitment to one alternative. However, recent evidence suggests that people distort attributes prior to stating a preference (For a recent review of this evidence, see Brownstein, 2003). Russo, Medvec, and Meloy (1996) demonstrated predecisional distortion of attributes in an experiment in which the authors endowed one alternative in a choice set with a positive statement that was independent of the attribute information. The effect of the endowment was to make one alternative preferred prior to the presentation of attributes. In the experimental condition, participants were told that the owner of one restaurant had donated meals to charity. This statement served to endow that restaurant, making it the favored of the two alternatives prior to the presentation of attribute information. The authors found that the preexisting preference for the endowed alternative led participants to differentially rate subsequent attribute information, even though the endowment information was independent of the attribute information. Thus, contrary to Festinger’s (1964) claim, Russo and his colleagues demonstrated that attribute distortion may occur prior to the public expression of preference. In a study of brand preference, Russo, Meloy, and Medvec (1998) examined participants’ ratings of attribute information as supporting one of two alternative choices. The researchers found that even in conditions where no alternative was endowed with positive information, participants constructed a preference
for an alternative as the task progressed and prior to expressing their preference, interpreted neutral information as supportive of their eventual choice. In fact, Russo, Meloy, and Medvec (1998) found that nearly twice as much attribute distortion occurs during predecisional processes as takes place during the dissonance-reduction processes following a decision.

*Distortion of standards.* Although studies of attribute distortion have consistently demonstrated the motivated recall and choice-consistent rating and processing of attribute information, there is a comparative dearth of published studies that focus on the distortion of decision standards. Cuccia, Hackenbrack, and Nelson (1995) investigated the effects of motivation on practitioners’ interpretation of tax information, a professional standard, and on their recommendation to a client for a tax reporting decision. In Cuccia et al.’s study, tax professionals were presented with a scenario that described an accounting case, a fictitious client, and a fictitious accounting standard. The researchers manipulated the outcome that the client desired and the order in which the practitioners indicated their (a) evaluation of the evidence and interpretation of the professional standard and (b) recommendation for reporting. By manipulating the client’s desired outcome in the scenario, all participants were motivated to choose either a liberal or a conservative reporting decision.

In Cuccia et al.’s (1995) first experiment, the researchers found an effect for motivation on practitioners’ interpretations of the vague “reasonable likelihood” standard. Practitioners whose clients preferred “aggressive reporting” interpreted the standard as implying a more liberal threshold than did those whose clients preferred a conservative reporting decision. There was no effect of motivation on the interpretation
of the evidence. Cuccia and colleagues did not find an order effect, indicating that the interpretation of standards was not influenced by whether participants interpreted the standard before or after stating their reporting decision. Cuccia et al’s findings suggest that external motivation may lead to predecision distortion, influencing the interpretation of information prior to a stated decision.

A follow-up experiment demonstrated that when the professional standard was made more explicit through the use of a numerical threshold for the criteria instead of a vague label, practitioners still aligned their reporting decisions with the clients’ desired outcome. However, given the explicit, numerical standard, participants’ motivation operated on the interpretation of ambiguous evidence, such that practitioners who were motivated to reach an aggressive reporting decision interpreted the evidence of the case as providing more support for that position than did those with the same motivation under the vague standard. Thus, similar to Russo, Medvec, and Meloy’s (1996) findings on information distortion, Cuccia et al found that motivation to reach a particular conclusion can manifest itself in the distortion of either information or vague criteria.

Phillips (2002) extended this line of inquiry by investigating the distortion of professional standards in the context of an auditing scenario. In Phillips’ study, participants were given a scenario in which they were to evaluate a company’s future viability based upon various statements about the company’s current status and to decide whether the information presented induced doubt regarding the viability of the company sufficient to warrant the reporting of the doubt. Specifically, Phillips (2002) was interested in participants’ interpretation of the level of uncertainty implicit in the vague “significant doubt” standard and how this interpretation changed based on the
decision to report or to not report their doubt. Phillips’ participants were not directionally motivated prior to their review of the evidence.

In contrast to Cuccia et al.’s (1995) results, Phillips (2002) found that participants in the predecision condition did not differ in their interpretation of the vague “significant doubt” standard, regardless of their subsequent decision. However, Phillips found a significant difference in interpretations of the decision standard for participants in the postdecision condition such that participants who decided to report doubts subsequently rated the standard as indicating a higher threshold than did those who rated the standard following their do not report decision. Unlike Cuccia et al., Phillips also found a similar pattern for the interpretation of evidential information. Thus, those participants who first made their decision provided subsequent interpretations of the information and the standard that were consistent with their reporting decision. Those who decided to report their doubts subsequently interpreted the evidence as suggesting decreased viability and the standard as indicating a more lax definition of “significant” than did those who decided not to report their doubts.

It may be that the disparity in Cuccia et al’s (1995) and Phillips’ (2002) findings is due to the effect of motivation on the predecision processing of problem information. Whereas Phillips found an order effect, Cuccia and colleagues did not. Phillips’ findings suggest that once a decision is made, people subsequently align their interpretation of the standard with their decision. Cuccia et al.’s findings suggest that an incentive motivates the distortion of the standard prior to the decision. Taken together, these findings suggest that motivation mediates the timing of the distortion of decision standards. However, as neither study contains both a motivated and an unmotivated
condition, it is difficult to assess the role of motivation in the distortion of information and decision standards. This gap in the literature is addressed in the current study and is assessed within the framework of Svenson’s (1992, 1996) differentiation and consolidation theory of decision making.

*Differentiation and Consolidation Theory of Distortion*

With differentiation and consolidation (Diff Con) theory, Svenson (1992) offers a framework that lends itself to the investigation of the distortion of applicant qualifications and selection standards. Diff Con is a process theory that encompasses many other models (e.g., prospect theory, multi-attribute utility theory, and criterion-dependent choice models) employed to account for aspects of decision making. According to Diff Con theory, when a person sets out to select from among several alternatives, it is not sufficient that the chosen alternative be merely superior to the others in the choice set. In order to avoid dissonance and regret, decision makers must choose an alternative that is superior to such an extent that it can withstand any challenge to its being the correct choice. For example, if a consumer were in the market for a new television, he/she would be confronted with many televisions from which to choose. In order to decide from among the alternatives, the consumer would need to identify one television as superior to the others. If there were no clearly superior alternative, fearing dissonance and regret, the consumer would be unable to make a choice from among the alternatives.

Differentiation is a mechanism that operates at different stages in the decision making process to separate the superior alternative from others in the choice set and to gather postdecision support for this chosen alternative. Svenson’s (1992, 1996) model
appeals to cognitive mechanisms that serve to reduce dissonance (Festinger, 1957, 1964) and allow the decision maker to avoid regret (Loomes & Sugden, 1982). According to Festinger (1957, 1964), conflict arises when a rejected alternative has some positive features and the chosen alternative has some negative features. Indeed, as our most important choices often involve tradeoffs among attributes (Beattie & Sema, 2001); this conflict is what makes some choices more difficult than others. Within the Diff Con framework, alternatives in a choice set are represented by aspects on attributes (Svenson, 1992). Someone in the market for a new television represents the alternatives by their attributes (e.g., screen size, price) and by each television’s aspect or value (e.g., 27 inches, 500 dollars) on each attribute. According to Svenson (1992), the attractiveness of each alternative in the choice set is related to each alternative’s aspect on each attribute, and to the relative importance of each attribute. The attractiveness of Television A in a set of televisions would depend upon the aspect (e.g., 500 dollars) of the television’s attributes (e.g., price) and the importance of those attributes on which the aspects were superior to those of the other televisions. Thus, if price were the most important attribute and Television A was the most affordable of the alternatives in the choice set, then, all other attributes being equal, Television A would be the most attractive alternative. The decision in this scenario is a simple one. Often, all other attributes are not equal and there is seldom a clearly superior alternative. Therefore, people rely on largely unconscious processes that aid in various stages of decision making. Differentiation processes restructure the attractiveness of alternatives prior to the decision by operating on the aspects and attributes which represent the alternatives in the choice set. These processes operate to differentiate one alternative
from the others in the choice set. Postdecision processes restructure the attractiveness of alternatives to consolidate support for the decision. The postdecision process of consolidation provides a justification for the decision and serves to defend the decision maker against the regret that the decision maker would feel following a negative outcome (Eisele, 2000). These postdecision processes “bolster” the chosen alternative in reference to the non-chosen alternatives (Janis & Mann, 1977) by a process of selective recall of attribute information. These processes alter the mental representation of the alternatives in the choice set, increasing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and decreasing the attractiveness of the non-chosen alternatives. Thus, Janis and Mann (1977) refer to this process as “spreading of the alternatives” (p. 82). This post-choice consolidation is one mechanism that accounts for information and criteria distortion.

According to Svenson and Shamoun (1997), differentiation processes serve to make the choice easier by separating alternatives from one another. Depending upon the context or stage of the decision making process, differentiation of one alternative from the choice set may be accomplished through processes termed holistic-, process-, and structural-differentiation.

Holistic differentiation is related to the preliminary categorization of alternatives. This process may be based upon comparing the alternatives in the set to some ideal or prototype, and may be implicated in the selection of a preliminary choice or preferred alternative. For example, in the context of an affirmative action program, managers may be motivated to initially classify applicants based upon their demographic characteristics. As Svenson (1992) indicated, in most situations the magnitude of
separation between one alternative and the others by this preliminary differentiation is sufficient for choice. However, as predicted by other criterion-dependent models, if the initial distance between the leading alternative and the other alternatives does not exceed the differentiation threshold, the decision maker will engage in further differentiation (Betsch, Haberstroh, & Höhle, 2002).

*Process differentiation* refers to the selective use of decision rules to differentiate one alternative from the others. Restructuring the decision cutoffs for different attributes is another form of process differentiation (Svenson, 1996). This type of differentiation is most obviously aligned with processes of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990) whereby decision makers selectively adopt decision making strategies and attend to and retrieve information on different aspects of the problem to ensure that they bolster their preliminary favorite and arrive at their preferred choice. This process leads to a separation of alternatives by the selective adoption of decision rules and the restructuring of attribute cutoffs.

*Structural differentiation* processes act more directly upon the mental representation of alternatives. According to Shamoun and Svenson (2002), structural differentiation changes the representation of facts and alters the attractiveness of the alternatives in order to bolster the preferred alternative. Bolstering can also take the form of biased memory retrieval and the restructuring of attribute importance, increasing the importance of those attributes on which the preferred alternative is superior and reducing the importance of those attributes on which the non-preferred alternative is superior. Thus, holistic and process differentiation are most implicated in the predecision separation of a preferred alternative from the other alternatives in the
choice set, whereas structural differentiation is involved in both the predecision
differentiation and the postdecision consolidation of support for the chosen alternative.

Recent research on Diff Con theory has indicated that the structural consolidation
phenomenon occurs regularly (Svenson & Benthorn, 1992; Svenson & Malmsten, 1991). Svenson, Rayo, Andersen, Sandberg and Svahlin (1994) also found that
decision problems that involve and interest the decision maker are most likely to elicit consolidation. Svenson et al. (1994) found that the need for decision makers to justify
decisions did not affect the amount of consolidation. In a more recent field study,
Svenson and Hill (1997) reported that subjects were more likely to engage in
differentiation and consolidation processes when they encountered a value conflict on
one of the two most important attributes. Svenson and Shamoun (1997) tracked
differentiation processes in students as they made an important choice, selecting
among five possible programs of academic study. The researchers compared the
representations of these alternatives between students who had value conflicts and
those who did not have value conflicts on important attributes of the programs of study.
The authors found that students who had indicated a predecision value conflict (i.e., the
preferred program was inferior to another on one of the two most important attributes)
were likely to engage in postdecision structural differentiation. In fact, the chosen
alternative was consolidated to such a degree that participants reversed the advantage
from the non-chosen to the chosen alternative on conflict attributes. These results
suggest that in the presence of a value conflict, decision makers restructure their
representations of the alternatives in a way that consolidates support for their decision.
Although differentiation processes aid in the efficient selection of a superior alternative from a set of alternatives and also serve to bolster the chosen alternative, decreasing dissonance and the likelihood of regret, they do so by distorting attribute information. In recent consumer research, information distortion has been demonstrated by the preference-supportive interpretation of neutral, non-diagnostic information (Russo, Medvec & Meloy, 1996; Russo, Meloy, & Medvec, 1998; Russo, Meloy, & Wilks, 2000; Phillips, 2002). While both pre- and post-choice differentiation processes involve the comparison of the preferred (chosen) and non-preferred (non-chosen) alternatives, decision makers must also justify their choice in reference to external criteria. This comparison initiates related processes by which criteria are distorted (Phillips, 2002). This type of distortion has also been explained in terms of motivation to reduce dissonance (Festinger, 1964) and to avoid regret (Loomes & Sugden, 1982).

The Current Study

The current study attempted to investigate distortion in employee selection by having participants evaluate applicant qualifications and decision standards in the context of a diversity initiative. In the current corporate climate, hiring managers are under pressure to increase the diversity of the workforce. Though diversity initiatives may not call on the hiring manager to give preference to an under-qualified target applicant over a more qualified non-target applicant, the initiative may serve to endow target applicants. Diversity initiatives that emphasize the importance of increasing the representation of women and racial minorities in the workforce may render target applicants the manager’s initial preference – a preference that is independent of the
applicant’s traditional qualifications. The literatures reviewed above demonstrate that when decision makers are motivated by external pressures and biases, they distort their interpretation of decision standards and justify decisions by distorting information. This suggests that hiring managers, motivated by external policies, may implicitly turn weak initiatives into strong ones by distorting qualifications and standards. Therefore, marginally qualified applicants are more likely to be hired if the hiring manager is motivated by a diversity initiative and if the applicant is a member of a targeted demographic.

Using the Diff Con framework, the study probed participants’ mental representation of applicant qualifications and selection standards at two stages in the decision process – before and after the hiring decision had been made. The manipulation of hiring policy (a diversity initiative favoring female applicants vs. equal opportunity), rating condition (predecision vs. postdecision), and the applicants sex manipulation (female vs. male) were examined to clarify the role of diversity initiatives in the assessment of applicants’ qualifications and decision standards. Specifically, the variation in hiring policy and applicant sex enabled the examination of ratings between participants who were externally motivated (i.e., assessing a female applicant in the context of a diversity initiative) and participants who were not externally motivated (i.e., all other conditions). Motivation and rating condition manipulations were included in an effort to clarify the mixed results on distortion from Cuccia et al.’s (1995) and Phillips’ (2002) studies. In addition, the manipulation of applicant’s status as a target of the diversity initiative (i.e., manipulating the applicant’s sex) allowed for the investigation of
the effect of diversity initiatives on the hiring and assessment of both target and non-target applicants.

Cuccia et al (1995) found that decision makers aligned their interpretation of the standard with the decision that they were motivated to reach, regardless of whether they stated their interpretation before or after stating their decision. Their method did not allow for the investigation of distortion in the absence of motivation, as all participants were directionally motivated to reach one of two conclusions. Phillips (2002) did not include a motivation manipulation and found that the distortion of the standard occurred only after the decision makers had stated the decision. Taken together, these findings suggest that motivation affects the timing of distortion. Therefore, manipulations of both motivation and rating condition were examined in the current study to isolate the effects of each, ensuring that differences in Cuccia et al.’s and Phillips’ findings were not due to other inconsistencies in method. In addition, the study examined the generalizability of the distortion phenomena to a selection context and offered a controlled test of Diff Con theory. In an effort to illuminate the impact of information and criterion distortion on personnel selection in the context of a diversity initiative, participants were placed in a fictitious employee selection scenario similar to that employed by Rosen and Mericle (1979).

The first hypothesis addressed the effect of diversity initiatives on managers’ hiring recommendations. It was hypothesized that when hiring managers assess applicants in the context of a diversity initiative that targets the applicants’ demographic, managers would be motivated to hire these applicants even though the applicant demonstrates only marginal traditional qualifications.
**Hypothesis 1:** Hiring policy will interact with applicant sex such that participants in the DI_female condition will be more likely to hire the applicant than will participants in the male applicant or equal opportunity conditions.

Results from the few studies that have investigated the distortion of decision standards suggest that decision makers interpret standards in a way that supports both decisions already expressed (Phillips, 2002) and decisions that they are motivated to reach (Cuccia, et al, 1995). Therefore, it was expected that participants would align their interpretation of the vague selection standard with their hiring decision. It was predicted that those who recommend hiring the applicant would provide a more liberal interpretation of the standard (i.e., lower threshold) than would those who decided not to hire the applicant. For example, those who decide to hire the applicant might interpret a “high intelligence” standard as implying a threshold level of IQ = 110. Those who decide not to hire the applicant, on the other hand, may interpret the standard as implying a more conservative threshold level of IQ = 120. In each case, the interpretation of the standard is aligned with and serves to justify the hiring decision.

**Hypothesis 2:** Participants who give a hire recommendation will indicate a lower threshold than those who give a do not hire recommendation.

The first two hypotheses addressed some elementary and perhaps intuitive expectations. However, the primary purpose of the study was to demonstrate the extension of the phenomenon and to address the inconsistencies in prior findings on standards distortion. Phillips (2002) operationalized *distortion* as an interaction between participants’ ratings, interpretations, and the timing of these ratings. Phillips found that
participants in the postdecision reporting condition more closely aligned their ratings with their decision than did those in the predecision condition. For example, distortion of qualifications would be evident if those who rated the applicants’ qualifications after making a hire decision gave higher ratings than those who provided their ratings before making a hire decision. Therefore, an interaction between hiring decision and rating condition was interpreted as a clear indication of distortion in the unmotivated condition.

In the predecision condition, participants provided their assessment of applicant qualifications and their interpretation of the standard prior to making their hiring decision. Diversity initiative-induced distortion would be demonstrated by an interaction between participants’ motivation and hiring decision in the predecision condition such that if participants’ ratings and interpretations differed not only by hiring decision, but by motivation, this would imply distortion unrelated to justifying a stated decision. Diversity initiative-induced distortion would be in evidence if those who assessed a female applicant in the context a diversity initiative provided higher qualification ratings or more liberal interpretation of the standard threshold than those who gave a hire recommendation in other predecision conditions.

Phillips (2002) found an interaction between interpretations information and decision standards and the ratings condition (predecision vs. postdecision), whereas Cuccia et al. (1995) directionally motivated participants and did not find an effect for rating condition. It was hypothesized that the disparity in these results may be accounted for by the effect of motivation on the predecision condition. Therefore, it was expected that in the equal opportunity and male applicant conditions, participants in the predecision condition would provide similar interpretations of the selection standard,
regardless of their subsequent hiring decision. It was predicted that in the postdecision condition, these participants would align their ratings with their prior hiring recommendation. That is, it was expected that those who decided to hire the applicant would subsequently provide a more liberal interpretation of the selection standard, and those who decided not to hire the applicant would subsequently interpret the standard as implying a more conservative threshold. It was predicted that there would be no such interaction when the participant is directionally motivated to hire the applicant. Therefore, participants evaluating a female applicant in the context of a diversity initiative targeting females would distort predecision interpretations of selection standards. Therefore, ratings would not differ by rating condition.

Hypothesis 3a: Except in the motivated condition (i.e., evaluating a female applicant in the context of a diversity initiative), rating condition will interact with hiring recommendation such that participants’ interpretation of the selection standard will not differ by hiring decision in the predecision condition. In the postdecision condition those who recommend hiring (not hiring) the applicant will provide a more liberal (conservative) interpretation of the selection standard. In the motivated condition, order will not interact with hiring recommendation. Participants’ interpretation of the selection standard will vary by hiring decision, but will not vary by whether this interpretation is provided predecision or postdecision.

The same effect was expected for participants’ ratings of applicant qualifications. Thus, the pattern of ratings and interpretations in the unmotivated postdecision condition were expected to mirror that found in the motivated predecision and
postdecision condition. No rating condition effect was predicted for the motivated condition.

**Hypothesis 3b**: Except in the motivated condition (i.e., evaluating a female applicant in the context of a diversity initiative), rating condition will interact with hiring recommendation such that participants’ ratings of applicant qualifications will not differ by hiring decision in the predecision condition. In the postdecision condition those who recommend hiring (not hiring) will rate the applicant as more highly (less highly) qualified than those in the predecision condition. In the motivated condition, order will not interact with hiring recommendation. Participants’ assessment of applicant qualifications will vary by hiring decision, but will not vary by whether this interpretation is provided predecision or postdecision.

The diversity initiative statement employed in the present study emphasized the importance of hiring a female for the job. In their review, Kravitz et al (1997) noted that people’s attitudes toward affirmative action policies are more positive if the initiative targets the demographic group to which they belong. This demographic effect is most clearly demonstrated with respect to race, but is less robust an effect with respect to gender. The study also examined whether participants’ race and gender would affect their assessment of information, their interpretation of selection standards, or their hiring recommendation. Follow-up analyses were used to investigate possible relationships between the manipulated factors, participants’ attitude toward affirmative action programs, and participants’ demographic makeup.
METHOD

Participants

Participants were 450 undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a Midwestern university. The sample was comprised of 297 females (mean age 19.1 years) and 153 males (mean age 19.4 years). Eighty-five percent of the participants identified themselves as White or Caucasian, while 15% identified themselves as being of some other ethnicity. Seventy-one percent of the participants were freshman, while 19% were sophomores, and 10% were upperclassmen.

Procedure

Participants were given the task of evaluating an applicant for the position of marketing assistant. Participants read a task packet that contained a job description that enumerated the skills, experience, and leadership capabilities necessary to succeed in the position. For participants in the diversity initiative (DI) condition, the task packet included a hiring policy statement that stressed the importance of hiring female applicants. For those in the equal opportunity (EO) condition, the hiring policy stated that hiring decisions should be made without regard to applicants’ demographic characteristics. Participants then read an applicant’s résumé and were asked to offer an evaluation of the applicant’s qualifications, their interpretation of the selection standard, their hiring decision, and if the applicant was hired, their salary recommendation. In order to create the type of conflict necessary to induce differential hiring recommendations, the résumé was constructed to depict an applicant who is marginally qualified for the position. The specific qualifications characteristic of a “marginal” applicant were defined in the pilot phase of the project (see Appendix A).
Independent variables. Three independent factors, hiring policy (diversity initiative vs. equal opportunity), rating condition (predecision vs. postdecision), and applicant sex (female vs. male) were crossed in a between-subjects 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design. Given this design, one in four participants were considered “motivated” to hire the applicant based upon the presence of a hiring policy that targets females and the presence of a female applicant. Therefore, participants in the diversity initiative condition who were to evaluate a marginally qualified female applicant would be motivated to hire the applicant. The order of the four dependent variables was also manipulated. In the predecision condition, participants provided their assessment of the applicant’s qualifications and their interpretation of the selection standard prior to providing their hiring recommendation. In the postdecision condition, participants first offered their hiring and salary recommendations and then provided their assessment of the applicant’s qualifications and interpretation of the standard. Applicant sex was manipulated by referring to “Jane” as the applicant’s name on the résumé and other task materials for the female condition, and as “John” in the male condition. The hiring policy, rating condition, and applicant sex factors were fully crossed and participants were randomly assigned to one of eight conditions. The order of qualification ratings and interpretation of the selection standard were fully crossed in all conditions, though it was expected that the order in which these ratings were elicited would have no effect on the ratings.

Dependent variables. Four dependent measures were elicited from each subject: (a) a hiring decision, (b) a salary recommendation, (c) an assessment of the applicant’s qualifications (hereafter referred to as a qualification rating), and (d) an
interpretation of the degree of promotability implied by the vague “high potential for promotion to manager” standard (hereafter referred to as the *standard threshold*).

**Materials**

The task packet contained the scenario, job posting, hiring policy statement, applicant’s résumé, information and standards rating form, hiring and salary decision form, and follow up items detailed below. Each of these materials appeared on a separate page. Participants were instructed to read the materials and to answer the items in order. Participants were not allowed to go back in the packet and change their responses.

*Scenario.* Participants read a scenario in which they were the Midwest District Manager for DynamoPrint, Inc., a manufacturer of high-performance industrial printers for the sign and screen-printing markets. In the scenario, the participant (as the district manager) is attempting to fill the vacant marketing assistant position (see Appendix G). Participants were instructed to read over the job description and assess the qualifications of an applicant based upon a résumé.

*Job Posting.* The job posting described the tasks and necessary qualifications for a marketing assistant at DynamoPrint, Inc. A list of qualifications highlighted the importance of a strong academic background; communication skills, ability to work independently, computer skills, and high potential for promotion to manager (see Appendix H).

*Hiring Policy Statement.* For participants in the diversity initiative condition, the task packet contained a hiring policy statement that read: “At DynamoPrint, Inc., women traditionally have been underrepresented in the management ranks.
DynamoPrint, Inc. is strongly committed to increasing the number of women in its workforce. Therefore, hiring decisions are reviewed to ensure compliance with company-wide diversity initiatives” (see Appendix I). For participants in the equal opportunity condition, the statement read: “DynamoPrint, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer. Therefore, hiring decisions should be made without regard to race, sex, or national origin” (see Appendix J).

Résumé. The résumé depicted an applicant for the job of marketing assistant. The applicant’s résumé was constructed to depict an applicant of “marginal qualifications,” as defined in the pilot phase (see Application A). Aside from the name at the top of the résumé, all résumés in the experimental phase were the same. For participants in the female applicant condition, the name on the résumé was “Jane Bloom,” while for those in the male applicant condition; the name on the résumé was “John Bloom” (see Appendix K).

Rating form. Participants indicated their assessment of applicant’s qualifications and their interpretation of the standard threshold interpretation by placing marks on graphical rating scales. Graphical response scales were 10 centimeters in length (see Appendix L). Responses on these scales were converted to numerical values for analysis purposes by measuring the distance (in millimeters) of the participant’s mark from the left scale anchor, thereby, converting the graphical response to a number on a (0 – 100) scale. Graphical rating scales are preferred because they alleviate the loss of information associated with Likert scales (Russell & Bobko, 1992).

The qualification rating scale was anchored by the labels “not at all qualified” and “extremely qualified” (see Appendix M). Participants were instructed to also interpret
the level of “promotability” implicit in the vague “highly potential for promotion to manager” standard. Specifically, participants indicated the lowest chance of promotion that an applicant must have in order to be hired for the marketing assistant position. The standard threshold scale was anchored by “50% chance of promotion,” a midpoint of “75% chance of promotion,” and “100% chance of promotion” (see Appendix N). The order of qualification rating and standard threshold interpretation were counter-balanced in all conditions.

Recommendation form. Participants were instructed to indicate their hiring recommendation with a dichotomous “hire” or “do not hire” response. Participants who recommend hiring the applicant were asked to recommend a starting salary. Participants indicated their salary recommendation by placing a mark on a graphical rating scale anchored by the labels “very low starting salary”, “average starting salary,” and “very high starting salary” (see Appendix O).

Follow-up Items. The first follow-up item served as a check on the hiring policy manipulation (see Appendix P). Participants indicated the degree to which it was important to hire a woman for the position, given the information in the hiring policy statement. The second item assessed the applicant sex manipulation. Participants were asked to recall the sex of the applicant who they evaluated for the position. For the purposes of assessing the extent to which decision makers’ behavior aligned with their attitudes toward affirmative action policies, participants completed Kravitz (1995) measure of attitudes toward affirmative action. Specifically, the scale assessed attitudes toward programs that are designed to actively ensure equal opportunity and intended to make amends for past discrimination (see Appendix Q). Finally, participants
provided demographic information: Sex, age, race, school status (e.g., freshman, sophomore, etc.), and work experience (see Appendix R).
RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

As a check on the hiring policy manipulation, participants’ evaluations of the importance of hiring a woman were examined for differences between the diversity initiative (DI) and equal opportunity (EO) conditions. Participants were presented with either the DI or EO policy and asked to indicate that they had read and understood the policy statement by writing their initial on the policy form. Three of 450 participants failed to initial the form and were removed from subsequent analyses. As expected, participants in the DI condition gave significantly higher importance ratings on the 0 – 100 graphical rating scale ($M = 69.46, SD = 23.25$) than did those in the EO condition ($M = 31.44, SD = 27.98$); $F(1, 434) = 236.24, p < .001; \eta^2 = .35$. In addition, the check on the applicant sex manipulation revealed that 97.3% of participants correctly recalled the sex of the applicant that they evaluated for the marketing assistant position. The 12 participants who did not correctly recall the sex of the applicant were removed from subsequent analyses. Taken together, the results of the manipulation checks suggest that participants were engaged and attentive to the experimental task.

The order of ratings was randomized such that half of the participants rated the applicant’s qualifications first, while others first provided an interpretation of the vague “high potential for promotion to manager” standard. The order in which the ratings were elicited had no effect on participants’ ratings of applicant qualifications or on their interpretations of the standard threshold; therefore, this factor was excluded from subsequent analysis.

Effects on Hiring
The purpose of the pilot test was to define “marginal” qualifications and to identify the candidate who would be “hired” by approximately 50% of participants in the main experiment (see Appendix A for description of pilot study). This even split of “hire” and “do not hire” decisions was to ensure sufficient sample size to assess the distortion of applicant qualifications and decision standards undertaken to justify or resolve dissonance in both “hire” and “do not hire” decisions. However, in the experimental task, 79.3% of experiment participants chose to hire the applicant.

The likelihood of “hiring” the applicant was affected by the hiring policy and applicant sex manipulations. Overall, participants were less likely to hire the applicant in the diversity initiative condition (73.1%) than in the equal opportunity condition (85.2%), \( \chi^2 = (1, n = 435) = 9.68, p = .002, \phi = .02 \). Among those in the EO condition, those who evaluated the female applicant were no more likely to give a “hire” decision than those evaluating the male applicant. However, as predicted in Hypothesis 1 and illustrated in Figure 1, participants in the DI condition tasked with evaluating a female (i.e., the sex targeted by the diversity initiative) were more likely to hire the applicant (79.4%) than were those tasked with evaluating a male (66.7%); \( \chi^2 = (1, n = 212) = 4.40, p = .036, \phi = .02 \). Unsupported was the prediction that the diversity initiative would increase the likelihood that the female applicant would be hired. In fact, there were no differences in female hiring across hiring policy conditions, while those who evaluated the male applicant in the DI condition were less likely to hire the applicant (66.7%) than were those who evaluated the male under the EO policy (85.3%); \( \chi^2 = (1, n = 214) = 10.25, p = .001, \phi = .02 \).

Effect of Selection Decision on Ratings of Qualifications and Standard
Participants indicated their ratings of applicant qualification and selection standards on a 10 centimeter graphical rating scale. These ratings were converted to a numeric 0 to 100 scale for statistical analysis. As expected, analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that participants who chose to hire the applicant rated the applicant as more qualified ($M = 69.65$, $SD = 15.06$) than did those who decided to not hire the applicant ($M = 47.50$, $SD = 14.87$), $F(1, 430) = 154.77$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$. Contrary to hypothesis 2, interpretation of the standard was unrelated to the hiring decision. That is, participants who chose to hire the applicant interpreted the “high potential for promotion to manager” standard as implying a level of certainty ($M = 54.45$, $SD = 21.91$) similar to that provided by those who decided not to hire the applicant ($M = 55.57$, $SD = 22.57$), $F(1, 433) = .182$, $p = .670$, $\eta^2 < .001$.

**Distortion of Applicant Qualifications and Standard**

As illustrated in Figure 2, consistent with Hypothesis 3a, participants who chose to hire the applicant and interpreted the vague standard *postdecision* interpreted the standard as implying a lower threshold of certainty ($M = 51.90$, $SD = 21.55$) than did those who interpreted the standard prior to making their decision to hire the applicant ($M = 56.89$, $SD = 22.03$), $F(1, 343) = 4.49$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = .013$.

In addition to the main effect for hiring decision on participants’ ratings of applicant qualifications there was also a main effect for rating condition on qualification ratings. However, as illustrated in Figure 3, among those who chose to hire the applicant, this effect was in the direction opposite of that predicted in Hypothesis 3b. Regardless of hiring decision, participants’ in the postdecision condition provided lower applicant qualification ratings than did those in the predecision condition. Participants
who chose to hire the applicant and rated the applicant’s qualifications prior to the hiring
decision, gave a higher rating ($M = 73.03$, $SD = 13.95$) than did those who rated the
applicant’s qualifications after making the hiring decision ($M = 65.99$, $SD = 15.38$), $F (1,$
$340) = 19.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .055$. Among those who decided not to hire the applicant,
the distortion of qualifications was in the predicted direction in that postdecision ratings
($M = 44.19$, $SD = 13.90$) were significantly lower than predecision ratings ($M = 52.24$,
$SD = 15.10$), $F (1, 89) = 6.81$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2 = .072$.

Motivated Distortion

For the purpose of analyzing the effects of motivation on qualification ratings and
on the interpretation of the vague standard, participants tasked with assessing a female
applicant in the context of a diversity initiative (DI) were compared to those in all other
conditions (i.e., those assessing applicants in the context of an equal opportunity policy
or assessing males in the context of the female-targeted diversity initiative). It was
hypothesized that hiring managers motivated by the diversity initiative to hire a female
applicant would distort ratings in the predecision condition. It was therefore expected
that predecision ratings in the motivated condition would differ from ratings in
unmotivated conditions. As illustrated in Figure 4, there was an interaction between
motivation and rating condition such that, among those who chose to hire the applicant,
qualification ratings differed across rating conditions (predecision vs. postdecision) only
for the unmotivated respondents, $F (1, 340) = 6.65$, $p = .010$, $\eta^2 = .019$. As illustrated in
Figure 5, the effect of rating condition was found only in conditions in which participants
rated male applicants in the context of a diversity initiative, and where participants rated
female applicants in an equal opportunity condition.
In the direct test of Phillips (2004) and Cuccia et al’s (1995) disparate findings on the distortion of standards, ANOVA revealed that, contrary to expectations, there was no interaction between motivation and rating condition. As illustrated in Figure 6, the main effect for rating condition discussed above was not significant though, if anything, was even more pronounced among the externally motivated participants. Therefore, it appears that distortion of standards occurs both in the presence and in the absence of external motivation.

**Attitudes toward Affirmative Action**

Using Kravitz' (1995) scale attitudes toward affirmative action policies were measured on a ten point scale. Attitudes were not affected by experimental manipulations. However, as found in prior research, attitudes toward affirmative action varied by the sex of the participant. On average, females had a more favorable attitude toward affirmative action policies ($M = 5.52, SD = 2.38$) than did males ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.82$), $F(1, 415) = 24.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .056$. In addition, participants’ attitudes toward affirmative action policies varied by their minority status. On average, non-Caucasian participants had a more favorable attitude toward affirmative action policies ($M = 5.93, SD = 2.26$) than did Caucasian participants ($M = 5.01, SD = 2.24$), $F(1, 415) = 8.05, p = .005, \eta^2 = .019$. The homogeneity of the sample did not permit additional post-hoc comparisons between non-Caucasian groups.
DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the effects of external motivation on the distortion of decision-relevant information and decision criteria. Distortion phenomena were investigated in the context of an employee selection scenario in which participants played the role of hiring manager and were, in some conditions, motivated by a diversity initiative that emphasized the importance of increasing female representation in the management ranks. Previous research offers inconsistent results as to when in the decision making process (i.e., predecision or postdecision) the distortion occurs. Therefore, the primary focus of the study was on the potential mediating role of motivation in the timing of distortion.

Impact of Diversity Initiatives on Hiring of Target and Non-Target Applicants

As hypothesized, the hiring policy impacted hiring decisions such that females were more likely to be hired than males in the context of the diversity initiative (DI). However, there was no evidence that participants treated applicant sex as a “plus factor” in their hiring decisions. Rather, it seems that applicant sex was treated as a “minus factor” by participants in the selection scenario evaluating the male applicant under the DI policy. While the female was no more likely to be hired in the DI condition than under an equal opportunity (EO) policy, the male applicant was less likely to be hired in the DI condition than in the context of an EO policy. This finding suggests, as detractors of these policies assert, that diversity initiatives lead to reverse discrimination (Heilman, 1994). However, since applicant qualifications were kept constant in all conditions, this study can not be considered direct evidence of reverse discrimination.
As expected, participants’ ratings of applicant qualifications varied by hiring recommendation, such that participants who chose to hire the applicant rated him/her as more highly qualified than those who did not hire the applicant. Contrary to expectations, participants’ interpretation of the vague hiring standard did not differ by hiring decision. The lack of differentiation in standard threshold ratings across hiring decisions suggests that participants did not base their decision on the vague “high potential for promotion to manager” criterion and placed more weight on traditional qualification criteria.

**Distortion of Applicant Qualifications and Decision Standards**

The primary objective of the study was to assess the distortion of qualifications and interpretation of the standard threshold; specifically, distortion motivated by a diversity initiative. Overall, qualification ratings varied with hiring decision. However, the patterns of distortion of qualification ratings were inconsistent across hiring decisions. As expected, those who chose not to hire the applicant rated the applicant as being less qualified after giving their hiring decision than did those who rated the applicant prior to giving their decision. In contrast, participants who chose to hire the applicant did not align their postdecision assessment of qualifications with their hiring decision. Those who provided their assessment of the applicant’s qualifications after giving their hiring decision rated the applicant’s qualifications lower than those who gave their assessment prior to providing their hiring decision. Therefore, the pattern of ratings among those who did not hire the applicant is consistent with expectations, while the pattern among those who chose to hire the applicant is in the direction opposite of the predicted outcome.
While it is challenging to reconcile these findings with prior research that has demonstrated decision makers consolidating support for their choice and reducing dissonance by providing an assessment that supports their decision, it could be that decision makers in this task relied more on the flexibility of the vague standard to consolidate support for their decision to hire after selecting the marginally qualified applicant. As Cuccia (1995) demonstrated, decision makers may not distort both information and criteria to justify decisions. Rather, decision makers may take advantage of the flexibility afforded by the vagueness in either the information or criterion to justify their decision by distorting one of the two. In the current study, participants in the role of hiring manager did align their interpretation of the vague “high potential for promotion to manager” standard to their hiring decision in a way that consolidated support for their decision. Given the flexibility of the vague standard, decision makers may not have been compelled to further justify their decision by distorting applicants’ qualifications to align with their decision.

It could also be that managers who gave their rating of the applicant qualifications after they decided to hire the applicant took the rating as an opportunity to distance themselves from their decision. The applicant was constructed from the pilot study to be a “marginal” candidate. After choosing to hire a marginal applicant, managers may wish to distance themselves from their decision by expressing their lack of confidence in the candidate. However, this is inconsistent with well established dissonance reduction processes (Festinger, 1957, 1964).

As predicted, those who chose to hire the applicant provided a more liberal interpretation of the standard postdecision than those who interpreted the standard prior
to making their hiring decision. This finding indicates that although decision makers did not align their postdecision interpretation of the applicants’ qualifications with their hiring decision, they did distort the hiring standard in a way that justified their decision. As a demonstration of standards distortion, the current study is an important replication of the phenomenon and an extension of applicability to the domain of employee selection decisions. A key objective of the current study was to clarify disparate findings in past investigations on the timing of standards distortion. The method employed in the current study was constructed to clarify whether disparate findings in past research were due to the effects of external motivation. Whereas Phillips (2002) found that distortion of standards occurred postdecision and therefore associated this with dissonance-reducing consolidation processes, Cuccia (1995) found that decision makers distorted standards to align with outcomes that were externally motivated regardless of when (i.e., predecision or postdecision) the interpretation of the standard was elicited. The current study addressed this inconsistency with the inclusion of both motivated and unmotivated conditions. It was predicted that distortion would occur predecision when hiring managers interpreted decision standards and assessed the qualifications of a female applicant in the context of a diversity initiative targeting females.

The pattern of results clearly supports Phillips’ (2002) finding that distortion of standards is a postdecision consolidation process. Contrary to the prediction based upon Cuccia et al’s (1995) findings, even when hiring managers were externally-motivated, predecisional distortion was not found in interpretations of the standard or in ratings of applicant qualifications. Therefore, this study does not clarify the source of
disparity in prior findings, but does suggest that the disparity is not due the effects of external motivation. However, there may be explanations for the absence of a motivation effect.

Though the diversity initiative clearly affected hiring decisions, it could be argued that the motivation manipulation was insufficient in its strength to induce predecision distortion. Clearly decision makers did not engage in distortion as a means to justify their preferential treatment of the targeted demographic. It could also be that the diversity initiative was so strong that participants did not experience dissonance that would necessitate distortion. In other words, when acting in the context of a clear organizational imperative, decision makers may not feel personally responsible for the outcome to the degree that would warrant engaging in predecision distortion to consolidate support for their decision.

It could also be argued that the population sampled for this study (i.e., undergraduate psychology students) is unrepresentative of the population about which generalizations are made. However, though these subjects may be inexperienced as hiring managers, the current study is not an investigation of managerial decision making per se. The hiring situation merely serves as a context for investigating general cognitive processes in decision making. The experimental materials contained all information needed for participants to answer the questions asked of them in the study. Furthermore, as an investigation of general cognitive processes in decision making, there may be benefit in avoiding the influence of preexisting biases that could be present among experienced managers and may best enable detection of the influence of experimental manipulations.
Impact of Attitudes toward Affirmative Action Policies

As expected based upon the work of Heilman (1994), attitudes and reactions toward affirmative action policies among males and Caucasians were less positive than among the females and non-Caucasians surveyed. Unlike Nacoste and Hummels’ (1994), findings, the investigations of the current study yielded no effects for participants’ attitudes toward affirmative action on any of the dependent variables. Only the oft demonstrated demographic effects resulted. Thus, while Nacoste and Hummels (1994) illustrated the impact of individual differences in selection decisions, findings from the current study offer no support for these hypotheses.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study extended the existing research investigating the distortion of vague decision criteria, a potential weakness of the method employed in this study is that in the experimental task, participants evaluated one applicant in isolation. As a result, in this single-applicant context, a “marginally qualified” applicant was hired by nearly 80% of the hiring managers. The applicant may have appeared less qualified if evaluated in the context of other applicants. While the method employed in the current study allowed for the isolation and identification of the specific factors affecting decision makers’ behavior, in practice, hiring managers evaluate many applicants simultaneously. While participants need not have expertise in managerial decision making to demonstrate the phenomenon under investigation, the effect of external motivation from the diversity initiative may be more salient in the context of a real world selection situation in which the manager evaluates multiple applicants and is held responsible for compliance to the hiring policy.
A needed extension of this work would examine the effects of criterion distortion over the multiple stages of the employee selection process and the influence of diversity initiatives on the evaluation of qualifications and interpretation of selection standards as applicants move from inclusion in the manager’s consideration set based upon the résumé, thorough the interviewing process, and to the final stage where the hiring and salary decisions are made. As Phillips (2002) suggested, even when distortion occurs only after the decision has been made, a distorted representation of applicant qualifications and selection criteria may render it unlikely that the hiring manager will learn from his or her mistakes when bad selection decisions are made. Distortion does not necessarily produce optimal decisions. Rather, distortion serves to marshal support for decisions, even when they are suboptimal. Therefore, distortion in one context may affect subsequent decisions (Phillips, 2002, p. 782). A potentially fruitful extension of the current study would evaluate the effects of distortion in a within-subjects design to explore whether distortion in one employee selection episode impacts future decisions.

Diversity initiatives are widely deployed in government, education, and private sector organizations. This study suggests that while the stated of aim of many of these initiatives is to generate a diverse pool of applicants, the initiative may also affect hiring decisions on individuals, to the detriment of non-targeted applicants. However, while the results of the current study suggest that diversity initiatives targeting the increased representation of females may impede males more than they benefit females, it is important to note that the central goal of the study was to assess the extent to which external motivation induces predecision distortion in diversity-motivated decisions. The diversity initiative appears to have had no effect on either pre- or post-decision
assessments of qualifications and hiring standards, while the diversity initiative did exert influence in hiring – especially the hiring of non-targeted applicants.

These findings imply that under diversity initiatives, demographics serve not as a plus factor for the targeted group, but as a minus factor for the non-targeted group. However, as applicants’ traditional qualifications were not manipulated, the claim by opponents of such initiatives that affirmative action policies keep more qualified non-targeted applicants from being hired is not assessed in the current study. An interesting follow-up study would examine the impact of distortion in the hiring of less qualified applicants targeted by a diversity initiative in a multiple-candidate context where there are more qualified, non-targeted candidates.

**Conclusions and Practical Implications**

In conclusion, the present study extended the existing literature related to the distortion of decision-relevant information and decision criteria. In demonstrating the distortion of information and vague criteria in the employee selection context, the study offers support for the hypothesis that decision standards are distorted postdecision to lend support for the choice and to reduce dissonance that is often the result when the decisions involve tradeoffs.

In practical terms, the current study suggests that the diversity initiatives widely deployed in organizations do impact the hiring of non-targeted applicants. It seems that marginally-qualified non-targeted applicants are less likely to be hired when evaluated in isolation (i.e., when no other applicant is under consideration). In this respect, these diversity initiatives may serve their purpose. As managers are increasingly held accountable for diversity in the workforce, the pressure to accommodate the diversity
goals of the organization in their hiring decisions may yield increased hiring of
marginally qualified, targeted applicants. However, the current study offers no evidence
that this external motivation leads to distortion in hiring managers’ evaluations of
applicant qualifications or in interpretations of selection standards.
REFERENCES


Gratz v. Bollinger (No. 02-516).

Grutter v. Bollinger (No. 02-241).


APPENDIX A

PILOT STUDY: METHOD

Procedure

Participants were 35 undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a Midwestern university. Participants read a scenario in which they were the Midwest District Manager for DynamoPrint, Inc., a manufacturer of high-performance industrial printers for the sign and screen-printing markets (see Appendix B). In the pilot task, the participants read a job posting that describes the tasks of a marketing assistant and the general qualifications necessary to perform adequately on the job (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to read seven résumés depicting applicants for the job (see Appendices D and E). The résumés depicted applicants of varying levels of traditional qualification (e.g., academic achievement, amount and relevance of work experience, fit between stated goals and the marketing assistant position, etc.). Participants were instructed to (a) order the résumés based on the level of qualification for the job depicted in each résumé and to (b) sort the résumés into two groups indicating 1) those they would hire and 2) those they would not hire (see Appendix F). The résumé that was most evenly distributed between the “hire” and “do not hire” categories across participants in the pilot phase was used to represent the “marginally qualified” applicant in the main experiment materials.
Imagine that you are the Midwest District Manager for DynamoPrint, Inc., a manufacturer of high-performance industrial printers for the sign and screen-printing markets. Recently, your marketing assistant left the company and you are now looking for someone to fill the vacant position. Hiring a qualified applicant is very important for the company because Marketing Assistants are often considered for promotions to management. Hiring a qualified applicant is also important to you personally, because you will rely on the assistant to help you fulfill the responsibilities of your job. Therefore, it is important to hire someone who would make a good DynamoPrint employee.

You are a very busy professional and you will take the time to interview an applicant only if you would actually hire that applicant for the job based upon information in the applicant’s résumé. In an effort to save time, you would like to interview the most qualified applicant first, and, if necessary, the second most qualified applicant second, and so on. Your first step in evaluating applicants is to carefully read the Job Posting which provides a description of the job tasks and outlines the qualifications that an applicant must have to be hired in the position.
APPENDIX C
PILOT STUDY: JOB DESCRIPTION

Position: Marketing Assistant

DynamoPrint, Inc. is a manufacturer of high-performance industrial printers for the sign and screen-printing markets. Our new US division has its sales/marketing/technical support office located in Columbus, Ohio and we are looking for a highly motivated individual who can handle a wide range of marketing and administrative tasks within our office environment.

Job Description: The job is an entry-level position reporting directly to the District Manager. Main responsibilities include answering sales calls, processing and organizing prospective customer information, shipping, travel arrangements, filing, and office management. In addition, the Marketing Assistant will be responsible for the development of marketing materials, tradeshows management, advertising purchasing, website and newsletter updates, and support of technical and sales personnel.

The successful applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Bachelor’s degree in Marketing, Business, or a related field
- Experience in sales and/or marketing positions
- Strong academic background and work performance
- Strong communication skills
- Computer proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
- Self-starter, able to work independently
- High potential for promotion to manager

DynamoPrint, Inc. offers an excellent work environment, compensation, and benefits package. This position requires a satisfactory pre-employment drug test and background check. The position may also require occasional travel.
APPENDIX D

PILOT STUDY: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

Now that you are familiar with the Marketing Assistant position from the Job Posting, your task is to sort through seven résumés that you have received and to classify applicants based on their qualifications for the position.

Task Steps:

Step 1: Carefully read each résumé and order the seven résumés from most-qualified to least-qualified. Feel free to write on résumés.

Step 2: Indicate the order on the Response Form.

Step 3: Divide the résumés into two groups, separating those who you would hire for the Marketing Assistant position from those who you would not hire for the position.

Step 4: Indicate your “would hire” and “would not hire” grouping on the Response Form.
APPENDIX E

PILOT STUDY: APPLICANT RÉSUMÉS

Applicant: 01
1565 Green River Dr.
Mount Pleasant, MI 48864

Education
Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI
B.A. in Business Administration (concentration in Accounting)
Minor: Marketing
GPA: 1.75 (2.50 in Business Courses)
June 2004

Experience
Dominick Associates, Mount Pleasant, MI
Junior Accountant – part time
2002 – 2004
• Handle monthly journal entries
• Analyze sales/marketing monthly expenses and sales representatives’ gross receipts
• Create spreadsheets
• Handle special projects

Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI
Student Manager – Recreation
2000 – 2001
• Coordinated and manage all operational functions, programs
• Enforce and interpret all facility, membership, and employment policies and regulations
• Resolve conflicts and supervise all University recreation

Sheraton Restaurant, Mount Pleasant, MI
Waitperson
1998 – 2000
• Take orders and deliver food to customers
• Communicated with public and managed customer complaints

Computer Skills
• Proficient in Microsoft Office applications
• Lotus Notes and 1-2-3

Honors and Activities
• Activities Coordinator, Student Investment Club
• Member, Marketing Club
Applicant: 02  
2332 Kendall Lane  
Highland Park, IL 60035

**Education**  
**DePaul University**, Chicago, IL  
Bachelor’s of Arts in Business (Marketing Concentration)  
Minor: Spanish  
GPA: 2.50 (3.00 in Major)

**Experience**  
**CNA Insurance Company**, Chicago, IL  
*Marketing Support Clerk*  
2002 – 2004  
- Developed exceptional communication and marketing skills through conducting telephone interviews for target markets  
- Utilized organizational skills in collection of quantitative and qualitative research data

**McDermott, Will, & Emery Law Firm**, Chicago, IL  
*Assistant*  
2000 – 2001  
- Handled incoming calls for a staff of ten attorneys  
- Independently completed special projects for attorneys  
- Created and maintained an efficient filing system

**Marshall Field’s Department Store**, Chicago, IL  
*Sales Associate*  
1998 – 2000  
- Assisted and advised customers on purchases of various merchandise  
- Dealt with customer inquiries and complaints  
- Executed special customer orders

**Computer Skills**  
- Proficient in Windows, Word, Excel, Internet  
- Functional in PowerPoint

**Activities**  
- Marketing Club member  
- Marketing Club Special Events Coordinator
Applicant: 03
345 Fenwick Street
Chicago, IL 60785

Education

Illinois State University, Normal, IL 2004
B.A. Communication/Public Relations
Minor: Business/Liberal Arts
GPA: 2.75 (3.25 in Business courses)

Experience

LONS Computing Systems, Chicago, IL 2002 – 2004
Sales and Marketing Representative
• Applied marketing skills to increase sales of Macintosh G3 computers
• Cultivated client relationships, increasing customer satisfaction and repeat sales
• Placed advertising in magazines including Men's Health, GQ, and Wired
• Wrote press releases on new computer products

Broadway Master Theatre, Chicago, IL Summers 2002 – 2004
Marketing Assistant
• Assisted with the planning, creation and distribution of theatrical press releases
• Wrote radio advertisements
• Tracked attendance based on information from reservationists and box office attendants
• Handled photo releases mailings to be distributed to media sources

Computer Skills
• Microsoft Office Programs
• Internet Research
• HTML

Honors and Interests
• Terrence S. Duboff Award: Award for academic achievement excellence in communications
• NCAA Division 1 Golfer: Winner of the Greenview Collegiate Classic 2002, 2nd Place finalist 2003 NCAA MidWest Cup
Applicant: 04
312 E. 10th, Apt. 8
Bloomington, IN 47408

Education

**Indiana University**, Bloomington, IN
Bachelor of Arts in Business (concentration in Marketing)
GPA: 3.25 (3.75 in Major)

Experience

**Eli Haley Corporation**, Cleveland, OH
*Marketing Intern*  
- Helped create slogans and logos for new product lines  
- Took part in developing advertising campaigns for a variety of media  
- Attended forecasting meetings with senior management

**Student Recreation Center**, Bloomington, IN
*Staff Coordinator*  
- Supervised aquatics staff  
- Planned work schedules  
- Taught fitness classes

**Showtime Cinema**, Bloomington, IN
*Assistant Manager*  
- Arranged work assignments  
- Processed box office receipts  
- Dealt with the public

**Chili's Restaurant**, Bloomington, IN
*Server*  
- Waited on patrons in a busy restaurant environment

Computer Skills
- Proficient in HTML and Microsoft Office

Activities
- Volunteer for Indiana Charities  
- Marketing Club Member
Applicant: 05
9867 East Summit Street
Kent, Ohio 44240

Education

Kent State University, Athens, OH
Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration
Concentration: Marketing and Business Management
GPA: 2.00 (2.75 in Major)
June 2004

Experience

McKenzie, Brachman, & Markowitz, Cleveland, OH
Assistant
• Greeted public and answered phone
• Typed letters and legal documents
• Maintained filing system
2002 – 2004

Fuller Medical Associates, Cleveland, OH
Office Assistant
• Filed medical charts
• Answered phone
• Scheduled appointments
2000 – 2001

Chardon Memorial Pool, Chardon, Ohio
Cashier
• Collected up to $1500 daily and maintained financial records
• Effectively communicated with public and managed customer complaints
1998 – 2000

Computer Skills
• Proficient in Microsoft Office applications

Honors and Activities
• Volunteer Award
• Advertising Committee
• Member, Collegiate Marketing Association
Applicant: 06
98 West Green Dr.
Athens, OH 45701

Education

Ohio University, Athens, OH
B.A. in Business Administration (concentration in Finance)
GPA: 2.25 (3.00 in Major)

Experience

Dave and Buster’s, Cleveland, OH
Guest ambassador for the restaurant and arcade facility
• Organize guest parties
• Maintain guest relations and company policies
• Collect money from game machines

Applied Industrial Technologies, Cleveland, OH
Warehouse Employee
• Construct interior of the branch warehouse
• Track and organize $10 million in products
• Prepare $4 million in products for delivery to customers
• Communicate directly with customers about their orders
• Receive and deliver products through United Parcel Service

University Painters, Cleveland, OH
Territory Manager
• Managed all aspects of the business, including marketing, financing, and customer relations
• Generated $18,000 in sales during the summer months
• Took on increasing territory and responsibility

Computer Skills
• Proficient in Microsoft Office applications

Honors and Activities
• Corporate Development Committee
• Freshman Honor Society
• Exsell Sales Club
• Robert Beck Scholarship
Applicant: 07
769 Kremlin Way
Atlanta, GA 41606

Education  
University of Georgia, Athens, GA  
B.A. in International Business (Marketing Concentration)  
Minor: German  
GPA: 3.00 (3.25 in Business courses)  

Experience  
Gherkin Publishers, Atlanta, GA  
Marketing Intern  
Summers 2002 – 2004  
- Developed a package insert program for a new hair product  
- Assisted creative services in the redesign of new package insert materials for clothing line  
- Worked directly with advertisers to significantly increase the sales of the insert programs  
- Updated computer reports to monitor the productivity of the insert programs  

University of Georgia, Athens, GA  
Resident Advisor  
2001 – 2004  
- Planned and provided educational, cultural, and social programs within a budget  
- Prepared administrative reports to monitor developmental aspects of student life  
- Trained Assistant Resident Advisors  

79th Street, Atlanta, GA  
Sales Associate  
1998 – 2000  
- Assisted and advised customers  
- Managed store operations; sales rose 45 percent  

Computer Skills  
- Microsoft Office  
- Lotus Spreadsheet  

Interests  
- Mountain Climbing  
- Soccer  
- Drawing
APPENDIX F
PILOT STUDY: RESPONSE FORM

Please order the résumés by their identification numbers (01 through 07) in order from most qualified to least qualified:

Most qualified

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Least qualified

_____

For each résumé, please write the identification number in one of columns below according to whether you would hire or would not hire the applicant for the Marketing Assistant position:

Would Hire Would Not Hire

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____
APPENDIX G

PRIMARY STUDY: SCENARIO

Imagine that you are the Midwest District Manager for DynamoPrint, Inc., a manufacturer of high-performance industrial printers for the sign and screen-printing markets. Recently, your marketing assistant left the company and you are now looking for someone to fill the vacant position. Hiring a qualified applicant is very important for the company because Marketing Assistants are often considered for promotions to management. Hiring a qualified applicant is also important to you personally, because you will rely on the assistant to help you fulfill the responsibilities of your job. Therefore, it is important to hire someone who would make a good DynamoPrint employee.

You will be given a description of the Marketing Assistant job and a résumé from an applicant for the job. Your task is to decide whether or not to hire the applicant. When you have turned a page in the task packet, you will not be able to return to previous pages. Therefore, it is important that you carefully read all information contained in the Job Posting and the applicant’s résumé. You will be asked specific questions about what you have read in theses materials and you will make a hiring decision.
DynamoPrint, Inc. is a manufacturer of high-performance industrial printers for the sign and screen-printing markets. Our new US division has its sales/marketing/technical support office located in Columbus, Ohio and we are looking for a highly motivated individual who can handle a wide range of marketing and administrative tasks within our office environment.

Job Description: The job is an entry-level position reporting directly to the District Manager. Main responsibilities include answering sales calls, processing and organizing prospective customer information, shipping, travel arrangements, filing, and office management. In addition, the Marketing Assistant will be responsible for the development of marketing materials, tradeshows management, advertising purchasing, website and newsletter updates, and support of technical and sales personnel.

The successful applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Bachelor’s degree in Marketing, Business, or a related field
- Experience in sales and/or marketing positions
- Strong academic background and work performance
- Strong communication skills
- Computer proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
- Self-starter, able to work independently
- High potential for promotion to manager

DynamoPrint, Inc. offers an excellent work environment, compensation, and benefits package. This position requires a satisfactory pre-employment drug test and background check. The position may also require occasional travel.
DynamoPrint, Inc. Hiring Policy

Before reviewing the applicant’s résumé, please read the following statement and initial below indicating that you understand DynamoPrint’s policy on hiring.

At DynamoPrint, Inc., women traditionally have been underrepresented in the management ranks. DynamoPrint, Inc. is strongly committed to increasing the number of women in its workforce. Therefore, hiring decisions are reviewed to ensure compliance with company-wide diversity initiatives.

Initial here _____
DynamoPrint, Inc. Hiring Policy

Before reviewing the applicant’s résumé, please read the following statement and initial below indicating that you understand DynamoPrint’s policy on hiring.

DynamoPrint, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer. Therefore, hiring decisions should be made without regard to race, sex, or national origin.

Initial here _____
APPENDIX K

PRIMARY STUDY: APPLICANT RÉSUMÉ

Jane/John Bloom
98 West Greene Dr.
Athens, OH 45711
(740)555-1212

Education
Ohio University, Athens, OH
B.A. in Business Administration (concentration in Finance)
GPA: 2.25 (3.00 in Major) August 2004

Experience
Dave and Buster’s, Cleveland, OH
Guest ambassador for the restaurant and arcade facility
2002 – 2004
• Organize guest parties
• Maintain guest relations and company policies
• Collect money from game machines

Applied Industrial Technologies, Cleveland, OH
2000 – 2001
Warehouse Employee
• Construct interior of the branch warehouse
• Track and organize $10 million in products
• Prepare $4 million in products for delivery to customers
• Communicate directly with customers about their orders
• Receive and deliver products through United Parcel Service

University Cleaners, Cleveland, OH
1998 – 2000
Territory Manager
• Managed all aspects of the business, including marketing, financing, and customer relations
• Generated $18,000 in sales during the summer months
• Took on increasing territory and responsibility

Computer Skills
• Proficient in Microsoft Office applications

Honors and Activities
• Corporate Development Committee
• Freshman Honor Society
• Exsell Sales Club
• Robert Beck Scholarship
Now that you have read the Job Posting, the DynamoPrint Hiring Policy, and John Bloom’s résumé, you are ready to answer questions about these materials and make your hiring recommendation. In answering some of the questions that follow, you will be asked to indicate your opinion by placing an X on a line.

For example, imagine that your task is to rate the movie *The Last Samurai* starring Tom Cruise in comparison to all other Tom Cruise movies.

If you think that *The Last Samurai* was better than the average Tom Cruise movie, but not his best, you might indicate your opinion by placing the X between “Average Tom Cruise Movie” and “Best Tom Cruise Movie” like this:

 `[ ] [ ] [X]`

    Worst Tom Cruise Movie  Average Tom Cruise Movie  Best Tom Cruise Movie

If you thought that *The Last Samurai* was almost the worst Tom Cruise movie, but not quite as bad as *Cocktail* you might indicate your opinion by placing the X near “Worst Tom Cruise Movie,” like this:

 `[X] [ ] [ ]`

    Worst Tom Cruise Movie  Average Tom Cruise Movie  Best Tom Cruise Movie
APPENDIX M
PRIMARY STUDY: QUALIFICATION RATING FORM

Please indicate your answer to the following question by placing an X on the line below:

Based on what you have learned from the Job Posting and the applicant’s résumé, how qualified is John for the Marketing Assistant position?

Not at all Qualified  Average  Extremely Qualified
Recall that the job posting indicates that the Marketing Assistant must have “high potential for promotion to manager.” We are interested in what you believe is meant by “high potential.” For example, do you think that “high potential” means that the applicant must have a high likelihood of promotion, or that the applicant must have an absolute certainty of promotion?

Please indicate your answer to the following question by placing an X on the line below:

In terms of percentages, what is the lowest chance of promotion that an applicant must have in order to be hired for the Marketing Assistant position?

- 50% chance of promotion
- 75% chance of promotion
- 100% chance of promotion
Based on the description of the Marketing Assistant position in the Job Posting that you read and on John Bloom’s résumé, please indicate your hiring recommendation for John by placing an X in the blank next to the appropriate option:

_____ Hire John       _____ Do not hire John

If you decided to not hire John, please turn to the next page now and do not answer the question below.

If you decided to hire John, please indicate your answer to the following question by placing an X on the line below:

What level of starting salary should John receive as a Marketing Assistant at DynamoPrint, Inc.?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Low Starting Salary</th>
<th>Average Starting Salary</th>
<th>Very High Starting Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


APPENDIX P
PRIMARY STUDY: HIRING POLICY MANIPULATION CHECK

Please indicate your answer to the following question by placing an X on the line below:

Based **only** on the information in the DynamoPrint Hiring Policy statement, how important is it to hire a woman for the Marketing Assistant position?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What is the sex of the applicant who you evaluated for the Marketing Assistant position? _____ Female _____ Male
“Affirmative action” is a policy or a program intended to make amends for past discrimination through active measures to ensure equal opportunity, as in education and employment.

1  Affirmative action is a violation of the Bill of Rights.

2  Affirmative action tends to create more harm than good.

3  Affirmative action distracts people from real, underlying problems of social inequity

4  Affirmative action is well meaning, but not the best solution.

5  Education reform will do more good than affirmative action.

6  Affirmative action can be justified in some instances.

7  Affirmative action may help remedy hiring inequity in specific businesses and regions.

8  Affirmative action is the way to correct for hiring inequity in the public sector.

9  Affirmative action should be national policy.

10 Affirmative action is the cornerstone of a fair and just society.
Now, please tell us a few things about you:

_____ Female   _____ Male

Age ______

What is your race or ethnic background?
   _____ American Indian or Alaska Native
   _____ Asian or Pacific Islander
   _____ Black or African American
   _____ Hispanic or Latino
   _____ White or Caucasian
   _____ Other (please specify)
      ______________________________

Marital status:  __Single   __Married   __Divorced   __Widowed

Year in school:  ___Freshman   ___Sophomore   ___Junior   ___Senior

Major:  ________________________________

Do you currently have a job?  ___Full-time  ___Part-time  ___No job

Have much work experience have you had?  _____ Years   _____ Months
FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1. Proportion of participants providing a “Hire” response as a function of hiring policy and applicant sex.

Figure 2. Mean standard threshold rating as a function of hiring decision and rating condition.

Figure 3. Mean applicant qualification rating as a function of hiring decision and rating condition.

Figure 4. Mean qualification rating among those that chose to hire the applicant as a function of motivation and rating condition.

Figure 5. Mean qualification rating among those that chose to hire the applicant as a function of hiring policy, applicant sex, and rating condition.

Figure 6. Mean standard threshold rating among those that chose to hire the applicant as a function of motivation and rating condition.
Figure 1

% of "Hire" Decisions

Equal Opportunity  Diversity Initiative

Hiring Policy

Female Applicant
Male Applicant

40 50 60 70 80 90

-  -  -
Figure 2

Mean Standard Threshold Rating

Predecision | Postdecision

Hire

Don't Hire

Rating Condition
Figure 3

- **Mean Qualification Rating**
  - **Hire**
  - **Don't Hire**

- **Rating Condition**
  - Predecision
  - Postdecision
Figure 4

Mean Qualification Rating

Predecision    Postdecision
Rating Condition

- - - Motivated
- - - Unmotivated
Figure 6

Mean Standard Threshold Rating

Predecision  Postdecision
Rating Condition

- Motivated
- Unmotivated
Table 1

**Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female (n=297)</th>
<th>Male (n=153)</th>
<th>Total (N=450) (% of sample)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>19.05</td>
<td>19.40</td>
<td>19.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>318 (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>84 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>442 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current work status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>214 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not work</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>211 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race or ethnic background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>382 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Demographic data other than sex and year in school were missing for two participants due to their failure to complete the survey.
Table 2

*Ratings among Participants who Chose to “Hire” the Applicant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hiring Policy</th>
<th>Applicant Qualifications</th>
<th>Standard Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predecision</td>
<td>Postdecision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Initiative</td>
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Table 3

*Ratings among Participants who Chose to Not “Hire” the Applicant*

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<th>Standard Definition</th>
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