ANALYSES/REVIEWS OF THE LITERATURE

Selection of Medical Students: Philosophic, Political, Social, and Educational Bases

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The task of selecting a cohort of medical students from a pool of well-qualified applicants is complex and fraught with ethical dilemmas and organizational difficulties. In this article, we identify and attempt to formalize the constraints on the task. In response to a range of pressures (or influences) a medical school creates a selection policy, in which selectors define the "necessary character-

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- 1. Academic achievement (A). Demonstrated ability in public examinations, particularly thee learning, recall, and utilization of factual information. This is related to intelligence in its naarrower definitions.
- 2. Intellectual and reasoning skills (I). Ann individual's style of manipulating concepts and information, and of approaching study and learn-

major groups are briefly outlined here, together with the personal characteristics required of students to meet such objectives. The relationship between the pressures and the required personal characteristics is summarized in Table 1.

Pressures Within the University and Medical School

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	deep processing, problem solving, and l logical	
	reasoning. It is broadly orthogonal to accademic	Universities are concerned principally with edu-
	achievement.	cation, and therefore try to select students who
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Table 1. Policy-Making Matrix

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University Pressures	_									
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Long-Term Academic Success		*	•	•						•
Professional Competence			•	۰		*		o	۰	
Specific Curriculum		•	•	۰		•			•	۰
Medical School Community				*	۰	•			*	
Professional Pressures										
Legal/Registration/Certification							•		o	
Maintaining Standards			*	•		•		•	0	•
Selection for a Specialty				•	٥	*		•	•	
Community Pressures										
"Good" Doctors Ontimal Matching of Characteristics to Sp.	pointe!			*		*		•	*	•
Optimal Matching of Characteristics to Spe	cciaities				•				*	
Political Pressures Affirmative Action/Discrimination/Bias		-								
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They might therefore recommend the selection of students with particular approaches to study and learning (I), motivation (M) for independent study, personality (P) reflecting intrinsic drive, and appropriate attitudes (AT). Specialist expertise may also depend on psychomotor skills (PM), as in surgery, or interpersonal skills (IC) as in

Political Pressures

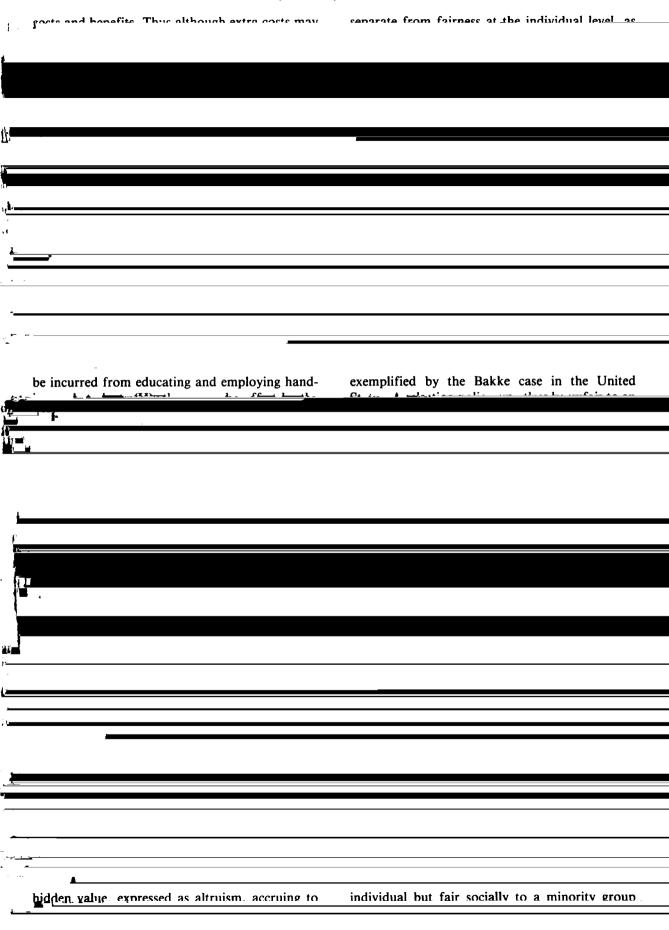
Universities are subjected to external pressures on their activities from political and legal sources, particularly when training professionals to work in large, expensive organizations, such as health services.

3. Selection for career speciality. Different specialties require different skills and attributes, and if these skills are less amenable to training,

general practice or psychiatry.

1. Discrimination, bias, and affirmative action. In the United Kingdom, legislation such as the Race Relations Act (1976) and the Sex Discrimination.

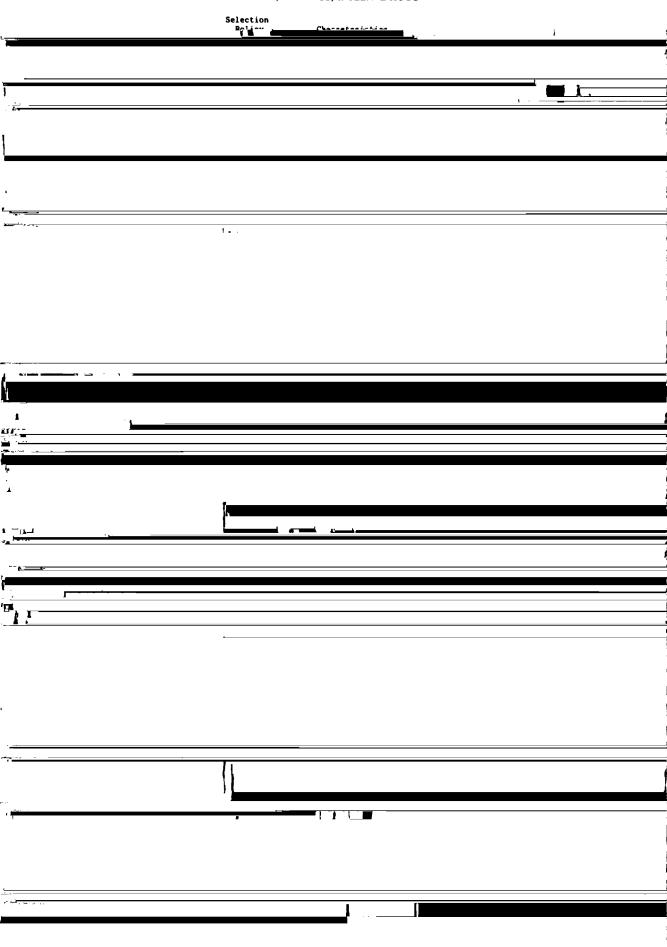
(IC), then specialties may recommend their emphasis at selection (Gough & Bell¹¹). Additionally, of opportunity means that academic achievement



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sessed indirectly (and not always reliably; e.g., Richards et al. 17). Attitudes (AT) and motivation parental aspirations or expectation of high financial rewards on graduation). Ty pinaranhical and other collideranimines

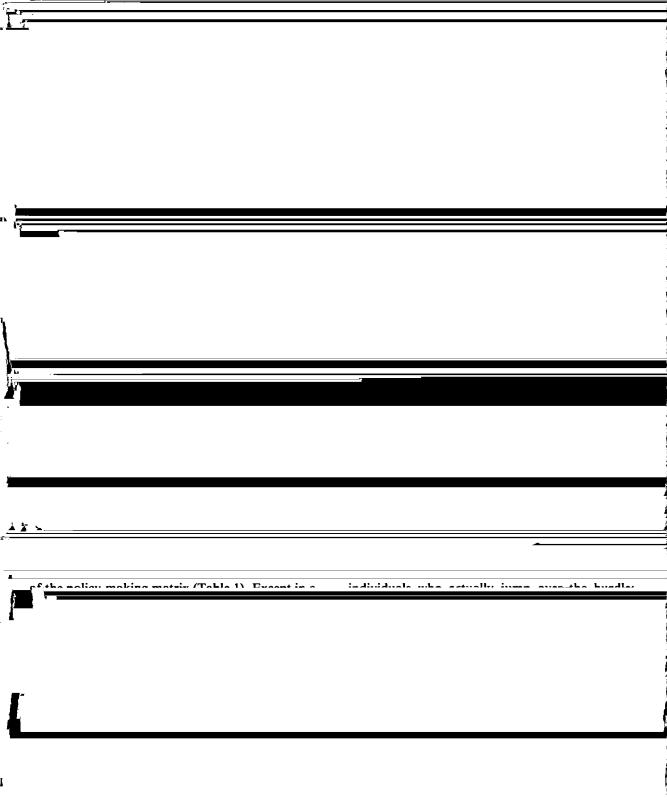
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Why Is There a Problem of Selection?

Expressing the selection process in the form we have described indicates clearly that the funda-

health care. The hurdles are set to ensure that eventually the number of qualified applicants matches the number of places available. Self-selection systems are often advocated because they seem neutral and passive from the selectors' point



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