

Does Affirmative Action Bring Positive Results?

First introduced in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action policies aim to mitigate the discrepancy in opportunities available for underrepresented social groups by taking into account one's minority background. The policies have become a pressing public issue that obstructs previously marginalized individuals, particularly in the educational environment. Despite their limitations, affirmative action policies in admissions to higher educational establishments prove to have a positive impact on bridging economic differences, creating broader ramifications for societal problems, and increasing racial diversity.

The primary aim of establishing affirmative action is to tackle educational disparity created by continuous trends of discrimination. Importantly, unconscious bias favoring white applicants seems to permeate admissions to certain institutions (Capers et al. 365). Therefore, though opponents argue that it is a system of racial quotas, the policy often relieves the biases present in other quantitative factors of admissions, such as test scores and grades (Poon 185-186). Additionally, as stated by Poon, race can present be taken into account "... but legally it cannot serve as a singular criterion" (187). This means that affirmative action does in fact help underrepresented minority students but it is not a sole decisive factor, thus refuting the argument about promoting unjust racial preferences. All in all, current trends in holistic admissions communicate the need for affirmative action policies to decrease the impact of implicit white preference and resulted disparities.

Not only do affirmative action policies increase diversity and potentially reduce bias currently inherent to college admissions but they also might have a wider effect on the society beyond the classroom. For example, if unconscious bias remains prevalent in medical school admissions, it will lead to negative implications for POC patients and the overall healthcare of a country (Capers et al. 365). Moreover, Venkataramani et al. suggest that there is a direct correlation between the ban of college affirmative action programs and increased

risk behavior among minority youth (10). Finally, the results of a substantial study demonstrate that surveyed students show increased support for applicants that are members of a racial or ethnic minority (Carey et al. 208). Overall, the evidence suggests that diversity initiatives in academic decision making have a broader positive impact on various social domains such as healthcare and wellbeing.

Affirmative action initiatives also succeed in promoting diversity on university campuses. Identity diversity in particular is deemed to foster environment necessary for educating woke individuals as it encourages challenging, multi-faceted discourse (Poon 191). This idea is also scrutinized by Carey and colleagues in their book *Campus Diversity: The Hidden Consensus*. They claim that a diverse student body "... contributes to cognitive diversity by bringing together on campus a broader range of life experiences and perspectives" (Carey et al. 5). Moreover, the results of the same study indicate that the student body itself is in favor of "prioritizing campus diversity in admissions" (Carey et al. 10). This implies that if such policies are employed, it could create a higher satisfaction rate among students and improve their performance. In general, the extensive discourse around the benefits of student body diversity shows strong preference for and substantial benefits to taking one's minority status into account in holistic admissions.

Affirmative action, though somewhat limited, offers a potential approach to improving opportunities for underprivileged groups. Such policies, if employed accurately, support historically marginalized groups. On a broader scale, they elicit positive societal change, such as decreased substance abuse, better patient care, and balanced education.

Works Cited

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