

Institutional discrimination

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



In the United States, institutionalized discrimination occurs everyday. According to Aguirre and Turner (2010) it is both subtle and complex. Because discrimination based on race is illegal, many acts of institutionalized discrimination are informal; a company, school, government, or other public institution does not formally write them in a policy. “ Yet individual acts of informal discrimination are so widespread in many communities that discrimination is informally institutionalized even in the face of formal prohibitions” (Aguirre and Turner, 2010).

Despite, being outlawed nationally, discrimination still exists. My first example of institutionalized discrimination exists in the public school system. There is a huge educational gap among urban public schools and suburban public schools, essentially, among white and minority students. In many states, educational systems have imposed standardized testing as a requirement for graduation from high school. I believe that these implementations are a strategic effort to weed out minorities from achieving higher education and decrease the opportunity to move up in social class.

Though state educational systems cannot formally institute discriminatory practices, they can subtly implement requirements such as these testing procedures. As a product of an inner city urban public school, I have experienced this first hand. Guiner and Torres (2009) discussed that a lack of education hinders social mobility, which essentially reinforces racial inequality. From third grade until passing the eleventh grade EXIT Level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills exam, also known as the TAKS test, I was taught how to pass the TAKS test. I wasn't taught the necessary skills needed to be successful in college.

As a student who took all of the AP classes offered at my school, I was not taught to the level to pass these AP test to test out of college general education classes and I wasn't taught on the college level, as the courses are designed for. As a result, upon entering college, although I had taken several AP courses during high school I had earned zero college credit hours. I was also not prepared for college level courses, I was not used to having homework, or test taking outside of the TAKS test, and didn't feel that I possessed the skills necessary to be successful in college.

This was true among many of my high school peers; many weren't able to survive in college and dropped out after a year, some after a semester. As Aguirre and Turner (2010) put it " The school may not have intended his to occur—indeed, just the opposite—but the very nature of its structure and operation has worked to discourage students and, in so doing, has subtly and inadvertently discriminated against students..." (pg. 13) This contributes to racial inequality because statistically blacks are less prepared, and subsequently less successful in college than whites.

A solution to this form of institutionalized discrimination in schools would be to eliminate standardized testing. Too much time is put into passing a test so that the school can have high numbers and not enough time is put into teaching students skills needed for achieving higher education. After talking to many of my white counterparts, I learned that their high schools spent little, if any time, teaching its students how to pass the TAKS test; they focused on college preparation.

Standardized tests are not an accurate depiction of a school's success; they unfairly hinder graduation rates and are sending young adults into society

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unprepared. In addition to eliminating standardized testing, schools should focus more on rigorous college level work and teaching time management skills. Because the differences in higher education preparedness is usually among Whites from suburban areas vs. Blacks and Hispanics from poor urban areas, these solutions would help close the gap. My second example of institutional discrimination is “steering. Steering occurs when realtors steer minorities to neighborhoods where the majority of residents are also minorities. Steering also occurs when realtors fail to inform customers of properties that meet the customers’ preferences or specifications. The purpose of this is to subtly segregate those of the same race in the same neighborhood. “The combination of growing urban Black populations and higher levels of segregation could only produce one possible outcome—higher levels of Black isolation” (Gallagher, 2009).

As a result, racially segregated neighborhoods are either really nice, clean, suburban neighborhoods with low crime rates, good schools, grocery stores with healthy eating options, and shopping centers or dirty urban neighborhoods with high crime rates, low performing schools, grocery stores with bad produce and fast food restaurants with unhealthy eating options, and people having to go across town to go shopping for essentials. Racial steering not only reinforces racial inequality, it also hinders diversity.

Racial steering must be stopped. It would be very difficult to find a solution to eliminate racial steering. Housing acts already exist to eliminate housing discrimination but these laws may need to be expanded. The Fair Housing Act, a subsection of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibits discrimination dealing with the sale, rental, or financing of housing based on race, sex,

religion, or national origin. (Employment-discrimination. org) Real estate agencies should be required to show customers all housing options that meet their preferences.

There should be a national database that provides realtors and real estate clients with all of the properties that meet preferences so that no available property is left out because the person is of a certain race. My third example of institutional discrimination is “ redlining. ” This is when banks deny or make it more difficult for people to get loans, healthcare, or insurance because they live in a certain area. The particular area is usually characterized by a specific race. Those who exercise red lining use “ blacklists” to keep track of groups or certain areas to use for discriminatory practices.

One of the most important solutions to redlining was the Fair Housing Act of 1968 which prohibited redlining that was based on race, sex, religion, family status, disability or ethnic origin (Wikipedia). To further the impact of this act, I think it would be important to require banks, insurance companies, and other institutions to keep information regarding their targeting of certainpovertystricken areas or racially dominated areas. This would be something similar to the guidelines of affirmative action, requiring firms to specifically target those of minority groups who are qualified.

The qualifications would be based off of past financial credibility or government programs that assist those who can't afford to pay on their own. All groups of people should have equal access to resources. Minorities shouldn't have to worry about getting denied or have less access because of the color of their skin. “ In the United States, civil rights laws and cultural

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beliefs do not condone discrimination as they once did; indeed they demand that all individuals be given equal access to schools, jobs, housing, and other important resources. The United States has been trying to eliminate discrimination for hundreds of years. However, because institutional discrimination is so subtle is difficult to do so completely. Many times institutional discrimination is exercised unconsciously due to the nature in which an institution is set up. Other times, institutional discrimination is very consciously practiced informally. Because of laws that explicitly prohibit discrimination, institutions strategically discriminate against individuals and racial groups by not giving them equal access to resources.

This discrimination continues to contribute to racial inequality in education, housing, health care, employment, and other aspects of human life. Not only do basic discrimination laws need to be expanded, but affirmative actions laws need to be expanded as well. A major solution to discrimination is education. Minorities need to be educated themselves about the ways in which they are being denied to access to resources. The fight forequalityis not over.