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Should Standardized Testing be Required for College Acceptance?

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction	4- 6
History of Standardized Testing	6- 8
Purpose of Standardized Testing	8-10
Literature Review	10- 26
Other Methods for Determining Admittance	26- 30
Why educational institutions still use standardized test scores	30- 31
Conclusion	32
Bibliography	33- 38

Abstract

Is standardized testing a valid method to determine the acceptance or denial of a high school student into an educational institution? This thesis is a scholarly essay that examines the unintended consequences of requiring SAT or ACT scores for educational institution admittance. This project explores other methods for colleges and universities to use as a way of determining whether or not a student should be accepted or denied into the institution. Specifically, in my project, I researched the reasonings behind using standardized test scores as a primary method for determining the admittance of a student, the unintended consequences of requiring standardized test scores, and different options educational institutions can use to weigh the acceptance or denial of a student.

The goal of this project is to synthesize existing research on this topic for college/university educators and administrators, who have yet to be informed about the drawbacks of requiring standardized test scores for institutional admittance. In order to address these points, I have conducted a meta-analysis of current, published research regarding standardized tests and college admissions. I have discovered that there are multiple unintended consequences of the SAT and ACT such as racism and socioeconomic bias. I have also researched other methods educational institutions can use to determine admittance such as becoming test- optional and interviewing potential students.

Introduction

“Over ninety percent of colleges and universities in the United States require either the SAT or ACT,” according to the work of F.E. Vars and W.G. Bowen in 1998 (Bowen & Vars, 1998, p. 7). Many colleges in the United States require students SAT or ACT scores for college admittance. Colleges and universities have regarded SAT and ACT scores as a significant aspect of determining institutional admittance. However, in the past few years, there has been a growing uproar regarding the SAT and ACT and their use and misuse in both the admissions process and assessment of educational institutions (Zwick, 2002, p. 32).

The Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and now in 2021 has decreased the usage of standardized tests which therefore has decreased this uproar (Future Education, 2020, p. 1). Many colleges and universities have stopped requiring standardized test scores due to testing center closures and the strain of the pandemic. Test-makers canceled previously planned sessions of the ACT and SAT and shifted those exams to later dates, though many of those sessions had to be scrapped due to pandemic-related concerns. In response, many colleges reacted to the pandemic by removing testing requirements for applicants and announcing test-optional requirements, with their length varying by school. From an article by Future Education, they state,

More than half of all four-year colleges and universities in the country have temporarily waived test requirements for applicants since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, including the sprawling 23-campus, 480,000-student California State University system, the entire Ivy League and other prominent private institutions like Duke, Amherst, Stanford, and Williams. (Future Education, 2020, p. 1)

Simply, many four-year colleges are no longer requiring SAT or ACT scores due to the pandemic. The SAT and ACT have been regarded as one of the key factors for determining a student's admittance which makes it shocking that largely populated well-known higher education schools would eliminate the usage of standardized test scores. The article goes on to explain,

The pandemic may finally signal the beginning of the end of mandatory admissions testing, which would be a big step in the right direction.

Moving the SAT and the ACT away from the center of the admissions stage would encourage colleges and universities to engage more deeply with their applicants and to value a wider range of talents. It would also help make the nation's selective college campuses look more like the nation itself, an important step toward racial and economic equity. (Future Education, 2020, p. 1)

Based on the article above a majority of colleges and universities will no longer be requiring standardized test scores for admittance. It is most likely that a majority of colleges and universities will follow suit once all of the largely populated and well-known educational institutions have turned to test-optional. This is a step in the right direction due to the many unintended consequences of the SAT and ACT. All students will have a greater opportunity to attend the college of their choice with the removal of SAT and ACT requirements or alternate admittance methods.

How standardized testing entered society

How did the concept of standardized testing enter society? An article from Dan Fletcher from Time Magazine explains, "In the Western world, examiners usually favored giving essays, a tradition stemming from the ancient Greeks' affinity for the Socratic method" (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). But as the Industrial Revolution (and the progressive movement of the early 1800s that followed) took school-age kids out of the farms and factories and put them behind desks, standardized examinations emerged as an easy way to test large numbers of students quickly (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). During the Industrial Revolution, many children did not attend school because they were needed to work in factories and farms, as more and more products were being produced (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). However, once the industrial revolution began to slow and

the progressive era came forward, students were sent back to school (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1).

Why schools used standardized tests

Schools used standardized tests as a way to place students in their correct academic level courses (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). Then, in 1905 psychologist Alfred Binet developed a standardized test for intelligence (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). The test has been adapted to what we now call an IQ test. The test that Binet developed was given to soldiers during World War I (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). The test determined what kind of jobs soldiers would have during the war. Next, the SAT was founded in 1926 (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was developed by the College Board, a nonprofit group of universities and other educational organizations (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). The original test lasted 90 minutes and consisted of 315 questions testing knowledge of vocabulary and basic math (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). Fletcher explains,

The test grew and by 1930 assumed its now-familiar form, with separate verbal and math tests. By the end of World War II, the test was accepted by enough universities that it became a standard rite of passage for college-bound high school seniors. It remained largely unchanged (save

the occasional tweak) until 2005, when the analogies were done away with and a writing section was added. (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1)

Later, in 1959 the ACT was developed by Everett Franklin from the University of Iowa (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). The test was developed to compete against the SAT. The exam included a section that guided students toward a course of study by asking questions about their interests (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). In addition to math, reading, and English skills, the ACT assessed students on their knowledge of scientific facts and principles; the test is scored on a scale of 0 to 36 (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1). Today, students have the choice of taking either the SAT or ACT. Students show a propensity for one test or the other: the SAT is geared toward testing logic, while the ACT is considered more a test of accumulated knowledge (Fletcher, 2009, p. 1).

Purpose of Standardized Testing

The SAT was created in an attempt to standardize college admissions procedures and increase access to higher education (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1). The Manhattan Review states,

In the late 19th century, it was common for individual universities to have their own admissions tests or to grant acceptances to students without testing through certification of specific high schools. Higher education at

this time was largely a privilege of the upper classes, with only about 1 in 25 high school graduates going on to college. (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1)

Before the creation of the SAT very few students attended college, and those that did attend college were of the upper class. Therefore, the creation of the SAT allowed all students, not just students of the upper class, to have a chance at attending an educational institution (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1). All students could take the SAT regardless of their class. This meant that if students from lower-income families scored high on the SAT they had a chance of attending college.

Another purpose of the SAT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1). A student's score on the SAT allows colleges to determine if particular students are ready to take on the university's course load. For example, if a student scores low on the SAT, a university might say that the student is not yet prepared for the university's course work. However, all universities weigh the SAT scores differently. Universities such as Harvard and Stanford require students to score very high on the SAT due to their rigorous course load. Other universities like Western Oregon University, focus more on a student's high school GPA and only

require SAT scores for students with a low GPA. Universities use standardized test scores as an indicator of success (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1). If students perform well on the SAT, then they have a greater chance of succeeding at the educational institution (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1). Students that score low on the SAT, have a lesser chance of succeeding at the educational institution (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1).

Overall, the SAT and ACT are used to determine college admittance because they are standardized (Manhattan Review, 1999, p. 1). Students can take either the SAT or ACT. Both tests are standardized meaning that all students taking either test are being asked similar questions, regarding mathematics and literacy. The questions have to be similar or the same to ensure that the test is equal for all students. All students have an equal opportunity when taking the test because the questions on either test are similar or the same for all students taking either test. This creates a fair opportunity for students.

Literature Review

The investigative question for my literature review is, should standardized testing be required for college admittance? I have conducted a meta-analysis of current, published research regarding standardized tests and college admissions. I have discovered that there are multiple unintended consequences of the SAT

and ACT such as racism and socioeconomic bias. I have also researched other methods educational institutions can use to determine admittance such as becoming test-optional and interviewing potential students. I gathered my information from existing publications regarding the topic. I used the Western Oregon Library website to find almost all of the articles and journals I used in my literature review. I also typed information into Google to see what kind of articles and journals would appear. Both on the Western Oregon Library database and on Google, some of the keywords and phrases I used included, bias in standardized testing, socioeconomic bias in standardized testing, racism in standardized testing, test-optional schools, unintended consequences of the SAT or ACT, and purpose of the SAT. Other phrases I used were, the history of standardized testing, methods for determining college admittance, and how COVID affects standardized testing. I selected materials that had been published in the last 15 years. I only used articles and journals from the United States. All of the journals and articles I included in my literature review were peer-reviewed.

To determine whether or not I would use certain articles or journals in my literature review, I would begin by reading the abstract. If the abstract included information relevant to my topics such as bias in standardized testing, socioeconomic bias in standardized testing, racism in standardized testing, test-optional schools, and unintended consequences of the SAT or ACT, I would skim

through the source and take notes while reading. After compiling a few sources, I analyzed which sources would best support my investigative question. I analyzed the sources by closely reading each journal or article and then copying down quotes that I wanted to include in my thesis. I then chose the sources that I believed would answer my investigative question and provide detailed evidence that supports the question.

Introduction to Unintended Consequences

Although some believe that standardized tests are a great predictor of academic success and are equitable for all students, many believe that standardized tests have unintended consequences (Strauss, 2020, p. 1). Some of these consequences include socio-economic issues, biased test questions, and disregard for other important qualities of a student (Strauss, 2020, p. 1). There has been extensive research that examines these unintended consequences. Below is a literature review of the research that has been conducted regarding these consequences. The literature review also addresses other methods colleges have or could use to determine college admittance, such as going test-optional and interviewing students.

Unintended Consequences of the SAT and ACT

The SAT and ACT alone are not a strong predictor of academic success and therefore lead to many unintended consequences (Strauss, 2020, p. 1). Every individual offers a multitude of qualities that contribute to determining their success at an educational institution. An article from the College Board website lists the following qualities universities look for in a college student; leadership, initiative, social responsibility, collaboration, curiosity, and organization. These qualities cannot be demonstrated using standardized tests. Standardized tests solely focus on a student's knowledge of mathematics and literacy (College Board, 2020, p. 1). If educational institutions are looking for the aforementioned qualities in a student, other admittance methods need to be considered. If educational institutions solely focus on a student's standardized test scores and their high school GPA, they will be unaware of the qualities students need to possess in order to be successful. Students that may score high on standardized tests, may lack some of the essential qualities to be successful in college. Students that may score low on standardized tests, may hold the qualities necessary to be successful. If educational institutions do not consider the “whole” student, then there is a high possibility that they will be denying students that will be a great asset to their institution (Strauss, 2020, p. 1).

Different Types of Intelligence

Standardized testing only focuses on two types of intelligence; logical and linguistic. However, in recent years views of intelligence have emerged.

Psychologist Howard Gardner proposed that there are eight different types of intelligence(s) a person may possess. These eight intelligences include logical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, linguistic, and naturalist (Gardner, 2000, p. 1). Gardner explains, “We may all have these intelligences, but our profile of these intelligence may differ individually based on genetics or experience” (Gardner, 2000, p. 1). Simply, everyone has a little piece of each intelligence, but some people have more of one intelligence than others based on their life experiences. Because the SAT and ACT only score two of the eight intelligences. They are forgetting or leaving behind students of other intelligences. All of the eight intelligences should be considered when evaluating a student's admittance to a college or university. Every student learns differently and has preferred learning styles (Gardner, 2000, p. 1). The SAT and ACT require students to sit in a room for hours at a time and answer questions. Some students have different intelligences or learning styles that are not brought forward during the SAT or ACT. Students need to have the opportunity to demonstrate their intelligence in a way that best suits them.

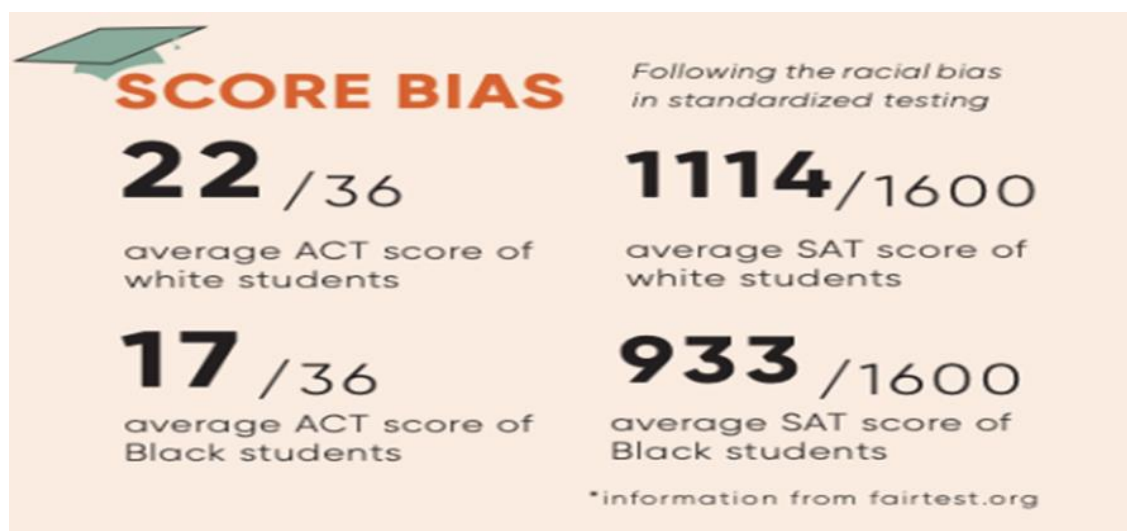
Racial Bias

In the journal *Rethinking the SAT*, Rebecca Zwick explains “Opponents of these tests have argued that they are biased with regard to race and that they correlate to socioeconomic status. On average African American and Hispanic students score one standard deviation below the mean on the SAT” (Zwick, 2002, p. 32). Simply, African Americans score lower on the SAT than white students. Figure 1, breaks down the average SAT and ACT of white and black students. There are multiple causes behind this statistic, such as the way the SAT and ACT are written, and the resources available in geographical locations. The test has biased test-question selection algorithms that systematically discriminate against blacks (Zwick, 2002, p. 32). High-stakes testing also causes additional damage to some students who are categorized as English language learners (ELLs). The tests are often inaccurate for ELLs, according to FairTest, leading to misplacement or retention. ELLs are, alongside students with disabilities, those least likely to pass graduation tests (Walker, 2021, p. 1). An article by FairTest explains, “On average, students of color score lower on college admissions tests, thus many capable youths are denied entrance or access to so-called “merit” scholarships, contributing to the huge racial gap in college enrollments and completion” (Walker, 2021, p. 1). Students that score high on standardized tests, can often receive academic scholarships from a university. However, because students of

color often score low on standardized tests, they often do not receive scholarships that will help them pay for their tuition (Walker, 2021, p. 1).

Figure 1:

Average Standardized Test Scores Amongst White and Black Students



The main reason minority students tend to score lower on standardized tests is because of their geographic location (Meier, 2021, p. 1). Unfortunately, some minority groups live in low-income communities due to societal history and the placement of those of color (Meier, 2021, p. 1). School districts in low-income communities receive less funding from the community because families are not able to give money to the schools (Meier, 2021, p. 1). Although school districts receive funding from the government, school funding also comes from the surrounding communities. Because schools in low-income areas receive less

funding from the community, the school has fewer resources to support their students and staff (Meier, 2021, p. 1). Therefore, the funding the school does receive is used for the most urgent needs in the school such as curriculum. The schools do not have the funding to provide students with SAT preparation courses and other college preparation resources (Meier, 2021, p. 1).

These biases have long-ranging and damaging consequences not only for students, and their families but also for the economic well-being of their communities (Hasan, 2019 p. 1). For example, the website Greatschools.org, a popular private school rating system, is accelerating racial and socioeconomic segregation (Hasan, 2019 p. 1). The rankings of the schools are based on standardized test scores. People want to send their children to these private schools because they want their children to succeed and go to a superior college (Hasan, 2019 p. 1). However, because many people want to send their children to the best schools and are willing to move to areas with high-ranking schools, only those of higher socioeconomic status are able to move to these areas, leaving those of a lower socioeconomic status stuck in school districts with less standardized testing support (Hasan, 2019 p. 1). Thus, creating a larger socioeconomic gap between communities. FairTest explains, "Affluent and more educated families were better positioned to leverage this new information to capture educational opportunities in communities with the best schools" (Hasan,

2019 p. 1). Simply, high-income families are able to move to better school locations, while low-income families are not.

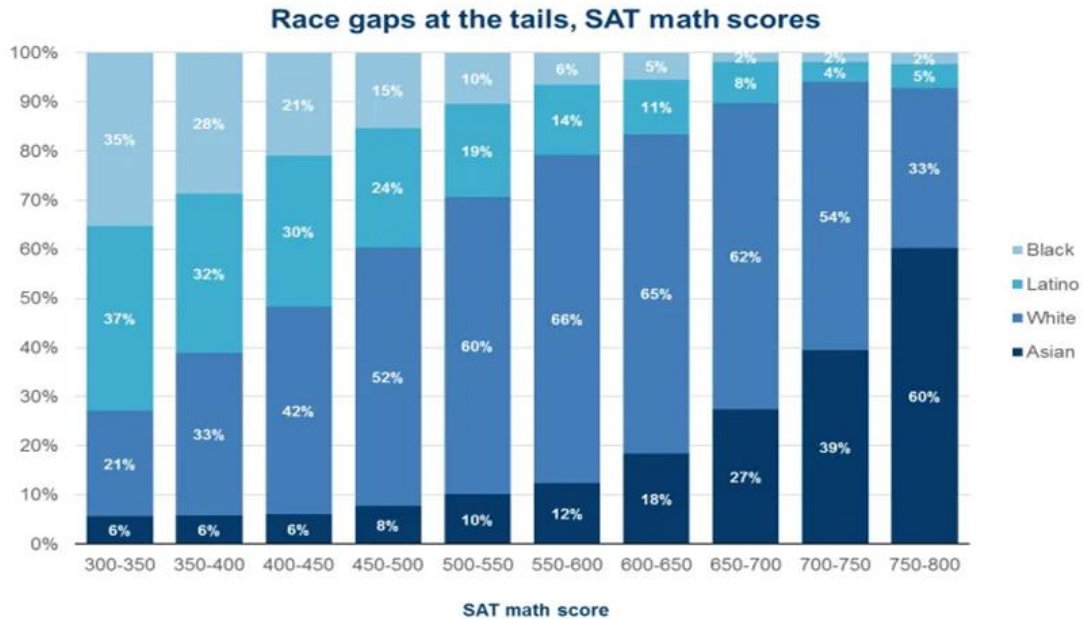
Standardized tests do not take into account other races and ethnicities (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001, p. 2). Standardized tests were originally created by white men after the industrial revolution. As aforementioned the tests were first given to white soldiers during World War I. Although the College Board has adapted standardized tests, the tests are still meant to test the intelligence of white people (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, when white people take the SAT, they use their background knowledge of their experiences and social norms. When people of other races and ethnicities take the SAT, they use their background knowledge relevant to their culture (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001, p. 2). Cultural and social norms affect how test-takers understand and interpret the wording of test questions. How they make sense of the test items can be influenced by their values, beliefs, experiences, communication patterns, teaching and learning styles, and epistemologies of their cultures and societies (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001, p. 2). Thus, people of color score lower on standardized tests because they interpret the test based on their social norms and cultural experiences.

Figure 2 provides an example of the differences in SAT scores for the mathematics section between races. White and Asian people score the highest in

the mathematics sections and Black and Latino people score the lowest. The SAT is also in English, which is the primary language of the United States. Therefore, a student taking the test in a native language other than English may do poorly on the test because they interpret the words differently. For example,

Native American students use a different sentence structure from that of English speakers when forming negative questions. When they are asked, “You don’t like eating this, [do you]?” they respond, “Yes” while they actually mean “Yes, you are right, I don’t like eating it. (Shields, 1997)

Asian students use the same sentence structure as Native Americans. Thus, tests must take into account students’ ways of knowing and demonstrating their knowledge through their use of language. (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003, Swisher & Deyhle, 1992, p. 1) In other words, Native Americans use a different sentence structure than the English language. Therefore, Native Americans may answer a question wrong because they follow their native language sentence structure. Standardized tests are simply unfair for students of different races, cultures, and ethnicities for the aforementioned reasons.

Figure 2*Race Gaps in SAT Math Scores*

Source: College Board, SAT Math Percentile Ranks for 2015 College-Bound Seniors.

BROOKINGS

Note: This graph represents the average percentage Black, Latino, White, and Asian students' score in the SAT mathematics section.

Creation of questions

Furthermore, some people argue that the SAT is biased in the way it creates questions. Jay Rosner in the paper "The SAT: Quantifying the unfairness behind the bubbles" shows that the SAT can be biased by how new questions are created (Rosner, 2011, p. 1). Creating the SAT and new questions is a long process (Chada, 2022, p. 1). First, the questions are all written, and then sent to a

panel for analysis (Chada, 2022, p. 1). Many of the questions do not pass the panel phase. Sasha Chada, from Ivy Scholars, explains,

Questions are then put into their own section of the SAT, with students taking the tests uncertain which sections are legitimate, and which are experimental. This allows the College Board to see how many students get questions right, and which students struggle with which questions. They use this information to determine which of these questions get turned into new SAT questions. They use this information to determine which of these questions get turned into new SAT questions. (Chada, 2022, p. 1)

Students taking the SAT do not know if they are answering questions from an experimental or legitimate test. This allows the test makers to see which questions students get correct or wrong. Then the College Board can determine which questions are placed on the new SAT. Performance on these practice questions can be broken down demographically as well, so you can see what percentage of students got a question right by race or gender (Chada, 2022, p. 1). Therefore, a question that is answered primarily correctly by white people is labeled a “white” question, a question that is answered correctly in the same proportion by all races is labeled ‘neutral.’ Chada examines,

When analyzing the data for testing questions which have been released, it was discovered that 99% of the questions chosen favored white students over black and Hispanic students. Further, 99% of the math questions chosen favored male students over female students. While the questions have all been written in a way meant to be unbiased, the test questions chosen to go on the official SAT do show a pattern of bias. (Chada, 2022, p. 1)

Many of the questions on the SAT favor white male students. Due to the fact that the questions on the SAT favor white people and men, the questions are biased toward those of any other race or gender.

Socioeconomic Bias

Another unintended consequence mentioned in the journal *Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, race, and academic performance in selective colleges and universities* explains that, when the SAT and ACT were first administered, the goal was for students to take the test with little to no preparation for the test except for what they had learned in school (Slack, 1980, p. 154). However, today the industry for test preparation has skyrocketed causing a bias correlating with socioeconomic status. The SAT and ACT preparation industry now offers preparation books and courses that are not offered for free. These resources

have shown that students' scores increase by 100 points or more on the SAT when used correctly (Slack, 1980, p. 154). However, these resources are not available for all students.

Inequitable Test Preparation

The SAT and ACT preparation industry causes a socioeconomic bias within SAT and ACT testing (Vars & Bowen, 1998, p. 457). Researchers Dixon-Roman (2013) and Mcardle (2013) from the University of Southern California found that wealthy students earn higher SAT scores compared to their low-income peers and that the difference in SAT scores between high- and low-income students was twice as large among black students compared to white students (Mcardle & Dixon-Roman, 2013, p. 3). This means that the tests are both racially and economically biased. Minority students often score lower because they live in low-income areas. The same article also mentions,

A 2015 analysis from Inside Higher Ed found that in each of the three parts of the SAT (reading, writing and language and math), the lowest average scores were among students from families who make less than \$20,000 in family income, while the highest averages were among students from families who make more than \$200,000. Inside Higher Ed reports that the biggest gaps were in the reading section. Students with family incomes

below \$20,000 earned average scores of 433, while students with family incomes above \$200,000 earned average scores of 570. (Hess, 2019, p.1)

Overall, students that live in higher-income communities score higher on the SAT than students that live in lower-income communities.

Why do some students outperform others?

So why are wealthier students performing higher on the SAT? One reason is that they can afford to take the test several times, which has been known to increase a student's score (Hess, 2019, p. 1). The cost to take the SAT during the 2018-2019 school year was about \$47.50 for the basic test and \$64.50 to take the test with the full essay section. To take an SAT subject test, students must pay a \$26 registration fee, \$22 for each additional test, and \$26 for each language test (Hess, 2019, p. 1). Many students are not able to afford these fees to take the test one time, let alone two or more times. Another reason they score higher is that students who live in wealthy school districts typically attend better-funded schools (Hess, 2019, p. 1). These funding disparities mean that wealthy students are more likely to attend high schools that have a stronger tax base and provide advantages to their students that students attending lower socioeconomic schools may not receive, giving them advantages in the college application and standardized test-taking processes.

Wealthy students are more likely to attend high schools with a significant number of AP classes, more likely to have access to tutors, and more likely to have taken standardized test preparation classes (Hess, 2019, p. 1). Public schools often don't do enough to prepare students to take the standardized tests required on college applications, so a majority of students will need to pay for some sort of outside college tutoring or test prep to succeed on the exams (Alessandrini, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, students that attend public schools, especially in lower-income areas, cannot afford these test preparation materials, which could potentially cause them to do poorly on the test (Alessandrini, 2020, p. 1). Whereas, students who attend private schools, receive all the standardized test preparation they will need to succeed on the SAT or ACT. The SAT and ACT preparation industry is a billion-dollar industry that is creating a socioeconomic divide in society (Alessandrini, 2020, p. 1).

Issues with Self-Esteem

For many individuals, they believe that SAT and ACT testing is a truthful reflection of their intelligence as explained in the journal article, *The Scholastic Aptitude Test: A Critical Appraisal* by Slack (Slack, 1980, p. 154). Therefore, students who perform poorly on these tests may experience low self-esteem or shame which could then impact their educational path (Slack, 1980, p. 154). Students that score low on the SAT or ACT, are automatically not able to go to

certain educational institutions. This can significantly affect a student's educational path. Students that score low may also feel like they are not intelligent enough to attend college and therefore completely change their educational path, which could become detrimental to their well-being (Slack, 1980, p. 154). An article from Thomas Clawson, a professor at Florida State University, explains that students of color often experience greater test anxiety than white students. He states that students of color experience more anxiety than white students because of the known information that students of color perform lower on the SAT than their white counterparts. This anxiety contributes to lower SAT and ACT scores (Clawson, 2018, p. 1).

Other Methods for Determining Admittance

The level of dissatisfaction with the SAT and ACT has prompted an increasing number of educational institutions to adopt admission policies that place less emphasis on SAT and ACT scores (Future Education, 2020, p. 1). The Coronavirus pandemic of 2019-21 has greatly decreased the use of standardized scores for admission (Future Education, 2020, p. 1). Instead, many colleges have turned to test-optional admissions policies, acceptance based on high school GPA, or required potential students to answer essay questions regarding their personal life or how they will be an asset to the educational institution. In the last decade or so, more than 1,230 colleges and universities have made the SAT and

ACT optional for admission, according to FairTest, a group that has pushed to end testing requirements (Hubler, 2020, p. 1).

Test-Optional

In the journal *SAT wars: The case for test-optional college admissions*, Soares explains why many colleges now prefer the test-optional method and its benefits: One of the greatest benefits of moving away from heavily weighing standardized test scores, he describes, is a substantial increase in college and university diversity (Soares, 2012, p. 7). As aforementioned, students of color are often denied college admittance due to their low SAT and ACT scores. However, if more colleges and universities chose the test-optional route, more students of color will be accepted into universities, making college campuses more diverse. Going test-optional allows colleges and universities to evaluate the “whole” student, rather than solely focus on their intelligence. This will allow more students of different races, ethnicities, and cultures to attend colleges that they have wanted to attend. An article by FairTest explains,

As more schools go test-optional or de-emphasize the SAT and ACT, students will know they will be evaluated more on the basis of their actual performance in the classroom. This should encourage greater attention to academics. Removing test scores from the equation will offer particular

benefits to low-income, minority, first-generation, rural, female, and older students, or, more generally, to any students whose performances on tests do not provide a good or meaningful measure of their academic abilities. (Soares, 2012, p. 7)

As more and more educational institutions turn away from requiring standardized test scores, students will have an equal chance to attend the educational institution of their choice. In turn, educational institutions will have a greater, more diverse range of students. Having a more diverse campus helps create a strong campus community.

Alternative Assessments

Alternative assessments are another admissions policy some colleges and universities are using. Alternative assessments include group projects and interviews. Group projects allow students to collaborate with one another to create a collaborative project. A meta-analysis found that peer-assisted learning is most effective with young, urban, low-income, and minority students (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003, p. 1). Therefore, group projects are a fairer college admittance process because students of all races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses can participate using their own experiences and background knowledge.

Interviews are one of the best ways to evaluate a student's readiness for higher education. Interviews allow the interviewer to get to know the student, rather than solely focus on their test scores (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003, p. 1). Asking students questions such as, how are you going to handle the rigorous coursework, allows the interviewer to see if the student would be a good fit for their educational institution. Students applying for college can often sound 'good on paper.' A student may have high test scores and answer the online application questions perfectly, but once they are being interviewed their personality and answers to questions may be different than what they said on paper. Interviews help educational institutions discover students that would be a great asset to their school.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Educational institutions can also use a student's GPA to determine their admittance. Elaine Allensworth, a University of Chicago researcher explains,

Students' grades are four times more predictive of college success than standardized exam scores. GPA is "incredibly predictive" of how students will do in college, no matter which high school they attend, and helping students get better grades is a stronger strategy for improving readiness for college than working to get higher test scores. (Allensworth, 2020, p. 1)

A student's GPA shows a wide range of a student's strengths and capabilities. Allensworth also says that students need to have lots of general knowledge across many different topic areas and they need to show consistent effort over a period of time (Allensworth, 2020, p. 1). The SAT and ACT only focus on literacy and mathematics. They also do not demonstrate a student's effort over a period of time. Using a student's GPA as a method for determining educational institution admittance is a strong predictor of a student's success at the university or college they plan to attend (Allensworth, 2020, p. 1).

Why do educational institutions still use standardized test scores?

Why do colleges and universities still require standardized test scores? Many educational institutions still require SAT and ACT scores because many colleges fear that dropping their SAT or ACT requirements will signal to potential applicants that they are also lowering their academic standards and because they are cheap; colleges pay nothing for applicants' test scores; students pay all the costs (Strauss, 2019, p. 1). Although there are many critics of the SAT and ACT, there are a few benefits. An article from New York Times states,

The tests provide important information beyond assessing achievement.

Some studies have shown that SAT and ACT scores, combined with a student's grade point average and other factors, can help predict a

student's success in college, especially in the crucial first year. (Hubler, 2020, p. 1).

In summary, standardized tests are beneficial in some aspects because they can help predict student success in college.

The same article also mentions that getting rid of the tests would mean revising the whole mechanism for admissions — retraining admissions officers, redoing applications and rethinking an entire methodology (Hubler, 2020, p. 1). Completely getting rid of requiring the scores would require colleges and universities to create a new method(s) for determining a student's admittance (Hubler, 2020, p. 1). This may be challenging for many educational institutions and it will also take lots of time and potentially money. An article by Forbes magazine argues,

Dropping a standardized test requirement necessarily means that admissions committees must rely more heavily on high school grades. But if grades become the metric by which applicants are judged, high schools will have an incentive to hand out A's like Halloween candy. Grade inflation of this sort could destroy high school GPA's usefulness as an indicator of student aptitude. (Cooper, 2020, p. 1)

This would be a large issue for colleges and universities. This is actually an issue during the Coronavirus pandemic. Many teachers are not giving their students grades below a C because of the strain of online school and the pandemic (Hubler, 2020, p. 1). However, there are many other methods educational institutions can choose from to determine a student's admittance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are benefits to using the SAT and ACT to determine a student's admittance to an educational institution. However, there are also many unintended consequences such as racial and socioeconomic bias. Colleges and universities should use multiple types of student information to determine a student's admittance. For example, educational institutions should use essays, interviews, standardized test scores, and group projects together to decide whether or not a student would make a great asset to their school. It is important for educational institutions to evaluate the whole student, rather than just their test scores. Students must have many necessary qualities in order to be successful as a university, and a standardized test does not determine these qualities.

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