

# **The Hour to End the SAT I Test in College Admissions**

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## ABSTRACT

Exploration of student performances on the SAT I exam reveal race-based scoring trends. The ability of White students to consistently outperform their Latino counterparts highlights the tests' racial bias. By using SAT I test scores as criteria to be admitted into universities, educational institutions are acting as promoters of racial inequality.

Focusing on themes of the test's capacity to measure innate intelligence, accommodations being made for ELL students, school funding discrepancies between races, and the ideology of colorblindness, I will show why it is time to reconsider the SAT I exam as a part of the college admissions process.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale for Undertaking the Investigation

Before teaching a SAT I test prep course, specifically pertaining to the Critical Reading and Writing sections, I had never thought about the difficulties the test posed to students who had a limited proficiency in the English language. However, the students enrolled in the course had all emigrated from the Dominican Republic with varying exposures to English. Now, they were matriculated in courses at Salem High School and expected to take the exam in order to apply to colleges the following year, just like the majority of their peers who had been living in the United States since birth. I regularly heard these students express fear that they would not be able to achieve the necessary scores to be able to enroll in their preferred universities and would then be stuck going to a lesser school that did not specialize in their intended area of study. It was normal to hear other students explain to each other that they were planning on attending North Shore Community College because that school does not care if a student received low SAT I test scores. This is the reason which fueled me to further investigate the problems associated with the SAT I test. The relationship these Latino students had with the exam was concerning and prompted research on this topic while looking at a larger scale, outside of my one tiny class.

The possibility that this SAT I test could limit a student's access to a school of their choice, translated to the limiting of a student's future opportunities. Simply, it struck me as something that was exceedingly unfair given the amount of hard work these students were consistently putting in and the good grades the majority were receiving in

school. Being unable to study in a certain university due to insufficient standardized testing scores certainly makes one question the current practices of the educational system in terms of the importance of one test; even more so when it is seen that White students are consistently outperforming Latino students, a fact which directly raises suspicion about the test being inherently biased. These are the reasons that have caused me to focus my research, in the form of a literary review, on the SAT I test and the ways in which this test is essentially a manifestation of systemic discrimination in the institution of education.

### Overview

By using SAT I test scores as criteria to be admitted into universities, even though statistics continue to show lower scores amongst minority students, the educational institutions are acting as promoters of racial inequality. Working behind the scenes, the educational system limits opportunities for Latino students in terms of college acceptances because students of color continuously receive lower marks, essentially highlighting the test as racially biased. The fact that Latino students have a tendency to receive lower scores than Whites shows how race is having a negative impact. This indicates that something about the test is inherently unfair, and therefore the use of it as criteria to enter into the university is consequently unfair.

Focusing on the themes of the exam's failure to measure innate intelligence and the notion of colorblindness that exists in the United States, these sections of the investigation will explore the problems with universities using the SAT I exam to determine which students should be invited into their school and which should be turned away. This investigation will explore the way in which the exam itself is formatted and

the state rules and regulations concerning the test; focusing on discovering if the test is truly measuring the achievements of Latino students fairly. Next, this paper will delineate how colorblindness is negatively impacting the educational opportunities of Latino students by promoting the myth of meritocracy; a belief that persists in the United States.

The next sections will be focusing on the aspects of high school funding and college admissions practices, where an exploration of White experiences will be compared with those of minority Latino students to depict that there is still a large degree of systemic racism present in the education institution. This part of the investigation will explore the funding of high schools in areas of near all-White school districts, and districts in which White students become the minority; looking for disparities between the two which are connected to the students' potential preparedness when taking the SAT I exam. Additionally, this investigation will examine evolving college admissions practices. The study of both thematic sections of high school funding and college admissions will illustrate how the idea of merit-based accomplishment, when it comes to education, is a widely held misconception. SAT I exams reflect inequalities amongst races and should no longer be used, as they only work to perpetuate the myth of meritocracy in the United States. By uncovering the ways in which the exam is unfairly setting up Whites for success while Latinos struggle and by showing and how the use of this biased exam is perpetuated by the belief in meritocracy, it will reveal the need for universities to rethink their admissions practices.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Failure to Measure Innate Intelligence

William Beaver, a professor at Robert Morris College, published the article *Is it Time to Replace the SAT?*, in which he details how both the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Colorado have had professors who investigated the value of the SAT I exam and its ability to do its job, so to say. According to College Board's website, "The SAT is a globally recognized college admission test that lets you show colleges what you know and how well you can apply that knowledge." (College Board). Basically, the SAT I scores have been used by universities in order to predict the academic performance of a student within their first year at a university (Atkinson 2). Contrary to the belief that the test is able to predict a student's future performance, University of Pennsylvania professors, James Crouse and Dale Trusheim wrote a book titled *The Case Against the SAT*, in which they proposed that, "the predictive value of the SAT is not particularly significant and perhaps not worth the trouble" (Beaver 38). Professor Robert Linn of the University of Colorado also drew the same conclusions in his similar investigation (Beaver 38). The fact that the SAT I exams are not good indicators of how successful a student will be within his or her first year of attending the university is role failure on the part of the exam; the test is unable to fulfill its intended purpose and now the reason why must be explored.

A deeper look into the SAT I exam shows the test's inability to predict a student's performance once they enter into the university. The main problem with this is the fact that the test does not actually measure the intellectual abilities of a student. The first

piece of evidence as to why an individual's test score should not be considered merit-based, or stemming from one's own perseverance in their studies, is the fact that through costly tutoring programs, such as Kaplan, which offer instructional classes guaranteed to have "proven, score-raising strategies" as promoted by their website page, students can easily raise their scores if they have the money to pay for such services (Kaplan Test Prep). Promising that students will be able to score higher after utilizing their tutoring, Kaplan even has the confidence to promise to return the money of anyone who does not improve their score (de Simone 15). This raises two problems. The first is the fact that a test that supposedly measures innate intelligence should not, in fact, be able to be tutored and the second is the fact that money can buy a student higher scores. This confidence Kaplan has about being able to increase a student's score is due to the fact that by learning test taking strategies it is easy to see improvement. This means the scores that the students are receiving have more to do with whether or not they have the money to invest in these expensive classes; they don't really measure the academic achievement of the students if scores can be raised just by learning test-taking strategies (de Simone 15). The current practices of universities who still use SAT I scores as admissions criteria give off the message that they are okay with the fact that money can buy higher exam grades on the exam. All of this leads to the uncomfortable suggestion that these universities who continue to utilize the SAT I test scores as admissions criteria are actually okay with comparing students who have the financial ability to afford these score-boosting resources right next to those who are unable to afford similar resources, and then believe they have the right to decide that the students with higher scores were more deserving of admittance than the others.

## Provisions for ELL Students

In addition to a test whose score can be improved thanks to money, the test fails to measure the innate intellectual abilities to a greater degree when focusing on ELL students in terms of the insufficient amount of provisions provided to them. According to the National Education Association website, the latest census data indicates that 79% of all ELL students declared that Spanish was their native language (McKeon). The reason for including data about ELL students in this investigation is due to the significant number of Latinos who make up the ELL student population and also to show the continued failure of the exam to measure what it declares its function to be, innate intelligence. Published in a 2008 College Board research report, the authors King and Young conducted an in-depth study of nationally suggested modifications and the accommodations that individual states implement in the case of ELL students. In the list of recommendations, modifications include extra time, breaks, bilingual dictionaries, glossaries, the exam to be written in the native language, or a simplified version of English and more (King and Young 3). However, in 2008, Massachusetts only provided for one modification out of the 26 which was the use of a translation dictionary with no definitions. (King and Young 8-10). This goes against the belief of the creators of the exam who think that the provision of extra time is the most reasonable way to modify the exam for ELL students when looking at the list of possible accommodations. The investigation states that, “For admissions tests such as the SAT I... allowing extra testing time for ELL examinees would be a reasonable accommodation, particularly since this accommodation is already available to some examinees, such as students with disabilities” (King and Young 4). The fact that Massachusetts schools do not provide

extra time for students to complete the exam means that if students do choose to utilize the translation dictionary, which they are provided with, they suffer greatly because they will spend precious time looking up unfamiliar words. By not allowing ELL students to have extra-time, or other accommodations, shows that certain states are not aware of the fact that by failing to provide modifications, they are directly causing the test to fail in its intended purpose of measuring innate intelligence. Innate intelligence should not be harmed by a language barrier. Any problems associated by a lack of English language proficiency should be diminished as much as possible when students take the exam.

It seems as if the test-makers are in agreement with this previously stated idea of the necessity to provide modifications to aide ELL students with any language barriers. This same 2008 article proposes that, “one of the few, if not the only, accommodation that has been demonstrated to narrow the achievement gap between ELLs and nonELLs is the linguistic modification of test items” (King and Young 3). The quote continues to say that only 10 states use this accommodation of presenting the test through simplified English. This illustrates the injustice in the accommodations that many Latino ELL students are receiving at the state level. Perhaps there should be a movement for all states to coincide with the same nationally-suggested regulations in order to maintain some sort of uniformity, but also to give students a fair shot when looking at provisions that actually help. The problem is that at this point in time, everything is considered an experiment and there are no results that determine which states are doing it right and which are failing. While the researchers wait for empirical evidence to come about, one investigator named Karantonis, who was an intern for the Educational Testing Service, conducted a literature review on which she comments that, “Upon reviewing the research

on the validity of accommodations for ELLs, there was not a single accommodation that was found to be ‘unequivocally reasonable’” (King and Young 3). The future implications to continue using these exams without proper and fair accommodations would be the continuation of limiting educational opportunities and eventually work related opportunities for Latino students.

### Colorblind Ideology

It is important to realize the reasons why such a test has failed to be removed from the list of college admission criteria despite the fact that the test is partial to White students and has been shown to not truly measure the innate intellectual abilities of students in general. Although racial discrimination is illegal according to U.S. law, systemic racism has been built into the practices of institutions making up the United States, including the educational system. It continues to operate successfully due to the popular idea of colorblindness which feeds fuel into the myth that the U.S. is a meritocracy. Explained by Gallagher, a Professor of Sociology at Georgia State University, in his article named *Color-Blind Privilege: The Social and Political Functions of Erasing the Color Line in Post Race America*, to be colorblind means that we do not admit the fact that there is still a racial hierarchy existent that affects everyday life (Gallagher 93). Colorblindness fools society into not seeing the racial inequalities, for any acknowledgment of race would be uncomfortably considered a type of racism. Academic and professor Bonilla-Silva predicts this colorblindness to reach a whole new level as the United States moves towards being what he refers to as a tri-racial hierarchy order, “if the state decides to stop gathering racial statistics, the struggle to document the impact of race in a variety of social venues will become monumental.” (Bonilla-Silva

12). Recognizing the problems of becoming a fully color and race-blind society, Bonilla-Silva expresses himself in a concerned manner. He acknowledges that it is this willful blindness that allows discriminatory practices to slip under the radar and penetrate society, going unchallenged. The SAT I test is one example of a discriminatory practice that has not gotten all of the recognition and scrutiny it deserves.

Gallagher's findings indicate that the support of a colorblind ideology is already rampant in the U.S. The majority of Whites who live in the United States see the country as a place of equality; however the minorities do not share this same optimistic viewpoint. For some reason, there exists this belief that by pretending to be blind to race, racial barriers have been ripped down and that discrimination is a problem of the past; no longer affecting our lives (Gallagher 91-92). The inability to recognize the presence of systemic racism is what permits the idea that the United States is indeed a meritocracy to prosper. The concept that an individual's, in this case a student's achievements, are based on merit, explains falsely that any success a student may achieve comes from their own personal persistence and drive; the ability to succeed is based in motivation and dedication. Wrongfully, this ignores the fact that upon the moment of birth, circumstances such as race, social class, and gender have profound impact on a student's ability to succeed and consequently their future test scores.

The idea that the United States is a meritocracy is nothing more than an illusion that ignores various important facts that impact the success of a person, for example, the closely intertwined factors of race and social class. In the belief that all have an equal opportunity to succeed on the exam, there should not be consistent disparities between racial groups. Looking specifically at data from 2013, White students received higher

scores, just as in years past, on all sections of the exam, which respectively were 527, 524 and 515, while Latino students received lower scores in all three categories which were 450, 461, and 443 respectively (The College Board 2-3). Race-based scoring trends that are visible when looking at SAT I scores directly contradict the belief that a student's performance on the exam is merit-based and reveal that there are powerful structures at work, more than the student's motivation and perseverance. Stemming from the idea that the United States should be a colorblind society, merit prospers. Whether this colorblindness is unintentional or not, Gallagher accusingly argues that "Colorblind ideology serves to maintain white privilege by making it [racial hierarchy] invisible while removing the need for race-based social programs" (Gallagher 93). The continued use of SAT I exams suggests that the United States is being colorblind when it comes to these tests and is refusing to see the consistent racial disparities, further promoting inequality between Whites and Latinos.

In the ongoing effort to create equality amongst all races within the population of the United States, opportunity-limiting practices that reveal racial patterns must be condemned. In the case of the SAT I exam, where statistics continue to show significantly lower test scores for those who classify themselves as Hispanic when compared to Whites, action must be taken to resolve the disparities that are seen. If test scores do not meet the university's requirements, students can be turned away. Currently, the implications of not receiving a college education can be financially crippling. "The importance of education beyond high school in determining economic well-being has grown substantially, mainly because of shifts in the structure of demand in the labor market that have favored workers at higher education levels" (Bailey et al. 157). In a

world where higher education is closely linked with better economic futures and occupational opportunities, it is critical that access is not limited according to race. Best put by John Gardner, a former president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in Lemann's book, *The Best Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*, "Those who receive the most education are going to move into virtually all the key jobs. Thus the question 'Who should go to college?' translates itself into the more compelling question 'Who is going to manage the society?'" (Lemann 348). Gardener's thought-provoking questions point out the link between education and control. It is important to recognize the need to reevaluate the opportunity limiting SAT I exam, which has been seen to be unfair. By using partial tests to determine who should be admitted to college, these institutions are also determining who will be the future controllers of society.

Keeping in mind Gardener's advice to be conscious of those who receive the education will receive the status that comes along with it, it is essential to look at the rapidly growing Latino community while keeping in mind that, as stated in the 2009 research of Desmond and López Turley, professors at the University of Wisconsin, Latino "access to and attendance at institutions of higher education remains, as it did nearly 40 years ago (Astin 1982), the lowest in the country vis-à-vis non-Hispanic whites, blacks, and Asians" (Desmond and López Turley 311). Frankly speaking, if these trends persist where Latinos show low rates of college attendance, those who hold influential positions in the society will be disproportionately White in terms of the society's demographics. Without attaining the higher education that is overwhelmingly required by these positions of power, Latino's will be unable to fill the roles, which, with their

growing population, has a troubling meaning. According to 2010 census data, 16% of the U.S. population was reportedly Hispanic or Latino and rapidly growing (Albert, Ennis, and Ríos-Vargas 1). Furthermore, statistics from the Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends Project predict that by the year 2050, Latinos will account for 29% of the population (Cohn and Passel). Lack of representation on the part of Latino's will lead to a lack of societal cohesion. Unequal or nonexistent presence of a racial group can cause serious repercussions as seen in our recent history of the race-linked 1992 Los Angeles riots. If institutions such as universities are allowed to persist in using unfair admissions criteria, like the SAT I exam, the educational opportunities of Latinos will continue to be limited, leading to future implications.

#### The Importance of High School Funding

As explained by university professor Charles Gallagher, an overwhelming majority of people in the United States feel that the country is a place of equality, in which an individual's successes stem from merit and not the color of their skin (Gallagher 91-92). It is this dangerous belief in meritocracy that permits universities to use the scores students receive on standardized tests as criteria to be admitted into their school. The assumed fairness of the test is predicated on the merit-based ideology in which all students have the equal opportunity to perform well if they have put forth effort into their schooling. However, these SAT I exams continue to show lower scores in the test's three sections amongst minority groups, including Latino's. These patterns of disparities between races reveal that there is something inherently biased about the exam itself.

The effects the interrelations between race and social class have are impossible to ignore when students take this particular exam, so it is important to look at the economic situation of Latinos in comparison to Whites. This exploration of economic situations leads to the idea of problems associated with potential preparedness to take the exam. Firstly, as indicated by census data, many Latino immigrants do not have the ability to escape from their social class (Donato 13). An investigation into the social class differences reveals there are large discrepancies between races, and Latinos tend to belong more often to the lower classes than Whites. One possible reason for the differences seen in SAT I test scores between Whites and Latinos is their access to preparation materials in terms of taking the exam. "Access to preparation varies according to social class; it turned out to be a key lever in the social transmission of privilege. (Alon 463). Differences of school districts in terms of financing will show the possible disparities in the potential preparedness of the students when taking the SAT I exam.

Further inspection into the scoring differences between Whites and Latinos reveals the importance of having access to preparation resources and how race and class work together in a manner that is negatively impacting the potential preparedness of Latino students. Data from a 2012 report from the National Center for Education Statistics shows the disproportionate number of minority students who attend schools in high poverty neighborhoods. According to the released report, 38% of Latino students were enrolled in schools that were considered to be high poverty, while only 6% of White students attended these same high poverty schools (NCES vii). Here, the links between race and social class can be noticed and it is important to realize the impact these factors

have on the education of an individual. Census data from 2007-2011 shows that of the Hispanic population, 23.2% live below the poverty line, but only 11.6 of the White population live below the poverty line (Bishaw, Macartney and Fontenot 12). In the United States, it has been seen that Latino students are more likely to attend schools that are struggling to meet state-wide standards. According to the NCES, each school has determined standards by the state which are based on the criteria contained in the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization*, which the school must follow, but when looking at the results in the ability of the school to arrive at their goals, differences along racial lines are seen. In the 2008-09 school year, 48% of Latino students attended a school that did not meet the states criteria for adequate yearly progress, while the percentage of White students was at 33% (NCES vii). The inability of the schools to meet the goals set forth by the state shows that Latino students, when compared to Whites, are not receiving the education needed to perform at the expected levels. This idea comes back to the importance of school funding and how it affects the performance of students on exams like the SAT I. These schools are not the recipients of the same amount of resources as schools situated in wealthier communities, which points to the importance of a schools geographical location and the social class of the surrounding community.

Geographically speaking, lower-class neighborhoods and middle/upper-class neighborhoods are highly segregated and separated from one another, which has consequences in terms of the education children will receive. According to Brown University professor John Logan, “the average American still ‘lives in a neighborhood that’s a lot like himself or herself in terms of race’” (Gurian). Living in a lower-class

community directly affects the potential preparedness of students taking the SAT I exam, due to the fact that schools receive part of their funding from local tax dollars. Wealthier communities have the ability to better fund their school systems, giving those students better access to resources such as professional instruction, test-preparation books, and more. The 2012 report from the NCES shows how school funding has the ability to directly impact the SAT I scores of students, “Higher percentages of ... Whites (51 percent) than Hispanics (38 percent) attended schools in which the counseling program’s primary goal was postsecondary planning and preparation” (NCES vii). Keeping in mind that White students are more likely than Latinos to belong to middle/upper-class neighborhoods, studies have revealed exactly how race, in conjunction with social class has the ability to impact one’s preparedness in taking the exam. The postsecondary planning and preparation that is mentioned guides students in the application process of colleges, including providing information about PSAT’s and SAT exams. The quality of education that the district is able to provide for the students impacts preparation in taking the SAT exams to enter into the universities. The fact that Latino’s are more likely to attend schools that do not provide this type of counsel suggests a perpetuation of inequality between races.

There is direct evidence that shows a correlation between the wealth of the geographical location of the school district and the test scores of students as stated in Stanley Fish’s article *Affirmative Action and the SAT’s*. He confirms that, “statistical studies have established that test scores are calibrated to income and ZIP codes” (Fish 83). Other studies also concur with Fish that the link between a students’ preparation to take the exam is connected to the social class in which they belong. In a study entitled

*Shadow Education, American Style: Test Preparation, the SAT and College Enrollment*, Claudia Buchmann, Dennis Condrón and Vincent Roscigno investigate the connections between social class and resources that students use to prepare for the exam, “Findings highlight the class gap in test preparation, it is not surprising that the race gap in preparation is most glaring among the privileged...This preparation, in turn, promotes access to more selective institutions” (Alon 467). It is important to realize the overwhelming connections of being Latino and belonging to a lower social class in order to fully grasp why Latinos are continuing to receive lower scores than White students. It is not a race factor alone, but the conjunction of race and social class working together that produce problems for many Latino students.

In addition to available resources within the school system, it is important to talk about resources that come from a student’s life outside of school, which is also linked to his or her family’s social status. Professional development leader in education, Doug Buehl, discusses the importance of having access to this academic knowledge beyond the classroom in his book *Developing Readers in the Academic Disciplines*. In a chart exploring the “matchup gaps” between students, Buehl shows that a student who has low academic knowledge but a high processing ability can find it, “increasingly difficult ...to give top effort, especially when other similarly able classmates do not but still have more success with classroom tasks” (Buehl 87). It is conceivable that lower social classes lack many of these important beyond-the-classroom experiences that are available to middle/upper-class students, keeping in mind the tendency of Latino students to belong to lower social classes than Whites.

The scores students receive are related to their cultural experiences they have had the privilege to experience. Another problem is that “the test's questions assume (without stating) a certain uniformity in educational experience and lifestyle and penalize those who, for any number of reasons, have had a different experience and lived different kinds of lives” (Fish 83). The criticism of the exam has to do with the idea that the questions reflect concepts that are prevalent in white culture but are not necessarily part of minorities culture. For example, “FairTest cited a word analogy question in which "regatta" was part of the answer - a question that 53 percent of whites but only 22 percent of blacks answered correctly, thus demonstrating a bias” (Beaver 37). In the article, a similar example is given that talks about the sport of polo where Whites chose the correct answer more frequently than those of other races. These examples demonstrate that the exam uses concepts that favor white upper and white middle-class culture.

Included in the same category of academic knowledge, is the knowledge of how to prepare to apply to universities. It is seen that students who come from families with a past in secondary education will have more opportunities due to the fact that their parents possess experience in taking the SAT I exam. These parents see the value in test preparation, which shows how, although the exam is supposedly connected to merit, it promotes a type of aristocracy having to do with heredity (de Simone 16). Looking at families who have received a post-secondary education in terms of race, it is seen that in 2006, “Latino children are least likely to live with parents who have at least some college education beyond a high school diploma (NCCP 1). This data suggests that, due to Whites having experienced parents who have attended university, they will have an

advantage. If Latinos were in a school system that did not provide adequate resources and information about how to apply for college, it is probable that they will suffer.

If achievement was independent of factors such as race and social class, it would not be possible to observe patterns that are common in the performances of the students on the SAT I exam, therefore the test fails to measure a student's innate intelligence. Social class and race have much influence in their scores on the SAT I exams, which has been demonstrated in the previous paragraphs. In order to eliminate the misconception that these low scores have to do with their future intentions and motivations to attend college, it is important to investigate the goals of the students. The desire of the students, when looking at race, who want to attend a university, does not seem to differ much across the board. Data from the year 2004, concerning high school seniors applying to college, showed that, of those who self-identified as Hispanic, 82% applied while the number for Whites was 88% (NCES xi). The close percentages of school applicants when looking at race, indicates a similar desire of all students to attain a secondary education and should not account for the disparities between test scores of Whites and Latinos.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCLUSIONS

#### SAT II's as a Potential Solution

During the early years of the implementation of the SAT I exam as criteria to enter into the universities, there were researchers interested in seeking out the best methods to measure the preparedness of a student to attend university without factors such as race or social class heavily impacting the test scores of these students. In fact,

researchers thought they had found solution to this problem, “The Measure of Academic Talent (MAT) was ‘an SAT score weighted and revised to account for background factors’ and showed a decrease in score difference between races” (Lemann 271). With this idea, the scores of students would be calibrated to take into account happenstances of their birth that played a role in the scores they were receiving; people from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds would have to recognize that their achievements on the test had much to do with their position in society and not just their native-born intelligence and they would have to abandon their high test score and accept more stratified version of it. Choosing capital over equality, the study did not receive any help from the ETS or the Educational Testing Service, because it would have destroyed their business of test-proctoring, and so the study went unpublished for years (de Simone 16). Because of this withheld information, the SAT I test has been able to firmly hold its position within the education system practices.

The SAT I exam has been widely considered a way to measure the intellectual capacity of students. In the words of William Beaver, “That what the test measures is native intelligence, the raw brain power persons have independently of their social, racial, ethnic, or economic status; it is, we are told, a test of merit” (Beaver 37). This literary review has shown that through the use of the SAT I exam, it is not possible to measure the native intelligence of a student due to the many factors that shape a student’s success on the test, such as race and social class. Duke University professor Stanley Fish agrees that exam scores are influenced by factors that have to do with the accident of our birth into a certain social class and as a certain race which shape out future opportunities and experiences (Fish 83). Due to the growing recognition of the

problems associated with the use of SAT I exams, there are many universities who no longer use the SAT I exam as criteria in their process of admissions (FairTest). Instead, the SAT II subject test exams are a way that current colleges are looking to promote equality in their admissions process. Studies done by the University of California show that these tests do not have the same problems of discrimination that the SAT I exam does.

The SAT I exam, an aptitude test, is not about what has been learned in the school, but rather, looks to measure the native intelligence of a student. An aptitude test has the goal of measuring, “innate mental abilities” (Atkinson 2) of students, but according to Atkinson, “Few scientists who have considered these matters seriously would argue that aptitude tests such as the SAT I provide a true measure of intellectual abilities” (Atkinson 2). Even though these experts admit that the exam is not the best way to be evaluating students, universities continue to use them because it avoids the problems associated with looking at a student’s high school transcript. Independent grading methods of teachers are thought to devalue the usefulness of a high school transcript and therefore a student’s GPA. However, the SAT II test when compared to the SAT I test, has been studied to show that, “After controlling for family income and parents' education, the predictive power of the SAT II is undiminished... These findings suggest that the SAT II is not only a better predictor but also a fairer test for use in college admissions” (Atkinson 3). The breakthrough in the ability of the test to measure a student’s achievement, independent of financial status is monumental, for it has been demonstrated how the link between belonging to a lower social class is negatively impacting Latino students in terms of SAT I test preparation and potential preparedness.

Being able to diminish the impact of race and social class would lead to less educational inequality. Other universities should consider the elimination of the use of the SAT I exam and other types of practices that favor one group over the others.

While the SAT I tests do not have any association between what students are learning in the classroom, it is difficult to understand the importance of attending school when the test that a student must pass is unrelated to their curriculum. A benefit of replacing the SAT I exam with the SAT II test, more than just the fact that it is a better predictor of future student achievement, is the fact that it gives purpose and motivation to attend classes. Atkinson also shows that it would have the ability to create uniform curriculum standards within schools, but also show the students what their strengths and weaknesses are; meaning that there is knowledge in how to improve (Atkinson 5). For these reasons, the SAT II test should be closely considered as a replacement for the SAT I test on the list of criteria for college admissions.

#### Final Note

Deeper exploration of student performance on the SAT I exam reveals race-based scoring trends. These patterns contradict the idea that student performance on the test is merit-based. The ability of White students to consistently outperform their Latino counterparts reveals a flawed and unfair test format. Firstly, the SAT I exam should not be used as criteria to enter into the university because there is no relation between the test scores and how well the student will do at university in his or her first year, which is the intended purpose of the exam. Secondly, the use of the exam perpetuates the inequality between races in the United States and although there are many schools that have decided

to stop using the exam in their admissions process, there are still universities who do use it and participate in a systemically discriminatory institution.

The idea of colorblindness continues to support the usage of this biased test by falsely promoting the idea that the education system of the United States is, in fact, a meritocracy where all have an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of race or social class. It was seen that funding of districts of primarily White schools differs from that of primarily Black/Latino schools, allowing for the opportunity of White communities to excel more than others. This unequal funding inhibits the ability of the schools to provide adequate means for test preparation and preparedness. White students, due to having more resources available to them in the means of test preparation, will have an increased chance of performing better on the SAT I tests than Latino students whose schools do not have the means to help them in preparing. When looking at college admissions, there was an almost statistically equal desire of all races to go to college. The continued discrimination of minorities in higher education through the use of SAT I exam qualifications could be devastating. The future consequences of believing all students have an equal chance of succeeding when taking the test could be devastating due to the fact that higher education is linked to economic opportunities and powerful positions of occupation.

Discrimination against minority students is perpetuated through the use of SAT I exams as criteria to enter into the university due to the fact that White students continue to receive higher scores on the exam than Latinos. This has been shown to be connected to the intertwined aspects of race and social class, where Latinos are far more prevalent in belonging to a lower-class than Whites. Truthfully, all universities should revoke the use

of SAT I scores as part of their admissions process, and instead, research for alternative indicators that are not partial to particular groups of people, to help combat the inequality that still exist within this country.

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