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Factors that Impact Performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) between Urban High School Seniors and their Parents.

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Running head: FACTORS THAT IMPACT

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School Seniors and their Parents.

LaConda T. Graham

The College at Brockport

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Abstract

The purpose of this researched is to highlight important factors that adversely affect scores of high school seniors taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). In this research there has been a lot of speculation regarding the possible correlation between the scores received by urban high seniors on the SAT exam, occupied with the level of their parent's education. This research has investigated the question of; does a parent's education influence their child's academic achievement? The purpose of this research is to help high school counselor's gain an understanding of why urban students perform so much lower academically, in comparison to their suburban counterparts which also lead to equally lowers scores on SAT's. A survey was administered to high school seniors regarding their parent's education as well as acquiring knowledge regarding preparation and test taking of the SAT exam.

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Across the U.S., it has been shown that urban students' score lower than suburban students on standardized academic achievement test (Steele, 1997). Although equipped with this information, most colleges still rely on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) as the main criteria for admission to their education institution. To better understand the complete picture, let's define the test in question. What exactly is the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)? The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), is a standardized test used to determine college admissions in the United States (Zwick, 2002). According to the College Board the SAT measures critical thinking skills that are needed for academic success in college (Sacks, 2001). The SAT assesses how well the test takers analyze and solve problems (Hoffman, 1962). The SAT is a test typically taken in the junior and/or senior year of high school. When combining the SAT scores along with the student's grade point average, it gives colleges a standard for admissions or rejection to their institution (Zwick, 2002).

Research stated that by a student's junior year, academically one should have had enough math, writing and critical reading to take the SAT's (Hoffman, 1962). According to Hoffman (1962) the SAT has three major sections: Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Writing, with each section possessing the ability to receive a score up 200–800 points (Hoffman, 1962). The test scored is in multiples of 10 (Hoffman, 1962). Individuals can calculate their score by adding the three sections together (Gould, 1996). Each major section is divided into three parts (Gould, 1996). There are 10 subsections, including an additional 25-minute experimental or "equating" section that may be in any of the three major sections (Hoffman, 1962). The experimental section is for administration use only and does not count toward the final score (Hoffman, 1962). The test runs about three hours and 45 minutes of actual timed sections; but when including

orientation, distribution of materials, and completion of the biographical sections (10–25 minutes per each section), the actual timing runs closer to five hours (Hoffman, 1962).

The SAT is offered throughout the entire school year in the United States. The test is administered once in October, November, December, January, March (or April, alternating), May, and June (Gould, 1996). The SAT test is typically offered on the first Saturday of the month during months of the November, December, May, and June administrations (Gould, 1996). In 2006, the exam was taken 1,465,744 times (Gould, 1996).

Parents and students that lack knowledge about the SAT's may not be aware that students wishing to take the test may register online at the College Board's website, by mail, or by telephone, at least three weeks before the test date (Sacks, 2001). The SAT is administered in a large book on test day (Sacks, 2001). To take the SAT test it costs \$43 (\$68 International), (Sacks, 2001). The College Board makes fee waivers available for low income school districts (Sacks, 2001). Additional fees apply for late registration, standby testing, registration changes, scores by telephone, and extra score reports (beyond the four provided for free), (Owen, 1999).

Students whose religious beliefs prevent them from taking the test on Saturday, may request to take the test on the following Sunday (Owen, 1999). Such requests must be made at the time of registration and are subject to approval (Owen, 1999).

A lot of urban parents and students are unfamiliar with SAT information. There are students and parents who lack knowledge and understanding of how important SAT scores are to the college admission process. According to research, in order for urban student's to get into college, circumstances seem to be designed to prevent admissions due to the competitiveness of being admitted into college and scoring well on the SAT exam (Walpole, 2005). How is it that

students of an urban district score much lower than that of the suburban district?

Review of the Literature

Information on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is becoming widely available as it pertains to urban students, and their parents education in relation to preparing and taking the exam. This literature review discusses the issues of urban educators, how educators play a significant role in providing students with unbiased education; this literature review will also examine the responsibility of education held by parents of urban students. If the parent lacks the knowledge to educate their child on the importance of SAT exams, then that could be one of the major reasons why there is such a big gap when it comes to scores. Finally, after reviewing the educator's and the parent's connection with their child's education there is the need to know how urban students actually perform on the SAT exam.

According to Green and Griffore, testing has become big business which affects the lives of American youth in a profound way. Early in their educational careers, student's are organized and categorized on the basis of standardized test (Green & Griffore, 1980). As they journey through grades advancing toward graduation from high school, the test become more and more life-determining (Green & Griffore, 1980).

The negative aspects of testing procedures are especially apparent with respect to racial minorities, since tests can serve as a convenient tool for rationalizing discriminatory practices (Green & Griffore, 1980). Because of all the past discrimination in education through out history in racial minorities, as a group, have not performed well on standardized tests when compared to their white counterparts (Green & Griffore, 1980).

Educators

According to Miller (1967) the low performance are related to poor dedication and commitment from the educators. There is such an unique cultural difference among urban students one must be committed to cope with massive daily problems (Miller, 1967). Many teachers have left the urban classrooms to accept teaching assignments in rural areas rather than accept the challenge of teaching in American city schools (Miller, 1967).

Unfortunately learning in an urban setting is different from suburban or the private school settings (Miller, 1967). Urban students generate stereotypes which generally present problems for the public school teachers (Green, 1969). Urban students who speak the nonstandard African-American dialect (Ebonics, slang, and broken English) are academically, socially, and vocationally handicapped (Passow, 1963). Standard English is a key to academic success; without it, many urban students are unable to perform at the regular education level when compared to other ethnic groups (Weinberg, 1968). This issue alone mandates a strong commitment from teachers (Green, 1969).

However, school settings of this manner seem to have a higher than normal rate of scholastic failure, truancy, discipline problems, dropouts, pupil transition and teacher turnover (Passow, 1963). Teachers don't really want to educate in districts where the students have poor health, inadequate motivation, malnutrition and lack of basic learning skills (Passow, 1963). Urban students basically need the same thing that other students need to become successful in life (Green, 1969). However; their cultural background sometimes causes their school unique problems (Passow, 1963).

Some teachers have admitted to refusing teaching positions in urban areas because of

adverse media hype highlighting urban problems; yet there are teachers who stay because of the satisfaction of teaching students who have so little to offer and who need so much to succeed (Green, 1969). It's the criticisms of urban education by the media that causes laymen and parents to believe, in general, that urban teachers lack dedication (Green, 1969). Teachers teaching in urban districts receive far more than their share of criticisms (Weinberg, 1968).

Where there is lack of dedication from teachers, more than often you find low scores on standardized testing (Foster, 1974). Research showed that teachers who teach in the suburbs failed to identify unique cultural differences with the students they are educating so academically the students performance level is higher (Huber, 1974). Ashraf (1994) stated that although urban schools have highly qualified teachers, schools with such high concentrations of poor or low-performing students often have a disproportionate numbers of teachers who have high standards for their students.

Parents Education

Despite teachers having a difficult time educating urban students, researchers showed another reason for low performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) with that being the level of education held by their parents (Autumn, 1998). Research stated parents who are college educated and have been through the SAT testing process themselves are in a position to offer advice on preparation and test-taking strategies (Autumn, 1998). College educated parents are better able to help their children with homework and help them study for test in school (Autumn, 1998). Researcher stated that the educational assistance that parents can offer their children can get them on a fast track into college preparatory classes and advanced placement courses that will better prepare them for college acceptance (Allexsaht-Snider, 2000). College educated

parents were more likely to have a higher income than parents that did not attend college (Alleksaht-Snider, 2000). This allowed college educated parents to afford test-coaching software and test-coaching classes for their children (Alleksaht-Snider, 2000).

Researchers stated that suburban parents possessed a large lead over urban parents in educational attainment (Alvarez, 1998). In 1969 only 2.4 percentage African-Americans babies were born to mothers that had a college education (Alvarez, 1998). For Caucasians, the number was quadrupled, 8.9 percent of all White babies had a mother with a college degree (Alvarez, 1998). It wasn't until the mid 1970's that a number of colleges and universities began admitting a large number of urban students (Autumn, 1998).

In 1976, the number of African-American babies born to college educated mothers parents had nearly double to 4.6; however White babies were still three times as likely to have college-educated mothers as were Black babies (Autumn, 1998).

The latest research stated that today 10 percent of all African-American babies are born to mothers who have completed four years of college or more (Krathwohl, 1997). Looking at their white counterparts 24 percent of their mothers are college educated with a four year degree or more (Krathwohl, 1997). Even though there has been improvement by African-American mothers, White mothers are still 2.4 times as more likely to be educated, which is the way they are able to prepare their children better for the SAT exam (Krathwohl, 1997).

According to research parents serve as the first teachers in a child's life. They are considered to be the primary educators of their child (Kozol, 1991). Parents can also serve as decision-makers and advocates and can collaborate with school teachers in an effort to aid in the progress of their child's educational career (Kozol, 1991). Like other ethnic groups, African

Americans parents want their children to achieve academically (Weitock, 1991). However, some parents may lack the knowledge and resources to assist their child with academic success.

Parent Involvement

Research stated because urban parents lack education themselves there is little or no involvement in their children's education (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). In the past, urban parental support was always thought to be poor when it came to their children education (McDermott, & Rothenberg, 2000). Teachers assumed, whether accurately or not, that families supported their efforts and expectations for their child's learning process (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). Yet in today's society, issues about parental support and involvement are complicated by diverse family arrangements and vast social-cultural differences among teachers, children and families (Oakes & Lipton, 1999). Urban families are often ostracized from everyday school life by poverty, racism, language and cultural differences, and their parents often perceive public education as designed for children from middle class, suburban families at the expense of others (Oakes & Lipton, 1999).

There have been some researchers who have looked at the challenges of a parent's involvement in their child's education. Comer, Haynes, Joyner & Ben-Avie (1996) believed that parent involvement, in the most poverty stricken urban schools, can improve a building's psychological climate for learning and children's academic performance. Delpit (1992) argued that families can help serve as cultural informants for teachers to interpret children's behaviors. McCarthy (2000) stated how family involvement in education is influenced by culture, income, language, and the adults' perceptions of school and family responsibilities.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) there are three psychological factors

why urban parents were reluctant to be involved in their child's education. The first factor, urban parents are not aware of how important their role and responsibility is when it comes to being involved in their child's education process. However middle class parents, feel that they should develop a communication system with school efforts, while low-income families often perceive themselves as outside the school system and feel it is the school's responsibility to do the teaching. The second factor is the parent's feelings of power. Feeling empowered parents contribute to being involved in their children's school. Parents who think they can make a difference in their children's education are more willing to visit and participate in school activities, more than those who feel ineffective. The final factor in question is the school's climate and attitude toward parent involvement. Some schools are more welcoming than others, and this factor alone can make parents feel comfortable and valued, which allows for contribution and participation in their children's education. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler stated when serving low income families you must make greater efforts to welcome families, because these are the parents that feel excluded because of their culture, income, and or ethnicity.

Cultural communication barriers are other obstacles that prevent low income urban parents from becoming involved in school activities (Au & Mason, 1981). Research found when teachers' conversation can somewhat match that of the community in question, children and parents are more eager to participate in classroom activities (Au & Mason). Heath (1983) believed that students will achieve better when their home language patterns and values for literacy match that of the school. Cazden (1988) showed that teachers, who are familiar with student's conversational styles, including the use of silence, are more successful in their classroom than teachers who are not.

Some teachers who teach in urban schools often lack knowledge of the ethnicities and cultures of the children they teach. According to Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski & Parker (1999) they argued that teachers often have limited knowledge of what parents do at home to help students in school. Pianta, Cox, Taylor and Early (1999) stated that most teacher's communicate with urban families through letters and flyers which allow the teacher to have little face-to-face interaction with the parents. Linek (1997) argued that many urban teachers have an attitude of us and them toward urban parents, meaning they do not view them as collaborators in the student's education. Researchers have found more recently that teachers must establish respectful and trusting relationships with children and families, which will improve urban education (Bloom, Katz, Slosken, Willet & Wilson-Keenan, 2000).

Previous research had suggested that parents are more likely to become involved when their children's teacher suggests that they do so. Eccles and Harold (1996) suggested that teachers and parents reciprocally influence each other's beliefs regarding parents' role and involvement. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) found that teacher-initiated contact with parents was associated with more parent-initiated communication with school, as well as improved student schoolwork.

Many parents are aware of the differences between themselves and the teachers and choose to stay away (Rioux & Berla, 1993). Research found that teachers may also fail to involve parents with their perceived inadequate level of expertise coupled with the parents' own past negative educational experiences may further intimidate parents (Weitock, 1991).

Low-Income Household

Research showed that students who live in one-parent household lacked involvement

from their parents (Thompson, 1988). Some researchers argued that the affects of one-parent families are largely explained by educational disadvantage or by low income of father-absent families (Herzog & Sudia, 1973). Others claim the opposite, that children are harmed by psychological stress and incomplete socialization, even in affluent one parent households (Crain& Weisman, 1972). They view the difficulties as more emotional than cognitive, resulting less from the family's lack of educational resources and more from its difficulty in managing the child's behavior (Keith& Finlay, 1988).

Living in an one-parent family has been argued to have a negative effect on standardized test scores (Keith & Finlay, 1988). After reviewing several studies, Hetherington, Camara, and Featherman (1983) concluded that students in one-parent families score lower than do students in two-parent families, the differences being less than a school year. Milne et al. (1986) found that students from father-absent households have lower test scores in vocabulary and reading; however, their model, built to look at the mother's employment, does not indicate whether controls on the predissolution socioeconomic status (SES) would explain the lower scores. Thompson, Alexander, and Entwisle (1988) stated that the absence of a parent lowers the scores on verbal and quantitative achievement tests of urban students in contrast to the scores of suburban students. However, Ware and Lee (1988) indicated that no significant effects of the one-parent family structure on students test scores.

If students from a single-parent household have lower test scores and grades it's possible because they have more behavioral problems (Peterson & Zill, 1986). A parent's absence may have negative effects on a student socialization and supervision by interfering with transmission of appropriate norms and values (Peterson & Zill, 1986). Some socialization theorists claimed a

parent's absence is no more harmful than is the parental conflict in many two-parent families, but others argued that the absence of one parent is generally worse, since it alters the family's methods of making decisions and weakens parental control over the behavior of students (Keith & Finlay 1988). The absences of mothers are more harmful than that of fathers, and the loss of parents through death is as harmful as the loss from divorce for urban students (Crain & Weisman, 1972). These findings suggest neither lower income nor parents' emotional problems are the principal causes of student's disadvantages; thus, the simple absence of a parent is the only remaining explanation.

The relatively longer-term dysfunctioning which results from living in a one-parent household may also suggest that behavioral problems account for the poorer educational performance of these students (Peterson & Zill, 1986). Research indicated adult students from a one-parent home may have lower incomes than do those from two-parent households (Crain & Weisman, 1972). Crain and Weisman speculated that lower income is the consequence of more frequent job changing.

Dropout Rate

The high dropout rate from students from one-parent families is explained, in part, by job changing, early incidence of intercourse, marriage, and pregnancy, along with difficulties in relationships with the opposite sex (Lareua, 1987). However, dropping out of school is strongly correlated with lower grades and achievement (McLanahan, 1985). Living in a mother only family decreases the likelihood of completing high school for by 5 percent most suburban students (McLanahan, 1985). Living with two parents significantly decreases the probabilities of dropping out of high school for suburban students (McLanahan, 1985). According to research

growing up in a one-parent family, reduced educational attainment by six months to one year (Duncan & Featherman, 1972). Single parent upbringing had a significant negative effect on urban student's completion of high school (Crain & Weisman, 1972).

Herzog and Sudia (1973) concluded that the only well-documented disadvantage of being raised in a father-absent household is the household is likely to be poor; the implication is that higher pay for women and widespread child support will meet all the needs of these students. However, researchers found that economic deprivation does not provide a complete explanation of the transmission of problems from single-parent families to the next generation (McLanahan, 1988). She also stated that differences in income explains how half the association between family structure and matriculation among Whites, and little of the tendency of daughters of single mothers to become heads of such families themselves.

Whatever mechanism students have from single homes, irrespective of living with their mothers or fathers, they are less likely to connect with school (Crain and Weisman, 1972). While they have the same academic talents and their misbehavior didn't have much effect on their grade, they seem less willing or able, overall, to meet the school's demands, as evidenced by the high dropout that other researchers have found (McLanahan, 1985). Although schools attempt to go further than do many other institutions in responding to the needs of urban students, the fact that they do not meet these needs equally it continues to pose a great challenge to the educational system, and the gap to SAT scores (Coleman, 1972).

The Gap

In 1976 The College Board published an analysis of the racial differences in scores of the SAT exam. Researcher stated at times the average urban student's score was about 240 points,

or 20 percent, below the average suburban student's score (College Board, 1976). When the College Board next examined the racial scoring in the early 1980's; the gap had shrunk to 200 points. Urban student's scores were then 17 percent lower than suburban student's scores. By 1988 the urban-suburban SAT scoring gap was down to 189 points. The trend was encouraging. Many people in the educational community believed that in time the racial scoring gap would disappear altogether. But progress in closing the SAT gap had stopped abruptly and now it has begun to open up again. For each of the past three years, the gap between urban and suburban student's scores on the SAT exam has expanded.

Successful student performance on precollege achievement test remains a vital step in gaining access to postsecondary education (House & Keeley, 1997). Over the past ten years, the number of urban students completing the SAT has steadily increased from 25 percent (275, 000) of the 1.1 million test takers in 1989, to 33 percent (400,000) of the 1.2 million test takers in 1999 (Roach, 1999). Although there has been an increase in the number of urban students participating in postsecondary education, statistics reveal that, with the exception of Asian students, most are not performing at rates comparable to those of suburban students (House & Keeley, 1997).

From 1986 to 1996, SAT scores for urban students rose slightly (Chenoweth, 1996). In 1995 the National Center for education Statistics reported the percentage of college-bound seniors nationwide that attained SAT scores of 1100 or more was higher for suburban students than urban students (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Yet Lederman (1998) reported that the gap in SAT scores between urban and suburban students recorded between 1976 and 1988 consistently averaged more than 200 points.

Overall, the gap between urban and suburban students has increased narrowly, from a 200-point difference in 1976 to a 201-point difference in 1999 (Owen & Doer, 1999). Despite overall urban students' performance trailing suburban student on the SAT exam, the difference between minority student's scores and those of urban student's appears to be narrowing (Corwin, 2000).

According to the literature review when it comes to the factors of why urban students perform low on SAT's scores, it stems from a combination of their educators, parents education and family income which are all major factors that will challenge our urban students for years to come (Corwin, 2000).

Method

Setting

This research was conducted in a Community and High School Setting located in the northeastern region of the United States. The population of this community is 35, 977, where only 13% of the individuals which live in this community have a college degree. The population of students that attend this particular school is 530. The ethnicity that attends the school is 62% African American, 19% Hispanic, 3% Asian and 16% White. Only 49% of the students graduate from this particular school.

The average household is 3 and the median household income is \$22, 107. The Social Economic scale for these students is 36% of students receive public assistance, 37% receive free or reduced lunch. As far as behavior in this particular school, suspension rate is about 35% and students attend school about 60% of the time.

Participation

The students that were selected consisted of the entire senior class of fifty students; however the researcher was only able to obtain thirty out of the fifty. These students were chosen because they had the opportunity of going through the process of taking and learning information about the SAT exam.

Procedures

A proposal was created that included discreet details that discussed and included the purpose of research, a survey, and a parent and student consent form. After receiving written permission from parents or students, if they were of the age of 18, the student read and answered a twenty question survey. Inside of that twenty question survey there were two questions; number 8 and 15 that were not data based content just an icebreaker to make the process of the survey not seem over bearing. The researcher met with each individual student explained the research that was taking place and had the individual student complete the survey in front of the researcher.

Evaluation

A survey was created and administered by the researcher. The researcher presented eighteen statements and had students answer on a Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to help high school counselors receive an understanding of why urban students perform so much lower academically, which then cause's lower scores on the SAT's exam, which then causes lower enrollment into colleges or universities. The survey

was given to generate how much knowledge seniors and their parents actually know about preparation and taking the SAT exam.

Results

Table 1

Students and Parent Scholastic Aptitude Test information Survey

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Item 1: The SATs are very important:	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%
Item 2: I need to take the SAT to go to college:	3%	6%	36%	36%	16%
Item 3: I studied for SAT exam:	10%	40%	23%	16%	10%
Item 4: I know how to study for the SAT exam.	10%	33%	30%	13%	13%
Item 5: I should take the PSAT:	3%	13%	30%	40%	13%
Item 6: There is practice SAT exams	0%	13%	30%	50%	30%
Item 7: I know when to take the PSAT/SAT:	0%	16%	16%	36%	40%
Item 8: Someone talked to me about the SATs:	3%	3%	13%	40%	40%
Item 9: My parent/guardian talked to me about the SATs:	27%	25%	16%	16%	16%
Item 10 : One or both parent/guardian took the SAT:	16%	43%	26%	6%	6%
Item 11: One or both parent/guardian graduated from high school:	13%	13%	0%	16%	40%
Item 12: One or both parent/guardian went to college:	26%	46%	0%	20%	8%

Item 13: One or both parent/guardian graduated from college:	36%	35%	0%	13%	16%
Item 14: I know where to get a SAT free wavier:	0%	3%	10%	20%	83%
Item 15: I know where to get a college fee wavier:	3%	13%	16%	6%	60%
Item 16: I know what SAT stands for:	10%	43%	0%	16%	30%
Item 17: I know everything I need to know about SAT:	20%	33%	13%	20%	13%
Item 18: What are your plans after high school:	43% plan to go to college	13% plan to work	30% are going to college	10% Vocational	1% Military

The first four items on the survey dealt with knowledge about the SAT exam. In item one the majority of seniors that completed this survey agreed that the SAT exam is important. In item two the majority of the seniors that completed this survey also agreed that they need to take the SAT exam in order to attend college. Item number three asked if the students studied for the SAT, the seniors that completed the survey stated that 50% studied for the exam and the other 50% did not. In item four according to the seniors that completed the survey 43% responded with “doesn’t know how to study”, 30% responded with “somewhat does” and 26% “does in fact knows how to study for the SAT exam”.

The next three items of the survey dealt with knowledge about the PSAT’s exam. In item five which states “I should take the PSAT’s”, majority of the seniors that completed this survey believed that they should take the PSAT’s exam. In item six of the survey the majority of the

seniors that completed this survey stated that they are familiar with the PSAT exam. In item seven of the survey the majority of the seniors that completed this survey stated that they know when they should to take the PSAT exam.

The next three items of the survey dealt with how much knowledge they received from their parent or guardian about the SAT exam. When asked if someone had talked to them about the SAT, the majority of seniors that completed this survey stated that someone in fact had talked to them about the SAT exam. In item nine 46% of the seniors that completed this survey stated that it was not their parents that talked to them about that SAT exam. There was 32% that agreed their parents did in fact talk to them and another 20% stated they were somewhat unsure if their parents did or did not speak to them about the SAT exam. When asked if one or both parent or guardian took the SAT, the seniors that completed the survey indicated that their parent or guardian had never taken the SAT exam. There was the 12% that indicated their parent or guardian had in fact taken the SAT exam before and the other 26% stated they were unsure if they have or have not taken the SAT exam at all

The next three items of the survey dealt with the educational background of each 12th grade student's parent that completed this survey. Item 11, asked if 1 or both parent or guardian graduated from high school? 56% of the seniors that completed this survey stated that their parent or guardian did in fact graduate from high school. The other 26% stated that their parent or guardian did not graduate from high school. In item twelve 72% of the seniors that completed this survey stated that their parent or guardian did not attend college. The other 30% did in fact attend college. Item thirteen asked about parent's college graduation rate, 71% of the seniors that completed this survey stated that their parent or guardian did not graduate from college. The

other 29% stated that their parent or guardian in fact did graduate from college.

The next two items in the survey dealt with whether or not the seniors that completed this survey knew how to pay for the SAT exam and how to pay for their college applications they submit. When surveyed as to whether or not seniors knew where to obtain a SAT waiver, the majority of seniors that completed the survey stated that they knew how to obtain a free waiver, for the SAT exam. Item fifteen then asked about college application waivers, the majority of the seniors that completed this survey stated that they knew how to obtain a free college waiver for their college applications.

The next two items of the survey dealt with general information about the SAT exam. In item sixteen when asked the definition of SAT, the majority of the seniors that completed this survey knew what SAT stood for. In item seventeen 33% of the students that took the survey felt they knew everything they needed to know about the SAT exam as a whole. However there was 33% that felt they didn't know everything they needed to know when it came to the SAT exam and the other 33% was undecided if they knew or didn't know enough information about the SAT exam.

The last item of the survey dealt with after high school graduation plans of the survey taker. In this item 30% of the seniors that completed this survey stated that they plan on going to college sometime in the future, 13% stated they will work right after high school. There is 43% that indicated that they will attend college in the fall, 10% will partake in vocational opportunities and 1% will enlist in the military.

Discussion

Data Analysis

According to the results, 59% parents are not educated enough to talk to their child about the SAT exams because they have never taken them. If parents don't have a strong educational aptitude or an idea of how to educate their child on preparing for the SAT exam; then it seems logical that urban students don't perform well in school and on SAT exams.

This is an example of Kozols, (1991) who believed that parents served as the first teachers in their child's life, and parents are what he stated as the primary educator to their child. He also believed that parent's can also serve as decision-makers, advocates and collaborate with school teachers in an effort to aid in the smoothness of their child's educational career.

However, according to McDermott and Rothenberg because parents lack education for themselves, there is little or no involvement in their child's educational career. In the past urban parent's parental support has always thought to be poor when it came to their child's education. Oakes and Lipton, (1999) believed the reason for such poor parental support and involvement stems from diverse family arrangements and vast social-cultural differences among teachers, students and their family. Urban families are often ostracized from everyday school life by poverty, racism, language and cultural differences.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, (1997) stated there are three psychological factors why urban parents were reluctant to be involved in their child's education: The first is that urban parents are really unaware of how important their role and responsibility is when it comes to being involved in their child's education. The second factor is the parent's feelings of power contribute to their involvement in their child's school. The last factor, which according to

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, (1997) is the most important factor, making parents feel comfortable and valued. This level of comfort is achieved by the sense of welcomed given from the school.

In addition only 12% of the parents surveyed had taken the SAT exam, 28% of parents went on to attend college and 29% actually finish and graduated from college. Autumn (1998) believed parents who were college educated and had been through the SAT testing process themselves were in a position to offer advice on preparation and test-taking strategies. Looking at the results, seeing that the majority of parents in this particular school didn't attend college or take the SAT exam; it's apparent why these students' scores were significantly, lower then other ethnic groups.

Autumn, (1997) stated parents who were college educated were more able to help their children with homework and help them study for exams in school. Allexaht-Snider, (2000) agreed with Autumn by stating that the educational assistance that parents can offer their child can get them on a fast track toward college preparatory classes and advanced placement courses that will better prepare them for college acceptance.

Allexaht-Snider, (2000) also believed that college-educated parents were more likely to have a higher income than parents that did not attend college. In looking at this particular school the average household income was \$22,107, which makes this particular statement agreeable. She also stated that having more income in your household allowed college educated parents to afford test-coaching software and test-coaching classes for their children.

In this particular instance the majority of the seniors that completed this survey come from a one parent low income household. According to Keith and Finlay, (1988) living in a one

parent family had a negative effect on standardized test scores. Hetherington, Camara, and Featherman (1983) agreed that a student in one-parent family's scored lower than students in two-parent families, the differences being less than a school year. Thompson, Alexander, and Entwisle (1988) mentioned that the absence of a parent lowers the scores on verbal and quantitative achievement tests of urban students in contrast to the scores of suburban students.

Students that come from one parent households and score low on standardized test, according to Peterson and Zill, (1986) have more behavioral issues as well. A parent's absence may have negative effects on a student socialization and supervision by interfering with transmission of appropriate norms and values (Peterson & Zill, 1986). Some socialization theorists claimed that a parent's absence is no more harmful than is the parental conflict in many two-parent families, but others argue that the absence of one parent is generally worse, since it alters the family's methods of making decisions and weakens parental control over the behavior of students (Keith & Finlay 1988).

Crain and Weisman (1972) seem to think the absence of a mother is more harmful than is the absence of the father and loss of parents through death as harmful as loss from divorce for urban student's. These findings suggest that neither lower income nor parents' emotional problems are the principal causes of student's disadvantages; thus, the simple absence of a parent is the only remaining explanation.

McLanahan (1985) believed that living in a mother only family decreases the likelihood of completing high school by about 5 percent for suburban student's (McLanahan, 1985). Growing up in an one-parent family delays educational attainment by six months to one year (Duncan & Feather man, 1972).

In researching the factors, why urban students perform poorly on SAT's, we clearly looked at a significant amount of circumstances. Most parents are not educated enough to prepare their child for academic achievement, not because they don't want to, but mainly because they don't know how. Most parents are working a job to provide for their household. In return this cycle doesn't stop but it continues to repeat itself over and over again.

Limitations

Most urban students are not fortunate enough to live in a house hold where both parents are present. Where parents have time to educate them on SAT exams or care about their academic advances. Instead they are faced with over worked, frustrated, tired and uneducated single parents that just barley make it to the next pay day.

Urban students are being limited not because they choose to, but mainly because they have no real guidance or direction from their parents. If the parents of our urban students educate themselves by attending college, then the populations of this community academic achievement wouldn't seem so limited.

Implications for Counseling

In the four years that students go through high school, students will have many teachers, coaches, and role models. However, as a school counselor, they are the one person who sees the entire picture of a student's high school career. Therefore, they can bring together information in times when their parents are not able to provide the information for them.

As a counselor, positive encouragement plays a critical role in helping students prepare for SAT exams (College Board, 2008). Urban students rely on counselors to educate them on information that they know their parents are unable to produce. Not because they don't care but

mainly because they are unsure of the type of information is necessary for their child. The goal of a counselor is to convince your low-income students that college is within grasp; by preparing them for important standardize test like the PSAT and SAT's. The College Board is a great website for counselors to introduce their students, along with their parents, to gain knowledge about exams and more important information about their academic achievement after high school.

Implications for future research

In an effort to future research on this topic, included needs to be insight on how to educate our urban parents on preparing their child for great success when it comes to their education. Each parent has the right to be successful and should have access to helping their child develop that same success so they can pass it down to generates to come However parents need the will power and drive to want to become that first natural resource for their child's education.

Parents must learn how to overcome the unfair circumstances surrounding them. For example, issues like low incomes, single parent homes and lack of determination for success in higher education. Instead they must embrace the fact that they are their child first educator. Even if they are limited in the resources they have, they must learn to network with their child's teacher and begin to develop open communication. It will benefit the parent's communication skills with teachers, but more importantly, develop an academic start for high achievement for the child.

Conclusion

Moreover, urban parents lack resources that can prepare their child, and future students to score higher on the (SAT) exam. 59% of urban parents don't speak to their child about SAT's,

88% have not taken them personally. It is important for urban students to understand how important this particular test is. Urban students need to grasp the concept that a test of this nature can grant them access into the college of their choice and plan their college success.

School counselors can help students by having frequent conferences with them individually to monitor future plans, and repeat these sessions at parent's nights. Engage parents by providing knowledge and information on the dates of the test and the deadlines when their child should register for the SAT exam.

It is especially important that urban parents are familiar with the role they play in their child success on scoring well on the SAT exam. Urban students can achieve higher scores with the support of their parents and counselors, who don't mind going above and beyond to meet the need of each student.

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Appendix A

Parent Consent Form

This form is to ask written permission for a research study that will be done at a high school. The person conducting the research is a student at a college and needs this research done in order to earn her master degree. Your child will be asked to complete a survey that asks questions about their preparation and involvement on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Any information that your child gives in this study remains confidential and will be known only to primary researcher. Except for this consent form, all questionnaires will be given a number and your child's name will not appear on them.

The possible benefit from answering this survey could be that the information will be learned and allow professional help students to prepare better for the SAT's.

A possible risk of answering the survey is that some questions asked are of a personal nature. Your child does not have to answer any question they do not want to. Participation or non-participation in this survey will not affect your child's academic performance.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to have my child, participate.

Signature of Parent/Guardian who is 18 years age or order

Date

Appendix B

Student Consent Form

This form is to ask written permission from the student in a high school. The person conducting the research is a college student. You will be asked to complete a survey that asks questions about your preparation and involvement on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Any information that you give in this study remains confidential and will be known only to primary researcher. Except for this consent form, all questionnaires will be given a number and your name will not appear on them.

The possible benefit from answering this survey could be that the information will be learned and allow professional help students to prepare better for the SAT's. A possible risk of answering the survey is that some questions asked are of a personal nature. You do not have to answer any question that you are unsure of. Participation or non-participation in this survey will not affect your academic performance.

I understand the information provided in this form and I agree to participate in this project.

Signature of Participant

Date

Birth date of Participant

Signature of witness 18 years of age or older

Date

If you have any questions you may contact:

Appendix C

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The SATs are very important:	1	2	3	4	5
2. I need to take the SAT to go to college:	1	2	3	4	5
3. I studied for the SAT exam:	1	2	3	4	5
4. I know how to study for the SAT exam:	1	2	3	4	5
5. I should take the PSAT:	1	2	3	4	5
6. There are practice SAT exams:	1	2	3	4	5
7. I know when to take the PSAT/SAT:	1	2	3	4	5
8. Dr. Sam wears a tie everyday:	1	2	3	4	5
9. Someone talked to me about the SATs:	1	2	3	4	5
10. My parents/guardian talked to me about the SAT:	1	2	3	4	5
11. One or both parent/guardian took the SAT:	1	2	3	4	5
12. One or both parent/guardian graduated from high school:	1	2	3	4	5
13. One or both parent/guardian went to college:	1	2	3	4	5
14. One or both parent/guardian graduated from college:	1	2	3	4	5
15. I know the name of my school counselor:	1	2	3	4	5
16. I know where to get a SAT free wavier:	1	2	3	4	5
17. I know where to get a college free wavier:	1	2	3	4	5
18. I know what SAT stands for:	1	2	3	4	5

19. I know everything I need to know about the SAT: 1 2 3 4 5

20. Tell me about your plans after high school: Brief comment