

Staff Editorial

The new ACT individual section retake policy will only exacerbate the score gap between students who come from wealthy families and those who are less well off.

That's because a fee must be paid for each section retake, so students who can afford multiple attempts will be able to achieve a significantly higher score. This makes the supposedly standardized comparison inherently unfair.

This recent development reinforces our viewpoint that standardized testing is an outdated practice. Rather than trying to make up for the flaws of standardized testing or change the format of the tests, it's time to eliminate them entirely from the college admissions process.

Students from lower income households already often do not score as well as students who are more affluent.

As stated in a Washington Post article, "The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, a nonprofit known as FairTest, just analyzed SAT scores for the high school class of 2019. It reported that the gaps between demographic groups grew larger from a year earlier, with the average scores of students from historically disenfranchised groups falling further behind students from more privileged families."

In light of this information, it is obvious that standardized testing favors students from families with a higher income. After all, wealthy parents can afford private tutors and other top of the line preparation programs.

The role that family income plays in standardized testing was underscored in the recent Varsity Blues Scandal. Parents (many of whom were in the top 1%) used their wealth to artificially inflate their children's scores.

"They had their children's SAT bubble sheets corrected by a corrupt proctor. And they conspired with the consultant at the center of the case, William Singer, to evade the efforts of school counselors to fact-check applications," the New York Times reported.

Beyond the inequity in test scores caused by differences in income, intelligence and college-readiness both include many factors a test cannot measure. These tests measure how skilled students are at test taking, or how quickly and accurately they can read a passage, rather than truly representing intelligence, creativity, or work ethic.

Some may argue that these personality traits will come to light in other parts of the application (such as a teacher recommendation letter or an essay). And while it is true that many schools review applications in a holistic manner, we all know that bad or mediocre test scores can sometimes be the decisive reason why a student is not admitted.

Some schools have recently made the switch and no longer require applicants to send ACT or SAT scores, a decision that we applaud. Marquette University and the University of Rochester both dropped this requirement over the summer, and University of Chicago made the switch back in 2018.

A PBS article analyzed a study that was conducted by William Hiss, the former Dean of Admissions for Bates College. This study noted the grades and graduation rates of students who chose to submit their test scores versus those who did not.

"Hiss' data showed that there was a negligible difference in college performance between the two groups. Only .05 percent of a GPA point set "submitters" and "non-submitters" apart, and the difference in their graduation rates was just .6 percent," said the PBS article.

The college board has been aware of and is working to fix the shortcomings of their exam. The adversity score--which has now been replaced with "landscape"--provides colleges with necessary context. It gives admissions officers information about the quality of the school as well as relative wealth and crime rates of the neighborhood.

However, this action on the part of college board doesn't address the root of the problem--the unfair nature of standardized testing. Instead, it attempts to mitigate the negative impact standardized testing often has on the less wealthy.

While we understand why colleges would want a universal method to compare applicants, the reality is that such tests don't take into account the full picture.

Students should not be required to submit standardized test scores as part of the college admissions process.

Early Decision: The ultimate game of manipulation



by Emma Mansour

Happy November first, everyone!

For most people, today is just another day. The beginning of November. Not at all significant. For seniors, however, this is the day we've all been dreading for the past few months.

November first is, for most schools, the deadline for Early Action, and more importantly, Early Decision.

Early action isn't very exciting, it's just applying to a school early. Early Decision, on the other hand, can feel like the most important decision you make for all of high school. It's not, but that's besides the point. If you're EDing somewhere, you're saying that you like this school more than every other school, that you are sure that this is where your future belongs.

That's a little scary.

Over the past few weeks, the stress has been amped up to extreme levels, with people spending every waking moment trying to figure out where they want to ED, if they'll get in, and even making lists of everyone else who is EDing there.

For some people this is a fine path to take. They know their dream

school, are totally and completely sure of themselves. I can't relate. The reality for a lot of people, though, is that they don't have one specific school that they know they're meant for.

The unfortunate thing is that without an ED, it's really hard to get into some of these schools, sometimes virtually impossible.

So, over the past few months of personal stress and observation of my peers, I've come to the conclusion that the whole system of early decision is totally unfair and manipulative on the part of colleges.

Students shouldn't have to say that one school is perfect. No school is perfect. For most people, they'll fit in and have a great time at a bunch of different schools. That's the beauty of the college process; you can apply to a variety of schools, get into a couple, and then decide based on a number of factors which one you want to attend.

EDing throws a wrench into that process.

It turns college admissions into more of a game than it already is; students strategically choose to ED, or not to, based on if they'll get in, if it's a reach versus a match school, who else is applying, etc. This adds so much stress to an already stressful process.

It's like you're signing away your future. Well that's a little dramatic. But it sort of is like signing away your future.

And not only does it place an unfair burden of stress and having to make a hard decision on students, there's also a huge financial burden.

When EDing, you're making

a financial commitment that some students just can't feasibly make. School is expensive. Saying that you'll go to a school no matter what means you're signing on to pay the bill. That adds another layer to the problem; some students who are equally qualified as any other ED applicant won't be able to ED because of the price, and then might not get in.

And on top of that, the school doesn't need to offer aid in order to incentivize students choosing their school. You already told them you're going, giving you money can't really change that.

What's particularly problematic about this is that there's already a socioeconomic disparity when it comes to college, especially the more prestigious (and expensive) ones. When it's only kids that can pay applying, colleges are just perpetuating the problem.

For a university to essentially say "hey, if you want to go here tell us that you'll come no matter what" seems unfair, and manipulative on their part. You're going to have plenty of kids going to your school, what's the point in adding another barrier that limits kids from going.

We're already making a potentially life altering decision. It's a big deal. A decision like that takes time, consideration, and should depend on more than just when we apply.

No matter how great ED can be for those that do actually get in, no student should have had to decide which school is the absolute best school for them by today.

"Joker" is nothing to joke about



by Sofia Papakos

Since the release of "The Joker," it's been at center of a controversy about glorifying murder and gun violence. And I agree. But I think it's important that it raises these issues. The film reveals the malevolence and the instability of our psyche.

In my Lit and Psych class, I've been discussing the foundation of our conscience: the battles between our id (unconscious desires), ego (realistic part that mediates between both) and superego (moral conscience). We all struggle with it, and the main character, Arthur Fleck, is conflicted more than most.

He suffers from obvious mental health issues, the most prominent being psychosis-- a mental disorder where thoughts and emotions are so impaired they are dissociated from reality.

He's a human punching bag throughout the film and I felt bad

for him. I mean the easiest way to comprehend the movie is to relate him with other notorious serial killers like Ted Bundy or Charles Manson. And on the surface, he is one of them. But I think it's important to recognize he's a product of the constant humiliation and ignorance of the world around him.

I'm not saying to feel remorse for him, which no one should feel. But Arthur has become a symbol of when rebellion against society goes to the extreme.

Since the majority of us are sane, rational humans, we feel the need to conceal all the bad and evil in our unconscious desires. We're not all wired to have homicidal thoughts, and that's a good thing.

However, I think the bigger picture is that not being 100% good is normal. It's important to explore the sides of ourselves that aren't always morally righteous. That doesn't mean robbing a bank or committing violent crimes, but acknowledging the fact that sometimes we do have the instinct not to do the right thing, and that's okay.

The more familiar and comfortable we become with that side of ourselves, the less likely we are to completely give in to it. We therefore achieve a balance between our good and evil sides, and help preserve our moral stability. I think

that's where Arthur goes overboard. He was conditioned to always need to act happy, (ironic that he's a clown) and maintain a moral compass. At some point, he becomes fed up with it and goes in to his homicidal tendencies that are fueled by the repressed evil.

And the more we acknowledge our darker side, the more we can understand, and therefore control it. I think that's the most important takeaway we can resonate with: it's fine to criticize the movie for being insensitive to murder and gun violence issues, however, ultimately, it reflects the society we live in today. The same issues "Joker" highlights, are those we choose to ignore.

The more we disregard films that expose the very issues exploited in our society, the more dangerous they become.

A lot of conversation has come about because of this film. From what I've noticed, the only real conversations we have are when people are killed: the March for Our Lives Movement was ignited after the Parkland shooting. We feel sympathy and pray it won't happen to our communities. It feels like we're too afraid to dive deeper than the surface level and have difficult conversations that recognize why and how the Arthur Flecks of the world develop.

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