

Staff Editorial

Tests won't determine your future

At the beginning of this month, 8th graders flocked to NT for a placement test that will help determine their classes for High school. The anticipation and excitement of finally being at high school, however, was outweighed by the stress of a test that seems to dictate the rest of their lives, for some.

Although these tests aren't the only factor influencing an incoming freshman's schedule, the four-hour test is the most tangible determinant. The process also includes detailed evaluations from 8th grade teachers who assess each student's critical thinking skills, class participation, homework completion, interpersonal skills, writing skills, independent learning ability, and analytical skills.

The stress and obsession that 8th graders and their parents can get sucked into with these placement tests definitely doesn't match the levels reached during the testing and college process, but it does appear reminiscent.

But it's also a 'chicken or egg' dilemma where the stress of the placement test is part of a larger stress about college, since many feel as if high school placement test results could in some way be predictive of a student's acceptance to Harvard.

And, technically, the classes you place into could have jurisdiction over your course load and your schedule which colleges take into account, but the problem with this mindset is the emphasis placed on fixed determinism.

'If I don't get into the right classes, I won't get into a 'good' school. If I don't get into a 'good' school, I will live a miserable life and won't be able to sustain myself,' is what it all seems to imply.

This line of thinking demonstrates the vulnerable underbelly of fear of the future dictating all of our decisions. Fear in general, even fear of the future, is not inherently unhealthy in moderate proportions, but when it usurps our ability to be happy and find autonomy in our own lives.

Placement tests and ACT tests and any other events that appear to hold the power to determine our happiness certainly determine some things, but not everything. The emphasis we place on them is a mirage to distract us from the fact that our lives are much more variegated and complex than this perspective allows.

It feels comforting to attribute our future success to something tangible. If you do well on an AP test, you will do well in life. But a good score has little bearing on actual life. Success and happiness and other lofty abstractions are composed of a myriad of things and can't be simplified to one number.

Tests are scary—no one knows what to expect when sitting in a room for hours on end filling out a never-ending barrage of tiny bubbles.

But past eighth grade and past freshman year, few people even remember the experience—or the results—of their tests.

It's rare to not know someone who's switched levels a few times, adjusting to the difficulty of the class and the demands of other parts of their life.

In reality, things change. New opportunities arise. We meet new people. We change our levels if they're not right for us.

Tales of a sleep-deprived Trevian

by Stephanie Kim

Sleep? Who is she?
I think I vaguely remember her from freshman year.

Okay, but seriously, my Circadian rhythm must've decided to part ways with me somewhere in the knot of high school, because I'm 99.9% certain I'm not getting enough sleep most weeknights. I wager I get about 2-3 solid hours a night. At my worst, it's about 45 minutes in a night. (My all-time record was my first all-nighter at the end of my junior year.)

It sounds absolutely horrendous, and let me tell you, it is. Most mornings I feel like I've been resurrected, engaged in a constant war with my eyes to keep them open. Of course, Early Bird doesn't really help matters.

I don't even know why I stay up so late. I definitely don't have so much homework that I'm grinding it out for nearly 8 hours a night, totaling to around 40 hours a week.

For the past couple of years, I've launched what one might call an "investigation" into the root cause of my egregious sleep habits, and here's what I've found so far.

First theory: maybe I'm just a slow worker. That's the most plausible explanation that I've come up with, and also the ones that my friends suggest pretty frequently. I

convinced myself that I just needed to get a move on with completing my assignments, studying, whatever it is that holds me up at night. So I decided in October of my junior year that I'd come home and do nothing but homework all night, hardly any breaks incorporated into the mix, and try to complete all of my assignments within three hours of getting home.

To my chagrin, it didn't work all that well. I slept maybe thirty minutes to an hour's worth more, and I was doing a bad job on my homework. Was I really that slow of a student, I wondered? Am I freakishly sluggish? Is it a disorder?

I actually Googled whether I had some sort of sleep issue or severe time management issue. This, of course, proceeded for about an hour, leading me back to square one with being one of the least productive students on this planet.

I thought to myself that I couldn't possibly be so clumsy with handling my time, but writing this now, I realized that that sounds about right.

But recently, I've come up with a more brazen theory: maybe I like being the living dead. Maybe I enjoy being sleep deprived.

The idea seems ludicrous — getting no sleep is cruel and unusual punishment. I wake up every

morning in a dismal state because of my lack of shuteye. Thus, it's only logical that sleeping more should reduce my morning blues and hopefully boost my grades a bit.

But there have been brief periods of time (as in, a stretch of a couple days) in this first semester of senior year where I've gotten at least six hours, and after the initial wake up, I feel no different. Actually, I feel like I'm missing something.

Sleep deprivation has become a frenemy of sorts, endearing in its own zany way. I feel "off" when I don't get enough sleep, but I feel even more "off" when I do, leading to a never-ending downward spiral into the destruction of my REM cycles.

I guess the point of my whole journey is this single warning: steer clear of any sleep schedule that looks like mine. Once you start going to bed at ungodly hours, you won't be able to stop the madness. The madness might even become your friend like it did for me, almost like Stockholm Syndrome. It's a locomotive that never stops going once you've boarded.

Even if you have leftover work to get done in the late hours of the night, I say just go to bed. It's what I should've done the past 730 days.

We should all listen to Noname

by Claudia Levens

The first time I heard Noname was on Chance the Rapper's song "Lost" off his mixtape, Acip Rap. Ever since, I've been enthralled by the way her soothing voice spins together intimate stories of growing up on the west side of Chicago with thoughtful reflections on gender, race, violence and politics evident on her 2016 album Telephone and 2018 album Room 25.

Last week, Spotify released their "Wrapped" end of year summaries, offering us all the chance to see the way that the thousands of minutes we've devoted to music have been spent. Since it revealed that Noname was the only female artist in my top 5 most listened to artists, I've been thinking about other reasons why I feel such a connection to Noname's music.

In addition to being a talented rapper, heavily influenced by her background as a slam poet, I think it also boils down to the fact that she's a talented female rapper.

In the same way that being from the same area as Chance the Rapper and Louis the Child causes us to flock to their concerts, having the ability to connect with an artist through an aspect of their identity is powerful.

In an industry that's dominated by men where women are objectified, exploited, sexualized, and underrepresented, Noname is someone I can connect to.

Don't get me wrong. Every morning, you can catch my brother

and me listening to Travis Scott's "Houstonfornication" on full, bass-boosted blast at 6:30 am on the way to school.

But I'd be lying if I denied ever feeling frustrated with a genre that's known for being a platform for disenfranchised voices and an outlet for cultural activism but whose industry and audiences consistently reject female rappers.

Sure, there's Cardi B. or Nicki Minaj. But even they're caught in petty feuds, chucking shoes at each others' heads as if there's only one single spot for a woman to dominate in hip hop.

There's a pervasive illusion that the success of one must come at the expense of the other, which would explain why women have remained in marginalized roles in the music industry.

After releasing her album Room 25 this October, Noname has received ubiquitous critical acclaim but moderate at best and lackluster at worst support, a phenomenon noted by many other talented female artists including Princess Nokia and Rhapsody. And it's made me think about the factors that influence what artists we listen to.

If you think about what actually determines music taste and consumption, there's a questionable amount of "free will" involved and that it's mostly determined by our environment and repetition.

This encompasses our families and friends, but it also includes pre-existing cultural biases swaying the

industry and the music streaming companies who are incentivized to maximize their profits by promoting certain artists guaranteed to make them money.

The sexism sewn deeply into the fabric of the music industry rears its head in so many complicated, multifaceted ways that can often feel distant and outside the boundaries of our control. While our tastes may be affected by other influences, we are ultimately the ones with the power to stream or not to stream.

A principle called the "mere exposure effect," describes the way people develop preferences for stimuli that they are repeatedly exposed to. This means that we can change our music tastes by stepping outside of our comfort zones and exposing ourselves to new music.

In the largely homogenous music landscape that doesn't just exclude talented female rap artists like Noname, but anyone whose identity deviates from the status quo, it's up to us to extricate ourselves from the sexism pervading the music industry and seek out new artists beyond those that the invisible hand of spotify algorithms guides us towards.

In today's iteration of the music industry, our attention and streams are what enables these artists to keep making good music that will diversify the hip hop landscape. Not only will listening to them do that, but it will also enable us to discover new music that will enrich our lives.



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