STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT

ABSTRACT

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Many studies on standardized assessment examine the exams' predictive validity, or correlation between students’ scores and their high school grade point average (HSGPA), with first-year college grade point average (FYGPA) or students' freshman composition course grades. Yet, few studies examine students' perceptions of SAT preparation or whether or not they think their SAT scores reflect their abilities. The contrast between student perceptions and how schools use this exam may impact how students view their courses, skills, or their motivation. This study aimed to examine whether or not the SAT will benefit students in higher education and beyond. Two hundred and fifty-seven students enrolled in English 101 in the spring of 2016 at North Carolina State University (NCSU) were surveyed electronically to identify whether or not they believe their SAT preparation material was transferable, that their scores accurately measure their abilities or grades, and their perceptions of their SAT preparation, scores, and experience. The data indicates most participants disagree that practicing for the SAT prepared them for writing in English 101 and other courses, strongly disagree that practicing for the SAT prepared them for a job, disagree that their SAT score reflects their work ethic, and disagree that their SAT Writing scores reflect their English 101 grades. The open-ended data suggests most participants believe a paper or writing portfolio is a better alternative than the SAT to assess student writing, that the SAT does not reflect their abilities, that their SAT preparation material was not transferable, and describe their SAT experience as stressful or causing lowered self-esteem. Although the SAT correlates with student performance, this study illustrates how students’ perceptions about the exam may impact how they regard the value of their high school, college courses, or abilities, and provides a better understanding of how SAT scores affect students’ self-esteem.

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