



College Readiness; Comparing Urban and Suburban Students



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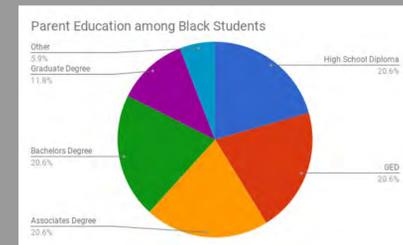
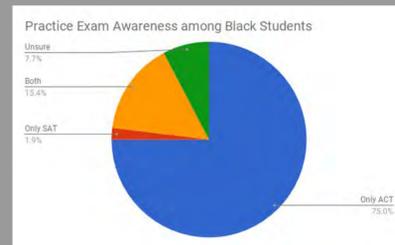
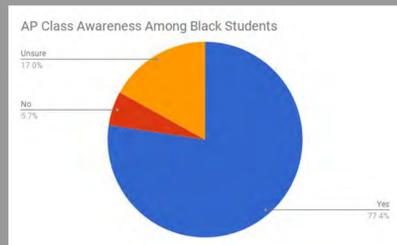
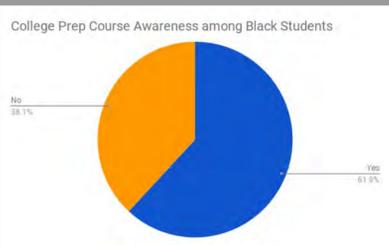
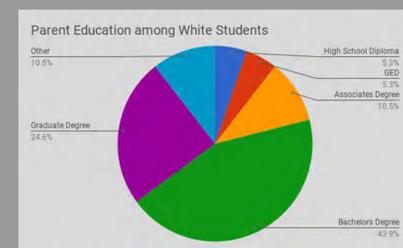
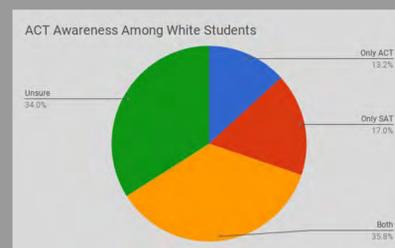
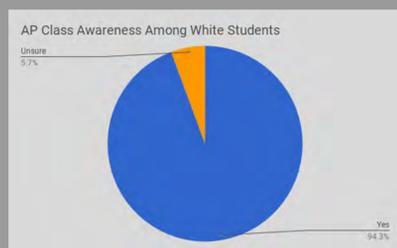
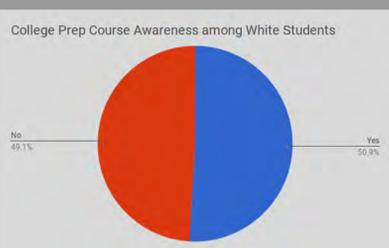
Introduction

Although college enrollment has risen over the years, high schools in our communities (West Milwaukee and Kettle Moraine School District) are not preparing students for the actual process of enrolling in, or creating a background of confidence in being accepted to college. As a result of this, students may be submitting less than adequate applications for acceptance. A team was compiled through the DRIVE program at the Medical College of Wisconsin consisting of one tenth grade student from High School of Health Sciences (HS²) and two eleventh grade students from Milwaukee Academy of Science (MAS). The focus of this study is to analyze how two different schools are preparing high school students for college. We also determined the factors that impact perceived college readiness (sex, race, community, family). These differences may lead to stronger college preparedness among suburban students. If high schools provide inner city students with the same support needed to succeed as those in the suburbs, then the future of citizens outside of post-secondary schooling will be more equitable. According to our study, 94% of white high school students, and 77% of black high school students were aware of the AP classes offered at their school. MAS offered less than 5 AP classes and HS² offer over 12 AP classes. When asked in our survey “What was your parent’s highest degree?” the majority of the white students reported a Bachelor’s degree or higher (79%). However, 63% of black students reported that the highest degree was under a Bachelor’s degree.

In talking about racial disparities, we must acknowledge that these exist along with community disparities in the suburban vs. urban communities we studied. There are inherent disparities in these communities that exist beyond race. The present study is one example of one way these disparities, between communities and thus race, manifest in the context of college readiness within schools. This study is as much of a comparison of schools as it is racial disparities.

Analysis

- Our group noticed a huge difference between the two schools, HS² and MAS, in college preparedness so we decided to look into this topic. Racial disparities in the suburban vs urban communities plays a big role in this project.
- Responses to the following, disregarding students’ school: “What was your parents highest degree?”
 - majority of the white students reported a bachelor’s degree (39%), however for the black students, 63% of people reported that the highest degree was under a bachelor’s degree.
 - For females, 36% said that the highest degree earned by their parents was a bachelor’s degree.
 - Similarly males reported that the highest degree earned was a bachelor’s degree (34%).
- When asked if they were aware of the AP classes offered at their school, most answered positively: 90% of females responded yes, 77% of the black students recorded yes, 81% of the males responded yes and 94% of white students did as well.
- A main concern of our study was if the schools were actually preparing students accurately for a post-secondary schooling, which could occur by implementing a college preparedness course. When asked if the students were aware of any program at their school, majority responded positively, yet still reported not feeling prepared.
 - 51% of white students, 62% of black students, 53% of females, and 68% of males surveyed reported that they were aware of the programs, however most reported that they would attend.
- The students were asked if they were aware of the practice ACT and SAT at their schools, as both schools offer both tests.
 - Majority of students reported that they were only aware of the practice ACT (75%).
 - 75% Black students, 38% female students, and 60% male students reported that they only knew about the ACT.
 - Additionally, a majority of the white students (36%) reported that they were aware of both. It is noteworthy that this is still not a high number and the tests should be furthered advertised.



Methods

- Created specific aims that relate to college enrollment.
- Developed different hypotheses that relate to each aim.
- Compiled a set of survey questions that aid us in learning about college enrollment and address our specific aims.
- Distributed survey throughout the two schools (MAS and HS²).
- Generated and analyzed survey results.
- Collected data was used to confirm or deny the hypotheses.
- Students at two schools were surveyed, each school has different demographics
 - HS² is predominantly white (94%)
 - MAS is predominantly minority students (97.5%) (MAS)
- Indications
 - The availability of AP classes to students.
 - Access to before or after school preparation programs
- Alternative resolutions could include integrating preparation into daily class work.
- With the information we acquired we aim to help inform and improve student’s and parents college preparedness.

Conclusion

- First it is important to note that in the present study we discuss the disparities in the context of race. There are many other contributing factors that lead to the demographic differences in the communities discussed and that these differences are intertwined with the community disparities, which was part of the reason for asking about parent education.
- White students and the female students tended to have an increase in perceived preparedness.
- Among the most interesting outcomes observed was the differences in not just AP classes offered, but differences in parental educational status.
 - In our preliminary research we learned that citizens with less education “are more likely to face unemployment, poverty, ill health, incarceration, and dependence on social services” (Radcliffe and Bos, 2013, pg.1).
 - Disparities such as these are thus deeper than just the schools attended.
- Overall we found throughout our studies that students are often fearful and unsure about how to apply to college or the process that the application requires.
- In light of our studies we decided to inform our peers about college applications and provide information about applying.

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