
The Americanization of Global Education

Egemen Aray, Toby Chen, Faiza Chowdhury, Connor Tan, Sena Temelli

Principal Investigator: Sarah Blevins

Affiliation: International Socioeconomics Laboratory™, The George Washington University

Abstract

The United States has long been crowned one of the most powerful nations in the world. This power extends beyond economics and the military; the United States has significant cultural impact on global markets such as entertainment, fast food, and education. The Americanization of global education has been an underlying matter for years, causing the majority of international education to be primarily eurocentric and class based. Because of this, we see higher levels of education being limited to select groups, creating an unhealthy incentive for many students to Americanize their beliefs and education. As such, we have conducted a study to see the range of effects that this “filter” in education has on different groups of students. To do this, we have used archival research: looking into previous accounts of data such as SAT and AP test scores provided by the College Board as well as surveys provided to different target groups in order to perform a comparison between the effects of Americanization in the institute and the quality of education amongst international and American students. After examining our survey results, we found that there were linguistic, geographic, and financial disparities hindering international students from reaching the same academic success as American students. We also found that much of the global historical curriculum is emphasized on American history; for example, institutes in Asia focus more on American history than Asian history in history classes. Using the results from this research, we hope to bring light to the innate problems present in American education to the masses.

Categories: United States, Standardized Testings, Education

Keywords: Collegeboard, Americanization, Global Education

Background Research

The United States of America is one of the most attractive countries for international students in terms of higher education. In 2019-2020, there were 1.1 million international students enrolled in US colleges (Migration Policy Institute). There are numerous reasons why international students want to get into a college in the United States, such as the high quality of universities and an economic atmosphere that allows non-citizens to access great job opportunities. Students' interest in studying in the United States has had a significant socio-cultural impact on the global education system.

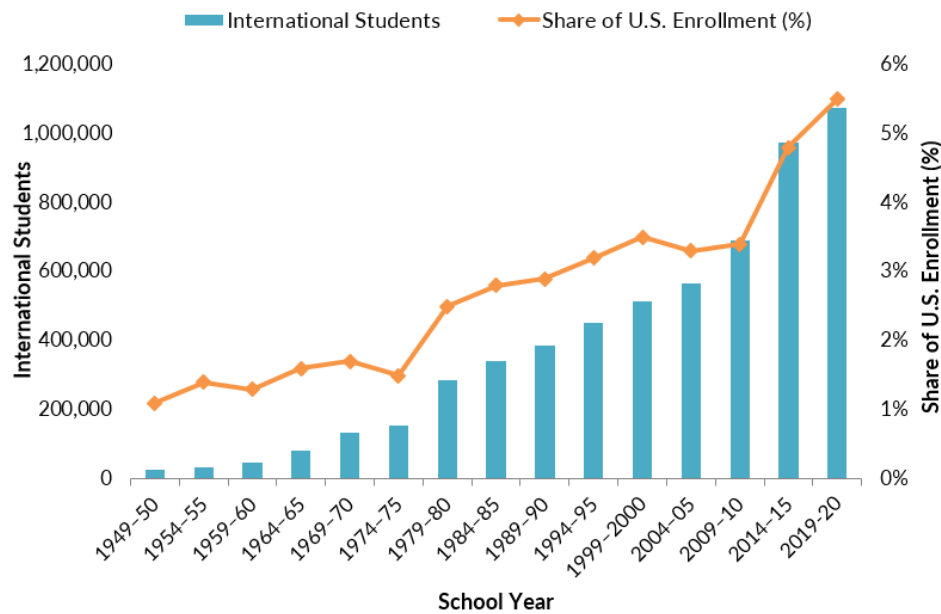


Figure 1: (Institute of International Education),(Migration Policy Institute), "Enrollment Trends: International Student Data from the 2020 *Open Doors* Report," accessed March 30, 2021. The figure depicts the gradual increase in the number of U.S.enrolled international students from 1949 to 2020.

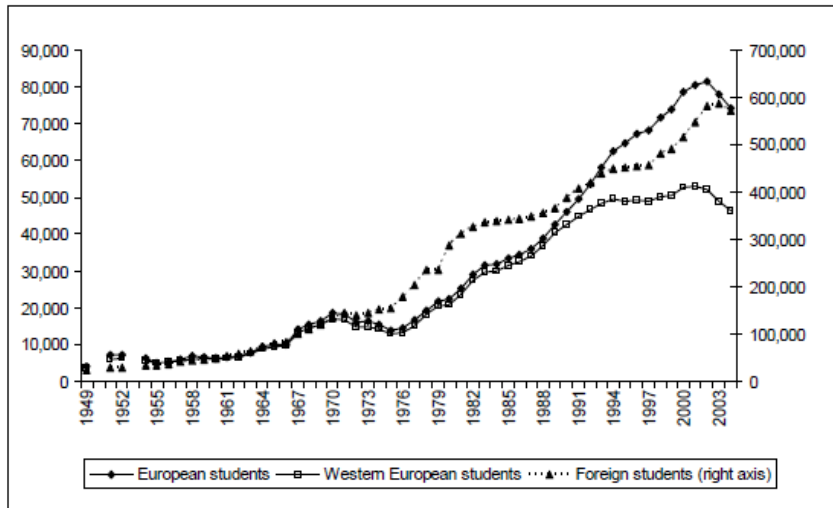
The College Board represents over 6,000 of the world's leading colleges. It organizes various exams for students from all around the world, sends their scores to colleges, and controls the academic process of higher education admissions. Different schools from different countries require different exams, but most of the prominent schools require you to take exams organized by the College Board. One might consider the College Board to be a monopoly since it has no competition and it is subsequently the leading organization in terms of international exams. There are different exam options for one to take and most of these are based on Western/American culture. One can take an SAT Subject Test on US History or World History, which mostly focuses on Europe. There are math and sciences tests available, and those tests only take what is taught at American schools into consideration. Advanced Placement (AP) tests offer an even wider range

of subjects, but the exclusion of different cultures stays the same. One can take an AP exam on European History or US Government and Politics but is unable to learn about different cultures in different continents such as Africa, Asia, and South America.

Moreover, this system puts different barriers on different people. All of these exams require extra fees in order to be administered internationally, which disables low-income international students from even taking the exams. Furthermore, there has been some research pointing to the conclusion that the College Board exams tend to favor White students. Non-Asian student groups of color have historically had lower SAT scores than their White and Asian counterparts (Geiser & Studley, 2001; Jencks, 1998; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004). In 1976, the College Board revealed that the average score for Black students was 240 points lower than White students. The gap was 177 points in 2018. Even after the organization changed the administration of the test, this trend continued (College Board, 2018). Given the persistence of racial differences in scores, as well as the inability of socioeconomic disparities to explain those differences, scholarship has positioned the SAT as racially (and statistically) biased (Freedle, 2003; Santelices & Wilson, 2010).

In addition to the growing magnetism of American institutions and the College Board, an American educational organization, there is a growing concern on the emphasis of American curriculum across global curriculum. Specifically, non-American institutions are imitating American institutions to meet the American standard of education. This phenomenon, known as Americanization, the assimilation of American culture, values, customs, and language, has become very evident in various global education systems. In a study examining the Americanization of European higher education and research, it was found that many European universities are beginning to adopt the American standard of education in response to the increasing appeal of American higher education amongst European students (seen in figure 2). This includes adopting English as the “research language” and is evident in the fields of sciences, economics, and medicine. Although research in other research fields such as law and the arts is still primarily done in the native language, it is currently in the process of switching to English. By embracing the American standard of education, the number of European students studying in the United States has started to reduce and through this approach, European institutes are regaining their appeal amongst European students. (Borghans & Cörvers 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to note that this recovery is made possible by implementing the American standards of education, demonstrating how much the Americanization of education plays on drawing appeal.

Total number of European and foreign (non-US) students in the US, 1949-2004



Source: Institute of International Education

Notes: The data has been drawn from the Open Doors database of the Institute of International Education. For international students in the US, Open Doors counts both enrolled degree students as well as students who are taking shorter non-degree courses.

Figure 2. shows a rising trend of European students attending American institutes during 1949-2003.

Percentage of doctoral dissertations in the home language, 1908-2007

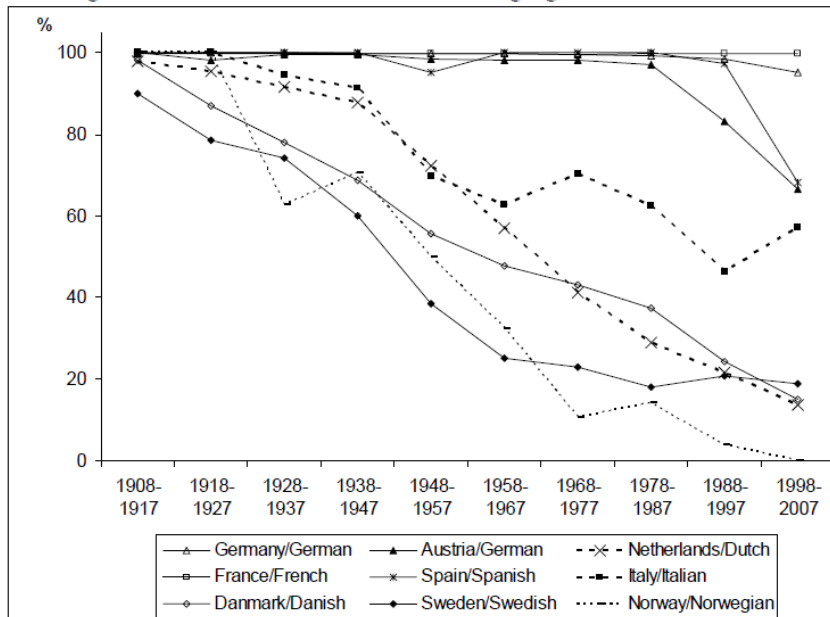


Figure 3. (Center for Research Libraries) (Borghans & Cörvers 2009). The graph above depicts the decline of native language in doctoral dissertations across various European countries from 1908 to 2007.

In our research, we narrowed our focus on the Americanization of global education to focus on the influence of the College Board on international and American students. Specifically, we

compared and contrasted how international and American students were affected by this based on financial, linguistic, and geographic factors. Furthermore, the original research conducted in this paper evaluates the educational lifestyles and opportunities of international and American students and helped us understand and try to answer the underlying question we had in mind for this topic: Is the global education system designed to selectively help students who are willing to ‘Americanize’ prosper?

Materials & Methods

Our study draws on empirical research that others have conducted, which consisted of in-depth investigations on the growing disparities in the Americanization of standardized testing internationally. The studies sourced are all parts of either postgraduate research or data released by the College Board on topics relating to the influence of Americanization. Through this research, we finalized the direction of our study, and created a survey that would collect data targeted at the inconsistencies of the College Board, and the possible causes to test score differences between different socioeconomic regions. Considering the intentions of our research, we aimed for the majority of the participants to be non-American students. As opposed to having a structured release of our survey which could lead to skewed results due to the close proximity of members of our team, we opted for a random selection of participants through various social networking sites. As a result, of the 89 responses, 64% of our participants were non-American students. To reliably establish our hypothesis, we looked at the international students’ feedback on the emphasis in their education on the College Board curriculum, as well as European history as opposed to Asian/African history. In regards to our archival research on the barriers that College Board poses to lower income families, or to those in different time zones, we addressed these issues in our survey, and gathered data on the accommodation and availability of test materials and test centers. In addition, we tried to determine whether the status quo obliges non-American students to self-study or not by asking them about the classes their schools offer. We have also included some questions with the purpose of measuring the burden of self-studying on international students.

Results:

International responses vs American responses

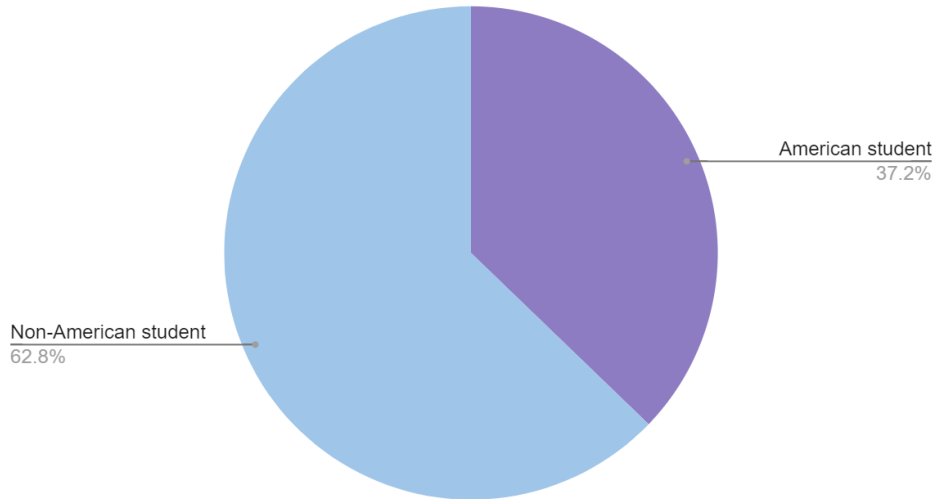


Figure 4. The survey we sent out garnered 89 responses. 37.2% of participants were American and 62.8% of participants were international students. For the purpose of comparing the perspectives of international and American students, we have extracted and illustrated the responses by categorizing them into the two perspectives.

Historical content taught in school

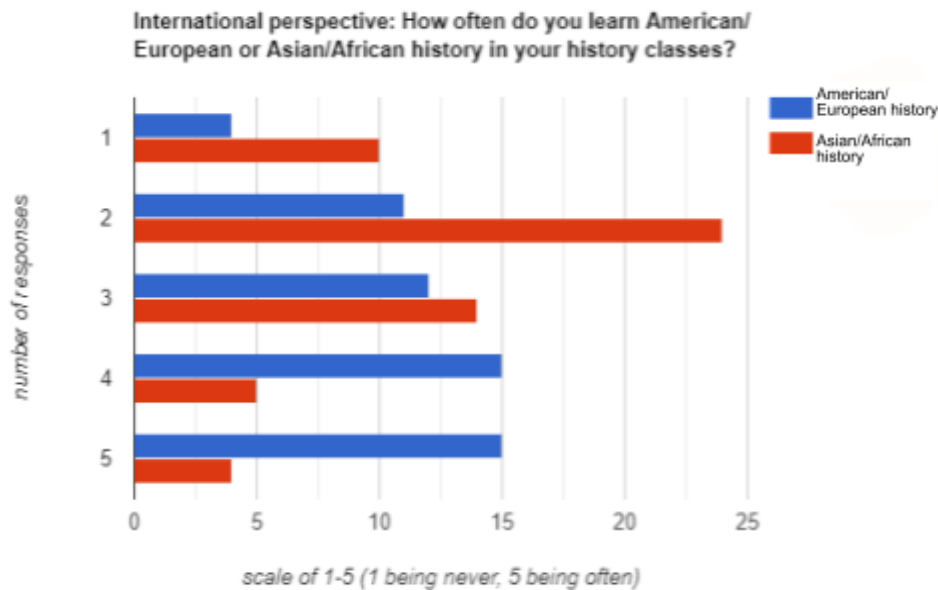


Figure 5. To understand the regional content being taught in history classes, participants were asked to choose how often –from a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being never and 5 being often)–they learned about African/Asian or American/European history in school. Based on the data from

international responses, there is a clear difference on the emphasis of American/European and Asian/African history in history classes. Our international responses indicate that African/Asian history is not taught often in class. That is because nearly 60 % of international responses were on the lower end of the scale (scale of 1 and 2), suggesting the uncommonality of this content. Furthermore, 18 % of all international respondents claimed they never learned Asian/african history in their classes. In contrast, the results appear to be almost reversed when students were asked about the frequency of learning American/European history in their classes. However, the responses for this part were less skewed than for Asian/African history. Regardless, responses showed that international students felt that they were taught US/European history often majority-wise, with 53% of respondents picking 4 and 5 on the scale.

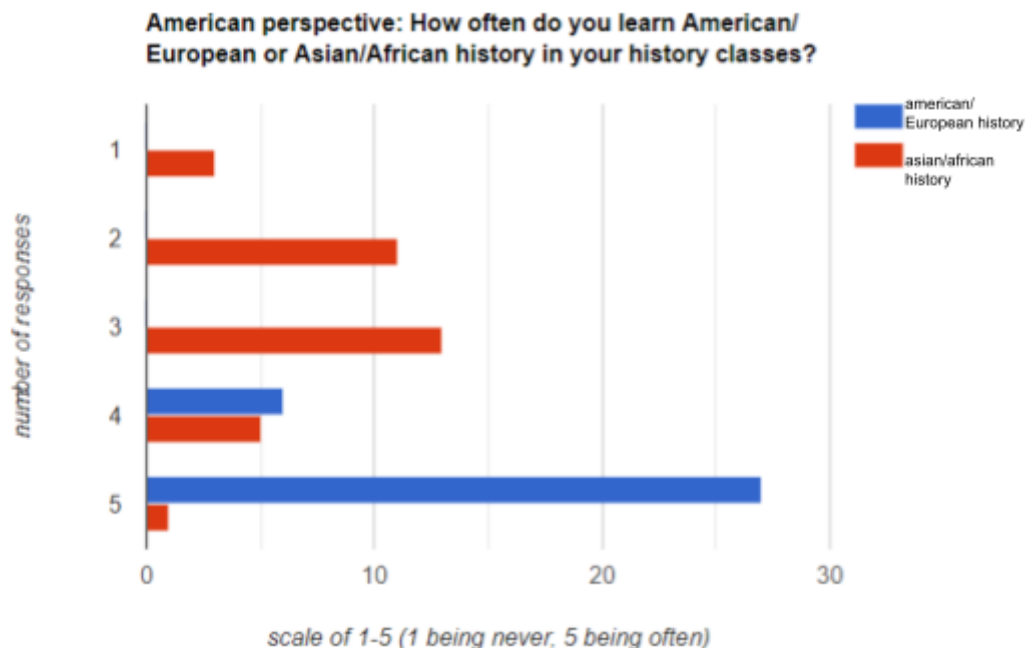


Figure 6. When asking American students the same question(s) about the historical content and the frequency of what they were being taught, we saw that all of our participants learned American/European history often. This is expected since the history-based AP exams, which are very common in American high schools, focus primarily on American and European history. However, the same could not be said for Asian/African history. Majority of our American participants ranked the frequency of Asian/African history in their curriculum as a 2 and 3 on a scale of 5, meaning they did not learn it often in their classes.

When comparing the historical curriculums of international and American students, we see that both are learning American/European history in their classes often. In addition, both are not learning Asian/African history as often. Although most of our international participants are from Asia, our responses show that they are learning more history about a foreign continent than their own. This observation indicates that there is a lot of emphasis on western history and culture in

history classes, especially American history and culture. This is true for global historical classes according to our statistics.

Time Zones

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the College Board administered its Advanced Placement Exams (APs) online for the 2019-2020 school year. However, unlike previous administrations, the 2019-2020 school year administration had only one designated setting for an AP exam, meaning that all test-takers taking an AP exam had to take it simultaneously. Therefore, if a student in New York took an AP they registered for at 1 pm, a student in Japan would be taking the same test at 2 am.

This special situation was a result of the pandemic shifting regular AP testing schedule. Regardless, our team wanted to examine how students- international and American- were affected by time zones during the pandemic. We asked our survey participants if College Board or other test taking companies accommodated to their time zones and the results are shown in the graph below:

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, did the College Board, or other test taking companies accommodate to your timezone?

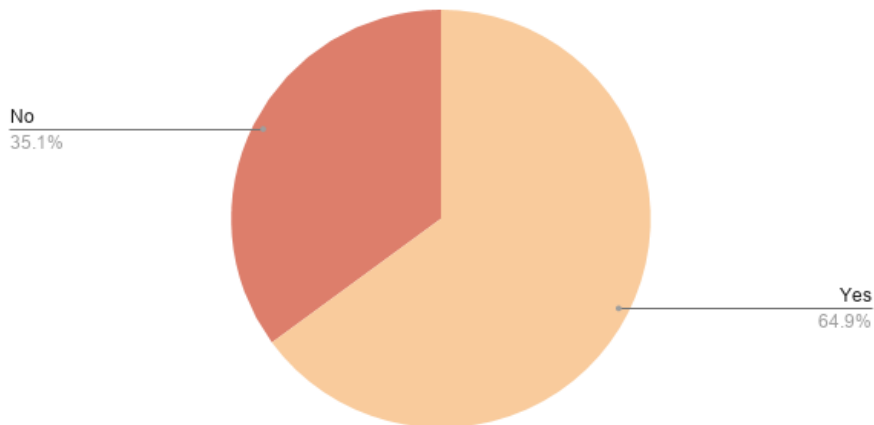


Figure 7. This figure shows the **international perspective** when international participants were asked the question above. 64.9 % of our international participants stated that College Board or other test-taking companies accommodated to their time zone while the rest (35.1%) said they did not.

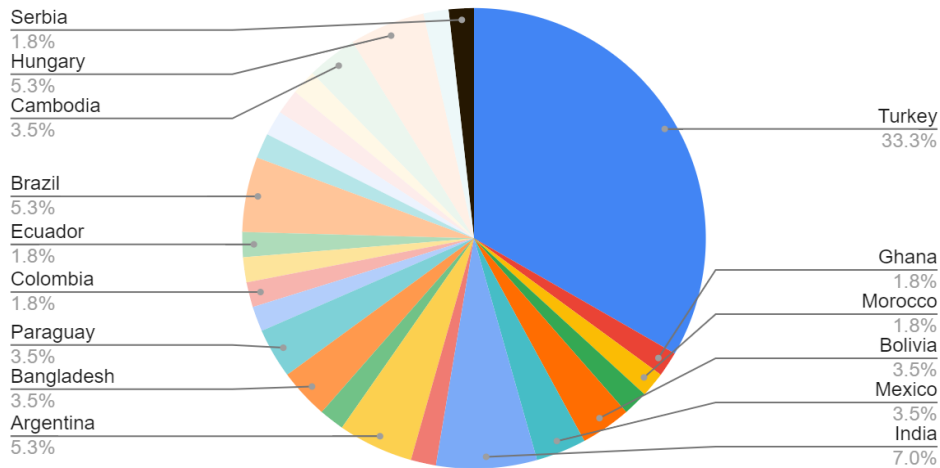


Figure 8. Most of our international responses are concentrated in Turkey, India, Hungary and Argentina. Overall, the time zones of the countries that most of our international respondents are from have a large contrast to American time zones.

Turkey Responses: During COVID-10, did College Board/test taking companies accomodate to your timezones?



Figure 9. Upon taking a closer examination on how our Turkish participants responded to our time zone question, we noticed that for the most part, responses were closely divided.

American perspective: Count of During the Covid-19 Pandemic, did the College Board, or other test taking companies accommodate to your timezone?

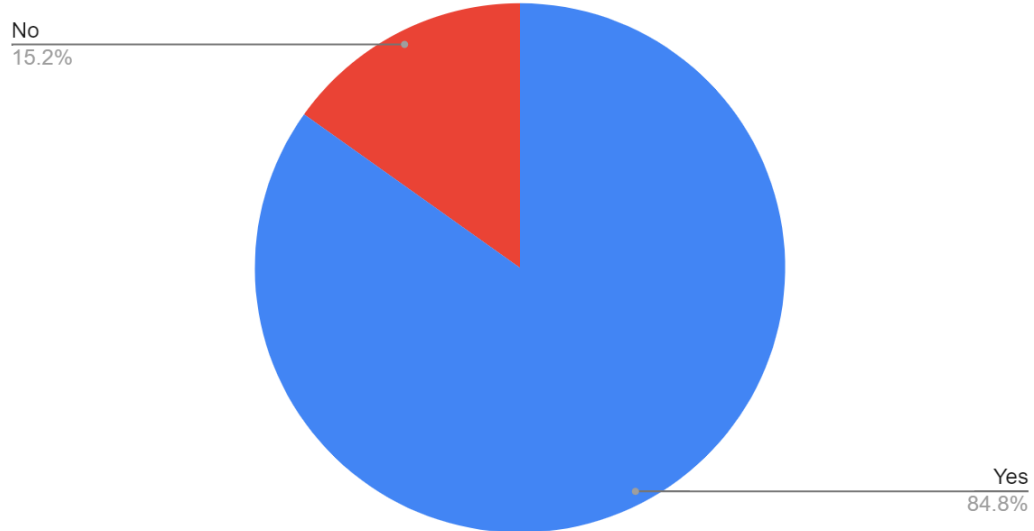


Figure 10. Of the 32 American students that we surveyed, almost all but four responses stated that the College Board did accommodate for their timezone. This, of course, is no surprise, since as stated earlier, College Board is an American organization. The four outlier responses were bizarre as the people who had submitted those surveys all lived in places within the United States that had other surveyees state that the College Board did accommodate to their timezone. Nevertheless, these outliers were not enough to skew the data.

Financial factors

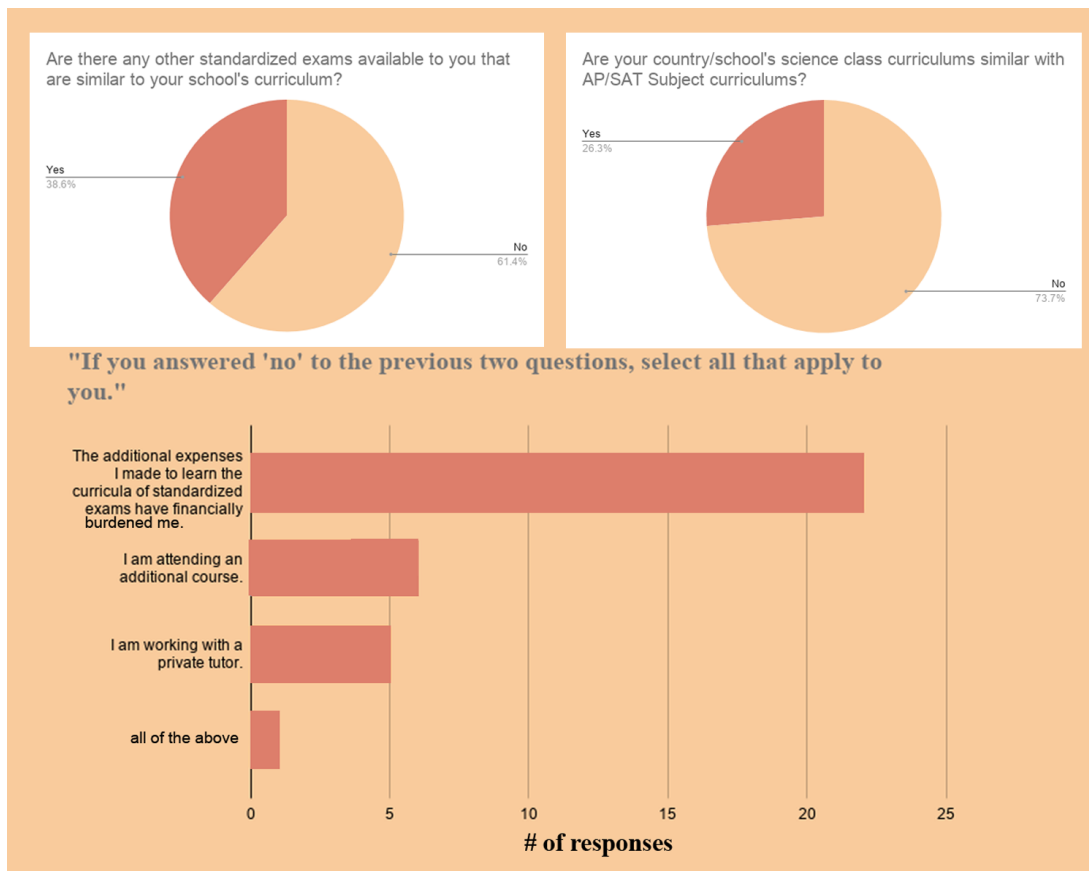


Figure 11. depicts **international** responses. For American responses, which is not shown, all but one participant said no to the two questions above.

To measure the barriers the College Board exams creates for students, we asked participants about the similarity of their schools' curriculum to College Board exams. 73.7% of the international participants indicated that their schools' STEM curriculums do not correlate with the ones the College Board requires them to know. Moreover, 61.4% of the participants indicated that there are no standardized exams available to them that are similar to their schools' curriculum. In this regard, we wanted to measure whether this situation causes financial hardship and asked students whose schools do not offer similar classes to the College Board curriculum to select situations that apply to them. 68% of the participants whose schools do not offer similar classes to the College Board indicated that the additional expenses they made to learn the curricula of standardized exams have financially burdened them. 20% of the participants stated that they are attending an additional course, while 17% stated that they work with a private tutor. We conclude that the majority of students who have to self-study for the College Board exams are struggling with financials, a very significant finding of this research.

English proficiency

Has your English proficiency negatively affected your performance on standardized exams? (For instance, not knowing the meaning of a term in an exam not aimed at measuring English proficiency)

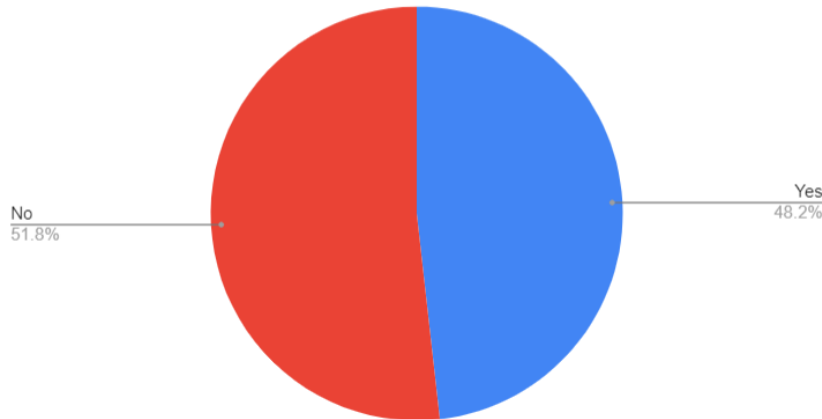


Figure 12. 48.2% of our international participants said that their english proficiency negatively affected their performance on standardized exams.

Miscellaneous

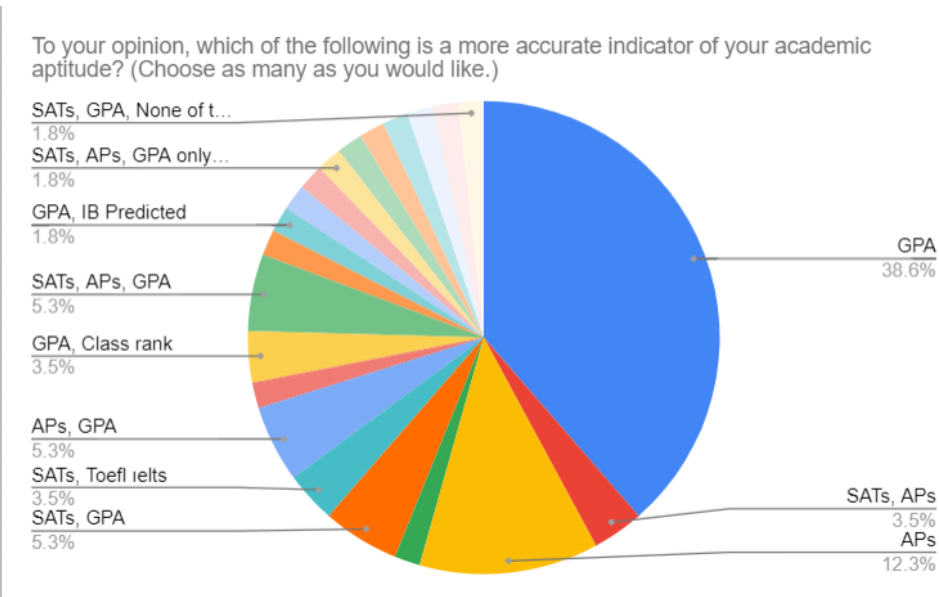


Figure 13. Nearly 40 % of our international respondents said that GPA was the most accurate indicator of their academic aptitude while roughly 12% said it was Advanced Placement exams. According to this data, this makes APs the second most common academic aptitude indicator from the international perspective. The Advanced Placement exam is administered by the College Board to measure an individual’s mastery of an introductory course equivalent to that specific AP course in college (in the United States). Our data supports and correlates with the research findings mentioned in the Literature Review by showing that international school systems are

adopting components of the American education system (the APs). Furthermore, though 12% is not a substantial percentage, the data still implies that components like APs are still important indicators of measuring academic aptitude in the global education system.

Discussion

Our findings support our initial claim that Americanization is present in international education.

When analyzing the data from our questionnaire, the most imperative indicators of said Americanization are the accommodation of international students in terms of time zones, financial resources, and the extent to which foreign countries conform their curriculum to College Board standards. Although the data collected comply with our claim, the collective impact of the collected responses are not significant enough to warrant a concrete representation of global education. In order to provide a more comprehensive claim, we would need a great sample size, from multiple countries. In this case, we were not able to obtain the volume of data we needed. However, our study still details the presence of Americanization in select countries that we were able to obtain data from. As a result, we can craft a reasonable conclusion on this topic.

In regards to foreign countries adapting their curriculums to better fit the College Board, we had a clear consensus that international students rarely learn about history in non-European countries, with nearly 60% of responses falling on the lower end of the spectrum. This is a clear indication that foreign countries have to incorporate American education into their syllabus. A closer look in the data further highlights this. Of the responses from Bangladesh students, the average response was 4 and 5 in terms of frequency of American/European history in their classes. Aside from this, we see close to 50% of participants stating that their English proficiency has negatively affected their performance on tests, primarily those that are not aimed to test their English proficiency. This by itself accentuates the issue of Americanization. On tests that are not testing for English proficiency, terms and phrases that would cause trouble to non-native speakers should not be a significant factor, however, when close to 50% of responses indicate that it does, it is undeniable that tests are made to better accommodate English speaking students.

As aforementioned, another important indication of Americanization were the accommodations made by the College Board to foreign students in terms of time zones and financial resources. After analysis of collected data, close to 65% of students said that there were ample adjustments to time zones for their country. However, this still leaves around 35% of students not being provided with accommodations. In this case, the negligence of foreign students by the College Board is indisputable. The impact of the time zone gap on student performance is imperative as students taking the same test in New York city would be taking them at 1pm while students in Japan would be taking them at 2 am. In addition, when asked whether preparing for College Board tests has financially burdened families, around 60% of all responses indicate that this has been the case. This is an example of how financial stability in foreign countries is not taken into consideration when drafting exams. Many of the opportunities to prepare for College Board

exams are hindered by financial problems, which has led to significant feelings of disparity within our participants. When asked about their feelings towards the exams, the majority of the participants voiced their dissatisfaction, pointing out that these exams favored American/European students, and those in upper class families who have access to resources. One of our anonymous respondents reached out after required parts of the questionnaire: “The books for SAT IIs were unavailable across my country and I had to literally call more than 55 bookstores to no avail. I had then ordered a second hand book from the US to Mumbai for SAT II but then these exams were cancelled. Even for registration, the fees for international students are very high and my test centre got cancelled for the second time in a row and now I am going to appear for SAT by travelling to another state with extra expenses. Also, the cost of TOEFL in my country is \$185 + taxes which is very, very unaffordable and has stressed me out because TOEFL is mandatory for International students. If we as international students are doing every bit to get to the level of domestic students in the admission process, why is there so much disparity and inequality?”

As stated before, in order for a more concise and accurate conclusion to be made, a wider scope of survey participants is needed. The survey used for this research was only accessible to the public for no more than two weeks and so it only gathered 89 responses. There was an evident difference between the number of international participants and that of American participants: 57 international and 32 American. This stark difference can create a biased shift in which not much emphasis is put on the American student perspective on the matter of Americanization on global education. In general, the representation for both perspectives is limited and can be worked on in future studies.

In further detail, there is bias in those who participated to represent the two categories: international vs American student perspective. For international students, we were only able to reach out to international students from select countries. Out of 194 countries, excluding the United States, our international participants counted to represent only 15. Moreover, those countries are not represented equally. While there were 18 participants from Turkey, only 1 participant represented Nigeria. On the other hand, for our American participants, further measures can be taken to get a range of responses from all across the states. 59.4% of our American participants were concentrated in New York, and out of the 50 states, we only acquired responses representing 10 of the states. Among the 10 states represented in our study, 6 of them had very little representation with only 1 participant for each. It is imperative to note that different states have different education systems and these education systems can have a significant effect on the responses regarding the American perspective by creating variation. For future research on this topic, it is recommended to have a much wider scope of participants in terms of both body and region.

Regardless of the limitations of our current research, there are strong future implications for this study. Given our findings on the disparity in terms of education and accommodations we believe that actions could be taken to level the playing field for students in all countries. By giving

adjustments to test dates and times, as well as providing ample resources in terms of tutoring or prep books, it is possible for students in foreign countries to perform just as well as American students despite the setbacks in their education, and the added obstacle in their curriculum-conforming their curriculum to English speaking countries. A future study could be made with a larger volume of responses. The impact of the issues surrounding this topic is tremendous, and it is imperative that we gather more information, and develop a concrete understanding of Americanization in the structure of college board exams.

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