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Exploring Administrative Practices to Improve African and Hispanic Highschool Students Enrollment in Advanced Placement Courses

Shallu Makan
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Walden University

College of Education

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Shallu Makan

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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The Office of the Provost

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2019

Abstract

Exploring Administrative Practices to Improve African and Hispanic Highschool
Students Enrollment in Advanced Placement Courses

by

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MA, University of LaVerne, 2015

BS, California State University, Northridge, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

Disproportionately lower numbers of African- and Hispanic-American high school students are enrolled in advanced placement (AP) courses in U.S. high schools. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in high school AP courses. The conceptual framework of the study was based on Bandura's social cognitive theory and its 4 elements: affective processes, motivational processes, selection processes, and cognitive learning. Research questions were designed to examine the perspectives of administrators about the disproportional enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses and administrative practices that may support proportional representation of these students. Semistructured interviews were used to collect data from 10 administrators from 2 high schools in the same school district. Data analysis involved open, axial, and a priori coding. The findings indicated that administrators agreed on the need to reevaluate prerequisites for AP courses that may create unintentional obstacles to enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students. Additionally, administrative support for the counselors to provide academic advising may improve access for Hispanic- and African-American students. This study contributes to positive social change by creating a deeper understanding of how administrative practices can improve African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in high school AP courses.

Exploring Administrative Practices and African and Hispanic Americans in Advanced

Placement

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Lord Almighty, who blessed me with determination, perseverance, and grit to complete this task. God paved the path to connect me with the right mentors and guides who supported me through this process. I am ever so grateful for this journey in this lifetime.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Advanced placement (AP) classes have gained an important standing in American high school curricula. AP refers to a series of courses and tests designed to determine mastery over introductory college material (Rehm, 2014). Through AP programs in high school, students have opportunities to take college-level courses, earn college credits, and gain a higher rate of college acceptance (Warne, Larsen, Anderson, & Odasso, 2015). AP courses provide high school students with an accelerated track toward college preparation, because they offer challenging coursework that facilitates critical thinking skills, time management, and strategic exam navigation, all of which may closely mimic the collegiate education that students will eventually receive (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). College admissions departments highly regard AP courses because they are indicative of a student's college-level and professional preparedness (Pugh, 2017). Students in AP classes attain academic achievement and course completion rates than students enrolled in standard high school classes (Gonzalez, 2016; Kettler & Hurst, 2017).

Despite the benefits of AP courses, there is a disparity in enrollment in AP courses between Hispanic and African-Americans and their European- and Asian-American counterparts. The College Board (2014) reported a disproportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. The 2017 data indicated that 55.6% of European Americans are enrolled in AP courses compared to 22.9% of Hispanic Americans and 4.3% of African-American students (Abamu, 2018). Asian Americans are the only ethnic subgroup with comparable enrollment to European Americans.

In this chapter, I provide a background regarding underrepresentation of African- and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. The gap in knowledge regarding administrative practices that could support the proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses will also be discussed. This is followed by the problem statement and description of how this problem is current, meaningful, and relevant in this discipline. The purpose of the study is described in the subsequent section. The study's design and rationale are outlined in the Nature of the Study section. A definition of terms is presented and followed by the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. This chapter concludes with a description of the significance of the study and a summary of the chapter.

Background

Research has highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). However, there are barriers that African- and Hispanic-American students encounter in accessing college-level courses such as a lack of administrative support for test preparation, peer mentorship, and tutoring that can help prepare them (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The nonproportional enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP can be linked to inadequate support in schools. James et al. (2017) indicated that there is an absence of support systems that encourage African- and Hispanic-American students to participate in AP courses. Additionally, the lack of motivational conditions and high expectations set by administrators lead to the enrollment disparity of African- and Hispanic-American students in challenging courses (Banerjee, 2016). Thus, there is a disparity in educational

attainment of African- and Hispanic-American students in science, technology, engineering, and math courses compared to their European- and Asian-American counterparts (Banerjee, 2016). Support systems available to African- and Hispanic-American students at school may help promote retention and success of these students in such programs.

Gap in Knowledge about Practice

There is a lack of research on administrative practices that affect the enrollment and achievement of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses as well as practices that support proportional representation (Ceballos, 2016). Many authors have expressed the need for further research in this area. For example, Santamaria and Santamaria (2016) suggested that further research be conducted to better understand the gap in knowledge on administrative practices and the issue of underrepresented African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. Additionally, researchers have emphasized the need for greater understanding of administrative practices that affect African and Hispanic Americans (Carter, 2016) such as practices that can promote equal representation and increased enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses (Bryan, 2016; Demaree, 2016; Haxton, Song, & Zeiser, 2016). Rodríguez et al. (2016) also encouraged researchers to investigate the expertise and ingenuity required to prepare students for college and future careers and suggested exploring leadership skills to initiate discourse among administrators and African and Hispanic Americans on how to close the opportunity gap. For example, it is important for administrators to understand the importance of racial and ethnic diversity to close the achievement gap (Agosto,

Karaxha, & Bellara, 2015) as well as have stronger awareness of students' course enrollments and success rates (Perez, Cromley, & Kaplan, 2014). Finally, Rowland and Shircliffe (2016) noted the need for increased understanding of administrative practices to eliminate barriers to preparing underserved students for college.

Improved understanding of administrative practices may help administrators to ensure proportional enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP classes. Thus, the findings in this study can increase understanding of the importance of accessibility to AP programs for all students. Access to AP courses is important for minorities and students from the lower socioeconomic sphere because it is associated with an increased likelihood of college enrollment (Banerjee, 2016). Enrollment in AP courses also has important implications for long-term education and the reduction of class disparities (Igualda, 2015). The data from this study may inform efforts to improve the self-efficacy and representation of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP classes.

The Problem Statement

The research problem that this study addressed is that there is a disproportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in high school AP courses. There is also a gap in knowledge about administrative practices that may address this problem and improve the proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP programs (Wood, 2016). Further, there is a need for increased understanding of administrative practices that could eliminate the barriers to prepare underserved students

for college in academic and nonacademic areas (Rowland & Shircliffe, 2016), and administrators are unaware of students' schedules or success rates (Perez et al., 2014).

A better understanding of administrative practices may lead to an increase the enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. Students' academic success depends, in part, on the educational practices of school administrators (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). It is the administrator's responsibility to improve student experiences in schools that may help produce equal academic results for various subgroups (James, Butterfield, Jones, & Mokuria, 2017). Administrative practices can address students' social needs (Rutledge, Cohen-Vogel, Osborne-Lampkin, & Roberts, 2015). Therefore, the findings in this study contribute to the literature by adding to understanding about administrative practices designed to promote equal opportunities for African and Hispanic Americans.

A broader understanding of this subject may also facilitate a more consistent implementation of appropriate administrative practices. To address the underrepresentation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses and provide optimal results, it will be necessary to mobilize effective administrative practices (Swanson & Nagy, 2014). Deeper understanding of administrative practices may improve the allocation of resources to support African and Hispanic Americans (Goddard, Goddard, Sook Kim, & Miller, 2015). Moreover, further research is required to explore the importance of administrative practices that allow for (a) collaboration time for teachers, (b) training in the best teaching practices, and (c) implementation time to improve culturally responsive pedagogy to support African and Hispanic Americans

(Goddard et al., 2015). Additional research must address the gap in knowledge regarding school wide implementation of programs to support students on academic, social, and emotional levels to improve their self-efficacy (Rutledge et al., 2015). Finally, there is a need to investigate administrators' responsibility for preparing African and Hispanic Americans in the necessary competencies and skills to guarantee equitable educational opportunities (Swanson & Nagy, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. Improved understanding of administrative practices is important because there is a gap in the literature regarding administrative practices that may support African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP courses. Further research is needed to deepen understanding of these administrative practices to improve self-efficacy and address the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses (Giersch, Bottia, Mickelson, & Stearns, 2016; Olszewski-Kubilius, Steenburgen-Hu, Thomson, & Rosen, 2016). Research has shown that positive feedback can improve self-efficacy among African- and Hispanic-American students enrolled in their first AP course, and there is a gap in knowledge about administrative practices to support teacher training to improve the self-efficacy of underserved student population in AP courses (Goode, 2017). Therefore, this study addresses the need for more exploration of administrative practices.

Research Questions

The following research questions along with sub-questions were used in this exploratory case study.

Research Question 1: What are school administrators' perspectives about the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP classes?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of school administrators, what current administrative practices and written policies in their school may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses?

Research Question 3: From the perspective of school administrators, what administrative practices contribute to self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP classes?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study involved Bandura's (1993) concept of self-efficacy, which is one of the constructs of social cognitive theory (SCT). The concept of self-efficacy explains that an individual's beliefs and thoughts about their capabilities help them organize and execute an activity or performance. Self-efficacy results from four main sources or experiences: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) reaction to negative stressors. These sources do not influence self-efficacy directly because it is cognitively appraised. People weigh the difficulty of the task, effort required to accomplish the task, and the outcome of the task, and then compare the task to their own experiences of failures and success. Based

on this evaluation, they make efficacious decisions regarding whether to pursue the task (Bandura, 1993).

There are four outcomes of self-efficacy based on individuals' experiences: (a) cognitive processes, (b) motivational processes, (c) affective processes, and (d) selection processes (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs affect human functioning in these four processes. Using a framework built from the concept of self-efficacy, I explored the cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes used in administrative practices. I examined administrative practices that may support the proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. Examples of documents that were examined include *AP Program Guide, 2018-19*; *Equity and Access Policy* (2018); *Personalized Guidance*; 2017-18 Coordinator's Manual, and materials pertaining to the AP Summer Institute and Mentoring Program (College Board, 2019)

Self-efficacy was an appropriate conceptual framework for this study because it has been demonstrated to mediate academic achievement in students (Bandura, 1993). High self-efficacy indicates students' increased motivation and performance, and the success or failure of African- and Hispanic-American students is directly associated with strong or weak self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy can be used to guide administrative practices that enhance motivation in students when faced with challenging tasks (Bandura, 2001). Administrators may establish task-oriented and supportive learning environments for students that will enhance the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students (Høigaard, Kovač, Øverby, & Haugen, 2015). Additionally, the four constructs of self-efficacy inform administrative practices that guide the

motivation, cognitive, affective, and selection processes that predict the academic achievement of African- and Hispanic-American students (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). According to Bandura (1993), personal processes alone may not determine students' self-efficacy until they have environmental as well as psychological support in their school climate. Administrative practices may improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students if the leaders identify barriers, improve diversity, and include all key stakeholders in the decision-making process. The administrative decisions can result in implementation of the programs to being effective change (Dewitt, 2017).

Overview of the Connections among Key Elements of the Framework

Based on an individual's unique experiences, the four outcomes of self-efficacy are psychological processes that influence motivation, cognition, selection, and affective characteristics in their behavior (Bandura, 1993). First, high self-efficacy results in affective processes that enhance an individual's control over stressors; as a result, they avoid negative thoughts and conjure up the energy to deal with challenging tasks (Bandura, 2001). Affective processes have been linked to administrative practices that influence student choices based on their self-efficacy, ability to manage stressors, and their decision to enroll in AP courses (Ramsey, Spira, Parisi, & Rebok, 2016).

Second, high motivation evolves from high self-efficacy. People motivate themselves by exercising forethought and guiding their actions to achieve certain outcomes. For example, Torre, Preston, Drake, Goldring, and Cannata (2017) found that administrative practices, such as creating safe places for student/teacher interactions, results in high self-efficacy. When students have positive relations with administrators

and teachers, they set goals and plan a course of action. As a result, these students are efficacious and have positive self-perception to achieve and, therefore, succeed.

Third, selection processes help individuals select activities and environments that will help them cultivate competencies, interests, and social networks. High self-efficacy helps individuals create beneficial environments to achieve their goals. For example, Daniel (2015) used Bandura's (1993) element of selection processes to show that students excel in challenging tasks even when those tasks do not correspond to the students' inherent abilities rather than their acquired skills. They select their environment to acquire the necessary competencies and skills to achieve their goals.

Finally, higher self-efficacy develops higher cognition processes. Individuals develop greater ability to visualize success, self-guide through positive thoughts, and predict and control the outcomes of their actions. Kotok (2017) used cognitive processes to demonstrate the differences that define the gap in acquiring superior learning opportunities between African and Hispanic Americans and their counterparts. Students from lower socioeconomic levels respond readily to positive reinforcement given by their teachers and therefore improve their self-efficacy and self-confidence when compared to the students from higher socioeconomic strata who have innate motivation and confidence to succeed (Kotok, 2017). Therefore, these four elements of Bandura's concept of self-efficacy from SCT aligned with the purpose of this study.

How the Conceptual Framework Relates to the Study

The problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, interview questions, and data analysis of this study are informed by four elements of Bandura's

(1993) concept of self-efficacy. Guided by the research questions, data were collected via semistructured interviews. The interview protocol contained questions based on motivational processes, cognitive learning, affective processes, and selection processes to solicit responses about administrative practices. Previous researchers have similarly used aspects of the conceptual framework, especially elements of self-efficacy to inform their interview questions and protocols (Cannata, Smith, & Taylor Haynes, 2017; LePeau, Hurtado, & Davis, 2018). Further, data analysis was accomplished, in part, through a priori codes based on the relevant elements of Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. A priori codes can be used to categorize data into themes based on the elements of the conceptual framework (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For example, Cannata et al. (2017) used the elements of the conceptual framework of self-efficacy to form themes using a priori coding methods, which helped understand the effectiveness of program, policies, and practices in urban high school districts to serve the low-income students (see also Yin, 2009).

Nature of the Study

I used an interpretive qualitative tradition focused on the participants' experiences and how they interpret and share them with others (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Specifically, I used an exploratory case study. Case studies are used to investigate a phenomenon, program, or event within a bounded setting (Zainal, 2007). Information in case studies is typically collected in the form of interviews, observations, and document evaluation (Creswell, 1998). Case studies are often referred to as descriptive, exploratory, or

explanatory. An exploratory case study is a reliable method to gather data through interviews (Tellis, 1997).

I used an exploratory case study methodology (Merriam, 2009) to explore administrative practices at two high schools in a suburban district in Southern California. An exploratory case study is an in-depth analysis of phenomenon or event where there is a lack of preliminary research (Zainal, 2007). In an exploratory case study, the phenomenon demonstrates no clear outcomes (Yin, 2003). The data may be gathered through interviews, observations, or document analysis (Creswell, 1998). I chose this method for multiple reasons. First, because the administrative practices are largely unknown, there is not a clear set of outcomes linked to them (Yin, 2000). Exploratory case studies can also be used to generate working hypotheses regarding a phenomenon (Yin, 2003), which helped investigate the broad range of administrative practices and understand the disproportionate representation of African and Hispanic Americans. An exploratory case study also provides flexibility in data collection methods (Streb, Burrell, Frederick & Genovese, 2008), which allowed me to use semistructured interviews to obtain detailed information in a relaxed environment, eliciting both implied and definitive responses from the participants (Yin, 2003). Finally, in the exploratory case study, the data analysis is directed within the circumstances or specific setting where the problem is being addressed (Yin, 2003). In this qualitative exploratory case study, the findings will be relevant to the current schools and any similar schools.

Phenomenon Being Investigated

The phenomenon of investigation in this case study was administrative practices that may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. The data in this qualitative study were collected via semistructured interviews and analysis of administrative documents (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Once collected, the interview data were transcribed and then analyzed through emergent and a priori codes. The coded data were categorized into themes via axial coding (Merriam, 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As suggested by Patton, Hong, Patel, and Kral (2017), computer software was used to expedite the data analysis process. A priori coding was used to note any elements of the conceptual framework.

Setting

The two schools where the research was conducted are comprehensive high schools. Both schools are considered high-performing schools, meaning that they both have high parental involvement to support student achievement. These schools have better school attendance, high graduation rates, and low dropout and delinquencies (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). They have well established remedial and intervention programs designed to improve academic rigor. The administrators support teacher training and provide resources and needs-based support for students (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Community engagement and business partnerships provide opportunities to students for college and career readiness (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

The first school (S1) is a Title I school with an enrollment of 2,316 students of which 49% are Hispanics, 40% are Whites, 6% are Asians, 2% are African-Americans,

and 3% are listed as Other. A Title I school receives funds from federal government to support the low-income students, referred to as Title I students. The supplemental funding is allocated to assist in meeting the educational needs of this population (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Approximately 40% of students are on a free and reduced lunch program, and 16% of the total population are first generation high school attendees. The second school (S2) is a comprehensive high school in an affluent area. The total number of students enrolled in the second school is 2,532. The demographic breakdown of student population in the second school is 44% White, 23% Asian, 24% Hispanic, 4% African-American, and 5% Multi-racial.

Neither school S1 nor S2 has been successful in raising the participation of African- and Hispanic-American students in their AP courses to a proportional level (Western Association of Schools and Colleges [WASC], 2015). The demographic breakdown of students taking the AP exams reflects the disparity in enrollment in the AP courses for the African- and Hispanic-American students. In S1, there were a total of 1,354 AP tests administered to 732 students in 20 subject areas with 64% of students passing at least one test. There were 387 (17%) White students who were enrolled in at least one AP class, followed by 270 Hispanics (12%), 10 African-Americans (0.4%), and 76 (3%) Asians and American Indians (0.04%). In S2, out of 1,654 exams, 604 (36.5%) Asian, 572 (34.5%) White, 34 (0.002%) African-American, 266 (16%) Hispanic, four (0.002%) American Indian, and 126 (8.18%) Multi-racial students took AP exams. There were total of 1,654 AP exams administered to 898 students in 27 different subjects (College Board, 2019).

Definition of Terms

For this qualitative case study, the following terms were used:

Administrative practices: Leadership methods characteristic of school administrators that are goal oriented, related to decision-making, and help in program implementation to influence staff and students (Maithya, Kieti, & Mulwa, 2017).

Advanced placement (AP) courses: The College Board (2016) offers a rigorous college-level curriculum culminating in an assessment at the end of the year. Students then take end of the year AP exam and demonstrate success by earning passing scores (College Board, 2011). This program offers students the opportunity to earn college credits while enrolled in high school (College Board, 2016).

African-Americans: Black people living in America who have ancestors or parents who originated from Africa or their own country of birth is on the continent of Africa (Lewis, 2013).

College Board: A non-profit organization with the major goal of connecting students to college through the AP program, SAT, and the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying (PSAT/NMSQT; College Board, 2016).

College and career readiness: An approach offered by professional educators who provide skills, training, and challenging curriculum to prepare students for college and career, regardless of their culture, race, nationality or gender (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014).

Disproportional representation: Disproportional representation is when there are substantially fewer than expected members of a group or a category represented in a certain situation or event, based on the group or category's representation in the general population (Oswald & Coutinho, 2006).

Hispanic Americans: According the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), Hispanic Americans are a group of people residing in America whose parents or ancestors originated from Cuba, Spain, Puerto Rico, Mexican, South or Central America or any other Spanish culture regardless of race are categorized as Hispanic Americans.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is one's belief that influences one's life and changes the course of action and experiences (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs manifest through the following four psychological processes; motivational, cognitive, selection and affective processes.

Assumptions

It was assumed that all participants would share truthfully (Pugh, 2017). It was also assumed that administrators have attempted to provide equitable access to all students, regardless of whether the students have taken advantage of this access individually (Warne, Larsen, Anderson, & Odasso, 2015). Another assumption is that administrators have a genuine interest in promoting the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students. Finally, it was assumed that all participants would maintain confidentiality and not disclose the content of the interview to their fellow participants or colleagues.

Scope and Delimitations

I explored the administrative practices that may promote the proportional enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. The scope of this study was limited to the administrators in two high schools in the same school district who are involved in the implementation of AP programs. The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. I chose to focus on administrative practices because they play a major role in the implementation of AP programs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017), introduction of AP courses (College Board, 2019), and allocation of funding and resources to support students (Pugh, 2017).

Because this qualitative study was conducted in two high schools within the same school district, I made choices to define the parameters for the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used purposeful sampling to obtain rich data that is contextually appropriate. Second, a small sample was selected due to limited administrators at each school site. However, the richness of the data is more important than the size of the sample (Patton, 2002).

Transferability in qualitative research refers to applying findings to other areas and groups (Cope, 2014). The findings may be able to inform the future research designs related to the administrative practices (Foltz, Gannon, & Kirschmann, 2014). The prospect of transferability is acceptable if valid findings of the phenomenon under the study are presented in a dependable and reliable fashion (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The experiences and the contextual basis of this study provided data that may provide insight

into the unique phenomenon (see Cole & Gardner, 1979). In this qualitative study, findings did not involve broad claims based on foreseeability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Limitations

This qualitative study was conducted in two high schools within the same school district; therefore, generalizability, transferability, and dependability are innate limitations. To overcome the limitations of the qualitative research, the findings can be transferred to a broader context, provided that the valid data are described in detail. This approach allows researchers, readers, and stakeholders to consider the specifics of the study rather than replicating the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Due to the knowledge base regarding AP programs that I have obtained while teaching AP courses for over 10 years, my main limitation is bias. This may have affected the design of the instrument, data collection, and analysis. As a human instrument, I collected data for this qualitative research; therefore, biases were inevitable. However, I controlled my own bias by focusing on participants' responses (see Marshall & Roman, 2006). Another limitation of the study could be participants' hesitance to be candid, as they tend to be politically correct in their responses.

Significance

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. The findings will influence positive social change by increasing the understanding of practices designed to improve the enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. Proportional enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in

AP courses will enhance college and career readiness of this population. African- and Hispanic-American participation in AP courses is directly related to high performance and improved socioeconomic status in college and beyond (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). School communities will benefit from improved understanding of administrative practices in this area because administrative practices have a key impact on student success and achievement (Marzano, 2003). Additionally, effective administrators provide equitable access to superior instruction for all students (Jacob, Goddard, & Kim, 2015).

Summary

AP curriculum is a part of the college and career readiness culture of high schools and serves as a gateway to college admissions (Demaree, 2016). However, many African and Hispanic Americans do not benefit from AP programs. Research has documented significant gaps in achievement between African and Hispanic Americans and their European-American and Asian-American counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Thus, I explored the administrative practices supported by research to improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students and expand their enrollment in high school AP courses. To improve understanding of the phenomenon, I conducted an exploratory case study at two high schools within the same school district.

Chapter 2 includes the literature review related to the administrative practices in the past 5 years. The review includes research related to this study. The literature review is divided into three major categories: conceptual framework, design, and administrative practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. AP courses provide a track toward college in which students improve critical thinking skills, time management, and exam taking strategies (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). However, there is a gap in research regarding administrative practices and their connection to improved representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP programs (Demaree, 2016; Wood, 2016). Thus, there is a need to improve current understanding of administrative practices that might reduce underserved students' barriers to college preparation (Rowland & Shircliffe, 2016). Additional research on administrative decisions is needed to address the low enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses (Giersch et al., 2016). According to Harris, Hines, Kelly, Williams, and Bagley (2014), input from administrators is crucial in improving the administrative practices and addressing the gap in research.

This chapter begins with the strategies used to search the literature. The next section provides the conceptual framework and its elements as well as how it has been applied in the literature. The following section describes the application and articulation of the phenomenon in previous research. Tracking and disproportionate representation of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses are the two issues discussed in this chapter. The literature discussed also pertains to the influence of administrative practices that can counter the effect of tracking and underrepresentation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. Finally, the literature review includes a discussion on

how the four elements of self-efficacy result in positive behavior in African and Hispanic Americans through effective administrative practices.

Literature Search Strategy

Literary academic databases, including Education Source, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and ProQuest were used to conduct the literature search. The following keywords were linked to the study's purpose, problem statement, and research questions: *AP courses, college preparatory classes, African and Hispanic Americans, African-American, Hispanic, minority underrepresentation in AP courses, SCT, elements of SCT, and STEM*. The literature required to examine related topics was searched using specific terms such as *administrative practices and underrepresentation, school leadership and African and Hispanic Americans, the impact of administrators on African and Hispanic Americans' performance, and AP courses and achievement gap for African and Hispanic Americans*. Most articles cited in this study were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2013-2018. The exception to this occurs when information on the conceptual framework is presented. To address gaps in current literature, the dates for specific searches that rendered limited responses were expanded until satisfactory resources could be found. The reference lists of these studies were used to gather additional current research. The articles were not required to have been published in the United States to meet inclusion criteria.

The iterative search process was conducted to focus on administrative practices. Articles that reflected common as well as contrasting views related to the topic of research were selected and reviewed. The goal was to find articles that encompassed a

qualitative approach to exploratory research to obtain knowledge related to this study's methodology. In addition, articles related to the analysis of written documents were also researched. This section could add to previously existing research and addresses the gap in knowledge related to the administrative practices that could support the proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in high school AP courses.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework included Bandura's (1993) concept of self-efficacy, one of the constructs of his SCT. Individuals' self-efficacy beliefs enable them to feel, think, behave, and self-motivate to perform to the best of their abilities. For example, administrative practices can help develop high self-efficacy in students (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). Four categories of experience may contribute to high self-efficacy: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) limited negative stress reactions. First, mastery experiences are life events that confirm the ideology that success comes from hard work and resilience in overcoming obstacles. It allows people to emerge stronger from adversity and setbacks. Second, vicarious experiences produce high-self efficacy in individuals who observe and emulate the success of social models and who are similar in their competencies. Third, social persuasion strengthens self-efficacy through verbal encouragement, boosting confidence and efforts in overcoming challenges and self-doubt. Finally, limited negative stress reactions improve self-efficacy by allowing emotional distress to be channeled into a positive and productive attitude (Bandura, 1993).

This framework facilitates an exploration of the administrative practices that are supported by research to improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students and expand their enrollment in high school AP courses. These administrative practices may include programs to support increased enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. For example, the Pittsburgh public school district implemented the district's equity plan, where the administrators at each school pushed to open AP courses to more ethnically diverse students who are mostly underrepresented. The administrators eliminated the prerequisites that were deemed biased and improved the access to AP courses for African- and Hispanic-American students (Godley, Monroe, & Castma, 2015). Other administrative practices may include instructional leadership practices that influence teachers to help improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students to increase their enrollment in AP courses. For example, to prepare students for AP courses in a Maryland school district, the administrators provided resources and time for teachers to revise the curriculum and teaching strategies to prepare students for AP courses (Blair, 2015). Another example of administrative practices that were explored is offering encouragement to counselors to help African and Hispanic Americans enroll in AP courses (Warne, Sonnert, & Sadler, 2019). Examples of written materials include *Personalized Guidance*; the 2017-18 Coordinator's Manual, and materials pertaining to the *AP Summer Institute and Mentoring Program* (College Board, 2016).

Relevant Elements of the Conceptual Framework

Self-efficacy beliefs affect human functioning through four psychological processes: motivational processes, affective processes, selective processes, and cognitive processes (Bandura, 1993). These four processes form the relevant elements of the conceptual framework of this study. These constructs have been used to understand school climate from the perspective of various stakeholders (Ramsey et al., 2016). Self-efficacy beliefs are linked to the cognitive and selection processes of all stakeholders in the school environment (Torre et al., 2017). For instance, administrators who have direct involvement through visiting classrooms, attending student organization meetings, and interacting with students contribute to self-efficacy beliefs in African- and Hispanic-American students (Rutledge et al., 2015). Additionally, the positive affective processes encouraged by administrators have led to improved student self-efficacy (Torre et al., 2017). The relevant constructs of the conceptual framework pertain to personal, behavioral, and environmental factors and guide students toward their academic pursuits (Rowland & Shircliffe, 2016).

Motivational processes. Motivational processes control thoughts that form beliefs about abilities (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1993) noted that high self-efficacy beliefs generated motivation, as individuals cognitively plan their actions in anticipation of their desired results. These results, in return, motivate them to achieve goals. Motivational processes pertain to underlying psychological processes that promote individuals' drive to learn and achieve. In addition, motivational processes improve the perception of competency, autonomy, and relatedness in African- and Hispanic-American

students (Ata, 2018). Students plan their personal goals based on their desired outcomes, building self-efficacy that motivates them to navigate successfully through academia (Bandura, 1993).

Counselors may not be encouraging motivational processes among African- and Hispanic-American students. Counselors may assume that the students can navigate through the school system and college admissions process even though they cannot. The school personnel may also have preconceived ideas and expectations about African- and Hispanic-American students. For example, Cromley et al. (2014) found that counselors assumed that African- and Hispanic-American students who had high grade point averages were adept at navigating the education system and able to maneuver through the college admissions process. However, despite their high-grade point averages, these students did not have a general awareness about the admissions process and experienced a diminishing motivation to achieve (Cromley et al., 2014; see also Ramsey et al., 2016).

Counselors and teachers can be influential leaders if they establish clear lines of communication with African- and Hispanic-American students and obtain culturally relevant training that can support student achievement (Clark, Ponjuan, Orrock, Wilson, & Flores, 2013). When the principal assigns duties and responsibilities to the counselors, it guides them to have an ethical practice and be the advocates for underrepresented groups (Edwards, Grace, & King, 2014). This also helps administrators identify and address the issues that are hindering student success.

Cognitive processes. Cognitive processes are based on self-appraisal that equates personal efficiency directly with self-confidence (Bandura, 1993). Individuals with high

self-efficacy cognitively visualize scenarios of success and create self-reinforcing cycles that strengthen their performance and analytic thinking. Individuals with higher perceived self-efficacy tend to set challenging goals and are committed to achieving them (Bandura, 1993). Cognitive processes that improve self-efficacy are reflected in certain teaching strategies that support student cognition (Kangas, Siklander, Randolph, & Ruokamo, 2016). Administrators who provide teacher collaboration time empower the collective efficacy of teachers, who are then able to help improve the self-efficacy of their students (Perez et al., 2014), as strong instructional leadership influences students' collective self-efficacy (Ata, 2018). Further research indicates that administrators who have a multicultural and diversity perspective invest in their counselors, supporting them to obtain culturally relevant training that can promote student achievement. Administrators and counselors can boost the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses through support programs like tutoring, study strategy workshops, testing, and accommodations for disabilities to boost their desire to learn (Perrone-McGovern, Simon-Dack, Beduna, Williams, & Esche, 2015).

Selection processes. Selection processes are used to select environments and activities where students believe they can cope (Bandura, 1993). Students' choices of their environment are based on self-efficacy beliefs and preparedness for personal growth. According to this element of Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy concept, positive selection processes result when students are surrounded by people who exert positive influence and enable them to create beneficial environments for themselves. These social influences promote career interests and positive regard for occupational pursuits that

result in greater success. Positive environmental factors instill confidence in students to perform challenging tasks, especially in difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1993). These choices significantly influence their personal development, competencies, values, and interests (Bandura, 1986; Snyder, 1986). African and Hispanic Americans students who are efficacious and well-informed about career options prepare themselves better for occupational pursuits. However, students who receive limited information about opportunities and minimal guidance from counselors tend to display low self-efficacy beliefs. They limit their interests and competencies due to their lack of self-belief (Kangas et al., 2016).

The administrative practices that create common learning and engaging environments help students navigate their academic plans and choose their desired careers (Bruce-Davis et al., 2014). Administrators who understood the importance of curriculum modification to meet student readiness needs have implemented programs to solidify the foundational skills of African- and Hispanic-American students to enroll and be successful in STEM and AP courses. Further, it is important to have a positive relationship among administrators, teachers, and students (Bruce-Davis et al., 2014).

Affective processes. Affective processes promote control over stressful situations and negative thoughts (Bandura, 1993). Individuals' coping abilities affect their level of motivation and their perceived control over distress and anxiety. The ability to cope with stressors in their environments mitigates the negative effects of mentally taxing activities and results in high self-efficacy. Thus, in their role as advocates, school administrators have implemented research-based programs to help students cope with everyday stressors

at school (Perez et al., 2014). With the help of counselors who are engaged, students can learn to deal with stressors and make career choices based on their potentials and goals (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). School counselors can be effective in helping students identify their best options based on their potential and goals (Ata, 2018). With the support and positive influence of counselors and teachers, students set high expectations and work collaboratively to ensure their success. When school administrators work with African and Hispanic Americans and their families to address marginality, culture, and power relationships, these students are more apt to overcome limiting environments and stressors, resulting in greater academic success (Spero, Balster, & Bajcz, 2018). Therefore, administrators who provide affective support for African- and Hispanic-American students in challenging AP courses invoke academic appreciation in students. The affective support is provided through programs that offer personal and academic counseling, study skills, time management skills, and peer study groups (Bruce-Davis et al., 2014).

Application and Articulation of Phenomena in Previous Research

Bandura's (1993) concept of self-efficacy is a key component of his SCT theory. Numerous studies have examined various phenomena through the lens of SCT. For example, the purpose of Nugroho's (2017) study was to use self-efficacy and its elements as the conceptual framework to refine a teacher-training program. The data informed the school administrator's decision to improve the teacher-training program to improve the self-efficacy of teachers that teach English as a foreign language. The improved teacher self-efficacy and confidence translated into student learning. Teachers' renewed

motivation guided the direct teaching that influenced students' ability to cope with the stress of learning a new language. Furthermore, through peer interaction, students motivated each other by improving their learning environment, and with improved self-efficacy, they challenged their abilities (Bandura, 1993; Nugroho, 2017).

Another study showing the application of SCT was conducted by Kopko, Ramos, and Karp (2018), who examined the effect of career counseling on students' self-efficacy as viewed through the elements of Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy concepts. This study draws attention to the fact that decision-making is a learning process that is influenced by an individual's innate qualities and environmental influences. Kopko et al. applied the elements of SCT to understand the type of career counseling that influences students' decision-making process. Ideal advising helps students engage in fulfilling tasks and motivates them to achieve their short-term and long-term career goals (Bandura, 1993). When administrators provide adequate support and guidance for counselors to obtain resources, students are more confident and efficacious to select careers of choice (Elrich & Russ-Eft, 2011).

Conclusion. It was deemed appropriate to use self-efficacy, an element of Bandura's (1993) SCT, to frame this study because the concept shapes the administrative practices that have the capacity to increase enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses. Leadership plays a significant role in the organization of individuals within society, especially within an academic institution (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The concept of self-efficacy acts as a lens through which to understand the practices that influence the values, beliefs, norms, and behavior of African- and Hispanic-

American students and their enrollment in AP courses (Lewis, 2013). Therefore, self-efficacy can frame an exploration of the cognitive, motivational, selection, and influential factors linked to administrative practices that may improve the enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses (Ata, 2018).

Review of Key Variables and Concepts

This literature review provides support for the influences that shape administrative practices and how students receive them. Specifically, the research shows that integrating the elements of Bandura's (1993) concept of self-efficacy in administrative practices is beneficial to improving African- and Hispanic-American representation in AP courses.

Tracking

Smith (2007) defined *tracking* as the process of segregating students and intentionally supporting Caucasian students in academia over African- and Hispanic-American students. Tracking, which has persisted since the inception of the American education system, wields an underlying influence on specific programs in the current education system, such as AP courses (Witenko, Mireles-Rios, & Rios, 2016).

Throughout the United States, AP courses have been predominantly populated by European- and Asian-American students, and are largely unrepresentative of the African- and Hispanic-American students (Ford & Whiting, 2016). The enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students has not improved, and such systemic racial underrepresentation has existed for decades (Kettler & Hurst, 2017).

Witenko et al. (2016) found that tracking and non-equilateral testing criteria were employed in academic settings. These unfair practices shaped the cultural landscape within segregated institutions, programs, and classes. Tracking utilizes biased testing methods to determine the aptitudes of a diverse population. This process is favorable to European- and Asian-American students while disfavoring the unique interests, needs, and abilities of African- and Hispanic-American students. As a result, the development of assessment tests, such as AP exams, has negatively affected African- and Hispanic-American college entrance.

In general, insufficient communication exists between internal stakeholders of a school (all staff members) and minority parents, guardians, and family about student preparedness for the requirements of college (Elliott, Brenneman, Carney, & Robbins, 2018). As a result, minority parents are not well-equipped to ensure that their children will enroll in AP courses (Frankenberg, Garces, & Hopkins, 2016). Quantitative and qualitative data indicate that inequalities continue to shape opportunities, social acceptance, and economic gain among racial groups (National Research Council & National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). As a result of such discrepancies, there is no level field where students can develop college and career readiness (Kangas et al., 2016). Since the academic institution is responsible for tending to inequalities by providing adequate opportunities for all students, the institution is tasked with remediating this issue in any appropriate manner (National Research Council & National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

The Disproportional Enrollment of African and Hispanic Subgroups in AP Courses

Theokas and Saaris (2013) revealed disparity in enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses in the United States. They indicated that this inequality led to achievement gaps where African and Hispanic Americans have low high school graduation rates and low college attendance as compared to European and Asian Americans (College Board, 2014). Further, the College Board (2014) reported that far more African- and Hispanic-American students were likely to attend high schools that did not offer comprehensive AP programs. As their data revealed, 72% of African-Americans and 66% of Hispanic-American students with significant PSAT scores were left out of AP courses. The College Board's (2016) demographic data from 2012-16 shows that, out of the total student population that took AP exams, 56.3% were European Americans, 6% were Asian Americans, 14.4% African-Americans and 22.4% were Hispanic Americans. Research indicates that students who take at least one AP course have a higher success rate in college. The College Board data indicated that 55.6% of European-American, 4.3% African-American, 22.2% Hispanic-American and 11.7% Asian-American students passed with a score of 3 or higher in at least one AP course. Only 57% of African-American students are attending high schools that provide access to these AP exams (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Further, Hallinger and Bryant (2013) found that although African-Americans represent 16% of the total U.S. student population in high schools, only 8% are enrolled in AP courses.

According to the California Department of Education (2015), the majority of California students are Hispanic-American, surpassing the European-American student

population, but only 40% of the Hispanic-American students are enrolled in at least one AP course. The high schools under investigation in this study yielded similar AP statistics for African- and Hispanic-American students, even though the two sites are academically high performing. School 1 (S1) is a Title I school with 49% Hispanic students as the majority, followed by 40% European-American and 6% Asian-American students. However, only 12% of Hispanic students are enrolled in at least one AP course as compared to 17% of European Americans and 50% of Asian-American students. In the second school (S2), European-American students represent the majority (44% of the student population), followed by Hispanic students at 24% and Asian-American students as 23% of the total student population. AP enrollment reflects a similar disparity between European Americans and Hispanic Americans; 34% of European American students are enrolled in at least one AP course as compared to only 17% of Hispanic-American students.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2017), the *achievement gap* refers to the disparity in school performance between subgroups based on ethnicity, race, or gender. Gaining enrollment in AP courses is based on a meritocratic framework that asks students to compete for limited seats (Witenko et al., 2016). Federal Way Public Schools in Washington State took the initiative to offer open access to all AP courses. The school administrators enhanced their practices to generate a school-wide and classroom-level support system. The administrators took the initiative to implement programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and AmeriCorps to build students' prerequisite skills and competencies required for AP courses to allay

the anxieties of prospective African- and Hispanic-American students. Further, with the support of the district, the administrators provided instructional coaches for teachers to offer strategies and techniques to meet the demands of AP courses. Although the transition was not smooth, the research indicated that the administrative support improved the self-efficacy of teachers and students (Theokas & Saaris, 2013).

Other obstacles may arise during the high school years of African- and Hispanic-American students that prevent them from taking AP courses. Ladson-Billings (1998) noted that high achieving African and Hispanic Americans students experience barriers that are not obviously related to their aptitude, such as lack of support and information. Banerjee (2016) indicated that high achieving African and Hispanic students come from higher socio-economic status families with a positive approach towards learning, and yet they are still underrepresented in AP classes. Shaunessy-Dedrick, Suldo, Roth, and Fefer (2015) explained disproportionate representation of Hispanic and African-American students in AP courses, through the lens of SCT. Although socio-economic status was not the barrier, cultural factors made Hispanic and African-American students less motivated. They lacked the support structure to cope with the rigor of AP courses and were deficient in the cognitive skills and motivational processes needed to sustain them through academic and emotional stress (Kotok, 2017).

Clark et al. (2013) interviewed high school administrators to understand their perceptions regarding Hispanic students' educational pursuits. Both high school and community college administrators reported a lack of specific programs to help this particular group. They suggested developing outreach and recruitment programs to enroll

Hispanic students in college-level courses. The administrators recognized the lack of cultural awareness among teachers who fail to understand the problems faced by African and Hispanic students. The administrators suggested changing their practices to increase parental involvement by breaking down cultural and language barriers. Despite these students' high socio-economic levels, the administrators pointed to the cultural demands on these students to enter the workforce at an early age, which takes away time from academics. Therefore, ongoing mentoring and tutoring programs offered, to support and encourage African- and Hispanic-American students to perform well at school are pivotal.

Disproportionate enrollment of African and Hispanic students in AP classes is exacerbated by weak involvement of guidance counselors. Hines et al. (2017) considered administrators to be pivotal in creating a school environment where all stakeholders are united in supporting student achievement. The lack of a positive relationship among students, parents, and counselors creates a void in the network of support systems that is a predictor of students' educational attainment. The lack of access to information, resources, and support prevents African and Hispanic Americans students from enrolling in AP courses or improving their college prospects (Hines et al., 2017). Moreover, the lack of consideration of the cultural values, norms, and experiences of African and Hispanic Americans prevents counselors from helping these students to achieve their educational goals (Harris et al., 2014).

Administrators can support school counselors to render services to African-American students more effectively (Hines et al., 2017). Hines et al. (2017) noted that

administrators are a source of social capital, especially for students who lack resources and a support system at home. Counselors can provide adequate information and channel African-American students' intellect by enrolling them in college-level courses. In order for African-American students to be successful in rigorous courses, administrators and counselors can provide access to social networks, peer-mentoring programs, and community resources that can support students' academic excellence (Harris et al., 2014).

Conclusion. As a means of improving proportionate representation among African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses, Goddard et al. (2015) placed value on the cultivation of effective culturally responsive administrative practices. As such, Goddard et al. stated that school leadership must initiate environmental change in order to provide additional support to their stakeholders. In order to foster proportionate representation, school leaders must establish a supportive climate that helps African and Hispanic Americans succeed (Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macey, 2014).

How Motivational Processes Guide Students

The self-efficacy construct of motivational processes has a strong connection with student achievement. SCT postulates that self-efficacy results in motivation—for the purpose of this study, especially for African- and Hispanic-American students, helping them plan and take actions to achieve their goals (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). The motivational processes translate self-efficacy into behavior that reflects the choices an individual has and the effort it takes to complete a task (Bandura, 1993; Brame, 2016). Motivated students can self-guide and evaluate their academic progress if they feel secure

in their environment (Brame, 2017). When students feel encouraged in their environment, it enhances their engagement and learning in school (Kim, Park, & Cozart, 2014).

Furthermore, students' motivation increases when others validate their opinions and judgments (Kim et al., 2014). This helps them think and behave with high self-efficacy, which translates into enhanced academic performance (Reeve & Lee, 2014). Finally, with improved self-efficacy and motivation, students grow more organized and execute tasks more skillfully, gaining the ability to deal with stressful situations confidently (Sargeant, 2017). As such, research has shown that students who believe in their abilities will take on challenging tasks, regardless of positive outcome (Lin & Tsai, 2017). Kim et al. (2014) demonstrated that improved emotional experiences lead to motivation that improves students' performance in challenging courses. Therefore, if administrators implement support programs that engage students in learning, it increases the likelihood that students will be motivated to achieve academically. In conducting the current study, my intent was to understand the administrative practices that can enhance motivation and confidence in African- and Hispanic-American students, inspiring them to undertake more challenging tasks (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

How Cognitive Processes Guide Students

Cognitive processes, another element of self-efficacy, explain how students use their knowledge to understand, learn, and retain content (Bandura, 1993). Students who are exposed to superior cognitive strategies such as rehearsal, elaboration, and organization are able to encode, recall, and comprehend information (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Self-reflection and monitoring their own thinking processes help students

with decision-making and critical processing (Shinnar, Hsu, & Powell, 2014).

Zimmerman (2013) recognized that students thrive when administrators and teachers offer them positive personal feedback.

The administrators implement support programs at their campuses, that scaffold multi-level training to impart study skills, critical thinking, and analytical skills for African- and Hispanic-American students, are helping prepare them for challenging courses. This training provides cognitive skills that help African- and Hispanic-American students regulate their thoughts and achieve higher goals. These students use these learned strategies and skills effectively to achieve mastery and sustain their efforts in challenging AP courses (Høigaard et al., 2015). Høigaard et al. (2015) reported that the achievement goals that students set are the direct result of their emotional and cognitive processes. When administrators implement programs to foster cognitive strategies and enhance motivation in African- and Hispanic-American students, students are less anxious. Administrators who encourage autonomy and competence among African- and Hispanic-American students enhance their self-efficacy, which enhances their cognitive ability and capacity to achieve academically. In contrast, emphasis on grades and ability level grouping may lessen students' self-efficacy and eventually cognitive processes. Therefore, it is essential for school leadership to focus on programs that enhance African- and Hispanic-American students' behavioral, environmental, and cognitive processes (Zimmerman, 2013).

How Affective Processes Guide Students

Affective processes, another construct of self-efficacy, describes students' intrinsic values that determine their emotional reactions to tasks (Bandura, 1993). When students value a task in their learning context, they allocate immense effort to stay engaged and obtain satisfactory results (Costley & Lange, 2018). Zimmerman (2013) confirmed this association, demonstrating that positive intrinsic values help students set goals in completing a specific task, provided that the task on hand matches their skills and merit. Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016), encouraged administrators to implement programs and provide culturally relevant teacher training to emphasize the importance of tasks and emphasize the benefits of learning to African- and Hispanic-American students. Students who are intrinsically motivated and have attainable goals tend to follow teachers' instructions to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts being presented. Finally, Dicke et al. (2014) asserted that when instructional and support programs for African- and Hispanic-American students emphasize self-regulation and self-assessment, students develop the ability to control their own performance and monitor their progress and learning. By exploring administrative practices in the current study, I sought to understand the capacity of various programs that may enhance self-efficacy and strengthen students' coping mechanisms in emotional and stressful situations.

How Selection Processes Guide Students

Students with high self-efficacy and confidence tend to select positive learning environments, such as the school they attend and people with whom they associate. They tend to choose goals based on their abilities and skills (Mardiana, 2016). These students

excel in challenging tasks when those tasks correspond to their acquired skills rather than their innate ability (Bandura, 1993). Positive school culture also affects students, which can be beneficial in choosing career paths and career development. Students with high self-efficacy have extensive career choices, develop personal identity, and have fulfilling lives (Shinnar et al., 2014). The selection of a constructive environment that cultivates interest in a wide array of careers as early as junior high leads to personal efficacy (Bandura, 1993).

Students demonstrate superior selection of their environment when administrators emphasize relationships as the core of the school climate. African- and Hispanic-American students gain acceptance and are supported in a diverse and positive school environment. Establishing positive relationships with administrators, teachers, and peers helps them to cope with stressors, even though their personal circumstances such as poverty and non-supportive family environment are not conducive to their success at school. Through purposeful mentorship, administrators can enhance students' self-efficacy and selection processes (Versland, 2013).

Williams and Portman (2014) suggested that administrators include African- and Hispanic-American students and their unique knowledge and cultural insight to develop programs that can help them cope with stressors. Making them a part of the solution enhances their self-efficacy and empowers them to make choices that enhance their educational outcomes (Williams & Portman, 2014).

Elements of Interest and Chosen Methodology

This research used an exploratory case study design, which has its origin in qualitative research. The exploratory case study methodology focuses on the semistructured interview process with an emphasis on experimental and observational inquiry (Yin, 2014). The data collection process for this study included semistructured interviews, a flexible and rigorous method of investigating a phenomenon in depth within its real-life context (Yin, 2003).

Semistructured interviews. I used the semistructured interview as the main instrument of data collection for the study in order to elicit information about administrative practices that may increase the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses. The SCT concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) grounded this study's data collection process. Because the semistructured interview protocols were based upon the relevant elements of the conceptual framework, the interview questions were designed using the four elements of self-efficacy. Semistructured interviews facilitate a deeper understanding of the central issue under investigation based on the participants' experiences and perspectives (Kvale, 1989). Therefore, the semistructured interview is a valid method of collecting qualitative data that allows for an open line of communication, providing first hand experiences and perspectives to add trustworthiness to the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I sought to emulate the methodology used by Saeng Pakdeejit, (2014), who used semistructured interviews to investigate how students in English as a foreign language classroom improved their self-efficacy to overcome comprehension failures. The

interview questions were predesigned through the lens of SCT's self-efficacy and its four processes (Bandura, 1993). My interviews were divided into two main phases. The first phase established the interview-interviewer relationship, and the second phase investigated the administrative practices that may increase proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses.

I found additional support for my chosen methodology in a study conducted by Herrera (2018), which also used the semistructured interview to investigate the efficacy beliefs of mid-career elementary teachers based on Bandura's (1993) four elements of SCT. Herrera made initial contact with the potential participants made via email, following up via phone call or email, based on participants' preferred mode of communication. In order to conduct the interview, Herrera asked the participant to secure a comfortable and non-threatening location. Herrera used the 1-hour semistructured interviews to gather rich accounts of situations that affected participants' self-efficacy.

Jackson, Gibbons, and Sharpe (2017) also used an open-ended semistructured interview in their research, creating a free-flowing conversation without the use of a rigid list of fully scripted questions (Kvale, 1989). Jackson et al. (2017) also formulated questions based on Bandura's (1993) four elements of SCT for their study, which presented a conceptual framework for self-efficacy. They designed their interview protocol as a guide to investigate the barriers that affected the self-efficacy development of students and prevented them from enrolling in AP courses.

Written documents. Written documents can provide an additional source of data for qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009). Using self-efficacy as part of the conceptual

framework for her study, Shi (2016) investigated the effectiveness of students' foreign language acquisition related to teaching environment and strategies with the goal of finding factors that affect students' self-efficacy beliefs when learning a foreign language. Shi analyzed survey documents that recorded the participants' opinions on self-efficacy and foreign language learning.

Torgerson et al. (2017) examined continuing professional development (PD) education in several countries to understand the sustainability of educational initiatives. Torgerson et al. collected documents (i.e., teacher educational curriculum and syllabi) to study the implementation of strategies and ideology from continuing PD. The researchers examined syllabi from various institutions for overlap or variations in their content. Torgerson et al. viewed the documents through the lens of self-efficacy to understand the influence of continuing PD on teacher instruction.

How the Framework Grounds the Data Analysis

I used self-efficacy to ground the data analysis in this study, analyzing the data using the four processes of self-efficacy: motivational processes, cognitive processes, affective processes, and selection process. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), this strategy to ground the data analysis in the four processes of self-efficacy has the capacity to maintain a study's rigor and enhance its credibility. The following sections describe the data analysis process specific to this study as supported by prior research.

Semistructured interview data analysis. Self-efficacy, a concept from SCT, grounded this study's data analysis process (Bandura, 1993). In doing so, this exploratory case study generated a deeper understanding of the administrative practices that may have

supported proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. Banfield and Wilkerson (2014) used audio-recorded data from students' semistructured interviews and analyzed the content using the elements of SCT. The content was processed into open, axial, and a priori codes. I used two approaches to data coding: emergent coding and a priori coding. I created the a priori codes in advance based on the elements of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Blair, 2015). Banfield and Wilkerson (2014) also used a priori codes, categorizing them into themes that helped identify culturally responsive teaching programs that strengthened teachers' self-efficacy to influence their students during their first year of teaching. I used the a priori themes, which were based on the four elements of self-efficacy, to categorize the data primarily based on words used most commonly during the semistructured interview. The most commonly used words were identified to make connections with the elements of the conceptual framework (Banfield & Wilkerson, 2014). Using a similar approach, Blair (2015) categorized the content from semistructured interviews into themes via emergent, axial coding, and a priori coding using the relevant elements of SCT. This process of encoding and interpreting helped deepen the understanding of culturally responsive teaching programs. Employing data from two pilot studies, Blair's research informed the process of analysis and reflexivity of the emergent and a priori coding techniques. As a result, I decided to use a priori codes to formulate subcategories to ensure grounding in the framework.

Content analysis of written administrative documents. I was unable to conduct content analysis of documents. Research Question 2 sought to explore, from the

perspective of building administrators, what written administrative policies may support the proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. The administrators from both school sites were unable to provide any documents related to AP programs for content analysis. They referenced the AP Program Guide and the Equity and Access Policy (College Board, 2019) found on the College Board website. These are both generic documents, and I could not use them to address the research question. Therefore, I could not conduct a document analysis.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature reviewed, focused on understanding the administrative practices that influence the disproportionate enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. This study was framed by constructs related to the concept of self-efficacy, a key part of Bandura's (1993) SCT. I used an exploratory case study methodology to conduct this research. The literature revealed measures to improve the enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP classes. The College Board (2016) has made resources and funding available to school districts to expand the number of AP courses offered, provide incentives to schools, and encourage students to enroll in AP courses. Despite these efforts, the enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students have remained proportionately low. This issue emanates from the history of the American education system, which has tracked students and created a disparity from the inception of AP programs. Barriers such as lower socio-economic status, social and cultural factors, and limited support systems have impeded the AP enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans. I found ample research on various

programs that have been implemented to provide equal access for all students to AP courses. However, only limited research has focused on administrative practices that may increase students' enrollment in AP courses.

The literature yielded few examples of administrative practices where direct communication and collaboration with teachers served as an influence on the school culture and climate. However, according to Bandura (1993), administrators have motivational and affective influences that can improve students' self-efficacy. Furthermore, I reviewed extensive literature to understand the research strategies, traditions, and approaches used by other researchers to organize the content of the semistructured interviews and the written documents. For this qualitative study, I used an exploratory case study approach. More details on research methodology follow in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. This chapter provides information about the two schools where the study was conducted. In this chapter, I describe the qualitative research design and the rationale for the selected methods. My role and procedures relating to participants, minimization of biases, data analysis, and instrumentation are also discussed. The data collection, analysis, and actions taken to improve trustworthiness are described, and ethical procedures are explained.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative research was an exploratory case study, which provided a holistic, in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. The case study approach can provide the comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon and the outcome. A case study is a commonly recognized research tool that provides more insight on an issue (Zainal, 2007), especially in this study to understand the administrative practices that may influence the enrollment of AP courses. A case study is a bounded system with a case or unit to study (Merriam, 2009), which in this study meant that the research had boundaries such as two secondary school settings where a small sample of administrators underwent a semistructured interview process. An exploratory case study also enabled close examination of the data in the context of behavior and social issues (Yin, 2000). Because the intervention (i.e., administrative practices that determine the programs, policies, and

processes that may influence the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students) was largely unknown, there was no clear set of outcomes (Allwood, 2011; Yin, 2003).

The literature review also helped improve my understanding related to the phenomenon, which resulted in my hypothesis that the administrative practices may influence the enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses (Zainal, 2007), and the research questions that guided this study:

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives of the building administrators about the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP classes?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of building administrators, what administrative practices and written policies may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses?

Research Question 3: From the perspective of building administrators, what administrative practices contribute to the self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP classes?

Semistructured interviews were conducted to understand administrative practices that may improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students and expand their enrollment in high school AP courses. This research design was relevant because there was a single set of outcomes expected from the data collected (Yin, 2000). The rationale for conducting this research within the school setting was to discover and understand the phenomenon from the administrators' point of view. Data were collected using triangulation to gather information that was rich in context (Creswell, 1998). The

WASC (2015) report and College Board AP (2019) student data were the two documents that were used to collect in-depth information to make the study relevant. Using numerous sources of data helped me understand the information derived from the interviews and provided the evidence to explore the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009) .

Role of the Researcher

I am employed by the school district at one of the high schools under investigation, which indicated that there was some researcher bias present. Biases were limited by following the scripted procedure and reading the questions as worded during the interview process (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). I also selected participants strategically to prevent confounding results (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Further, I remained open, sensitive, and patient to any unconventional opinions expressed (Kallio et al., 2016). I eliminated bias by designing the research process and remaining perceptive while conducting the interview and during the post interview clarifications and discussion. I also used valid methods to obtain reliable data and limited bias by being task oriented, only requesting neutral clarifications and probing indirectly during the interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I limited my personal biases and opinions through all phases of the study by not using participant information to confirm my beliefs (confirmation bias); not having questions that provide answers the following question (question-order bias); and not clarifying or summarizing participant responses, which can prime the participants' responses using specific words that can prevent evoking specific thoughts and feelings from responders (Creswell, 1998).

As an interviewer, I initiated a working relationship with the participants to ensure interactions that were as unbiased as possible (Deas, 2017). One principal and one assistant principal whom I interviewed were in authority over me at the time of the study. Therefore, I acknowledged the power imbalance and established clear boundaries between my role as a researcher and teacher. These included an understanding that the participants' responses would neither affect my future performance at the school nor our relationship (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). I also protected the identity of the participants and adhered to the purpose and format of the research (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). Additionally, to ensure candor and trustworthy responses, clear norms should be created (Kallio et al., 2016). Before beginning each interview, I reminded the participants of what to expect and maintained these expectations. I explained the format for the interviews, and the participants' responses guided the follow-up questions for more in-depth and detailed information, if required (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). If participants had any questions related to the research, I asked them to wait until the end of the interview to avoid digressing from the topic.

As the interviewer, I was also prepared to address any sensitive or unpredictable ethical issues that may arise during interviews (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). In addition, I conveyed to the participants that the methodology and the design of the study, including data collection and analysis, were carried out using ethical principles (Batchelor & Briggs, 1994). I also reiterated the rights of the participants, including the right to be informed about the study and finally the right to withdraw at any time during the interview process (Orb et al., 2001). Further, I established trust by ensuring privacy

and confidentiality. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential and their information would not be shared with any other participants or individuals (Kallio et al., 2016). The data collected were stored securely in a locked cabinet, and only I had access to these materials. The data are to be stored for 5 years, and thereafter the transcripts will be shredded.

Methodology

I used a qualitative, exploratory case study to investigate administrative practices that support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses. The setting for the study was two high schools in the same district in Southern California. The sampling strategy was purposeful sampling, which helped identify and select experienced, knowledgeable participants who were able to provide in-depth information related to the phenomenon being investigated (Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition to having the required expertise and experience, the participants were willing and available to share and communicate the relevant information (Creswell, 2012).

Participant Selection/Location of Research

The participants in the study were administrators from the two high schools. All administrators whom I interviewed have valid administrative credentials and had been employed for a minimum of 3 years in the school district. The minimum length of employment criterion ensured that the selected administrators had in-depth knowledge about the school programs. More importantly, this length of employment allowed them the opportunity to recognize student needs and implement certain programs in the school.

The administrators had specific expertise and roles that can provide in-depth accounts of their experiences and perspectives about the study's phenomenon.

How Participants Were Known to Meet the Selection Criteria

It is important that participant selection is purposeful, following the criteria that inform the data collection for the study (Sargeant, 2012). I selected the administrators who were able to provide in-depth information related to the study due to their experience and involvement with AP programs (Orb et al., 2001). In the two high schools involved in the study, the assistant principals rotated their set of responsibilities every 2 years, ensuring that all selected participants had been involved with AP programs at some point in their careers. Furthermore, the duration of employment of the administrators was a pertinent criterion that informed me about their perspectives based on their experiences. Finally, I intentionally selected participants from diverse backgrounds (gender, ethnicity, and other background) to obtain data from diverse perspectives (see Sargeant, 2012).

Number of Participants and Rationale for that Number

The goal was to recruit 10-12 administrators, including two principals and 10 assistant principals. This sample size was conducive to an exploratory case study if the participants had enriched experiences to share regarding the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The selected sample size was a sufficient number to fully inform the phenomenon of the study, leading to data saturation (Sargeant, 2012). Furthermore, a small sample helped me establish close associations with the participants that augmented the in-depth inquiry process to obtain reliable information about their experiences (see Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Procedures to Identify, Contact, and Recruit Participants

The procedure for contacting and recruiting participants was as follows. First, the list of identified administrators from two high schools were compiled and finalized based on the study's inclusion criteria. I formulated the list based on the specific parameters of the research and by focusing on the desired characteristics of the study (see Acury & Quandt, 1999). The list was compiled based on the suggestions of the principals of two high schools. Second, the purpose of the study was explained to the principal and vice principals at each of the school sites via e-mail. After receiving the e-mail responses from the participants for voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study, I requested a specific day, time, and place of interview. Next, I sent the consent form in a subsequent e-mail, allowing time for the participants to review the consent form. I met with the participants at the determined place for the interview. Before beginning the interview process, I reviewed the consent form and request the participants' signatures. I reviewed the established norms during the interview, such as switching off phones, minimizing any distractions, and closing the doors for privacy and confidentiality. After the interview was over, I debriefed to confirm the authenticity and accuracy of the information. I provided a copy of the consent form to the participants for their records. I requested that participants offer any clarifications or concerns via phone call or e-mail.

Instrumentation

I used semistructured interviews and planned to use document analysis as the two instruments to gather data. In addition to the main set of questions, follow-up questions were asked to probe the participants for richer data and descriptions (see Kallio et al.,

2016). I designed the interview protocol by formulating an outline, using the elements of SCT (Bandura, 1993). The main questions were based on the elements of the conceptual framework. Question 1 was divided into the four elements of SCT: cognitive processes, motivational processes, affective processes, and selection processes (Bandura, 1993). To increase the questions' validity, I aligned them to the elements of SCT (Bandura, 1993; Singleton & Strait, 2010). The interview protocol was critiqued and evaluated by my committee members to ensure that the questions captured the participants' intentions and perspectives to generate information about the phenomenon (see Agee, 2009). The committee members also reviewed the questions for alignment with the framework and for the instrument's sufficiency to collect valid results (see Oates, 2015). I established the reliability of the data collection instrument through iterations based on feedback provided by the committee members (see Creswell, 2007).

Written documents as an instrument. Research Question 2 was used to explore what written policies may support representation of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses. I requested written documents related to administrative practices linked to AP enrollment to be informed about the phenomenon from various facets and perspectives (see Agee, 2009; O'Leary, 2014). However, I was unable to conduct content analysis of documents, as the administrators were not able to provide any written documents that aligned with Research Question 2. They directed me to the College Board and the school website for information related to the AP programs. But the school websites only provided the demographics of the students enrolled in the AP programs and

the number of exams administered at both sites. This information was not substantial in answering Research Question 2.

Content validity. In this qualitative research, I assessed the content validity of the interview protocol by reflecting on the relevancy of the questions to obtain the participants' perspectives (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009). I assessed the interview questions for the context to derive information that was impactful and important for the population (see Glesne, 2006). I asked my committee members to review the interview protocol for transparency, rigor, and coherency (see Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, the committee members reviewed the instrument for any ambiguous, emotive, or stressful questions that could hinder the natural flow of the conversation (see Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Finally, I validated the content by analyzing the instrument for authenticity, trustworthiness, and fairness (see Creswell, 2007).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I conducted this exploratory research at two high schools in a district located in Southern California. I selected this suburban school district to understand the administrative practices that influence the disproportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses, despite the high-performance status of the schools within the district. I provided a consent form to inform participants about the voluntary nature of the study and ensured that the participants thoroughly understood the risks and benefits of their participation in the research (Oates, 2015). I required written and oral recorded consent to conduct the semistructured interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I emailed the informed consent form to the participants prior to the interviews. For clarification purposes, I reviewed each section of the form with the participants before beginning the interview. After receiving assurance from the participant about his/her complete understanding of the study and their rights, I verbally asked for consent and recorded it on the voice recorder. In addition, I asked participants to sign the consent form. After the interview was over, I provided a copy of the form to the participant for his/her records. I conducted the interviews in the private, quiet areas selected by the participants. The norms mentioned in the consent letter were established before starting each interview. To ensure complete focus, I reminded the participants about maintaining minimum distractions, such as no phone calls or interruptions during the interview process.

Data collection. For this qualitative study, I planned to use written documents and semistructured interviews as the data collection sources. I gathered information from the participants using interview questions that were developed from the main research questions. These questions are aligned with the framework as listed in Appendix A. The questions evolved during the interview. Based on participants' responses, I asked follow-up questions as well. I recorded all interviews and took notes regarding any non-verbal cues (Thorne, 2000).

I interviewed each participant for 1 hour, in the office or any other physical space on campus selected by the participant (Patterson & Johnson, 2017). Before beginning the interview process, I read the confidentiality and privacy policy to each participant (Agee, 2009). I assured complete privacy and anonymity to the participants by eliminating their

names, positions, and interview locations from the study. I guaranteed confidentiality by securing the data with no possibility of breach. During the interview, as the conversation flowed and became more natural, I stayed alert and conscientious so as not to disclose or share any information related to other participants or their responses (Patterson & Johnson, 2017). I recorded all interviews using the voice memo application on the iPhone. I had a back-up recorder in case of any technical malfunctions.

I took all the interview notes and gathered additional information in a paper notebook (Glesne, 2006). I took notes on participants' body language, facial expressions, pauses, and other movements that provided further insight into their responses (Patterson & Johnson, 2017). During the analysis process, I contacted the participants to provide any clarification needed. After gathering satisfactory data, I brought each interview to close by expressing gratitude and appreciation for the participant's time and debriefing the participant on the process of data analysis. Finally, I asked for permission to call them if I needed any clarification regarding the data collected. Because no written documents related to AP programs were provided, I was unable to analyze written data for this study.

Data Analysis Plan

Semistructured interview data analysis. In qualitative research, the data analysis is a reflexive and iterative process that begins while collecting the data (Stake, 1995). In this study, it was my intention to analyze the data from semistructured interviews and written documents. I coded the interview data according to open, a priori, and axial codes. I read the transcribed data from the audio recordings and took notes in the margins. Next, I performed open coding of the entire data set from transcripts and the

notes in order to label the content and form, focusing on interpretations from the interview data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Finally, I developed the a priori codes based on the four elements of SCT: affective processes, motivational processes, cognitive processes, and selection processes (Bandura, 1993). I based the axial coding on the research questions, wherein I organized the descriptive data according to the questions. I made a sample table that helped organize the four constructs of self-efficacy in the first column. The second column contained the interview questions that corresponded to each construct, and I recorded the participants' responses in the final column. Using the research questions as a guide, I grouped the responses into codes. I organized the data under clear headings and in quotations to suggest the source of origin (Creswell, 2007; Oates, 2015). The second cycle of coding involved the grouping of codes. I compiled the codes to draw common themes, which were presented as the findings of the study (Oates, 2015). I categorized any emergent codes that evolved from the data and were different from the a priori codes into a separate column of the matrix (O'Leary, 2014). I checked the data for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability by verifying the conclusions with the transcripts (Patterson & Johnson, 2017).

Document analysis. I requested that the two principals provide me with written administrative documents related to their AP programs. I aimed to derive empirical knowledge by evaluating and understanding the written documents. However, neither school principal provided me with documents. Therefore, no emerging codes from document analysis could be integrated into the study's common themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Patterson & Johnson, 2017).

Trustworthiness

In this qualitative study, I collected the data that resonated with the participants' experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In order to improve the validity of the study, I viewed the data through a specific lens and the interview questions I developed (Creswell, 1998). I designed the lens and instruments by keeping the beliefs and opinions of both interviewer and interviewee in context. I enhanced the trustworthiness of the data through triangulation, which is discussed later in this chapter. I designed the interview questions to explore administrators' understanding of practices to enhance the proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses.

Credibility

I enhanced the credibility of this qualitative research by addressing any complex issues that might have been linked directly to the research design, instrumentation, and data collection process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). I noted the interwoven qualities of methodology and data findings as a critical aspect of the research design (Emerson, 1995). I collected data based on the participants' personal experiences, keeping my personal biases out (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Doing so ensured that the information provided was authentic and true experiences were reported. I did this by keeping my opinions, and those of interviewees, in context. I established credibility further by using triangulation and member checking and by engaging the participants extensively during the interview process to obtain data and feedback (Toma, 2011).

I performed member checking by formally and informally validating the interview data with the participants for its accuracy and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). During

the interview process, I validated the information by periodically checking in with the participants regarding the correct interpretation or authenticity of the responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I continued the dialogue, intermittently listening to the participants reflectively, to ensure the content interpretations resonated with the participants (Cho & Trent, 2006).

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the ability to transfer the findings to other areas and groups (Cope, 2014). The findings were used to advance AP programs or subgroups because in conducting this study I not aiming to make broad claims. I encourage the readers to use certain findings of the research and connect them with their own personal experiences (Bridges, 1993). The transferable aspect of this study will be the selective practices that administrators may use to enhance AP programs for African- and Hispanic-American students. Furthermore, the administrators may compare their own practices with the findings and understand how to make their practices more effective.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data collected (Miles et al., 2013). I ensured the dependability of the study by maintaining consistency during the conceptualization of the study, data collection, and data analysis process. I explained the logic behind participant selection, recorded if there were changes of venue, and explained the data derived in different contexts from various participants (Smith, 2007). This process will help with future duplication of the study (Kvale, 1989). I avoided making

careless mistakes and self-audited the study for credibility and transferability, which enhanced its dependability (Smith, 2007).

Confirmability

In this exploratory case study, I strove to keep biases out due to my background and position during the entire process, from selecting the topic to data collection and analysis. By continually reflecting on personal values and interests, I maintained a high level of reflexivity for the study. Through this process, a beneficial understanding of the findings emerged that was trustworthy and confirmed the findings of the qualitative study.

Reliability

As the sole coder, I was the only person with access to the interview data; therefore, I maintained the reliability of the study through transparency and accuracy of the data analysis process. To make the findings of this qualitative study more reliable, I reviewed the transcripts multiple times for accuracy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I ensured trustworthiness through data saturation to derive themes from the codes. I kept my biases in check by recording the data analysis process to explain how I arrived at each code. I reflected on the data to obtain different perspectives and insights to enhance the study's reliability. I attempted to produce similar, stable, and consistent results while reviewing the data multiple times to increase the study's reliability (Schwandt, 2015).

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to a convergence of data from multiple sources to derive the findings that help attain better understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002),

promoting trustworthiness of the findings. In this research study, I achieved triangulation by collecting the data from two different schools. I anticipated collecting data from written documents in addition to interviews. However, I received no written documents to support Research Question 2. Instead, I cross-validated semistructured interview data via careful reviewing and consolidating (Schwandt, 2015). By reflecting on the data from the interviews and the understanding of the demographics of the students enrolled in AP courses at the two sites, I was able to triangulate an understanding of the phenomenon (Denzin, 2012). After analyzing and reflecting on data from the interviews and school demographics, I then coded the data into categories to understand the participants' various perspectives (Bowen, 2009). Although I received were no written documents, the data from the interviews in conjunction with the school and the College Board websites allowed for comparative interpretations of data, enabling data triangulation from different perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

Many ethical challenges emerged as I worked through the various stages of a qualitative research study (Agee, 2009). To alleviate ethical challenges, I explained the nature of the study and clarified any of the participants' concerns during the recruitment and interview process. I reminded myself to use effective interviewing strategies in order to protect the participants as I observed, interpreted, and provided trustworthy outcomes for my study. I continued the effective interviewing approach by ensuring the participants' privacy and engaging in honest and open interactions during the recruitment and interview process. I refrained from inquiring about contradictory issues that evoked

emotional responses or made the participants uncomfortable. I avoided any conflicts of interest and tried my best to eliminate biases. I recruited participants via email and documented their consent for volunteer participation using the consent form. Participants reserved the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time in case of any unpredictable adverse events. Even though the participants and I worked together at one of the school campuses, I was not in a position to influence the participants.

I assured the participants' complete anonymity and confidentiality during and after the study. I removed the participants' identities (name, place of interview, or organization) from the study and securely stored the data collected in my home office and on my personal computer. The data will be stored for 5 years and subsequently deleted from my hard drive. During the data interpretation process, I maintained the ethical intention to decipher the information without biases (Oates, 2015). Therefore, keeping in mind the high ethical and professional responsibilities as a researcher, I conducted the study with integrity. Using these ethical procedures, I aimed to empower administrators with knowledge to influence students and effect social change.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research methods, explaining the design and the rationale behind the selected methodology. My role as the researcher role was to engage in the selection and recruiting of participants. I described the data collection instrument (i.e., the semistructured interviews) as well as the data analysis plan and coding procedures. By using these procedures, I ensured that the data analysis process would lead to credible, transferable, and dependable findings that would make the study

trustworthy. Finally, in the section on ethical procedures, I addressed the ethical related to human participants, data collection, and the data interpretation process. In the next chapter, I discuss the results and findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. This study was guided by the research questions that helped explore high school administrators' perspectives and practices:

Research Question 1: What are school administrators' perspectives about the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP classes?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of school administrators, what current administrative practices and written policies in their school may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses?

Research Question 3: From the perspective of school administrators, what administrative practices contribute to self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP classes?

Chapter 4 begins with the personal or organizational conditions that affected the data interpretation process. This is followed by a discussion of demographics of the participants, sample size, location, duration, and frequency of interviews to collect the data. This chapter further explains the data analysis process, including the descriptive process of coding and categorizing of data. Next, I include evidence of trustworthiness of the study, which details the implementation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the Results section, I present data to support the findings. Finally, I

summarize the findings to justify the results with evidence that answers the research questions.

Setting

When studying a social phenomenon, meaningful data can be derived by interviewing participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 1998). Thus, I asked the participants for the location where they preferred to be interviewed and a time that was convenient for them to meet. To explore participants' experiences, thoughts, and perspectives, it was also important to build professional rapport. All the participants preferred to be interviewed in their offices at their convenience. This was an ideal setting in which I elicited the participants' candid experiences, ideas, and feelings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Moreover, participants had access to any documents or data regarding AP enrollment and results that were needed to report, or support, their replies.

Before conducting the interviews, I considered any personal biases and any participant concerns and perspectives about this issue. I kept my tone objective and neutral to improve my ability to record and understand their perspectives (see Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). I assured complete privacy, confidentiality, and accuracy in recording and reporting the findings. Interviews were conducted in the participants' offices. Each interview was recorded on a password-protected iPhone app and the data were stored in my home office cabinet.

Demographics of Participants

The study included a total of 10 participants: two principals and eight assistant principals from two high schools in the same school district. Each participant was

affiliated with the school campus for a minimum of 3 years. The participant pool represented diverse ethnic backgrounds; there were seven European Americans, one African-American, and two Hispanic participants. All participants reported having direct or indirect oversight of the AP program. The participants' cultural experiences and competencies allowed these administrators to share a deeper understanding concerning the learning needs of students from similar ethnic backgrounds (see Griner & Steward, 2013). The diverse pool of participants brought a positive cultural relevance to the data collection process. They shared common experiences, values, and beliefs with the students who shared their ethnicities and therefore provided a unique perspective about the phenomenon (see Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Data Collection

Participant recruitment began in December 2018 and ended in January 2019. Within the span of 2 weeks, all the participants were recruited. I planned to interview 10-12 participants based on the number of administrators at each site. However, two potential participants declined the request to be interviewed and 10 agreed to participate. All participants signed the consent form electronically. Each of the administrators was interviewed once in his/her office for no more than 1 hour during the times that they suggested. The data were recorded on a voice recording application on a cellular device. I adhered to the plan for the data collection process as described in Chapter 3. All participants were informed before the interview that the proceedings would be recorded to maintain the authenticity and accuracy of the data. They were assured of confidentiality of the data and that the recordings would be stored on a password-

protected computer. During the interview process, I took notes in the margins of the paper that contained the interview questions. I noted the participants' facial expressions and body language to observe any hesitations in responding to the questions. No unusual circumstances or situations affected the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The steps of data analysis process involved transcription of the semistructured interviews, coding the data, organizing these codes into categories, and identification of themes. I transcribed the audio text myself, which expedited the process of data analysis (see Stake, 2005). This helped my preliminary analysis, because I became familiar with the content of each interview while transcribing (see Patton, 2002). The raw data included approximately 100 pages of interview content from 10 participants. I understood the various aspects of the data analysis process and designed the plan to evaluate the content (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After several readings and reflection of the transcripts, I coded the data (see Babbie, 2017).

Coding Process

The two coding strategies I used were open coding and a priori coding. First, I performed open coding of the transcripts (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016) by reading through the transcripts and highlighting the ideas that participants repeated or emphasized in some manner (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Stake, 2005). For example, when I found phrases about "motivational influences," I color coded them in pink and added the label "motivation" in the margins. These concepts emerged from the raw data and labeling helped lay the groundwork for later analysis (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

A priori codes are “purposefully designed based on the framework to draw meaning from data into coherent constructs through the application of established language” (King, 1998, p. 12). A priori codes were based on predetermined concepts from the conceptual framework’s four elements of affective processes, motivational processes, cognitive processes, and selection processes (see Bandura, 1993). The process of a priori coding produced codes that were labeled into one of the four constructs of self-efficacy. These codes were overlapping and were combined into categories (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Categories

I organized the codes with similar characteristics into categories. The common properties resulted in categories that were named differently than the coding label to express their scope better (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldana, 2016). Relevant themes related to administrative practices that may influence the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses were explored throughout the data analysis process, which led to codes that I clustered into categories. For example, “eliminate prerequisites,” “let go of summer assignments,” and “grade requirement” were the codes that were characterized under the category of “Gate-Keeping.” The process of categorizing enabled the codes to be sorted and aligned systematically, which progressed into themes (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, categories helped focus on concepts that required further refinement into themes (see Stake, 2005).

Identification of Themes

Themes were developed by comparing and consolidating the categories, which was based on the recommendation to divide transcribed data based on patterns into categories that develop into emerging themes (Creswell, 2012). Many straightforward themes surfaced from categories of codes (see Saldana, 2016). I consolidated these categories to arrive at the themes that reflected a partial reality of the phenomenon (Stake, 2005). For example, when comparing the categories, it was evident that teachers and counselors had become gatekeepers. Further, lack of parental education contributed to underrepresentation of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses. Therefore, from approximately 20 unique and complex categories that emerged, I grouped them into two to three major themes for each research questions (see Bandura, 1993).

Discrepant Cases

Using the semistructured interview process, the data collected from 10 participants was likely to produce discrepant cases (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Discrepant cases are data that are inconsistent with the themes (Gast & Ledford, 2014). Discrepant cases are contradictory, but they provide the participants' unique perspective regarding the explored phenomenon (Yin, 2014). I included the discrepant cases in the findings to provide an alternative perspective (see Silverman, 2011). During the data analysis process, as the discrepant cases emerged, I reanalyzed the data to represent the case alongside the appropriate theme that it contradicted.

I found one discrepant case that contradicted the responses of all the other participants. Nine of the 10 participants asserted that all students should be allowed to enroll in AP classes so that students at least gain exposure to rigorous curriculum, even if success is not likely. These participants believed that doing so allows students to realize the skills, competencies, and time required to succeed in an AP course and be prepared for college. However, one of the participants disagreed and advocated that students who have little chance for success in AP courses should be directed to vocational training. Although the participant was a proponent of increasing the representation of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses, the participant stated that *only* students with a likelihood of success should be allowed to enroll in AP courses. Therefore, the discrepant case included in the analysis provided a unique perspective.

Results

In this exploratory, qualitative study, I explored the administrative practices that may improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students and expand their enrollment in high school AP courses. The concept of self-efficacy, along with constructs of motivational, affective, selection, and cognitive processes, formed the basis of the conceptual framework (Bandura, 1993). All the participants willingly shared and expanded on their perceptions and practices related to the enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. After data collection, the results were aggregated based on the research questions.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was used to explore school administrators' perspectives about the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP courses. Based on responses, administrators believed that the disproportional representation of Hispanic- and African-American students is due to a lack of academic counseling and issues with prerequisite requirements. All administrators agreed that AP programs were pivotal for college admissions and provided academic and financial advantages in college. Further, administrators indicated that to ensure the success of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses, counselors must be engaged to provide academic counseling and help alleviate obstacles for ethnic subgroups. Three themes emerged from the responses of the participants to Research Question 1: (a) participants articulated the advantages of AP programs; (b) certain prerequisites create hurdles for underrepresented students; and (c) counselors are not sufficiently engaged to promote African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP courses, and administrators agreed that it is their responsibility to improve counselors' effectiveness.

Theme 1: Advantages of AP programs for all students. Participants articulated the advantages of AP programs. In general, they stated that robust AP programs meet the educational needs of all students. Participants emphasized (a) the positive influence that AP programs can have on college admissions; (b) that students who are enrolled in AP courses have a lower chance of dropping out of high school and higher chance of succeeding in college; and (c) that there are financial benefits of taking AP courses, as

students can earn college credit while saving money on college tuition. They felt, however, that AP classes must be taught by qualified teachers for students to benefit.

Participant 1 and 4 shared the AP data that is posted on the school website.

Participant 1 added, “We understand the importance of a strong AP program for students, therefore, there are a variety of courses offered to fit the interests of all students.”

Participant 4 stated, “The goal of a strong AP program is to prepare students for college, as these courses offer an opportunity for students to earn high school and college credits simultaneously.” Participant 3 shared, “Students who are taking AP courses will be economically better off. They will incur less debt and will graduate early and may go for higher degrees.” Participant 6 asserted, “We want to make sure that all our students succeed. This not only benefits us as a school and students but colleges too. These students attain competencies and skills to be successful in college as well as in careers.”

There was one discrepant case in this study; one of the administrators disagreed with the concept of AP for all students. The administrator shared,

One of our goals is to get students into college. We also understand that not all students need to go to college to be successful. There are plenty of students that get involved in a career technical pathway [sic] and they may not need AP courses.

This administrator justified the low enrollment of Hispanic and African-Americans in AP courses by stating that, “Many of these students might pursue different careers right after high school, so taking AP courses is not essential.” The participant’s reasoning was that

the goal of the school is to prepare students for life after high school, whether that be going to college or having a career.

Theme 2: Certain prerequisites create hurdles for underrepresented students. In general, the participants understood that certain prerequisites create hurdles for underrepresented students. They felt that this was because the College Board recommends specific prerequisite courses and summer assignments before students be allowed to enroll in AP courses. Participant 4 shared that “the prerequisites recommended by College Board create an obstacle because most of our ethnic subgroups lack foundational skills to take these courses.” Participant 7 agreed, saying that, “due to lack of skills . . . these students are afraid to take AP courses. The prerequisites require higher reading comprehension and academic skills that many students in the underrepresented groups do not demonstrate. As a result, they are placed in noncollege preparatory tracks. The participants indicated that they have identified similar gaps in knowledge and skills in these underrepresented ethnic subgroups at their campuses. The relatively few Hispanic- and African-American students who enroll in AP courses at the research schools often drop the AP classes or do not perform as well as their Euro- and Asian-American counterparts. The administrators at the research schools are working to address the prerequisites and remove barriers to ethnic subgroup enrollment in AP courses.

Theme 3: Counselors are not sufficiently engaged to promote African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP courses, and administrators agreed that it is their responsibility to improve counselors’ effectiveness. The third theme that emerged was that the counselors were inadvertently acting as gatekeepers. The counselors’ lack of

a proactive approach to help the ethnic subgroups enroll in AP courses was apparent from the interviews. Participants agreed that this lack was due to counselors' immense caseload that prevents them from spending enough time with these students. The data showed that mental health crises and other issues took priority over academic counseling, leaving little time to conduct academic conversations. Second, some of the participants indicated that the counselors did not engage in sufficient intentional planning to encourage high performing, college bound Hispanic- and African-American students to enroll in AP courses. Third, there was a lack of communication from the counseling department to encourage parents from the underrepresented groups to fill out the paperwork for free and reduced lunches, which in turn would waive the fee for AP courses for their students. Therefore, effective communication from counselors could eliminate the high cost of taking AP exams (a potential deterrent) for Hispanic- and African-American students.

What follows is a sampling of the key statements that support this theme.

Participants indicated that the lack of a proactive approach by the counselors to support the students from ethnic subgroups can diminish their college readiness. Participant 2 shared,

There is an increase in mental wellness issues on our campus. Our counselors have more pressing issues of student safety and emotional well-being and that is taking precedence over academic counseling. Yet it is important to help the underrepresented students establish realistic and achievable goals.

Participant 1 shared,

The counselors can spend a little time with each student to know who they are and what their goals are and how they can help them. It's just a matter of letting them know that there's somebody who would help them navigate that pathway.

Some of the participants agreed that counselors do not engage in enough intentional planning. Participant 6 mentioned,

We will look at the data and share it with . . . counselors on how we are underserving these populations. The principal has to drive these goals for the school and has to understand the urgency. If the principal doesn't understand or prioritize then the assistant principal, counselors, and teachers will not take steps to prioritize the issue.

Participants suggested different approaches for planning intentionally and enhancing communication in order to remove the gatekeeping that bars ethnic subgroups from enrolling in AP courses. Participant 7 shared,

Intentional planning by counselors may include initiating conversations about AP courses with the middle school counselors and teachers. We should support counselors to establish partnerships with the middle school and find a way to entrench in their minds that college going mentality, so that by the time they hit ninth grade they are taking AP courses.

The participants agreed that there is a lack of communication from the counselors regarding the services available for first generation school attendees or prospective college bound African- and Hispanic-American students. The counselors can help them develop a college going mindset. Participant 4, from the Title I school, stated,

The counselors have to be advocates for the families and students. The parents are afraid to fill out the free and reduced lunch application which allows students to have no cost for AP exams and this is not being communicated to our parents. As a result, the cost of the course also becomes deterrent for many students.

Based on the data analysis, the lack of proactive approach, communication, and collaboration may have created gatekeeping for ethnic subgroups.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, from the perspective of school administrators, what current administrative practices and written policies in their school may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses? Administrators expressed that an ongoing practice of providing personalized teacher training to enhance pedagogy and instruction may support proportional representation of students in AP courses. From the analysis of data collected, two main themes emerged. The first theme was emphasis on the importance of PD for teachers and counselors. The second theme emphasized the necessity of allocating resources for school-wide programs.

Theme 1: PD, workshops, and summer institutes. The majority of participants agreed that AP summer institutes and PD opportunities were valuable resources that foster increased self-efficacy of teachers and counselors. Further, some of the participants agreed that resources were allocated to ensure that all AP teachers attended AP summer institutes to learn the implementation of College Board content specific standards and AP teaching strategies. According to the data, offering a personalized PD series would be a

meaningful intervention; in such a series, the group would determine their topic and design their own PD based on their own needs and those of their students. Lastly, the data highlighted the need for collaboration among teachers, counselors, and administrators on best practices to target and motivate Hispanic- and African-American students for a college pathway. This PD was designed to meet the WASC action plan that aimed to close the achievement gap of ethnic subgroups and increase their enrollment in AP courses.

Most of the participants highlighted the need for a relevant and applicable PD and trainings for the staff. Participant 4 shared, “I make sure that every AP teacher attends the summer institute before they start teaching a new AP course. Moreover, I make sure that all AP teachers go to summer institutes at least once every 3-5 years.” Participant 8 stated, “AP summer institutes provide the training for teachers to be prepared for the content specific instruction. But we are looking into designing the PD for differentiated instruction in AP classes.” Participant 3 said, “We offer funding for teachers to attend specific conferences that will help them improve their teaching practices, especially in AP courses.” Participant 1 shared,

This year we have given teachers the opportunity to design their own professional development based on their own and students’ needs. One group of AP teachers focused on collaboration and finding best practices to scaffold and differentiate instruction to help all students with the content specific skills. . . . Effective teacher collaboration fosters best teaching practices to support all students. . . . Our WASC goal is to target underperforming students from ethnic subgroups. We

have designed a program for all teachers to select five students to watch from their rosters. . . . This program has initiated a concerted effort by every teacher, to take five African-American and Hispanic students under their watch to counsel them periodically throughout the semester. This helps gauge their academic progress.

The participant emphasized the power of one conversation with the student that can change his/her academic course and turn him/her around.

Theme 2: The administrators allocate resources for school wide programs.

Most of the participants believed in the importance of implementing strong school-wide support programs. The data suggested that these programs were geared toward not only at-risk students but also the average student from ethnic subgroups. Some programs such as AVID and REACH (Relationships, Education, Accountability, Character, and Hard work) were designed to provide support and equitable access to quality education for all students. Another program that was embedded successfully in the daily schedule is tutorial time, which was designed for students to receive one-on-one help from teachers each morning. Further, data revealed that another successful program, late start Wednesday, allowed pupil free time every Wednesday morning for the staff to collaborate in their professional learning communities. This program enabled staff to address the WASC committee's recommendations and develop action plans to close the achievement gaps for Hispanic- and African-American students. In addition, support programs such as Link Crew and Safe School Ambassador have been created to ensure

the safety and comfort of all students. These programs encourage relationship building and provide mentorship for the groups that need support.

Many participants agreed that implementation of the right school-wide programs enhances student motivation, learning, and achievement of ethnic subgroups. Participant 4 shared,

We have the unique program that targets the middle student, especially from ethnic subgroups. We pride ourselves on our AVID and REACH programs that target the first-generation college bound students. These students are in this program for 4 years and one of the requirements is that each student must try taking at least one AP course before they graduate to get the exposure to the college level rigor. With these programs we are helping our ethnic subgroups attain college level heights.

Participant 7 stated,

We offer a unique tutorial program. We have allocated a specific time for students to go to their teachers in the morning to get help for upcoming tests or homework assignments, before they go to their classes. This is also the time for counselors to provide individualized academic advising for students.

Participant 8 noted that:

the late start Wednesdays provide time for the staff to work in their professional learning communities to produce strategies and action plans on how to close the achievement gap for our African- and Hispanic-American students. In addition,

our WASC goal is to increase the enrollment of ethnic subgroups in AP courses by 20%.

Both sites had additional programs such as Safe School Ambassadors and Link Crew that ensure safety and conflict resolution among students. Participant 8 shared that:

they selected students from all backgrounds including ethnic subgroups. The Link Crew program assigns an upper classman mentor to each incoming freshman. They help them navigate through the campus for the first 5 weeks of transition.... This kind of mentoring program results in students motivating each other, answering questions and help alleviate anxiety and stress of the new campus. The mentors guide students in their 4-year plans and provide suggestions related to any topic relevant in high school. . . . [The] importance of such program is to ensure that every student feels that they belong, and at the same time have equitable access to all the required information.”

Research Question 3

The last research question asked, from the perspective of school administrators, what administrative practices contribute to self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP classes? The administrators’ perspective was that their practices of establishing a wellness program (in both schools) and a PD program for positivity (in one of the schools) contributed to the self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP classes. The data collected for this question were analyzed through the lens of the conceptual framework of self-efficacy and its four constructs: motivational, cognitive,

affective, and selection processes. The main themes that emerged are discussed in the following sections.

Theme 1: Administrative practices guided the motivational and cognitive processes of students. The administrators' perspective was that their practice of running a wellness program promoted students' motivational and cognitive processes. The participants shared that the student wellness program is intended to produce a growth mindset (cognitive development) in Hispanic- and African-American students, to whom the program is targeted. According to the participants, the wellness program increased motivation and translated into higher attendance, which helped enhance the students' cognitive skills.

Administrative practices at the Title I school. At the Title I school in this study, administrators have established additional practices to improve motivation and cognitive processes. The administrators used Title I funding to organize PD that would promote a more positive school culture. In that school, students and staff members were encouraged to interact with each other positively through school-wide activities. The PD also helped teachers understand how to push students from the learning zone to the performance zone. Administrators collaborated with counselors to implement support programs. Participants said that these dynamics created a sense of belonging and acceptance and, as a result, students felt motivated to attend classes and learn. The idea behind this strategy was to persuade students to challenge themselves academically and become active learners. Teachers encouraged students to enroll in one AP course of their choice to experience the associated rigor and understand the expectations of college courses.

The administrators' position that their practice of running a wellness program promoted motivational and cognitive processes was evident in the following statements. Participant 3 stated that, "The collaboration between the administrators and counselors [in the wellness program] resulted in creating programs for ethnic subgroups, in an effort to bring them at par in their cognitive processes to their counterparts." Participant 1 shared,

We have scheduled tutorial time [as part of the wellness program] so that counselors can provide academic and emotional advisement for students. This is an opportunity for all students to meet with their counselors, regarding any issues they are having at school.

Participant 6 shared that the wellness program provides for improved motivational and cognitive processes, stating, "This is achieved by focusing on our intervention to increase the motivation of our Hispanic- and African-American students to be involved in rigorous academic pathways." Participant 3 stated that,

We understand the obstacles this particular population faces. We are preparing our campuses to support our students with the newly created wellness centers, where counselors, psychologists and trained professionals will be available to support the emotional and mental well-being of our students.

Therefore, the collective perception of the participants was that the practice of providing a wellness program improved student motivation and cognitive processes, contributing to self-efficacy.

The administrators of the Title I school stated that their positivity program promoted motivational and cognitive processes. For example, Participant 4 shared, "The campus-wide goal is to encourage all students to avoid dwelling on the negative relationships that have gone sour or bad test grades. Teachers are reminded of their purpose of helping students and motivating them to achieve their academic goals."

Participant 4 added, "To motivate the students, you must have a motivated staff."

Participant 8 said, "There are guided exercises offered for teachers to reflect on their own experiences and employ those practices to manifest that positivity in the workplace."

Participant 9 stated,

To motivate staff and to create a positive environment, we have informal lunches and meetings with staff just for a casual conversation, to know them and their interests besides their professional roles. Teachers are encouraged to employ the same strategies with students and build relationships.

Participant 10 shared,

We offered professional development for teachers, where the best practices were shared on how to increase the students' time in the learning zone and the performance zone with a safety net, so that the student feels safe to take risks.

Theme 2: Administrative practices guided the selection and affective processes of students. The administrators' perspective was that practices to improve the affective and selection processes for these students lie primarily in the domain of counselors and teachers. Participants reported no administrative practices other than

administrative support for counselors and teachers. Administrators stated that the first contact for the incoming freshmen was with their counselor, who must be compassionate and culturally receptive in order to understand the students, especially the Hispanic- and African-American populations. The administrators agreed that, during academic advising, counselors must encourage the students to select AP courses. Participants indicated that such encouragement from counselors and teachers may contribute to positive affective and selection processes, but that these practices are applied by counselor and teachers, not administrators.

Administrators unanimously agreed that affective and selection processes are the field of the counselors, as evidenced by the following statements. Participant 5 shared, Counselors and teachers must encourage Hispanic- and African-American students to select challenging AP courses, based on their interests. This shows the students that their counselors believe in their abilities and will probably motivate them to be successful in these courses.

Participant 7 stated,

The Hispanic- and African-American students need ongoing support [by the counselors and teachers], such as tutoring and intervention to be successful in AP courses. When they receive this kind of support, they feel more emotionally prepared for the rigor and become resilient in the face of failure.

Participant 4 suggested, “The student is relying on human resources to set the tone for the next 4 years of their high school experience. Therefore, counselors have to be very cognizant of student’s college and career planning.” Participant 5 recommended that:

Counselors should be proactively guiding Hispanic- and African-American students, understanding them and then create a projected path. For example, if the student is strong in Math, they should be encouraged to enroll in rigorous math courses, on the other hand, if the student is a good writer, the counselor should enroll the student in AP Language and Composition and AP Literature. By doing so, counselors can help develop the self-efficacy of these students along with emotional resilience and self-confidence.

Referring to the Title I school's positivity program, participant 3 stated that:

it is our goal to encourage all Hispanic- and African-American students to take at least one AP course during their high school, for exposure to the rigor of the college level course, whether they take the AP exam or not.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I sought to establish trustworthiness for this study in order to convince the participants and readers that the findings would be worth their attention (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The data gathering process was rooted in four aspects of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and reliability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used the research questions and conceptual framework to guide the data collection process. Trustworthiness was the practical choice to ensure this study's findings were acceptable and useful in order for the participants and readers to reflect on their practices (Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility

Credibility is the first and the most important criterion in establishing trustworthiness of a study. Credibility means that the findings of the study are a true reflection of the participants' intentions, beliefs, and perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, I established credibility by relating the findings to the different situations at each campus due to their different demographics, as well as by applying triangulation and member checking. The data from the interviews were robust, thick, and detailed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

During the interview process, I used member-checking to add to the study's credibility. Because the purpose of the study was to explore administrative perspectives and practices, only the participants could accurately evaluate the credibility of the data collected through the interview process (Miles et al., 2013). Throughout the interview process, I checked with the participants periodically to establish that the information they shared was interpreted correctly. I reiterated the information they shared in the follow up questions to ensure that I had a clear understanding of their intentions, corrected errors if I misunderstood, and requested additional information to clarify their responses.

Transferability

Transferability of the study refers to the application of the findings to a different group and in a distinct context. A key goal of any study is to provide evidence that the findings are transferable (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In this study, the thick description of the phenomenon established transferability. Thick description includes detailed information about the data collection process, details of the setting, and the time of the

interview (Cope, 2014). I conducted the interviews in the participants' offices at their convenience. All the participants were engaged and interested and shared descriptive accounts of their practices related to their school culture and student population. The participants readily answered all the questions and shared relevant data related to their schools' social and cultural environments. Furthermore, I shared the findings with all the participants to help them evaluate and implement them in their own practice (Duncan, 1993). However, this study would be considered narrow because it was limited to only two schools in the same school district. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to the broader audience (Saldana, 2016). It is unlikely that the findings would be applicable to schools nationwide, but because the transferability requirement was met, those who consider this information applicable can use it at their own campuses (Cope, 2014).

Dependability

The collection of stable data leads to a consistent and repeatable study (Miles et al., 2013). I verified the findings of the raw data repeatedly to ensure the study's dependability to make sure that if any other researchers replicated the study, they would be able to collect and interpret similar data and arrive at similar findings (Kvale, 1989). I also upheld the study's dependability by maintaining consistency during each semistructured interview I established confirmability through a lengthy engagement with the participants during the semistructured interview, where the participants informed me about their perspectives, practices, experiences, and philosophies related to the study. Due to my employment in the same district and my background as an AP teacher, I was conscientiously attentive to keep any personal biases in check during the instrument

design, data collection, and analysis process. To maintain high reflexivity for the study, I engaged in continuous reflection and checking of personal biases and interests throughout the process. I interviewed the sample of 10 high school administrators and collected in-depth data. I audio recorded the semistructured interviews, which allowed me to revisit the data repeatedly and check for codes and subsequently emerging themes that were true to the information provided by the participants (Noble & Smith, 2015). This process helped me establish a more trustworthy study that confirmed the study's findings.

Reliability

I maintained the study's reliability by replicating the interview process precisely using the scripted questions, which preserved the consistency of the process that helped collect rich data with minor variability (Leung, 2015). I was the sole person with access to the interview data. I analyzed the data to create the list of a priori and open codes with descriptions of each code, which helped articulate or define the codes with clear boundaries, thus maintaining the reliability of each code and guiding the development of categories (Miles et al., 2013). This process helped establish the transparency and veracity of the data analysis process. I reviewed the data several times to ensure accuracy and reliability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I established the reliability of the research via data saturation and sufficiency to ensure many categories from codes. I kept my biases in check by adhering to the scripted questions and the follow up questions to obtain rich and comprehensive data. I reflected on the data to obtain different perspectives and insights to enhance the study's reliability. While reviewing the data multiple times, I constantly compared the results to enhance the study's reliability (Schwandt, 2015).

Summary

The participants shared their perspectives and practices that may have influenced the enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. All participants agreed that these subgroups are underrepresented in AP courses. They reflected on their policies and programs that may support these ethnic subgroups. Most administrators understood the importance of offering AP classes to all students to make their academic programs equitable. They offered their perspective on the importance of administrative support for teachers, counselors, parents, and students in order to create a positive school climate. By collaborating with counselors and teachers, the administrators could redesign the AP requirements and provide opportunities for Hispanic- and African-American students to enroll.

Furthermore, this study found that meaningful PD for counselors and teachers can have a positive impact on student learning. With increased motivation, students are prepared to take on challenging tasks and develop the skills and competencies to be successful in those tasks. The findings suggested that counselors play a key role in improving Hispanic- and African-American students' selection processes. With a mindful approach to understand the ethnic subgroups, their culture, and their background, school counselors can help them select their career paths effectively.

These findings suggested that various factors and programs contribute to Hispanic- and African-American students' success in AP courses. Participants asserted that implementation of certain programs such as AVID, Achieve, and Link Crew, along with tutoring and intervention, can support the ethnic subgroups in making empowered

academic choices. Finally, the results corroborated the literature findings that, when administrators are willing to challenge their current perspectives and practices, they may improve educational opportunities for Hispanic- and African-American students and therefore can help improve the self-efficacy of these ethnic subgroups.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore the administrative practices that may expand enrollment of African and Hispanic American students in high school AP courses. Semistructured interviews were used to obtain detailed information, eliciting both implied and definitive responses from the participants (Creswell, 1998). The data analysis was directed within the specific setting where the problem was addressed (Yin, 2003). The following research questions were used to explore the phenomenon in this qualitative study:

Research Question 1: What are school administrators' perspectives about the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP classes?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of school administrators, what current administrative practices and written policies in their school may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses?

Research Question 3: From the perspective of school administrators, what administrative practices contribute to self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP courses?

Key findings of the study may be summarized as follows. First, administrators believed in the advantages of AP programs. Second, the administrative practice of promoting meaningful PD for teachers and counselors was perceived as an effective tool to increase the enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses.

Lastly, administrators realized that there may be a lack of support from counselors to support the ethnic subgroups in their academic endeavors. The administrators recognized that they need to support the counselors in managing their workload so that they can offer relevant academic guidance to Hispanic- and African-American students.

Interpretation of the Findings

The following section offers interpretation of the findings for this exploratory case study, presented in response to each research question. The findings are compared with current research literature.

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed administrative perspectives about the disproportional representation of Hispanic- and African-American enrollment in AP classes. The data were collected from semistructured interviews with administrators from two high school campuses in the same school district. This information was intended to develop a deeper understanding of administrative perspectives in this setting.

Theme 1: Advantages of AP programs for all students. Participants stated that AP programs are advantageous for all students who complete them because they provide a college pathway and financial benefits for students. The administrators also suggested that completing AP courses reduces the frequency of high school dropouts for Hispanic- and African-American students. Administrators agreed that AP courses are more thought provoking than conventional classes and help students to develop higher-level critical thinking skills that prepare students for college admissions.

These findings align with current knowledge about the discipline as reviewed in Chapter 2. For instance, the College Board (2014) indicated that there are financial benefits related to taking AP courses. Students who score high on AP exams demonstrate mastery, earn high school and college credits simultaneously, and are not required to pay for the same courses in college (College Board, 2014). This accelerated college pathway increases the chances of early college completion (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). However, although AP programs offer an opportunity for early completion of college, not all colleges offer credits toward graduation (Avery, Gurantz, Hurwitz, & Smith, 2017). This disconfirms the assertion that AP courses always result in early college completion and provide financial benefits. The participants' view might be moderated accordingly.

This theme also aligns with research indicating that AP courses improves students' skills and prepares them for college. Kettler and Hurst (2017) asserted that AP course completion improves critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing students for college or professional careers. Additionally, the College Board (2014) stated that students who have taken AP courses have stronger analytical and critical thinking skills and greater opportunities after high school. These findings are also supported by Kolluri (2018), who indicated that exposure to rigorous AP curriculum helps students explore their career interests early. The challenging content also allows students to attain time management skills, commitment, diligence, and dedication—all traits that may help them succeed in college (Malkus, 2016). Finally, Porter (2017) indicated that students who successfully complete AP courses are highly motivated and prepared for college. A combination of rigorous AP curriculum and effective instruction prepares students for

academic challenges (Kolluri, 2018). Adequately prepared students who have attained critical analysis and reasoning skills through AP courses demonstrate greater success in college (Avery et al., 2017). Therefore, the finding that administrators perceive AP courses to be beneficial is supported by the research.

Theme 2: Certain prerequisites create hurdles for underrepresented students. Most of the participants agreed that teachers and counselors are using the criteria recommended by the College Board to filter out unprepared students from AP courses. Some of the participants described the College Board recommendations as hurdles that prevent African-Americans and Hispanic Americans from enrolling in AP courses. Interview data indicated that teachers and counselors are deterring these underrepresented students from enrolling in AP courses because the students lack the skills and competencies required to be successful. This disparity in representation between Hispanic- and African-American students and European- and Asian-American students has existed since the beginning of AP programs (College Board, 2014). Participants stated that this practice amounts to unintentional tracking of underrepresented students into noncollege preparatory pathways

This finding indicates that administrators are aware of the disproportionate enrollment and that inadvertent tracking exists in their schools. This finding aligns with those of Witenko et al. (2016), who explained that there is an underlying system of tracking in the American education system, creating unequal opportunities for Hispanic- and African-American students. These students have to compete in a merit-based program that is not established in favor of their interest, needs, or abilities. Additionally,

research has indicated that the gap between students of different ethnicities occurs because AP courses and testing criteria favor some ethnic subgroups over others (Spreo et al., 2018), with AP courses serving the interests and abilities of European- and Asian-American students over Hispanic- and African-American students on high school campuses (Ford & Whiting, 2016). One participant described the collaborative effort of the administrators, teachers, and counselors to review the current prerequisites for certain AP courses and elimination of independent AP summer assignments, which may be preventing African- and Hispanic-American students from enrolling in AP courses. The administrator was aware that African- and Hispanic-American students at their site may lack resources to afford private tutoring or the readiness skills to complete the independent assignments over the summer. As a result, the team at this site is exploring options to offer some companion courses to support the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP classes. This finding indicates that administrators in the research setting are evaluating the prerequisites for enrollment in AP courses.

Theme 3: Counselors are not sufficiently engaged to promote African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP courses, and administrators agreed that it is their responsibility to improve counselors' effectiveness. In this study, administrators agreed that it is their responsibility to improve counselor effectiveness. The data suggested that lack of effective career counseling prevents Hispanic- and African-American students from making informed decisions about AP courses. According to the interviewees, the counselors in their schools do not approach Hispanic- and African-American students proactively to enroll them in AP courses, which demonstrates a lack

of planning to enroll high-performing Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. Some of the interview participants shared that, due to lack of time and overwhelming caseloads, counselors provide inadequate academic advising to Hispanic- and African-American students. Interviewees also reported a lack of communication between counselors and Hispanic- and African-American students regarding the resources and programs available to help them succeed in AP courses. Some of the administrators expressed that they should work with counselors to develop and implement support programs for students who are underrepresented in AP courses. For example, the participants suggested using Title I funding to provide afterschool tutoring, technology, transportation, and childcare, if needed, to support Hispanic- and African-American students.

Current research is consistent with this finding. Hines et al. (2017) acknowledged that counselors should approach students proactively so they can render effective services to Hispanic- and African-American students. Additionally, Frankenberg et al. (2016) noted that poor communication between internal stakeholders exacerbates underrepresentation of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. Effective communication from counselors is important to encourage students from underrepresented ethnic subgroups to complete free and reduced lunch forms. For students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, the AP exam fee is automatically waived. Without this waiver, the high cost of the AP exams can be a deterrent to participation (Spreo et al., 2018). Again, the administrators in the current study expressed willingness to improve counselor effectiveness. Their comments extend knowledge of

administrators' awareness and commitment to address the issue of disproportional enrollment through counselor improvement.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was used to explore the participants' perspectives regarding the current administrative practices and written policies in their school that may support proportional representation of Hispanic and African-Americans in AP courses. In this study, administrators from both high schools had followed the College Board recommendations as their policy regarding the prerequisites for certain AP courses and summer independent assignments. There were no written policies or documents that supported the enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. Additionally, there were no tangible written policies or documents that indicated that all AP classes are open to all students. The administrators from this study advocated for PD related to content specific instruction for the teachers to improve their pedagogy. They also recommended that the teachers attend AP summer institutes hosted by the College Board. Using enhanced instructional skills, teachers may be able to motivate and assist underrepresented students to enroll in AP courses. The administrators were committed to allocating resources to support school-wide programs to increase the enrollment of underrepresented ethnic subgroups in AP courses.

Written policies. The two principals in this study shared that they had adopted the College Board's (2014) recommendations as their guided policies for their programs. Both high schools have followed the requirements for prerequisite courses and independent summer assignments, as suggested by the College Board. These

prerequisites helped determine the readiness of students for these courses. The College Board (2019) has recommended that challenging prerequisite coursework prepares students for AP success. The other procedures regarding how to order, administer, and proctor the AP courses are followed directly from the *AP Program Guide 2018-19* (College Board, 2019). This guide offers links for free resources for students and teachers. Aligning with the *AP Equity and Access Policy* (College Board, 2019), both sites are trying to eliminate any barriers that may restrict the access for African- and Hispanic-American students at their sites. Both principals are committed to providing equitable access by opening certain courses for all students, including African and Hispanic Americans. The principals are reviewing the syllabi for certain AP courses regarding mandatory independent summer assignments as the requirement to continue the course, which may be an obstacle for Hispanic- and African-American students because some of these students may not have resources to complete these independent assignments, making them ineligible to continue the course once school resumes. Both school sites have published their AP data and demographics on their school websites for transparency. However, they do not have any specific written policies for their sites to guide the process of improving AP courses. Because no written documents were offered, there was no analysis of written policies.

Theme 1: PD, workshops, and summer institutes. The participants in the study affirmed the importance of administrative practices that support PD, workshops, and summer institutes for teachers. The findings emphasized the importance of meaningful PD and summer institutes to improve teachers' content specific knowledge and culturally

relevant pedagogy. The administrators have allocated resources to support all teacher training. The influence of continuing PD better teaching practices that positively affect the students' experiences in learning and achievement.

Administrators allocated funding to ensure that all AP teachers can attend summer conferences and trainings to enhance their teaching practices. In addition, the administrators at the school supported the implementation of PD designed to introduce differentiated instruction in AP classes. Participants from one campus shared about their school's unique and personalized PD approach that is being used to meet the needs of AP teachers. According to the participants, most of the PD was geared toward collaboratively creating an action plan to meet the goals of implementing differentiated instruction and improving the learning outcomes of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses.

This finding is consistent with the literature. For example, research has indicated that when administrators allocated resources to provide training for teachers and counselors to implement best instructional practices, they were able to meet the needs of underrepresented ethnic subgroups, especially when teachers were able to select training that would meet students' needs (Blair, 2015; Kassae & Rowell, 2017). Further, meaningful PD results in sustainability of educational initiatives and is highly effective in catalyzing creativity in teaching strategies (Torgerson et al., 2017). Rowland and Shircliffe (2016) confirmed that when PD supported the incorporation of practical and meaningful ideologies and strategies, teachers were more willing to implement and practice these strategies for their students. Ladson-Billings (2014) also suggested that it is

beneficial for teachers to receive training in culturally relevant pedagogy that can be implemented in recruiting students and providing instructional practices for Hispanic- and African-American students. By encouraging and providing funds for such training, administrators promote stronger instruction and can help underrepresented students overcome barriers and improve their proportionate enrollment in AP courses (Rowland & Shircliffe, 2016). Therefore, the literature affirms the administrative practices in the research setting related to PD and summer trainings for AP teachers. Administrators are implementing strategies effectively, meaning that in this area there is no gap between administrative practices and research-supported practices.

Theme 2: Administrators allocate resources for school-wide programs. Most of the participants are trying to increase the presence of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP by supporting programs such as AVID and REACH. These programs target underrepresented, academically average students and prepare them for college eligibility. The administrators ensured that the teachers overseeing the AVID and REACH programs were trained in culturally relevant pedagogy to support these students. The administrators offered resources to the AVID and REACH teachers and students through Title I funding. The administrators are removing barriers by mandating that all students in these programs take at least one AP course before graduation. Therefore, the administrators are making an intentional effort to improve their schools' academic culture.

The current literature supports the efficacy of this administrative practice. The school-wide implementation of support programs such as AVID targets students from

underrepresented ethnic subgroups for college and career pathways (Cota, 2017; Kroboth, 2016; Pugh, 2017). These programs help students develop skills and competencies required to for success in rigorous AP courses, targeting high achieving Hispanic- and African-American students who otherwise would have experienced barriers due to lack of support and communication (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In fact, administrator support of programs such as AVID is clearly linked to improved academic performance of underrepresented ethnic subgroups (Blair, 2015; Warne, Sonnert, & Sadler, 2019). The success of this administrative practice is corroborated by current research.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 explored the participants' perspectives of administrative practices that may contribute to the self-efficacy of Hispanic- and African-Americans in AP classes. All participants shared practices that were intended to improve students' motivation and cognition processes. In administrators' opinion, there were no direct administrative practices implemented at their schools to support students' affective and selection processes, as this area is the domain of counselors and teachers. Administrators from both schools had established student wellness centers that addressed African- and Hispanic-American students' emotional needs. Additionally, one of the schools provided specialized training to promote a school culture of positivity. All practices were implemented with the goal of empowering ethnic subgroups. The participants indicated that these programs helped students to develop strong motivational, cognitive, affective, and selection processes.

Theme 1: Administrative practices guided the motivational and cognitive processes of students. From the perspective of most administrators, their practice of establishing wellness centers improved Hispanic- and African-American students' motivation and cognitive processes. Enhanced student wellness resulted in increased motivation, which is reflected in improved school attendance. The findings of the current study are consistent with research findings by Bandura (1993), in that the administrators intentionally practice in ways that align with improved student motivation. High motivation promotes cognitive processes that lead to personal efficiency and self-confidence. These results corroborate Ata's (2018) research findings by Ata; when administrators invest in their African- and Hispanic-American students by implementing special support programs, such as wellness centers, these students are highly motivated and demonstrate improved cognitive skills. Due to the support system offered by the school, these students from ethnic subgroups demonstrated positive learning outcomes, regardless of the difficulty of the task at hand (Lin & Tsai, 2017). Perrone-McGovern et al. (2015) reiterated the importance of administrative support in implementing special programs to support Hispanic- and African-American students and encourage improved attendance, thereby substantiating this study's findings. Further, this study's findings were corroborated by research indicating that special programs and academic intervention can support cognitive skills and motivate African- and Hispanic-American students to succeed in challenging courses (Zimmerman, 2013).

Administrative practices at Title I School. The findings of this study address the gap in practices at the Title I school related to administrative tasks and their influence on

teachers and students' motivation and cognition. Due to the culturally responsive PD about positivity at the Title I research school; teachers had a better understanding of how to motivate Hispanic- and African-American students. This result aligns with the findings of Spreo et al. (2018), who found that meaningful PD and training for teachers can generate positive school culture, translating into increased learning outcomes for ethnic subgroups. Kangas et al. (2016) found that administrators who provided culturally responsive PD empowered the teachers and enhanced students' motivation and cognitive processes, which was reflected in their learning outcomes. Additionally, Kim et al. (2014) found that positive support from teachers resulted in increased motivation and cognition of Hispanic- and African-American students, as manifested in engagement and achievement in the classroom. The administrative practices in the Title I school aligned with current research that supported the implementation of special programs to increase the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses.

Theme 2: Administrative practices guided the selection and affective processes of student. The perspective of the administrators in this study was that practices to improve the affective and selection processes of Hispanic- and African-American students are primarily the responsibility of counselors and teachers. Other than to provide support for counselors and teachers, participants shared no direct administrative practices to enhance students' selection and affective processes. Administrators shared that they have offered support for counselors to engage proactively with Hispanic- and African-American students, helping them make their 4-year plans, empowering their selection of AP courses, and providing affective support to deal with

the daily stressors of life. Ackerman et al., (2013) confirmed that when administrators provide a support system for counselors and teachers, they are able to evoke selection and affective processes among Hispanic- and African-American students.

Lewis (2013) suggested that administrators who supported counselors and teachers by providing culturally responsive training helped the counselors and teachers become cognizant of incoming Hispanic and African-American freshmen's needs. The students responded to the individualized attention given by the counselors. Further, the counselors' affective support and adequate selection process helped Hispanic- and African-American students design their 4-year plans (Ackerman et al., 2013). Therefore, school counselors and teachers played a pivotal role in helping students with selection and affective processes (Ata, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

Although I intended to interview 12 administrators, only 10 agreed to be interviewed. Having taught AP courses, my personal bias was an overarching concern. Therefore, I stayed aware of my biases throughout the study (Creswell, 1998). I crafted open-ended questions for the interviewees to answer freely, yielding rich data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I conducted the interviews adhering to the protocol and asked questions in a neutral tone, controlling my emotions to ensure that I did not sway participants' emotional reactions. I took detailed notes during interviews in order to interpret the data correctly (Kallio et al., 2016). Only collecting the data that the interviewer perceives as meaningful may result in skewed interpretations and results. My method may have

helped me avoid confirmation bias, preventing interpretation of the data to support the hypothesis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Recommendations

There is a gap in practice related to the disproportional enrollment of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses in U.S. high schools. I explored the perspectives and practices of administrators that may influence the disproportional representation of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. The recommendations for further research are based on the findings of the current study, limitations of the current study, and the literature review. Although the findings of the study were derived from rich data gathered from 10 administrators, the current research was limited to two high schools in the same school district (Medina, 2017). I recommend the scope of a similar study be expanded to other school districts with different demographics. The sample size may be increased by including administrators from different districts with varied demographics (Malterud, Volkert, & Guassora, 2015). Malterud et al. (2015) suggested that an increased sample size from different districts may result in the information power that is needed for data saturation. The research can be extended to understand the perspectives and practices of administrators and their influences on the self-efficacy of other internal and external stakeholders (teachers, counselors, and parents).

One of the major findings of the study was that the counselors were not adequately engaged with Hispanic- and African-American students in promoting their enrollment in AP courses, and administrators recognized that it was their responsibility to collaborate with counselors. I recommend conducting a future study to gain improved

understanding of collaboration between administrators and counselors and its connection to Hispanic- and African-American students' academic achievement (Ata, 2018). Such a study may focus on administrators and counselors' collaborative effort to remove social and cultural barriers and their influence on Hispanic- and African-American students' enrollment in AP courses. Warne et al. (2019) suggested that when there is effective communication and collaboration between the administrators and counselors, it may remove social and cultural barriers for Hispanic- and African-American students and therefore improve their learning outcomes.

Another major finding from the study was that certain prerequisites for AP courses create unintentional barriers for Hispanic- and African-American students. Research suggests that certain prerequisites recommended by the College Board (2014) created barriers that prevent Hispanic- and African-American students from enrolling in AP courses (Ford & Whiting, 2016). Further research may be conducted to understand if the removal or easing of these prerequisites will increase Hispanic- and African-American students' enrollment in AP courses. I recommend further research to explore how the elimination of prerequisites may link to improved enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses.

Finally, additional research is recommended to study the effects of administrative practices on teachers' self-efficacy. Administrators who implement school wide programs to improve the cognitive and motivational skills of ethnic subgroups may enhance access to quality instruction on their campuses and provide support for Hispanic- and African-American students to take on challenging courses such as AP (Spreo et al., 2018; Kassae

& Rowell 2017). Personalized PD was implemented at one of the two schools. The personalized PD was meaningful and improved teacher training programs that may enhance teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993). Further research is recommended to close the gap in knowledge and practice related to administrative support for teachers through personalized PD.

Recommendations for Practice

High school counselors are not adequately engaged in counseling to promote Hispanic and African-American enrollment in AP courses. Therefore, I recommend improved counselor engagement and collaboration with administrators. Administrators should strengthen the dynamic relationships with counselors by decreasing their caseload. Decreased caseload will afford the counselors sufficient time to provide academic counseling for Hispanic- and African-American students. Lastly, administrators should allocate time and resources for high school and junior high counselors to collaborate and develop plans to improve the enrollment of incoming African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses. Doing so will help counselors and teachers at the junior high level understand the expectations of AP courses early on, allowing them to start preparing their students with the necessary skills.

Because participants in the present study agreed that College Board prerequisites create barriers to Hispanic- and African-American students' enrollment and therefore should be diminished and eventually eliminated, I recommend that administrators develop strategies to moderate these prerequisites. Administrators may allocate resources

to offer companion courses to support Hispanic and African-American student enrollment in AP courses.

At the school sites where I conducted the research, administrators had launched programs to help Hispanic- and African-American students enroll in AP classes. Programs such as AVID support the development of underrepresented students' coping, management, and cognitive skills. The AVID program requires that every student enroll in at least one AP course to experience the rigor and expectations of college level courses. I recommend that AVID programs be continued and expanded in the research schools.

From the perspective of building administrators, administrative practices can contribute to the self-efficacy beliefs of African and Hispanic Americans in AP classes. My recommendation for practice is that administrators continue, but also evaluate, the programs that promise to support students and improve their cognitive abilities. Finally, administrators should cultivate the assistance of faculty and counselors for support programs and advising to empower and encourage Hispanic- and African-American students to enroll in AP courses.

Implications

My purpose in conducting this qualitative study was to explore administrative practices that may improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students and expand their enrollment in high school AP courses. The following sections describe the potential implications for positive social change with administrators, teachers, and counselors. The findings of this study may contribute to potential social change through

deeper understanding of administrative practices that may influence the self-efficacy of Hispanic- and African-American students and their enrollment in AP courses.

Potential Social Change with Administrators

The first major finding of this study was that counselors are not adequately engaged in academic advising to increase the enrollment of Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. Administrators recognized their responsibility in improving counselors' effectiveness. They may effect positive social change through improved collaboration and engagement with counselors. Doing so may contribute to increased opportunities for Hispanic- and African-American students to enroll in AP courses. According to Warne et al. (2019), most administrators understand that academic barriers result from a lack of communication between counselors and Hispanic- and African-American students, and that these barriers should be removed. The intentional effort to collaborate with counselors may promote equity in educational outcomes for Hispanic- and African-American students and increase their enrollment in AP courses.

The second major finding is that the administrators perceived that certain prerequisites create barriers to Hispanic- and African-American students' enrollment, and those barriers should be eliminated. Participants at both school sites reported that these prerequisites unfairly track Hispanic- and African-American students away from AP courses. If administrators were to apply this finding, it would likely result in positive social change through the reduction of academic barriers between underserved student populations and AP enrollment. The administrators might develop strategies to explain and moderate these prerequisites that the College Board has recommended for certain AP

courses. They might develop plans to either eliminate the prerequisites or implement programs to support Hispanic- and African-American students to achieve the prerequisite skills. Ford and Whiting (2016) agreed that the College Board's recommended prerequisites for AP courses do not favor the unique interests of Hispanic- and African-American students. Therefore, administrators might develop strategies to moderate the prerequisites so they are not overly strict and discouraging of Hispanic- and African-American students' enrollment in AP courses.

Potential Social Change with Teachers and Counselors

The third major finding was that administrators are implementing school wide programs to improve Hispanic- and African-American students' academic achievement. They are allocating resources to ensure equitable opportunities to improve the educational outcomes of these subgroups. There was a consensus among the participants that these programs are effective and Hispanic- and African-American students are benefitting from them. If the administrators in this study continue to implement programs that improve underrepresented students' cognitive skills, they may contribute to positive social change (Blair, 2015). The specific requirement of the AVID program is for each student to take at least one AP course to ensure exposure to academic rigor and college level expectations. Kroboth (2016) acknowledged the benefits of the AVID program, which instills cognitive and coping skills in Hispanic- and African-American students and helps them meet the challenges of AP courses. If administrators continue to support such programs, they might contribute to positive social change.

The fourth finding was that most administrators emphasized the importance of PD, workshops, and AP summer institutes to improve teachers' instructional practices. If the administrators persevere in this practice, it will contribute to positive social change. Blair (2015) supported resource allocation for teacher training in best practices. The administrators in the current study agreed that differentiated instruction training is a valuable means to support Hispanic- and African-American students in AP courses. Torgerson et al. (2017) recognized that meaningful PD may help encourage teacher creativity in the classroom and improve student learning. Moreover, administrators agreed to provide collaboration time for teachers to implement best teaching practices to support Hispanic- and African-American students' enrollment and success in AP courses. Therefore, if administrators continue to allocate resources to applicable teacher training, teachers will apply improved pedagogy that will benefit student learning.

Potential Social Change through Understanding Self-Efficacy

The fifth major finding was that, from the perspective of building administrators, administrative practices can contribute to African and Hispanic Americans' self-efficacy beliefs with regard to AP classes. The administrators agreed that they can accomplish this goal through programs that motivate students and improve their cognitive abilities. The findings implied that positive social change can be created through administrative practices that raise counselors' self-efficacy of to meet the needs of Hispanic- and African-American students. According to Bruce-Davis et al. (2014), with the counselors' support, administrators can implement programs that may offer personal and academic counseling, study skills, time management skills, and peer study groups. In the current

study, school administrators employed wellness programs and provided opportunities for counselors to focus on underrepresented ethnic subgroups. According to the participants, students responded positively to the individualized attention given by the counselors and felt comfortable discussing their career goals and choices with the counselors. This finding's linkage to positive social change is consistent with the research of Ata (2018), who found that counselors play a pivotal role in helping students identify their goals based on their potential. Spero et al. (2018) confirmed that administrators provide the support system to improve their staff and students' self-efficacy through an effective support system that promotes wellness in the entire school. Therefore, the findings may encourage positive social change by increasing Hispanic- and African-American students' self-efficacy through guided academic support and mental and social wellness.

Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, administrators at both schools work hard to create equitable access to AP courses for all students. Because this is their WASC goal, they are exerting a concerted effort to improve Hispanic and African-American student representation in AP courses. The administrators are implementing various support programs to achieve this goal. Seeing the underrepresentation of a specific demographic group in rigorous and challenging AP courses triggers an inquiry into how to address the gap in practice (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). The findings indicate that administrators should continue to implement programs that help improve Hispanic- and African-American students' self-efficacy.

Through the lens of self-efficacy, this study generated increased understanding of administrative practices that may influence the enrollment of underrepresented ethnic subgroups in AP courses. Application of this study's findings may provide Hispanic- and African-American students with improved motivation and cognitive skills to take on the challenge of AP courses. Through practices to engage counselors, minimize academic barriers, and sustain programs, administrators can contribute to positive social change for Hispanic- and African-American students through improved representation in AP courses.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Administrator #1 _____

Years of Service _____

Opening Statement: First of all, I would like to thank you for your time and cooperation to help me with my research study. Thank you for signing the consent form. A gentle reminder that I will be recording the entire interview. With your permission, may I please start the recording? I would like to gain a deeper understanding about your role as a leader at this campus. I would like to gain insight especially about the AP program on campus.

Research Question 1: What are school administrators' perspectives about the disproportional representation of African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP classes?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of school administrators, what current administrative practices and written policies in their school may support proportional representation of African and Hispanic Americans in AP courses?

Research Question 3: From the perspective of school administrators, what administrative practices contribute to self-efficacy of African and Hispanic Americans for AP classes?

1. So, to begin this process, please provide some information about your AP program.
2. What do you think about the difference between the enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses as compared with European and Asian American students at your campus?
 - a. If so, what is your role in improving the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students to enroll in AP courses?
 - b. If not, are you and your faculty implementing programs or using strategies in the classroom to encourage African- and Hispanic-American students to enroll in AP courses?
3. How do you ensure equal access for African- and Hispanic-American students to AP courses at your campus?
4. Are there any pre-requisite courses offered that specifically prepare all students for AP courses?
5. How do you manage the teacher gate-keeping of students for AP courses?
6. Are there any specific intervention programs to improve the self-efficacy of African- and Hispanic-American students to increase their enrollment in AP courses?

General/Overview Questions:

Motivational Influences: Activation to action. Level of motivation is reflected in choice of courses of action, and in the intensity and persistence of effort.

Affective influences: Processes regulating emotional states and elicitation of emotional reactions. One feels good and controls negative reactions toward stressors.

Cognitive processes: Thinking processes involved in the acquisition, organization, and use of information.

7. What administrative practices currently contribute to enrollment in AP courses?
8. What written administrative practices currently contribute to enrollment in AP courses?
9. What administrative practices currently contribute to African- and Hispanic-American enrollment in AP courses?
10. What written administrative practices currently contribute to enrollment of African- and Hispanic-American students in AP courses?
11. What current admin practices help to give African- and Hispanic-American students' encouragement and confidence to enroll in AP courses? Written practices?
12. What kind of administrative actions do you think may increase the motivation of Hispanic- and African-American students to enroll in AP?
13. What do you think may be deterrents that work against their motivation to enroll in AP courses?
14. What kind of administrative actions do you think may increase the emotional resilience of Hispanic- and African-American students so that they feel more emotionally prepared to enroll in AP?
15. What role do you think administrators may play in providing emotional well-being of African- and Hispanic-American students?
16. What kind of administrative actions do you think may increase the likelihood of these students to plan

Selection Processes: beliefs of personal efficacy can shape the course lives take by influencing the types of activities and environments people choose.

General/Wrap-Up Question:

- and process the information required to enroll in AP?
17. What practices do you think administrators may use to help students from this group to improve their prerequisite skills for specific AP courses?
 18. What kind of administrative practices do you think may help Hispanic- and African-American students to select AP as an activity and environment where they will believe they belong?
 19. What role do you think administrators play to help African- and Hispanic-American students assimilate in the AP classroom environment?
 20. Would you like to add anything else?