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**REGISTRATION, ATTENDANCE, AND REALITY: AFRICAN-AMERICANS
ENGAGED IN SAT PREPARATION**

by

Don Taliaferro Coleman

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
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Dissertation Chair: Joanne Damminger, Ed.D.

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Dedication

To The Coleman Clan

Steve (Edwin), Gwendolyn, Edwin (Stevie), Robert, and Masai

Especially to Edwin "Steve" Coleman,

You knew from the beginning.

To my Family

Nicole P.

Darnell J.

Destinee S. E.

Neo

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed in some way to the attainment of this degree. All of my thoughts, actions, and concerns were the direct result of someone teaching, assisting, and guiding me through my formal education. That includes my parents, brothers, loved ones, and all the teachers, professors, and mentors that directed me.

I thank the Atlantic City Board of Education and the Atlantic City Education Association for having the foresight to negotiate the necessity of funding continuing education.

I thank Rowan University on their selection of the instructional staff in the Educational Leadership Department. Special thanks go to my dissertation chair Dr. Joanne Damminger who gave me much needed counsel, direction, and encouragement. To my dissertation committee Dr. Coaxum and Dr. Sisco both of whom provided support and feedback on my research.

To all of my colleagues who helped in all aspects of this research.

Abstract

Don Taliaferro Coleman
REGISTRATION, ATTENDANCE, AND REALITY: AFRICAN-AMERICANS
ENGAGED IN SAT PREPARATION

2012

Joanne Damminger, Ed. D.
Doctor of Education

There is limited research into the persistence, participation, and efforts of African American students in their preparation for college admission exams (SAT, ACT).

Registration, attendance, and the experienced reality of African American students who voluntarily enrolled in an SAT prep program as well as perceptions of African American instructors were the foci of this mixed methods action research. This study examined the development of a Saturday SAT preparation program over an 18 month period.

Theoretical frameworks of Stereotype Threat (STT) (Steele, 1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995) and schooling effects (Diamond, 2007; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Ladson-Billings 1995, 1997; Starratt, 2003; Tate, 2004) were the guiding interpretive frameworks (Creswell, 2007) of this investigation. Findings suggest that opportunity to learn (OTL), and STT themes of test anxiety and fear of low achievement influenced some study participants' decisions to register, attend, and experience a SAT preparation program. Moreover, this study documented a lack of overall student commitment to persist in the SAT program - a phenomenon that warrants additional research.

Additionally, my development as a leader was assessed throughout this project. Through this study, I gained a better understanding of what leadership entails and how to improve my educational practices. I grew in my capacity as a teacher leader and realized that aspects of transactional leadership are embedded in my leadership.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

Introduction

Approximately 1.6 million college-bound students took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in September of 2010 (The CollegeBoard, 2010). Additionally, American College Testing (ACT) reported increases in their number of test-takers in 2010 (ACT, Inc., 2010). Both the SAT and ACT are the most familiar College Admission Exams (CAEs) that many colleges include as a component of their college admissions process (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Loken, Radlinski, Crespi, Millet, & Cushing, 2004; Peltier, 1989; Popham, 2006; Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001; U. S. Department of Education, 2000; Walpole et al., 2005). The Scholastic Aptitude Test I (SAT-I) is an exam given by the College Board eight times a year consisting of question items in three content areas: language, math, and writing, and the SAT II is a content specific test for selected subject areas. The ACT developed by ACT, Inc., is a course content aligned CAE that is scheduled five times a year and covers topics in science, reading, English, and math (ACT, Inc., 2010; Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; The CollegeBoard, 2010).

Because these exams hold credence as primary components of the college application and admissions process, as well as predictors of potential student success in the first year of college, many students are compelled to find competitive edges to increase their chances of achieving high scores or raising their existing ones (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Korbin, Patterson, Shaw, Mattern, & Barbuti, 2008; Loken et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 2001; Walpole et al., 2005). The literature on students seeking preparation, “coaching,” or tutorials for CAEs is steadily increasing (Briggs, 2001;

Briggs 2009; Gayles, 2009; Lane, Kalberg, Mofield, Wehby, & Parks, 2009; Powers, 1982, 1993, 1998; Powers & Rock, 1999; Zuman, 1988). Some college-bound students display a multiplicity of emotions including concern, anxiety, fear, worry, and frustration associated with attaining high scores on either the SAT, SAT II, or ACT. These emotions have many college bound students eager to find ways to improve scores on subsequent attempts of these CAEs or to attain first attempt target scores (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Jencks & Crouse, 1982; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001).

CAE scores are influential because a “good” score along with enrollment in a secondary college preparatory course program as well as enrollment in honors and advanced placement (AP) courses may improve a student’s chance of entrance into more selective higher education institutions (Chait, 2007; Jenks & Crouse, 1982; Lane et al., 2009; Peltier, 1989; Terenzini, 2001; Walpole et al., 2005). There are many CAE preparation programs and alternative test-day strategies that college-bound students may opt to utilize to achieve the highest possible score. Some may use the preparation booklets offered by both the College Board and ACT, purchase self-study books and software programs, enroll in one or more of the commercially available programs at selected sites, register as participants for school-based or community-based programs; while still others find assistance in web-based materials (Briggs, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Lane et al., 2009; Powers, 1998;). In my role as a secondary education math teacher, I have found that most students combine two, if not more, of these CAE preparation modules. I have also observed some students forgoing any type of CAE preparation and approaching these exams with little, if any training.

Extant research into the effects of coaching services concurs that the strength of high school curricula and courses (based upon a college trajectory) along with some test preparation can improve expectations on CAE results (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Korbin et al., 2008; Lane et al., 2009; Loken et al., 2004; Peltier, 1989; Popham, 2006; Terenzini et al., 2001; U. S. Department of Education, 2000; Walpole et al., 2005). Although the quality of these preparation programs is continuously scrutinized, there is an underlining belief that any preparation, as opposed to none, may be advantageous (Briggs, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Powers, 1998; Walpole, et al., 2005).

The research of Briggs (2009) and Powers (1998) regarding coaching effects found that those college-bound students' decisions to enroll in CAE preparatory classes should consider both cost and opportunities to learn. Cost relates to fees paid to tutors and instructional programs in addition to the expenses of purchasing practice materials. Opportunities to learn refer to those activities in the educational domain related to access to enroll and time required to review and practice content material. These opportunities assist students in achieving a "target" CAE score. This target score is based on college entrance score requirements or personal bests on the SAT combined current maximum score of 2400 and the ACT current maximum score of 36 on individual tests.

Additionally, college-bound students should be aware that the effects of persistence, preparation, and effort are attributes characteristic in the pursuit of high CAE scores as well as college readiness. Because many private and commercial preparation programs come at very high costs, many school districts are offering free preparation services or services for a nominal participation fee (Briggs, 2009; Chait, 2007; Powers, 1998; Powers & Rock, 1999; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001).

Problem Statement

Briggs (2009) and Powers (1998) concur that for many college-bound students, finding the time and money to pursue CAE preparation may be problematic. Subsequently, to alleviate these barriers, some secondary schools – like Bay Beach High School (BBHS) (pseudonym for research site) - offer CAE preparation for the SAT as a course selection elective. This additional course elective has benefitted some BBHS students including traditionally marginalized students with limited exposure to CAE preparation programs or testing familiarity. Because of efforts over the years by BBHS’s educational board’s decision to offer all-inclusive college trajectory curricula, there exists a need to find improved avenues for traditionally marginalized students to become familiar with CAEs, especially the SAT (Briggs, 2009; Chait, 2007; Gayles, 2009; Steele, 2004; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). There clearly exists a need to extend BBHS’s SAT preparation course to service more students and increase familiarity of SAT testing practices.

At BBHS, I currently serve as a co-lead teacher of geometry instructors within the school’s mathematical department. BBHS has designed curricula such that students upon graduation can, at some junction of their formal education, possibly pursue post-secondary schooling. Students listed as having special needs and accommodations are also placed along a course trajectory towards post-secondary schooling. My role, over the years, in teaching BBHS’s students mathematics and emphasizing the importance of college preparation led to my desire to research student SAT preparation, especially for traditionally marginalized students. Therefore, this research study involved an SAT preparation program offered to BBHS students on a series of Saturdays in 2010 and 2011

as well as special summer sessions. I studied the registration, attendance patterns, and participant perspectives as reported by a cohort of African American students who participated in Saturday and summer sessions of SAT prep a new program in 2010 at BBHS. Additionally, the perspectives of current and retired educators in SAT preparation were documented as well.

A few years ago, BBHS began offering a SAT preparation course during the regular school day. To begin my research, I performed a documentation review of demographic characteristics of Bay Beach High's current elective SAT preparation course. In viewing the course enrollment for two calendar school years, many traditional underrepresented and marginalized students (ethnic minorities, English Language Learners [ELL], African American males, Latinos, etc.) showed a limited presence. Questions arose as to what methods were these potentially college-bound students, as well as others, using to prepare for CAEs. Demographic information of the 2009-2010 school year documented a SAT preparation class totaling 19 students, consisting of 13 females and 6 males. Racial/ethnicity demographic information of the class, based on the district's current categorical constructs, reported 6 White, 7 Black, and 6 Asian/Pacific Islander. Class total for the 2010-2011 school year documented 25 students (19 females, 6 males) and racial/ethnicity as 12 White, 6 Black, 4 Hispanic/non-White, and 3 Asian/Pacific/Islander. It was my belief that an extended SAT preparation program was needed for Bay Beach High students so that more college-bound students could have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the SAT testing format under instructional direction.

A series of inquiries concerning SAT preparation classes from both students and parents, coupled with a district administrators' interest as well as my own, in expanding SAT preparation services led to the procurement of funds to extend the program to a series of Saturday sessions of SAT preparation at BBHS. Instructors, program site maintenance, and purchase of preparation materials were considered in requested funding for the new initiative. The allocation of funding was contingent upon enrollment patterns and interest. However, this action eliminated the barrier of cost in SAT preparation at this juncture, for some BBHS college-bound students as the program was offered to them free of charge. What remained uncertain at the inception were students' interest and enrollment in this SAT extension program and their willingness to create opportunities for learning.

This action research project consisted of planning and implementing the extended SAT preparation program on selected Saturday mornings and a possible summer session in 2010. The study highlighted registration, attendance, and the experienced reality of a cadre of African American students out of a general pool of students who self-selected the SAT preparation program. Additionally, perspectives of SAT instructors were also documented to provide ongoing assessments and interventions for the program. The extended SAT preparation program was housed at three different locations throughout the district beginning in January 2010. This study reported actions of the program and its African American participants for 18 months. I chose to study African American students because there is limited research into how this subgroup of CAE takers prepare for the SAT. Although demographic data were collected from all three locations, I

collected observational data and recorded attendance only from the site where I instructed the mathematics component and served as co-planner.

Purpose of the Study

There is limited research into the persistence, participation, and effort that certain underrepresented subgroups of secondary college-bound students display in CAE preparation programs. Fear, costs, apprehension, and lack of opportunities to learn may be some root causes in explaining why some students, especially historically underrepresented ones, are limiting their preparation efforts for CAEs, especially the SAT. For the scope of this study, African American students were the focus of observation because of their historical underperformance on this measure of college readiness. Additionally, this subgroup of students were chosen because of the reported educational gaps, limited educational outcomes, and stagnate college attendance rates that some of these students, in relation to other racial/ethnic student subgroups, still experience in the K-16 educational milieu (Briggs, 2009; Chait, 2007; Powers, 1998; Powers & Rock, 1999; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001).

Investigations into the causes of educational underachievement for many African American students are quite extensive (Bol & Berry, 2005; Davis, 2007; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Gresalfi, 2009; Harper, 2006; Jencks, 1972; Moore & Smith, 1986; Riegle-Crumb, 2006; Tate, 2004). For purposes of this study, some historical sources of underachievement for this group of school-age students will be discussed later, but was not the focus of this research. However, this study investigated the preparation efforts for CAEs by an assembly of college bound students who self-reported their racial/ethnic identity as African American.

In the extensive literature of SAT comparison score results, African American SAT takers have historically scored below that of other students (Chait, 2007; Fleming & Garcia, 1998; Johnson & Wallace, 1989; Powers, 1998; Terenzini et al., 2001; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). SAT 2010 demographic information for BBHS exhibited that trend (The College Board, 2010). However, the literature is limited in displaying how African American college-bound students are preparing, availing, and familiarizing themselves with the components of the SAT and other CAEs outside of their college preparatory coursework (Johnson & Wallace, 1989).

The 2010 graduation class from this study's comprehensive high school reported a class total of 583. Figures from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE, 2011) reported that out of BBHS's 2010 graduation class 126 and 198 students, respectively, self-reported attending a four-year or two-year college program. Moreover, according to a report that The College Board sends yearly to the nation's high schools that summarizes individual high school students' scores who took the SAT at some period during their high school tenure, BBHS reported 242 test-takers (The College Board, 2010). Of that number, 124 were female and 118 were male. Score results aggregated by racial/ethnicity showed 1 American Indian/Alaska Native, 36 Asian/Pacific Islander, 65 Black, 9 Mexican, 5 Puerto Rican, 24 Other Hispanic, 75 White, 9 Other, and 18 No Response. These percentages showed that 41% of the graduating seniors at Bay Beach High School reported taking the SAT. An aggregated profile by racial/ethnicity of the 2010 graduates was not available at the writing of this paper.

The purpose of this study was to document the registration, attendance, and the experienced reality of a group of BBHS African American college-bound students who attended a district-wide SAT preparation program. College-bound students from BBHS, for purposes of this study, were defined as those students who self-reported their intentions to attend a two-year or four-year post-secondary institution upon high school graduation. This reporting was gathered from responses via the student surveys (see Appendix C) and student interviews (see Appendix G).

The function of this study was three-fold. The first was to document student registration and attendance patterns of African American students who self-selected to enroll in the SAT preparation program over a 16 month period from January 2010 until April 2011 at specific locations. During that period, four sessions of the extended SAT preparation course were planned to be in operation. Session I began in January 2010 and extended to April 2010; Session II occurred during the summer break of 2010; Session III occurred from September 2010 until December 2010; and Session IV began in January 2011 and concluded in April 2011. The four program sessions contributed to the planning of my action research cycles during the timeframe that began in November of 2010 until its completion in April of 2011.

The second function of the study was to record some students' perceptions as well as those of secondary educators regarding the experienced reality of African American students enrolling in a SAT preparation course. Students' motivation to devote study and personal time as well as educators' responses to the necessity of this program was documented. Moreover, I hoped to capture individual and collective views on how some African American students prepare for overall CAE readiness. Theoretical frameworks

of Stereotype Threat (Steele, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995), and schooling effects (Diamond, 2007; Flores, 2007; Gresalfi, 2009; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Ladson-Billings 1995, 1997, 2000, 2006; McMillian, 2003; Nesselrodt & Alger, 2005; Starratt, 2003; Tate, 2004) were the guiding interpretive frameworks (Creswell, 2007) of this investigation into the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of African American secondary students engaged in a SAT preparation program. Stereotype Threat is the hypothesis that suggests performances in certain academic contexts (i.e. “high stakes” tests) are due to anxiety and conformance to known or identifiable stereotypes that may impugn abilities for particular minorities (Goode et al., 2003; Steele, 1992; Steele, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Schooling effects are those structural and educational factors that affect the academic achievement of certain subgroups in their schooling experiences (Bol & Berry, 2005; Diamond, 2007; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Fleming & Garcia, 1998; Flores, 2007; Gresalfi, 2009; Ladson-Billings 1995, 1997, 2000, 2006; McMillian, 2003; Nesselrodt & Alger, 2005; Scherff & Piazza, 2009; Starratt, 2003; Tate, 2004; Yan & Lin, 2005). An element of schooling effects is the opportunity to learn (OTL) framework that foregrounds those structures that make educational engagement possible and/or impossible (Gresalfi, 2009; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Starratt, 2003; Tate, 2004, 2008). Additionally, these theories could provide insight into explaining this subgroup’s motivation and persistence, or lack thereof, in pursuing SAT preparation at BBHS.

An additional purpose of this study was to determine and establish my ongoing and emerging leadership. As a career educator, there are instances in which I engage peers, administrators, parents, and students in areas of instruction, pedagogy, and

educational policy. Acknowledging my distinctive leadership traits is essential. In relation to my study, knowledge of leadership could be helpful in expediting change initiatives because organizational cohesion is dependent upon individuals who are knowledgeable, understanding, committed to organizational improvements, first-rate leaders, and competent followers.

Context Narrative

The high school used in this study is located in a shore community in Southern New Jersey. The student population consists of students from five towns, all of which are located in close proximity to the high school. Most of the students are bussed to and from school. The high school is culturally diverse. Current student demographics for the 2010 -2011 calendar year record enrollment slightly over 2200 and racial/ethnic aggregated as: 33.48% Black, 31.86% Hispanic, 19.62% White, and 15.03% Asian/Pacific Islander. The socioeconomic backgrounds of the students vary because each aforementioned city has its own economic stratum. The school is organized to serve grades 9-12. A more thorough contextual analysis is written in the study's methodology section.

Significance of the Study

As a teacher of secondary mathematics for over 20 years, I have observed many college-bound students unfamiliar with the college admissions process. Although school guidance procedures are exemplary, there remains a gap between college admissions information and preparation for entrance examinations. Some students are confused as to which test to take, the ACT, the SAT I, or SAT II. The exams measure entirely different skill sets and the hopeful college prospects are inexperienced as to which measure would

be appropriate for their college choice. An expanded SAT preparation program could fill this void. In doing so, African American participation in the program could be examined and discussed. The SAT structure was selected because some research suggests that historically the racial/ethnic subgroup of African American test takers often underperform in comparison to other student subgroups on the SAT (Johnson & Wallace, 1989; Ponessa, 1996; Terenzini et al., 2001; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). This action research could shed light onto the efforts that some African American students display in registering for and participation in a free SAT preparation course.

Overview of Methodology

A constructivist (interpretive) paradigm informed this practical action research study (PAR), and a more detailed description of this study's methodologies is detailed in Chapter 4. This type of qualitative research is one that relies on the study's participants' and the researcher's views in contextual forms (Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). Thus, the researcher and the participants continuously filter their experiences through subjective meanings based upon culture, history, and knowledge (Creswell 2007; Hinchey, 2008). This study followed interpretive PAR as outlined by Hinchey (2008) My role in this PAR project was along the participant/observer continuum as described by Bogan and Biklen (2007). A participant observer is a researcher that participates both in the research setting and in information gathering; during which observations are recorded using deep description and reflection (Bogan & Biklen, 2007). Stereotype Threat (STT) and schooling effects are the key theoretical lenses that assisted in impacting the formation of the study's design and examination of the collected data, as

well as provide possible insights into this population of college-bound African American students' SAT preparation.

The focus of the study was the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of some African American college-bound students who self-enrolled in a SAT Saturday preparation program. The SAT preparation program had three instructional components: English instruction, math instruction, and computer-based assessment material. This action research study utilized a mixed-methods form of data collection in which aspects of quantitative and qualitative research designs explored the research questions (Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2006). Qualitative data consisted of observational and leadership journaling, field-notes, interviews, document review, and excerpts of educational stories to capture descriptive data. Surveys, numeric information, and demographic data comprised the quantitative component. The participants were a purposeful sampling of teachers involved in a SAT Saturday preparation program as well as students from the pool of SAT preparation enrollees from January 2010 to April 2011. Research questions include:

1. What factors influence some college-bound African American students to register, attend, and experience a SAT preparation course?
2. What are some concerns of African American educators relative to college admission exam (CAE) preparedness efforts of African American college-bound students?
3. How has my input as a veteran teacher leader influenced an extended SAT preparation program?

4. As a result of this action research project, how did my leadership impact change at BBHS, and how did I change as an educational leader?

Leadership Theories in Use

The principles of democracy in education (Dewey, 1916; Reitzug & O’Hair, 2002), critical social justice theories (Bottomore, 2001; Freire, 1985, 1998a, 1998b; Giroux, 1992, 2008; Kohn, 1992, 1999, 2000) and ethic of care (Noddings, 2003; Sernack, 1998) contribute to my ongoing and emerging leadership styles. As a classroom teacher in mid-career, I view myself as a teacher leader who attempts to advocate these leadership qualities. Danielson (2007) writes that the veteran teacher who wishes to extend his or her own influence and recognizes that an administrative job is not interesting and opts to remain chiefly in the classroom is a teacher leader. It is in this capacity that I utilize positional power to develop meaningful teacher-to-teacher relationships and better student-teacher reciprocity. These espoused leadership traits and my practiced disposition as a teacher leader allowed me to approach my research with an openness of mind and clarity of judgment.

Expanding the SAT preparation class as a district wide initiative involved some practiced and emerging leadership skills. For a number of years, I participated in remedial as well as review of skills programs for many testing situations and as a lead teacher in enrichment programs. During that time, I worked alongside many educational professionals who were dedicated and committed in improving overall student success. While there were instances when group cohesion was not functioning at 100%, as a group, we still operated towards program objectives. This was the first time that I co-led

the creation of a district wide initiative that was the context of a study as well as collaborated in maintaining a sustainable district educational plan.

In the process of learning my leadership approach, I read a section from John Dewey's (1916) *Democracy and Education*. In it, Dewey stressed the democratic conception and how it relates in society and education. Although I do not agree with all that Dewey wrote, I do agree with the following because its ideation is applicable to my change initiative:

A society which makes provisions for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustments of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secures social changes without introducing disorder. (p. 99)

The extension of our SAT preparation was an exercise in extending democratic principles which gave individuals choice and agency in planning for post-secondary educational success in addition to engagement in collective educational improvement. This experience was also an example of my transformational leadership. Transformational leadership theory proposes that leaders and followers engage in actions that mutually raise one another's morals and purposes (Bass, 1985, 1998; Burns, 1978). During my observer/participant role in my study, I hoped that I displayed this tendency from an educator's prospective and as a researcher.

Throughout my study I saw transactional leadership as one of the symbolic leadership frames that permeated my action research (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Burns, 1978). Although I did not see this leadership approach exclusively functioning in my organizational engagements, I did, however, see that some transactional activities occurred because of the nature and context of my study. My study involved the

cooperation of many individuals, some of whom I had never worked with professionally. With that, I expected episodes of exchanges and negotiations. Subsequently, I was diligent in observation of these occurrences and documented them accordingly.

Conclusion

Research into the educational experiences of African Americans is quite broad. The phenomena of standardized and achievement testing has existed for well over 100 years (Lemann, 1999), however the preparation for CAEs has been gaining in popularity (Briggs 2001; Powers, 1993). The combination of studying the educational experiences of some African American students and their preparation for CAEs for this practical action research project should add to the continuing discussion on building educational access, equity, and merit for this racial/ethnic subgroup of college-bound students. In the following chapters, I provide a discussion of my leadership approaches and traits, a background of theoretical frameworks and literature pertinent to my action research, a comprehensive outline of the action research project and its methodological approach, the findings of this research, the implications of the results of this project, and the project's impact on my continuing leadership development.

Chapter 2

Espoused Theories of Leadership

Introduction

The development and declaration of my leadership platform, as I became familiarized with its concept, is a blend of my personal beliefs, morals, lifestyles, world views, and my particular leadership style. My leadership platform is helpful in developing a framework for further critical reflections as they pertain to my role as a teacher engaging in instructional and learning episodes. In developing my leadership platform, I aim not to espouse certain theories or positions, but to explain my platform as a fusion of practices and theories that have guided me in my progression as a teacher, leader, life-long learner, and parent. The fusion of leadership that I adhere to consists of four facets: 1) my role as a caring teacher leader, 2) referent knowledge of leadership styles and what “good” leaders practice, 3) my views of social democracy and how decimating its values pertains to public education, and 4) my developing critical social justice perspective.

In documenting my leadership styles, I was reminded of a story and character I encountered during my youthful readings. Although fictional, this character’s actions would later provide me a conceptual framework and, unwittingly, insights into what leadership entails. Ultimately, this tale assisted me in identifying and developing my particular leadership perspectives as I progressed in my career and professional studies. The story and character is what I perceive to be an example of what emerging leadership involves: a cause and a call.

In my formative years, my parents required my brothers and me to read whenever possible. My eldest brother was an ardent reader. He introduced me to comics, and I

have been collecting them ever since. One character, as I recall, stood out from all the others. This character's tale came to me while I was contemplating a leadership example - divergent from contemporary and historical ones:

The fictitious character of Adam Warlock through the course of several events came to possess a gauntlet of extreme power. Embedded in it were seven jewels that controlled both time and space, as well as, bestowing upon the wearer both omnipotence and omnipresence. Because of its power, Adam had to relinquish ownership, for the heavenly deities (other characters in the story) petitioned the Living Tribunal (the godhead of this tale) that Adam would have total control of the cosmos, thus creating an imbalance of power. Adam, in his defense, explained that he could do no such thing. Nonetheless, Adam had to relinquish his possession and The Tribunal granted him time for personal reflection. Adam used this time to consider the situation and reflect on his relinquishing the gauntlet and why the heavenly deities felt that he was unworthy of the mantle. After careful reflection, Adam returned with a plan. He first purged himself of the dueling personality traits of his masculine and feminine aspects. Second, he formed a "watch" group in which each member would have possession of one of the seven jewels to protect and use based upon their unique abilities and acumen. Third and last, he would maintain a jewel as well and the "watch" would live together to combat any disruption, imbalance, or situation in known multi-verses. The living tribunal agreed and Adam set out to gather his watch.

Recalling this story, although some may consider it puerile, gave me direction in my current educational and professional pursuits. This story offered me my first

encounter with the difficulties that leadership entails: the choice to lead and the knowledge that it is a complex phenomenon that involves the leader, the followers, and the surrounding situation or context (Wren, 1995).

Leadership Platform

Equipped with the idea that leadership and its theory is quite encompassing, I was not only able to understand the situation that the fictional Adam Warlock experienced, but I could now apply these new understandings of leadership to scenarios that I encountered. Before transitioning into the next subsection, I would like to digress and briefly explain some life experiences that led me into the profession of education.

During my formative years, I would classify myself as a diligent student. I enjoyed my elementary, junior high, and high school years. Education was a family priority and receiving “good grades” was a great expectation. Earning above average grades and partaking in extra-curricular activities throughout my high school tenure netted me a merit scholarship at a small private liberal arts college in the Northeast.

While studying as an undergraduate, I assisted and mentored students in the community, and during my summer breaks I worked as a summer camp counselor. In my second year of undergraduate work, my college advisor suggested I take a pre-professional profile survey. The survey profiled me as a teacher or instructor. At that time, my interests were in another field. However, life situations and circumstances left me discontented with the college experience and I decided to leave this school. With counseling from friends and mentors, I was able to enroll in a large public state university while maintaining my merit scholarship. With the urgency to complete my undergraduate course work, it befitted me to change my major. This course of study

change enabled me -years later- to apply and accept a teacher of mathematics position in a large urban district. This job offering came at a moment when school districts were actively recruiting qualified minority teaching applicants. That was more than two decades ago.

Over the past 20 plus years as an educator, I have often considered my own elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational development and experiences. Moreover, during these moments I have reflective thoughts concerning my choice in becoming an educator. In retrospect, I believe my journey into the teaching profession began with an experience in my seventh grade mathematics class. This specific memory, whenever excavated, invokes a particular emotion that I would not want any of my students to endure.

During my seventh grade year, the teacher I was assigned for mathematics instruction, suffered a broken leg early in the school year. For the entire year, substitutes were assigned to cover the class. With my current knowledge of optimal instructional practices and pedagogy, very little “quality instruction” occurred in that time frame. So, as my classmates and I began to transition and prepare for our eighth-grade course selections, we were denied entrance into the algebra sections as a mathematical choice because we were not prepared to take the entrance exam. We were regulated into the “general” mathematics curriculum. At that time, the district in which I was educated “tracked” students and classes were majority homogeneous based upon many-now considered discriminatory-indices. So, as a self-motivated student, I began to teach myself rudimentary Algebra I.

Like most households in the 1970s, my parents invested in a set of encyclopedias. I found the “A” book, located the section on algebra and taught myself elementary algebra. I went to the library and found other texts on the subject and by the end of my eighth grade year I was prepared to take the algebra entrance exam. Consequently, I passed and was able to proceed into the “college-preparatory” track in the local high school. Some of my classmates also passed, while others were “tracked” into general math.

This life episode of mine has had a lasting effect in my formal educational development as well as in my teaching. I readily identify with so-called marginalized students and the students who are listed as “struggling learners.” Exceptional teachers need to be ever mindful of these types of students, because with the right display of encouragement and applicable instructional strategies these educators can provide “break-through” moments for certain groups of students.

I have enjoyed my years as a classroom teacher. Having taught at the high school level has enabled me to use my position as an example for students on the cusp of failing or dropping out. Over the years, I have used my story, in addition with others, as continued examples of perseverance and illustrations for my students. In the coming years, I envision myself as a veteran teacher who enjoys the classroom experience, but one who also realizes the influence of the teacher leader model.

Teacher leader.

During the span of several years, the daily tasks of teachers have changed tremendously. Teachers are faced with a combination of tasks, such as completing professional development hours, pursuing advanced degrees, attending to administrative

tasks outside as well as inside the classroom, and participating in meetings and conferences. Notwithstanding, teachers still must attempt to provide optimal instruction to their students who enter the classroom with diverse learning styles, varying demographics, and an assortment of socioeconomic obstacles. The concept of one-classroom schools and the mindset of teaching toward a homogeneous group or in singular modality in contemporized learning episodes are no longer effective. Current state and national governing bodies, notably the work of American Diploma Project (ADP) (2000), have lobbied for legislation that promotes an education befitting for all, respective of varied learning abilities and styles.

During the past few decades, statewide and local educational mandates, along with the high-stakes testing in this current educational reform of accountability, has dominated our educational institutions from kindergarten to post-secondary levels and placed an enormous task on our public schools. In order to meet the federal government mandates, educational leaders and policy makers are looking for innovative, creative, and proactive measures to search for equitable and excellent ways to improve instructional programming and delivery. Some of these are teacher improvement programs, mentorship for teachers, student-centered learning models, and differentiated approaches to leadership like teacher leaders.

As a classroom teacher in mid-career, I have decided at this time to continue in the capacity as a teacher leader. During my entire professional instructional career, I viewed myself not only as a teacher, but as a leader. I strive to be aware of best-practiced instructional deliveries, remain current on emerging pedagogical developments, and offer this knowledge to colleagues and other teachers of mathematics within the district, in

addition to maintaining an interest in educational investments of equity and access.

Danielson (2007) describes a teacher leader as the veteran teacher who wishes to extend his or her own influence, but recognizes that an administration job is not interesting, and possessing greater responsibility is more desirable. Additionally, teacher leaders often choose to remain chiefly in the classroom domain, whereby they spend their energies developing meaningful relationships with students and making content engaging (Danielson, 2007).

I volunteered to become a teacher leader formally, as requested by my immediate supervisor, and informally to befriend new administrators as they adjust to the climate and culture of our school, engage in teacher development, plan progressive curricula, and mentor new teachers. These leadership characteristics that I display are acknowledging what Bolman and Deal (2003) as well as Evans (1996) wrote of the human resource frame as it pertains to effective and transformational organizational change. Moreover, as a teacher leader, I am able to practice aspects of what Schein (2004) described as transformational change.

During my current principal's tenure as a vice principal, the math initiatives that he wanted to implement to increase student testing performance, I thought, were applicable, valid, and possible. I can recall, during one of our faculty meetings when I stood and stated that his plan was useful and pertinent. I made it part of my professional responsibility to explain to my math colleagues that his initiative could work. As the school year progressed and he outlined the plan, two other math teachers agreed to participate. Currently, we are in our eighth year of his initiative, and teachers continue to

be very receptive and supportive. Without knowledgeable support and encouragement, this transition would not have been possible or facile.

My role as a teacher leader pertains to implementing teacher development, as approved by supervisors, and planning progressive curricula, as directed from the School Board. During the past several summers, I was a part of our math curricula revision task-force. As a member, I was responsible for updating the mathematics department of current trends, national policies, and state level changes in mathematics policy, in addition to formatting geometry benchmark assessments. Moreover, as the district enacted Whole Faculty Study Groups (WFSG), small content-specific teacher collaborations, I made myself available to update math teachers on current pedagogical trends and instructional developments. In this lead position, I “turn-key” information when appropriate, based on my supervisor’s plans, the developmental levels of my colleagues, and timelines set by district initiatives.

In my capacities as a teacher leader, I became knowledgeable of Glickman’s (2007) discussion about teachers’ developmental abilities as a continuum in which teachers, as they grow, engage in situations of teaching, learning, and knowing. Although this kind of research is familiar to supervisory personnel, it can also provide help for not only teachers striving to improve their teaching practices, but understanding the didactic within supervisor/teacher relations. I have made some of my colleagues knowledgeable about how supervisors evaluate teachers and what model of evaluative measure they should employ to assuage possible dissonance.

A teacher leader that exercises “marginalized” positional power can help new and struggling teachers confront and contend with the difficulties of inadequate resources,

difficult work assignments, unclear expectations, sink or swim mentalities, and reality shock by the offering their expertise (Glickman, 2007). The role of a teacher leader is important in all school environments; as Donaldson and Johnson (2007) wrote, “[teacher leaders] feel increasingly competent and confident in their work and they want to share their acquired expertise with others” (p. 8). Effective teacher leaders, with support from central administration and their building administrative staff, can encourage collegial interactions which reduce building teacher isolation, and promote collective and individual teacher growth, as well as expand one’s influence.

Teacher leaders also display actions that promote care, respect, acceptance, and reciprocity. In an overview of my supervisors’ observations of my classroom, I was reported having great rapport with my students and that my classroom is inviting. Over the years, I was encouraged to share with my colleagues my individual classroom management style. In a WFSG, I attempt to display and encourage my peers to develop a classroom that has an atmosphere of reciprocated teacher-student learning episodes. There are many qualities that make certain individuals qualified to become effective teacher leaders including open-mindedness, respectfulness, persuasiveness, confidence, flexibility, and care (Danielson, 2007). For the present discussion, I would like to concentrate on the characteristic of care.

Ethic of care.

Sernak’s (1998) and Noddings’ (2003) analyses of caring and its tenets are crucial to the developing teacher leader. The qualities of connectivity, particularity of responsibilities, commitment, and reciprocity are all traits that I attempt to project not only to my students, but to my colleagues and district administrators. I can recall a

situation in which a new math teacher was hired into our department, and because our department has historically operated on a hidden preferential seniority status, the teacher had been assigned five Algebra I inclusion courses. Inclusion classes consist of regular education and special education students in addition to classroom support personnel. After a few months, it was obvious that this new teacher experienced beginner “teaching blues,” and it appeared that the teacher would not, at that rate, continue teaching in our setting. One day, I approached this educator and suggested that there were new academic Calculus classes scheduled for the coming year and that an inquiry of interest if possible should be submitted. Moreover, I was currently co-revising the new curricula objectives and that curriculum was available to peruse. I suggested that a letter of interest be submitted to our immediate supervisor. Knowing that this teacher was a recent college mathematics graduate, I thought that there would be minimal disconnect with course content. Past and present examples of co-working dialogue illustrate the pleasure of my professed capacity of a teacher leader. I saw in this beginner teacher great potential, and I could not afford for this educator to become disheartened due to our “hidden agenda.” This example of caring is what I would like to build upon as an emerging teacher leader, and what I believe could foster improved teacher and teaching interactions.

Sernak’s (1998) belief in the development of an environment that promotes the ethic of care should be the focus of prospective teacher leaders in their spaces of instruction. Practicing qualities of a teacher leader, I believe requires knowledge of sound leadership theories; theories that highlight relational knowledge and organizational concerns. The next section continues my ideations of my leadership styles and highlights my thoughts of leadership knowledge.

Leadership knowledge.

In my present professional and educational pursuits, I have come to understand that leadership entails both the choice to lead and the knowledge that it is a complex phenomenon that involves the leader, the followers, and the surrounding situation or context. Additionally, leadership is an appreciation of strengths and deficiencies. With assistance from current research and my developmental understandings, I believe that there are four aspects of leadership that are deemed essential to building and understanding a particular leadership style or model (Bolman & Deal; Bass, 1989, 1998, Burns, 1978; Ciulla, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Giuliani, 2002; Lencioni, 2002; Schein, 2004; Stowell & Meade, 2007). They are: understanding of personality traits of self as they pertain to leadership propensities, developing a knowledge base that professes cognitive discernment, engaging in critical reflective moments, and understanding the multifaceted theories of leadership approaches. Equipped with the idea that leadership and its study thereof is quite encompassing, I can now embark on the task of understanding emerging situations from a teacher leader's perspective and apply these new understandings to scenarios that I may encounter in my teacher role as well as in my evolving leadership of this action research project.

Personality traits.

Having an understanding of one's personality traits and what motivates or drives individual aspirations of leadership helps in explaining personal choices and modalities of action. In my doctoral studies, I learned that leaders fundamentally must have an awareness of the leadership environment and possess adequate situational preparedness. Moreover, candid discussions regarding leadership revealed that "good" leadership

characteristics include the ability to approach problematic situations utilizing Bolman and Deal's (2003) multi-frame lens, as well as, employing other critical leadership principles. I have come to realize, after reading *Leadership* by former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (2002) that effective leaders need to be insightful, forward thinking, pragmatic, visionary, trustworthy, ethical and moral, critical, and reflective.

A personal assessment of my leadership revealed a personality trait that was conducive to a participatory approach to leadership. A participatory approach to leadership is a method that considers all stake-holders' concerns and thoughts on a particular project or organizational change. My undertaking to assist in the redesign of our current mathematics curricula and co-lead our WFSG cohort has allowed me to exercise leadership propensities that reflect a participatory team approach. During our bi-monthly math focus groups, I meet in district with my colleagues for horizontal coordination of content level concerns and with sending district educators at the K-8 grade levels for vertical articulation of course curricula inquiries. During these meetings there are co-discussions of many topics and there are no top-down delegations or demands by individual participants. Reading Lencioni's (2002) discussion of team dysfunctions and Stowell and Mead's (2007) thoughts on team building, led to the recognition of my participatory leadership style. These researchers' insightfulness into solving internal incongruencies and overcoming team dysfunctions indeed makes the assertion "with teamwork anything is possible" not only attainable but true in its entire connotation.

Knowledge base.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (as cited in Wren, 1995) noted that the ability to cogitate effectively is what those who are led want in a leader. The need of a knowledge base is important because leaders can utilize their understanding of a situation, not as experts, but experts in delegation which enables them to assign tasks to individuals that are best fitted for job completion or success. Giuliani (2002) wrote that leaders should not assume anything, and they should plan and consider situations with discernment and pragmatism.

As an emerging teacher leader, I have tried to position myself as being a leader who is cognizant of internal organizational dilemmas. An example of why this is important can be shown as follows:

Due to retirement, BBHS is currently experiencing a gradual exodus of veteran math teachers, who have traditionally taught the “harder” courses. Remaining teachers are hesitant to enlist in teaching these courses and are positioning themselves to avoid selection. I have suggested, in prior years, a rotation of all subjects amongst mathematics teachers on a five year basis. This movement every five years implies that it takes three years for a teacher to familiarize themselves with new subject matter and thus the remaining two years classroom instruction and lesson preparation will be much more simplistic. Because I have taught various abilities and on many mathematical levels, and because this rotation model was successful in another school, I believed that it could work for us. Nonetheless, it was met with anger and disgruntlement.

These actions are direct results of changes to the human side of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Evans, 1996). I perceived that it was an outgrowth of past

educational practices or a deep entrenchment of non-egalitarian models of selections based upon personal choices or institutional prerogatives. Looking back on this experience, had I the understanding of Lencioni's (2002) team dysfunctions, I could have countered the grumblings with suggestions for off-setting our specific problems. Additionally, Schein's (2004) and Evan's (1996) analyses of culture and the human resource side to organizational change assisted in my understanding as to why my subject matter department was so entrenched in their understanding and resistance in coping with change.

Currently my building principal, two other math colleagues, and I are embarking on an in-house study to improve our standardized test scores. The principal has employed three teachers to work collaboratively to instruct those students who are projected to perform marginally on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). The students will be assigned to classes that are no more than 15 in number, of similar skills and abilities, and that will move together for the next three years in their math courses. Research into this model has documented incremental growth, growth that we desire for our targeted group. Success is contingent on the collective concerns and individual interests of the principal, teachers, students, and their parents who will think critically about potential problems and devise alternative corrective plans to enhance test scores, and achieve federal and state mandates, as well as fulfill district improvement initiatives. Without proper research and collaborative meetings, the knowledge of this successful teaching model would not have been possible.

Critical reflective moments.

As explained earlier, leadership is an ongoing, self-corrective process that requires deep consideration and reflective practice. Personal and critical reflection in leadership development, as Densten and Gray (2001) wrote, can help to develop an inquiring mind whereby a model of problem recognition can be employed. Current understanding of reflective practice by teacher leaders is an important undertaking in educational leadership, as well as in other organizational models. Rodgers (2002) asserted that reflection requires cognitive and emotional discipline. Reflection is a vehicle that transforms experience that is a meaning-filled theory that serves as moral growth both for individuals and the larger society (Rodgers, 2002). Rodgers extended and agreed with Dewey's (1916, 1933, 1938) work of reflective thinking in that it recognizes the importance of teachers' and students' learning and that the actions of teachers are based on a deep knowledge of the teaching didactic, subject matter, the contexts of operation, and themselves.

In my action research project, I wanted to be mindful of that inner voice that requests reflection and critical examination. I concur with Rodgers (2002) that reflection is a particular defined way of thinking and that it must be practiced, assessed, and ultimately perfected. As I progress through my project, I was mindful of the necessity of reflective thinking. When I revised strategies and instituted interventions, as deemed necessary for investigating my research questions, I allowed time for critical reflective moments and document them in my journal.

Action research requires that the investigator understands and is attentive of critical reflective moments. In the action research cycle of planning, action, and

reflection, I believe reflection is the most important feature. From this component, future interventions are planned and enacted.

Understanding leadership approaches.

A personal definition of a leader is central to developing a framework for a leadership fusion. Denstein and Grey's (2001) summary of leadership is one that functions as an amalgam of academic fields which integrate knowledge with experience. This definition has led me to reconsider how I view leadership and the ability to lead. My working understanding of successful leadership approaches are ones in which the leader creates an environment whereby the individual or group can flourish and expand, but understand the guiding principles, visions, inquiries, or aims as promoted by the leader and/or collective body. An example of this is how I co-lead our WFSG. In those settings, I introduced the topics of interest, as directed by our supervisor, and provided an open discussion of our teaching/learning episodes. Subsequently, leadership approaches should be selected that properly align with a leader's values and personalities. This would allow opportunities of organizational success in multiple situations which maintains the leader's complete faith in his followers', constituents', or workers' abilities.

Although my colleagues and immediate supervisors have lauded my aforementioned teacher leadership roles, I believe that further development of my ability to lead and delegate tasks with and alongside my co-workers needs to be honed and investigated. It is my belief that a teacher leader who reflects, acknowledges his personal limitations, asks the right questions to arrive at particular goals, and who engages in collaborative and collective tasks is the one who receives and gains great respect and understanding from his followers and superiors. These attributes are ones which I seek to

incorporate as I continue to identify and develop my teacher leader responsibilities. However, I must continue to be mindful not to hide my light under a bushel or continually lead from the margins, because my students, colleagues, and current supervisors respect my dedication, love, and passion for the teaching profession, and it should be revealed. It must be added that the ethos of care includes nurturing qualities of respect, acceptance, and reciprocity; these qualities were withheld purposely from the above discussion only because of the limited nature of this discourse. Practicing ethics of care flows naturally with the guiding principles of democratic practices. The next section describes my views of social democracy and how it relates to my educational practices.

Social democracy and education.

As a teacher leader, I believe that the principles of our democratic state in our compulsory public education system should always be placed at the forefront while engaging in the mapping of lessons, development of essential questions, implementation of selected instructional deliveries, and continuing collective and individual professional development. In our school, the advent of WFSG teaching communities which allow cohort co-workers to brief each other on student progression, content pacing through the curriculum and how to properly assess our students are examples of shared ownership: a tenement of democratic ideology.

The implementation of differentiated instruction in lesson planning and curriculum design by our group of teachers employ democratic ideologies that compel us to plan for the collective student body, while instituting safe-guards for learning, understanding, and knowing for the individual learner. Because schools are inter- and extra- relational, as a teacher leader I believe we should project approaches of learning

that are collaborative, personal, participatory, and reciprocal – all of which are foundations of democracy. As one of the teacher leaders in my WFSG, I place emphasis on giving everyone an opportunity to share and voice their concerns within our meetings. This has proven to be quite productive and proactive.

Reitzug and O’Hair (2002) had concerns that the integration of democratic principles into schools that have traditionally operated in a bureaucratic hierarchical model and learning engagements was often difficult. In 1995 when our school was contemplating abandoning the general and business educational tracks in favor of an inclusive college preparatory trajectory for all high school enrollees, many educators did not envision this need and their positions were quite apparent. During my high school tenure, I was a student in a system that had three levels. Although I was in the college preparatory track, I experienced, first hand, that other students felt regulated and regarded as inferior students. As a teacher that taught in that system as well, I believe that the view of Dewey’s (1916) contention “...make(s) provisions for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms...” (p. 99) was appropriate in describing the need to incorporate such a drastic change in our educational ideology. While the educational change is currently 15 years and holding, there are prevailing issues that still hamper our premise of an all-inclusive college preparatory model.

Educational leadership should move toward a true democratic community in which “leadership is grounded in assumptions that all individuals in the school community have knowledge and the insight that can contribute to, and enhance the work of the school” (Reitzug & O’Hair, 2002, p. 122). Additionally, democratic leadership fosters shared understandings that lead to common directions and improves the school

experience inclusively for all members. Although this model of change is often met with resistance, there can exist “unity in community” if all stakeholders in the educational process truly want to enhance the schooling process. The instance of our school moving to an all-inclusive model did experience its share of apprehensions. Reitzug and O’Hair (2002) wrote that “[T]he development of a democratic community is typically accompanied with tensions and struggles” (p. 123).

Knowledge and application of Fullan’s (2001) phases of change, Kotter’s (1996) eight stage process, and Evan’s (1996) six step change strategy helped in providing solutions to organizational changes that were quite supportive in enhancing my teacher leadership environment and promoting shared unity of purpose and mission. Evans’ discussion of how change can cause loss, conflict, confusion, and how it can challenge competency helped in my development and implementation of our new curricula revisions. Kotter’s octet model that deals with organizational change from a vantage that includes a shared vision, short-term wins, and coalitions assisted me in performing my small group duties as well as teaching responsibilities and the development of my action research project. Application of Fullan’s phases of change, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 4, will also support me in the sustainability of my district change initiative. These change strategies also proved useful when our school was planning to move toward a dress code. I had a role in initiating the implementation of the dress code based on the above authors’ approaches to organizational changes. Additionally, strategies for organizational change also proved useful in disseminating responsibilities and leadership sharing in our WFSGs.

In my position as a teacher leader, I constantly remind my students that they have a direct voice in how they learn, know, and are taught. Democracy by and large is a form of government and an educational practice that espouses public deliberations, values human dignity, and protects the rights and beliefs that individuals have autonomy within the greater nation and learning system. Public education, like governance in our country, respects the rights of individuals and collectives to exercise public deliberation. As a teacher leader in faculty meetings, developing curricula, teaching students, or pursuing professional development these components of the democratic process are always acknowledged because of the many burdens and dilemmas that are inherent in public schooling. Terence McLaughlin (as cited in McDonough & Feinberg, 2003) states that in democratic societies adhering to ideations of liberalism, multiculturalism, and pluralism can add to contentions in unifying common educational values. This contention is clearly felt in the delivery of controversial material or the application of policies in educational settings. My personal beliefs as a teacher leader are to facilitate social democratic ideals in the learning didactic through the lens of a democratic ethical leader. This helps in navigating parents, students, and other educators through the harsh realities that stifle the public learning environment. Additionally, these practices can assist in improving learning and nurturing models that enhance compulsory public education. The character of a democratic ethical teacher leader, from my perspective, is one that acknowledges the basic constructs of a democratic society, actively participates in its processes, and who practices and projects the values and morals that are inherent in a democratic lifestyle as they pertain to education.

Students have yet to realize that they teach teachers and in doing so they are contributing to building their beliefs in our democracy and their practice of public deliberations when they are not afraid to discuss their educational concerns openly in class. No other form of teaching can equate to that of democratic modeling for educating our children. In my position as a teacher leader, I believe in the truism of democratic practices in educational settings. Moreover, I believe these practices can battle the most violent element in our society - ignorance.

Critical social justice.

Critical social justice theory framework has as its foundation in Marxist ideology and social transformation concepts of Paulo Freire (1985, 1998a, 1998b, 2000). It is an emancipatory ideology that enables individuals to acknowledge and explain what is incorrect with social realities. With that, actions are undertaken to understand oppressive conditions and attempts are instituted to change them (Freire, 2000).

Understanding critical theory helped in codifying my educational and professional experiences. At times I was troubled by certain practices done unto me. When I was an undergraduate, I was often questioned why I was enrolled in certain courses. Most of the time I was the single African American in all of my classes, while attending a small liberal arts school as well as at a large university. Unbeknownst to me, I was not aware of the practices of power, ideology, and dominant culture. Now equipped with a “mental model” (Senge, 2006) of critical theory, I see, at certain periods, unequivocally instances of oppression and dominance in my educational pursuits and in some learning milieus.

Reading works by Henry Giroux (2008) and Alfie Kohn (1992, 1999, & 2000) has increased my awareness of oppression and dominance in educational policies,

reforms, and certain contexts. Because public education is a very social institution, as an educational leader in my sphere of influence, I regularly interject, in our meetings, issues that may be problematic for instruction and development for some marginalized students in our setting. Acknowledging a critical social justice worldview, for me, is very essential.

Currently, in our democratic country, educating the masses based upon a compulsory public system is a social enterprise of teaching a multitude of racial/ethnicities with varying physical and cognitive abilities under an outsized umbrella of scrutiny and accountability. As an African American teacher of mathematics, I hold with me, positively, all of the socio-historical contexts of my recognized racial/ethnicity as an encouraging example for my students. It is often difficult, but the practice has gotten much easier over the years.

Early in my teaching career, there were times that a few of my students would say that Black people are not supposed to be good at math. Those statements would trouble me. As the years progressed, I understood that these views expressed by the students were not just by their own accord, but ones that reverberated through social structures, institutions, and ideations. Recognizing that critical theory is important as an emerging educational leader is essential. Equitable and accessible public education is an exercise in social justice. Possessing a critical social justice perspective, for me, allows a deeper comprehension of practices that might be unfair. All educational leaders, operating in diverse environments should realize the strong connections of culture and power and how the abuse of it can lead to failing educational systems.

Conclusion

In this analysis of my leadership, I discussed those aspects and anecdotes that have led me to approach my educational activities with that of a teacher leader who practices a democratic ethical style of care with an underlining critical social justice theoretical view. Previously, I introduced the character of Adam Warlock. Although fictitious, I referenced him because he exemplified excellent leadership qualities and for an eight year-old young learner, my first example of a “leader.” He was presented with a problem. He gave time for reflection and evaluation of his present predicament. During his deliberations, he referenced his knowledge base and formulated a proactive plan. He exercised democratic principles by disseminating power and responsibility to trusted others. He formed a “watch group” to debrief current concerns, disconnections, and future expectations. He gave a critical view of his distracters and considered their collective concerns. In all, I believe this fictitious charter was a leader who acknowledged the roles in an organizational system and the problem inherent in leading. However, he also formed a coalition that assisted in his leadership capacity and deliveries. In my capacity and deliveries as a teacher leader, I hope that I continue to reflect and acknowledge organizational concerns through the guidance of knowledge, understanding leadership ideations, and adherence to social democratic practices while maintaining a critical perspective. To lead is a calling. To lead well is a cause that continually needs debriefing.

In my action research study, I recognized from the onset that my espoused leadership approach might undergo conversion and adjustment. In the beginning, I did not perceive my leadership approach to be transactional. However, in developing my

plan and gaining subsequent broad approval, I recognized that the SAT preparation program may involve instances of transactional leadership especially when monetary issues were paramount. In professing a democratic ethic of care leadership approach, my action research project was one that emphasized the need “to develop an intelligent citizenry and to provide educational opportunities that guarantee each individual the chance of optimal development” (Tanner & Tanner, 2007, p. 4).

The next chapter, a review of current literature, provides conceptual frameworks into less salient causes in explaining some African American students’ academic abilities, efforts to learn, and persistence in learning episodes. A brief historical background of African Americans in the domain of public education from the literature is highlighted. Moreover, a brief historical biography of the SAT is warranted before the discussion of conceptual frameworks. After these considerations, Stereotype Threat and schooling effects are discussed as theoretical frameworks that may provide interpretation and perspective into obstacles of learning and academic preparation for some African American students.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

Current literature and research on African American school aged populations, as well as other marginalized underrepresented groups (women, Latinos, immigrants, low socioeconomic status, Native Americans) use a variety of independent and dependent variables in explaining deficiencies and gaps in the learning processes, educational potentialities, and underachievement of these groups. Some of these variables include ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), family lifestyle, cognitive development, standardized tests, national assessment data, grade point averages (GPAs), and mathematical data. Additionally, extant studies are overwhelmingly quantitative and many of the studies use mathematical assessments in determining educational deficiencies (Davenport et al., 1998; Hall, Davis, Bolen, & Chia, 1999; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Lleras, 2008; Lubienski, 2002, 2008; McGlone & Aronson, 2007; Moore & Smith, 1986; Riegle-Crumb, 2006; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2007; Signer, Beasley, & Bauer, 1997; Woods, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2005; Yan & Lin, 2005).

Most educational researchers in documenting achievement gaps and schooling success emphasize the relevance of using mathematical competency in establishing and documenting achievement gaps (Bol & Berry, 2005; Flores, 2007; Gutierrez, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Lleras, 2008; Martin, 2007; Matthews, 2005; Moore & Smith, 1986; Rousseau & Tate, 2003; Rousseau & Powell, 2005; Stinson, 2008). The saliency of ethnicity, gender, SES, home dynamics, cognitive development, and mathematical competency as research variables in studies examining gaps in competency and

achievement for traditionally marginalized school aged children precludes and overshadows other research models and interpretive frames.

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate emergent research to uncover possible learning inhibitors and obstructions (low expectations, little or no access to quality materials, etc.) for some African American students. Stereotype Threat (STT) and schooling effects are some of the less prominent and growing interpretive theories, as well as some of the most controversial, in explaining academic achievement gaps and perceived cognitive disconnections for some African Americans. STT posits that individuals feel threatened in certain academic settings i.e., tests. Schooling effects are those educational structures “hidden” and “unhidden” that hinder progression and success as students pass through the halls of academia. These frameworks diverge from past ideologies like deficit theory because the discussion of traditional achievement variables is less of a focus. The frameworks of STT and schooling effects may underlie the theoretical assumptions that make educational success and progress difficult for some African American students (Berry, 2003; Bol & Berry, 2005; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Kellow & Jones, 2005; Rousseau & Powell, 2005; Steele, 1992; Stinson, 2008). Before beginning my discussion of STT and schooling effects, I deviate from this discussion momentarily to explain why a critical lens must be opened into historical perspectives of educational influences on African Americans. Afterwards, discussion will follow concerning the origins of the SAT, STT, and those elements of schooling effects that have made learning a struggle for some African American students.

Historical Perspective

African Americans have a history of being marginalized more than any other group in recorded American history (Davis, 2007; Farley, 1996; Fordam, 1996; Fultz & Brown, 2008; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Takaki, 1993). It is the only group that suffered institutional slavery and segregation for an extended length of time. During slavery and extending into the antebellum period, most African Americans were not permitted to publicly read or write and were subjugated to harsh penalties and repressive legislation (Davis, 2007; Farley, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1997). Educators should be aware that African American students carry some unique socio-historical characteristics with them as they proceed through the educational path. If one were to read much of the extant literature concerning African Americans, one would find overly generalized statements from educational, social, and psychosocial research that attempt to categorize and describe this group's educational levels, economic viabilities, beliefs, group identities, and familial situations (Bol & Berry, 2005; Davis, 2007; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Gresalfi, 2009; Harper, 2006; Jencks, 1972; Moore & Smith, 1986; Riegle-Crumb, 2006; Tate, 2004).

Educational researchers, leaders, and policy-makers for several years have investigated linkages between teacher quality and African American students (Berry, 2003; Bol & Berry, 2005; Davis, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1996, 1997; Tate, 2008). They have found that African American student achievement levels and schooling successes are indicative of the type of instructional deliveries they receive in classrooms. Moreover, many teachers of these students do not implement reform-oriented pedagogical practices as suggested by professional educational organizations and

governing bodies (Berry, 2003; Davis, 2007; Fultz & Brown, 2008; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Ladson-Billing, 1997, 2000; Martin, 2007; McMillian, 2003; Tate, 2008). A critical social perspective into schooling experiences that have stigmatized some subgroups, specifically African American school aged children, could provide explanation about their educational success or lack thereof.

The next sections of this literature review explore the history and origins of the SAT and possible impediments in explaining the negative schooling and experience of many African American students. The discussion of STT and components of schooling effects can possibly clarify potential educational hindrances that many African American students experience.

History of the SAT

Research into the origins of the SAT predates World War I (Lemann, 1999; The College Board, 2002). Lemann (1999) gave an in-depth assessment on why the SAT, since its inception, has been laden with claims of meritocracy and bias. Lemann wrote that during World War I the Army was looking for qualified recruits for officer training and that earlier test-makers used majority English and reading-based questions to sort the possible officer candidates. Hence, many newly arrived European immigrants could not pass or satisfy these Army requirements. Meanwhile, sensing the need for more stringent admission requirements, the educational leaders at some Ivy League schools saw these early Army tests, as well as engineering some of their own, as a way of sorting applicants.

In the following years, the first SAT approved test was administered at Harvard in the year 1926. In his research, Lemann (1999) found that some of the early designers of

aptitude-tests foresaw biases in testing outcomes. Additionally, Lemann in his research on the SAT found that early college administrators especially one at Harvard used early forms of the test to find “hidden” talent throughout the country. However, for well over 90 years the maker of the SAT, Educational Testing Services (ETS), has had the dubious honor of being the first company to sort, grade, and assign merit to a test that has been criticized for not accurately measuring aptitude and correctly predicting college achievement for subgroups of test takers (Banks, 2006; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Lemann, 1999; Reynolds, 1983; The College Board, 2002). Popham (2006) outlines misconceptions that have developed over the years concerning both the SAT and ACT, and provides examples of other variables that better measure college performance. Critics of standardized tests like the SAT support the position that these tests really do not provide much useful information besides inferences to socioeconomic and available resources (Kohn, 2000; Steele, 2004). Moreover, Steele stated that using test scores especially for educational decision making is bad practice, however, policy makers continue to use tests like the SAT to measure and report racial gaps in scoring outcomes. Based on this brief overview of the SAT origins, merits of its validity and reliability will continue to wage.

Stereotype Threat

Research into Stereotype Threat (STT) (Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995) suggests that achievement gaps, racial differences, as well as gender variances in testing situations, especially those that are attached to “high stakes” tests are due to stereotypes that impugn the math and intellectual abilities of Whites, women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and individuals from low SES backgrounds

(Good et al., 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2005; McGlone & Aronson, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Walpole et al., 2005; Woods et al., 2005). The psychosocial research approach of Steele, Aronson, Osborne and Walker as well as many others into achievement and testing outcome gaps differ from the research focusing on race differences in cognitive ability. Cognitive ability research of Jensen (1969) as well as Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve* suggest genetic factors for racial group average IQ and testing outcome differences. Research explaining the nature versus nurture roles in individual and group differences in cognitive ability to date has no resolution and the debate has continued for well over a century (Rushton & Jensen, 2005).

Steele (1992, 1997) and Steele and Aronson's (1995) Stereotype Threat hypothesis argues that group members' (women, African Americans, low SES, etc.) performance in certain testing contexts suffered due to anxiety, stereotype associations, and the burden of negative performance outcomes (Goode et al., 2003). Simplistically, STT is the theory that asserts that anyone that contends with stereotypes in certain situations, usually scholastic, risk conforming to a known stereotype in selected situations (Goode et al., 2003; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Howard, 2003). For most African American students, it is the risk of low test performance outcomes and academic underperformance (Howard, 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2003; McMillian, 2003; Steele, 1992, 1997, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Several studies have confirmed the significance of STT (Good et al., 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2005; McGlone & Aronson, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Woods et al., 2005). Many educational researchers

believe that acknowledging STT in educational settings can close gender and racial/ethnicity achievement gaps (Good et al., 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2005; McGlone & Aronson, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Osborne, 2007; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Some authors (Kellow & Jones, 2005; Osborne & Walker, 2006) cited the lack of extensive STT research for K-12 participants, particularly African American high school students. Their rationale in researching STT was to expose the limitations of the current body of research and to advance knowledge of STT by addressing perceptions of African Americans students. Additionally, the studies confirmed the phenomena of STT within their sample of African American high school students.

Osborne and Walker (2006) investigated an interesting caveat of STT in their longitudinal study of a racially diverse high school in the Midwest. The authors cited that the more strongly a student of color is invested in academics, the more likely that student is to experience STT and to become disinterested. They found students of color who held highly-invested identifications with academics were the most likely to withdraw from school. Disinterest and disenfranchisement from school is a result of anxiety and opportunity obstructions in the learning environment (Osborne, 2007; Osborne & Walker, 2006). Osborne and Walker's findings supported Claude Steele's (1997) STT caution that academically stigmatized students (women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, low SES) who identified with academics would be more likely to withdraw from school because of aversive environments. These and other studies into STT and other schooling effects may assist in helping improve African American students' as well as other marginalized groups' academic achievements. Increased positive school

interactions for some marginalized students may be possible by improving in-school and out-of-school networks (Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Howard, 2003; Signet, Beasley & Bauer, 1997; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008; Tyson, Darity & Castellino, 2005).

Schooling Effects

Educational equity, classroom engagements, teacher perceptions, course selections, opportunity structures, academic communities, pedagogies, parent involvement, educational advantage, student teacher interactions, differential course work, school reforms, peer communities, and accountability policies (high-stakes testing, The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) are some of the factors that affect the academic achievement of certain groups of students (Bol & Berry, 2005; Diamond, 2007; Flores, 2007; Gutierrez, 2002; Gutman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005; Lleras, 2008; Matthews, 2005; Martin, 2007; McMillian, 2003; Moore & Smith, 1986; Rousseau & Tate, 2003; Rousseau & Powell, 2005; Somers et al., 2008; Tate, 2008; Yan & Lin, 2005). This lengthy list of characteristics of schooling effects research falls into broader domains of school resources, school organizational conditions, and student composition. For brevity in this literature review, I will discuss educational equity, teacher perceptions, high stakes testing, and opportunities to learn as factors that could minimize some African Americans' participation in SAT preparation.

Educational equity.

Part of the reason for the academic achievement gap is that African American students are reluctant to enroll in higher level course work (Gutierrez, 2000, 2002; Stinson, 2008; Thompson & Lewis, 2005). However, current reform policies along with engaging instructional practices have increased the likelihood of traditionally

marginalized students, including students of color, women, and low SES students, enrolling in higher level courses in high school (Berry, 2003, 2008; Gutierrez, 2000, 2002; Jackson & Moody 2004; Moore, 2008; Stinson, 2008; Thompson & Lewis, 2005). Also, equity reform-orientated initiatives and the collapse of tracking students, based upon testing competence, are other reasons explaining the increased enrollment (Gutierrez, 2000, 2002; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Tate, 2008). However, what still remains are the gaps in performance on standardized tests between Black, White, Latina/o and other racial/ethnic groups (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Identifying optimal instructional practices that simultaneously boost achievement and promote equity is of increasing concern for researchers, policy makers, and educational leaders (Lubienski, 2006). Many educational researchers have attempted to identify positive correlations between reform-oriented instructional engagements and overall student achievement for various student groups (Diamond, 2007). Rousseau and Tate (2003) stated that for the first time in American educational history many students are challenged to take mathematic courses traditionally offered only to “college capable” students. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has been instrumental in endorsing equity in mathematical instruction as well as in offering suggestions and initiating standards-based reform (NCTM, 2000).

Teacher perceptions.

Educational researchers and social scientists are beginning to research programs and curricula, as well as better pre-service teacher preparation models, that will significantly impact segments of the population that have been marginalized, most notably women, students of color, and those living in poverty (Diamond, 2007; Gutierrez,

2000, 2002; Matthews, 2005; Rosseau & Powell, 2005). Out of the volume of research literature on the linkages of teacher quality and African American students there are few examples of teacher preparation models focused on serving African American learners (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Martin, 2007; Tate, 2008). In order to serve these students' needs, pre-service curricula and pedagogical strategies for teachers must focus on being successful with large African American learning communities.

Ladson-Billings (1995, 1996) cited the need of pre-service leaders to develop anti-racist and culturally relevant perspectives. Martin (2007) and Tate (2004) both examined improving teacher quality and opportunity structures for African American students. Martin specifically questioned the highly qualified requirement of NCLB legislation in teaching specialized courses, like science and mathematics. Martin remarked that policy requiring highly qualified teachers did not necessarily facilitate meaningful mathematics education and instruction for traditionally marginalized groups, especially for the African American student population. Using an opportunity-to-learn- (OTL) framework from Tate (2004), Rosseau and Powell (2005) used Tate's concepts of time, quality, and design in researching two secondary mathematics classrooms' implementations of reform initiatives. Their research found that there are multiple factors that influence teachers' perceptions of classroom instruction for African American and Latino students.

A teacher's perception, classroom instruction, and pedagogical practices influence students' assessment results and mathematical competency (Bol & Berry, 2005; Diamond, 2007; Lleras, 2008; Martin, 2007; Rousseau & Powell, 2005). However, several scholars found that many African American and Latino students are taught

differently than their White counterparts. In Lleras' (2008) study, teachers working with African American and Latino students utilized a mainly didactic pedagogy which included teacher-led instruction, lectures, and single answer responses; whereas most White students were taught using interactive pedagogy. Moreover, many educational researchers (Bol & Berry, 2005; Diamond, 2007; Martin, 2007; Rousseau & Powell, 2005) reported that reform-orientated change of instructional practices for some teachers is a very difficult transition. Additionally, these same researchers documented that teachers understood that non-traditional pedagogical approaches and instructional practices assisted in reducing some achievement gaps, but the implementation processes were difficult (Diamond, 2007; Martin, 2007).

Ladson-Billings (1995) stated that student performance plainly and simply relies on "good teaching" utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy. Several studies (Diamond, 2007; Martin, 2007) into content and pedagogy reported that teachers were the obstructions to some marginalized groups' achievement gaps. Moreover, upon closer inspection it was clear that certain school districts' underachievement was due in part to inappropriate pedagogical practices and deficient content coverage (Diamond, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Martin, 2007; Matthews, 2005; Rousseau & Powell, 2005). From my career experience, I have come to believe access to quality curricula and excellent teacher/student learning episodes are two variables that can help reduce the achievement gaps that exist among groups of students.

High-stakes testing.

Proficiency testing, achievement testing, or high-stakes graduation exams have become an integral part of educational reform and accountability. Tests and assessments

have been motivating factors behind specific educational movements and areas of instructional pedagogy. It would be quite a task to describe any facet of our lives that is not impacted by some testing element or assessment component. We daily assess our lifestyles, health, job performance, and even our food consumption. Gandel and McGiffert (2003) wrote that our society relies on tests because they ensure our safety, our health, and allow making reasonable choices. Broadfoot (2002) adds that the need for assessment has made us responsible for meeting standards as well as measuring up against others. However, in the arena of educational oversight, accountability, and reform, testing is a very different creature (Kohn, 2000).

Quality education relies on good testing practices and meaningful explanations of assessment. Initially these instruments were used to rank and track students more efficiently, and they were much more cost effective in evaluating educational improvements in comparison to changing class sizes, instructional time, and curriculum (Darling- Hammond, 1991; Stone & Lane, 2003). Moreover, tests were agents of change assessing student achievement, and diagnosing strengths and weaknesses. It is only in the past few decades that they have become tools primarily for accountability, decision-making, and assessing quality of instruction (Kohn, 2000; Neill & Medina, 1989; Stone & Lane, 2003; Thompson, 2007; Steele, 2004). Broadfoot (2002) wrote that today's students will be shaped by demands of assessment.

Many of the test-driven educational reforms came during the 1980s on the heels of "A Nation at Risk" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) when there were very strong arguments for more responsible testing because our schools were graduating students who were ill prepared for college and the workforce.

Proponents for reform-based testing stated the lack of students' competency skills. Educational reformers and policy makers agreed that testing would help in improving instruction. As a result, standardized testing became the norm and some school districts were impressed by the test results, however flawed and skewed (Neill & Media, 1989; Neill, 2003; Stake, 1991).

Currently in the era of NLCB, where local, state and federal legislation mandates extensive high-stakes testing (Lattimore, 2005), standardized testing continues to drive reform and perceptions of quality instruction. High-stakes tests are those tests that are defined and used to make significant educational decisions about schools, funding, teacher equality, administrative governance, and student outcomes (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Kohn, 2000; Lattimore, 2005; Neill, 2003). Alfie Kohn (2000) has written and commented on the effects that high-stakes testing has on the schooling of all children and believes that our current testing reform is unprecedented and unparalleled. Additionally, Kohn believes that test anxiety has increased amongst our students and that these tests have built in mechanisms that may be biased for subgroups of minorities, a position that is felt by others (Kellows & Jones, 2005; McMillian, 2003; Lattimore, 2005; Kohn, 2000; Steele, 1997; Thompson, 2007).

Some researchers believe that high-stakes testing is problematic for African American students because they have consistently scored lower than other racial/ethnic groups, especially when it is a predictor of success or grade promotion (Boaler, 2003; Carlson, 2004; Good et al., 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2005; Steele, 1997; Lattimore, 2005; Steele, 1997; Steele, 2004; Steele, & Aronson, 1995; Thompson, 2007; Townsend, 2002). Over the past decades, outcomes of this national testing paradigm have channeled some

subgroups of marginalized students, especially African Americans, into remedial education that sustains lower expectations (Steele, 2004). Carlson (2004) is convincing in his assessment that the only argument the NCLB legislation has for test scores by race is the reinforcement of opinions that some groups [students?] are “naturally” inferior to others.

The testing paradigm before the passage of NCLB and under its governance has created an educational divide that justifies the importance of testing as well as arguments against its practice. Regardless of these differences, what is pressing is the failure rates of our students and the fact that the sanctions that are levied against schools are detrimental to student performance. McMillian (2003) stated that achievement gaps will still persist regardless of the rewards and sanctions attached to federal legislation. Recognizing those African American students’ test performances when compared to those of other marginalized racial/ethnic groups are predicted to be lower, should reinforce efforts in continuing to provide adequate testing preparation. Moreover, high quality instruction that is aligned to testing items should also be enforced.

Opportunities to learn.

The plight of attaining high levels of educational achievement and competency for African American students is well documented (Berry, 2003; Davis, 2007; Flores, 2007; Fultz & Brown, 2008; Good et al., 2002; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1997; McMillian, 2003; Thompson, 2007; Townsend, 2002). Some scholars believe that educators must understand African American students’ particular cultural style and unique educational challenges in order to amend achievement gaps (Berry, 2003; Davis, 2007; Landson-Billings, 1996, 2000). However, some researchers believe that unequal

schooling opportunities could better explain the achievement gap (Flores, 2007; McMillian, 2003; Tate, 2004; 2008).

Tate's (2004) Opportunity to Learn (OTL) framework stresses that the dynamics of time, quality, and design of educational factors can impact marginalized students' mathematical engagements. This framework is useful in understanding the achievement gap because of its focus in refining instructional practices and encouraging learning opportunities (Flores, 2007; Lleras, 2008; McMillian, 2003; Rousseau & Powell 2005; Tate, 2008). Tate (2008) extended this framework to include those issues of opportunity structures that may be denied, like access to college preparatory classes, especially mathematics. Tate cites that the OTL literature includes quality of instruction, able teachers, access to college preparatory work, concern for minimizing schooling success based on high concentrations of minority students and government educational policies.

OTL is an emerging theory into the achievement gap literature. The acknowledgement that the achievement gap can be reframed as an "unequal opportunity gap" is adding to the literature that there are operating impediments in school as well as outside of it (Flores, 2007). Teachers of historically marginalized students must be consciously aware of these structures.

Conclusion

This literature review highlighted issues, concerns, instructional delivery practices, and sound pedagogical strategies that could make academic achievement for marginal groups in American education a reality. This dialogue specifically showcased the concerns of educational researchers, policy-makers, leaders, teachers, and students and the need to improve learning strategies for all students. Because the literature

overemphasizes the low performance of African American students, continuing research into countering popular images and erroneous information of African American students may aid in increasing African American achievement levels and also in decreasing their reported educational gaps.

As a mathematics teacher leader, I have a vested concern in achievement for all of my students. Acknowledging the ever-changing landscapes of educational development will always need critical educational researchers. Currently, compulsory public education in our country has many problems; however, it has and still produces some of the most engaging students. The next chapter discusses the need to investigate how some African American students prepare for college admission examinations (CAE), especially the SAT. Subsequently, the discussion will focus on methodology, research study design, review of the research questions, cycles of implementation, as well as a discussion of my leadership change applications for this action research project.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

For my change initiative, I utilized practical action research (PAR) to explore and explain the registration and attendance patterns, as well as the experienced reality of African American students in a district-wide SAT preparation program. This exploratory study followed an action research approach, employing a mixed methodology. This chapter identifies the actions taken to explore college admission examination (CAE) preparation practices of some African American college-bound juniors and seniors. Particularly, this study explores the preparation practices of this subgroup of students and their attendance in a SAT preparation program. This chapter provides discussions of study design, data collection and analysis, study population and context, study limitations, change frameworks, and cycles of action research.

I intended to record both African American study participants' and secondary educators' perceptions of SAT preparation. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks of STT and schooling effects were employed to help in understanding, for this study, why these students historically underperform in comparison to other racial/ethnic subgroups on this measure of college readiness and their efforts to seek preparedness for CAEs. Creswell (2007) states theoretical frameworks provide an interpretive lens that impacts the research process and includes: the development of questions, the approaches to data collection, data analysis, writing, and evaluation, as well as social justice transformation. STT and schooling effects, for this study, were chosen as interpretive frameworks based upon my experience working with this subgroup of marginalized students in addition to the themes that emerged from initial study reconnaissance. It was also my intention to

explore how the creation of a free district-wide SAT preparation program offered on Saturdays and during a summer session could possibly allow students, who could not enroll during regular school hours, an opportunity to prepare for taking the SAT and familiarize themselves with its format. The choice of using the SAT program as my study's setting was dual. One of the main reasons for this selection was the abundance of research that suggests large numbers of underserved minority and marginalized student groups do not fare well historically on this measurement (Johnson & Wallace, 1989; Ponessa, 1996; Terenzini et al., 2001; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). The other originated out of my lack of SAT testing familiarity when I was preparing to enter my undergraduate experience. Although I was in the academic "track" in high school, I was not well-informed of testing information or about testing strategies. I do not want the same to befall my students. As a practicing teacher leader that espouses social justice ideations, co-planning, implementing, and instructing an extended SAT preparation program available to all BBHS students displays aspects of my transformational leadership.

My change vision consisted of students from diverse backgrounds in an intervention program that could help them acquire a strong post-secondary position as confident 21st century learners. Students participated in a SAT preparation program based on semi-directed mathematics and English instruction. Pre- and post-assessment assisted in determining students' skill sets and possible potential for success in future SAT attempts. Organizational documents of enrollment, demographic information, interviews, surveys, and observational data provided methods to record the study and enhance district programming, in addition to contributing to research data.

In my role as a teacher leader, I was part of an educational team that planned and implemented an extended SAT preparation program on Saturdays and during the summer breaks. The extended SAT preparation program was a longtime vision of several current and former district employees in addition to being pertinent to my instructional interests. For this research project, I observed enrollment patterns of student enrollees in the extended SAT program, particularly the registration of African Americans from January 2010 until April 2011. This particular sub-group of students was chosen because an organizational scan of enrollment patterns of an existing course--preparing for SAT readiness--showed a limited presence of traditionally marginalized students. The subsequent approval of the expansion of BBHS's SAT program to Saturdays by the study district's Board of Education provided the context of this study. The Board offered the course free of charge and the students had the opportunity to self-enroll. I was granted approval by Rowan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in January 2010, but do to title revisions and item clarifications a second approval was granted in April of 2011.

During the action research study, I recorded observations of my study participants, collected data from participants via surveys and interviews, as well as documented my leadership interactions. This strategy of data collection followed four scheduled program sessions between January 2010 and April 2011. The SAT program sessions were the contexts of three cycles of my action research. In each cycle I recorded and analyzed data, as I planned interventions and actions to increase African American student participation.

This researcher's inquiries into the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of African American college-bound students in a SAT preparation program were contingent upon two questions concerning African Americans' participation. The other two research questions pertained to my leadership development throughout the study and how this PAR could affect my future leadership engagements at BBHS as well as within the district. The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What factors influence some college-bound African American students to register, attend, and experience a SAT preparation course?
2. What are some concerns of African American educators relative to college admission exam (CAE) preparedness efforts of African American college-bound students?
3. How has my input as a veteran teacher leader influenced an extended SAT preparation program?
4. As a result of this action research project, how did my leadership impact change at BBHS, and how did I change as an educational leader?

As stated previously, a constructivist (interpretive) paradigm undergirded this study. Creswell (2007), Glense (2006), and Hinchey (2008) describe this worldview as one that relies on study participants' and the researcher's experiences, views, and perceptions in specified contexts. Thus, the researcher and the participants continuously filter their experiences through subjective meanings based upon culture, history, and knowledge (Bogan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell 2007; Hinchey, 2008). The next section explains, in detail, the study's design.

Study Design

Practical action research (PAR) is a type of educational research that lies in the general category of action research (Hinchey, 2008; McMillian, 2000; Mills, 2000). PAR is a systematic inquiry conducted by teachers. It pursues improvements, solutions, and developing reflective practices while exploring and explaining positive (or negative) changes in the school environment conducted either as an individual researcher or in collaboration. Moreover, PAR seeks understanding of an area that the researcher deems relevant (Hinchey, 2008; McMillian, 2000; Mills, 2000). PAR lends itself to an action plan which generates recursive cycles consisting of planning, observing, acting, reflecting, and changing. Methodology into this research paradigm relies mostly on qualitative methodology, though this study followed a mixed-methods course. The cyclic nature of action research allowed me to reflect upon the collected data from each cycle and provide useful interventions for subsequent ones.

Using the PAR model, I was able to first explore the relevance and sustainability of an extended SAT program through reconnaissance in the first cycle and through succeeding cycles gathering information to answer the research questions, in addition to documenting my leadership growth. My role in this practical action research project was along the participant/observer continuum as described by Bogan and Biklen (2007). As a participant observer, the researcher participates in both the research setting and in information gathering. During the study time frame, I was an instructor for the mathematics portion of the SAT preparation program. While not engaging in SAT instruction, I was actively recording participants' actions in my observational and leadership journals.

Qualitative research is a type of social/educational inquiry that researchers select in order to understand, interpret, and explain how study participants create or ascribe meaning to a problem. For this study, I explored and explained the student participants' rationale for registering and attending a SAT preparation program as well as secondary teachers' perceptions concerning these students. Subsequently through the collection of data, I analyzed, using STT and schooling effects as possible underlining theoretical frameworks, perceptions of both the African American student and adult participants in the SAT extension program.

Context

The context of this study was a comprehensive all-inclusive high school. It is positioned within a vibrant diverse city that houses over 40,000 people in 11.35 square miles in Southern New Jersey. The educational district in this diverse city is directed by a nine member elected board with terms lasting three years.

The school district is situated in a region that lacks major corporate investment; however, key industries are tourism and gaming which has led to the increase in regional diversity and demographics (Karmel, 2008; Pollock, 1987). The students are from diverse ethnic, academic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The district's student population consists of preschool through grade 12. There are over 2600 language minority students who speak 34 languages in the school district. The school district provides services for approximately 7,000 residential students and additional secondary students who are sent by bordering communities to attend the district's only high school, which completed new construction in 1994.

Culturally rich, the student population of this city's educational community, which includes the elementary and high school populations, according to data available at the time of this study, is comprised of 40.9% African Americans (Black), 35.5% Hispanics (White and non-White), 10.6% Caucasians (White), 12.9% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and .1% American Indian/Alaskans. Enrollment at the high school is slightly above 2200 (Nickles, 2008; Torres, 2009). The demographic data changes slightly for the student population attending the high school because of the population demographics of the four surrounding communities. As of the 2010-2011 calendar school-year the percentages were as follows: 33.48% Black, 31.86% Hispanic, 19.62% White, and 15.03% Asian/Pacific Islander. Additionally, the high school receives transfers from other countries.

In gathering contextual data for this action research project, I was interested in how, over the span of 30 years, the gaming industry revitalized, or not, this shore community and if it had positive as well as negative influences on the economic, social, and educational mobility and attainment of its residents. Additionally, I was interested if gaming had any effects on the District Factor Grouping (DFG) of the research site.

Since 1975, The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), based on decennial Census data, utilizes a ranking system to measure the relationship of socioeconomic status and educational attainment for its school districts. District Factor Grouping (DFG) is an index, based on decennial United States Census data, which rates school districts by seven indices of the district's community. These indices include: percentage of population with no high school diploma, percentage with some college education, occupational status, population density, income, unemployment rate, and

poverty level (NJDOE, 2011). Currently, there are eight DFGs that have been created based upon 1990 United States Census data. They range from A (lowest socioeconomic districts) to J (highest socioeconomic districts) and are labeled as follows: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J (NJDOE, 2011). The school district in this city and the high school selected for this study has been at the lowest ranking since the inception of the DFG. Table 4.1 shows the 1990 and 2000 rankings of BBHS’s district and the four sending districts that uses its services. Investigations into the causes for this ranking cannot be explored in this study, but may well be a topic for future examination.

4.1

District Factor Grouping of Decennial Census Data

City	2000	1990
BBHS	A	A
Bay Front*	CD	DE
Lake View*		DE
Lucyville*	DE	FG
Boatville*	B	CD

*pseudonyms

As I further investigated the effects of gaming, I found that there are a few worthy research studies and books concerning the impact casino gaming has had on the residents of this community and the greater area. Karmel’s (2008) utilizes oral histories of this city’s residents in documenting perspectives of the effects of gaming and how it changed

the demographics and the aspirations of its life-long residents and newly arrived ones to the area. It is also the only account of how immigrants to the city impacted the demographic make-up prior to and during the gaming era. Tyrrell and Posner's (2009) work is a collection of reports that document 30 years of economic, social, educational, and political costs of the institutional complex of gaming in the resort. LaRosa's (2003) tome documents how the political environment, the economic growth, and demographic changes in the city's history influenced educational perspectives and planning. Moreover, LaRosa's (2003) overview of the changing economic and political landscapes of this gaming city documented that while the gaming industry did produce changes within the city it did very little in improving the overall socioeconomic status during the subsequent decades. Investigating the linkages of gaming and low DFG could be a worthwhile post-doctorate study as I continue to be a teacher leader in this educational district and investigate educational gaps unique to this educational environment.

The school district in this study is committed to eliminating educational gaps that currently exist by enacting several student achievement programs. Parent involvement is a key element for the district's success. Through the creation of seven Title I Parent Resource Centers in 2009, parental involvement increased and participation in activities that benefit students socially, emotionally, and academically has as well. The seven parent centers are distributed throughout the district and offer daily services to ensure that parents receive information regarding school programs, special assistance, and adult concerns. Additionally, these centers supply key communication through phone calls and mailings that also aid in keeping students and parents aware of programs and other resource services.

For this study, the high school parent center was instrumental in the registration and dissemination of information to potential SAT prep enrollees. Students had to register at the parent center for entrance into the preparation sessions that were planned for three different locations. The locations were chosen strategically and placed throughout the city so that students would have access. The parent centers also contacted enrollees concerning absenteeism and their failure to report to scheduled SAT prep sessions. Financial support of this program was contingent upon student participation, parent involvement, district support, and cooperation from additional educational stakeholders.

Data Collection

This study employed a mixed-method form of inquiry in which aspects of quantitative and qualitative research designs helped collect data and explore the research questions (Creswell, 2006; Glense, 2006). Creswell, Shope, Clark, and Green (2006) define mixed-methods in qualitative research as one that legitimizes and emphasizes the qualitative approaches to inquiry and its data collection methods are the criticism of quantitative exclusive proponents. Glesne (2006) adds that "...the qualitative researcher draws on some combination of techniques to collect data, rather than a single technique...the richer the data and the more believable the findings" (p. 36).

For this PAR, quantitative methodology consisted of data collection by means of surveys, numeric documents, and simple descriptive statistics. Student participants answered a multi-structured survey (see Appendix C) that described their high school experience, education of family members, and reasons for enrolling in the SAT preparation program. Numeric document reviews consisted of student participants'

results from their latest SAT attempts, demographic enrollment patterns of each cycle, and simple descriptive statistics from aggregated enrollment information which included age, grade level, racial/ethnicity construct, and individual program total enrollment. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) helped in storing, organizing, and analyzing survey data.

Qualitative methodology included semi-structured interviews (see Appendices B, E, and G) with open-ended questions, field notes, as well as observational and leadership journaling. Glesne (2006) reported that the use of interview, document collection, and participant observation are the three dominate data-gathering techniques of qualitative inquiry. A small purposeful collection of African American student participants answered questions concerning their decision to enroll in the SAT preparation program and views of their readiness for CAEs. Additionally, a purposeful sampling of African American adult educators, participating in the SAT preparation program as instructors, answered questions regarding African American student registration patterns, attendance, and experience in the program. Both interview protocols were field-tested by former students and current educators for revisions of problematic items (Patten, 2001).

Educational historical data were derived from two adult African American study participants' recollections of their CAE and SAT preparation experience (see Appendix B). Using educational histories supplied a historical frame, also viewed through STT and schooling effects lenses, in understanding contemporary successes or obstructions for college-bound African American students in this research context. Field notes, leadership journaling, and an open-ended survey (see Appendix H) documented my role as a participant-observer in the study and recorded my leadership growth, emergent

leadership styles, in addition to their effect on my fellow team members and co-workers. This qualitative methodology followed the examples set forth by Glesne (2006), Creswell (2007), and Hinchey (2008).

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach assisted with the triangulation of data. Glesne (2006) identified that triangulation of data is a form of validation technique that relies on multiple means of data collection. Because participant observation, documentation collection, and interviewing are dominant qualitative data collection methods, I used these techniques to aid in the reliability and trustworthiness of collected data (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). The data collection methodology cited above was chosen for this study because of its relevancy and intent to establish confidence in data reporting. All data collection followed stringent processes to maintain study participants' anonymity and confidentiality. The ethical treatment of the study participants followed those guidelines set forth by Rowan University's Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis

Data analysis and representation for this mixed-methods project followed the format of qualitative analysis of data management, reading and journaling, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing as outlined by Creswell (2007), Glesne (2006), and Hinchey (2008). Coding, "a system to identify individual pieces of data as belonging to a particular category" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 92) was employed for the qualitative data. Using the open-coding process which followed the data → category → code → theme model, I was able to analyze the data (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). Whenever data became overwhelming and the organization of its deep description and

the establishments of themes were paramount, an open coding model was efficient in examining, comparing, and categorizing my four cycles of data. Creswell's (2007) template (see Appendix A) for coding a multi-group study was utilized in this PAR. The frameworks of STT and schooling effects undergirded the interpretation of emergent themes. SPSS programming assisted in categorizing and establishing inferences of the quantitative data for analysis. Registration totals and attendance records data from each subgroup were analyzed individually for within-group themes and collectively for cross-group theme comparisons. Moreover, as I analyzed the data from each cycle, subsequent cycles were modified and adjusted based upon necessary interventions.

Population

The participants were a purposeful sampling of teachers involved in a SAT Saturday preparation program as well as students from the pool of SAT preparation enrollees. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe a purposeful sample as participants that are believed helpful in developing or explaining assigned or emerging theories pertinent to an investigation. Adult participants were selected based upon their professional work history within the study district, knowledge of test preparation, and experience working with diverse student populations. Student participants had to be registered as juniors and seniors and be enrolled in or have completed Algebra 2. This stipulation was necessary because math proficiency on the SAT is based upon skill sets acquired in Algebra 2.

Limitations of the Study

Because practical action research design lends itself to describing, exploring, or explaining a particular problem, situation, or phenomenon in contextual realities, concerns of researcher bias and the inability to generalize are often criticisms of this

research methodology (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). Additionally, the issues of validity, reliability, and rigor are often found to be lacking in the qualitative component of a mixed-methods approach (Anfara et al., 2002). By keeping these issues paramount as I progressed through my research cycles, I established research validity (credibility) by employing a triangulation of data which implies constant surveillance of collected material, using various data collection techniques; member checking of participant responses, and monitoring emerging themes (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Additionally, I was mindful of Glesne's (2006) and Creswell's (2007) suggestions of having my research peer reviewed and extending my research time in the field. In regards to reliability for the qualitative researcher, Creswell (2007) suggested detailed transcriptions of interviews and deep analyses of coding schemes of observational and journal data. Finally, rigor was addressed by adhering to critical subjectivity and self-awareness of the research process (Creswell, 2007). As a novice researcher, I had to foreground these issues and remember that undertaking this type of methodology called for strict adherence to documentation review, interview protocol, relevance of data, and contextual relevance. There must always be a conscious endeavor to limit the effects of researcher bias.

Moreover, the representation of my study participants had to be realistic and concise, so that I could accurately analyze and report the findings. As an African American educator and lifelong learner, I had to be cognizant of my own prejudices and dispositions as I piloted this investigation. The research of African American students in learning contexts is quite varied. This action research was conducted to add to the extant

research through the voices of African American participants. It was my hope to be thorough in my data collection, analyses, and discussions.

Change Frameworks

As a teacher leader, I understand that leading and managing change is an important but arduous task. My experiences as a life-long learner, parent, and educator have prompted me to begin a change project that I believe could be effective in addition to providing assistance to a variety of educational stakeholders. Although my change project initially began cognitively several years ago, observations, collaborations, and networking have helped bring this change idea to fruition. Kotter's (1996) 8-step model is the change framework that I found most applicable and one that enabled me to venture into a progressive, yet sustainable project. Kotter's organizational change octet is a process that incorporates creating urgency; forming a coalition; creating and communicating vision; removing obstacles; managing short-term wins; building upon the change; and anchoring organizational culture as paramount for sustaining change initiatives. In utilizing Kotter's (1996) model, my guiding coalition included active secondary teachers of mathematics, teachers of English, administrators, retired secondary math teachers, parent center personnel, and school officials, all of whom have a major concern about the plight of all students - particularly underserved minority students. In my role as a teacher leader, these individuals have consistently demonstrated a strong sense of commitment to the success of all students and their advice, leadership insight, and assistance in development of the SAT preparation program cannot be over emphasized. Moreover, the creation and communication of the vision of an extended SAT preparation program by this guiding coalition was paramount in getting program

approval. The parent center housed at BBHS was very instrumental in assuaging the obstacles of registering the students as well as promoting the SAT extension.

I also found Fullan's (2001) change phases appropriate to the study's initial implementation. In relation to Fullan's change model, his six phases of effective change guided my research and this district initiative. This change project involved many obstacles in upstart and in action. Logistics on where and how students would enroll as well as how the instructors would be selected were just some of the surface obstacles, not only for me but for other district administrators. Fullan's discussions on understanding the culture of change have made this project, for me, less intimidating. Co-strategizing this project over a large district required knowledge of Fullan's phases of change. The cycles of initiation, implementing, continuation, and outcome (Fullan) helped in the preparation and final analysis of my practical action research project.

Cycles of Action Research

There were four cycles of planning, observation, and reflection in this action research project. With the exception of Cycle I, all succeeding Cycles followed similar data collection strategies and contextual environment. The difference between the cycles was Cycle I consisted of an organizational reconnaissance. Cycle II consisted of data collection and analysis from the SAT January 2010-April 2010 program session and the summer 2010 session. Cycle III consisted of data collection and analysis from the September-December 2010 session. Cycle IV consisted of data collection and analysis from the January 2011-April 2011 session. Between each cycle, interventions were introduced to increase recruitment of African American enrollees into the extended SAT preparation program and to strengthen each new program session as it was planned and

implemented. After Cycle IV, I analyzed the collective data from each cycle and answered the research questions from the findings. The study culminated with an account of my leadership development and implications of future leadership engagements. The next section gives a brief synopsis of each cycle; a more thorough discussion of each cycle is detailed in Chapter 5.

Cycle I - The initial action: Research investigation and reconnaissance.

The reconnaissance occurred during November and December of 2010.

Reconnaissance for Cycle I of this action research project served a dual purpose. First, it sought to examine the existing SAT course following Bolman and Deal's (2005) model of organizational diagnosis particularly examining the structural and human resource frames. Second, I sought to interview significant stakeholders and thoroughly co-plan an intervention program with district administrators, community coordinators, and teachers to increase the number of underserved potential and future SAT test takers.

Cycle II.

Cycle II consisted of reviewing registration patterns from the first two program sessions which were the January-April 2010 and the summer 2010 sessions. Data collection was comprised of observational data, surveys, and reflective journaling. Interventions were contingent upon African American student enrollment and program attendance. In this cycle, I positioned myself as a participant observer. Analyses of the data concluded this cycle and led to adjustments, interventions, and implementation of Cycle III.

Cycle III.

I continued my role as a participant observer for the September-December 2010 session. Data collection was the same for this cycle as it was in Cycle II; however, interviews of African American educators' perceptions of SAT preparedness of African American students were conducted. A second intervention was implemented during this cycle and a third intervention was planned for Cycle IV. Analyses of the data concluded this cycle.

Cycle IV.

With the data collected from Cycle III, interventions for increased registration and improving the attendance of African American students in the final cycle were implemented. I maintained my position as a participant observer in collecting the final data for this project from January-April 2011. Student interviews were added to the qualitative data collection. Analyses of the data contributed to answering the research questions of this project, helped to assess my leadership of this change initiative, and informed the final report and recommendations resulting from the study.

Conclusion

Four cycles of action research were planned to study the registration, attendance patterns, and experienced reality of some African American college-bound students and perceptions of African American educators in a SAT preparation program. Throughout the cycles from January 2010 to April 2011, I sought to answer the research questions about SAT preparedness for African American students as well as continually evaluated my ability to co-lead a change initiative. The following chapters provide details about the planning, acting, observing, changing, and reflecting for each cycle of this action

research project, final findings, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of the study. The next chapter provides an overview of each cycle, collected data, analyses of data, and study findings.

Chapter 5

Findings by Cycles

Introduction

Throughout my teaching career, I always held a strong belief that students should be knowledgeable of testing practices and formats. Current educational accountability is largely contingent upon acceptable levels of testing proficiency, and teachers should plan educational strategies that allow for student success on this component of their formal education. Although I do not agree with the high-stakes that these testing practices place upon students, teachers, and educational stake-holders, standardized tests are necessary in proving certain aspects of proficiency as well as overall student achievement. However, test scores Under No child Left Behind (NCLB) are reported based upon racial and ethnic grouping, gender, and even socioeconomic status (Carlson, 2004; Steele, 2004; Townsend, 2002) and under the standards-based reform initiatives over the span of more than two decades, the standardized test outcomes for many African American learners have not been favorable (Steele, 2004; Townsend, 2002). The poor outcomes of many African American students in standardized testing are reasons why I undertook the task of helping this subgroup of students as well as other learners in testing preparation. Skill mastery is not the only approach to improved test scoring, but developing techniques and strategies of testing practices are just as important. Many researchers have undertaken exploration in building student motivation and other factors that can lead to improved testing outcomes (Black, 2005; McMillian, 2003; Popham, 2006; Thompson, 2007)

The SAT is a CAE that historically places additional pressure on perspective college enrollees (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Jencks & Crouse, 1982; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). The study district's Saturday SAT preparation

program wanted to provide a particular skill set to its secondary students for SAT testing success. The Saturday SAT preparation program was open to all enrolled students at Bay Beach High School (BBHS). After accepting the position as an instructor of mathematics and planner for the Saturday SAT programs, I officially notified the assistant superintendent and my building principal of my intention to plan a study of the program's enrollees and development. I received permission in December 2009.

This chapter discusses the cycles of my practical action research (PAR). There were four cycles to this PAR which began in late November 2009 and concluded in April 2011. During these 18 months, each cycle for this PAR employed a mixed-method design of data collection. I used multiple sources of information (field notes, documents) and data sources (teachers, administrators, students). Each cycle discussion contains dates of initial actions, data collection strategies, analyses of data, findings, limitations, and conclusions. Additionally, all cycle overviews contain connections to the initial theoretical (interpretive) frameworks and my leadership development.

The Saturday SAT preparation sessions utilized either a short term or long term program and each program functioned as a subgroup of this action research study. The short-term program lasted for six or seven weeks and the long term program lasted for 12 weeks. Summer programs followed a 21 day, Monday - Thursday format.

Overview of Cycles

Cycle I.

Introduction.

In this cycle, which occurred during the months of November and December 2009, discussions of the feasibility of an extended SAT preparation program were

underway by district administrators. As I later found, district coordinators met to discuss the instructors needed, probable sites for instruction, nutritional incentives, as well as the number of students projected for the program. District administrators and coordinators discussed initiating a Saturday SAT preparation program open to all enrolled BBHS students. One of the purposes of the extended preparation program was to reach particular target populations that were challenged in regards to their college admission exam (CAE) preparedness and post-secondary pursuits. Particular targeted groups consisted of: African American and Hispanic males, low socio-economic status (SES) students, and athletes. Subsequently, I was hired as one of the mathematical instructors, and I gained approval to make this the context of an action research study. As discussed previously, Cycle I of my action research was reconnaissance.

Mills (2000) defines reconnaissance in action research as a process of three forms; self-reflections, descriptive activities, and explanatory activities. Self-reflection consists of exploring those theories and educational values that impact researchers' instructional practices. It also explores historical contexts of an individual's schooling experiences as well as beliefs concerning teaching and learning. Descriptive activities include those engagements that a researcher undertakes to create change that focuses on *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where*. The final form, explanatory activities, attempts to explain the *why* of the research focus (Mills, 2000). In the following sections, I describe my data-gathering strategies used to fulfill reconnaissance criteria, an analysis of reconnaissance data, and leadership implications.

During reconnaissance in Cycle I, I collected data using the methods of historical account, personal reflection, and document review to fulfill the three techniques of

reconnaissance. This reconnaissance allowed me to identify and interview two key educational stakeholders who were knowledgeable of the study district's history. These stakeholders' historical accounts helped in confirming the use of STT and schooling effects as possible theoretical frameworks into this PAR. Personal reflections in my leadership journal provided data involving instances of my direct leadership as well as leadership decisions. Review of existing documents from the school day SAT preparedness program provided the quantitative data for this cycle.

Data collection.

Quantitative data-gathering entailed reviewing demographic characteristics of BBHS's current elective SAT preparation course, conducted during regular class time of the academic year. In viewing the course enrollment for two calendar school years, many traditional underrepresented and marginalized students (ethnic minorities, English Language Learners [ELL], African American males, Latinos) showed a limited presence. Demographic information of the 2009-2010 school-year documented an SAT preparation class totaling 19 students, consisting of 13 females and 6 males. Racial/ethnicity demographic information of the class, based on the district's current categorical constructs, reported 6 White, 7 Black, and 6 Asian/Pacific Islander. Class total for the 2010-2011 school year documented 25 students (19 females, 6 males) and racial/ethnicity as 12 White, 6 Black, 4 Hispanic/non-White, and 3 Asian/Pacific/Islander.

Qualitative data collection for this cycle consisted of interviews with two adult participants and leadership journaling. These interview sessions were semi-structured (see Appendix B) and very informal. There were three prepared questions; however, I allowed flexibility in their responses. I set aside a 90-minute timeframe for each

interviewee. Each interview was conducted after school hours in the administrators' respective offices. I requested verbal permission from each interviewee and explained this was pre-research into the study district's extended SAT program. They both agreed accordingly. The interviews were comprised of two informants; both held teaching and administrative positions in the district for some time. Following is a brief biography of each.

- Interviewee #1 is a retired African American male career educator. He is a southerner who relocated to Southern New Jersey in search of employment over four decades ago. He originally taught elementary school, whereby within a few years he sought an administrative position. For well over 30 years he performed as a vice principal or principal in the K-12 sector.
- Interviewee #2 is a current District coordinator who oversees supplemental instructional services. He is also a former student of the District as well as teacher. He also has vested almost four decades of service in the District: two decades serving in the capacity of instructor at the middle grade level and nearly two decades as a district coordinator.

Leadership journaling presented data to document instances of my direct leadership actions particularly focusing on my espoused leadership traits. Coding from my leadership journal during this reconnaissance revealed that I was developing transactional leadership qualities.

Findings.

I discovered from the numeric data that there was only a small percentage of traditionally marginalized students enrolling in the school sponsored SAT preparedness course that runs during the school week. Data revealed low enrollments of Latino, Asian/Pacific, and male students. This could be for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the number of available seats, the time of course offering, or students just not opting to enroll. Moreover, many upper-class students may be less compelled to enroll in an eighth period course, BBHS's, last scheduled class of the day. These issues, as pertinent as they are, were not researched in this study.

The historical testimonies of two experienced educators supplied data that confirmed my assumptions to view the extended Saturday SAT program research through STT and schooling effects theoretical lenses. Analyses of the interview data disclosed that there clearly existed an historical need to push this district's college-bound students towards college admissions exam (CAE) preparedness. Both interviewees expressed the need for a district-wide SAT preparation program for all students especially students of low-economic households, struggling learners, and those students seeking academic improvement. After coding the interview data, emergent themes were: access and opportunity, testing vulnerability, and ethics of care. These themes will be discussed in subsequent subheadings of this chapter.

Access and opportunity.

Both interviewees expressed the need for creating access and opportunity in the district for students needing CAE readiness, especially the SAT. Access and opportunity are both characteristics of schooling effects according to Tate (2004), Lubienski (2006),

and Kao and Thompson (2003). Interviewee #2 discussed at length the need for an expanded SAT preparatory course based on his own schooling experience with college planning and what he observed as both a teacher and coordinator within the District.

Interviewer #2 stated,

Me not ever having the opportunity to go [SAT] myself or have nobody to push me, I always wanted to push students, especially from Bay Beach (pseudonym) where I grew up... I was never given the opportunity... because I was raised by a grandmother and she had maybe a 3rd or 4th grade education, so she wasn't able to offer me those things that were necessary... If you know... being down at the high school [BBHS] and even your years there, it was not a given or known you could take SAT prep classes. I understood it was a certain administrator at the high school that would offer to help students for a fee to help prepare for the SAT test and it was an outrageous figure... people could not afford it.

This interviewee saw the necessity to create a program that was free of charge and available to all students in the district and furnish them an opportunity to prepare for CAEs. Using his now positional power to provide means of testing readiness was evident in his comments: "I dreamt...prayerfully that we will get and be able to do something... free of charge through money that we get to pump-up all areas of the city... not [just] the most affluent."

Interviewee #1 also discussed the need to expand SAT preparation services. The history of BBHS has always been a tale of two stories: those within the city of Bay Beach and those from the sending districts. It has been assumed that the educational services provided to the sending districts were different than those within the Bay Beach district; even as it pertained to SAT preparedness. Interviewee #1 spoke about this factor:

We decided to start the SAT preparation program, because in [BBHS], the population is primarily minority and foreign born. It hasn't always been that way, but over the past 25 years, the population has shifted. In the past, it has been shown that our [BBHS] students coming from the sending districts have an advantage over our [Bay Beach] students when it comes to SAT prep. In my opinion, the Saturday program that was started to get our students up to snuff is a

wonderful program because it helps bring our kids up to par with the kids from the sending districts. I hope the program continues for a long time. It is valuable.

Testing vulnerability.

The interviewees did not speak at length concerning testing vulnerability as it pertained to African American students specifically; it surfaced as a general concern for the extended SAT prep course. Interviewee #1 stated:

These SAT programs would help the reluctant learner and test taker more than the already confident tester. Nervousness and fear can affect a lot of kids and the schools are not always going to know everything that is going on with them. However, that means that we need to work with this. These programs are a good way to get them to understand that while these tests aren't life or death, they are a very important component in their education and one of the keys to success.

Interviewee #2 stated that "Some [students] are scared because they don't want to be embarrassed...so they are reluctant to come [to SAT prep]."

Ethic of care.

Sernak (1998) described an ethic of care as a kind of moral reasoning stemming from feminist literature. It describes the qualities of connection, particularity of responsibility, commitment, and reciprocity. However, Sernak prefaced her discussion of ethical caring with the understanding that its ideations result from overcoming internal hierarchical power relationships; caring for collective persons and groups within the larger organizational community; and having diverse perspectives of caring behavior that are non-European and non-hegemonic. The interview data from the key informants revealed that they had an understanding that past SAT preparation practices were entrenched in "power over" relationships. The informants' also held a concern for all students in the BBHS larger community. Additionally, as African American male

educators, their perspectives were reflective of the changing diversity in their educational community.

As career educators, the key informants' comments reflected the ethic of care tenets. In reviewing the transcripts, both of the interviewees spoke about a constant connection, commitment, and responsibility to all educational stakeholders that they encountered in their professional responsibilities. Interviewee #1 specifically discussed the reciprocity element as it pertains to student-teacher testing preparation, "...if you teach...teach to the test, your kids are gonna be prepared for it... and they [students] have to be dedicated, so it can't ...can't be a teaching thing...it has to be the students themselves."

Both interviewees were life-long educators and administrators; they understood the need to have excellent instructors for supplementary programs. Although not asked a specific question as to the kind of teacher chosen to instruct the Saturday extended SAT course, interviewee #2 stated:

You have the best educational leaders teaching those students... who give motivational help too...who not only give informational knowledge but heart knowledge as well to those students. A lot of students will come just because of the particular teacher that's coming...the caring person...they [the students] will make an effort to come.

Limitations.

Through this cycle, I learned that planning and implementing educational change is a very complex and tedious endeavor. After the reconnaissance, I realized that I should have conducted the educational history interviews under a more structured format. The two key informants, in retrospect, held valuable historic information of BBHS's district. I could have drawn more from their teaching and administrative stories to strengthen

my choices of interpretive frameworks for this action research. Additionally, I should have included other key informants that were instrumental in planning the Saturday SAT sessions.

Leadership applications.

Scheduling a Saturday SAT preparation program was an exercise in negotiations and strategic planning. The idea of a Saturday SAT preparation program hosted within district had been a brainchild, as I later found, of several current and former school administrators. The rationale for such a program was to increase access and exposure to college entrance exams (CAE) for underserved student populations. The proposal was originally designed for a small group of volunteer African American junior and senior students. A school content supervisor later suggested having open enrollment for all students at BBHS.

I began my leadership journal December 2009 after I was hired as a mathematical instructor for the extended SAT program and asked to shadow a district supervisor as she identified Saturday SAT prep instructional sites. I documented the processes that were necessary, from an administrative standpoint, for the success of the Saturday SAT initiative. It was a plan of negotiations.

Negotiations included strategizing best district locations to provide easy access for students because transportation services were not provided for the students. We planned for three sites and contacted each building principal for permission stating our purpose, times, and the number of students. Classroom computers had to be accessible. We also had to make provisions for our individual custodial services and cafeteria assistance for the nutritional aspect of the program. If these sites also held transitional

Saturday classes, we had to ensure that our high school students had little contact with the other students because of liability issues involving student-student contact. I did not consider all of the line-items needed just to run a Saturday program. I journaled:

As I viewed the supervisor as she talked on the phone, making the necessary arrangements for one building, I had to consider she has to do the same thing for the other two proposed sites. And that isn't considering she will be granted permission. She displayed great transactional leadership. I could not have been as patient. (Leadership Journal, November 19, 2009)

After securing the three buildings, the supervisor and I planned the first SAT instructor meeting. We had to select appropriated lesson materials that were beneficial for all instructional SAT aspects. I recalled sitting in on a conference call between a book vendor and two administrators, and there were way too many concessions for this book order. I would have chosen another vender. I was later told that this particular vendor had the study district's approval and the books were the best available. I documented the following: "I am so glad that I wasn't on that call. I would have sought another Board approved vendor and requested available SAT practice materials. No way would I have remained on the phone for so long" (Leadership Journal, December 15, 2009).

There were few instances during this cycle that directly related to my leadership role. Although I was an active participant observer in many of the phone calls and mini-meetings as I shadowed the administrator that supervised the SAT program, I had very limited action in displaying my leadership styles. As I proceeded into my remaining cycles, I recognized the need to be very thorough in documenting my leadership encounters.

Hired staff members for the extended Saturday SAT program were notified in December 2009. The supervisor of the program planned an instructors' meeting to notify

us of program session dates and times. Additionally, she made us aware of a planned celebration dinner that included the teachers, certain members of the study district's administrative staff, enrolled students, and their families.

A dinner was held on January 19, 2010, the week before the first Saturday SAT prep session to present the students and families to the instructional and administrative staff. This dinner celebration was scheduled through the district coordinator's office and the logistics were planned by his staff. At the dinner, the district coordinator announced that the program was originally designed for a maximum of 45 students, but due to an overwhelming response of enrollees, the program blossomed into 104. I observed the gathering and the interactions between the district coordinator and the administrators, and for the first time I realized that the administrative side of the educational process involves many instances of transactional leadership.

As a life-long educator, I viewed my teaching interactions as transformative. In my professional and teaching interactions, I attempted to raise the standards of academic pursuits to higher levels. I did not view these engagements as exchanges of awards, punishments, and negotiations, traits typical of transactional leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). While planning the Saturday SAT program, I recognized the need for transactional leadership. As an emerging transactional leader, I needed to take responsibility for transactional engagements during the Saturday and summer SAT sessions. I could no longer defer the program's daily "negotiations" to the program director. These "negotiations" consisted of contacting the parent-center personnel, planning the nutritional snacks for each program session, scheduling maintenance coverage for each site, maintaining instructional hours, planning session dates, and

providing coverage for instructor absences. Each of these “negotiations” required a different set of transactional leadership skills.

Conclusion.

Cycle I was designed to perform research reconnaissance on the feasibility of a Saturday SAT preparation program for students enrolled at BBHS. I learned that the program’s initial purpose was to increase traditionally marginalized students’ familiarity with college admissions exams (CAE). Eventually, I was awarded a position in the program, and I used this as a platform for my action research. I planned to explore the program’s effects on African American enrollees.

Actions in this cycle included interviewing key informants which provided historical data into the school district, researching documents of an existing SAT course, in addition to documenting my leadership interactions. Interviewing the volunteer informants provided correlation data to this study’s interpretive frameworks of STT and schooling effects. The career legacies of these experienced professionals are contingent on the cultural understandings that they have acquired as both teachers and administrators. Their insightfulness confirmed my underpinnings into this research.

During this cycle’s timeframe, I also saw Kotter’s (1996) eight stage change process in effect. Kotter’s processes of establishing urgency and creating a coalition were noticed very early in my study. Developing visions and communicating these visions were seen as the team of instructors planned and reviewed course materials. These instructors were empowered for action because the district’s administrative staff was confident in this team. Kotter’s last stages were evident in the remaining cycles.

Cycle I allowed me to investigate the sentiments of the Saturday SAT program and the implementation and planning of its initiation. In Cycle II, the first classes of the Saturday SAT preparation program began. During these class sessions, at my scheduled site, I reviewed Saturday SAT course enrollment demographics, documented classroom interactions, and recorded in my leadership journal.

Cycle II.

Introduction.

Cycle II began in January 2010 and ended July 2010. It was in this cycle that actions were underway to notify students of the Saturday SAT preparation program. Part of my instructional duties, as well as a component of my research, was to promote the program to students. I assisted in posting flyers in conspicuous places throughout BBHS announcing the beginning of Saturday SAT prep sessions. Morning and afternoon school-wide announcements were implemented to give perspective enrollees notice of registration deadlines and enrollment limitations. Selected teachers were also asked to announce SAT sessions.

Based on the concerns gathered from Cycle I in regards to the Saturday SAT program, methods for qualitative and quantitative data collection were planned for Cycle II. Because each Saturday SAT program spanned several weeks, each individual session functioned as a distinct subgroup for my action research. Quantitative collection methods consisted of student surveys (see Appendix C) and review of numeric documents. Participant observations and journaling rounded out the qualitative aspect.

Cycle II covered two planned Saturday SAT program sessions. The first was January - April and the second was summer 2010. The first Saturday session was

originally planned as a 12-week session. Only three Saturdays were completed due to inclement weather during this cycle's timeframe and the inability to reschedule SAT sessions. An administrative decision permitted a summer session to be scheduled to accommodate the loss of instruction. A promotional intervention was implemented between the two sessions. This intervention was to increase the visibility of the extended SAT preparation course and to increase student interest. Registration and notification of Saturday SAT preparation program remained the same for these two sessions.

Data collection.

The original timeframe for Cycle II was January-April 2010. Because the first session was curtailed, there were limited data collected in the scheduled January-April 2010 timeframe. In this cycle, attendance records were kept documenting individual student's presence for District record-keeping; however for my research data, I kept weekly attendance totals based on ethnicity. I decided that this approach best suited my research analysis because I wanted to document attendance rates of African American enrollees in comparison to other ethnic/racial groups.

Collective enrollment of the Saturday Sat prep course totaled 104. Of that collection, I had 39 students at my instructional site divided between two instructional sections. The first section was schedule from 8:45 a.m. extending till 10:30 a.m. and the second section from 10:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Qualitative data for this session was comprised of observational notes from instructional sections and leadership journaling. Session curtailment of the January – April session did not allow time for a student survey which involved questions of parental educational levels, knowledge of the SAT, individual demographics, as well as college

plans. Adjustments to data collection were made during the summer session whereby the student survey was administered during the first SAT class meeting. Observational notes at this time documented my concern for overall student participation and ethnicity/gender enrollment.

Changes to the extended SAT program during the summer 2010 session included a single site of instruction instead of three. This was due to space limitations at the other sites during the summer months. All registered students had to report to BBHS. They were told that three sections of students were to be rotated between three instructors. The sessions of instruction were mathematics, language, and technology. The students were grouped into three sections and each section moved between the instructional sessions in 90 minute rotations. Unique to these sessions was the hiring of an English language learner (ELL) instructor to the SAT program. This was due in part to the large enrollment of English as second language (ESL) and ELL students.

Data collection for the summer 2010 session of the extended SAT program included the review of documents, student surveys, observational notes, and leadership journaling. Documentation review included looking at the demographic enrollment of students for the summer session as well as reviewing registration numbers and attendance patterns. Observational notes documented student behaviors and my participatory interactions with the students. Leadership journaling recorded my reflective thoughts of my leadership growth. Student surveys (see Appendix C) were distributed during the first class session. Students were allowed 30 minutes to complete the survey instrument. Student surveys gathered demographic information and open-ended responses so that I would become familiar with the students' college aspirations, family educational

histories, and prior SAT exposure. The surveys also assisted with my instructional strategies so that I could establish baseline student-teacher rapport.

Findings.

Numeric data from the January-April Saturday SAT program abridged sessions showed interest from a variety of students. Table 5.1 represents the total enrollment at the three sites for the scheduled January-April 2010 Saturday SAT program’s a.m. and p.m. sections aggregated by ethnicity, gender, and the number registered.

Table 5.1

Total Student Enrollment January-April 2010 at Three Sites (n = 104)

**Ethnicity/Gender	Number of students registered
White males	10
White females	12
Black males	10
Black females	31
Hispanic males	6
Hispanic females	10
Asian/Pacific males	15
Asian/Pacific females	10

**District ethnic codes

Essential to the sustainability of the extended Saturday and summer SAT preparation program is student attendance. Moreover, for this action research study the attendance of African American students who registered and reported to the Saturday

SAT prep sessions is equally important. The significance of documenting gender and ethnicity at my study site was my attempt to monitor the attendance patterns of each ethnic subgroup based upon gender not only for the findings of this study but to report interest levels to district coordinators and the program supervisor. Table 5.2 represents the total number of students assigned to the research site for both a.m. and p.m. sections during the January – April program timeframe.

Table 5.2

Total Enrollment at Research Site (n = 39)

Ethnicity/Gender	Number of students registered Jan-Apr
White males	6
White females	3
Black males	2
Black females	13
Hispanic males	1
Hispanic females	4
Asian/Pacific males	4
Asian/Pacific females	6

Table 5.3 represents the combined a.m. and p.m. gender/ethnicity attendance counts during the January-April abridged timeframe. As I studied the SAT registration list for the January-April Saturday SAT program, I observed African American students self-enrolling, but I did not see many attending the class sessions when they began.

African American females showed a strong presence in registering, but the African American males showed little interest in enrolling let alone attending class sessions.

Table 5.3

Attendance by Ethnicity/Gender Count at Research Site (n = 39)

Ethnicity/Gender	January 23	January 30	February 6
White males	0	0	0
White females	3	2	3
Black males	1	2	2
Black females	9	7	7
Hispanic males	1	1	0
Hispanic females	2	3	3
Asian/Pacific males	3	4	4
Asian/Pacific females	3	5	3

Ethnicity/gender totals of the summer SAT session is given in table 5.4.

Attendance for the 21-day summer session was taken daily. A table of ethnicity/gender attendance patterns during the summer session does not appear because of the absence of African American participation, a major component of this action research. However, I did record in my observational journal the large number of English language learners (ELL) and English as second language (ESL) students enrolled in this session. These data were pertinent because it shows the expanding interest of non-traditional and

marginalized students enrolling in CAE preparation at BBHS, data that are helpful for oversight and evaluative procedures. Moreover, I noted the high representation of Asian/Pacific females during this preparation session. However, I could not provide evidence on the disinterest of African American student participants in the summer program sessions.

Table 5.4

Total Enrollment for Summer 2010 SAT Session (n = 56)

Ethnicity/Gender	Number of students enrolled
White males	1
White females	5
Black males	0
Black females	8
Hispanic males	4
Hispanic females	8
Asian/Pacific males	9
Asian/Pacific females	20
Native American female	1

Student survey data gathered from the summer participants revealed that half of the students' fathers graduated college and most of the respondents wished to attend a 4-year or 2-year college. Over 50% of the students reported taking at least one Honor or

Advanced Placement (AP) course. Major themes from the open-ended response question “What would you like to gain by attending SAT Prep?” included reaching target scores, improving one section of the SAT, test preparation, and testing fear. Respondent # 24 wrote, “I’m a terrible test taker, so I hopefully will improve on that.” Respondent #7 recorded “I would like to gain knowledge about the SAT, and I would like to be well-prepared so I can be able to take the test without any worries.” Another student participant wrote “I’d like to gain experience with the types of questions I’ll be seeing on the SAT.”

During Cycle II, a promotional intervention for the extended SAT course was implemented. This intervention was planned for April 24, 2010, two days after the scheduled ending of the first Saturday SAT program. The district coordinator that oversees all supplementary services planned a student/parent summit to increase school and community awareness of beneficial school-based programs. The SAT prep instructors decided to present during this summit and wear shirts advertising the districts extended SAT program. Each of the instructors wore either a black or blue shirt with the words SAT on the front and a picture of a student at a desk. On the back was an acronym of the word PREP (**P**reparation **R**eadiness **E**ducational **P**rogress). The goal was to continue increased awareness of the Saturday SAT preparation sessions and to solicit former enrollees for the next session in the summer. I documented in my leadership journal during a SAT instructional meeting on April 22, 2010:

It is my hope that we plan accordingly to keep the students interested in the SAT program. The bad weather forced the cancellations of many SAT days, and I hope we can get returning students for the planned summer session. Whatever we decide to do I am willing to be an active part, even if it causes me to make concessions. I still consider myself a transformational leader, and if I have to

negotiate for a successful Saturday SAT program I will sign on the dotted line.
(Leadership Journal)

The program was modestly attended. Most of the students who attended our presentation were accompanied by a parent. Some parents nodded approvingly when we presented the background and need for a Saturday SAT prep program. After the summit, I documented the experience in my observational journal.

The limited presence of African American and White students during the summer SAT session was a concern for all of the instructors. Only one African American enrolled for the summer session and he did so late and did not appear on initial enrollment figures. Attendance records show he was present for only three sessions. By summer's end, I learned he transferred out of the study district. After instructional sessions the instructors discussed the student population and possible reasons why some subgroups of students were absent. My observational notes discussed the students' preparedness but concentrated more on the missing population.

I know that there was a cap on the number of students allowed for the summer program. Course enrollment is based upon first come registrants, with priority going to junior and senior students. But, why weren't any African American (Black) males pre-registered? Why is overall participation of White students lacking? Is the summer SAT programming a social outlet for some sub-groups of students? Does the program lack endorsement, certification, or has word of mouth, via student circulation, not fully developed? (Observational Journal)

Concerns of the ethnic make-up of the Saturday and future summer sessions will not only be a concern for the contents of this study, but warrants further investigation into student behavior patterns at BBHS. As a teacher who advocates equity, parity, and democratic principles, it is frustrating that high participation expectations were not met.

Limitations.

Limitations associated with this cycle of research are the lack of data from the students who did not return for the summer session after the curtailment of the January-April sessions. Also, informal student interviews of students who failed to attend SAT sections for which they registered may have contributed to instructors' understanding of failure to report to SAT sessions. My own biases of concentrating only on the target population of African American enrollees could have affected my perceptions of the overall SAT program significance. The presence of ELL and ESL students showed their increased interest in SAT preparation. Also, I should have included in my data collection other instructors' perceptions in understanding the absenteeism or lack of interest of certain ethnic groups during the summer session, because their responses could supplement my perceptions of the increasing number of non-traditional minority students seeking SAT preparation.

Leadership application.

After the cancellation of the remaining Saturdays in the January-April program session, I had a gut feeling that the Saturday SAT program would have a substantial drop in interest. In my experience, students are either very committed or very uncommitted. When we were notified that the SAT make-up sessions had to be cancelled due to scheduling conflicts caused by regular school make-up days from the winter storms, I expressed to the overseeing supervisor that we should continue with the SAT sessions during the make-up days. We just had to modify the program and make the proper notifications. I thought it was quite doable. I was notified that it would not be possible. On the day of our first Saturday make-up, I wrote in my leadership journal:

Some concessions just can't be compromised. I firmly believed that we could have modified the SAT program during these make-up sessions. Sometimes leadership needs to view the bigger picture for the students' sake. We will suffer student interest with the cancellation of these Saturday classes. (Leadership Journal)

Conclusion.

At the end of this cycle which concluded July 29, 2010, I was indifferent with the progress that the extended Saturday SAT course was making. The summer session proved that there was still interest in SAT preparation, but certain ethnic subgroups were not fully represented in the enrollment. Few White males participated in the summer sessions and only one African American male showed for three days. Registration and attendance patterns showed favorable participation from the Indian/Pacific, ESL, and ELL student populations. The tables of registration totals, my site student registrants, and actual attendance totals for this program session highlighted the under-representation of not only African American students, but other ethnic subgroups as well. These tables provided excellent data on how the SAT instructors and program supervisors could improve program recognition and better student involvement for the next SAT preparation session and subsequent cycles of this action research project.

The informed intervention for Cycle III was to increase the enrollment of African American students as well as build interest for all students. During the instructional meeting for September-November 2010 SAT sessions, the district coordinator, program supervisor, parent-center personnel, and the instructional team discussed a recruitment plan for increasing the African American enrollment and student interest by developing a reminder system. This system would monitor student registration and place calls about non-reporting students and absenteeism.

Cycle III.

Introduction.

Cycle III began September 2010 and ended November 2010. Utilizing the information gained from Cycles I and II, I attempted to increase enrollment of African Americans in the extended SAT prep course. During the two previous cycles, I gathered data and closely inspected the enrollment of the two planned sessions of the extended SAT program, interviewed key individuals, and documented my participatory observations and leadership development. This SAT preparation session was held for seven weeks. Total enrollment was 75. Only 32 reported to the first session. Similar to Cycle II there was a large registration of African American males and females, however, reality showed that attendance in the sessions was limited.

During this cycle, a second intervention was implemented. The intervention was a monitoring system. The monitoring system consisted of a phone script (see Appendix D) for student absenteeism, student failure to report for the first tutorial, and student failure to report for program sessions. This intervention was instituted as a reminder for all students of their program commitment and the phone calls reiterated that promise. Scripted phone calls were conducted by parent-center personnel to the homes of students who failed to appear for the first day of classes. Phone calls were placed the week following the first scheduled Saturday session and followed for subsequent sessions. Reasons for absenteeism were recorded for each answered call. No response was documented for non-answered calls. The phone call campaign reported changes in students' weekend responsibilities, athletics, and employment as significant factors that influenced some students' attendance patterns.

As mentioned earlier, a major focus of this research was to record the registration and attendance patterns of African American students in the extended SAT program and efforts to enlist and retain these students remained challenging at all three sites. From the number of registered students, 33 African Americans enrolled during this timeframe, however, only one female and male attended at least one program session. Attendance figures showed that African American student participation remained under-represented.

Data collection.

Qualitative data for this cycle continued to be coded from observations, leadership journaling, and adult interviews (see Appendix E). The adult interviewees for this cycle included a purposeful sampling that encompassed those African American teachers involved in the Saturday SAT sessions and one African American teacher who taught in a community-based SAT tutorial. Each adult interview was conducted during mutual planning time. Each interview averaged between 45 and 60 minutes. These interviews provided qualitative data in further understanding African American student SAT preparedness, students' willingness to report for preparation sessions, and the reality of their reluctance in failing to report. Quantitative data in this cycle entailed student surveys (see Appendix C) and registration totals. Of the 32 participants only 29 students responded. Surveys revealed that 46% of the respondents were African American; 79% reside in Bay Beach; and 79% reported that this was their first time taking a SAT course.

Findings.

At the beginning of each class session, I documented the class attendance based on ethnicity/gender. This allowed me to create a tabulation of enrollment data grouped by ethnicity and gender as displayed in table 5.5 for the September-November 2010

session. From the total session enrollment of 75 only 32 students reported and of that only 11 were scheduled for my site.

Table 5.5

Total Student Enrollment September-November 2010 at Three sites (n = 75)

Ethnicity/Gender	Number of students registered
White males	3
White females	8
Black males	10
Black females	23
Hispanic males	5
Hispanic females	13
Asian/Pacific males	6
Asian/Pacific females	7

Combined total ethnicity/gender daily attendance counts are in table 5.6 for both morning sections at the research site. Six students were schedule for the 8:45 a.m. section and five were scheduled for the 10:45 a.m. section. Registration enrollment for this SAT preparation program overall was impressive, but the actual attendance numbers did not reflect this surge. The parent-center continued their services of the phone script and they reported that some students made commitments to attend and that those students

would come to the scheduled sessions. The parent center also reported that some students decided not to attend.

Table 5.6

Ethnicity/Gender Daily Count for Combined Sessions at the Research Site (n = 11)

Ethnicity/gender/ Registration totals	Dates						
	Sept 25	Oct 2	Oct 16	Oct 23	Oct 30	Nov 13	Nov 20
White males (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White females (8)	1	3	2	3	3	3	2
Black males (10)	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Black females (23)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Hispanic males (5)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Hispanic females (13)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific males (6)	0	3	0	2	3	1	2
Asian/Pacific females (7)	0	0	0	1	1	1	1

The intervention of the phone campaign to students' parents allowed me to gain some insight into why some students were failing to report as promised. The parent-center was helpful in making the calls, recording the answers, and reporting if there were no responses. I learned that although I was experiencing difficulties in participation, other sites were consistent in their attendance records.

There were five adult interviewees for this cycle concerning their perceptions of African American student preparedness for SAT testing. Four interviewees were

involved with the extended Saturday SAT program and one had previous experience working with a community-based SAT tutorial program. All are African American educators who are study district employees. Four are male and one is female. The female educator was a district teacher of English for 15 years and transitioned into an administrative position three years ago. Two of the male teachers are teachers of mathematics with 30 years and 15 years of teaching respectively. The other interviewees were an elementary teacher with 20 years of experience, and a secondary English teacher with 2 years of experience. This was a purposeful sampling because as a career teacher, I never discussed at length my deep concerns of the overall historical performance of African Americans' concerning the SAT. The Saturday SAT prep sessions offered me the forum to explore these interests. The perceptions of my ethnic peers, notwithstanding the concerns of my other co-workers, were important for my action research. My motivation was to gain an understanding of a systemic educational problem from life-long and change orientated educators. Each interview was scheduled during mutual planning time, and I allowed a maximum of 60 minutes for each interviewee. Each interview session was transcribed and an MP3 file was emailed to each interviewee for member checking. Themes that emerged from the data were the educators' perceptions of African American students' confidence levels, student apathy, and "no push" from home. These themes are discussed in the following subheadings.

Confidence.

Almost all of the respondents commented about the African American population lack of confidence. The SAT is an exam that increases the tester's anxiety and Goode et

al. (2003) reported the burden of negative performance outcomes by African American students is a result of STT. One of the interviewees reported:

They [African American students] lack confidence in their abilities and they are not surrounded by other students who are like them. They become intimidated. They buy into the notion that they aren't smart enough or that they don't deserve to be there so they quit. They have a fear of the unknown. They don't understand their own abilities.

Another respondent stated:

They don't see it as cool. Many, not all, but many of them want to be "ballers," you know have money and cars and be cool and they don't see education fitting into that puzzle. They think that they don't need it.

Student apathy.

Student apathy was voiced throughout the interviews. The educators believed the lack of participation was due to the students willingly opting not to participate in the SAT sessions. One reply from an interviewee was, "Yes, many students sign up but never show up. I try to encourage my students to take the course and they tell me they are going to, they even enroll, but then they never come to class or only come one time and never return." Additionally, an interviewee stated, "In two sessions, I only had one African American student. I had many more names on a roster list, but only one showed up." One of the interviewees became irate when discussing the lack of student participation, especially African American participation:

It's a great program but not a lot of African American students take advantage of it. Why? I think that they're just too lazy to get up on a Saturday morning and go to a class. This is a free program, A FREE PROGRAM; you mean to tell me that these kids can't spend 2 hours on something that is going to help you in your life?

The respondents felt that the Saturday SAT program was helpful. One interviewee reported:

The district SAT program is a good program. It started off strong the first year, but interest has since dropped. I don't think the program itself should be dropped. It is very important. There is definitely a need in the African American community for a program of this type.

"No push from home."

Parental involvement is important at all educational levels. These five educational leaders displayed similar sentiments. One interviewee said, "...if the parents were more involved and could see the true value of the class, not just from the teacher's perspective but from student's point of view, I think that could be valuable."

Additionally, one respondent commented the following: "Not being pushed from the home, these kids have no idea what is available to them. Also, some kids feel that they 'know enough' they don't need these types of programs." The interviewee who worked in the community based program stated:

The kids look for instant gratification, not interested in putting in the hard work needed to get them to the next level. Also, where is the push from home? Parents aren't supporting and pushing their kids to be successful. Reinforcement of, 'You're going to do better than me,' is not there. In fact, it is quite the opposite; some parents hold their kids back. Maybe it's the economic situation; the parents don't tell their kids that they can do any better. It's the home life you look at.

Limitations.

In Cycle III, it was clear that the Saturday extended SAT prep program was experiencing a lack of interest. The interviewed educators expressed their concerns, but for the most part they felt that the students who "signed up and showed up" improved their confidence as SAT learners. As the participant observer in this study, during this cycle I felt more inclined to question to what extent we have to make students, especially college-bound ones, more concerned with their CAE preparations. Moreover, I questioned that limiting this study to just African American students narrowed my focus

from the larger issue of overall student testing apathy. With all the federal, state, and local governance of educational accountability, students are just “test-tired.”

Leadership applications.

At the beginning of this cycle, I was feeling discouraged. After the October 16th session, I spoke with my co-teacher and we discussed the progress of the program. Both of us co-taught since the first extended SAT sessions and we were discussing the dismal attendance of this session based on the registration number. In the midst of the conversation, I was reminded of Kotter’s (1996) discussion of the downside of change. He cautioned leaders to be mindful of the shifts in the change process that may cause temporary disappointments. He states that these temporary disappointments are mistakes or errors that could be easily avoided if we approach them with awareness and skill (Kotter, 1996). In this cycle I realized that I became victim to the mistakes permitting obstacles to block the vision and failing to create short-term wins. When reviewing my observational and leadership journals, I noticed that much of my writing focused on the scarcity of particular subgroups from the Saturday SAT sessions. I suffered the mistake of “missing the forest for the trees syndrome.” By recalling Kotter’s (1996) eight warnings, I was able to first identify that I was allowing small obstacles to impede the larger vision of the Saturday SAT; which was to provide an opportunity for CAE preparation. These mistakes did not allow me to view the substantial changes that impacted not only students but educators as well. The extended Saturday and summer SAT program exposed the reality of preparation and familiarity of its content to a broader cross section of college-bound and college hopeful students.

Additionally, I was concentrating on the hope of increasing the “sign-up show-up” instead of observing the actual small numbers. I had to be reminded of my leadership knowledge of managing change in order to view the current state of the Saturday SAT program. Kotter discusses the need to mitigate “destructive inertia” which I was adding to the Saturday program by my constant assessment of the small attendance numbers. I had to re-learn the “accentuate the positive, not the negative” attitude.

Conclusion.

I began Cycle III with trepidation, and I did not believe we were making an impact on the students. As this cycle came to an end, I recovered my motivation in the vision of the Saturday SAT program and was confident that the interventions were giving credence to the worth of the program. I recovered with an understanding that change does come with destructive inertia (Kotter, 1996), and it is incumbent of reflective and evolving leaders to be mindful in noticing those “mistakes” that may impede organizational change.

During the instructional planning and implementation meeting in late December 2010, the program supervisor suggested that we plan a school promotional campaign targeting senior English classes and upper-class electives with enrollments of ten or more African American and minority students. The campaign would consist of these students voluntarily answering an SAT prep interest survey (see Appendix F) about SAT preparation. The outcome of this voluntary survey was to gauge student interest as well as gather data as to which students were college-bound and what were their actions to prepare for CAEs. This action was the last intervention to increase African American

student involvement for this study's timeframe, but not the last action to increase future enrollments of the extended Saturday and summer SAT program.

While reflecting on the actions and outcomes of this cycle, I considered: was I truly reflecting? I did not think so, because during this cycle, I remembered that well prepared reflective practice entails three components: my actions, my principles, and my ideas. These three components were not in sync until I remembered Kotter's eight "mistakes." I was not 100% cognizant of practical ideas that concerned continued improvement and development of the extended SAT initiative. These three components were at combinational odds during Cycles II and III. After corrective thinking, I was better prepared to tackle my last action cycle.

Cycle IV.

Introduction.

Cycle IV began January 2011 and ended April 2011. The SAT interest survey (see Appendix F) that was discussed at the conclusion of Cycle III was administered in late December of 2010, two days prior to the winter break. The interest survey was distributed to designated senior English classes and selected elective classes with large enrollments of 10 or more African American and minority students. The interest surveys were distributed to seven classes. Each classroom teacher allowed 15 minutes for the student volunteers to complete the survey. There was a positive response to the surveys by students who expressed interest in the SAT prep program. This was the last scheduled cycle into the investigation of African American students' registration, attendance, and experienced realities in an extended Saturday SAT preparation course.

Data collection.

Data-gathering techniques followed a mixed-methods design. Qualitative techniques consisted of observational notes, leadership journaling, and student interviews (see Appendix G). Interview data involved a purposeful sampling of African American students selected from the four scheduled SAT program sessions that included the abridged January - April 2010 session. Student interviews were scheduled voluntarily during study-hall or lunch assignments within a 45-minute timeframe. Quantitative data collection included SAT prep interest surveys (see Appendix F), student surveys, (see Appendix C), and document review.

Findings.

The intervention of the SAT prep survey was to gather information about how selected juniors and seniors were preparing for SAT success and interest in the Saturday SAT prep program. Data were entered into SPSS and frequencies for each item were tabulated. Twenty-five seniors and 17 juniors responded. Only 15 of the survey respondents or 35% reported studying for the SAT. A cross-tabulation of grade level and taking the SAT revealed that of the 42 survey respondents, only one junior and 13 seniors had at least taken the SAT, for the first time, by December 2010. These data inferred, with the exception of the one junior, that this group of students scheduled their SAT testing late. These data provided evidence that some students at BBHS were delaying taking CAEs. This may provide changes to the SAT programing schedule in the future.

December registration for the January-April 2011 Saturday SAT prep program yielded an enrollment of 62 students. About one third of the student registrants were African American equal to the number of Asian/Pacific students. Of those students, 28

were assigned to my instructional site. Table 5.7 displays the enrollment based upon the descriptive constructs ethnicity and gender at all three sites.

Table 5.7

Total Student Enrollment January-April 2011 (n = 62)

Ethnicity/Gender	Number of students enrolled
White males	2
White females	5
Black males	5
Black females	15
Hispanic males	8
Hispanic females	7
Asian/Pacific males	10
Asian/Pacific females	10

Table 5.8 gives the daily attendance count by ethnicity/gender for both sections (8:45 am and 10:30 am) at my assigned site. It is noteworthy that as in previous cycles and tables of total enrollment and daily counts, student registration was not indicative of actual session attendees.

Table 5.8

Ethnicity/Gender Count for Combined Sessions at the Research Site (n = 15)

Ethnicity/gender	Jan	Jan	Feb	Feb	Feb	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Apr	Apr	Apr
	22	29	5	12	26	5	12	19	26	2	9	16
White male	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
White female	3	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Black male	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Black female	3	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
Hispanic male	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hispanic female	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
*A/PM	3	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
**A/PF	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*A/PM Asian/Pacific males

** A/PF Asian/Pacific females

At the conclusion of this last Cycle of research for the extended SAT preparation program, attendance rates appear to be the bane of the program. Registrations for all program sessions were high, but it did not reflect in actual student attendance. A meeting with the instructors and the program supervisor revealed that a change in timeframe and limiting the number of program sites would concentrate the student population that may improve attendance.

In order to capture African American students' perspective of the extended SAT prep course, I interviewed nine students who registered for the extended SAT sessions. The interviews investigated students' motivation for enrolling in the SAT prep course. The total number of students was the result of choosing three African American SAT

enrollees from Cycle II, Cycle III, and Cycle IV who either enrolled, but failed to attend any sessions, or enrolled and attended some sessions. Only eight of the nine students consented to be interviewed. Four were female and four were male. An additional ninth interview could not be conducted because of scheduling issues. Students' responses about their motivation for registering were analyzed through STT and schooling effects frameworks. Coding of the qualitative data followed the open-coding method of data →category → code→ theme model (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). Interviews occurred in late June 2011. The students reported to a centrally located and conspicuous setting within BBHS during their study hall or lunch assignments. Data from the student interviews showed that certain African American students are engaging in and understanding the need for CAE readiness. They acknowledged their CAE testing concerns, ideas, and perceptions. Their candid responses mirrored those of the two key informants from Cycle I. Themes that emerged were CAE preparedness and SAT vulnerability that will be discussed next.

CAE preparedness.

Each of the interviewees was aware of the need for early preparation for CAE. Three of the interviewees took the SAT for the first time in the spring of their junior year after the mandatory state proficiency exam. The other five took the SAT for the first time during the fall of their senior year. Interviewee #1, a senior who signed up for Saturday SAT but failed to show, took the SAT for the first time in her junior year. She stated "I took SAT January 2010...and I took ACT...uh...April... 2010." She also remembers taking the SAT for a second time in June 2010. Interviewee #2, a female who also never attended a Saturday SAT session, spoke very cavalierly about taking the SAT; however

she was not planning to take it for a second time. During our interview she spoke about a meeting with her guidance counselor:

Well...I didn't really... like I knew I had to take the test...but they didn't say you should take it more than once...I was never told that. I went to my guidance counselor...and she told me ...you know... take it....

The students knew of the importance of test preparedness. Two females that enrolled and stayed for some sessions spoke of the benefits of the Saturday SAT prep. When asked why they enrolled in the SAT prep, interviewee #3 stated:

Just to get an idea of what the SAT would be like, 'cause you hear like so many different aspects of it, so I just wanted to get like the real...some say it will be... it's easy, some say it's hard...some say it's set up a certain way...some say the point system is different...so just to get what it really was.

Interviewee #7 had a very different perspective of the SAT. He was a junior who had currently taken three AP courses and he felt prepared because of his individual work ethic:

...most [of] the people I associate with are all in AP classes so...we expect to work hard...'cause that's what we are always doing...so...the work and how much you have to put forth into it wasn't a problem...because I was one of three people with me at the time was taking it for the first time [SAT]...everyone else was like on their second or third....

Most of the interviewees acknowledged that SAT preparation was integral for a “good” score. Their responses reflected that they did make attempts to improve on their SAT scores and the importance of SAT readiness. However, what they failed to discuss at length were their poor attendance patterns.

SAT vulnerability.

These students were knowledgeable of their emotions regarding their performance on the SAT. Each gave responses to their apprehensions. The student who never attended a Saturday session after registering, interviewee #2, indicated “I have heard

like...some people say...it was racially biased or something...like...and they say for Black students should take the ACT because it's more favorable for us...but, I mean a test is a test....” Interviewee #3 felt the most vulnerability. She occasionally attended two of the scheduled Saturday SAT sessions and enrolled in a community-based program. She was a senior who had previously taken the SAT three times and was scheduled to take the last offering of the ACT. She stated:

I was frustrated...because...I thought that I didn't...I thought that I had all the tools...but it just wasn't showing...on the scores...so...I felt that...you know...like...I was like starting to doubt myself, like I can't do this....

She added “I feel...I probably don't have the right attitude...when I hear SAT...you know? Interviewee # 1 stated “When I think of the SAT, I think of my head hurting, of me being tired and fatigued before and afterwards.” She also added that “I have to do good...because there's a lot of pressure.” When I asked her to continue she admitted:

Like...a...that...I wanna achieve... 'cause when I took ... was taking them [SATs] I wanted to achieve a 1600, so it was a lot of pressure on me like I have to get the 1600. But right now I'm comfortable with my score.

The concerns of these students about the SAT and scoring “well” reflected the literature concerning CAE preparation (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). These findings confirm the research concerning the effects that standardized and CAE testing creates in most educational settings and with certain minority groups (Briggs, 2009; Chait, 2007; Fleming & Garcia, 1998; Gayles, 2009; Kellows & Jones, 2005; Kohn, 2000; McMillian, 2003; Powers, 1998; Steele, 2004; Thompson, 2007; Walpole et al., 2005). The effects mentioned in the literature and evident in this study include: inability to finance preparation courses (Chait, 2007) lack of testing familiarity (Walpole et al., 2007), and time (Thompson, 2007).

Limitations.

One of the major limitations I saw during this cycle was the delay in interviewing the student participants. In planning this action research, I thought that waiting until the end to interview the students would be the best course. I believed that to be so because the Saturday and summer SAT prep classes would have been in operation for eighteen months and student word of mouth, program advertisement, and interventions would have drawn a greater student pool from which to select interviewees. What I did not contemplate was the risk of losing valuable information if any of the students who attended the SAT sessions transferred out of district. Additionally, during this cycle I could have interviewed my supervisor concerning our co-working relationship and how she viewed my leadership capabilities. I overlooked this important data source in documenting my emergent leadership traits.

Leadership application.

Cycle IV was an awakening period for me. After my initial sentiments at the beginning of Cycle III, I thought that I would not be able to rejuvenate my sentiments for the remainder of the study. As I began to instruct and observe during Cycle IV, I was glad to record the resurgence of interest for the Saturday SAT program. Although not all, some students expressed the “sign up and show up” mentality, while others attempted to attend. During these class sessions, I began to look at the student attendance and the growth of the program through the lens of Kotter’s (1996) avoidance of the “8 mistakes.” My journaling became more reflective and I concentrated more on observing how the students arrived happy and were excited to be part of the SAT program. Regardless of the numbers, some students and the instructors were engaging in the lessons.

After our final instructional meeting for this SAT program, the Saturday SAT team instructors' and district administrators' conversations centered around who was benefiting from the Saturday and summer SAT sessions. I journaled:

I observed the discussions centering on the Saturday SAT sessions not only becoming an instructional push for the students but an outlet to discuss, in a more leisurely atmosphere, how and why the SATs or any other college admission exam (CAE) are still important, and that we are here to assist in any capacity. (Observational Journal)

At the conclusion of this SAT program, I was eager to get my co-instructors' responses to my leadership abilities during the month of June when we had half days. Their candid comments are discussed in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

During Cycle IV, I felt more relieved and better focused as a researcher. I had to be reminded of the greater benefits of the Saturday SAT preparation program. Although this action research wanted to document the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of African Americans engaged in a SAT preparation program, I had to be cognizant of the overall vision of the program.

The student interviews allowed me to view the program and the difficulties that surround doing well and preparing for the SAT. As an evolving teacher leader, I must remain conscious of change and the disruptive inertia that may be attached to it. Cycle IV saw an increase in certain ethnic/gender counts and I can only hope that as the extended Saturday SAT prep sessions continue they will see greater numbers.

The next chapter examines the four research questions regarding the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of African Americans in an extended SAT preparation course. The discussion focuses on the importance of this action research,

research recommendations, and implications. Additionally, the development of my leadership and professional growth is examined.

Chapter 6

Final Analysis

Introduction

As partial requirement for a doctoral degree, I studied as a participant observer for 16 months, several sessions of a SAT preparation course. This practical action research (PAR) involved planning and implementing an extended SAT preparation program offered to Bay Beach High School students on a series of Saturdays in 2010 and 2011 as well as special summer sessions. I sought to document and record the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of college-bound students, specifically African Americans, in a college admissions examination (CAE) preparatory course. Additionally, I gathered the perspectives of current and retired educators who assisted in the program.

The extended SAT preparation course concentrated on preparation for and testing familiarity of the SAT. The SAT is one of the most familiar CAEs and one of the most difficult in scoring success. For some college-bound students, taking the SAT evokes emotions of apprehension, anxiety, fear, and frustration (Black, 2005; Briggs, 2009; Gayles, 2009; Jencks & Crouse, 1982; Walpole et al., 2005; Yates, 2001). These causes alone have forced some students to seek assistance in SAT testing practices either through private tutorials, school extension programs, on-line or commercial tools, community-based assistance, or independent in-depth study (Briggs, 2001; Briggs 2009; Gayles, 2009; Lane, Kalberg, Mofield, Wehby, & Parks, 2009; Powers, 1982, 1993, 1998; Powers & Rock, 1999; Zuman, 1988).

The Saturday SAT program was instituted and completely funded to provide SAT preparation opportunities to traditionally marginalized students with limited exposure to CAEs and for students who could not attend the regular school day class. The sessions were open to all Bay Beach High School (BBHS) students who registered on a first come first served basis with priority given to junior and senior students.

The purpose of this study was three-fold. The first was to document student registration and attendance patterns of African American students who self-selected to enroll in the Saturday SAT preparation program from January 2010 to April 2011. This action research study consisted of four cycles over the span of 18 months. The first cycle functioned as reconnaissance into the impetus of the SAT Saturday program. The subsequent three cycles functioned as subgroups of an action research study in hopes to explore the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of some African American students who self-enrolled in the SAT sessions. The second function of the study was to record African American students' perceptions of SAT readiness in addition to those of purposely selected secondary educators regarding the experienced reality of African American students.

An additional purpose of this study was to affirm my espoused leadership styles and document my emergent ones. In undertaking this PAR, I wanted to be cognizant of my role as a teacher leader who believes education is truly a democratic social endeavor and that my leadership beliefs remain grounded in social justice and transformational ideations. Upon final reflections, I believe there are key reasons why I wanted to research and instruct in CAE preparation. First, I was not afforded the opportunity to

adequately prepare for my own CAE and second, I wanted to afford my students and others attending BBHS access to CAE preparation.

A teacher leader that contributes to school improvements and learning outcomes is a leader that acknowledges the responsibilities of professional practices that motivates and leads other educational stakeholders. The improvement of teaching practices, student achievement, and professional recognition are aspects of good teacher leaders. This chapter addresses the study's research questions, analysis of leadership, project analysis, and conclusion. It also provides recommendations for implementing a SAT preparation program.

Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions. The first two concerned African American participation in an extended SAT preparation course and the other two questions pertained to my leadership development throughout the study. Research questions (RQ) #1 and #2 attempted to supplement and increase the limited research that pertains to perceptions of college admission examination (CAE) preparation practices for traditionally marginalized populations, particularly African American students. Motivations for these research questions resulted from equity concerns and my instructional interests, as well as the research of standardized admission tests perceptions conducted by Walpole et al. (2005). RQs #3 and #4 respectively report the extent, if any, my role as a teacher leader influenced the SAT change initiative and how my leadership impacted change within BBHS. The next sub-headings of this chapter provide an analysis of the four research questions.

RQ #1.

1. What factors influence some college-bound African American students to register, attend, and experience a SAT preparation course?

From the data collected via observational notes, student surveys, and interviews, student participants believed that the extended preparation course was beneficial in improving their chances of scoring “high” or achieving their target score for selected college admission. The factor of attaining a high score was the most prevalent factor for these student interviewees. Moreover, most believed that the Saturday and summer SAT program prepared them for SAT testing familiarity. Additionally, the student interviewees expressed basic knowledge of the SAT and how attaining a “good score” may contribute to post-secondary schooling acceptances. Overall, the student interviewees for this study believed that attaining a high score, testing familiarity, and college choice acceptance were justifying factors for enrolling in the Saturday SAT preparation course.

The current study could not ascertain why some students did not enroll in the extended Saturday program. However, there were some recorded factors in regards to those students who did register but failed to report. Documentation from the phone call campaign reported changes in students’ weekend familial responsibilities, athletics, and employment as significant factors that influenced some students’ attendance patterns.

In relation to the interpretive frameworks of Stereotype Threat (STT) and schooling effects, the data were conclusive that essential components of both affected student decisions to enroll in the SAT preparation program. Two of the student interviewees openly expressed anxiety and anger which associate with STT themes of

low achievement and disinterest (Goode et al., 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2005; McGlone & Aronson, 2007; Osborne, 2007). One student in her interview articulated feelings of anxiety whenever the SAT was discussed. All of the student interviewees voiced the importance of doing “well” on the SAT, and that there were negative connotations for not meeting this expectation. Although doing “well” was not clearly defined by any of the students it could be inferred that these students had negative feelings if their scores were lower than those of their BBHS peers.

The opportunity to learn structure (OTL), an element of schooling effects, also appeared in the student interviews. According to OTL literature, schooling structures should provide equal access to quality instruction, materials, and technology (Starratt, 2003). Student interviewees recognized that BBHS developed the SAT preparation program so all students had an opportunity to improve their SAT scores. However, some student interviewees also acknowledged that certain schooling stakeholders (teachers, guidance officials) did not clearly explain the processes of preparing for college admission exams which according to OTL functions as an obstacle to opportunities (Kao and Thompson, 2003; Lubienski, 2006; Tate, 2004). Although some BBHS school officials had knowledge of the Saturday SAT program, not all did. This placed obstacles in providing opportunities for some students to improve their SAT outcomes.

Saturday SAT attendance in this study suggested that CAE preparation provided an opportunity to learn, but it was underutilized. My informal investigations at BBHS provided some evidence that many teachers have recommended students to enroll and participate in the Saturday SAT program, but more efforts are needed. Therefore, BBHS has planned more interventions to increase student participation.

Three of the student interviewees recognized that enrollment into a SAT preparation course aids in testing familiarity and readiness which gave them an opportunity to “do well” on the SAT. Moreover, two students identified that high school counselors influenced them to take the SAT, but had not recommended to students that they prepare prior to taking the test. This is an area that warrants further study.

RQ #2.

2. What are some concerns of African American educators relative to college admission exams (CAE) preparedness efforts of African American college-bound students?

The African American retired and active educators who interviewed for the current study were quite candid in their interview responses, not only as to the limited presence of African American students, but to the overall student apathy towards CAE preparedness. With the exception of the summer session, attendance during the Saturday sessions was sporadic. All of the educators expressed a concern for the “sign-up” but failure to “show up” syndrome that permeated the Saturday SAT program sessions. Schooling effects highlights the concerns of educational researchers, policy-makers, leaders, teachers, and students and the need to improve learning strategies for all students especially optimizing school resources. From these educators’ perceptions, the schooling effects that could hamper African American participation were negated because of equity, use of school resources, and opportunity structures that the extended Saturday and summer SAT prep courses offered self-enrolled students. Furthermore, these educators acknowledged the financial and supplementary assistance that the federal and state governments offer students meeting certain demographic, economic, and academic

criteria in assuaging adverse schooling effects. BBHS offers a SAT fee waiver for those students taking the test for the first time in addition to meeting certain economic criteria.

Most of the educators were not familiar with STT, but they admitted experiencing its effects during their high school and collegiate years. All of the adult interviewees concurred that their direct involvement either in instructing, planning, or implementing SAT preparation programs was based on their desire to give all students opportunities of which they themselves were not able to partake. Although unknowing, each of the adult interviewees referenced Tate's (2004) Opportunity to Learn (OTL) framework elements of time, quality, and design of educational factors. All the adult interviewees stressed that time to engage the SAT program was one that was the most difficult for the students. Each of the interviewees agreed that the Saturday SAT preparation program was a worthwhile educational endeavor, and by their collective standards one of quality. The adult interviewees believed that all of the students who registered but failed to maintain high attendance levels missed a great opportunity in preparing for SAT testing.

RQ#3.

3. How has my input as a veteran teacher leader influenced an extended SAT preparation program?

In regards to this question, I surveyed five SAT co-workers as to my involvement in the Saturday and summer extended SAT initiative. The leadership survey (Appendix H) consisted of three questions pertaining to my leadership interactions during this study's timeframe. After coding the responses, the themes that surfaced were that I provided opportunities, shared practices, displayed leadership, and held a deep understanding of content material. One colleague commented:

Mr. Coleman demonstrated excellent qualities during the summer SAT prep sessions. He was focused, organized, and motivating. He was always available to both students and instructors for help, ideas, and general support. His ability to judge a situation and prevent any problems before they began is a testament to his leadership abilities.

In Chapter 2 of this study, I acknowledged Glickman's (2007) discussion of teacher leaders' developmental abilities as a continuum of growth in engagements of teaching, learning, and knowing. I strived to display those attributes as a teacher leader that I had maintained in the regular classroom into the context of the extended SAT initiative. Additionally, I attempted to display in the SAT sessions those qualities of a teacher leader that Danielson (2007) describes as developing meaningful relationships and extending his influence.

Another SAT colleague wrote:

Mr. Coleman showed leadership through his depth of knowledge about the SAT test and math content. Lessons were always prepared and well thought out. Mr. Coleman also showed leadership by collaborating with me and other SAT teachers. He has the ability to share his expertise with other teachers without putting their current practices down. His passion for education will inspire teachers.

As a high school mathematics teacher for over 20 years, I placed great emphasis in developing students' appreciation of mathematic inquiry as well as overall academic integrity. I tried to demonstrate this to the SAT students during instructional activities. A SAT instructor commented: "While working with SAT students Mr. Coleman made sure to frame his instruction beyond mere "test-prep." He made it clear to his students that his course was a means of gaining opportunities, not just getting a good score."

From the inception of the extended SAT initiative, I sought to exhibit those teacher leader traits that fostered knowledge, leadership, and care. Although for the past 16 months in the extended SAT program my primary role was a participant observer, I

nonetheless kept foregrounded my teacher leader characteristics. The observations of my SAT colleagues provided evidence that RQ #3 was addressed.

RQ#4.

4. As a result of this action research project, how did my leadership impact change at BBHS and how did I change as an educational leader?

In Chapter 1 of this study, I discussed that this was the first time I co-led a district-wide initiative and participated in an instructional collaboration with co-workers with whom I never cooperated professionally. This study provided me the opportunity to showcase my instructional and leadership abilities to students, teachers, and district personnel with whom during the regular school day I would not interact. My involvement as an instructional leader in the extended Saturday SAT initiative impacted change at Bay Beach High School as it pertains to promoting access, expanding opportunity, and shifting perceptions.

In Chapter 2 of this study, I stated that my leadership style aims not to “espouse certain theories or positions, but to explain my platform as a fusion of practices and theories that have guided me in my progression as a teacher, leader, life-long learner, and parent.” I listed democratic and social justice theories as contributing to my leadership fusion.

Social justice theory is an emancipatory ideology that enables individuals to acknowledge and explain social inequities and oppressive conditions which as a by-product also promotes equity of access and opportunity in educational settings (Freire, 1985; Giroux, 2008; Kohn, 1992, 1999, 2000). As a social justice proponent, and after collection of reconnaissance data, it was my intention to help co-plan and implement a

CAE preparation course that promoted accessibility to all BBHS students. Although there were capacity limitations, enrolled students only had to “sign up” and “show up.” At their assigned site, students received testing information and preparation. I impacted change at BBHS by continuing to support those practices that encourage correction of educational inequities. The Saturday SAT preparation program provided free access to all students.

Democratic leadership promotes shared understandings that lead to common directions and improve the school experience inclusively for all members. It was apparent through the testimonies of my co-instructors that I exhibited leadership qualities that were democratic in nature. These qualities were also displayed during our Saturday and summer SAT planning sessions. It was in those meetings that the team members’ ideas were considered and often instituted. During one of the planning sessions, I was reminded of Reitzug and O’Hair’s (2002) observation that “leadership is grounded in assumptions that all individuals in the school community have knowledge and the insight can contribute to, and enhance the work of the school” (p.122). Our meetings were collaborative, personal, participatory, and reciprocal, all of which are foundations of democratic participation.

Democratic principles also allow for growth and expansion. My democratic leadership style helped promote the expanding CAE preparation. I mentioned earlier in this discussion that democratic leadership fosters shared understandings that lead to common directions and improves the school experience for all members. Expanding the SAT prep course provided opportunities for students who could not afford outside assistance or the purchase of study materials. In expanding the SAT preparation course

to Saturday and summer instruction, it impacted expanding opportunities for increasing SAT preparedness for enrolled students.

In co-planning, implementing, and promoting a Saturday SAT prep program, my leadership impacted BBHS by managing the shift in perceptions and culture of SAT preparedness. One of the key informants from the discussion in Cycle I mentioned that he could not afford nor had the opportunity to enroll in SAT review courses. Additionally, key informant #2 stated that BBHS had issues of equity in past SAT preparation models. The extended Saturday SAT initiative promoted a cultural shift from an isolated selective personal preparedness model normally associated with CAE preparation to a more open and communal application. The shift to a larger more communal or organizational ownership of increasing CAE preparation, specifically preparedness for the SAT, involved cultural change.

Culture as defined by Schein (2004) is a learning process that is partially influenced by leadership behavior. This learning process involves shared group assumptions of perceiving, thinking, and problem solving. The old cultural model of SAT preparation at BBHS was isolate and held personal ownership. Several of my co-workers talked informally about the way that some students historically prepared for the SAT. It was mostly an individual endeavor and many students did not engage in study groups. They explained that the old model was elitist whereby very few students could afford the cost of preparation. The extended Saturday model attempted to expand that cultural model to incorporate more inclusive perceptions, populations, and support. Schein added that leadership is cultural creation and management.

In co-planning and leading an extended Saturday SAT prep course, I intended to be cognizant of those issues that involved shifting perceptions or cultural change. My leadership impacted BBHS in changing the assumptions about SAT preparedness. Transformational leadership is a leadership style that promotes changes in perceptions and expectations (Burns, 1978). It also involves motivating shared leadership and organizational goals (Bass, 1985). I tried to display a transformational leadership style during the 16 months of this research study. Additionally, I attempted to impact change in utilizing Fullan's (2001) understanding that "leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups—especially with people different than themselves" (p. 5). The extended Saturday and summer SAT program included many different people who wanted to help fulfill the need for CAE preparedness.

Leadership Analysis

An important component of this research was to study my leadership traits and observe emerging ones. In Chapter 4, I listed transformational as a leadership quality that I display in my teaching, learning, and growing experiences. During this study's timeframe, I documented that I developed transactional leadership qualities because of the nature of my study. These leadership traits complemented, for me in this study, those ideations of democracy and social justice. Fullan's (2001) discussion of leading in cultural change and Kotter's (1996) observations of leading change assisted me in understanding my emergent leadership growth.

As an evolving teacher leader I was mindful of my leadership styles and emerging ones. During Cycle II, I documented a new understanding in my leadership practices. Transactional leadership permeated my already established leadership traits of

democracy, transformation, social justice, and ethics of care. The extended SAT initiative provided me the opportunity to engage in transactional leadership as I interacted with students and staff in co-developing a sustainable schooling initiative.

Understanding that a transactional approach to leadership involves organizational management and accountability (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978), I attempted to be cognizant of these two components during the Saturday SAT sessions. During the course of this study, I found that management and accountability enhanced the operation of the extended SAT initiative. Instructors understood their duties and responsibilities based upon the initial job descriptions and the student enrollees were notified of their responsibilities by signing a document of “trust” contract during program registration. This “trust” contract explained the student responsibilities, such as it was important for them to appear in class for the program duration. Other co-managerial “negotiations,” as the study progressed, centered on site locations, placement of instructors, allocation of materials, and the selection of Saturday dates that were beneficial to the instructors and reflective of the school calendar. These “negotiations” I believe, will continue as long as the Saturday and summer SAT sessions remain a priority to the BBHS school district.

Changing SAT preparation by adding a Saturday program offered new academic options and SAT preparedness and support for some BBHS students. I found that “managerial accountability” enhanced the application of my combined leadership approaches. My practiced leadership traits enabled me to co-lead SAT instructors into a sustainable program at BBHS. I attempted to incorporate all of my teacher leader skills as I co-lead and developed the extended SAT preparation program. I plan to continue my leadership improvement by continually monitoring my emerging and practiced leadership

traits in various district and professional capacities. Additionally, I plan to strive to change traditional and out-dated thinking about attaining higher education. Moreover, I need to reflect, expand, appreciate, and extend my teacher leader qualities so that students that stem from a background similar to mine will not have to encounter schooling obstacles and unnecessary challenges during their educational pursuits.

Project Analysis

Findings.

This research attempted to highlight my observations and leadership growth in a schooling initiative to provide college admission examination (CAE) information, preparation, and familiarity to a group of self-enrolled students. Specifically, the initiative concentrated on developing SAT readiness and college testing skills for all students; however, this study's focus documented the registration, attendance, and reality of African American students. STT and schooling effects were the theoretical lenses that underlined this study. From the collected data in this study, elements of STT were acknowledged, but they were not as prevalent as schooling effects in determining why some African American students did or did not enroll in the Saturday SAT program. The research demonstrated that there exists some interest in an extended SAT preparation course; however interest was marginal at best for certain subgroups of students. This was affirmed in interviews from the student and adult participants, student surveys, and in my observational journaling. Yet, the findings also revealed, at least in this study's environment, that there appears to be some student apathy in attending a Saturday SAT preparation class. Though the number of registered students for all sections of the

Saturday SAT reflected the demographic characteristics of BBHS, the actual student attendance patterns presented a different account.

In response to this study's goals, I aimed to show that the frameworks of STT and schooling effects helped in identifying some influences as to why some African American students self-enrolled or not, in a SAT preparatory course. This research indicated that the interpretive frameworks were influential in identifying the concerns of those African American students who enrolled, but it was inconclusive as to those who did not. Additionally, the frameworks, in regards to this study, assisted in identifying the adult participants' perceptions of their African American students' CAE preparedness.

Implications and Recommendations.

The results of this practical research study and my involvement as a participant observer provided insights into establishing a school-wide initiative that fostered equity, opportunity, and access. The extended Saturday SAT preparatory sessions illustrated equity in that they increased the visibility of the study district's emphasis on college preparedness and its commitment in providing services to all its students regardless of socioeconomic status, academic proficiency, and future academic pursuits. Additionally, the SAT change initiative fostered opportunity and access to college testing preparedness through program design. The extended SAT program was centrally located at three different sites for easy student access. It provided materials and instruction free of cost and if a student qualified for free or reduced lunch, the cost of the first SAT examination was covered.

In documenting the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of some African American students, the study provided data that further investigations are

warranted into CAE preparation for this population. The student participants in this study may or may not be representative of the collective African American college-bound students, but comparisons of their CAE preparation can be paralleled to existing research into CAE preparation. This study adds to the research of Walpole et al. (2005) in that all students are pressured by CAEs and that African American students as well as other marginalized populations may require more preparation.

The school district in which BBHS is located has made CAE preparation one of its priorities. Having instituted an all-inclusive college trajectory educational program for all of its students, there appears to be a passive approach to college planning and promotion for some BBHS students. This research revealed that motivating students for college planning cannot be a passive approach; students need to be both motivated and encouraged to take a more active role in their collegiate pursuits.

Educating a student population that is over 70% traditionally marginalized and ethnically diverse students, requires an understanding of non-traditional inhibitors to college preparedness. Recommendations for establishing a Saturday SAT program should focus on pre-surveying student interest, involving all educational stakeholders in advocating CAE preparedness, piloting a Saturday program before establishing a district-wide plan, and researching college growing rates aggregated by ethnicity in order to determine subgroups that require special interest.

Conclusions

This practical action research helped in identifying the need to expand SAT preparation at BBHS and how difficult the process was for the attendance of certain subgroups of students. With the increasing numbers of non-traditional students enrolling

in college, educators must be mindful to provide opportunities for CAE preparedness for these students. Additionally, be mindful of Fullan's (2001) statement that "leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups—especially with people different than themselves" (p. 5). The extended Saturday and summer SAT program provided access to a larger number students that the regular school day offering could not provide. In that, I believed that the extended SAT instructors, program supervisors, and district coordinators provided the building of relationships that Fullan promoted. The SAT change initiative sought to provide additional CAE preparation to students who could not, for varying reasons, attend the regular day offering or afford outside assistance. My position in the SAT expansion was to co-plan, instruct, and promote testing preparedness. Those students who self-enrolled and attended the preparation sessions received instruction in English, mathematics, and computer related skill development. Student responses stated that the program was indeed helpful in providing them skills for scoring success.

This research attempted to highlight my observations and leadership growth in a schooling initiative to provide college admission exam (CAE) familiarity to a group of self-enrolled students. Specifically, the initiative concentrated on developing SAT testing skills for all students; however this study documented the registration, attendance, and experienced reality of African American students. Additionally, the study recorded African American educators' perceptions of registered students, particularly African American enrollees.

The findings demonstrated, at least for this study, that there appears to be some student apathy towards attending a Saturday SAT preparation class. The students who

reported did display interest and willingness to engage in SAT preparation, but the number of students who attended did not reflect the actual student registration numbers.

At the conclusion of my study, I was still rather perplexed as to why some students signed up but was reluctant to show. I asked one of my colleagues who had established a SAT preparation course in a very large Southern urban city. She suggested that many students, affluent or not, had some sentiments that suggested that a free preparation or tutorial program may appear as a government entitlement program. As absurd as that sounds, she stated that was one of the concerns that students felt and any attachment to that may appear as needy. I said to her I never considered that as a possibility of the lack of participation in our program. That was a very interesting caveat and one that I would investigate further as our program continues.

Furthermore, the research demonstrated that there is a need in the study's contextual environment for an extended SAT preparation course. There are a substantial number of students reporting or planning at some juncture to attend college, but the actual number of students taking or preparing for CAEs was not as significant. In response to this study's goals, I aimed to show that the frameworks of STT and schooling effects were some causes as to why some African American students were reluctant to self-enroll in a SAT preparatory class. This research confirmed aspects of both frameworks, but was unable to fully ascertain correlations to CAE readiness or low attendance patterns.

Continued research into the preparation of CAEs for this research site's student population is necessary. The preparation practices of the student population for CAE needs to be researched further in hopes to improve upon what is truly needed for this

particular group of college-bound students. The Saturday SAT initiative began with great expectations, but a review of the program's objectives needs to be reevaluated. Instead of concentrating on a small subgroup of student participants, a much broader representation of all students could shed understanding as to why there was a falling away of student interest. Moreover, concentration of the SAT sessions into one site could help in boosting retention rates for all students.

In hindsight as the extended SAT program was forming, I could have extended my reconnaissance further. During Cycle I, I should have scheduled time to investigate current SAT or CAE preparation courses operating in the research area. That includes community-based, religious, commercial, or private tutorials. This could possibly assist in explaining some student subgroups non-participation, especially the top-tiered students because none of the top 50 BBHS graduates of 2010 registered for the extended SAT program. I suggest the following in establishing an in-school extended SAT program:

1. Do a thorough investigation of existing community programs.
2. Pre-survey your student population.
3. Involve parents early.
4. If possible, provide instructional sites that nullify residential segregation.
5. Establish program credibility (i.e. instructors' credentials, SAT certified instructor).
6. Promote program visibility.
7. Plan active approaches that involve all educational stakeholders.

As for my development professionally, it was a truly enlightening experience, from both a researcher's perspective and an educator's one. I learned a great deal

including that I should have performed a more thorough reconnaissance of established community-based or independent SAT preparation classes. In doing so, I could have documented appropriately other instances why certain student subgroups were not fully represented. In relation to my leadership development, I was aware of my slow growth as a transactional leader and recognizing that “managerial negotiations” can be beneficial in educational contexts if applied appropriately. Although, I counted myself as a transformational leader who espouses social democratic beliefs, I saw myself in many instances` negotiating educational services and needs.

During this research study, I grew in my capacity as a teacher leader. Many of my colleagues were interested in my research study and helped in addressing the needs of student attendance and program credibility whereas others were more concerned about how they would address me post-doctorate. Nonetheless, I will continue to improve upon my teacher leader interactions and seek ways of improving overall student apathy towards learning. Additionally, I will continue in my capacity of Saturday and summer SAT program instructor as well as continue to research the phenomena of the high registration and low attendance patterns of certain subgroups of students in the extended SAT preparation program.

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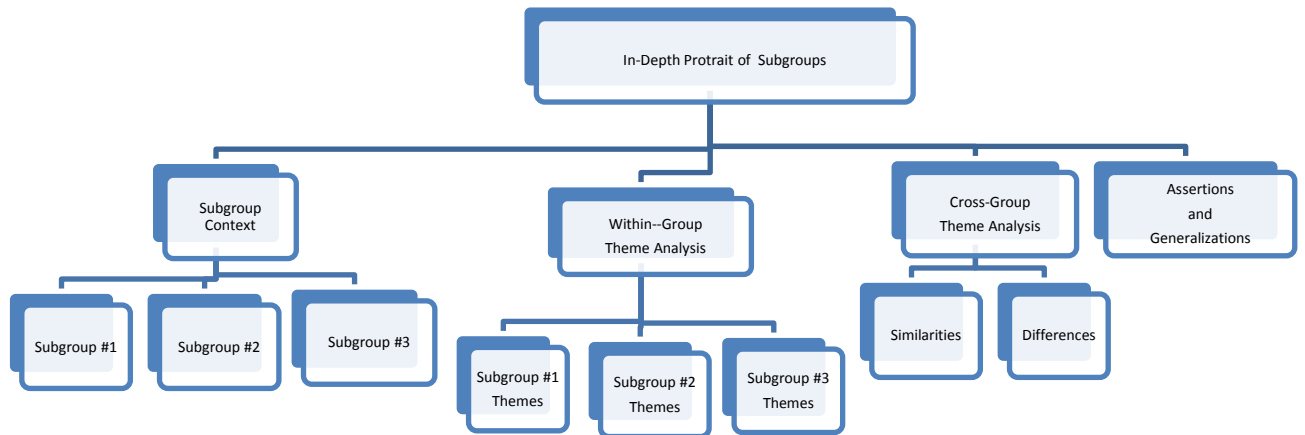
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Appendix A

Template of Sub-group Analysis



Appendix B
Informant Questions

1. What were your experiences as a student preparing for the SAT?

2. What were your experiences as a teacher in preparing students for the SAT?

3. In the past were there any district programs for SAT preparation?

Appendix C

SAT Student Survey

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Answer the following questions as best you can.

1. What do the letters in SAT define?
2. Did your father graduate college?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
3. Did your mother graduate college?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
4. Do you have a brother or sister who graduated college?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
5. Have you ever taken honors or AP (advanced placement) courses?
 - a. yes
 - b. no (skip item #7)
6. What honors or AP courses have you taken?
 - a. English only
 - b. Math only
 - c. English and Math only
 - d. English, Math, and other
7. How would you self-describe your racial/ethnicity?
 - a. White
 - b. Black
 - c. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - d. Hispanic/Latino (non-White)
 - e. Native/Alaskan
 - f. Other

Appendix D

Phone Script

This is _____ calling from the Bay Beach Parent-Center. I am calling because you were absent for the first SAT session Saturday_____. You are only allowed (2) excused absences, Do you plan to continue in the program?

If the answer is yes, please report to your assigned site.

Do you know where your site is?

If no your site is _____.

Thank you for your support.

Appendix E

Interview Questions for Adults

1. How many years have you taught?
2. What is your area of expertise?
3. Have you any experience in teaching SAT preparation courses?
4. How many years?
5. What, if any, were your experiences in SAT preparation or coaching prior to this program?
6. What are some comments you may have with this SAT Saturday program?
7. How would you describe your SAT learners?
8. Are there any particular sub groups of students that could benefit the most from this SAT preparation program?
9. In your SAT student population, what percentage would you estimate are African American?
10. Are there a low percentage of African American enrollees?
11. What would you say could possibly contribute to this low enrollment?
12. What would you suggest to increase African American enrollment?

Appendix F

SAT Interest Questionnaire

Please answer all items with honest responses.

1. What is your current grade level status?
 - a. Sophomore
 - b. Junior
 - c. Senior

2. Are you considering attending a college or university?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. Have any of your immediate family members attended or graduated from college?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Have you taken the SAT?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. Did you study or have any prior preparation for the SAT? If no, go on to item #7
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

6. How did you prepare for the SAT? Answer only one.
 - a. Private tutor
 - b. Computer software
 - c. Online tutorials
 - d. Study alone
 - e. School-sponsored test prep class
 - f. Commercial books/materials

7. How would you self-describe your racial/ethnicity?
 - a. White
 - b. Black
 - c. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - d. Hispanic/Latino (Non-White)
 - e. Native/Alaskan

Appendix G

Student Interview Questions

1. How would you describe yourself racially/ethnically?
2. What is your current age?
3. What is your current grade level?
4. Where do you live?
5. How would you describe yourself academically?
6. Do you plan to continue your education after graduating high school?
7. What type of schooling are you considering? What school?
8. Did you take or are you considering taking the SAT or ACT? When?
9. How many times have you taken the SAT?
10. Would you like to tell me your overall first score on the SAT?
11. Why did you retake the SAT?
12. Have any of your family members attended or graduated from college?
13. Have any of your family members ever talk about or discuss the SAT?
14. What thoughts come to mind when you hear the word SAT? Can you explain further?
15. What kind of comments have you heard from classmates, friends, or family members about the SAT?
16. In what ways did you prepare for the SAT?
17. For what reasons, if any, would you enroll in a SAT preparation course?

Appendix H

SAT Teacher Leader Survey

1. What qualities of leadership, if any, did Mr. Coleman demonstrate during the SAT preparation sessions?
2. What leadership qualities did Mr. Coleman demonstrate while working with SAT prep students?
3. What suggestions, if any, do you believe Mr. Coleman needs in order to improve as an aspiring teacher leader?