CHAPTER 3

Critical Race Case Study on College Choice

Racialization in School Culture and Climate

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This chapter presents a qualitative case study that examined the college-going processes of an under-resourced and highly racialized urban high school with a large Latina/o student population. At the organizational level, the study revealed the conceptualization and application of college-going efforts within the larger school culture. At the student level, the study identified how college-going efforts shaped the college choice, transition, and navigation pathways of Latina/o students who aspired to earn a bachelor's degree.

In California, Latinas/os represent 53% of the K–12 public school population and are the fastest growing group in the K–12 sector nationwide (California Department of Education, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, schools with large populations of Latina/o students offer inferior academic resources (Rogers, Fanelli, Freelon, Medina, Bertrand, & Del Razo, 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that Latinas/os are underrepresented in 4-year colleges and maintain the lowest educational outcomes among all racial groups (Fry, 2004; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). The educational statistics result in one of education’s most vexing problems because Latina/o students have high educational aspirations and want to attend college (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Pew Hispanic Center, 2005; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Allensworth, 2006; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). The lack of counselors in schools contributes to the problem and instead of receiving individual college guidance students obtain information in school group settings (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2008). Although schools aim to develop strong college-going cultures, the amount and type of resources available to a school influence the effectiveness of efforts that provide information to all students (Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2003).
Given the increase in Latina/o population and educators resorting to a college-going culture, this chapter examines the college-going efforts of educators at Academies High School (AHS) and the college choice and integration processes of Latina/o students. With the study, I aimed to understand how educators in an under-resourced school developed a college-going climate and informed the post-secondary pathways of Latina/o students. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the structure and culture of Academies High School?
2. How do Academies High School educators utilize policies, resources, and practices to develop a college-going climate within the larger school culture?
3. How do Academies High School Latina/o students with high educational aspirations develop college-going and college-navigating identities?

This chapter reveals examples of caring educators situated within institutional instability that presented obstacles to improve college-going efforts. In addition, multiple climates in the school served to counter college-going efforts and resulted in the stratification between 4-year college preparation and tracking into vocational programs of aspiring community college students. Finally, this chapter presents a college-going and navigation identity development process to exemplify how students' racial, gender, class, and immigration status influenced the established high aspirations of Latina/o students and the determination to meet educational goals despite foreseeable obstacles.

Overall, this study reveals how institutional processes can both create and close the gap between high aspirations to attend college and the educational outcomes of Latinas/os. In addition, I discuss why researchers who conduct future studies should use a critical framework to reveal systemic injustices experienced by students of color.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although my goal in using a qualitative case study was to develop a theoretical understanding of a topic, a case study design alone was insufficient to build theory (Diaz Andrade, 2009). Therefore, I included a strong theoretical foundation to build theory from findings (Yin, 2013) and I applied critical race theory in education (CRTE).

Critical Race Theory in Education

Critical race theory (CRT) began in the legal field during the 1970s. However, education scholars began to utilize CRT as a research tool during the 1990s (Solorzano, 1998). Solorzano (1998) defines critical race theory in education as a framework, which "challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups" (p. 122). Solorzano (1998) identifies five principal tenets of CRTE after drawing from several fields, including ethnic studies, history, law, psychology, sociology, and education. The tenets call for scholars to (1) centralize race and racism, (2) challenge the dominant perspective, (3) commit to social justice, (4) value experiential knowledge, and (5) conduct interdisciplinary research. In this study, I examined the concepts of race and racism as they intersected with other forms of subordination, such as gender and class. Since I aimed to understand how Latina/o students experienced college-going efforts I conducted multiple interviews with Latina/o students and educators of color, which revealed the deficit ideologies that students overcame.

In addition, because I focused on Latinas/os, I also used LatCrit—a branch of critical race theory—to guide the study. LatCrit enables researchers to understand, analyze, and articulate the specific experiences of Latinas/os through a closer examination of the unique forms of oppression that Latinas/os encounter (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). The framework acknowledges the particular needs of Latina/o communities, such as issues of immigration status, language, and culture. In particular, the integration of LatCrit facilitated the analysis of students who experienced educational inequities due to an undocumented immigration status. Finally, the implementation of LatCrit and CRTE frameworks challenges contemporary deficit thinking in educational research as defined by Valencia and Solorzano (1997).

School Culture

The concept of school culture also informed this study to examine the college-going efforts at AHS. Because a relationship exists between school culture and climate (Miner, 1995), I merged the conceptualization of Schein (1985, 1996), Steele and Jenks (1977), and Rodriguez and Brown (2009) to define school culture as a set of actions informed by the intersections of school structures, climates, and individual agency. I defined school structures to include school history and policies. School climate entailed the prevailing standards, attitudes, and practices enacted by administrators and teachers within spaces in the school and classrooms. Therefore, I used the term college-going climate, as opposed to college-going culture, which is used widely in education research. Finally, I defined individual agency to include the ideologies, perceptions, experiences, and actions of students, teachers, and administrators.

College-Choice Organizational Habitus

To bridge the school- and student-level processes, college-choice organizational habitus also informed this study. McDonough (1997) expands on Bourdieu’s (1979) concept of habitus to develop college-choice organizational habitus. First,
McDonough (1997) accounts for the role of institutions shaping individual agency and established organizational *habitus*, which she defines as the “impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual’s behavior, through an intermediate organization” (p. 107). Although McDonough (1997) categorizes “groups” through social class, the concept of organizational *habitus* allows for race to serve as a critical dimension in how “dispositions, perceptions, and appreciations” are organized (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004, p. 76). Second, McDonough (1997) establishes a college-choice organizational *habitus* to refer to the “patterns of college-choices and behaviors that are manifested in schools with similar socioeconomic status environments” (p. 108). She finds that college-choice organizational *habitus* influences how individual students understand the available postsecondary options. Therefore, I centralized college-choice organizational *habitus* to understand the role of school processes in reproducing and challenging social inequalities through college choice.

**College-Going Culture**

College-going culture in high schools represents a form of college-choice organizational *habitus*. McCafferty, McDonough, and Nuñez (2002) contend that students who have families with limited college knowledge or resources often resort to school to (1) understand the value of college, (2) receive advice on appropriate classes, and (3) obtain assistance with college choice. Since the number of counselors in schools is limited, studies argue that all school staff should establish a college culture (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McCafferty et al., 2002; Pathways to College Network, 2006). McCafferty and her colleagues (2002) establish that a college-going culture entails a school environment where all students are prepared to make informed postsecondary decisions by receiving structural, motivational, and experiential college preparatory opportunities. While studies argue for the need to develop a college-going culture to assist students during the college choice process, more research is needed to examine how this process occurs (McCafferty et al., 2002; Tierney et al., 2003). In particular, this study examined a dearth in the literature by addressing the implications of college-going culture on the college choices and transitions to postsecondary education for Latinas/os.

**THE CASE STUDY PROCESS**

By using a qualitative case study design, I aimed to expand upon existing theoretical propositions in the areas of college-going culture, college choice, and college transitions. To do so, I collected data from one high school in northern California—Academies High School (AHS). Since the majority of Latina/o students attend highly segregated and under-resourced high schools (Orfield & Lee, 2007; Rogers, Bertrand, Freelon, & Fanelli, 2011), AHS could provide an in-depth understanding of such contexts.

In 2012, AHS served more than 1,600 students, with 83% identifying as Latina/o and 73% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch. In 2009, about 22% of AHS seniors took the SAT exam but only 8% enrolled in a California State University (CSU) (Rogers et al., 2011). However, in 2012, 39% of those graduating from AHS completed the A-G college admission required curriculum, compared to the state average of 37%. Moreover, in alignment with the increase in urban schools participating in career academies, the selected school site was organized into five Linked Learning career academies.

**On Oral History Interviews**

I conducted oral history interviews with 57 student participants during two points in time. The first round was collected during their senior year in high school, and the second round occurred during the first semester in college. Of the 57 students, 47 were Latina/o. The remaining 10 participants reflected the racial composition of 12th-grade students, including five Black or African American, four Asian American or Pacific Islander, and one White. Since the majority of Latinas/os have parents who did not graduate from college and are low-income (Alon & Tienda, 2005; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005), every student participant selected for interviews had parents who did not graduate from a 4-year college in the United States, lived in a low-income household, and aspired to earn a college degree.

The graduating GPA of the students ranged from .824 to 4.06, with 17 students earning below a 2.0, 19 earning between a 2.0 and 3.0, and the remaining earning above a 3.0 GPA. For the second interview, I contacted only the Latina/o student participants to gain insight about their transition to college. I called participants, sent a text message, and/or sent an email message to select a date and time for the interview. Although 40 students responded, I was able to interview only 37 due to a limitation of time. Of the 37 Latina/o students in the follow-up oral history interviews, 23 were female and 14 were male. During the second interview, 20 had enrolled in (or planned to enroll in) a 2-year college, six in a University of California UC campus, six in a California State University (CSU) campus, and three a private for-profit vocational college. In addition, two males stopped attending the local community college and another two were completing a final semester of high school but applied to the local community college.

Oral history interviews allowed me to analyze college choice and transition to college. In addition, oral history interviews enabled this study to make meaning of how the participants' personal and educational histories impacted their educational aspirations. During the first interview, participants elaborated on previous schooling experiences, college aspirations, access to college information, and how they were selecting a college. The second interview reviewed points from the first interview but emphasized how the students chose a college and experienced the transition and integration into college.
I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 practitioners and administrators, including three college advisers, seven teachers who supported college-going efforts, three support staff, and one full-time counselor. I interviewed three administrators, including the principal and two vice-principals. I conducted informal follow-up interviews with participants to address issues that surfaced during observations. Interview questions aimed to understand the ideologies underlying college-going policies and practices.

Finally, I observed college-going activities at AHS, at least once per week during the school year, to understand how teachers, college advisers, and other educators developed a college-going climate. Observations included schoolwide events, classroom workshops, and individual meetings with college advisers. During observations, I used handwritten field notes and/or audio recordings, and after the event, I would write memos. My goal was to observe the workshop facilitator, not the students. However, the workshop facilitators were college advisers at AHS whom I had interviewed.

The Process of Uncovering the Findings

This study was guided by grounded theory and critical race grounded theory, or CRGT (Malagon, Perez Huber, & Velez, 2009). Therefore, I utilized an inductive data analysis process but I also considered how larger structural phenomena shaped the data (Malagon et al., 2009). This occurred while utilizing the three stages of coding used in grounded theory: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first round of coding occurred prior to collecting the student interviews, the second occurred after collecting the student interviews, and the third occurred upon collecting all interviews. In the third round, I also compared findings with relevant theories, such as Anzaldúa’s (2002) concept of *conocimiento*. Considering that the college-choice process has proven to be a rather complex topic, I found it essential to use multiple methods and to triangulate the data (Cohen & Manion, 1986).

**MULTIPLE CLIMATES WITHIN SCHOOL CULTURE**

The first finding addresses research question one: What is the structure and culture of Academies High School? The culture of AHS was of one change, instability, and marginalization, which resulted from inequitable funding policies and the organizational structure. AHS culture entailed at least four climates: high aspirations, college-going, low expectations, and surveillance and control. The climates intersected with one another and students experienced multiple climates at once, depending on space and time. After explaining the climates of high aspirations and low expectations, I elaborate how I applied a CRTE lens to examine, analyze, and critique the climate of surveillance and control.

Several teachers created climates of high aspirations. In these climates, the teachers aspired for students to succeed in college and integrated college-going activities, which resulted in college-going climates (discussed in the second finding). Teachers who created climates of high aspirations worked to align course standards with college and were willing to invest additional time and resources to support students. The teachers attributed their focus on a strength-based approach to sharing similar backgrounds as the AHS students.

However, teachers and administrator participants also created climates of low expectations, rooted in deficit ideologies about academics and a lack of role models. During his interview, I asked Mr. Olson, a teacher, to discuss the biggest obstacles he experienced when attempting to create a college-going environment. He explained:

The biggest detriment to college is mindset—generational poverty. Kids that have not seen anything but poverty... Changing that mindset, getting them to think outside of “gangland,” and out of the mindset of street culture is the hardest thing to do because you have to have an incredible amount of credibility with the student before they will take you seriously and that is hard to gain.

Mr. Olson spoke about generational poverty and emphasized a deficit ideology when framing students and their families as the greatest limitation to increasing college-going rates. He framed students as individuals who did not care about school because they lived in impoverished situations and did not understand the value of school. Similar to Mr. Olson, two other teachers emphasized students as the “problem” when attempting to implement college-going efforts.

However, students experienced overlapping and multiple climates. Two AHS teachers, Ms. Noguera and Mr. Rivas, argued that all educators needed to nurture a climate of high aspirations. The teachers recalled an incident when a counselor disturbed the climate of high aspirations they had established in the classroom:

One of our kids came in with the counselor and the counselor was like, “I heard that this kid is trying to apply to college? I don’t know what’s going on, what are you telling the students?” In front of the whole class! I stepped outside and he was like, “I don’t understand why you think this student has the potential.” He had like a 2.7 GPA, he was qualified to go to a state college—that was his goal. He had an IEP, so if he carries the IEP through college, he can get help there. We made sure everybody could apply; we didn’t just have anybody apply. But you have to have some belief in these kids. His approach was “They are going to mess up.” My approach was “Let’s be optimistic, at least we can try.” I think these kids have that fight or flight, they don’t flight. They have a lot of perseverance, they can adapt to any situation, that’s something that most of these kids
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develop growing up in the city... That's why I have faith that they can be successful. Some people don't see it that way, but I do, maybe that's why we help the kids go to college.

During this incident, students encountered a climate of low expectations intersecting with the high aspiration climate established in the classroom.

Mr. Rivas elaborated on his high aspiration ideologies and argued that students possessed strengths and skills that supported postsecondary perseverance and success. Mr. Rivas created a climate of high aspirations that focused on providing students with an opportunity to pursue a college education. On the other hand, the counselor perceived students with a deficit ideology and as academically unprepared to complete a 4-year college degree. This particular exemplar provides insight into how climates can trespass spaces and that individuals help create climates.

In alignment with the low-expectations climate, educators also developed a climate of surveillance and control, with high levels of security and regulations that aimed to maintain student safety by controlling student behavior. Administrator and teachers argued that incidents of violence on school grounds led to an increasing presence of surveillance and policing that took the form of security measures, enacted through funding, disciplinary regulations, and allocation of space. The surveillance climate was primarily a result of the five measures of security—rooted in paternalistic policies, structures, and practices. For example, as depicted in Figure 3.1, upon entering the school building, students were welcomed with a jail-like fence, which was closed during most of the day.

Figure 3.1. AHS Students Eating Lunch Against the Black Gate

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Ultimately, the students argued that the climate of surveillance and control restricted their abilities to navigate college independently. Juan Pablo, who maintained a 2.25 GPA, described the experience of being an AHS student as aligning with feelings of being in jail and also articulated how this climate would hinder him in college:

Here at Academies, it feels like a jail, they have us locked in here... I feel trapped... [F]or a long time I thought this was a jail before it was a high school. There's always structure here and if there is no structure, they think it's not going to work. In college they give you more freedom so that's going to be a tough transition. Here they tell you, "You have to do this, you have to do that," and they give you all these type of rules. The guards they tell you, "Do this, do that" and you have to do it, there's not much else you can do cause they have the authority.

Students elucidated that a climate of surveillance and control in AHS did not support college aspirations. Instead, the climate pushed some students out of college in the future by not equipping them with the appropriate skills required to navigate such an independent space.

In addition, the principal knew that some teachers maintained low expectations and he emphasized the urgency to view all students from a strength-based approach. Given the four climates within AHS, it is important to note that the personal ideologies from administrators, teachers, and staff determined the climates. As seen in the low expectations and surveillance climates, cultural deficit perceptions framed how educators viewed AHS students. On the other hand, centering the strengths of students allowed educators to establish climates of high aspirations and college-going in order to support students. Mr. Fernandez, the principal of AHS, expressed the significance of teachers having low expectations. He argued the urgent need to replace low expectations with high expectations:

You have to believe it. They [teachers] have to believe that the kids can do it—that's what we don't have sometimes. We still have some teachers who don't believe in our kids, porque uno es de diferente color [because we are a different color] we cannot achieve. We might have an accent but that doesn't mean I cannot build a bridge. I think that's one of the hardest things to do, changing the meaning system of the teachers. ... The new teachers we can mold our way... I want people who come from the community, people who see a Juan and they believe that the kid can learn. ... [T]he key issue is people believing.

Mr. Fernandez argued that teachers had to believe in students' abilities to achieve and succeed in college. However, he acknowledged that some teachers did not have high expectations for AHS students—some teachers did not believe in the students' ability to succeed academically.
Mr. Fernandez highlighted the issues of race, racism, and language abilities as possible reasons for teachers having deficit notions of students. He explained that changing a teacher's ideologies was the most difficult issue for him to address. As a result, he hoped to replace the deficit teachers with new teachers to mold an ideology of high expectations. As principal of AHS, Mr. Fernandez hoped to equip his school with teachers who saw strengths in students, had high expectations, and believed in students. His aim was that teachers would support students by bridging high aspirations with high expectations. Ultimately, Mr. Fernandez revealed that personal ideologies shaped how educators perceived students and the actions taken to support or hinder students' educational journeys.

Generally, students reinforced the notions expressed by administrators and teachers. One student explained that teachers “want us all to succeed.” Moreover, students differentiated between some teachers “not caring” and other teachers having high aspirations for students to attend college. Most students argued that teacher aspirations and expectations “depend on the student.” Finally, students believed that their English teachers hoped they would succeed in college.

During the second round of interviews, students reinforced Mr. Fernandez’s argument that teacher ideologies informed practices, which could prepare or hinder student abilities to navigate college. For example, during the follow-up interview, after completing her first quarter in community college, Anais clarified how the restrictive climate of surveillance and control limited the possibility of success in college for students:

In Academies High School, it's like they want us to grow up but we have to ask permission to go to the bathroom. ... The first 2 years, we didn't have the gates but then we had no freedom, we didn't really have a say in anything. They controlled us and they wanted us to do certain things. Then we graduate and have freedom and now it's hard. In high school, you have to ask permission for everything. Then, when you graduate, you have to do things for yourself. If we had done things differently, I would be more independent and know how to do things by myself. It's harder now. I don't know how to explain it.

Much like the other students who attended AHS since 9th grade, Anais explained that the school implemented tougher security measures throughout her high school years. Anais contrasted the child-like experience of having to ask permission to use the restroom with the expectation of being an adult in college. She compared the constant control that she and other students experienced while at AHS with the complete freedom that a community college provided. Anais could not articulate why the restrictive policies and practices of AHS limited her ability to navigate college successfully. However, she blamed the restrictive AHS policies and practices for her lack of the skills necessary to succeed as an independent college student and argued that the experiences hindered her college transition.

CRTE ANALYSIS OF THE COLLEGE-GOING CLIMATE

The second finding addressed the research question: How do AHS educators utilize policies, resources, and practices to develop a college-going climate within the larger school culture? The college-going climate included several elements, such as the college center, collaborative efforts with college outreach programs, community college outreach, college-going teachers, college visits, engaging with students' identities, and internships. The college-going climate was composed of two sub-climates: 4-year college-going and vocational college-going efforts.

The 4-year climate focused on supporting students who were eligible to attend a 4-year college to take the required college admission exams. The climate also focused on eligible students applying to and enrolling in 4-year colleges. The 4-year college-going sub-climate was developed by several educators; it was uncoordinated and not a streamlined process. Ms. Jacobs, the director of the college and career center, explained, “My job is dictated by the different deadlines throughout the year. The big focus is always to make sure the students that are eligible to apply to 4-year schools are prepared to apply to 4-year schools.” Ms. Jacobs explained that as the director of the college and career center, she focused on working with students who met eligibility requirements for admission to 4-year colleges. As opposed to 4-year colleges, community colleges did not have application or admission deadlines, which contributed to the 4-year college sector being a priority throughout the year.

On the other hand, the career academy structure facilitated a vocational pathway for the students who planned to attend a community college—regardless of aspirations to transfer from a 2-year college to a 4-year college. Nick, the outreach counselor for the local community college, supported students with the enrollment process for the 2-year college but focused on vocational programs. Nick explained that the local community college recruited AHS students into vocational college pathways:

There was an organization called Career (Pathways); they wanted to help link, high school academies to related community college programs. ... We can query all (vocational law) students, we can target those students, send them info about that program, look at students who want to do culinary arts and send them info. ... As far as transfer goes, we will have a couple of years to go over that. We will re-establish the transfer center ... it was eliminated about 5 years ago so we are going to re-establish it.

Nick explained the connection between the high school program and a non-profit organization, funded by several national foundations, which established career pathways into vocational programs. For example, the AHS students in the Law Academy could easily transition into the law vocational program, which offered a certificate. Students could earn certificates, such as “Security Specialist,” or continue to earn an associate’s degree, which facilitates transfer admission into a
CSU campus. Although Nick acknowledged that “a lot of students want to transfer,” the institutional mechanisms in place do not prepare incoming community college students for the transfer pathway.

**LATINA/O COLLEGE CHOICE AND NAVIGATION**

To address the third question—how do AHS Latina/o students with high educational aspirations develop college-going and college-navigating identities?—I applied and adapted Anzaldúa’s (2002) path to conocimiento. Conocimiento is an identity development process that entails self-reflection and outward-directed action that results in a social justice epistemology (Anzaldúa, 2002). Based on the student experiences, I established a theory of college choice and navigation, which I called conocimiento colegial. I defined conocimiento colegial as a reflective collegial consciousness where Latinas/os use their ethnic/racial identity and social positionalities in an empowering college identity. This process engaged with the seven stages of conocimiento as they pertain to the process of (1) preparing for college, (2) searching for colleges, (3) choosing a college, (4) transitioning into college, and (5) navigating college. The process of conocimiento colegial is nonlinear and complex. Finally, data revealed that a college-going climate could foster a conocimiento colegial identity but was not designed to prepare students for postsecondary pathways.

**CRTE AND THE DEBUNKING OF DEFICIT IDEOLOGIES**

Using CRTE, I challenged the deficit notions within the study by centralizing race, racism, and other forms of subjugation when analyzing the data. First, I acknowledged the positive climates of high aspirations and college-going developed by educators. However, I argued against the ongoing notion that urban students of color need police and other measures of control. Similar to the perceptions of students, a previous study found that students perceive the policing measures to be unnecessary and restrictive (Bracy, 2011). The student perspectives reinforced an urgent need for administrators to consider how measures of surveillance impact the day-to-day schooling experiences of students.

Furthermore, the AHS physical environment contributed to the feeling of being in prison. Alexander (2010) established the concept of the New Jim Crow (NJC), which argues that mass incarceration serves to maintain a racial caste system. Given my application of CRTE, the NJC is an essential point to consider. Alexander (2010) alluded to the education system serving a role in the NJC through unequal educational opportunities alongside police surveillance (Sokolower, 2012). Alexander (2010) aligned the lack of educational opportunities coupled with police surveillance as a contribution to the NJC. A climate of surveillance and control exemplifies the NJC within the educational system. Essentially, the AHS methods of surveillance and control served to maintain a panopticon (Foucault, 1977) and prepare students for other controlled environments, not the freedom of college.

Second, CRTE calls for social justice-oriented work. Thus, I examined the college-going processes developed in an under-resourced high school but called attention to the postsecondary tracking functions for future community college students. By combining the nonexistence of transfer preparation with the push for vocational short-term programs, students who aspired to transfer into 4-year colleges were not prepared well. The bridge between the AHS career academies and the local community college served as a future vocational workforce. Since AHS enrolled a majority of students of color and low-income students, it served as an acceptable space to prepare students for vocational careers as “short-term goals” and contributed to social reproduction.

Although previous research found that career academies support high school graduation rates (Conchas, 2006; Stern, Dayton, & Raby, 2010), this study showed that AHS students were steered toward vocational degrees and, as a result, not one of the 27 students who aspired to transfer was aware of concrete resources for transfer to a 4-year college. This coincides with the Kemple and Willner (2008) study, where higher percentages of academy students were earning certificates and associate degrees instead of bachelor degrees. The data suggest the need to examine more in-depth how career academies facilitate a new form of tracking students into vocational pathways. Given the goals of Latina/o students to transfer into a 4-year college (Nuñez & Elizondo, 2013), educators need to provide more emphasis on transfer information beginning in high school, as opposed to tracking students into vocational postsecondary programs.

Third, a CRTE lens supports researchers in expanding current theories that do not address the experiences of students of color. Traditional theoretical frameworks of college choice and college integration are limiting due to the lack of applicability to nontraditional and underrepresented students. Furthermore, as the following section will explain, by utilizing CRGT, I applied my cultural intuition in the research process, and understood the need for a theory that bridges college choice with college integration.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY DESIGNS**

This study includes three key recommendations for future case studies that examine the educational contexts of students of color. First, I highlight the need to use critical theoretical frameworks and methods to activate our facultad (Anzaldúa, 2002) as researchers in communities of color. La facultad allows researchers to see beneath the surface and reveal continued systemic injustices based on issues of race, class, gender, immigration status, and other forms of subjugation. To support the process of la facultad, education researchers who conduct future studies should use a critical framework that allows the data to reveal the systemic injustices experienced by students of color.
CONCLUSION

This study revealed that individual educators in the under-resourced high school site care about students succeeding in college but that a lack of institutional sustainability and stability presented obstacles to improving college-going efforts. In addition, multiple climates in the school revealed how a climate of surveillance and control countered the college-going efforts. When examining the college-going efforts within the school, the stratification between 4-year college and the tracking into vocational programs of aspiring community college students was evident. Finally, the interdisciplinary analysis of individual college-going and navigation identity development exemplified how students’ racial, gender, class, and immigration status influenced the established high aspirations of Latina/o students and the determination to meet educational goals despite foreseeable obstacles. Overall, despite various obstacles and a lack of institutional resources, students maintained high aspirations and continued to strive for completing a college degree. It is our responsibility as educators, educational leaders, researchers, and scholars to foster the high aspirations of students to ensure the success and completion of postsecondary goals.
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...participatory action research with youth. New Directions for Youth Development, 123, 19-34.


