

Can High School Educators Bridge the Gap?: Message Construction as a Process of Anticipatory Socialization for Marginalized Students' Transition to Higher Education

Alexandra N. Sousa
Communication Studies Department
Indiana University Southeast

Abstract

Previous research has identified the important role high school educators play in the postsecondary advancement of racially marginalized students. However, research has yet to examine how educators construct messages to facilitate these students' transition from high school to college. Therefore, this study explores how teachers make sense of factors impacting postsecondary advancement and, as a result, how they construct messages about higher education for diverse students. In-depth interviews with educators from three school districts in central Texas revealed several perceived factors, including the equalizing effect of SES across racial lines and a colorblind mentality towards student advancement. Educators constructed a variety of messages about higher education, including both generalized and individualized messages about the more pragmatic aspects of college (e.g. the application process, study habits, daily life), and motivational messages meant to encourage college decision-making. Based on these findings, I make suggestions for future research about higher education messaging for racially marginalized students.

Keywords: *postsecondary advancement, anticipatory socialization, sensemaking, messaging, marginalized students*

“©American Psychological Association, 2022. This paper is not the copy of record and may not exactly replicate the authoritative document published in the APA journal. The final article is available, upon publication, at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000308>

Can high school educators bridge the gap?: Message construction as a process of anticipatory socialization for racially marginalized students' transition to higher education

Attending college can be one of the most meaningful experiences for young adults, as higher education provides significant opportunities for personal accomplishment, upward social mobility, and civic engagement. However, members of racially marginalized groups often have limited access to opportunities for postsecondary advancement due to deep-seated inequities and issues regarding inclusion. For example, although demographically more diverse, schools often remain internally segregated in ways that create environments which discourage students who do not “fit the mold” of the type of student for which the educational system was designed (Drake, 2017; Muller, Riegle-Crumb, Schiller, Wilkinson, & Frank, 2010). In 2019, The Civil Rights Project noted, “Despite the growing diversity, the larger political climate has complicated educators’ efforts to effectively make schools welcoming for the students they enroll who are increasingly multiracial” (Frankenberg, Ee, Ayscue, & Orfield, 2019, p. 12). Such environments facilitate the persistence of achievement gaps and harmful psychological effects in students from marginalized groups. Inequitable school environments can also lead to alienation, minimal encouragement, and a lack of knowledge about the college selection process (Elam & Brown, 2005).

Previous research suggests the educational experience of diverse student bodies can be enhanced by culturally responsive curriculum development and instruction (Hemmings, 1994; Kim & Slapac, 2015), high expectations for racially marginalized students (Rojas & Liou, 2017), access to high-quality teachers (Martinez & Klopott, 2005), and strong educator-student relationships (Blanchard and Muller, 2015; McKown & Weinstein, 2002; Sosa and Gomez, 2012). Studies have also pointed to the positive role of parental and family support in educational

success (Fallon, 1997; Monahan, 1993; Holland, 2015). Researchers in communication have noted the importance of communication between schools and homes (Musial, 2014) and how perceived differences in parental involvement may influence the way educators structure communicative activities to encourage parental involvement in their child's education (Barge & Loges, 2003).

Interventions aimed at improving higher education access for racially marginalized students often feature high school teachers as central actors and sources of information. One way to understand the importance of high school teachers as sources of information is from a socialization perspective. Myers and colleagues (Jahn & Myers, 2014; Myers et al., 2011) have explored the way that messages and frameworks from parents, friends, and teachers shape the vocational anticipatory socialization (VAS) of adolescents and their perceptions of educational and career opportunities. Extending this line of thinking, we can conceptualize higher education institutions as representing a particular type of organization with a specific culture and set of associated practices that shape the experience of a student. Anticipatory socialization, or socialization prior to entry into an organization (Jablin, 1987; Kramer & Miller, 1999; Miller, 2015), occurs in high schools as students learn collegiate-level expectations. Likewise, high school teachers may be viewed as socializing agents or key sources of information (Buzzanell, Berkelaar, & Kisselburgh, 2012) that help provide information to students and contribute to their understanding of what it takes to transition into institutions of higher education.

Sensemaking processes also inevitably impact the messages these educators construct about college. Sensemaking is the ongoing process of how individuals make sense of and create meaning in their worlds; it is retrospective, social, systemic, and grounded in identity construction (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). In this context, high school

educators interpret the various contextual and identity-based factors that may influence students' decisions about going to college and, unsurprisingly, this impacts how educators then construct messages about postsecondary education for those students.

These educators act as socializing agents, as they construct messages that help students understand the practices of higher education organizations and what it means to become a member. A key service high school teachers render is the construction of messages that address barriers to college that students experience, thereby helping them reduce uncertainty about the process of applying to and attending college (Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen, & Brusckke, 1998). However, relatively little research has specifically examined how teachers construct messages to help racially marginalized students make the transition to college. Therefore, in this study, I examine how high school educators understand the differences in factors influencing postsecondary advancement for racially marginalized students and the resulting ways they construct messages about college for these students.

While many studies involving racially marginalized students have focused on general relational elements, such as interpersonal interactions between educators and students, few have examined the characteristics of the specific messages constructed. Similarly, though some communication studies have focused on the importance of messaging and conversation in higher education, much of communication research regarding access to higher education has tended to ignore the impact of race and ethnicity in these messages and interactions. As a result, it is important to explore the interconnections among race/ethnicity *and* communication as they relate to the ways high school educators facilitate their students' transition into postsecondary education.

Literature Review

High schools act as sites of anticipatory socialization where students learn about the process of getting into college and expectations once they arrive. In high schools, educators often act as socializing agents who can help students successfully navigate the transition to college via their messaging about higher education. However, in order to construct effective messages, educators go through the sensemaking process in order to understand their students' needs and what factors may be impacting their college decisions.

High Schools as (Potential) Sites of Anticipatory Socialization

High schools are often one of the only sources of information about college for racially marginalized youth and are essential for “academic preparation, social support, access to information, parental involvement and knowledge about college and financial aid” (Martinez & Klopott, 2005, p. 5). Yet, high schools and higher education institutions often fail to provide necessary support for and information about transitioning to college successfully. As Obiakor (1993) describes, minorities are ill prepared to play the necessary “political game” of higher education. Disempowerment of racially marginalized students in college is also the result of “discourse norms” in high school that do not prepare them for the higher education context. Discourse norms reflect dominant cultural and social messages and dictate how to participate within a certain system (White & Ali-Khan, 2013).

A variety of contextual factors enable or inhibit access to postsecondary education. These factors include a lack of access to rigorous and competitive academic environments that provide resources for students from different backgrounds (Martinez & Klopott, 2005), high school educators who are not culturally responsive (Hemmings, 1994), and inadequate standardized

testing procedures that reflect inequitable curricula (Au, 2009; Phillips, 2006). Furthermore, students from racially marginalized groups do not respond to mainstream curricula and expectations in the same way, which can inhibit positive interpersonal relationships between them and their teachers (den Brok, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2004; Thijs & Fleischmann, 2015).

From a socialization perspective, high schools become central to the anticipatory socialization process of prospective students to postsecondary education institutions. Traditionally, socialization literature depicts schools as “transitional institution[s] between childhood and full-time work” where students learn important communication and interaction skills for their chosen vocation (Jablin, 1987, p. 737). If we view higher education institutions as socially desirable organizations, then we have to consider the unique socialization process required to become members of these organizations.

Educators as Socializing Agents

Within schools, educators have the complex task of creating both a *supportive* and *challenging* environment within schools for racially marginalized students (Hammond, 2006; Wass & Golding, 2014). When it comes to preparation for college, not only do educators need to focus on challenging marginalized students and guiding them through the application process, but they also need to teach their students the appropriate “academic discourse” required to succeed at college (White & Ali-Khan, 2013). With this, Welton and Martinez (2014) recognize the opportunity for teachers to become “institutional agents” that help racially marginalized students prepare for the college context.

High school educators are particularly important in helping students build social capital and preparing them for the racially exclusive norms they will encounter in college. However, they face many barriers when acting as socializing agents. Teachers are crucial in promoting

achievement for diverse students and are oftentimes willing to do so, but many lack important cultural knowledge and are limited by “their ability to understand who their students are and [how] to connect with them” (Blanchard & Muller, 2015, p. 262). Although public schools in the U.S. now have a “minority majority” student body (50.3% reported for the 2014-15 school year), an estimated 80% of public school teachers are White (“What’s the racial breakdown of America’s public school teachers,” 2018). The education system also places many constraints on teachers that impact their ability to teach effectively and engage with students of color (Welton & Martinez, 2014).

Messages as Tools for Anticipatory Socialization

Communication plays a central role in the anticipatory socialization process, as socializing agents construct messages that affect adolescents’ perceptions of their future educational experience and career paths. For example, Jahn and Myers’ (2014) study on STEM careers found that “gendered messages have a powerful influence on STEM interest by contributing to role prescriptions and stereotypes about who is (and is not) suited for STEM careers” (p. 88). Yarbrough and Brown (2003) also observe, “Students’ successful adjustment to the institution is directly related to the amount of realistic, accurate information that they possess about their own roles within the university” (p. 67). Without effective messages that address these kinds of information needs, adolescent students are less able to transition successfully into institutions of higher education.

Existing literature in communication has established the important role that educators have in postsecondary advancement, and some even note the lack of attention paid to racially marginalized groups within socialization literature. Organizational socialization research often centers the needs of the organization and the privileges and presumed universal experiences of

White men (Allen, 2000). Simultaneously, this body of research leaves unexamined the role of socialization in the postsecondary advancement of marginalized students and the specific messages educators use to help these students navigate this process. What we do know is that the standardized “college-for-all” messages prevalent in schools have been found to be ineffective, sadly leaving “low-SES and underrepresented minority students [to] suffer the consequences of educational dynamics that limit university information and assistance” (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015, p. 4). High school educators’ messages can either facilitate or impede the anticipatory socialization of racially marginalized high school students.

As socializing agents, high school educators also continually go through the process of sensemaking. Put simply, this process is how individuals make sense of and add meaning to their world (Weick, 1995; Weick et al, 2005). Sensemaking is “central because it is the primary site where meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action,” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). Here, the action of focus is how teachers construct messages about college. In the context of this study, high school educators’ sensemaking about the relationship between race and postsecondary advancement, as well as their understanding of their role in facilitating students’ transition out of high school and into college, both influence how they construct messages.

Existing research has explored related topics and found that instead of interrogating the role of race in educational disparities, teachers often quickly cite poverty and family support instead (Noguera & Wing, 2006; Philip, 2011). As Philip (2011) notes, several studies have explored teachers’ sensemaking about race and “have highlighted the importance of addressing race and racism in teacher education, disrupting notions that they can be understood simply as individual biases and stereotypes” (p. 298). Because disparities do exist, it is important to

understand how educators as socializing agents make sense of race when constructing messages about college for racially marginalized students. In order to explore these tensions further, I offer the following research questions:

RQ1: What differences do high school educators perceive in the factors that influence postsecondary advancement decisions for racially marginalized students?

RQ2: How do high school educators construct messages about postsecondary advancement for their racially marginalized students?

Research Methodology

For this study, I chose to interview high school teachers from three independent school districts in central Texas. I selected smaller schools because existing literature suggests that interpersonal relationships between educators and students are typically more positive in these environments, and teachers are more likely to adapt and differentiate their instructional styles to match student needs (Cotton, 1996). I selected specific districts based on two inclusion criteria. First, each of the schools needed to have significant racially marginalized student populations (at least 50% of the total student body), although the specific demographic makeup could vary. Second, it was important to choose at least one school where the largest student group was of a marginalized status and at least one that was predominately White to identify any differences between schools with these compositions. Given my intention to explore how educators construct messages for racially marginalized students, I chose high schools with varied racial student profiles purposefully, as educators in these schools had intimate experience with racially diverse student bodies. Although the labels used below to describe the different racial groups in

each district are limited and somewhat outdated, they reflect the terminology currently used by the schools.

District A's student population is approximately 400, with 44% of students identifying as Hispanic, 37% as White, 18% as African American, and 1% as Two or More Races. District B's student population is approximately 600, with 46% identifying as White, 33% as Hispanic, 20% as African American, and 1% as Two or More Races. Lastly, District C has a student population of 700. The majority of students identify as Hispanic (48%), while 29% identify as White, 22% as African American, and 1% as Two or More Races (*See Table 1*).

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Participants, Interview Procedures, and Analysis Procedures

I created the participant sample using convenience and purposeful sampling (networking) strategies (Tracy, 2013). I contacted teachers using schools' directories, and participants were allowed to refer me to other potential interviewees. In total, I interviewed 19 teachers (6 from District A, 6 from District B, and 7 from District C), 16 women and 3 men. Seventeen participants identified as White, while one woman identified as Hispanic, and a second woman identified as Black (both from District C). Participants' ages ranged from 35-58 years and their years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 33 years.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

I conducted semi-structured interviews that lasted between 25 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews were conducted in-person, over the telephone, and via Skype. In order to maintain the integrity of the interview process, I audio-recorded interviews to maintain accuracy and used several methods to maintain validity, including verbatim transcriptions, peer review, and researcher reflexivity (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015; Johnson, 1997). Questions on the

interview guide were framed to parse out educators' perceived barriers to student postsecondary advancement and the types and content of messages educators subsequently construct about college. When creating the interview guide, I did not want to prime participants on the topics of race and ethnicity, so I did not pose questions about racial differences until the second half of the interview. Example interview questions include: *When you talk to your students about higher education in class, what do you talk about?; What types of barriers do students identify when they are talking about their college plans?; Reflecting on your answers to the previous questions, do you notice any racial differences in the types of questions students ask or the barriers to college they identify?; In what ways do you tailor your messages to students to better communicate to a diverse student body?*

Data Analysis

I used a two-step process to analyze the interview data. First, I thematically analyzed the three different school districts as separate case studies in order to identify the individual and unique themes that characterized each high school. Second, I performed a comparative analysis to compare the three districts in order to highlight similarities and/or inconsistencies in the messaging that occurs about higher education within small school districts in central Texas (Eger & Way, 2016). Coding was done iteratively (Tracy, 2013). Existing literature on socialization and sensemaking guided me, but I also allowed additional themes to emerge organically.

Findings

Interviews with high school educators in central Texas revealed an interesting picture of how they understood the experiences of their racially marginalized students and what it takes for them to get into college. Although some teachers were cognizant of the unique barriers their

racially marginalized students may face in terms of transitioning into college, most of their messaging did not reflect these concerns. Messages constructed by educators about higher education overwhelmingly did not address known barriers faced by racially marginalized groups. I best categorize these educators' approaches to messaging as "colorblind." Before delving into my analysis, I will first describe the three school districts I chose for the study.

District A is situated within a small community in Central Texas, which prides itself on its family-centered values and opportunities for living and working within a prosperous rural environment. The high school here places a high value on academic achievement, as well as athletics and band. This has earned them various distinctions including State Championships in sports and recognition of their honor band. Roughly 44% of the students are Hispanic, 37% White and 18% Black. It is also important to note that 60% of the students are classified as low-SES, a characteristic that is true of many small school districts in the area. The teaching staff in District A overwhelmingly identifies as White (90%). In District A, I interviewed six teachers. Two teachers identified as men, four as women, and all identified as White. Their ages ranged from 35 to 58 years, and they had between 2 and 33 years of teaching experience.

District B is also located in Central Texas, within a community that celebrates how they embody both small town charm and city-like culture. Of course, the high school emphasizes providing students with the best possible education, but the school's administrative body and educators also value extracurricular activities that broaden student experiences. Over 52% of students identify as Hispanic and African American (32.1% and 20%, respectively), while students who identify as White make up about 44% of the student population. The school district is also considered low-SES, with about 75% of students classifying as economically

disadvantaged. All of the teachers interviewed in District B were women between 35 and 48 years of age, with 9 to 22 years of teaching experience. They all identified as White.

District C is located within a small Texas town that one teacher described as being reminiscent of the television show “Friday Night Lights.” The city has pushed for improving the district’s academic performance and increasing postsecondary readiness as a means of producing college-educated young adults who come back and contribute to local business. As for racial demographics, 48% of students identify as Hispanic, 29% as White, and 22% as African American. Like the other districts, the school also has a very high percentage of students who classify as low-SES. In District C, I interviewed seven teachers. Every participant identified as White, with the exception of two women, one who identified as Black and the other as Hispanic. All but one participant identified as women, and all were between the ages of 24 and 53 years old. Their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 21 years.

Perceived Factors that Impact Postsecondary Advancement

To explore the quality of the messages high school educators construct about going to college, it is important to understand how they make sense of the factors that impact their racially marginalized students’ transition into higher education. These perceptions inform or constrain the messages they construct. When I asked educators from these three districts about factors that could impact the postsecondary advancement of their students, they noted several, including race, socioeconomic status, parental support, and peers. First, I discuss these themes within each district individually, and follow with a comparative analysis of the important similarities and conclusions that can be drawn across districts.

Impacts of race and socioeconomic status.

Many of the educators interviewed in District A recognized that racial diversity existed in their classrooms, but they did not see that diversity as something that differentiated postsecondary paths. In many cases, they consciously ignored race in the conversations they had with students about college. For example, as a relatively new teacher in the district, Jessica, explained:

I have so many students in my class that are just racially mixed and I don't think that the conversations are really any different and I think one of those reasons is, I don't look at them any different...I don't think it has anything to do with race more than it has to do with each individual student and what their goal is at the end of the day.

Seeing students as “individuals” negated the need to recognize issues that may exist because of racial inequities. Likewise, Vince, another teacher at the school, attributes postsecondary decisions and the differences in conversation to “background,” not race. As he explained:

I don't think it's anything racial or ethnic. I think it's more a...background thing. It could be the same reason that someone roots for the Dallas Cowboys or something because their mom or dad does... If they have never had anybody in the history of their family go to college or anything, it doesn't really exist in their lives.

In another example, William said he did notice racial differences between the college decisions being made by his students. As he explained, Hispanic students are now more motivated to go to college than when he first began, as well as African American women. Yet, William's observation was not him noticing racial differences *between* distinct groups; instead, he simply noted that more racially marginalized students are now exploring college as an option. William also closed by affirming that there is diversity within every racial groups' decisions, explaining, “We have some [White students] that go to work on daddy's ranch...and be perfectly

happy...And we have some that work to that college pathway. So that part of our demographic is also very diverse.”

In District B, the narrative is very similar. Although some of the teachers interviewed are conscious of racial differences among their students, they rarely attribute college decisions to that positionality. When asked whether she noticed racial differences in barriers to access or the questions students asked about college, Farrah expressed, “I mean the barriers that I really see has nothing to do with race. I see a more income-based... just my economically disadvantaged kids.” As another teacher in the district, Laura, noted, “From what I’ve seen and what I’ve heard, the more economically advantaged students, the Caucasians, they are getting more of the information [about college]. The majority of those students are in the AP classes, the higher-level courses, the dual credit.” Although Laura did in fact identify racial differences in the amount of information students receive about college, she prioritized socioeconomic status in her response and simply noted race as a subsequent classification.

District C, the largest of the three districts, had the most variability in terms of how racial differences and racial impacts on postsecondary advancement were perceived by the teachers in the school. District C is also the district where the only two non-White participants taught. Despite this, most of the educators still did not attribute different paths to racial differences. For example, Jack explained, “The population I work with is so small that it is easier to tailor to a student than a group... I really get to know my students and so I don’t have to tailor to broad ethnicity, cultural background. I tailor to their personality and what I see in them.” From this perspective, individualization negates the need to consider racial differences. In a deviation from other educators in this study, this district also had two teachers, Rae and Lily, who spoke very openly about racial disparities that exist within their high school. As Rae explained:

Well let's take our Caucasian population, if they're not in farming...they're going to college... the Hispanic population, it's a cultural thing and 15-year-old girls are considered women and sometimes they don't even think past that...It's a cultural thing. Your Black population, they're figuring that there's two choices. You either don't go and you just go to work or you have to get a scholarship in some type of sport.

While recognizing many of these same patterns, Lily also noted how she is even explicit with her own students about the racial disparities that exist. As she added, "I tell them you know, it's unfair how the world works and the expectations of you, but you can't act the same way [White students] do. That's just reality." However, these two examples are very unique and stand out across the three districts. These women were the only non-White participants interviewed for the study. Their own positionality likely has given them more empathy for racially marginalized students.

Despite this more nuanced recognition of the potential role race can play in postsecondary advancement, one identity factor was overwhelmingly highlighted across all three districts as equalizing the experiences of students: socioeconomic status. Interviewees identified socioeconomic status as the most crucial factor tied to postsecondary advancement, understanding SES as erasing racial differences. Because the vast majority of students across these school districts are classified as low-SES, regardless of race, educators in these districts saw SES as the leading determinant for advancement. Although some of the educators interviewed easily identified racial differences in students' postsecondary paths, as discussed previously, they still cited SES as most indicative of these differences. One teacher from District B, Isabel, summed up the general sentiment of the role that SES was perceived as playing across all districts: "It comes down to the economic factor more than anything. That just happens to be

the population that is also typically the population of the minority.” In another example, Robin in District A added, “More than I see students in ethnic groups, I see them in economic groups... You don’t have those super wealthy people that run around here.” Educators did not consider the relationship *between* SES and race as being more complex or having a unique effect on certain groups. Instead, SES equalized any other identity differences that existed.

Although a few teachers and counselors did identify a multiplicity of factors that impacted postsecondary advancement, including SES, parental support, and peers, race and culture were rarely considered as drivers of messaging about higher education either. The majority of participants throughout the three districts revealed that race is not considered at all when guiding students through the college application process. If the educators did consider race, the effects of intersectionality were ignored, despite the research that points to its potentially compounding negative effects (Becares & Priest, 2015; Gillborn, 2015; Nelson, Stahl, & Wallace, 2015). The result of this perception was often “colorblind” messaging or messaging consciously devoid of addressing known barriers for racially marginalized students.

Family and friends.

Second to socioeconomic status as the most indicative factor of postsecondary advancement was the level of parental support. Across all three districts, educators noted that those students who have plans to go to college are overwhelmingly those that also have parents invested in their education. As Carrie, a teacher in District C explained, “The kids whose parents have gone to college, they already know that’s probably an expectation in their household.” Educators attributed the lack of parental support to the fact that students in these three school districts are overwhelmingly first-generation college students and their parents do not have the knowledge to support them properly. For example, when it comes to seeking necessary financial

aid, Vince explained, “There’s a lot of financial aid available... [When I went through it], just getting all the paperwork together was tough enough with my mom and dad, much less if I was kind of on my own and tr[ied] to do all that.” In most instances, participants revealed they did not believe parents did not want to help, they just simply lacked the necessary knowledge.

However, in some cases, participants noticed certain parents do not want their children to attend college at all. Typically, educators attributed this attitude to cultural values, referring in particular to Hispanic women. Hispanic women are expected to stay home and raise families, just as generations before them have done. As Rae from District C explained, “They’re just thinking, ‘Well I’m going to be a wife and I’m not going to go to school at all.’” Participants revealed that in these cases, students find themselves in tension between the school and their community and, sadly, often succumb to the pressures of their families. Another teacher, Reagan in District B, noted that African American students also receive backlash from their communities for attending college. In general, this group of students was described as “hit or miss.” They are either enthusiastic about college and have parental support or the opposite was true.

Participants also identified peer support as an important motivator for postsecondary decisions. They described decisions about higher education becoming collective. As in, if certain members of a clique were not going to college, it becomes harder to convince other members of the group to attend. As Rae, a teacher in District C, explained:

You have to get them early because by the time they get into junior high, in junior high you become a clique and then you want to be with the popular people and then usually that’s pretty much who you run with. And so it’s almost like if this group is going to college, that whole group is going to college.

This also speaks to the importance of the early initiation of messages about college education that can occur before students form firm social groups.

Educators overwhelmingly identified socioeconomic status as the key factor influencing students' decision to go to college, whether or not they were racially marginalized. Educators did not consider race an important factor because SES, along with the level of support from family and friends, was thought to equalize experiences across students. This is consistent with what we know about how educators typically make sense of the role of race in educational disparities (e.g. Becares & Priest, 2015; Winkle-Wagner, Sule and Maramba, 2012). In this study, the result is the creation of messages that do not fully address each of these relevant factors.

Constructing Messages about College

The messages that high school educators constructed about college for their student bodies took two general forms, which I have characterized as (1) *informational* and (2) *motivational*. Informational messages included concrete information about the application process and the curricular demands of higher education. For example, Robin in District A made sure her students developed a system for note taking, with and without technology, and often discussed what a person's daily schedule in college might look like. Informational messages can be classified as either *generalized*, designed for the student body as a whole, or *individualized*, tailored to students' individual needs.

In many instances, generalized, "one-size-fits-all" informational messages were seen as ineffective. As Isabel, a teacher from District B noted, "It is more of the choose your own [path]. It's not a one-size-fits-all. It's not an everybody's going to college attitude. That's not portrayed here." Educators were drawn to what they viewed as individualized messages, although individualization was based on different postsecondary paths, rather than the unique

characteristics of each student. As one teacher, William, explained, “The kids realize there are many different options, especially with a school that is so diverse as ours, we try to open their eyes to a lot of different paths.” Teachers used both informational and motivational messages, but they typically designated the school counselor/s as the central source of information about the specifics of the college application process.

In some cases, educators utilized a mix of general and individualized informational messages. Because the majority of their students were first-generation college goers, teachers used generalized messages initially in order to spark interest and give students a starting place. Once students began to ask more questions and draw closer to concrete decisions, messages shifted to a more individualized form. However, one teacher felt that conversations about college remained generalized and negatively impacted students. Laura in District B noted, “I firmly believe from what the kids have, I’ve overheard conversations and them asking me questions, it’s one-size-fits-all conversations with them...I think that they feel slighted, they feel like they’re not getting information and I do think that causes them to be negative about that.”

Educators also used *motivational* messages as a means of general encouragement to inspire students to consider some form of postsecondary education. For example, when asked about the ideal messaging she hopes students get about college, Jessica in District A answered, “To not give up on whatever their dreams are because they have those dreams for a reason.” Although these motivational messages were fairly consistent across school districts, challenge messages were another type of motivational message that emerged. General motivational messages say, “You can do it,” while challenge messages express, “You can do more.” Neither type of motivational message offers pragmatic information about attending college and are simply geared towards boosting students’ confidence. However, challenge messages are more

geared toward students who have made the decision to attend college but may still be undermining their potential by not choosing a more rigorous and/or gratifying path.

Teachers also emphasized motivation-based messages, especially when it came to helping students combat financial barriers and family concerns. Yet, many of the educators found it important to balance motivational messages with realism. For example, Carrie, a teacher in District C, explained:

I don't wash those dreams by any means, but I, you know, definitely try to make them see it realistically and see, you know that maybe see other options if that's not very realistic...I don't think that college is necessarily the end all be all. I always emphasize it because I feel like it's the easiest way to improve and get better and further your education.

In general, individualized messaging was thought of as a way to combat any personal differences between the students, including race. By avoiding "one-size-fits-all" messaging, teachers thought students were getting personalized postsecondary planning. However, given that race was often not considered a factor influencing advancement, messages about college, whether informational or motivational, did not accurately reflect the challenges faced by certain marginalized students.

Message source.

Educators from these three school districts revealed important information about message construction, including differences in message *source*. Teachers typically saw themselves as sources of general information, including how to stay organized or how to develop study skills, while they viewed school counselors as the main source of concrete information regarding college and scholarship applications. For example, as one teacher in District C, Carrie, explained,

“Typically when I talk about it, I talk about sort of, I guess life as a student. We do have a college career counselor who does a lot of the application and scholarships and things like that for them.” There is also a similar sentiment in District A. As Denise added, “Seniors can go into the counselor’s office and she does a really good job of trying to help meet their needs and get them going in the direction that they need to.” While teachers saw themselves as sources of classroom-based information, including study skills and time management, they overwhelmingly delegated concrete information about applying to college to counselors.

This delineation of information often translated to each source using different messages. While teachers tended to utilize motivational messages and occasionally incorporated practical lessons about the college curriculum into their own classes, they left informational messages primarily to counselors. As one teacher, Jack, explained, “When we usually discuss college, it’s like when you get to that level, this is what will be expected of you...These are the study skills that you’ll have to use when you’re in college.” However, when asked about the specific messages about college the school gives, he replied, “I’m not a counselor, but I know our counselors meet with all of our students and I think they kind of touch on [it].” In each of the three districts, some teachers even revealed they did not know much about the school’s postsecondary resources at all. This could lead one to believe that they were not redirecting students to these potentially helpful resources since they did not know they existed.

Message timing.

Educators in all three districts differed widely in their beliefs around message timing and initiating conversations with students about college. However, they all noted that timing is important. While the state of Texas’ House Bill 5 requires students to start making college and career-oriented decisions in eighth grade, many teachers argued that this might be too soon to

have these conversations. Isabel, a teacher in District B, agrees:

I think most are still searching and that's a fault in our education system and that we put pressure on them from their seventh grade year to start picking up halfway as to where they want to do and what you want to do...And that's about maturity level to be able to make those decisions. We're forcing them so young now to start making these decisions that are going to change their lives and they're not always prepared to do that.

The challenge seemed to exist because of questions about student maturity. Although some teachers felt that messages about college cannot come too soon, most noted that students don't have the maturity level or comprehension to make core decisions that could change the rest of their lives until a certain age. On the other hand, some teachers thought the seed should be planted early enough that the decision is taken seriously. As Denise from District A added:

I think you also have to have a balance there because if you start pushing that too much, sometimes the Freshman are already overwhelmed with just coming to high school that they, you don't want to overemphasize it, but I think it would be important for them to already be thinking about what they want to do and where they want to be, so they can start seeing those options that they have.

Although faculty members agreed there was most likely an appropriate time to introduce messages about higher education, none made a definite recommendation on when this should be. Timing of messages is important, but research has not adequately explored when it is most beneficial to introduce students to messages about college. When paired with useful content from reliable sources, educators can use messages about higher education as a tool to help bridge the gap between the higher education system and marginalized student groups.

Discussion

College may not be the “right” next step for all high school students, but all students who are interested in postsecondary education should have access to effective and comprehensive information about their options. In this study, many educators’ perceptions about the factors that influence racially marginalized students’ college choices aligned with existing literature about how teachers make sense of race in schools. Likewise, educators viewed parents and peers as impactful forces when it came to college plans. However, when it came to the tension between race and socioeconomic status, educators’ perceptions of differences in postsecondary advancement did not match accepted perspectives about intersectionality in current literature on these topics. Although teachers and counselors recognized their role as socializing agents, they overlooked race as a significant factor in both postsecondary advancement and their own message construction about college. Their limited understanding of intersectionality directly impacted the messages they created for their students about college.

Intersectionality, SES, and Colorblindness

These case studies reveal that intersectionality is important in the context of constructing messages about college. Intersectionality can broadly be defined as “the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference...social practices, institutional arrangements, cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions” have complex consequences (Davis, 1992; Strand, 2014). Furthermore, existing literature has pointed to the compounding negative effects of race and SES (Nelson et al., 2015; Gillborn, 2015). The educators in these districts promoted an *equalizing effect of SES* in the educational context, instead of taking an intersectional perspective, which would highlight the relationship between race and SES. The data in this study revealed some teachers believe race might not be indicative of postsecondary advancement when students are overwhelmingly of low socioeconomic status. Overall, teachers I

interviewed rarely considered race and culture as drivers of messaging about higher education. The only two educators who explicitly identified race as an indicative factor of college decision-making were *unsurprisingly* also the only two participants who identified as non-White. As Egalite, Kisidam and Winters (2015) confirm, “Minority teachers are uniquely positioned to improve the performance of minority students directly or indirectly, by serving as role models, mentors, advocates, or cultural translators for those students” (p. 44). Because they have gone through similar experiences, they can recognize the racial differences that may exist for racially marginalized students. However, the majority of participants throughout the three districts revealed that race is not considered when teachers guide students through the college application process.

This form of colorblindness is dangerous because it ignores racial differences that continue to impact racially marginalized students. In their study of educational policy discourse, Winkle-Wagner et al. (2012) found that public discussion about college admissions policies has become race-neutral, “falsely assuming an equal playing field” (p. 537). They also noted that omission of race from educational discourse is very harmful, even if unintentional. As they explained:

The failure to name the problem of racial inequality as having to do with *race* leads to much larger social pathologies such as continued racial inequalities in housing, schooling, and long-term social and economic advancement (Feagin, 2006; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Shapiro, 2004). ‘Colorblind’ discourse may really conceal “colorblind racism”—where racism and racial inequality are implicated in the discourse and persist without being recognized (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2012, p. 538)

Colorblindness is often paired with meritocracy and ideals of the “American Dream.” As Blanchard and Muller (2015) explain, teachers evaluate students along several measures, “including their effort and potential, two central tenets of the American Dream of achieving success through hard work” (p. 264). When we consider postsecondary advancement, messages such as “You can do it if you work hard enough” ignore the complexities of structural barriers, especially within education. If educators overlook race-based factors, their colorblindness can lead to incomplete messaging about postsecondary advancement for marginalized students.

Educators who fail to create messages about higher education that meaningfully address race and/or intersectionality can perpetuate structural barriers and leave students unprepared to deal with similar constraints in college. Higher education has a well-documented problem with inclusivity (Muller et al., 2010; Obiakor, 1993). If high school educators are not recognizing the influence of race on advancement and achievement, students will not be prepared to deal with these continued differences in college. As Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, and Powers-Costello (2011) explain, teachers may be uncomfortable talking about racial issues, but it does not stem from a lack of willingness, “but rather from unfamiliarity with the knowledge base and available resources” (p. 335). Therefore, a concerted effort is necessary across school districts to address these constraints. Educators can use motivational messages to address racial discrepancies, but that begins with an acknowledgement that these issues exist. Although informational messages could remain individualized, encouragement and support has to address *all* factors that influence student advancement from high school to college.

The Role of High School Educators in Anticipatory Socialization

High school teachers are important socializing agents (Souza, 1999; Yarbrough & Brown, 2003). This role becomes especially important when interacting with racially

marginalized students who may face additional barriers and lack other forms of support and resources for information about postsecondary education. Educators in this study identified themselves as possessing important information about higher education, but unfortunately their messages did not account for the unique needs their racially marginalized students may have. Educators designed messages to provide students information about normative expectations of postsecondary institutions. Educators in this study constructed two main types of messages, *informational* and *motivational*. While the former provided pragmatic information about the “values, norms, and expectations” of colleges and their organizational members (Yarbrough & Brown, 2003), motivational messages are designed to increase prospective students’ sense of belongingness.

Relatedly, in their study on the impact of vocational anticipatory socialization on students’ STEM interests, Jahn and Myers (2014) identified both *personal fulfillment messages* and *career detail messages*. *Personal fulfillment messages* focus on advising students to pursue careers that match their talents or interests and can allow them to provide for themselves, while *career detail messages* give concrete and pragmatic details about a profession, including opportunities, responsibilities, and day-to-day life. While my study similarly identified messages that give pragmatic and concrete information about going to college (*informational messages*), personal fulfillment messages were not identified as a distinct type in this context. Instead, some of my participants opted for what I call *motivational messages*, which seek to inspire students to explore their postsecondary options.

Scholars have also noted that organizational assimilation is a dual process, consisting of socialization and individuation, meaning both the organization and prospective members have the capacity to adapt to one another (Ziller, 1964; Jablin, 1987; Kramer & Miller, 1999; Miller,

2015). However, the present study revealed that socialization is more heavily weighted in educators' composition of messages about higher education. Messages designed by educators for prospective students overwhelmingly focused on what higher education institutions expect of students and how they should conform to the established norms of "going to college." Even though several teachers critiqued racial inequities, their response to the problem was not seeking change in institutions of higher education, but rather disseminating messages to marginalized students that they simply need to adapt. As Gordon (1964) notes of traditional theories of assimilation, they typically require "Anglo-conformity" into White-dominated institutions. Higher education's historically "Anglo" structure makes these educators' messages about college less surprising. If the organizational assimilation process is to be completed successfully, individuation of messaging cannot be ignored. In this study, the impacts of race and intersectionality are important structural and individual factors that dictate postsecondary advancement, which make them critical to consider when constructing messages about college.

The role of sensemaking.

Educator sensemaking is also an important force driving the construction of effective messages about college. The assumption that meaning-making guides subsequent action is a foundational assumption for many models of social and organizational change. In this study, teachers' sensemaking was of particular concern. Sensemaking impacts the ways *both* teachers and students make sense of the world and how it informs their behaviors and actions (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). For educators, sensemaking guides how they interpret the present situation and how they subsequently construct messages aimed at encouraging high school students to pursue postsecondary education. For high school students, sensemaking influences how they interpret these educator messages and what subsequent

behavioral choices they make, including the decision to apply for college, the way they structure their postsecondary experience, and their potential success in college.

Although educators' sensemaking about race was the focus of this study, educators must also take into account various other contextual and identity-based factors that may impact the way they interpret the situation. For example, the way educators interpret the level of family support that students have regarding attending college may influence their sensemaking about the situation, which, in turn, may influence the choices they make regarding what messages to produce. The present study and existing literature suggest a number of important contextual factors and embodied identities that may influence the ways educators make sense of their students' needs and their roles as socializing agents for higher education institutions. These identity factors include educator-student relationships (Blanchard and Muller, 2015; McKown & Weinstein, 2002; Sosa and Gomez, 2012), peer and family support (Fallon, 1997; Monahan, 1993; Holland, 2015), and socioeconomic status. Race and culture are also central factors for teachers to consider when designing messages about college.

In regards to educators' message production, their sensemaking processes, inherent message design tensions, and numerous contextual and identity-based factors may impact how they construct messages for various student groups. As the present analysis suggests, there are many choices that educators must make when designing messages for high school students. The first is the *message source*, or identifying "who" constructs and disseminates messages. Second, the message designer must consider *message content*, or the "what" (informational versus motivational content) and "how" (generalized versus individualized delivery) of the messages. The last design choice is *message initiation*, which means an educator must consider *when* they should disseminate messages about college to students in school. There is a reciprocal

relationship between educator sensemaking and message design choices, as the way that educators make sense of the world will influence the choices they make regarding message construction. At the same time, Weick (1995) observes that sensemaking is inherently retrospective, which means that the people often act in ways they must make sense of after the fact. This means the choices educators make regarding message construction may also drive sensemaking.

Implications for Theory and Practice

At the theoretical level, this study opens up many opportunities for meaningful future research. First, I have highlighted the importance of exploring how important identity factors can impact educator sensemaking regarding the postsecondary advancement of their diverse student bodies and the subsequent messages they construct about higher education. For example, it was surprising that race did not emerge as an important identity-based factor that impacted educator perceptions of students' postsecondary paths. While teachers in this study identified contextual factors such as family support and socioeconomic status as impacting postsecondary advancement, they failed to recognize the impact of race and intersectional identity on the choices students make about going to college. Therefore, future research could explore why certain contextual and identity-based factors are thought to dominate college-seeking behaviors, while others are not.

Future research should also seek to understand the importance of message *timing*. At different stages in high school, students have an array of understandings about higher education. Thus, educators should design messages to meet the needs of all students, whether they are beginning the information-gathering phase or already fully immersed in the application process. In the present study, educators expressed different opinions about when students should begin

hearing about college and what kinds of messages were most relevant. Therefore, it is possible that students need different kinds of messages depending on what stage individual students are in. As noted earlier, Prochaska et al. (2015) recognize individuals may be at different stages of behavioral change and interventions. In this case, messages may need to be targeted to the stage of change of the proposed audience. In order to address this, it is important that future research explores socialization and sensemaking processes that occur from the perspective of racially marginalized students. Although I focused on educators' perceptions, communication is cyclical and generative across all parties involved. Through in-depth interviews and observation, future research could extend this line of research to better understand how students make sense of going to college and the messages they need from their high school teachers. Therefore, communication scholars can better understand the tensions that exist between the messages students receive and those they actually need.

In terms of practical implications, this line of research could improve educator practices. Although there is teacher training centered around issues of diversity and its impact on students' perceptions of cultural acceptance (Cox, Bledsoe, & Bowens, 2017), the literacy development of students' from different linguistic backgrounds (Strain, 2003), and school-family relationships (Cousik, 2015), there is a lack of training about how to construct messages in ways that meet the needs of diverse student bodies. This work serves as a starting point for considering the choices that are associated with developing messaging strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity in learning environments generally, but also in the promotion of postsecondary advancement. Likewise, the findings of this study help make a case for hiring more racially diverse teachers who can better highlight the unique needs of their racially marginalized students. In this study, those educators who were most cognizant of racial differences in postsecondary advancement

were also more likely to identify as racially marginalized. Therefore, teachers' identities are also an important part of this conversation that must be explored further.

Limitations

Several limitations in this study open avenues for future research. The most evident limitation is the sample population. High school educators were the focus of this study, as formal research review boards make it difficult to access and interview minors in high school. However, future investigation of this topic should include the perspectives of the students who consume these messages. These students are also making sense of the decision to go to college, and educators should address their messaging needs. In addition, because the school districts were located in one rural Southern area of the country, the localized context could have impacted views on going to college and how educators should manage their students' barriers to academic advancement. Finally, to move my analysis beyond just educator perceptions, this study could have benefitted from more formal observations of teacher-student conversations.

Conclusion

As long as achievement gaps still exist, scholars need to explore ways to close them. The discipline of communication is in a unique position to address the many relevant processes that enable and constrain postsecondary advancement, including interpersonal relationships between educators and students, anticipatory socialization, and sensemaking. In this study, I explored the ways in which high school educators act as socializing agents and construct messages about higher education for their racially marginalized students. The findings revealed important message design tensions and contextual factors that impact educators' messages about college, which open up several research opportunities to continue exploring this important area of study. While there are many changes that need to be made to address educational disparities, messages

are a tool that can be utilized right now. Every educator can use messaging to convey important pragmatic and motivational information about college, and they can do so in a way that meets all of their students' unique needs.

Resources

- Allen, B.J. (2000). 'Learning the ropes': A Black feminist critique. In P. Buzzanell (Ed.), *Rethinking organizational & managerial communication from feminist perspectives* (pp. 177-208). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Au, W. W. (2009). High-stake testing and discursive control: The triple bind for non-standard student identities. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 11(2), 65-71.
doi:10.1080/15210960903028727
- Barge, J. K., & Loges, W. E. (2003). Parent, student, and teacher perceptions of parental involvement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 31(2), 140-163.
doi:10.1080/0090988032000064597
- Becares, L., & Priest, N. (2015). Understanding the influence of race/ethnicity, gender, and class on inequalities in academic and non-academic outcomes among eighth-grade students: Findings from an intersectionality approach. *PLoS ONE*, 10(10), 1-17.
- Blanchard, S., & Muller, C. (2015). Gatekeepers of the 'American Dream': How teachers' perceptions shape the academic outcomes of immigrant and language-minority students. *Social Science Research*, 51, 262-275. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.10.003
- Boutte, G. S., Lopez-Robertson, J., & Powers-Costello, E. (2011). Moving beyond colorblindness in early childhood classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(5), 335-342. doi:10.1007/s10643-011-0457-x
- Buzzanell, P. M., Berkelaar, B. L., Kisselburgh, L. G. (2012). Expanding understandings of mediated and human socialization agents: Chinese children talk about desirable work and career. *China Media Research*, 8(1), 1-14.

- Cotton, K. (1996) School size, school climate, and student performance (School Improvement Research Series). Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Cousik, R. (2015). Cultural and functional diversity in the elementary classroom: Strategies for teachers. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 9(2), 54-67.
doi:10.1108/JME-03-2015-0010
- Cox, M. R., Bledsoe, T. S., & Bowens, B. (2017). Challenges of teacher diversity training. *The International Journal of Diversity in Education*, 17(2), 1-15. doi:10.18848/2327-0020/CGP/v17i02/1-15
- Davis, K. (1992). Toward a feminist rhetoric: The Gilligan-debate revisited. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 15(2), 219-213.
- den Brok, P., Brekelmans, M., & Wubbels, T. (2004). Interpersonal teacher behaviour and student outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 15, 407-442. doi: 10.1080/09243450512331383262
- Drake, S. (2017). Academic segregation and the institutional success frame: unequal schooling and racial disparity in an integrated, affluent community. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(14), 2423-2439. doi: 10.4324/9780429059223-10
- Egalite, A. J., Kisida, B., Winters, M. A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 45, 44-52.
doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.01.007
- Eger, E.K., & Way, A.K. (2016, February). *Imagining qualitative organizational communication research beyond the quantitative specter: Introducing a comparative constructed focus group method*. Paper presented at the Organizational Communication Traditions, Transitions, and Transformations conference, Austin, TX.

- Elam, C., & Brown, G. (2005). The inclusive university: Helping minority students choose a college and identify institutions that value diversity. *Journal of College Admission, 187*, 14-17.
- Evans, A. E. (2007). School leaders and their sensemaking about race and demographic change. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(2), 159-188. doi:10.1177/0013161X06294575
- Fallon, M.V. (1997). The school counselor's role in first generation students' college plans. *The School Counselor, 44*(5), 384-393.
- Fraenkel, J.R., Wallen, N.E., & Hyun, H.H. (2015). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Frankenberg, E., Ee, J., Ayscue, J. B., & Orfield, G., (2019). Harming our common future: America's segregated schools 65 years after Brown. (The Civil Rights Project). Los Angeles, CA: Center for Education and Civil Rights.
- Gillborn, D. (2015). Intersectionality, critical race theory, and the primacy of racism: Race, class, gender, and disability in education. *Qualitative Inquiry, 21*(3), 277-287. doi: 10.1177/1077800414557827
- Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hammer, M. R., Wiseman, R. L., Rasmussen, J. L., & Brusckie, J. C. (1998). A test of anxiety/uncertainty management theory: The intercultural adaptation context. *Communication Quarterly, 46*(3), 309-326. doi:10.1080/01463379809370104
- Hammond, J. (2006). High challenge, high support: Integrating language and content instruction for diverse learners in an English literature classroom. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 5*, 269-283. doi:10.1016/j.jeap.2006.08.006

- Hemmings, A. (1994). Culturally responsive teaching: When and how high school teachers should cross cultural boundaries to reach students. Presented at *The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. New Orleans, LA.
- Holland, M.M. (2015). Trusting each other: Student-counselor relationships in diverse high schools. *Sociology of Education*, 88(3), 244-262. doi:10.1177/0038040715591347
- Jablin, F.M. (1987). Organizational entry, assimilation, and exit. In F.M.Jablin, L.L. Putnam, K.H. Roberts, & L.W. Porter (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Communication* (pp. 679-740). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.^[1]_[SEP]
- Jahn, J. L. S., & Myers, K. K. (2014). Vocational anticipatory socialization of adolescents: Messages, sources, and frameworks that influence interest in STEM careers. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 42(1), 85-106. doi:10.1080/00909882.2013.874568
- Johnson, R. B. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2), 282-292.
- Kim, S., & Slapac, A. (2015). Culturally responsive, transformative pedagogy in the transnational era: Critical perspectives. *Educational Studies*, 51(1), 17-27. doi: 10.1080/00131946.2014.983639
- Kramer, M. W., & Miller, V. D. (1999). A response to criticisms of organizational socialization research: In support of contemporary conceptualizations of organizational assimilation. *Communication Monographs*, 66(4), 358-367. doi:10.1080/03637759909376485
- Martinez, G.F., & Deil-Amen, R. (2015). College for all Latinos? The role of high school messages in facing college challenges. *Teachers College Record*, 117(3), 1-50.
- Martinez, M., & Klopott, S. (2005). The link between high school reform and college access and success for low-income and minority youth. *American Youth Policy Forum*.

- McKown, C. & Weinstein, R. S. (2002). Modeling the role of child ethnicity and gender in children's differential response to teacher expectations. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 159-184.
- Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (7th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Monahan, P.R. (1993). *Enhancing higher educational opportunities for secondary school minority students: A precollegiate program* (Practicum Report). Retrieved from ERIC. (ED370051).
- Muller, C., Riegler-Crumb, C., Schiller, K. S., Wilkinson, L., & Frank, K. A. (2010). Race and academic achievement in racially diverse high schools: Opportunity and stratification. *Teachers College Record, 112*(4), 1038–1063.
- Musial, E. (2014). Teacher-parent cooperation and pupils' achievements in the perception of adult respondents. *Pedagogy Studies, 114*(2), 96-105.
- Myers, K. K., Jahn, J. L. S., Gailliard, B. M., & Stoltzfus, K. (2011). Vocational anticipatory socialization (VAS): A communicative model of adolescents' interests in STEM. *Management Communication Quarterly, 25*(1), 87-120. doi: 10.1177/0893318910377068
- Nelson, J. D., Stahl, G., & Wallace, D. (2015). Race, class, and gender in boys' education: Repositioning intersectionality theory. *Culture, Society & Masculinities, 7*(2), 171-187.
- Obiakor, F.E. (1993). The politics of higher education: Perspectives for minorities in the 21st century. Presented at *The Annual Arkansas Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Conference*. Little Rock, AR.

- Philip, T. M. (2011). An "ideology in pieces" approach to studying change in teachers' sensemaking about race, racism, and racial justice. *Cognition and Instruction, 29*(3), 297-329. doi: 10.1080/07370008.2011.583369
- Phillips, M. (2006). Standardized tests aren't like t-shirts: One size doesn't fit all. *Multicultural Education, 14*(1), 52-55.
- Prochaska, J. O., Redding, C. A., & Evers, K. E. (2015). The transtheoretical model and stages of change. In K. Glanz, B. K. Rimer, & K. "V." Viswanath (Eds.), *Health behavior: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 125-148). San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass.
- Rojas, L., & Liou, D. D. (2017). Social justice teaching through the sympathetic touch of caring and high expectations for students of color. *Journal of Teacher Education, 68*(1), 28-40. doi: 10.1177/0022487116676314
- Sosa, T. & Gomez, K. (2012). Connecting teacher efficacy beliefs in promoting resilience to support of Latino students. *Urban Education, 47*, 876-909.
- Souza, T. J. (1999). Communication and alternative school student socialization. *Communication Education, 48*(2), 91-108. doi:10.1177/0042085912446033
- Strain, L. B. (2003). Language and diversity training: Critical emphasis needed in education of literacy teachers. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 33-37.
- Strand, S. (2014). Ethnicity, gender, social class and achievement gaps at age 16: Intersectionality and 'getting it' for the white working class. *Research Papers in Education, 29*(2), 131-171. doi:10.3102/0013189X032005033
- Thijs, J. & Fleischmann, F. (2015). Student-teacher relationships and achievement goal orientations: Examining student perceptions in an ethnically diverse sample. *Learning and Individual Differences, 42*, 53-63. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2015.08.014

- Tracy, S. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collective evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wass, R. & Golding, C. (2014). Sharpening a tool for teaching: The zone of proximal development. *Teaching in Higher Education, 19*(6), 671-684.
doi:10.1080/13562517.2014.901958
- Weick, K. E. (2011). Organized sensemaking: A commentary on processes of interpretive work. *Human Relations, 65*(1), 141-153. doi:10.1177/0018726711424235
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science, 16*(4), 409-421. doi:10.1287/orsc.1050.0133
- Welton, A. D., & Martinez, M. A. (2014). Coloring the college pathway: A more culturally responsive approach to college readiness and access for students of color in secondary schools. *The Urban Review, 46*(2), 197-223. doi:10.1007/s11256-013-0252-7
- White, J.W., & Ali-Khan, C. (2013). The role of academic discourse in minority students' academic assimilation. *American Secondary Education, 42*(1), 24-42.
- Winkle-Wagner, R., Sule, V. T., & Maramba, D. C. (2012). When race disappears: College admissions policy discourse in the state of Texas. *Educational Policy, 28*(4), 516-546. doi:10.1177/0895904812465114
- Yarbrough, B., & Brown, M. H. (2003). Understanding organizational socialization: Insight for academic advisors. *NACADA Journal, 23*(1-2), 66-73.
- Ziller, R. C. (1964). Individuation and socialization: A theory of assimilation in large organizations. *Human Relations, 17*(4), 341-360. doi:10.1177/001872676401700403