

The Promise and Limitations of a College-Going Culture: Toward Cultures of Engaged Learning for Low-SES Latina/o Youth

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Background/Context: *Literatures on college-going cultures offer patterns and lists of practices that promote schoolwide attention to college-going for nondominant youth, often with organization-level analyses of policies and procedures. Other literature identifies promising practices and challenges to conventional instruction, often examining pedagogical discourse. Seldom are ideas from these two literatures brought together to examine promises and tensions of effectively preparing youth of color for higher education. Our study examined both school and classroom levels to develop such understanding.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *The purpose was to learn how high schools committed to reversing historic underrepresentation of low-SES students of color in higher education may leverage two dimensions of schooling to hit this goal: development of a school-wide college-going culture with norms and roles that articulate high expectations and provide extensive supports toward college admissions and academically engaging classroom experiences that include rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenges, supported by language-rich communication, collaboration, culture, and context. To learn about one school's complex college-for-all efforts, we asked: How is a college-going culture enacted at the school, and by whom, to support Latina/o students in gaining access to college? What is the nature of academic engagement at the school that may help prepare Latina/o students for college?*

Setting: *Urban College Academy (UCA) is a public charter high school whose population was 98% Latina/o, 35% English learners, 81% receiving free/reduced price lunch. UCA's entering students were predominantly two or more years below grade level in reading and computing, according to standardized tests. The school explicitly recruits students who have previously failed a course, and the mission statement identifies "underachieving students" as UCA's target population. Students are mostly of Mexican origin, with roughly 80% first generation.*

Population/Participants/Subjects: *We collected data from school leaders, teachers, counselors, parents, and students. At classroom level, we selected six focal teachers (diverse in subject areas, ethnicity/race, and gender). We examined work and perspectives of focal students representative of academic performance and English language proficiency per focal class.*

Research Design: *We treat UCA as a "critical case," holding strategic importance to the problem on which the study focuses. Using qualitative methods, a survey, and structured observation scores, we worked to integrate, associate, and counter themes and findings between and across school organization and classroom levels.*

Data Collection and Analysis: *School-level analysis focused on normative social structures (goals, values, norms, and roles); resource allocations associated with advancing a mission to promote Latina/o students' academic success and college acceptance; and factors UCA identified as relevant. Drawing on over 40 hours of transcribed interviews with a wide range of participants, we developed themes and triangulated with other data. Classroom observation data were analyzed using CLASS and Standards Performance Continuum protocols, supported by other analyses. Teacher cases used teacher history and reflections on practice; videos, annotated fieldnotes; materials of teaching; and student work samples and focus groups. We found comparisons, contrasts, and tensions across lessons and classes; one case emerges as "a pocket of promise."*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *The study reveals a need for ongoing attention to both a college-going culture and instructional interactions. It highlights distinctions between college talk (talk about college) and college-level academic discourse, or socialization versus academic functions of schooling for college access and success. The study uncovers promising instructional interactions, as well as tensions, in engaging low-SES Latina/o students in academically rigorous work. Results suggest schools supporting low-SES youth of color may need a schoolwide culture of engaged learning that is rigorous, meaningful, and infused throughout school.*

In his first joint address to Congress, President Obama proclaimed: "By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world" (2009). These remarks signal a national commitment to provide "college for all," with a special emphasis on preparing students from historically underserved communities to attend and graduate from college. Against this policy backdrop, accessing higher education remains a challenge for students from underrepresented communities, including Latina/os. In California, site of the present study,

Latina/os constitute 52% of K–12 public school students (California Department of Education, 2013) but are underrepresented in the state’s colleges and universities (NCES, 2010, 2011).

In response to this vexing problem, educators and researchers have focused on shifting U.S. secondary schools toward procollege orientations by infusing them with what has been termed “college-going cultures.” Early scholarship on college-going cultures in secondary schools identifies principles and indicators associated with promoting students’ predispositions toward and readiness for college (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Oakes, 2003). These include college talk (schoolwide talk about college), clear expectations, rigorous academic curriculum, comprehensive counseling, faculty/family involvement, and intensive academic and social supports. These principles emphasize alignment of organizational structures with college ends. Empirical studies have since elucidated school efforts to implement college-going cultures, illuminating both promising practices and challenges in pursuing “college for all” (Farmer-Hinton, 2011; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Knight & Marciano, 2013; Mehan, 2012).

While increasing numbers of students from underserved communities gain access to post-secondary education, research reveals that many lack academic preparation to participate fully in rigorous college academic life. Consequently, many do not persist and graduate from college. A recent report identifies that almost 70% of Latina/o high school graduates enroll in college, slightly higher than the rate of White counterparts (Fry & Taylor, 2013). However, Lascher’s (2011) research review cites a national study (ACT, 2007) documenting that Latina/os lagged by double-digit percentages behind other high school graduates in meeting ACT-tested benchmarks in English, math, reading, and science. Similarly, Vernez and Mizell (2001) report a disproportionate number of Latina/os need academic remediation in college. In California, the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (2002) found only a third of entering students “sufficiently prepared for the two most frequently assigned writing tasks: analyzing information or arguments and synthesizing information from several sources,” and English learners (ELs), the majority of whom are Latina/o, are particularly unprepared for college-level academic demands (pp. 4–5). This trend in academic preparation may be a key factor for Latina/o students who attend college but are less likely to graduate than students from other racial/ethnic groups (Lascher, 2011), with just 46.2% of Latina/os graduating within six years from four-year colleges (NCES, 2010, Spring).

An important way of exploring this seemingly contradictory set of findings about college admission and college success is to examine high

school academic preparation, classroom interactions, and learning opportunities for underrepresented youth. However, researchers have paid inadequate attention to what occurs in classrooms of schools attempting to establish “college going cultures.” Many commentators have noted the importance of ensuring that students have access to rigorous, college preparatory curriculum taught by highly qualified teachers and have even asserted that “academic preparation is the most vital component of becoming college ready” (Corwin & Tierney, 2007, p. 5). However, there has been little systematic effort to understand how (and if) teachers’ instructional interactions with students in schools implementing “college for all” missions prepare economically and educationally disadvantaged students for college-level academic work. This omission is problematic since educators in urban high schools often face the daunting challenge of preparing low-SES, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, who may arrive several years below grade level, to be college ready within 4 years.

Our research extends the “college-going culture” literature by providing a systematic, nuanced, bilevel examination of one high school’s effort to promote Latino/a students’ college-going. Our study attends to both the organizational features of school-level college-going culture and instruction-level interactions aimed at equipping low-SES, Latino/a youth for college-level work. Ultimately, we argue that college-going cultures must pay equal attention to school-level socialization efforts and classroom-level academic learning in order to remedy college access and college persistence inequities. Beyond this, we argue that what may be needed is what we call a *schoolwide culture of engaged learning* that is rigorous and meaningful and infused throughout a school so it is visible, normalized, and ritualized.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this article is to explore how high schools committed to reversing the historic underrepresentation of low-SES students of color in higher education may leverage two dimensions of schooling in service of this goal. These dimensions are (a) the development of a school-wide college-going culture with norms and roles that articulate high expectations and provide extensive supports toward college applications and admissions, and (b) academically engaging classroom experiences that include rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenges, supported by language-rich communication, collaboration, culture, and context. We report the case study of Urban College Academy (UCA), a small public charter high school that provides a set of promising practices but also

reveals challenges and tensions in working to address both of these dimensions. UCA's students, almost all of whom are Latina/o and live in low-income communities, embody the paradox described above. Almost all students who graduate from UCA go on to attend college; however, a high proportion lack the academic preparation they need to succeed in doing college-level work. To learn about one school's complex college-for-all efforts, we sought to answer a pair of research questions: (a) How is a college-going culture enacted at UCA, and by whom, to support Latina/o students in gaining access to college? (b) What is the nature of academic engagement at UCA that may help prepare Latina/o students for college?

FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE

The framework guiding this study is rooted in a longstanding conceptualization of the dual societal purposes of schooling (Bidwell, 1965). First, schools socialize students to societal values and sort students for access to different societal strata (Meyer, 1977). Through the sorting process, schools confer status on students according to social categories that impact outcomes, historically disadvantaging students from low-income and culturally nondominant¹ communities (Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1977; Pallas, Entwistle, Alexander, & Slutka, 1994; Rist, 1977). Second, schools also instruct students in academic content, process, and skill building. High schools offer instruction in core subjects, such as mathematics and U.S. history, and develop students' academic skills, including the historically foundational "3 Rs." Generally, the socialization and academic functions of schooling have been congruent. For example, students in high academic tracks receive more rigorous curriculum and instruction (Oakes, 2005), preparing them for higher social status, including admission to college.

SOCIALIZATION: COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

Recently, many schools have attempted to confer college-going status on students from underserved communities to reverse inequities and improve educational outcomes, engaging families to support the new social and academic status conferred by school (Achinstein, Curry, & Ogawa, 2015). Researchers and educators identify college-going culture as critical to socializing students from underrepresented communities to gain access to college (Achinstein et al., in press; Knight & Marciano, 2013; McClafferty et al., 2002; McDonough, 1998; Oakes, 2003). Instead of relegating nondominant youth to lowered expectations and low tracks and denying them access to educational and economic opportunities,

educators call for an explicit focus on building a school culture with the goal of preparing all students for college admission. Within such cultures, school-wide norms engage staff, students, and parents in activities and roles that promote college access. Researchers have defined a college-going culture as the conditions of schools that provide formal and informal socialization of students to expectations for college-going and the supports needed to access college through information on college admission and financial aid (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McClafferty et al., 2002; Oakes, 2003). Research identifies two critical aspects of college-going culture: high expectations and high support for college-going (Farmer-Hinton, 2010; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Knight & Marciano, 2013; McClafferty et al., 2002; Oakes, 2003).

School Goals and Norms That Express High Expectations

High expectations for college-going are a central aspect of college-going culture. This involves two elements of the organization of schools. First, schools explicitly adopt a goal of students gaining admission to and succeeding in college. This may be reflected in a school mission statement or policies that link graduation to college acceptance. Second, schools enact organizational norms, rules that establish how participants act to contribute to attaining collective goals (Scott, 2008). In schools with college-going cultures, norms shape actions of staff, students, and parents to communicate value of attending college. The importance of college-going is conveyed through expressions of high expectations, symbols and rituals, and adoption of policies that confer positive social status on students from communities historically underserved by post-secondary education. Oakes (2003) describes the centrality of high expectations in a “college-going culture”:

Teachers, administrators, parents, and students expect students to have all the experiences they need for high achievement and college preparation. Adults encourage students to exert the necessary effort and persistence throughout their entire educational career, and adults work diligently to eliminate school-sanctioned alternatives to hard work and high expectations. These high expectations are coupled with specific interventions and information that emphasize to students that college preparation is a normal part of their childhood and youth. (p. 2)

The assumption behind high-expectations is that youth will rise to them, and that in nondominant communities such expectations will

counter the historic trend of low expectations where college is deemed out of reach. High expectations promote a collective commitment to college for all.

School Roles That Support College Access

College-going cultures also provide high support for college attendance by establishing organizational roles, which provide expectations for how people in particular positions in schools contribute to the goal of having students gain access to college. At one promising school, Farmer-Hinton (2011) noted the importance of “building a college culture, where college preparation was a guiding principle for all interactions in the school building” (p. 583), including personalized social support through individualized mentoring, counseling, and alumni support. Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) describe the importance of six types of support provided by staff in varied roles, including: college talk, college preparation activities, teacher advocacy, counselor advocacy, student/counselor interaction, and hands-on support. McClafferty et al. (2002) also reference the importance of providing information and resources, comprehensive counseling, and college partnerships. Oakes (2003) similarly identifies a need for teachers, counselors, and support networks of peers and adults who provide counseling, tutoring, academic programs, test preparation, coaching on college information and financial aid, and more. Teachers and counselors can serve as brokers to provide college knowledge for Latina/o families and students (Cooper, 2014; Tomas Rivera Center, 2001). A school’s college-going support role, thus, is instrumental in enabling students—those from underrepresented communities, specifically—to gain access to college, opening the door to “membership” in higher education.

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT FOR NONDOMINANT YOUTH

A second aspect of supporting low-SES youth of color to thrive in college involves the academic function of schooling. The college-for-all literature often advocates for a “college prep curriculum,” including access to algebra in middle school and college preparatory and advanced placement courses in high school as the main academic path to college readiness (McClafferty et al., 2002; Oakes, 2003). However, minimal attention in the college-going literature has been devoted to examining how academic readiness for college rests fundamentally on the quality of academic rigor and engagement afforded youth in classrooms (Cooper, 2014). Only when school-level analyses are coupled with examination of academic engagement can we understand the nature of college-readiness

being developed. Our framework therefore includes academic engagement in classrooms, in the interactions between teacher and students and between students and their peers. We highlight interactions associated with support for nondominant youth (e.g., Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, & Tharp, 2003; Pianta, Hamre, Haynes, Mintz, & La Paro, 2006). These include: (a) rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenge, (b) culture and context as support for learning, and (c) language-rich communication and collaboration. These kinds of interaction are mutually reinforcing, but we separate them here for heuristic purposes and elaborate each.

Rigorous and Meaningful Disciplinary Challenges

Without challenging curricula and lessons, instruction cannot take students to levels needed for meaningful intellectual activity associated with college. Research on learning activities that support youth from nondominant cultural and linguistic communities highlights a need to engage youth in academically challenging work to meet high standards (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; V. E. Lee & Smith, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Woolley, 2009). Academic challenge and press are particularly critical given that unchallenging curricula often occur in high-need, lower-SES settings with many diverse youth and many ELs (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006). Relevant work includes basic literacy routines (reading fluency, notetaking structures); intermediate, general academic literacy work that cuts across disciplines (e.g., comprehension strategies); and disciplinary targets (e.g., learning to think like an historian, mathematician, literary critic) (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Especially salient for college-readiness is discipline-specific activity, as college heightens subject-specific coursework. Discipline-specific activity includes study of both subject-specific content and concepts (learning about) and subject-specific ways of doing and thinking (learning how), which some distinguish as conceptual and procedural knowledge. Rigorous academic activity also includes meta-disciplinary work, including particular kinds of knowing, doing, and writing common to clusters of disciplines. These include problem-solving, essential to mathematics, engineering, and sciences; empirical inquiry, central to both natural and social sciences; and researching from sources, common to humanities (M. Carter, 2007). Learning to engage in these disciplinary and meta-disciplinary ways of doing involves entering into discourse communities that share practices and ways of thinking and making meaning (Gee, 2003).

Culture and Context as Support for Learning

Our framework highlights both rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenges. For youth of color in low-SES urban communities, texts, content, and tasks often can seem impossibly distant from realities of local communities and daily living; learning activity in classrooms benefits from links to communities and lives of students. Of special concern, as standardized testing has encroached upon pedagogical decision-making and practice, teachers have increasingly devoted time to skill-level work and test preparation, to the detriment at times of larger literacy activity and language production. Those working in low-SES schools have felt even more pressure to teach mandated, scripted curricula, leaving them less able to develop best practices and unequipped to teach diverse students effectively (Costigan, 2008; McCarthey, 2008; Menken, 2006). A challenge for teachers in such a context is to design discipline-rich activity that is meaningful for students.

A central and persistent issue for schools in low-SES and culturally nondominant settings is to challenge students academically while providing appropriate and adequate supports (C. D. Lee, 2007). Youth from nondominant communities, including youth of color and ELs, may benefit from particular kinds of support for learning. Culture and context enable students to build on prior knowledge by accessing cultural and linguistic resources (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Bruer, 1994; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Sawyer, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999). Such resources can be mined, for example, for cultural modeling, where students gain awareness of their own cultural ways of interacting and learn to use such awareness and resources as part of a problem-solving toolkit for academic learning (C. D. Lee, 2007). This kind of activity is far more than routine support, providing scaffolding that is responsive to diverse learners, building on what they know, and directing instruction to target students' challenges (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014). Contextualizing instruction moves past atomistic, facts-based curriculum, linking what is under study to everyday lives of students, tapping prior knowledge, drawing on experiences of diverse learners (Doherty et al., 2003). When done thoughtfully, this contextualizing adds relevance and meaning to lessons.

Language-Rich Communication and Collaboration

It is in classroom communication that curriculum gets explored and where teachers and students may coconstruct understandings and raise questions and dilemmas about content and ideas. Multivocal

communication can provide frequent and sustained opportunities for language production, particularly important for ELs and former ELs now mainstreamed into general track classes (Gibbons, 2002; Lucas & Villegas, 2010; Walqui, 2011). In classes of mostly Latina/o ELs, alignment with Standards for Effective Pedagogy yielded student learning gains; two of the standards were especially language-focused—language and literacy across the curriculum and instructional conversations between a teacher and a small group of students (Doherty et al., 2003). Small groups can be particularly promising, when cooperative tasks are group-worthy and not merely low-level tasks. Math teachers at a high school in one study called “groupworthy problems” those that (a) illustrate important mathematical concepts, (b) include multiple tasks that draw effectively on collective resources of a student group, (c) allow for multiple representations, and (d) have several possible solution paths (Horn, 2006, p. 76). While this conception sets the groupwork bar high, it marks disciplinary specificity and use of collective resources of the group, hallmarks of the social construction of knowledge.

For ELs, collaboration can support academic English development (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2005), with flexible grouping structures, use of students’ native languages as resource, and interactions with fluent English speakers (Faltis, Arias, & Ramirez-Marin, 2010; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). When teachers structure group-worthy tasks, students coconstruct knowledge through collaboration, community building, and joint productive activity (Brown & Campione, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sawyer, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). When the social construction of knowledge occurs, youth can learn how to make meaning together, that they need not abandon community in individual knowledge development. Discussion fosters language-rich classroom communication when it moves beyond teacher-dominated talk, widely documented as IRE (initiate-reply-evaluate), to dialogic instruction (Nystrand, 1997). In such instruction, substantive student engagement with high levels of authentic questions, uptake, and high quality evaluation of student talk is associated with high literacy performance (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003). For youth from groups marginalized societally and educationally, sustained language-rich interactions such as these are crucial for academic engagement. Drawing from our framework, we sought to understand the college-going culture and quality of academic engagement at one urban high school serving a low-SES Latina/o population.

METHODS

This case study draws from a program of research on innovating high schools that have documented success with Latina/o students (Achinstein et al., 2015; Achinstein, Curry, Ogawa, & Athanases, 2014; Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014; Curry, 2013). Case studies can describe participants' conceptions and the nature of schooling experiences, thereby generating in-depth understanding of meanings, processes, and contexts of those involved (Merriam, 1988). Case findings provide opportunities to generate hypotheses and build theory about relationships that may otherwise remain hidden (Yin, 1989). We treat UCA as a "critical case," holding strategic importance to the problem on which the study focuses (Flyvbjerg, 2001). We selected UCA by these criteria: located in California, the U.S. state with the highest concentration of Latina/os; located in urban, high-need areas; enrolling predominantly Latina/o students; and state-funded. Other criteria included an explicit mission to advance education of youth from nondominant cultural and linguistic communities and some reported success with Latina/o students (e.g., college-going rates for Latina/o students higher than district averages, course completion rates for admission into California universities higher than district averages, school rank achievement scores at midrange or higher compared with similar schools in the state). Finally, UCA, as an urban public charter school operating for over a decade, enabled a study of a mature charter school well beyond early phases of organizational growth, which is the focal period of most case studies of charter school life (Farmer-Hinton, 2011). In this way, patterns we might discern could uncover promise and tensions beyond "start-up" challenges.

DATA COLLECTION

From 2010–2012 we collected data at school and classroom levels. At the school level, we conducted a series of five semistructured interviews with the principal, two interviews with the executive director,² and one interview each with an academic dean and three college counselors. We audiotaped and took fieldnotes of interviews, highlighting themes from our framework and emerging themes on college-going cultures. We conducted and audiotaped a focus group with the English and math departments and two parent focus groups. We observed meetings including professional development meetings held weekly on-site and over the summer, parent meetings, College Resource Center meetings with community members, school assemblies, community events, and graduation. Again, field notes and summary documents reported both a priori and

emerging themes and noted questions and tensions in activity. We also conducted a schoolwide teacher survey and collected school documents on mission, goals, school history, and practices.

At the classroom level, we identified six focal teachers, selecting diversity of subject areas (English and math as gatekeeper subjects for college-going, as well as history/social studies), ethnicity/race, and gender. With each focal teacher, we observed and videotaped six class sessions (two consecutively in fall, winter, and spring). Due to some block scheduling, classes ranged from 66–106 minutes (average 83 minutes), totaling 50 hours of observed instruction, 8.25 hours per teacher. In addition to collecting audio and video records, for each observed lesson a researcher typed detailed field notes on a laptop, following a set of protocols that included recording of notes, segmenting notes by instructional activity or topic, and scanning of handouts and photos.

We followed each pair of lessons per teacher with a 90-minute interview, totaling three interviews per teacher during a year of study, and a fourth member-check interview the following year. Again, audio recordings and field notes recorded interviews, totaling over 30 hours of teacher interviews. We collected teaching materials and student work linked to lessons/units observed, with attention to work by focal students identified by teachers as representative of the range of academic performance and English language proficiency in class. We also conducted focus groups with these students. We observed focal teachers' grade-level advisories (where students received personalized support and information about college), after-school academic intervention sessions, and student exhibitions. In all, we collected over 200 hours of data in a digitized database.

SCHOOL-LEVEL ANALYSIS

Our school-level analysis focused on promising features of the school organization that supported Latina/o student success and complexities in practice. We had preliminary notions of success shaped by initial selection criteria, but also looked to the school's definition of success—college-going. While collecting data, our team conducted preliminary analysis in weekly 3-hour meetings where we debriefed observations and discussed emerging insights. Discussions drew from field notes and post-observation summary reflection memos (template in Appendix A), providing us considerable familiarity with observation data and heightening attention to research questions and core constructs from the larger program of research: (a) school normative social structures, including goals, values, norms, and roles, (b) resource allocations associated with

advancing the school's mission to promote Latino/a students' academic success and college acceptance, and (c) factors the school viewed as contributing to their success. For survey data (100% response rate), our total number of respondents was small due to school size, leading us to calculate basic descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation per item). We used the core framework constructs to cluster items in our reporting of survey results.

With over 40 hours of transcribed interviews and with such a range of participants, we used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, to assist with a systematic process to mine the richness of this dataset and to code themes relevant to our framework constructs. We developed our initial codes based on the framework from the larger program of research, including key constructs and subconstructs drawn from the literature, while allowing for new codes to emerge. Three team members attended two-day NVivo training workshops and returned to teach remaining team members. Our coding team (three senior researchers and two students) engaged in four rounds of exploratory pilot coding to establish a productive coding scheme and decision rules. Subsequently, all five coders participated in interrater calibration through six rounds of coding; each round focused on one to two 20-minute transcript excerpts. After each round, we ran pair-wise coding comparison reports within NVivo to determine interrater agreement. We looked at pair agreement levels within each code (10 combinations of pairs possible in a five-member team) and calculated an overall code average. To refine the codebook and calibrate understandings, we held lengthy meetings between rounds, examining codes with under 80% agreement. Pair-wise single-code agreement averages were averaged to calculate overall team inter-rater agreement average. By the 10th round, we had achieved a Kappa coefficient of .68; according to Landis and Koch (1977), this score indicates "substantial" interrater agreement.³ From this point onward, we coded transcripts independently and team members became case experts on different informants. A final codebook included 35 codes for the larger program of research (Appendix B). Illustrations of coded data most relevant for the present study (Appendix C) include: organizational goals, values, and norms; organizational roles of students and families; resources or forms of capital such as physical, social, and cultural; and organizational successes and challenges.

Using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), we identified themes across interview data. NVivo enabled us to generate "raw" code reports listing all text linked to a particular code. Each team member specialized in a coding domain (organizational formal and informal structures, resources or capitals, instruction, outcomes, and

special populations), sifting through compiled “raw” reports for each assigned code and writing synthesis memos that included frequency calculations indicating the number of times a theme surfaced across participants, as well as illustrative quotes. Included in reports were tabular displays of quantitative survey data, to triangulate themes. We further refined themes and triangulated findings through use of summary reflections from observational data. Emerging from analyses were the themes of (a) college talk, (b) comportment, (c) college-going supports, and (d) tensions arising as the school engaged in promoting a college-going culture. From these various analyses, we developed a summative, holistic school case memo. Finally, we incorporated feedback from member checks.

CLASSROOM-LEVEL ANALYSIS

For classroom instruction, our unit of analysis was classroom interactions and instructional activity. To understand interactions, classroom observation data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using the CLASS protocol (Pianta et al., 2006) and elements of the Standards Performance Continuum (SPC) (Hilberg, Doherty, Tharp, Estrada, & Lee, 2003). These observation instruments assessed a range of constructs, based on research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of student development and learning (Appendix D displays constructs we focused on and for which we generated scores). Our team received 4 days of training in use of the instruments by experts and instrument developers. CLASS training culminated with an online reliability test and all coders obtained certificates of reliability.⁴ For SPC reliability, we identified a lead coder, then used several calibration rounds to ensure that other coders achieved 85% agreement or higher. For each focal teacher, we scored three randomly selected lessons (one per each 2-day observation cycle) for an average of over 4 hours of instruction per teacher. Researchers scored constructs on a 1–7 scale (CLASS) and on a scale for SPC later adapted to align with a 1–7 scale (1 reflects low and 7 reflects high degree of evidence of enactment of a construct). Each construct was scored at timed intervals of 20 minutes, totaling three to four instructional segments per observation and a total of approximately 10 segments per focal teacher across lessons. To reinforce reliability, two raters scored 75% of all segments, with continued strong agreement. For each construct, we tabulated mean rater scores per focal teacher for each segment, for each class observation, and for cross-lesson summaries. We tallied mean scores per construct across all focal teachers. From this body of scores, we tracked trends in data.

Table 1. Classroom-Level Analysis: Data Analysis, Alignment, and Triangulation by Data

Framework construct	Analysis of videorecorded observational data: Focus on relevant CLASS/SPC dimension through scores, raters' remarks, patterns	Coding and analyses within and across teacher cases: Focus on observational data (audio, video, & field notes); transcribed teacher interviews; student work samples; transcribed student focus groups
Rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenges	<p>Analysis and problem-solving</p> <p>Key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher level thinking • Complex tasks to problem-solve • Strategic opportunities to develop thinking and planning 	<p>Levels of academic literacy focus (Following Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic • Intermediate • Disciplinary
Culture and context as support for learning	<p>Contextualization for making meaning</p> <p>Key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home, school, community knowledge tapped • Knowledges incorporated into lessons 	<p>Analysis informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses of culture as resource; • Cultural modeling (C. D. Lee, 2007) • Scaffolding that is responsive to diverse learners (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014)
Language-rich communication and collaboration	<p>Language and literacy development</p> <p>Key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for written or verbal language expression and development • Interactions with peers and teacher • Teacher assistance through questioning, listening, rephrasing, modeling 	<p>Focus on purposes and processes of small- and large-group discussion</p> <p>Discourse analysis of selected, relevant episodes focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-R-E vs. substantive student engagement (Applebee et al., 2003; Nystrand, 1997) • Teacher probes for elaboration to extend language production (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005)

After reporting trends in scores across all interaction dimensions, we focused additional analyses to deepen and triangulate interaction score patterns, focused on our framework constructs for classroom-level academic engagement (Table 1, Column 1). Three dimensions of observation protocols (Column 2) aligned with our framework constructs. Raters' written remarks supporting their scores provided additional information. To gain a holistic sense of teachers' instructional interactions, a subteam of six researchers constructed teacher cases. Cases used teacher history and reflections on practice derived from interviews;

audio, videotaped, and annotated field notes documentation of six lessons per teacher; teaching materials; and student work samples and focus groups. For case construction, we created a matrix for each of six lessons per teacher, mapping activities by topic, duration, purpose, action for engagement (listen, read, speak), academic challenge, and uses of culture and language as support. For matrices, memos, and other data, we used our framework constructs (Table 1, Column 1) as a priori codes for analyses. The Table 1 third column shows specific analytic frames that assisted. For example, for academic rigor, the Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) model (described in our framework) served as a tool to analyze levels of academic literacy and challenge. We also generated pattern codes, using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to create new codes and themes about quality of interactions. One new theme, for example, was the evolving arc of activity and interaction in instructional segments; our analyses highlighted ways activities and interactions began and the degree to which they were sustained. From cases, we created tables and memos on crosscutting themes, comparisons and contrasts across lessons and classes, and dilemmas and tensions.

LIMITATIONS

Our study has several limitations. First, while embedded in a program of research on sites including a large comprehensive school, the study features one small public charter school with a mission to meet the needs of a population almost entirely Latina/os. We chose the school as a critical case to examine possibilities and challenges in meeting the needs of urban low-SES Latina/o youth, most of them academically underprepared and many of them ELs. However, large comprehensive high schools with large numbers of Latina/o students but more ethnically and linguistically diverse student bodies may encounter similar dilemmas but certainly others. For example, more diverse schools may require other considerations to create multicultural navigators (P. Carter, 2005), links with families, and cultural links in academic learning. Second, while our decisions in selecting focal teachers were deliberate, and data collection included many lessons and episodes, any such sampling of classroom work yields a story that is partial. For this reason, we brought systematic, analytic care to all work with data and treated instructional interactions as the unit of analysis, rather than rely on broad claims about individual teachers. Third, we are able to speculate about a need for both a college-going culture and rigorous academics in classrooms, but our design did not enable us to draw tight associations between school and classroom levels or to gauge what and how much is needed at each level

for effective schooling of nondominant youth and Latina/o youth in particular. Nonetheless, the case-based nature of the study and the rich database uncovered promises, tensions, and complexities and provides opportunities to generate hypotheses and build theory about relationships that may otherwise remain hidden (Yin, 1989).

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Urban College Academy is an urban, 9–12th grade charter high school, founded in 2000. Its student population of 415 during our years of study was 98% Latina/o, 35% English learners, and 81% students receiving free/reduced price lunch. UCA's entering student population was predominantly below grade level according to standardized tests, with 82% of 9th graders reading below 7th grade level, and 52% of 9th graders computing below 7th grade level. The school explicitly recruits students who have previously failed a course, and the mission statement identifies “underachieving students” as UCA's target population. Students are mostly of Mexican origin with roughly 80% first generation and the remaining 20% second or third generation. Students attend from across the city, some arriving from 45 minutes away by public transport.

UCA recruits teachers from a highly-regarded nearby university pre-service program and seeks teachers who embrace its mission and share students' backgrounds. The total number of teaching staff at UCA was 18. With an average teaching experience of 3.6 years, UCA teachers reflect trends in other charter schools with fewer years of teaching experience than regular public schools (Farmer-Hinton, 2011). Within the teaching staff, 13 teachers (70%) were women; eight (44%) had a clear credential; eight (44%) had a preliminary credential; and two were enrolled in a credential program or had an emergency credential. Teachers included: 9 (50%) White; four (22%) Latina/o; three Asian (17%), one African American (6%), and one Latina/White (6%); three (17%) identified as highly bilingual in English and Spanish, while four (22%) identified as moderately bilingual. Our six focal teachers (three female, three male) were one Latina, one Latino, one Latina/White, one Latino/African American, one African American female, and one White male. Four were first-year teachers, and the other two had 3 and 11 years of experience. Five of the six held master's degrees. Nonteaching staff included a principal, academic dean, executive director, athletics director, college counselor, part-time alumni coordinator, and financial aid coordinator; the administrative team was White, while the college counselors were Latinas.

RESULTS

UCA boasts success in creating a college-going culture for its low-SES urban Latina/o students, the majority of whom graduate and attend college. Before reporting results on UCA's successes and challenges related to college-going, we begin with several caveats. First, UCA does not prove a fit for all of its admitted students: 44% of entering freshmen between 2005–2012 left UCA before graduation for reasons including wanting to be at a large comprehensive high school, not liking the strict rules, or failing more than two consecutive years. While we lack interviews with exiting students, staff reported that the school's lack of extracurricular activities, small and insular community, strict discipline policies, and single-minded emphasis on college and academics may have also alienated some students. Exiting students typically re-enroll in traditional high schools with less demanding graduation requirements. In a 2-year period at the time of our study, just one student who left UCA before graduation dropped out of high school rather than re-enroll elsewhere. Second, of those students who persist and graduate from UCA, many enter community colleges rather than achieving 4-year university admission that UCA's mission espouses. An average of 30% of graduates from 2004–2012 entered community college,⁵ many of whom lacked immigration documents and thus could not access financial aid. For undocumented students, community colleges may have been more affordable.

Nonetheless, of UCA students who remain at UCA until graduation, college admission rates are extremely high. On average, 93% of UCA's graduating classes between 2004 and 2012 enrolled in college (63% in 4-year institutions). In 2009 UCA had 78% of its 2009 graduates enrolled in California public colleges, while the average countywide rate was 46%, making UCA the number one high school in its county in terms of public college enrollment after graduation. In the same year 85.5% of UCA graduates completed the California A-G coursework requirements for admission to the UC or CSU systems,⁶ while countywide only 25.5% of Latina/os met these requirements (<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>). Proud of this accomplishment, UCA's principal often boasted to parents, "We send more Latinos out of high school and into college than any other high school in the entire city. More than schools with almost 2000 students."

These promising results reflect UCA's robust college-going culture but mask complexities. While college admission was required for graduation, this did not mean students were "college ready." One teacher explained: "Just because someone gets accepted to college doesn't necessarily mean they are ready for college. It's the skill level . . . the majority

of our students as seniors are not there.” For example, in 2011, UCA seniors’ low scores on CA’s English Placement Test (EPT) and the Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) meant that approximately 70% would have to take remedial English coursework in college and 66% would have to do the same in math. Disturbingly, several administrators noted that the class of 2011 represented an improvement over past performance since traditionally 75%–85% of graduates faced remedial college courses. Such remediation can lead to loss of time and money for students, lower retention and graduation rates, and a devastating impact on students’ self-esteem (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003).

Because many UCA graduates enter college academically underprepared, they struggle to persist and graduate. UCA reports a 6-year college graduation rate of 47%, which is slightly lower than the national rate of 49% for Latinos; notably, UCA’s 47% rate is significantly higher than the 11% 6-year college graduation rate for low-SES students (NCES, 2010, 2011). Even so, UCA’s graduates still lag behind when compared to wider national populations—57% of all students and 79% of higher-SES students graduate from college within 6 years (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2010; Postsecondary Education Opportunity 2012). UCA’s mixed success prompts us to inquire if college-going high school cultures absent the academic engagement supports of high challenge, culturally relevant curriculum and instruction, and rich-language development are adequate in preparing Latino/a youth to persist and thrive in college. Further, our investigation into classrooms reveals issues teachers face in engaging students in academically challenging work needed for a successful academic transition into higher education.

Reflecting UCA’s seemingly contradictory outcomes of high college enrollment rates, high college remediation coursework, and low college completion rates, we report results in two parts. First, we report on the college-going culture at UCA. We describe how school goals and norms that express high expectations and school roles supporting college access enabled students to gain entry to, or membership, in postsecondary education. Second, we document how instructional interactions revealed promise and complexities as teachers struggled to develop academic engagement and equip students with knowledge and skills needed to participate fully in college. We close by drawing upon one promising teacher case, highlighting what the focal interactions look like at high levels and how they work in an integrated fashion in one teacher’s practice.

COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE: PROVIDING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

UCA's college-going culture aims to socialize students to behave in ways that will gain them access to postsecondary education. This school culture rested on a clearly understood goal that all students would be admitted to and attend college. The culture included two school-wide norms: college talk and college demeanor. The college-going culture was also enacted through school roles: college counseling and teachers of color as multicultural navigators and role models.

The School Goal

College-going culture at UCA is pervasive. UCA's name, which incorporates "college," communicates a clear, nonnegotiable goal: to prepare underperforming students, whose parents did not attend college, to succeed in 4-year colleges and universities. Driven by this mission, the school explicitly recruited students who failed one or more classes in middle school and would be the first family member to attend college. UCA's executive director and co-founder explained that the mission was written for "first-generation college attenders" since "All the data show if you can change the educational status of one kid in the family, you can change the family." Indeed, admission to a 4-year college was a relatively nonnegotiable graduation requirement. Seniors not admitted to a college must plead their cases to a community panel and demonstrate their commitment to pursuing higher education. Most of these students enroll in community colleges. UCA has no formal tracking; it requires all students to take "A-G" course requirements for admission to California public universities. UCA expected teachers to endorse the school's mission; on the school-wide survey teachers strongly agreed (4.83 mean score on 5-point scale, where 5 = strongly agree) with the statement, "This school encourages teachers to promote college-going for their Latina/o students." In addition, the survey items "Faculty support the school's stated goal" received a 4.44 mean score and "In pursuing the school's goal, how important are the following outcomes for Latino students? It is important that Latino students in our school . . . go to college" teachers strongly agreed with a mean score of 4.83.

Schoolwide Norms

UCA's college-going culture included two norms that directed participants to act and interact in ways to promote the college-going goal for all students (Scott, 2008). These norms are reflected in a pervasiveness of college talk and college-going demeanor.

Pervasiveness of College Talk

UCA was characterized by a norm that staff and students would talk frequently about college. College talk supports the conferral of positive social status for nondominant youth who historically have not been considered college prospects. One student explained, "Right from the start, you get used to the idea of college, because that's all they talk about. . . . A lot of students, they haven't heard of college or been motivated for it [before UCA]." At a school assembly and at a professional development meeting, the principal showed a PowerPoint displaying statistics on low achievement of Latina/o students and the consequences for future attainment. The principal asserted, "We challenge that story." He then showed UCA's high college enrollment rates, contrasting these to county, state, and national statistics.

Symbolic displays of college-going were evident in the ubiquity of college banners and the ritual of college gear days when teachers wore their college sweatshirts, often opening dialogue about college experiences. Friday assemblies where teachers shared college stories provided another college talk forum. For example, a mathematics teacher noted a circuitous path—dropping out, transferring, starting again—and how persistence got her through. An English teacher shared joys of international study, using slides of traveling the world with college friends. College talk was also formalized in advisory curriculum, with explicit focus on college access. For example, ninth-grade advisory included: a college visit followed by a group debrief, a panel discussion with seniors sharing their wisdom about the path to college acceptance, and completion of a "vision book" which featured students' self-portraits as college-bound sophomores.

College talk was not reserved only for UCA educators; it surfaced in parent and student forums. Parents reported choosing UCA because a college-going mission aligned with their hopes for a better life for their children. At family outreach meetings, parents wrote comments on posters where they articulated hopes for their children's college success. A representative comment read:

Podemos demostrar ganas haciendo lo siguiente apoyando a nuestros hijos en todo para que ellos se enfoquen y pongan todo su empeño para que se gradúen en la Universidad. (We can show determination by supporting our kids in everything so that they can focus and put all of their effort and graduate from the university.)

Such handwritten notes remained displayed in student gathering spots for weeks, conveying how parents and school jointly committed to students' college futures. Also, the invocation of "ganas" (determination, effort, self-direction), a value embraced by Latina/o families and later reified as a core school ethic, reflects how UCA strategically situated college talk in culturally relevant terms.

The pervasiveness of college talk also seeped into students' social exchanges. Students in a focus group (S = student) described their peer talk on college:

S1: With other high schools, people aren't saying to each other, "What college are you going to? Where did you get accepted to?" And that's our conversations here. We're talking about scholarships.

S2: It's like, "Oh, I have to go do an application."

S1: That's what we're talking about, that's our conversations right now. And at other high schools, I don't think it's like that.

These comments highlight the informal ways college talk saturated students' social interactions.

College talk was also apparent in more formal settings as was evident in a ritual during a 4-day college trip for juniors, when students engaged in a three-hour "commitment ceremony" to reflect on what it means to be college-bound. One teacher described how students lit candles, shared thoughts, and made commitments to attend college, and how "they all cry":

Because it's like, "This is for my mother, who works three jobs and came to this country so I could have a better life. I see how much she works, and I just want to make her proud. I want to take care of her. I want to provide for her." That's really the moment where they're saying, "Yes, I am." Not just "Yes, you think I am" but "Yes, I am."

The teacher identified this as a moment when students viewed themselves as college-bound. A student described the experience of the commitment ceremony and the core question:

What does it mean to be college-bound? And it just led to three hours of talking about our families and everyone shared their stories. After that a student I know, he was thinking about not going to college, but he's thinking about college now. I think that really helped.

The prominence and power of family as a key motivator for college was key in the commitment ceremony and other college talk at UCA. One hallway poster entitled "Why go to college?" and written by students declared, "[I want] to give back to my parents for all they have given me." Also, cap and gown photos were taken as family portraits with siblings, parents, and grandparents; they decorated the school entry, announcing to all that pursuit of college was a family endeavor. In this manner UCA infused college talk with the Latino value of familismo, which Andrés-Hyman, Ortiz, Añez, Paris, and Davidson (2006) characterize as allocentric, focused on others and being community-minded, a "cultural value that stresses attachments, reciprocity, and loyalty to family members beyond the boundaries of the nuclear family" (p. 696). In sum, college talk at UCA was pervasive and culturally relevant.

College-Going Comportment

Another norm at UCA encouraged students to act with what we refer to as the comportment of college students. Through body language and embodiment of other college/professional ways of communicating, UCA students are explicitly taught codes of power. Such comportment conveys that "I can function in a college environment and know how to act according to the norms of places inhabited by college-educated people." From this perspective, comportment becomes a way for students to tell the world "I am a college-goer." College comportment is promoted through rules (e.g., uniforms and planner books) enforced by staff. This focus requires students to look and act, in the words of staff, like "college-going professionals."

Throughout interviews, staff and students referred to school efforts to get youth to buy into "school culture." Students were required to wear collared shirts with the school logo and khaki pants, with no hooded sweatshirts or clothing in blue or red (which can signify gang affiliation). At the start of every class, teachers shook hands with students, teaching them a firm handshake with steady eye contact. The principal noted that it may be a bit "militaristic," but he linked the emphasis on this kind of comportment to becoming a proud student and future professional:

We talk about valuing college a lot. We're trying to fit into the mold of what the dominant society feels is successful, which is go to college, get a job that involves you being important. And that's part of their families' culture, too. "We want you to be somebody."

The founding executive director similarly explained that UCA students must "start playing the part" of college-going students. She explained that in the school's earliest years it established a "culture of achievement" linking a strict code of conduct with success:

"You will go to college. You will have to change how you engage with people. You are going to shake our hands. You're going to look us in the eye. . . . You're going to have self-respect. You're going to have respect for your peers around you. You're going to make sacrifices." . . . We started calling things college-readiness. . . . "Tuck in your shirt, pull up your pants, start looking like you're a college prep student. *Start playing the part.*"

What we have termed norms of comportment, then, were viewed as an important strategy to engage youth in being and seeing themselves as college-bound. This stance towards comportment is supported by social psychologists, who document how power poses in body language increase confidence. Carney, Cuddy, and Yap (2010) argue that "embodiment [of power] extends beyond mere thinking and feeling, to physiology and subsequent behavioral choices" (p. 1363). In this manner, UCA's emphasis on college comportment features an embodiment process whereby students adopt and practice new behaviors associated with success within dominant society.

School Roles—Supporting College Access

To support Latina/o students' access to college, the school specified roles to guide how organizational participants would perform their formal positions and contribute to goal attainment (Scott, 2008). Importantly, these roles entailed supporting college access for UCA's Latina/o students by coupling students' familial and cultural identifications with their emerging college-going identifications. The two sets of roles were comprehensive college counseling and staff of color as multicultural navigators and role models.

Comprehensive College Counseling

UCA invested in a College Resource Center (CRC), staffed by a counselor, financial aid officer, and alumni coordinator. The staff used college talk to build students' and parents' college- and financial literacy. CRC provided many services: one-on-one college counseling, access to information about college admissions and financial aid, college trips, and alumni connections. CRC staff worked with students and parents, starting the summer before students entered UCA and continuing into their college years. As seniors, students were assigned to a CRC staff member with whom they met individually every 6 weeks to discuss their academic performance and check on their progress in completing college and scholarship applications. Special efforts were made to meet the needs of undocumented students. CRC held monthly meetings for families of juniors and seniors to address important topics such as choosing the right college and how to apply, paying for college and financial aid, and supporting children's academic success and college aspirations. CRC staff also provided support for UCA alumni by visiting graduates on their college campuses and connecting them with resources, including clubs (particularly those with a Latina/o focus), academic programs, professors, and alumni.

Staff of Color as Multicultural Navigators and Role Models

UCA hired staff who could lead college talk that coupled college-going goals with students' cultural identities in two ways. First, three Latinas who were first-generation college-goers, including a UCA graduate, ran the CRC and acted as multicultural navigators (P. Carter, 1995), using their bicultural experiences to bridge students' home and college cultures. They gained trust of Latina/o families, enabling them to have difficult conversations with families about students traversing home and college cultures. At a parent meeting, a panel of CRC staff and UCA alumni explained how parents could support college-going students. Panelists helped families understand college culture and how it may differ from what they expect in their homes; one CRC Latina who attended a local college explained:

My mom expected that I would take care of my family. My recommendation [to parents is] that if the student is staying at home [and going to college], you need to respect the child's time that they are full time at school, that they do schoolwork first and then family things.

Undertaking the role of multicultural navigator meant that CRC staff did not merely cheerlead for college, but rather initiated a nuanced, serious, and ongoing conversation aimed at socializing all parties in a child's world into the realities of college. For example, UCA staff talked about "Latina guilt" at leaving home to attend college, and negotiating the balance of familial ties and school.

Second, UCA intentionally hired teachers who were bilingual or persons of color or both because, like CRC staff, they could serve as role models for students and help them bridge college and heritage cultures. As noted, half of UCA's teachers identified as people of color. Forty-nine percent of staff was bilingual in English and Spanish. Many teachers of color felt a deep affinity with their students and described how they hoped to be role models who made a difference in the lives of Latina/o youth. Several used college talk to help Latina/o students navigate a seeming distance between their communities and college. For example, in one advisory, a teacher referenced his Salvadoran family and his culture shock when he left his predominantly Latina/o community to attend a predominantly White college. He also stressed that one of the best things about college was that through distance he grew to appreciate his heritage and family in new ways.

Though students reported in focus groups that they valued teachers of any race or ethnicity who cared about them and taught effectively, some also noted especially appreciating teachers of color who understood their experiences, talked of their own college lives, and thus served as role models. A student noted that "all these Latino teachers that have succeeded" were

a real inspiration to me because...they're just like my family, so someone in my family has achieved that, and I can, too. . . . Here at UCA, we have role models that . . . come from the same background that we have, and that encourages many people to pursue their education.

These comments demonstrate how UCA's teachers of color powerfully influenced students' college aspirations with testimonials that college was not only possible but also a worthy goal. Furthermore, the school's commitment to recruiting persons of color to perform the role of teacher as counselor served to heighten the cultural relevancy of college talk while also affording opportunities to address potential disjunctures within the intersections of school-home-college.

College-Going Culture Before Curriculum

A tension in UCA's college-going culture was the greater emphasis placed on socializing students to college norms over providing academically rigorous curriculum and instructional interaction to foster college readiness in classes. The cofounding executive director explained that, from the beginning, UCA focused on "culture before curriculum," believing that establishing a college-going culture was a prerequisite to rigorous academic instruction. Numerous respondents echoed this emphasis. Comportment to "college-going ways" eclipsed a schoolwide concerted effort at deep academic engagement. The executive director acknowledged that inadequate attention to fostering students' academic capacity had been shortsighted. Recognizing that college-going culture by itself was insufficient to achieve UCA's mission, the school responded in its ninth year by hiring a principal identified as an "instructional leader," who could focus the school on teaching and learning. Nonetheless, efforts to promote students' high quality academic engagement and ensure college readiness remained challenging.

ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

Aligned with school-wide goals of creating a college-going culture, UCA's vision for instruction focused on goals of college admission and success. Methods for realizing that vision, however, were mixed, and some tensions in instruction were traceable to the school vision, norms, and discourse. For example, in two days of professional development before the start of the school year, faculty and staff discussed a handout prepared by leadership identifying UCA's Vision for Instruction, with a principle that "Teachers expect all students to succeed in college-level rigorous work." This element of the vision offered some focus, but staff posters and stickie notes from the session recorded questions about what exactly this meant: (a) Need a common definition of rigor; (b) What is college-level work? What does it look like? (c) When is it time for students to engage in truly college-level work? Our study found, in fact, that faculty effort to enact college-level rigor varied dramatically, highlighting promise as well as questions and concerns such as these.

Drawing upon our framework dimension of academic engagement for Latina/o youth, we report instructional trends in (a) rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenge; (b) culture and context as support for learning; and (c) language-rich communication and collaboration. As our framework notes, the quality of academic engagement can be evidenced in classroom interactions between teacher and students and

between students and peers. We begin, therefore, with a descriptive summary of classroom interactions recorded and coded across observed focal classes.

Table 2 displays mean scores for classroom interactions for 12 dimensions across three observations each of six focal classes. The table also includes means with the high-scoring outlier teacher removed. That teacher is Consuelo, a first-year history teacher. Because her interaction scores consistently fell above the mean, we use her instruction as a case illustrating a pocket of promise, which we feature at the end of results. The table shows relatively high levels of evidence that focal teachers' instruction provided many indications of a positive climate, sensitivity to students, and effective behavior management—dimensions concerning establishment of welcoming and orderly learning environments. These have been associated with providing caring, safe spaces that may affirm identities of Latinas in particular (Cooper, 2013). Sensitivity to students also relates to the socioemotional dimension of activity that one school serving Latina/o and Black students linked with academic engagement to promote learning (McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2012). However, the table also shows that there was relatively little evidence across focal lessons of the three key dimensions of classroom interactions that map on to our framework, pointing to problems in academic engagement across focal classes. We take up each dimension in reporting on our three framework components: challenge, culture and context, and communication and collaboration.

Moderate Academic Challenge

A moderate level of challenge was evidenced overall in focal classes. Interaction scores highlight this trend, with mid-level ratings (a mean of 3.9, seven-point scale) for Analysis and Problem Solving in instructional episodes. This dimension (Appendix D) focuses on higher level thinking such as analysis, complex tasks for students to problem solve, and strategic opportunities for students to develop thinking, self-evaluation, and planning skills. Higher level scores of 6–7 are assigned to instruction that “consistently” or “regularly” addresses these analysis and problem-solving features in a 20-minute episode; mid-level scores (3–5) are assigned to instruction that “sometimes” addresses these; and low scores of 1–2 are assigned for “teacher does not provide” opportunities to engage in analysis and problem-solving activity.

Averaged rater scores were recorded for sixty 20-minute instructional segments across three observations each of six focal teachers. Nine of these 60 segments (15%) received high scores, 11 (18%) received low

Table 2. Classroom Interaction Analysis Results

Mean rater scores across 60 instructional segments (10 segments per focal teacher, 20 minutes each)

Classroom interaction dimension*	Mean across all focal teachers	Mean without top-scoring outlier
Relatively high degree of evidence		
Positive climate	5.9	5.8
Teacher sensitivity	5.5	5.3
Behavior management	5.2	5.2
Moderate degree of evidence		
Productivity	4.9	4.6
Instructional learning formats	4.8	4.5
Student engagement	4.4	4.1
Content understanding	4.3	4.0
Quality of feedback	4.3	3.9
Regard for adolescent perspective	4.0	3.7
Relatively low/low-moderate degree of evidence		
Analysis and problem solving	3.9	3.5
Language and literacy development	3.6	3.2
Contextualization/connections to student life	2.5	1.8

* Dimensions from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta et al., 2006) and the Standards Performance Continuum (SPC) (Hilberg, Doherty, Tharp, & Estrada, 2003).

Note: 1 reflects low and 7 reflects high degree of evidence of enactment of a dimension

scores, and for the remaining 40 (67%), two thirds of instructional segments, scores were midlevel. A full 7 of 9 high ratings for Analysis and Problem Solving were assigned to instruction delivered by Consuelo. Rater notes accompanying her scores included remarks such as “Students are actively sharing ideas with one another” and “incorporates higher level thinking and asks students dynamic questions” about government services for those in need: “What is fair? Who should be getting these goods and services?” When we remove Consuelo’s high mean rating of 5.7 for Analysis and Problem Solving, the mean for remaining teachers drops from 3.9 to 3.5 (Table 2). In one English class, for example, a rater accompanied a score of 4 with “some connections are made, but there

was more sharing of events in book rather than expanding”; the rater scored another episode a 3, noting “not much metacognition.”

Triangulating across data sources, we found classes targeted varied purposes, beginning with basic literacy concerns. Prominent in instructional episodes was a focus on intermediate-level literacy concerns. These often are enabling literacies that cut across subject areas, topics, and grades (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008); they include reading comprehension strategies, developing academic language proficiency, and generating evidence to support a claim. One teacher described how scaffolding general academic literacy ran through UCA discourse and was part of the culture for developing college-readiness. Regarding sentence starters, she noted:

one of our big focuses last year was rigorous academic language, that they will be speaking complete sentences with academic language. Definitely there was a push to make sure that we had word walls or there were sentence starters or that there was good modeling.

Like many of her colleagues, this teacher aligned with this instructional push as evidenced by her classroom bulletin board, which featured a collection of over 30 handwritten vocabulary words such as manifestation, hierarchy, false dichotomy, and status quo. A poster provided sentence starters for debate, to help students to summarize/clarify (“So what you’re saying is . . .”), add on to an idea (“One example that supports _____’s idea is...”), and disagree (“I see _____’s point, however . . .”). Clearly these kinds of activities can support language production for ELs and others.

Far less common were activities and scaffolds designed for developing disciplinary literacy. What we found in some episodes of moderate challenge were beginnings of explorations into disciplinary constructs that were not sustained. In one English class, for example, a teacher had students enact dramatic scenes to highlight varied dramatic genres. A rater scored this segment a 5, noting, “Students must use critical analysis to categorize scenes.” However, as scenes were completed, one girl remarked, “I can’t decide if it’s a dramatic monologue or a comedy.” The teacher responded, “Just write it on the worksheet.” Though the student had opened up a spot for deeper analytic exploration, the instructor did not take up this student’s question, foreclosing analytic discussion and missing a student-generated opportunity for deeper disciplinary analysis.

Low Levels of Culture and Context as Learning Supports

A low level of culture and context as learning supports was evidenced overall in focal classes. A classroom interaction mean score of 2.5 for Contextualization for Making Meaning is relevant here. Doherty et al. (2003) explain that an activity is contextualized when students' home, school, or community knowledge

is actively incorporated into the lesson. For example, the teacher solicits and/or makes an explicit statement connecting previous student knowledge and the present work. Students' prior knowledge may be elicited by the teacher, or spontaneously offered by students, and then actively incorporated into, or connected to, instruction.

Higher levels show "constant weaving of schooled concepts and everyday experience." Again, scores were averaged for sixty 20-minute segments across observations. Eight of these (13%) received high scores, 13 (22%) midlevel scores, and the remaining 39 (65%), nearly two thirds, scored low on contextualizing instruction. Again, a majority of high scores (6 of 8) were assigned to segments taught by Consuelo. When we remove her high mean Contextualization rating of 5.9, the mean for the remaining teachers drops from 2.5 to a low of 1.8 (Table 2). Rater notes for the many low scores were consistent: "No connection to school/family/community."

We found math teachers among our focal teachers used particularly low contextualization levels for instruction. Ben, a White male and most veteran of the group, was very committed to the college-going culture and worked to remediate students in math to be ready for college and not have to take a college freshman remedial math course. He noted that he knew of reform initiatives on providing context for math learning but added, "All our math stuff was very traditional in terms of the academics. We didn't cast it in any kind of multicultural light." He argued that infusion of cultural context "just for the sake of doing" was disingenuous, especially for higher level math:

You're teaching logarithms or whatever. To come up with a way to tie that to Mexican culture is going to be really stretching it. And I think kids can spot that: "You're just doing this because we're Mexican." And there's a whole lot of that "Because we're Mexican." You hear that statement a thousand times a day.

Ben preferred to think about "student skills and academic skills": "What do you have? What are your deficits?" That's what I focus on."

Ben's scores on contextualizing for making meaning were low, but one student reported that she remembered a lesson because Ben used candy to illustrate a problem. She noted that Ben has "good strategies in making people remember things."

In other subjects, we saw seeds of culture and context sown as learning support but without deep or sustained treatment or weaving of context into instruction in ways to guide and reinforce how culture and context frame and support knowledge development. English teachers chose texts that created opportunities to explore issues of culture and context as ways to make meaning of literature. However, discussions did not provide evidence of in-depth use of culture and context as resources to deepen understanding. Mario, who identified as Latino and African American, had his class read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), set on the Spokane Reservation, which explores issues including poverty, alcoholism, and racism. Mario introduced internalized racism through an adaptation of L. M. Padilla's journal article entitled "But You're Not a Dirty Mexican" (2001). In addition, he used popular culture texts and references, including music by Alicia Keyes, Disney, and the Dixie Chicks, and media icons (Justin Bieber, Britney Spears) during class skits. Mario's class clearly included diverse cultural references. However, classes overall evidenced a pattern of a start at contextualization, but leveraging it for explicit meaning-making was seldom evident.

Another English teacher structured class projects with a goal of developing a creative story about a social issue (e.g., teen pregnancy, community violence). While choice was provided to link academic learning to issues that matter in the lives of youth, the attendant pedagogy did not facilitate rich treatment of the issues, evidenced in presentations that did not go deep. In a history unit on early 20th century immigration, a teacher explored push/pull factors leading immigrants to the United States. He forged cultural connections to the topic by asking students to interview an immigrant and then facilitated a discussion highlighting salient themes from these conversations. The whole class discussion elicited participation from only 5 of 21 students and while one student's story of his uncle making his way to the United States to escape drug cartels in his home country commanded students' attention, links to content were not sufficiently elaborated. In various lessons, we observed culture and context introduced but not mined for meaningful and deep academic learning.

Limited Language-Rich Communication and Collaboration

A low-moderate level of communication and collaboration was evidenced overall in focal classes. Interaction scores for Language and Literacy Development had a mean of 3.6. Doherty et al. (2003) describe how such development needs “opportunities for written or verbal language expression and development. Students have opportunities to interact with peers and the teacher, and the teacher assists students’ language development by questioning, listening, rephrasing, or modeling.” At higher levels, a teacher demonstrates skillful integration of several of these standards.

Of averaged rater scores across segments, 10 of 60 (17%) rated high, 20 (34%) rated low, and the remaining 30 (50%) earned midlevel scores. Yet again, a majority of high scores (9 of 10) were assigned to segments taught by Consuelo. Excluding her high mean rating (5.7), the mean for remaining focal teachers drops from 3.6 to 3.2 (Table 2). Low-scoring segments had rater notes indicating very little focus on sustaining language activity in spoken or written form. Raters noted that when reading occurred silently, orally in groups, or as a full class (e.g., oral reading of a play), there was little oral or written language production linked to what was read. Midlevel ratings included notes about modeling or practicing vocabulary and, in some cases, attention to content area language. Other mid-level ratings included notes such as “students are sharing ideas with each other in group work” and “students have to read peer’s paper and write feedback.”

A key piece of Language and Literacy Development is teacher assistance by questioning, listening, rephrasing, or modeling. Some segments scored a 5 (higher end of mid-level), with notes of “some probing questions” and, in a discussion about race, “rephrasing, modeling: race, class, color of skin.” Such modeling and probing for elaboration support language development of ELs (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). A theme emerging from rater notes explains how some segments earned midlevel scores that did not rise to high-level. For small- and large-group discussions, raters noted, “Teacher is dominating classroom talk” or “Students read with teacher, but teacher throws out ideas more than students do.” The dominance of teacher talk can undermine authentic discussion efforts. In a history segment scored a 5, a rater noted more interaction between students and teacher: “A student asks ‘What is Protestant?’ Another student answers, and the teacher builds off of this answer.” Here we see evidence of both student and teacher uptake of a discussion turn. Such language moves build discussion coherence and are part of substantive student engagement, associated with higher performance in subject matter learning (Applebee et al., 2003).

In triangulating data and analyses, across classes, we saw students paired or grouped by four or more. Group talk purposes included reviewing material for an oral quiz, pair-share work prior to full-class discussion, and partnered worksheet completion with interaction levels from much to none. Students appeared positive about groupwork. This may relate to appreciation for peer support before reporting out to a full class, a value Latinas reported in Cooper's (2013) study. Despite this support, little of the groupwork observed afforded social construction of deep content knowledge. While group activities often had content and peer learning goals, they illustrated that UCA often embraced a potentially powerful pedagogic strategy with implementation that fell short of goals. For example, two teachers in different departments attempted to lead Socratic seminars, designed to foster dialogic engagement, inquiry, and knowledge-building. In both cases, despite attempts to create such opportunities, the seminars devolved into I-R-E (initiate, reply, evaluate) patterns with teacher as authority, dominating talk and interpretation of text.

A Pocket of Promise: Consuelo Fostering Academic Engagement

Across dimensions of interactions, Consuelo emerged as a clear outlier. Consuelo was a first-year teacher, a Latina from Southern California, a graduate of a well-respected teacher education program, and a professional committed to teaching urban Latina/o youth. These characteristics did not significantly differentiate Consuelo from other focal teachers. However, with our focus on instructional practices, Consuelo's teaching illustrated many practices associated with meaningful student interactions and academic engagement for nondominant youth. Because of her high ratings across dimensions we reported, we describe how the dimensions were integrated in Consuelo's instruction in a manner that was academically engaging. Focal lessons were observed in a 12th grade government/economics class of 22 students, 4 of them ELs and another 14 of them former ELs no longer needing English language development support outside mainstream classes.

First, Consuelo's lessons provided evidence of rigorous, meaningful challenge, segments consistently demonstrating analysis and problem-solving. In an electoral politics unit, Consuelo used multiple sources to examine California Latina/o voting patterns. She reinforced disciplinary constructs, explaining how to "source" an editorial to understand author bias, when reading about history and government. Consuelo made these analytic moves in a meaningful way—in a lesson close to concerns of her students: bias and sourcing about Latina/o voting patterns in

California. After they viewed Spanish and English versions of a controversial campaign TV ad targeting Latina/o voters, read several essays, and discussed issues, students wrote two essays analyzing reasons for low voting rates among California Latina/os and ways rates could improve. Analyses of essays showed those of higher level English proficiency and lower performing ELs benefitted from Consuelo's scaffolding for thesis statements, evidence and quotes, and commentary on gathered evidence—all intermediate literacy processes and skills. Essays had to explore content of voting patterns and clarify sources and potential biases, elements of disciplinary literacy—knowing about reasons for voting patterns and knowing how to source editorials for bias. In these ways, the lessons promoted rigorous and meaningful academic engagement.

To support meaning-making, Consuelo engaged in a weaving of culture and context into the voting patterns lesson and other lessons. Raters noted: "Connections to current political events" and "Integrates background and community, family, and identity." For the voting patterns lesson, Consuelo modeled with personal examples relevant to the topic and continually reminded students why these voting patterns mattered especially for California Latina/os. Also for support, Consuelo used language-rich communication and collaboration throughout this and other lessons, with groupworthy tasks and full-class discussion in which she modeled academic language use, recast students' talk at times to link it with disciplinary vocabulary, and probed for elaboration. Raters repeatedly used the word "sustained" to characterize speaking and writing activities Consuelo guided, highlighting that she promoted extended language production. In one episode, Consuelo used four probes in a row with a single male student who favored one-word answers, until she elicited more complete language production from him that was relevant to the topic. For a full-class discussion, one rater noted, "Teacher is NOT dominating the conversation."

Consuelo's treatment of academic language was nuanced. She fluidly used disciplinary vocabulary related to ideology, political beliefs, social welfare programs, and economics. At times she asked students to decode terms: "Remember: what does that mean—de facto segregation?" Raters noted how she frequently asked students to put terms such as *allocate* and *scarcity* in their own language. At other times, she helped students to recast their own language into language of the discipline. Most significantly, as one rater noted, Consuelo remarked, "Again, we're practicing our academic language." In these ways, Consuelo was fostering metalinguistic awareness, a particularly powerful strategy for current and former ELs.

In these various ways, the Latina/o voting patterns lesson and other

lessons provided evidence of (a) rigorous, meaningful challenge in which analytic thinking was central, intermediate and disciplinary literacies were explored, and challenges were made meaningful; (b) culture and context modeled and woven into the lesson to support meaning-making; and (c) language-rich communication and collaboration, evident in groupworthy tasks and full-class discussion in which the teacher modeled, recast, and probed for language production.

DISCUSSION

This study makes four important contributions. First, it reveals the need for deep and ongoing attention to both a college-going culture and instructional interactions. Second, the study highlights the distinction between college talk (or talk about college) and college-level academic discourse, or the socialization versus academic functions of schooling for college access and success. Third, the study uncovers promising instructional interactions, as well as nuances and tensions, in engaging low-SES, Latina/o students in academically rigorous work. Finally, the results suggest schools supporting low-SES youth of color may need what we call a schoolwide culture of engaged learning that is rigorous, meaningful, and infused throughout school.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL INTERACTIONS IN A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

Literatures on college-going cultures offer broad patterns and lists of practices that can promote development of schoolwide attention to college-going for nondominant youth often through organizational level analyses of policies and procedures. The literature on classroom instruction related to the education of nondominant youth identifies promising practices and challenges to conventional instruction, often by examining unfolding pedagogical discourse. Seldom, however, have we seen ideas from these two literatures brought together in studies to understand the promise and tensions of effectively preparing low-SES youth of color for higher education.

Our study examined both school and classroom levels to develop such understanding. What we found was a school exhibiting ample evidence of organizational-level socialization factors associated with a college-going culture. There were schoolwide college-going goals, driven by a carefully articulated mission, and strong agreement among faculty about the importance of that mission to meet the needs of youth of color. The college-going culture also involved norms that expressed high expectations, including college talk, demeanor, and comportment. Further,

this culture involved school roles supporting college access including comprehensive college counseling and teachers of color as multicultural navigators and role models.

Our design took us into classrooms where we explored complexities of the quality of instructional interactions aligned with what the literature described as effective in meeting the needs of students of color. We surfaced tensions in this work. For example, UCA's leadership vision and professional development showed that school staff understood the need for academic rigor but that more robust conceptions and understandings of the topic likely were needed to enact relevant practices for students. Also, the college-going culture emphasized comportment with a dominant vision of college, evident in school behaviors and classroom routines focused on becoming. However, classroom interactions evidenced relatively few instances of tapping experiences of youth already formed as resources to scaffold challenging academic learning.

COLLEGE-LEVEL TALK VERSUS TALK ABOUT COLLEGE

The results of this study reveal that focusing intensively on organizational level dimensions of a college-going culture is necessary but likely insufficient in understanding what supports Latina/o youth in accessing and succeeding in college communities. Beyond schoolwide college talk as a means of socializing high school students to a college-going culture and college-going identity, attention likely needs to be paid to developing college-like discourse as a vehicle for academic development and college-readying. What our study suggests is that greater focus on the kinds of actual discussions and academic interactions found in college-level classrooms may be a critical missing piece in current conceptions of a college-going culture. Learning to engage in disciplinary ways of doing involves entering discourse communities that share practices and ways of thinking and making meaning (Gee, 2003). High school classes may need explicit instruction in how to engage in such disciplinary ways of doing and thinking, and these processes can occur in and beyond classrooms in after-school activities, informal learning, and internships. Engaging in college-like discourse may require attention to discipline-specific forms and functions of language (Schleppegrell, 2004), some of which we saw evidenced in examples from Consuelo's instruction.

Adolescents need opportunities to generate and express rich understandings of ideas and concepts. Concepts vary across disciplines, but in all subjects, students (including ELs) need to develop capacity to use oral and written discourse particular to disciplines as they explore, explain, and engage with concepts (Sturtevant et al., 2006). Developing

college-like discourse in class with students such as those enrolled at UCA requires balancing high academic press with substantive support. The college-for-all literature often includes provision of a rigorous academic curriculum or “college prep curriculum,” including access to algebra in middle school and college preparatory and AP courses in high school (McClafferty et al., 2002; Oakes, 2003). Beyond this are intensive academic and social supports at the organizational level such as counselors and tutors. However, beyond these curricular and organization-level supports, generating and balancing challenge and support is the difficult and ongoing work of the teacher in the acts of instruction.

COMPLEXITIES AND PROMISING PRACTICE OF SUPPORTING ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN CHALLENGING WORK FOR LATINA/O YOUTH

Our study also highlights complexities and promising instructional practices in meeting the needs of low-SES Latina/o youth. Overall, our focal teachers were hard-working and deeply invested in the UCA mission. However, as demonstrated, their practice overall hovered around moderate academic challenge and intermediate literacy concerns, seldom targeting high-level disciplinary learning goals in sustained ways. While group structures were evident, group talk seldom met goals of the social construction of knowledge, and full-class talk seldom used teacher probes to prompt substantive elaboration of ideas. Finally, despite widespread arguments for the value of culture and context as learning supports, these were seldom at play in sustained ways. At times a lack of sustained attention to culture and context was due to a position that Ben argued, that culture was irrelevant for math instruction; other times it was an issue of culture and context being introduced but not used so these interactions could serve as learning models and supports.

Nonetheless, we saw in Consuelo’s instruction consistent evidence of instructional practices associated with challenge and support for nondominant youth. What made her instruction particularly striking was the way in which she wove these practices together in seamless and meaningful ways. We cannot explain Consuelo’s capacity to sustain attention to these promising instructional practices associated with effective instruction for nondominant youth, nor can we explain how she managed such promising pedagogical practice in only her first year of teaching. We offer examples from her practice, however, to demonstrate what is possible in instruction for her target student population of low-SES Latina/o youth and to argue that such instructional practice, aligned with literatures in our framework on effective instruction for nondominant youth,

may provide the college-like disciplinary discourse as the companion piece for talk about college.

There is danger in describing a talented teacher as exemplar. Doing so can take focus off of ways schools and professional development need to engage deeply and continually in providing guidance for all teachers to set the bar high in disciplinary work and to create appropriate supports for academic engagement. Clearly UCA had developed elaborate systems of creating a college-going culture, evidenced as a rich set of practices, some of them rather innovative. However, the perhaps even more challenging work of developing school-wide frameworks and practices related to academic engagement likely would require the same kind of organizational level commitment, innovative planning, and resources, in order to make deep inroads in many classrooms of vastly different subject areas, at various grade levels, and at different points on teachers' pathways of development. In a companion study, we saw ways in which scaffolding as a key school goal for instruction at UCA gained traction through professional development sessions and conversations with school administrators; however, even there, we found that far deeper and more engaged attention was needed to help teachers truly develop their capacity to design instructional scaffolding that was responsive to learners and faded appropriately to transfer control of learning to students, and teachers articulated the need for such professional support (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014).

TOWARD CULTURES OF ENGAGED LEARNING FOR LOW-SES YOUTH OF COLOR

There are two problems in the literature and discourse on developing a school culture in general and on a college-going culture in particular. First, there is little explicit focus in these conceptions and lists of characteristics on learning and intellectual development. There frequently is a nod to academic work, course-taking trajectories, or achievement, but little more. Second, the focus in these conceptions is on getting somewhere in the future (vitally important, particularly for nondominant youth who would be first-time college-goers) but with too little attention to the transformative possibilities of the present through learning, discovery, and inquiry. We argue therefore for a recasting of a college-going culture that couples it with a culture of engaged learning. We clarify reasons for each key word in our conception.

First, a culture of engaged learning places the emphasis squarely on *learning*, arguably the primary function of schooling. By learning, we mean not just acquisition of knowledge or skills but potential for new

perspectives and changed behavior and dispositions. The identity shaping possibilities of learning are key, as learners transform through involvement in deep learning activity and may begin to see themselves as capable knowers who desire continued learning. Our conception includes the dynamic nature of learning as process, over the construction of products that simply comply with rules and conventions. Learning in this view is not a stable process but is ever-changing; effective assistance needs to keep pace to guide expansive learning (Engeström, 2001). Others extend “college readiness” to include community; Middaugh and Kahne (2013) explain that “community readiness recognizes that education should be not only a collection of facts and skills but also preparation to join with others in our democracy to make our communities better places in which to live and work.” While we concur, we assert that a culture of engaged learning is foundational to achieving college and/or community readiness. For learning to expand in these various ways, learners are viewed as holding potential for an awakening and a realization of the mind as a powerful instrument in knowing and making change in self and society.

As our framework clarified, a learning focus for schools serving primarily low-SES youth of color who historically have been underserved includes basic and intermediate literacy activities, but strives for rigorous and meaningful disciplinary work. In such activity, goals are linked to cultures and contexts beyond school to frame the significance of learning, and assistance attends to students’ cultural and linguistic resources and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). A culture of engaged learning casts school as a site with potential to develop in youth the birth of intellectual thought as foundational to making meaning and making change. While achievement gets much play in the college-going literature, that word often gets understood as standardized test score performance. While we recognize such tests as gatekeepers to college and having other functions, we highlight learning instead, which takes many forms, can unfold over time, and is evident when we make it visible, viable, and meaningful in the lives of diverse youth.

Our conception of cultures of *engaged learning* also highlights engagement. This suggests that prizing routine, basics, and formulaic approaches cannot take youth far enough in preparing for disciplinary discourse, discovery, debate, and critique that are essential to participation and leadership in civil society and fundamental to college curricula. School cultures of engaged learning would include routines and structures but would eschew dependence on skill-level work and test preparation. As our framework articulates, academic engagement connotes not merely doing and functioning but engaging with problems and content and

issues that are rigorous and meaningful for youth of color in low-SES communities and supported richly through an array of resources associated with successful schooling for nondominant youth. Also in our framework, contextualizing instruction connects content to students' everyday lives, forging transparent links.

We agree with Yonezawa, Jones, and Joselowsky (2009) that much of the work on student engagement has focused on behavior, cognition, or affect in unidimensional ways that do not enable a multidimensional understanding. We envision engagement as multifaceted and integrated. It also is fostered not just through teacher guidance; collaborative learning structures engage youth in the social construction of knowledge, tapping and developing knowledge within the collective so that individuals begin to grow empowered with recognition that their perspectives matter and can shape those of others. Engaged learning is for all. This means that youth developing English language proficiency have opportunities to engage with rich disciplinary content and are encouraged to take risks in communicating understanding using whatever language they currently have in their linguistic repertoires and through other modes and media.

Finally, our conception of cultures of engaged learning retains the word *culture*, denoting how engaged learning needs to be infused throughout a school so it becomes visible, normalized, and ritualized. Such a systems-oriented engagement links student agency and community with organizational structures and cultures of school (Lawson & Lawson, 2013). The Great Schools Partnership argues that a school culture refers to “beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions” (<http://edglossary.org/school-culture/>). This idea of school culture as pervasive highlights our conception of a culture of engaged learning that permeates school so students, staff, families, and community witness and take pride in acts of learning both reported and unfolding in real time. Just as college-going cultures stress college preparation as a school-wide guiding principle for all interactions (e.g., Farmer-Hinton, 2010), we argue that a culture of engaged learning for schools serving primarily low-income youth of color needs the same clarity of principle and school-wide attention.

IMPLICATIONS

This study calls for more research that examines associations between organization-level socialization functions of schooling and classroom-level academic analysis. A bilevel focus is critical in understanding complexities of fostering both a college-going culture and instructional

interactions that develop college-level work. Further research exploring the construct of cultures of engaged learning in different contexts is needed. Researchers need to conduct qualitative work in classrooms to illuminate effective enactments of academic press and college-like discourse with nondominant youth. There also is value in tracking graduates through high school and into first years of college to see how they undertake college tasks and what knowledge/skills they draw on as they attempt to participate in college discourses. Efforts by UCA staff to track the college trajectories of UCA's graduates illustrate a first step seldom evident in the college-for-all literature. Hearing students' reflections about which high school activities proved most useful in readying them for college tasks could be helpful.

This study also holds implications for educators, highlighting a need for professional development on fostering cultures of engaged learning for especially low-SES youth of color. Such work would involve extensive professional development to expand the knowledge and practice base for complexities that arise in enacting college-level instructional interactions that include rigorous and meaningful disciplinary challenges, culture and context as support for learning, and language-rich communication and collaboration. It would also involve linking schoolwide organizational structures and leadership aligned with such a culture. Further, as Common Core State Standards (CCSS) gain prominence in professional communities, elements of our framework will gain importance. CCSS highlights collaboration through class discussion across the grades as a means to promote higher-order thinking. Culture and context appear as related to tapping prior knowledge and experiences as learning resources. It is possible that increased attention to such instructional dimensions will sharpen their focus in teacher education and development. However, our theme of sustaining a focus on instructional dimensions across segments, lessons, and instructional units is key here and warrants attention in professional development. When schools such as UCA take on working to meaningfully educate students who have been historically underserved, and who enter high school several years behind but with the goal of college admission, then nothing short of deep and sustained attention to the tough work of meaningful academic engagement will work to accompany innovations in developing a college-going culture.

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NOTES

1. By nondominant youth, we refer to members of groups historically relegated to status of less power and privilege in society and those who have been underrepresented in educational contexts such as higher education.

2. The executive director of the charter organization that oversaw UCA and affiliated schools was a co-founder of UCA and was involved in hiring and supervising the principal during the time of our study.

3. The kappa coefficient is a statistical measure of inter-rater agreement. Many statisticians view it as a more robust indicator than simple percent agreement calculations since it takes into account the agreement occurring by chance.

4. The online test involved scoring five randomly selected, 15–20 minute long master videos. Scorers were able to pause the videos, but not rewind them. Criteria to become a Teachstone certified scorer include: scoring 80% of all codes within one of the master codes and scoring at least two of five codes within one of the master within each dimension.

5. UCA College Success Report, 2013.

6. “The intent of the ‘A-G’ subject requirements is to ensure that students have attained a body of general knowledge that will provide breadth and perspective to new, more advanced study....” Courses from California high schools used to satisfy the ‘A-G’ subject requirements must be certified by UC and appear on the school’s ‘A-G’ course list. These courses are to be academically challenging, involving substantial reading, writing, problems and laboratory work (as appropriate), and show serious attention to analytical thinking, factual content and developing students’ oral and listening skills. (<http://www.ucop.edu/agguide/a-g-requirements/>).

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APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION FIELDNOTE SUMMARY REFLECTION TEMPLATE

1. WHAT DOES THE LESSON/OBSERVATION REVEAL ABOUT THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION IN SUPPORTING LATINA/O STUDENTS?

How and to what extent is the **organization of high school** associated with promoting instructional interactions that engage Latina/o youth in academically challenging work?

- a. How and to what extent is the organization of high school, **both directly and indirectly**, associated with promoting instructional interactions that invoke culture, collaboration, and code-breaking to support Latina/o youth to do challenging work (e.g., direct support of instructional practices and indirect ways adults model and embody the approaches)?
- b. How and to what extent are **schools' resources**, e.g., **physical, social, human, and multicultural capital**—associated with promoting instructional interactions that support Latina/o student engagement in academically challenging work?
 - i. **physical**, which includes money, time, and materials
 - ii. **social**, which involves relationships and community, sense of trust and collaboration, and professional ties to networks and community within and beyond the school
 - iii. **human**, which includes professional knowledge and skills, commitments and dispositions
 - iv. **multicultural capital**—cultural knowledge embraced and given priority at this school (cultural knowledge that confers power and status that affirms both dominant and nondominant communities)
- c. How and to what extent are **schools' normative social structures** associated with that aim to support Latina/o student engagement in academically challenging work?
 - i. **values** that guide goal definition (e.g., mission, vision, assumptions)
 - ii. **norms** that govern actions and interactions (e.g., rules, procedures, and structures)
 - iii. **roles** that set expectations for the behavior of the occupants of particular positions
- d. How do innovating high schools characterize **academic success** for Latina/o students and how has that been realized in recent accomplishments (e.g. achievement, retention, college going record, honors, etc.)?

- e. **Department issues**—What does the meeting reveal about departmental culture, particularly for English and Math Depts. in terms of organization of department and associations with instructional interactions
- f. **Other** ideas related to school organization

2. WHAT DOES THE LESSON/OBSERVATION REVEAL ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL INTERACTIONS THAT SUPPORT LATINA/O STUDENT SUCCESS?

How and to what extent do **instructional interactions** engage Latina/o youth in **academically challenging work**?

- a. How and to what extent are the **cultures and languages** of Latina/o students invoked in instructional interactions to support Latina/o youth?
- b. How and to what extent are the **collaboration and community** of Latina/o students invoked in instructional interactions to support Latina/o youth?
- c. How and to what extent are the **code-breaking and academic language scaffolding** of Latino students invoked in instructional interactions to support Latina/o youth?
- d. What is the level of **student engagement** (and disengagement) in instructional interactions that invoke culture, collaboration, and code-breaking to support Latina/o youth to do challenging work?
- e. **Other** ideas related to instructional interactions?

3. WHAT DOES THE LESSON/OBSERVATION REVEAL ABOUT ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL INTERACTIONS?

Evidence of “3 B’s” identifying interaction between school organization and instructional interaction

- a. **Boundary Encounters:** Can you identify activities and events that connect school level mission/values to classroom instructional interaction that promote Latina/o student success?
- b. **Brokers:** Identify and explain the role of people who connect school mission to classroom level to promote Latina/o student success? Who are they and how do they link?
- c. **Boundary Objects:** What materials, resources, symbols or other artifacts connect school mission to instructional interactions that promote Latina/o student success?
- d. **Other** ideas related to association between school organization and instructional interactions?

4. ISSUES TO FOLLOW UP ON / FURTHER QUESTIONS

APPENDIX B

NVIVO CODING SCHEME FOR INTERVIEWS AND OPEN-ENDED SURVEY ITEMS

CODES	DEFINITION
Organization	
School-wide Instruction	References to school-wide, department-wide, or grade-level instructional practices and beliefs about instruction.
History	Any description of founding of the school, previous principals, or critical events in the past, as well as demographic shifts.
Logic	Models taken from environment that shape school org & imported from institutional field or environment that influence school (e.g., entrepreneurial, prep school logics; community based org/activist org logics; neighborhood/extended family logics).
Goal	Refs to schoolwide goal or mission, vision, or success or challenge in meeting those goals. Goals are conceptions of desired ends to which an org aspires and such goals provide directions for decision making. Includes org definition of academic success.
Value	Values are the officially deeply held schoolwide beliefs of the organization.
External Environment	Refs to environment beyond school shaping/impacting or impinging on the school. May include local community, neighborhood, district, state, and federal government.
Informal Structure	Refs to nonformalized social patterns; includes norms, rituals, routines, and social networks of interaction. Includes informal structures or scripts that shape participants' actions/interactions.
Formal Structures	Explicit references to structure of organization, codified features of the "official blue print" for the school (e.g. policies, rules).
	Administration
Formal Structure Role	Teacher Student Family Other
	Refs about role, expectations, activities, actions, and performance; and perceptions of performance of role (general statements about expectations about that role, not necessarily a specific person).
Formal Structure Professional Development	References to professional development received in the school.
Formal Structure Department	Any ref to department organization, approaches, commitments, common practices, conception of discipline, or collaboration in dept. or lack of dept. structure.

CODES	DEFINITION
Organization	
Capital: Physical	References to physical capital including financial resources, time, and materials, and their allocation.
Capital: Human	Refs to human capital including professional knowledge & skills, commitments & dispositions, & their allocation (concentrate on adults, staff, parents, collaborators, community—not students).
Capital: Social	Refs to social capital involving relationships & community, sense of trust & collaboration, and professional ties to networks and community within and beyond the school. (May include presence or lack thereof).
Capital: Cultural	Refs to dominant, nondominant, or multicultural capital (both positive and negative); may include multicultural navigators (have to bring cultural capital into the school).
Tension	Organizational factors causing problems or tensions in the organization related to supporting Latina/o student success (e.g., challenges & barriers).
Success	Organizational factors supporting Latino/o student success.

CODES	DEFINITION
Instruction	
Challenge	Refs to academic challenge in instructional interactions (only presence of factor, NOT lack thereof). High cognitive challenge, analytic thinking, problem solving at high levels, deep disciplinary understanding. Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice/teaching strategy, as well as actual enactment.
Culture and Language	Refs to culture/language in instructional interactions including: refs to community as analogies for content learning or interviewing community members for projects; use of heritage culture/language (e.g., Spanish); culturally responsive teaching; explicit ref to social justice (only presence, NOT lack). Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice/teaching strategies, & enactment.
Collaboration: Community	Ref to collaboration in instructional interaction; small groups, project-based learning (presence of factor, not lack). Refs student-to-student, & student-to-teacher. Include beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice, teaching strategies, & enactment.
Code-breaking	Refs to code-breaking or academic scaffolding in instructional interactions (e.g., ELD, sentence starters) (only presence of factor, NOT lack thereof). To include beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice/teaching strategy as well as enactment.
Engagement	Refs to student engagement (active participation, visible interest) in instructional interactions (only presence of factor, NOT lack). Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice/teaching strategy as well as actual enactment.

CODES	DEFINITION
Instruction	
Assessment	Teacher formative/summative assessment (test, exhibition, certification, project-based expos, exit slips, check for understanding). Not standardized test from state or district, unless integrated into T's own assessments (double coded external en). Include beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice/teaching strategies, & enactment.
Instructional Success	Factors, strategies, practices identified only as positive in support of instructional success of Latinos/as (NOT identified by previous instructional subcodes). Include action, practices, philosophy, or conceptions of success.
Instructional Tension	Factors causing problems or tensions in instructional interactions to support Latino/a student success. Any challenges (including lack of other subcodes like academic challenge, etc.) Include when teacher identified struggling with instruction. Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice, & enactment.
Outcomes	
Outcome: Student	Explicit refs to tangible (positive or negative) student outcomes (achievement, college-going, attendance, retention, honors, AP courses). Both individual & group refs.
Outcome: Staff	Refs to staff outcomes including: success, efficacy, retention, etc. Includes administration, support staff, and teachers.
Student special populations	
Student Special Pops	References to ELs, undocumented youth, immigrants, Spanish speakers.
Student Capacity	Positive or negative refs to students' academic ability (i.e., student human capital).
Teachers of color	
Teachers of Color	References to Teachers of Color (academic teachers only).

APPENDIX C

NVIVO CODES ESPECIALLY RELEVANT TO PRESENT STUDY, ILLUSTRATED WITH DATA

NVivo Codes	Definition	Illustration From Data
Org_ Goal	Refs to schoolwide goal or mission, vision, success or challenge in meeting those goals. Goals are conceptions of desired ends to which an org aspires and such goals provide directions for decision making. Includes org definition of academic success.	We talk about moving students sometimes 7 years within the 4 years that they're here. So that compression, that advanced progress, takes a lot of real energy from us. . . . It's a great thing that the mission of the school is so honorable, and at the same time, it's extremely challenging to make those kind of gains in a four-year period. (Male English T)
Org_ Value	Values are the officially deeply held schoolwide beliefs of the organization.	UCA's battle cry of <i>ganas</i> . . . & telling the Ss from the very beginning they're capable of achieving higher education, that they're more than capable of breaking the pattern, and that things don't have to be as they were or as they are. (Male English T)
Org_ Inform_ Structure	Refs to nonformalized social patterns; includes norms, rituals, routines, social networks of interaction. Includes informal structures or scripts that shape participants' actions/interactions	Something I've seen is a sense of encouragement amongst Ss. There is no stigma with being a repeater here. Actually a lot of my students in advisory are repeaters, but I have not heard, "You're a repeater." That's really strong. (Female History T)
Org_ FormStr_ Role_ Student	Refs about role, expectations, activities, actions, and performance; and perceptions of performance of role	You will go to college. You will have to change how you engage with people. You are going to shake our hands. You're going to look us in the eye. . . . You're going to have self-respect. You're going to have respect for your peers around you. You're going to make sacrifices." (Exec Director)
Org_ FormStr_ Role_ Family	(general statements about expectations about that role, not necessarily a specific person)	P meetings are always packed & they communicate in both Spanish & English. . . . But they're very, very, very clear about their mission & their goal & that prep for college is everything we do here, & they link it directly to college. I do think that the school is particularly strong about involving families in the whole college prep process. (Female math T)

NVivo Codes	Definition	Illustration From Data
Org_ Capital_ Physical	References to physical capital including financial resources, time, and materials, and their allocation.	There's just little money. Private money, for years this campus operated on \$800,000 in additional private money. And to some degree, that was necessitated because we were building our capacity . . . last year and this year were our first two years where the school really operated on its own federal and state public dollars. (Exec dir)
Org_ Capital_ Social	References to social capital involving relationships & community, sense of trust & collaboration, and professional ties to networks and community within and beyond the school. May include presence or lack thereof	We had a ceremony of thinking about why do you want to go to college now. They made us say why we want to go to college, and people from our class just said, like, their background and why, and then this whole group of probably 60-plus people just started crying because people had some, like, deep stories. (Male student)
Org_ Capital_ Cultural	References to dominant, non-dominant, or multicultural capital (both positive and negative); may include multicultural navigators (have to bring cultural capital into the school).	We talk about valuing college a lot. We're trying to fit into the mold of what the dominant society feels is successful, which is go to college, get a job that involves you being important. And that's part of their families' culture, too. "We want you to be somebody." (Principal)
Org_ Tension	Organizational factors causing problems or tensions in org related to supporting Latina/o student success (e.g., challenges & barriers)	This is a dilemma I had recently with a policy here at school where students...were allowed to retake a final. I was just really upset, because we're talking about accountability . . . & if students can retake a final, that's not really holding a student accountable. (Male history teacher)
Org_ Success	Organizational factors supporting Latina/o student success	Right from the start, you get used to the idea of college, because that's all they talk about. . . . A lot of students, they haven't heard of college or been motivated for it [before UCA]." (Male student)

NVivo Codes	Definition	Illustration From Data
Instr_ Challenge	Refs to academic challenge in instructional interactions (only presence of factor, NOT lack thereof). High cognitive challenge, analytic thinking, problem solving at high levels, deep disciplinary understanding. Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instructional practice/teaching strategy as well as actual enactment.	I give them college-level reading. I challenge them with the stuff they're going to get in college. I tell them, "Look, this is college stuff, and you're going to be able to handle it. I'm not going to dumb it down for you." And that says a lot, not dumbing down. (Female history Teacher)
Instr_ Culture_ Lang	Refs to culture/language in instructional interactions; includes references to community as analogies for content learning or interviewing community members for projects; use of heritage culture/lang (e.g., Spanish); culturally responsive teaching; explicit ref to social justice (only presence, NOT lack). Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instr practice, teaching strategy & enactment.	In English we're always reading about articles and stuff about how being Mexicans, you should be proud and how people learn how to be proud and show it off. (Male English teacher's Student Focus Group)
Instr_ Tension	Factors causing probs or tensions in instr interactions to support Latina/o S success. Any challenges (incl lack of other subcodes like acad chal, etc.) Include when T i.d.'s struggling with instr. Includes beliefs, commitments, vision of instr practice & enactment.	Though we do support students that still struggle with reading & writing (e.g., scaffolding & intensive focus on vocabulary in many of our classes) we do not have a real system in place for students that are not native English speakers (survey response)
Outcome_ Student	Explicit refs to tangible (pos or neg) S outcomes (achievement, college-going, attendance, retention, honors, AP courses). Both individ & group refs.	No matter how far behind they are, if they don't speak English, if their parents are working, whatever, there's no excuse. 95% of our seniors got accepted to college. No excuses, right? (Principal)

APPENDIX D

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION ANALYSIS INSTRUMENTS AND THEIR CONSTRUCTS*

CLASS	
Positive Climate	Reflects the emotional connection and relationships among teachers and students, and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions.
Negative Climate**	Reflects the overall level of negativity among teachers and students in the class; the frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and student negativity are important to observe.
Teacher Sensitivity	Reflects teacher's responsiveness to academic and social/emotional needs and developmental levels of individual students and entire class, and how these factors impact students' classroom experiences.
Regard for Adolescent Perspectives	Focuses on the extent to which teacher is able to meet and capitalize on social and developmental needs and goals of adolescents by providing opportunities for student autonomy and leadership. Also considered are the extent to which student ideas and opinions are valued and content is made useful and relevant to adolescents.
Behavior Management	Encompasses teacher's use of effective methods to encourage desirable behavior and prevent and redirect misbehavior.
Productivity	Considers how well teacher manages time and routines so that instructional time is maximized. This dimension captures degree to which instructional time is effectively managed and down time is minimized for students; it is not a code about student engagement, quality of instruction, or activities.
Instructional Learning Formats	Focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes student engagement in learning through clear presentation of material, active facilitation, and the provision of interesting and engaging lessons and materials.
Content Understanding	Refers to both depth of lesson content and approaches used to help students comprehend framework, key ideas, and procedures in an academic discipline. At a high level, this refers to interactions among teacher and students that lead to an integrated understanding of facts, skills, concepts, and principles.
Analysis and Problem Solving	Assesses the degree to which the teacher facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills, such as analysis, problem solving, reasoning, and creation through the application of knowledge and skills. Opportunities for demonstrating metacognition, i.e., thinking about thinking, are also included.
Quality of Feedback	Assesses the degree to which feedback expands and extends learning and understanding and encourages student participation. In secondary classrooms, significant feedback may also be provided by peers. Regardless of the source, the focus here should be on the nature of the feedback provided and the extent to which it "pushes" learning.

CLASS	
Student Engagement	Intended to capture the degree to which all students in the class are focused and participating in the learning activity presented or facilitated by the teacher. The difference between passive engagement and active engagement is of note in this rating.

SPC	
Language & Literacy Development Developing Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum	Teacher assists student language expression and development through questioning, listening, rephrasing or modeling throughout much of instruction; AND instructional activities generate language expression and development of content vocabulary.
Contextualization Making Meaning - Connecting School to Students' Lives	The teacher <u>integrates</u> the new activity /information with what students already know from home, school, or community.

*Construct language adapted from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta et al., 2006) and from selected elements of the Standards Performance Continuum (SPC) (Hilberg, Doherty, Tharp, & Estrada, 2003).

**Negative Climate is scaled in the opposite direction of the other CLASS scales. Higher negativity indicates lower quality.

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