Institutional Culture of Care:

A Mixed – Methods Exploration of the Importance of a College-Going Culture and a Caring

Schooling Environment

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: In this article, the authors explore the extent to which a school's college-going culture and educators' caring practices shape 1) students' aspiration and motivations to matriculate to college and 2) their reported engagement in the college-going process.

Theoretical Framework(s): To understand better the experiences of students at one school site in an urban northern California community, the authors employed an ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1999) and political race theory lens (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Together, the authors use these frameworks to re-center the success of urban, public comprehensive high schools and students' academic preparedness for college in a broader discourse of structural factors (e.g., neoliberalism, deindustrialization), community contexts (e.g., urban, low-income), and schooling environments (e.g., college-going cultures).

Research Design: Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methodological design, the authors employed survey data from 684 students of color at one school site. The authors related measures of school culture, adult caring, and family educational expectations to students' aspirations and motivations, as well as their engagement in the college-going process using regression analyses. Thereafter, the authors nuanced survey findings with qualitative focus group data.

Findings: The authors found significant positive coefficients for measures of school climate in each model. Most notably, however, one found adult caring significantly related to students' engagement in the college-going process. Three themes emerged from both strands of data: 1) the salience of college-going cultures; 2) the benefits of care; and, 3) barriers that defer dreams.

Implications: The authors contend that educators are uniquely poised to help ensure that the dreams of Students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds are no longer deferred by restructuring school policies and practices to disseminate resources, information, and opportunities to all students, not a select few.

Keywords: urban high schools; college-going culture; care; students of color; mixed methods

Introduction

Research shows that Students of Color (SoC) and students from low-income backgrounds have high levels of post-secondary academic aspirations and that they are motivated to see those aspirations realized (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Cooper & Davis, 2015; Freeman, 1997; Howard, 2003). Yet, for a multiplicity of reasons, students from these backgrounds are often unable to see their dreams become a reality considering they engage in the college-going process and matriculate to college at significantly lower rates than their wealthier, White and Asian counterparts (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013; Carnavale & Strohl, 2013). For instance, in 2012, 52% of high school graduates from the lowest family-income group matriculated to college, as compared to 65% of middle-income graduates, and 82% of graduates from the highest-income group (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). Specific to California, in 2009, only 36 percent of African-American high school graduates enrolled in any type of public college or university immediately following graduation (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2009). Somewhere in the college-going process, these students' dreams were deferred (Cooper, 2009).

Historically, myriad factors have converged to obstruct access to college for students from these backgrounds. In the past, exclusionary laws delimited college-going opportunities for these student groups (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Present day, however, research suggests that these students' access to college is obstructed by their academic preparedness (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010; Welton & Martinez, 2014), their access to college preparatory information (Avery, 2010; Conley, 2008), their access to financial aid resources (Davis, Nagle, Richards, & Awokoya, 2013; Flores, 2010), as well as structural factors including but not limited to housing segregation and poverty (Bedolla, 2010; O'Day & Smith, 2016; Stewart, Stewart, & Simons, 2007). To this point, numerous federal, state, and local actors have implemented policy and program

interventions to mitigate structural, financial and information barriers to college (Avery, 2010, 2013; Doyle, 2006; Executive Office of the President, 2014). Unfortunately, these initiatives have failed to mitigate disparities in access to college. Thus, while necessary these interventions are not sufficient in remedying inequities in access to college.

Educational researchers have taken a different approach and have focused their conceptual, theoretical and methodological attention on the relationship between school culture and students' educational outcomes. Specifically, scholars have explored how urban public high schools' college-going cultures affect students' academic preparedness for college, as well as their college-going opportunities. To date, scholars have defined the term 'college-going cultures' (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McClafferty, McDonough, & Núñez, 2002), explored how students' socio-emotional and academic needs are addressed in these school settings (Athanases, Achinstein, Curry, & Ogawa, 2016; Farmer-Hinton, 2011; McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2013), framed the importance of caring teacher practices (Knight-Diop, 2010), and documented increased student participation in key college-going activities (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Rivera, 2014; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). Unfortunately, few scholars have actually used empirical data to investigate the relationship between a school's college-going culture and students' engagement in the college-going process (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Jarsky, McDonough, & Nuñez, 2009; Knight-Diop, 2010; McKillip, Godrey, & Rawls, 2013; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). Of these cited studies, no study has endeavored to frame this relationship as a predictive model that also takes into consideration students' academic aspirations and motivations, as well as the salience of caring relationships students have with educators, peers and other adults within the schooling context.

Accordingly, in this paper, the authors explore the importance of a site-based, school

reform initiative that leverages relationships and fosters the intentional alteration of school policies and instructional practices to support college preparation and matriculation. Specifically, the authors investigate the extent to which students' perceptions of a college-going culture and caring relationships with peers and educators affect their college aspirations and motivations and whether they will engage in the college-going process (e.g. completing financial aid applications, applying for scholarships, visiting colleges and universities, etc.). This scholarship adds to the literature by focusing explicitly and exclusively on the experiences of SoC and students from low-income backgrounds in a comprehensive urban high school in northern California. The study's findings elucidate the importance of college-going cultures and challenge educators to interrogate and change ideologies about who should be prepared for college, institutional structures, school policies and pedagogical practices that derail students' post-secondary educational trajectories. More broadly, the study's findings have the potential to shape how educators in schools comparable to the site under study conceptualize and develop college-going cultures that are designed to prepare all students for college, not a select few.

Research Questions

This study follows the empirical research tradition. As such, the authors endeavor to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent, if any, do students' perceptions of a school's college-going culture and care affect their post-secondary educational aspirations and motivations?
2. To what extent, if any, do students' perceptions of a school's college-going culture and care affect whether students will engage in the college-going process?

To address these questions, the authors employ an explanatory sequential mixed-methodological design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Using this methodological design, the authors collected

two strands of data (quantitative and qualitative) in sequential order. This approach provided the authors with an opportunity to nuance survey data with rich qualitative information collected in focus group discussions with students (Robinson, 2012). For the purposes of this paper, the authors performed two statistical procedures: ordinary least squares regression analysis, where a students' college-aspirations and motivations served as an outcome variable, and binary logistic regression analysis, where engagement in the college-going process was modeled as the outcome variable. Following the execution of these procedures, the authors then nuanced and contextualized these findings with qualitative data from the aforementioned focus group discussions.

In the pages that remain, the authors open with a brief discussion of urban public schools and urban communities. Following this section is a synopsis of the theoretical frameworks that position the participants under study within a more contextualized setting. In particular, the authors use ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1994) and political race theory (Guinier and Torres, 2002) to frame and problematize the relationship between macro-societal issues (e.g., globalization, neoliberalism, etc.), urban public high schools and their culture, and students' college-going opportunities. The authors then review four bodies of scholarship: college-going cultures, care in schools, college-aspirations and motivations, and engagement in the college-going process. In the second half of this paper, the authors discuss their methodological approach, paying particular attention to details regarding the site of study, data collection, research procedures and relevant findings. The authors then close with practical considerations for educators in schools comparable to the site under study.

Urban School and Community Context

Many individuals would argue that the purpose of public schooling in the United States adheres to a democratic and egalitarian ideal, as well as a commitment to the betterment of all members of the public, or the public good (Dewey, 1909; Warren, 2014). Yet, "for many Students of Color, schools have become sites of resistance, alienation, silence, and ultimately failure" . While an in-depth discussion of the purpose of public schooling does not fall within the overall scope of this paper, the authors acknowledge that any attempt to fundamentally change the culture of urban public (high) schools, particularly those serving a large contingent of SoC and students from low-income backgrounds, must also take into consideration the many ways in which public schools have played a role in the reproduction of inequality and privilege (Noguera, 2001; Ochoa, 2013).

When one considers empirical data (e.g. achievement data, graduation rates, and college-matriculation rates), urban public schools have failed many of the most marginalized students. However, one must not limit blame to these schools and to educators. Educational researchers have argued that one must interrogate and problematize the dominant ideologies and systemic forces that shape the communities and schools where youth of color both live and are educated (Anyon, 2005; Bedolla, 2010; Cooper & Davis, 2015; Lipman, 2011; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Pedroni, 2011). It is for this reason that the authors use the term 'urban' as a way to capture the experiences of "students and families living in and being educated in large metropolitan communities that have been isolated, impacted, and systematically abandoned by policymakers and industry actors" (Cooper & Davis, 2015, p. 312). Reimagining and working with educators to develop and sustain an urban school's college-going culture is a critique of the status quo and a call to action to change the schooling process and environment in equitable ways for all students. Recognizing that such endeavors will require a great deal from urban educators, many

who are already over-burdened, the authors contend that school-based educators need support

and partnership from researchers, policymakers and other educational stakeholders as they begin

to work towards this important aim. This manuscript is an attempt to offer such support.

Theoretical Frameworks

Ecological Systems Theory

Lipman and Haines (2007) claimed the following: "any thoroughgoing analysis of urban

education needs to account for its relationship with [the] urban political economy and its

relationship to global economic and political processes" (p.476). In short, research that nuances

only what happens within schools but does not acknowledge what happens to these organizations

from a structural perspective fails to challenge the dominant discourse, ultimately leaving it

intact. Educational researchers must interrogate the ways in which structural factors, like

globalization (Martinez-Fernandez, Audirac, Fol, & Cunningham –Sabot, 2012), neoliberalism

(Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Pedroni, 2011), and racism (Giroux,

2003; Leonardo, 2013), manifest in policies and practices that reshape urban communities and

urban schools (Smith & Stovall, 2008). The theoretical framework introduced in the space below

situates such issues within a larger context.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) theorized that

students' development is facilitated and inhibited by macro-societal issues and the settings in

which they are situated, whether home, school or community contexts. He termed this

framework and its five nested structures ecological systems theory and micro-, meso-, exo-,

macro- and chrono-systems, respectively (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). As those impacted by

these nested structures, Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994) positioned students at the center of the

framework. *Chronosystems* represent the temporal aspect of development, which affects entire systems. An example could be globalization since the 1950's. On the other hand, *macrosystems* are the overarching layer of the framework and "are informal and implicit—carried, often unwittingly, in the minds of the society's members as ideology manifest through custom and practice in everyday life" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). In short, *macrosystems* are ideologies, historical trends, or cultural norms and expectations. Neoliberalism is an *example* of a *macro-system.* As support for this position, consider society's tacit content of market-based reforms, consumerism, and policies that prioritize private interests and financial gain over public interests and the common good (Giroux, 2003; Harvey, 2005).

  Exosystems, on the other hand*,* are defined as structures that "impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 520). In particular, these structures operate at the local level. Considering the current state of urban schooling and urban school reform, one can consider high-stakes accountability measures as an example of an *exosystem*. Research suggests that these measures have been co-opted by neoliberals and used as tools to further the political economic project of neoliberal urban restructuring (Hursh, 2007; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Pedroni, 2011; Saltman, 2014). Invariably, research shows that when enforced, high-stakes accountability measures have a negative impact on urban communities, urban public high schools (or *microsystems*) and students' educational outcomes (Deeds & Pattillo, 2015; Kirshner, Gaertner, & Pozzoboni, 2010; Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011; Smith & Stovall, 2008). Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized, moreover, that while in school students have frequent and lasting interactions with peers, educators, school staff, and other integral elements of the school's structure, particularly its culture. As such, in order to improve students' educational outcomes,

educational researchers must nuance the relationship between students' college-going opportunities, school culture, and external factors (e.g., high-stakes accountability measures) that place undue pressures on urban public schools.

In using this theory, the authors focus specifically on the level where schools are positioned, microsystems, while also making connections to existing community contexts, meso-systems. The goal in doing so is to articulate how students' postsecondary educational aspirations and motivations develop within and as a result of the schooling environment and the degree to which their engagement in the college-going process is contingent upon the care they receive from educators in school. Unfortunately, this framework is limited in a few ways. Although educational researchers can use human ecology to frame the relationship between various contextual factors and the developing person, or in this case SoC and students from low-income backgrounds, it is not a particularly useful tool for scrutinizing the conditions that exist within each of these nested layers. Different frameworks are needed for this important task. It is for this reason that the authors employ Guinier and Torres (2002) political race theory.

Political Race Theory

Guinier and Torres (2002) introduced political race theory in an attempt to offer a method "of analysis to signal systemic failure and to catalyze institutional innovation" (p.15) through collective organizing around race and the experiences of racialized groups. To make this point, these authors employed the metaphor of the miner's canary to illustrate how the experiences of racial minorities (i.e. the canaries) serve as a diagnostic tool that alerts society (i.e. the miners) to inequitable systems and structures of power and privilege. Recognition is but the first step and once aware of these issues, society collectively works to critique and change inequitable structures in systematic and socially just ways. Guinier and Torres (2002) term this the 'activist

project'. This metaphor of the miner's canary serves both as a reminder and a warning that failing to act jeopardizes the integrity of the mine and by consequence society.

The authors of this study draw parallels between Guinier and Torres' (2002) conception of political race theory and the culture of comprehensive urban high schools surrounding notions of college readiness and college going. As a starting point, the authors reason that urban public high schools, particularly those serving SoC and students from low-income backgrounds, are not preparing all students for college (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010; Howard, 2003; Noguera, 2002). The authors consider students that are not being prepared for college as canaries and their lack of preparation for college indicative of the culture of the school in question. As such, the collective task of educators and all other adults within these spaces is to create a school culture where all students are prepared for college and are able to see their dreams become a reality. This is the 'activist project' (Guinier & Torres, 2002) in that all miners, or in this instance school-based educators, must work together to bring about the change owed to those most impacted by inequitable systems and structures of power and privilege. By using this framework, the authors are able to shine a light upon the experiences of SoC and students from low-income backgrounds using various strands of data that center student voice in discussions about their schools. The explicit focus on the experiences of SoC and students from low-income backgrounds is in no way an attempt to discount the experiences of other student groups, quite the contrary point. That is, by addressing the schooling conditions that members of these communities face, educators are likely to improve the educational experience for all students.

Review of the Literature

The college-access literature is vast, but the authors narrow their attention to key themes present in four distinct yet closely related bodies of scholarship, those being: college-going

cultures, care in schools, college aspirations and motivations, and engagement in the college-going process. At the beginning of each of the four sections of this review is a note on how educational researchers have defined each term. Then, the authors discuss major themes and identify specific gaps this study will help to address.

College-Going Cultures in Public High Schools

Over the past decade, researchers have focused their empirical and conceptual attention on the overall culture of public secondary schools and students' preparation for college (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Howard, 2003; Knight-Diop, 2010; McClafferty, McDonough, & Núñez, 2002; McClafferty-Jarsky, McDonough, & Núñez, 2009; McKillip, Godrey, & Rawls, 2013; Schneider, 2007; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Generally, many of the scholars cited above have argued that by purposefully changing the culture of the school, educators can better prepare students for college. Specifically, however, they contend that educators must create academic climates that address gaps in students' knowledge about college and that normalize college attendance (Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). The term 'college-going culture' has emerged as a way to discuss educators' explicit commitment to creating such settings. For the purposes of this study, the authors borrow Holland and Farmer-Hinton's (2009) definition of a college-going culture:

> College culture reflects environments that are accessible to all students and saturated with ever-present information and resources and on-going formal and informal conversations that help students to understand the various facets of preparing for, enrolling in, and graduating from postsecondary academic institutions as those experiences specifically pertain to the students' current and future lives. (p. 26)

This definition builds upon previous conceptions of college-going cultures and delineates matriculation to college and persistence through college as to suggest that merely enrolling in college is not a sufficient outcome. A discussion of seminal works on this subject is in order.

McClafferty, McDonough, and Núñez (2002) introduced the concept of a college-going culture, which they suggested were comprised of nine fundamental characteristics, those being: college talk, clear expectations, information and resources, comprehensive counseling model, testing and curriculum, faculty involvement, family involvement, college partnerships, and articulation. They theorized that if properly implemented, educators in public schools could ensure the competitive eligibility of all students for college. However, lacking from their discussion of a college-going culture was an articulation of the relationship between the school's culture, students' postsecondary educational aspirations and motivations and their engagement in the college-going process. Building on this foundational study and using survey data from multiple school sites across Chicago, Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) investigated the extent to which students engaged in the college-going process as a result of the college-going culture that existed in the schools they attended. In short, using analysis of variance (ANOVA), they found that students in smaller schools, as compared to their peers in larger schools, were more engaged in school-related activities when there was a strong college-going culture.

Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka (2011) attempted to nuance this finding further by exploring the extent to which the school's climate related to students' engagement in key college-going activities and to their enrollment in four-year colleges and universities. Not surprisingly, they found that "students' attitudes, parental support, gender, and race/ethnicity are strongly associated with plans to attend college, but, at least in an urban system, are less correlated with whether students participate effectively in college application and search" (p.191). In essence, students aspire to matriculate to college only to see those hopes dwindle as they engage—often with limited support—in the complex process of searching for, applying to, and enrolling in a post-secondary educational institution. Educators must be intentional in their

efforts to ensure students receive the support, knowledge and information needed to matriculate to college (Conley, 2008; Roderick, Coca, Nagaoka, 2011; Schneider, 2007). This is especially true in spaces and communities with historically low rates of college-matriculation.

Notably, educational researchers studying college-going cultures in urban high schools have suggested that such schooling contexts prove most effective in in small school settings where educators can better tailor instructional practices and develop closer relationships with students (Athanases et al., 2016; Farmer-Hinton, 2011; Farmer-Hinton & Holland, 2008; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Knight-Diop, 2010; Knight-Manuel et al., 2016; McKillip et al., 2013). From an equity standpoint, the authors of this study push back against this theme in the literature to argue that one must place greater attention on exploring ways in which college-going cultures can achieve comparable success in large comprehensive school settings. Solely focusing on how educators in schools with specific characteristics (i.e. small size, magnet, schools of choice, charter) implement college-going cultures only perpetuates well-documented inequities in the college-preparation process (Cooper et al., 2015; Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010; Ochoa, 2013). That is, one must reimagine what is possible within a system that has traditionally not served Students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds well. In order to develop a college-going culture in comprehensive urban high schools, educators must actively work together to ensure its creation, sustainability and reach (Roderick, Coca & Nagaoka, 2011; Schneider, 2007; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Research that takes these perspectives into account is lacking in the literature. This study has the potential to fill this important gap in the literature by exploring such possibilities in one large urban high school, especially the distinct ways in which educators have demonstrated high levels of care in their relationships and dealings with students.

Care in Schools: Institutional Culture of Care

Caring relationships in schools have been studied extensively since the late 1980's (Adler, 2002; Antrop - González & De Jesús, 2006; Garza, 2009; Louis, Murphey, Smylie, 2016; Noddings, 1988; Shann, 1999; Schussler & Collins, 2006). Over time, the focus of scholarly research on such relationships has shifted from individual-level interactions to institutional level interactions, largely the notion of institutional culture of care (Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Cooper & Chizhik, 2012; Knight-Diop, 2010). Noddings (1988) is credited as having introduced and defined relational ethics, or ethics of caring, within the educational discourse. Through the lens of relational ethics, Noddings (1988) argued that individuals interact with one another in some form of affective awareness—whether love, hate, admiration or disgust. Particular to schools, she opined that educators should strive to assume the role of caregiver in their relations with students and should push the student to reach his or her potential full potential. As a critique, Noddings (1988) failed to consider how and whether caring relations could exist beyond the dyad of student-teacher, and she argued that a considerable array of institutional arrangements must be made that enable students and teachers to spend more time together in smaller classroom settings. Harkening back to issues of equity mentioned in the previous section, smaller classrooms and smaller schools are often not a reality, or a matter of choice, for educators in many urban school districts. As such, educational researchers must continually question and consider ways in which educators can facilitate comparable success in larger classroom and school settings.

Schussler and Collins (2006) explored the idea of care within the context of an alternative school for students at-risk of dropping out and school failure. Through in-depth interviews and observations, they found that a caring school environment created a school context conducive to

learning where student success was allowed to flourish absent other impediments. These authors situated their findings within five dyads of caring relationships: teacher-to-student; student-to-student; student-to-teacher; school-to-student; and, finally, student-to-school. Given the focus of this paper, the authors of this study borrow Schussler and Collins' (2006) definition of care, which is defined as a relationship "marked by a desire to understand the other and help the other reach his [, her, or their] potential, as well as the concern for an organization that has the capacity to succeed or fail" (p.1464). Explicit in this definition of care is the idea that organizations, or schools, fail to achieve their purpose when genuine concern for students and a desire to assist them in maximizing their potential is absent the schooling environment.

Unfortunately, both Noddings (1988) and Schussler and Collins (2006) have argued that this type of caring relationship can only be achieved in small school and classroom settings, similar to what was observed in the college-going literature. Inherent in these arguments is the belief that educators and administrators are able to restructure technical elements of the school (e.g. enrollment and classroom size) in ways that give credence to these claims (Cooper, Slavin, & Madden, 1997). This is often not a reality for educators working in schools situated in urban communities. To this end and given these limitations, the authors argue that all adults working in these settings (e.g., administrators, counselors, educators, and support staff) should endeavor to create an environment where all students feel cared for by *at least* one adult. Drawing from Cooper and Chickwe (2012) and Knight-Diop (2010), the authors term this expanded model of care an 'institutional culture of care.' Students interact with a host of adults in their day-to-day schooling experiences and those encounters must be situated in a genuine desire to help a student reach his or her full potential, irrespective of whatever that may be. A college-going culture cannot exist without a strong institutional culture of care (Cooper & Chickwe, 2010; Cooper et

al., 2015; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Knight-Diop, 2010). As is the case with college

preparation, caring relationships must exist for all students, not a select few.

The authors of this study recognize that this type of reform initiative is challenging in that

it requires purposeful collaboration across all facets of schools (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993;

Blase & Björk, 2010; Johnson, 2001). Yet, this type of school reform should prompt educators

and others to interrogate their own ideological positions regarding notions of who should be

prepared for college, and whether their ideologies and classroom practices align with the express

mission to prepare every student for college. In instances where ideologies, policies and practices

do not align with said mission, educators must change them. The gains to be made in bolstering

access to college for students from marginalized backgrounds by doing so necessitate this work.

College Aspirations and Motivations

The educational aspirations and motivations of Students of Color and students from low-

income backgrounds are an integral component of student success and educational attainment.

Research has demonstrated that students from historically marginalized backgrounds have high

levels of college aspirations (Cooper, 2009; Freeman, 1997, 1999; Howard, 2003; Kiyama, 2010;

Myers & Myers, 2012; Stewart, Stewart, & Simons, 2007) and are motivated to pursue those

aspirations and see them realized (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Cooper & Davis, 2015).

Bohon, Johnson and Gorman (2006) conceptualized educational aspirations as traits that espouse

a certain degree of hopefulness/desirability, abstractness and idealistic preferences for the future

with regards to college. The authors of this study incorporate this conceptualization of

aspirations and include a motivational component within this framing to capture the degree to

which students are motivated to see their 'dreams' become a reality. The authors present relevant

research on the subject of educational aspirations in the space below.

Howard (2003) investigated the lived experiences of 20 African American high school youth and their perspectives and opinions on college, the processes through which their academic identities were formed, and their educational experiences in schools. In this qualitative study, the authors found that the encouragement and the expectations that parents had and shared with their children helped to create high levels of aspirations towards college attendance. Regrettably, many students noted that their experiences with educators and their experiences in schools, more broadly, counteracted the support and encouragement they received from their parents. Howard (2003) was careful to note that "adolescents' identities are shaped by external as well as internal factors" and that "all students should be provided with the opportunity, or at the very least, encouraged to consider college" (p.15). This important note, as well as the study's findings, indicate that a student's aspirations for college can be influenced by the settings in which they find themselves, whether peer groups, families or schools settings.

Howard (2003) alluded to the role of contextual factors and their relationship with students and their educational aspirations and motivations. Other educational researchers have explicitly asserted that Black and Latino students' aspirations and motivations for college are impacted and influenced by the contexts (e.g. family structure and family expectations) and settings (e.g. neighborhood contexts, rural, urban) in which they may find themselves (Bohon, Johnson & Gorman, 2006; Stewart, Stewart, & Simons, 2007; Strayhorn, 2009). Moreover, between these groups, aspirations and motivations differ at statistically significant levels. Yet, despite the clear articulation that contextual factors impact the college aspirations of SoC, Bohon, Johnson and Gorman (2006), Stewart, Stewart and Simons (2007) and Strayhorn (2009), left unaddressed how structures of oppression (i.e. macrosystems; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and

public policies (i.e. exosystems; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) impact and affect the settings in which students find themselves (meso- and microsystems).

Cooper and Davis (2015) endeavored to problematize the discourse on the subject of college aspirations and motivations for urban, Black youth in California. The authors used an ecological systems theory lens to interrogate the degree to which neoliberalism as a broad systemic force and political-economic movement, school reform policies and practices that disrupt communities and allow for gentrification, and family and peer contexts predicted the college aspirations and motivations of urban, Black high school students. In short, these authors found that family and peer contexts did predict the college aspirations and motivations of urban, Black youth. Among many things, Cooper and Davis (2015) suggested that researchers also explore the degree to which school culture and school policies and practices relate to the college aspirations and motivations of historically marginalized urban youth. This work builds on Cooper and Davis's (2015) study by exploring the relationship between students' perceptions of a school's college-going culture and their college aspirations, motivations and engagement in the college-going process. Unlike most explorations of college-going cultures in empirical research studies, the authors of this study intentionally center students' aspirations and motivations regarding college in the forefront of this discussion (Roderick, Coca & Nagaoka, 2011). Doing so centers students' hopes and dreams for their future, while also reminding educational stakeholders of the responsibility they have in ensuring that these aspirations and motivations are nurtured and helped to grow and come to fruition rather than deferred.

Engagement in the College-Going Process

As has been discussed, students aspire for college and are motivated to see their aspirations realized. Specific to Students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds,

however, student engagement in activities that signal participation in the college-going process (e.g. visiting campuses, talking to one's counselor, applying for financial aid and scholarships, etc.) is low and not often done in a way that ensures a student's competitive eligibility for selective colleges and universities (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu, 2012; Executive Office of the President, 2014; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Roderick, Caco, & Nagaoka, 2011; Smith, Pender, & Howell, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the authors define and measure engagement in the college-going process as completion of key activities like submitting a financial aid or scholarship application, applying to college, attending college-fairs, requesting college information, taking college entrance exams, taking advanced placement and honors courses, and speaking with one's counselor about college. Research on this subject is aggregated in such categories and seldom accounts for the ways in which educators can help students and families better engage in the college-going process (Carey, 2016; Bettinger et al., 2012; Hoxby & Avery, 2012).

For instance, Carey (2016) explored the role and salience of college-going familial capital among two Students of Color who were engaged in the college-going process and found that "college-going messages were present early in their lives, not only within their immediate (e.g. mother, father, and siblings) families, but also their extended families (e.g. grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins) and fictive kin…family structures"(p. xx). That is to say, for the two students under study, college matriculation was an established norm in their families even though the students' parents did not graduate from college. Carey (2016) reminds educational researchers and school-site educators that students come to school already possessing knowledge about the significance of college, but they often lack the 'know-how' needed to matriculate to college (Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Bettinger et al., 2012). It is for this reason that the authors focus

explicitly on student engagement in the college-going process. Many SoC and students from low-income backgrounds are not being prepared for college (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010). For those that are being prepared, engaging in the college-going process may feel like a foreign process (Carey, 2016; Freeman, 1997, 1999; Myers & Myers, 2012). By shining a light upon the ways in which students are presently engaging in the college-going process, the authors endeavor to illuminate spaces where educators can provide students with opportunities, resources and information they might not otherwise be afforded or have access to in spaces outside of the schooling context.

Methodology

Background Information

The survey data presented in this study originate from a multi-year investigation of ten California high schools and the efforts of educators and other stakeholders at these sites to develop and sustain college-going cultures. The qualitative data, on the other hand, were collected as a part of a pilot study that focused more specifically on one site in an urban northern California community, Malcolm X High School (MXHS, pseudonym). Data collection for this study occurred in the 2015- 2016 academic year. Students at MXHS completed a survey in fall 2015 and were later interviewed in focus group discussions in spring 2016, along with two educators. The authors facilitated two focus group discussions with students and two semi-structured one-on-one interviews with educators. **Appendix B**, **Table 1C** contains demographic information for focus group and interview participants.

Research Site

Like many urban comprehensive secondary schools across the nation, MXHS has been a staple in the local community for decades, particularly at a time when all other forms of industry

left the surrounding community. Generations of families have walked through the halls of

MXHS, and educators and community members take great pride in the school and are committed

to helping improve the services and offerings available to students. MXHS fits the demographic

and performance profile of many schools in urban spaces that have been divested from and left

on the margins. During the time of study, 1,916 students were enrolled at MXHS, of whom 48 %

were Latinx, < 1 % American Indian, 20 % Asian or Pacific Islander, 20 % African American, 6

% White, and 2 % non-specified. Roughly 21 % of the students were identified as an English

Language Learner while nearly 80 % were eligible for free and reduced price meals. Rather than

share performance-based outcomes, the authors center the voices of students and educators in

describing the site.

  Broadly, students and educators at MXHS described the school site as a familial space

and a safe haven in a community devoid of many other spaces of solace. For instance, when

asked to reflect on the ways in which they perceived their school and its reputation in city,

Naiomi, an African American senior, noted that the school and the students that attend MXHS

are perceived as "ghetto", "ratchet", and "scary". Yet, Naiomi's description of the site did not

align with those views,

> … the school is like a family. Everybody here is really close. We really are like a family… It's not like any other regular school. Just walking by everybody knows everybody. Teachers, outside of the school, football games bring everybody together, you know. It's always a good thing.

Norman, an Asian senior, noted that the school's reputation in the greater metropolitan area

comes from the surrounding community and people's inability to disassociate the two: "it's

usually location that's a factor. It's kind of like the area that influences people's thoughts about

the school". Mr. Smith, a White male and a veteran educator at the school, espoused similar

ideas when asked to describe the surrounding area and MXHS as a space situated within the

community,

> Belle Vue Heights is a rough neighborhood, and a low socioeconomic neighborhood.
> Most of the kids here find MXHS a safe place, a place to go. We are a family here.
> I've been here 16 years.

Later in the conversation, Mr. Smith expounded upon the community's perspective of the

school when he noted "the community loves this school" and that "this is a safe haven". His

mention of safe haven was in response to an incident that occurred off campus and involved a

few students from MXHS. In fall 2015, while driving off campus three MXHS students were

involved an altercation that left one MXHS student shot. Rather than go to the hospital, the

students went to the one place they knew they could both get help and be safe, MXHS.

Tragically, the student passed away on the school's grounds.

Comprehensive, urban high schools are frequently described by low-rates of academic

achievement, particularly on high stakes accountability tests. Seldom, however, are the voices of

those who work in and attend these schools brought to the fore, shared, and considered as

policymakers implement reform measures that greatly impact such spaces (Milner, 2008). The

remarks shared here characterize a school that holds a valued place in the local community,

although such may not be true in the greater metropolitan area. Efforts to reform this school and

others like it must begin from such spaces and not deficit-oriented accounts that disregard the

relationships students, educators, and other adults within the schooling context have formed over

years.

Instrumentation and Data

The survey instrument used to collect the first strand of data measures students'

perceptions of their schooling environment and their knowledge of, attitudes toward, and their

behaviors and participation in the college-going process. To achieve this aim, a team of

researchers adapted scales and measurement items from the following sources: Transitional

Choice Scales Survey (Cooper & Huh, 2008), National Gear Up survey, School Attitudes

measurement (Epstein & McPartland, 1976); Perceptions of Educational Barriers measurement

(Kenney et al., 2003), Putting College Plan Into Action Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment

(Constantine, Benard, & Diaz, 1999). The authors also included items from seminal studies and

reports in the college readiness and college-going literature in the survey instrument (Corwin &

Tierney, 2007; Holland & Farmer- Hinton, 2009; McClafferty, McDonough & Núñez, 2002).

The survey instrument is comprised of 127 items, many of which are situated on a five-point

Likert response format (e.g. 1 -5, Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree; Carifio & Perla, 2007).

Once developed, administered and collected, survey responses were cleaned, recoded and

prepared for formal analysis. The 2015-2016 dataset for the multi-year project contains

approximately 10,000 unique cases. This accounts for approximately 63% of the total student

population across the ten schools participating in the larger study. Given the focus of this paper,

the authors only used responses of students from MXHS, particularly those who self-identified as

Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native American. With the bounds

imposed on the data (e.g., Students of Color and MXHS), the final dataset comprised 687 unique

cases with complete data. Given the intersection of race and class, many of these students also

come from low-income backgrounds. As a note, these student groups were selected given their

underrepresentation in selective colleges and universities and their overrepresentation in

community and for-profit colleges, as well as the manner in which they have been racialized

within (Ochoa, 2013; Zhou, 2009) and outside of schools (Molina, 2014).

------------[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE] -------------

Research Procedure

Data analysis proceeded in five steps. First, the authors conducted a principal axis factor analysis on 55 survey items using oblique rotation. This initial step resulted in the extraction of eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (Bollen, 1989). Together, these measures helped identify the factor structure by providing insight to the latent variable under investigation—a school's college-going culture—while also explaining 66% of the variance. Presented in **Appendix A, Table 1B** are factor loadings, item names and reliability estimates, which were at or above .70 for the six Likert scales included in the analyses. Two scales were not included in the final analyses due to multicollinearity. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's measure of sampling adequacy was .964 whereas Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 (1485)= 28874.296, p<.001). Second, the authors generated descriptive statistics (**Table 1, Table 2**) and inter-item correlation coefficients (**Table 3**) for the sample. These results were particularly important as they afforded the authors the occasion to examine more closely the relationship between key independent variables extracted in the first step. In addition, themes observed at this stage of data analysis became the foundation of the focus group interview protocol. Given the debate on whether one should treat Likert scales as ordinal or interval data (Carifio & Perla, 2007; Jameison, 2004; Murray, 2013), the authors conducted the appropriate parametric and non-parametric tests to explore the degree to which results differed between the two statistical approaches. In short and similar to Murray's (2013) findings, no significant differences were observed allowing the authors to proceed with parametric tests.

------------[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]------------

To answer whether school climate and care predict students' aspirations and motivations, in the third step, the authors estimated a multivariate regression model that is depicted in the space below (subscripts are suppressed):

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLACK + \beta_2 LATINX + \beta_3 NAT.AM + \beta_4 MOMED + \beta_5 DADED + \beta_6 FRPM + \beta_7 FEMALE + \beta_8 JOB + \beta_9 ACADEMY + \beta_{10} AVID + \beta_{11} AP\&HONORS + \beta_{12} CCE + \beta_{13} ADULTCARE + \beta_{14} ADMINCARE + \beta_{15} PEER + \beta_{16} CURRICULUM + \beta_{17} FEE$

where Y, or College Aspirations and Motivations, is a measure of students' desire to excel academically at the secondary and post-secondary educational level (Bohon, Johnson & Gorman, 2006; Cooper & Davis, 2015). As a note, this measure is situated on a five-point Likert response format, where the highest value (5) equals 'Strongly Agree'. The coefficients β_1-β_3 are dummy codes that capture the difference in predicted values of Y for Black, Latinx, and Native American students, as compared to Asian/Pacific Islanders. The coefficients β_4 -β_5 are measures of parental educational attainment, situated on a scale of increasing educational attainment where the highest value (3) indicates a student's parent(s) holds an advanced degree. Conversely, the lowest value (0) indicates a student's parent(s) has not graduated high school. FRPM, or Free/Reduced Price Meals, is a binary variable that functions as a proxy for low socio-economic status. In the case of gender, FEMALES are coded 1.

The coefficients β_8 -β_{11} are measures of school engagement. Educators at MXHS informed the authors most students participate in an academy or AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) and take different AP&HONORS courses while a small percentage work an after-school JOB. To account for these different experiences, the authors have included four different measures of engagement in the model listed above: JOB, AVID, ACADEMY, and AP&HONORS. Of these four measures, three are binary, whereas AP/Honors is situated on a

five-point scale where the lowest value (0) indicates a student has not taken an AP or honors

level course. The previously mentioned dichotomous variables capture mean group differences in

the outcome variable for students that do not participate in said activity and the AP&HONORS'

scale captures the degree to which the outcome of interest is expected to increase for every one

unit increase in AP/Honors courses taken. β_{12} - β_{17} represent the coefficients of principal interest,

students' perceptions of their school's college-going culture, care, and familial/social support.

Educational researchers have employed questionable measures of school climate.

For instance, Roderick, Coca and Nagaoka (2011) used the percentage of students from a

given school that attended a four-year institution as one of their climate measures. They reasoned

that a high rate of college matriculation for former students would be an indication of a strong

college-going culture (Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2013). Multiple factors (e.g., finances,

location, etc.) impact students' decision to matriculate to college after finishing high school,

especially four-year colleges and universities. Including this proxy without accounting for such

factors obfuscates the salience of the school's climate and biases the study's findings. The

measures introduced in this analysis provide an alternatively appropriate account of the school's

climate. CCE, or Clear College Expectations, measures students' perceptions of whether

educators and other adults at the school site have high expectations of them and are preparing

them for college. ADULTCARE measures the degree to which a student feels cared for and

connected to adults, not merely educators, within the schooling environment. ADMINCARE

captures the degree to which students feel supported and valued by school administrators.

CURRICULUM, on the other hand, is a measure of whether students' perceive the lessons they

learn in class as being relevant to life, in general, and relevant to college and their culture

experiences and lived realities, in particular. As previously mentioned, McClafferty et al.'s

(2002) seminal work on nine characteristics of a college-going culture, as well as research on

caring relationships within schools, contributed to the development of the items present in each

of these scales.

With regards to familial and social support, PEER is a scale that measures the degree to

which students feel supported by their friends within the schooling context, both from a personal

and academic perspective (Holland, 2011; Sokatch, 2006). Research suggests that urban parents

of color involve themselves subtly in the schooling experiences of their children (Boutte &

Johnson, 2014; Carey, 2016; Jeynes, 2014). The communication of educational expectations is

one example of the ways in which parents may involve themselves in their children's schooling

experiences, and it is vital that such expectations be included in discussions about students'

aspirations for college. FEE, or Family Educational Expectations, gauges the extent to which a

student perceives his or her family expecting him or her to complete high school and attend

college. For a full listing of items included in each scale, factor loadings and reliability

estimates, please refer to **Appendix A**, **Table 1B** and see **Table 1** and **Table 2** for details on

(scale) ranges.

In the fourth step, the authors specified a logistic regression model where engagement in

the college-going process was the dichotomous outcome of interest and where students' college

aspirations and motivations served as a predictor. The resulting regression equation is presented

below (subscripts are suppressed):

$logit[P \text{ }(y=1)] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CCE + \beta_2 ASPIRATIONS + \beta_3 ADULTCARE + \beta_4 ADMINCARE + \beta_5 PEERSUPPORT + \beta_6 CURRICULUM + \beta_7 FEE + \beta_8 JOB + \beta_9 ACADEMY + \beta_{10} AVID + \beta_{11} AP\&HONORS + \beta_{12} MOMED + \beta_{13} DADED + \beta_{14} FRPM + \beta_{15} FEMALE + \beta_{16} BLACK + \beta_{17} LATINX + \beta_{18} NAT.AM$

where Y, Engagement in the College-Going Process, denotes whether a student has talked to his

or her counselor about their college plans, collected college information, attended college fairs,

visited a campus or applied for scholarships. In the exploratory phases of data analysis, the authors found that students' engagement in college-going activities did not differ significantly between grades. As such, the measure was recoded in such a way that completion of any of these activities earned a student an engagement score of 1 such as not to privilege any one college-going activity over another. All things considered, the authors hypothesize that student's perceptions of a school's college-going culture and care will predict their aspirations and motivations to pursue college opportunities, as well as the likelihood they will engage in the college-going process. The authors constructed the aforementioned regression models in a hierarchical manner to highlight the change in the amount of variance (R^2) accounted for by each block. Interaction terms were included in the models and later removed after the authors found non-significant coefficients.

Considering the explanatory sequential mixed-methodological design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007) employed in this study, focus group data were purposefully collected only after survey data had been collected and partially analyzed. The authors conducted two focus group discussions with a total of 17 students from the 10th and 12th grade. Nearly all of the students identified as a Student of Color, with one exception. In an effort to provide a representative sample of perspectives and opinions, the authors' school liaison selected focus group participants at random. Discussions ranged in time, but on average lasted approximately 45 minutes and were audiotaped only after students and educators consented to participate and be recorded. Themes that emerged from the partial analysis of the survey data were instrumental in developing a protocol that was later used to gather rich qualitative data to help nuance further the survey findings. Feedback on the wording of the focus group protocol was elicited from a team of educational researchers. Following the conclusion of data collection, audiotapes were sent to a

transcription service. Once transcribed, the authors verified the transcriptions and proceeded to analyze the discussions in ATLAS.ti using top-level codes generated from the analysis of the survey data. Along the way, the authors identified themes that departed from the initial set of top-level codes and made decisions about how to rectify those. Inter-rater reliability was achieved among the authors.

------------[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE] ------------

Findings: Influence of College-Going Cultures and Care

Broadly, students at MXHS aspire to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities. Of those students that responded to the survey, over two-thirds plan to enroll in a four-year college or university and roughly 20 % plan to enroll in a two- year college immediately after high school. These data points were fairly accurate in that most students in the focus groups desired to matriculate to college, a select few opted to enlist in the military, and a small portion were undecided about their future. Historically, MXHS has been successful in sending students to college; however, one finds that many of these students ultimately enroll in two-year colleges despite their aspirations to immediately enroll in a four-year institution. It is difficult to specify why this is occurring given the available data, but research would suggest that finances (St. John, 2006), information (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2009), and location (Martinez, 2013) play a central role in the decisions students ultimately make regarding their post-secondary educational futures. Nonetheless, the fact that such incongruences exist suggests a gap between aspirations and reality. With this in mind, the authors explored the survey and focus group data to nuance what, if any, relationship there was between students' aspirations and motivations, their engagement in the college-going process, and their perceptions of the schooling environment.

   Table 2 and **Table 3** present descriptive statistics and bivariate correlation coefficients

for each of the variables present in the regression models, respectively. For instance, the

mean/percentage for both college aspirations and motivations and engagement in the college-

going process are high (4.47 and 79%, respectively). This would indicate that students in the

sample are both motivated to go to college and that they engage in the college-going process. In

addition, the authors found a range of positive, statistically significant correlations between key

independent variables, college aspirations and motivations and engagement in the college-going

process. For example, ADULTCARE (μ, 4.07) was positively and highly correlated (.539) with

students' aspirations and motivations, as was the measure family expectations (μ, 4.61; .365).

These descriptive findings indicate that, on average, students at MXHS feel as though educators

care about them and also that their families expect them to graduate high school and matriculate

to college. In addition, these findings provide a clue as to whether students' perceptions of the

school's culture and their family's expectations for them help shape their educational aspirations

and motivations and engagement in the college-going process.

   Generally, students in the focus group discussions shared these sentiments. When asked

whether their parents/guardians wanted them to go to college, most students replied that their

parents did in fact want them to go, while some students, like Naiomi, were clear to point out

that their parents were not forcing them go but would be happy if they did so. Students also saw

the import in attending and graduating from college, not simply because their parents wanted

them to go, and were able to express why it mattered to them:

Interviewer: What made you all choose college then, if there isn't the expectation that you have to go to college but you have to do something good? Why did you all choose college as that path?

Naiomi: It will be better…It's a good way to back you up too, because you can't start dropping or you're just somebody with a high school diploma.

Juan: It's because they couldn't find me.

Tommy: Well you could get extra skills just in case. Just in case you get fired or quit that job.

Ron: Yeah, it's always good to have a plan B waiting around.

James: Yeah, because what happens if some guy doesn't have a college degree, and then you go over there and you're like, "I have one," and they're like, "Oh, well I'm going to hire you, straight up." That's how it is.

For these students, their aspirations to matriculate to college were affected by their parents' expectations (Freeman, 1997, 1999; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000) and by the earnings, marketability and skillsets they expected to gain by attending and ultimately graduating from college (Perna, 2000).

Yet, when examining the survey data, one finds that FEE was not statistically significantly correlated to students' engagement in the college-going process (.074). The focus group data helped explain why this might be the case. Students were candid about the support they received from their parents in filling out financial aid applications and other salient college materials. For some students, their parents were not knowledgeable of the process and could not provide the assistance needed, whereas for other students, their parents worked or siblings stepped in to provide support and assistance where needed. What became clear from the conversations was the valued role educators occupy in both shaping students' educational aspirations and motivations and in assisting them in the process of applying for college and engaging in the college-going process. To this point, three major themes emerged from the regression models and the focus group data, those being: 1) the salience of college-going cultures, 2) the benefits of care, and 3) barriers that defer dreams.

------------ **[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]** ------------

Theme 1: The Salience of College-Going Cultures

Educational researchers have long theorized about the role of college-going cultures and their purported affect on student engagement in the college-going process (Farmer-Hinton & Holland, 2008; Holland & Farmer- Hinton, 2009; Roderick, Coca & Nagaoka, 2011). Yet, few studies have explored the ways in which such institutional cultures affect students and their aspirations and motivations to pursue college opportunities. **TABLE 4** contains findings that address this notable gap in the literature and the study's first research question. As a note, the authors delineate between statistically significant and practically meaningful beta coefficients. Many of the coefficients for key independent variables in this model are statistically significant (p <.001) and practically meaningful in their explanatory power. In short, the authors uncovered that MXHS students' perceptions of their school's college-going culture and care predict their college aspirations and motivations to a great degree. Thus, the authors reject the null hypothesis that students' perceptions of the school's college-going culture do not predict their college aspirations and motivations.

Practically, one finds that for every one-unit increase in CCE, PEERSUPPORT, ADULTCARE and FEE, a student's aspirations and motivations are expected to increase by .081, .187, .344, and .152 points, respectively, holding all other factors constant. These findings shine an important light upon the significance of relationships, expectations and ultimately how each of these within and out-of-school elements contribute to students' hopes and dreams for themselves. As shown in **Table 4**, the final model explains 51 percent of the variance in MXHS students' aspirations and motivations. The focus group data support these findings and nuance the varying ways in which educators communicate their expectations to students through various

programs and policies and how they nurture students. For example, when asked, "do they

[educators] want you all to go to college?", students responded in the following ways:

Naiomi: Yeah. That's their main goal.

Interviewer: Main goal? How do you know it's their main goal?

Naiomi: Because they tell us this al the time.

Lance: They offer programs…

Sam: They also gave us scholarships to go to different colleges too.

Naiomi: Lots of field trips, to many colleges all around here.

Interviewer: What else are they doing to help? To show that they're expecting you to go to college?

Santos: They're teaching us how to do the FAFSA.

Naiomi: They also have a lot of cultural activities for all the kids because our school is so multicultural. There's a lot of activities for every culture that really doesn't have…Isn't to where kids are feeling alone. Everybody has something to do and [someone to] hang out with it and it's really cool.

Ron: They help us out with scholarships too. Helping us apply for them, figuring out which ones we can get.

Despite its size, MXHS offers an array of academic programs, clubs, organizations, sports and

co-curricula activities that engage students and connect them to the resources they need to be

successful. Students in the discussion groups for this study generally felt as though the school

provided them with all they needed to be successful even though they were not in what some

would term the higher academic track. Administrators and educators at the school site have been

intentional in their efforts to introduce students to various college opportunities.

Conversely, through previous site visits and focus group discussions, the authors found

that academic tracking via small learning academies played a part in sorting students in ways that

resulted in a mismatch between aspirations and college matriculation. Traces of this can be seen in the statistically significant coefficient for AP&HONORS. In short, for every one-unit increase in AP&HONORS, students' aspirations and motivations are expected to increase by .045. The students were critical of the lack of support received from some educators who did not share in the school's sense of community and family. James, an African American senior on his way to a local community college, problematized the effects of this behavior when he commented on one educator's low expectations and standards,

> It gives me a disadvantage in a way because instead of holding me to a higher standard, I'm at a lower standard, and when I go there [college] they're going to hold me to a higher standard. She [Mrs. Pondexter] prepares me. She puts me there already so when I go there I'm already there. For other teachers who don't give a damn, they just come get their paycheck and they pass you and that's it. I feel if we had…If they could hire teachers who are more passionate…They should hire teachers for like a year and see what the students think about the teacher, if they're more passionate, and then that could help us. When they're more passionate it makes you want to try harder. It makes you feel like you're not just doing the work, they care…

James was able to articulate in a profound way the salience of the school's culture and fellow students in the discussion affirmed his sentiment. According to this group of students, some educators at the school approached teaching simply as a way 'to earn their paychecks' while other educators would stay after school for hours to provide students with the assistance and attention they needed, sometimes so long that they would be locked in the school. This critique of educators speaks to a notable bi-furcation in the school's culture and teaching staff. In addition, James' comment students, their voices, and their needs must continually be centered in discussions of school reform.

------------[**INSERT TABLE 5 HERE**]------------

Theme Two: The Benefits of Care

Table 5 contains the findings of the logistic regression analysis that models the extent to which students' are likely to engage in the college-going process given the school's climate and care, among other measures. These findings address the second research question and provide noteworthy insights when triangulated with the focus group data. Of the key factors present in this model, two of six were statistically significant—ADULTCARE (1.447) and CURRICULUM (.683). Practically, one finds that for every unit increase in ADULTCARE, the estimated odds that students will engage in the college-going process increase by a factor of 1.447, holding the remaining variables constant. In other words, the actual probability that a student will engage in this process is .622 when the student reports a value of 4.07 on the ADULTCARE scale. Oddly, however, one observes that for every one-unit increase in CURRICULUM, the estimated odds that a student will engage in the college-going process decreases by a factor of .683. With regards to this finding, it could be the case that the curricula students are exposed to, particularly those that center their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds are not expressly linked to the college-going process.

Nonetheless, while discussing educators' instructional practices, James alluded to the benefits of high levels of ADULTCARE when he stated the following,

> Well, let me be clear, I think the teachers have prepared us, or at least me. I do feel like, speaking in this school, some teachers have more passion for what they do and I know for example, my English teacher, Ms. Pondexter, she is tough, but I know…You can get the vibe from people when they have passion. That's what I love about my teacher, so I think that…I think she's prepared me for college by tough love. By not allowing you to, "Oh, well you write this, give me trash and [I'll] let you pass." No, she doesn't do that. You have to work. She grew up here, she went to school here. I love that because I feel that if we had more teachers like that then we could be better because there's a lot of teachers here who you don't have to do anything in their class and they'll just pass you, and how does that prepare me for college? It doesn't.

James' statement is complex yet nuanced as it pertains to the tangible benefits of care and how that manifests in one's preparation for college. In addition, James' comment sheds an important light on educators' beliefs and behaviors, which may be a bi-product or the cause of the schooling structure (e.g., ACADEMY, AVID, AP&HONORS) and informational pathways. The authors engage these considerations in the forthcoming section.

Theme Three: Barriers that Defer Dreams

With regards to **Table 5**, many of the factors that were statistically significant and practically meaningful predictors of college aspirations and motivations are not so for engagement in the college-going process. Yet, the findings for JOB, ACADEMY, and AP&HONORS illuminate notable and somewhat concerning trends. For instance, one finds that students that work, are in an academy and that take AP and honors courses are 2.723, 1.547, and 1.676 times more likely to engage in the college-going process than are their non-working, non-academy peers and those who take fewer advanced level courses, respectively. James' statement may speak to educators' dispositions, their instructional practices, or may suggest altogether an alternative problem—schooling structure. Consider the following excerpt from a focus group discussion with a group of 10th graders who were not actively taking advanced level courses but the majority of who desired to matriculate to college:

Interviewer: When you get to graduation, and if you want to go to collage, do you think that the school has given you the resources, information, and the knowledge that you need to do that?

Braxton: I don't know if they have.

Interviewer: You don't know. You don't know if they have?

Braxton: Yeah. How would I know? What's the stuff that you need to go to college? I know the A through G requirements, and a little bit of other stuff. Not really much.

Interviewer: Now would you say that's a good thing or a bad thing?

Braxton: Bad thing.

Interviewer: Bad thing, why?

Braxton: Because I don't really know how am I supposed to… I don't really how to explain it…How am I actually supposed to get into a college?

Interviewer: If they're not giving you what?

Braxton: Like the information of like how to get into college and like what questions will I need to get in particular careers and stuff like that?

Despite having high levels of aspirations, many of the students in this focus group had a limited working knowledge of the college-going process, what it entailed and what they needed in order to be successful in actualizing their aspirations. For them, the school dropped the ball, and they were quick to identify where they felt additional resources where needed:

> If you're in AVID, they help you out with that [college]. Not everyone takes AVID. It might be, I think like in English they should talk about college sometimes and give information about that. Not just in AVID. All our students don't like being in AVID class…That's what I think. I think all teachers, should at least tell students about going to college, knowing what to do to be able to go to college. You know, mostly honors, AP, they mostly teaching in college already. Not most people take honors. I think all teachers in different kinds of Math, English, History…they should teach what they [need] to be able to go to college or something.
> - Lauren, an Asian 10th grader at MXHS

As depicted in **Table 1,** a small percentage of students at MXHS participate in AVID and few take AP/Honors courses. Yet from Lauren's perspective and as shown in the data, students in these academic programs and tracks are more likely to engage in the college-going process than their peers. Students come to MXHS with high aspirations only to see them deferred by an institutional structure that unintentionally guards privileged resources for a select few. In conclusion, while these findings confirm to a small degree that educators can effectively structure opportunities, resources and expectations within schools in ways that help reduce

inequities in access to college and encourage students to engage in the college-going process, students contend they must be intentional in their efforts such as to ensure all students, irrespective of academic track or program participation, receive the knowledge, information and resources needed to be successful in the college-going process.

Discussion

Numerous scholars have argued that educational researchers, bureaucrats and other concerned stakeholders must examine what happens within urban public schools, what happens to them, and ultimately how they educate students (Giroux & Giroux, 2009; Lipman & Haines, 2007; Lipman, 2011; Pedroni, 2011; Smith & Stovall, 2008). Not doing so, they contend, fails to challenge the dominant narrative regarding the 'failure' of urban public schools, which ultimately leaves it in tact. Such perspectives led the authors to employ an ecological systems' theory lens in this study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1999). Using this framework prompted the authors to consider more fully the community and school that students are situated in and how the schools' reputation and seeming success is intricately connected to a community that has been racialized and divested from by policymakers and industry actors. Yet, in spite of the outside factors, students and educators at MXHS found refuge in their school and in the sense of family they were able to create among one another. Students and educators alike truly believe they are, '*family for life*'.

Though useful in framing the relationship between a school's culture and students' aspirations and engagement, Bronfenbrenner's (1979,1999) ecological systems theory was not especially suitable to the authors' efforts to identify and problematize schooling conditions that obstruct students' access to post-secondary educational opportunities. With this in mind, the authors incorporated Guinier and Torres' (2002) political race theory, along with the metaphor of

the miner's canary, in order to centralize the salience of race and the experiences of racialized communities and to instigate institutional innovation. Comparable to Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka (2011), the authors found that students at MXHS that took advantage of various school engagement activities (e.g., AVID, ACADEMY) and advanced level courses (e.g., AP&HONORS) were more likely to engage in the college-going process than their peers, even after controlling for aspirations. In short, this suggests that the school's climate, along with the support students receive from family and friends, plays a monumental role in shaping aspirations and motivations and also in facilitating engagement in the college-going process.

Students, like Lauren and Braxton, complicated the ways in which these programs impart particular groups of students with the knowledge, resources and information they need to be successful in the college-going process with their remarks as shared above. Braxton, like the miner's canary, is signaling the negative effects of the school's culture, urging educators to restructure information pathways within the school. Small learning environments often further perpetuate inequities that exist in the college-going process (Athanases et al., 2016; Farmer-Hinton, & Holland, 2008; Holland & Farmer - Hinton, 2009; Knight-Diop, 2010; McKillip et al., 2013). This was true for students at MXHS. In examining the survey data more closely, one found that 3% of Black students, as compared to their Latinx (51%), Asian/Pacific Islander (46%), and Native American (28%) peers, were active participants in an academy—a specialized learning community often geared towards a trade or career pathway. Deil-Amen and DeLuca (2010) referred to the educational underclass of students that neither receives the college preparation nor career training needed to transition out of high school as "the underserved third" (p. 28). From their statements, Lauren and Braxton, were among those in this underclass. In and of themselves, these programs are not negative. While they present students with alternative

academic tracks, for some these tracks lead nowhere meaningful. Rather, for some, these tracks derail aspirations.

Students enter high school with lofty, yet reasonable goals and expectations for themselves; they simply want to matriculate to college after high school, especially four-year colleges and universities. Largely, students view college as an opportunity to gain additional skills that will help distinguish them in what some consider a saturated market. As shown in **Table 2** and **Table 4**, students at MXHS, on average, know their parents/guardians expect them to do the same (Boutte & Johnson, 2014; Jeynes, 2014; Valadez, 2008). Often, given their parents' level of educational attainment, however, Students of Color from low-income backgrounds are entirely reliant upon their school and educators to assist them in the college-going process. While the care students receive from educators challenges them to pursue excellence, one educator cannot impart all of the knowledge, information and resources students need to be successful in the college-going process. This must be a collective effort where all adults present in schools work together to transform the institution to ensure students receive the support needed (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Johnson, 2001; Malen, 1994). That is, such efforts must be firmly situated in the school's academic program, not on the periphery (Conley, 2008; Schneider, 2007; Roderick, Coca, Nagaoka, 2011).

In closing, educators are encouraged to consider ways in which they can restructure school policies and practices to disseminate resources, information, and opportunities to all students, not a select few. As an example from the field, one school site in southern California developed a 'Culture of Care' activity where every student in the school (approx. 2,000) met with an adult on campus for roughly five minutes during the course of two regular school days to discuss their academic transcript, their goals and aspirations, and resources they needed to help

make their dreams a reality. Educators were briefed on how to facilitate these discussions, and during these 'Care Sessions' they took notes which were later aggregated and acted upon by the school's administration and counseling team. Together, administrators, educators, counselors, support staff, and even the authors devised a way to ensure every student on campus felt cared for by *at least* one adult and that they knew their aspirations would not be deferred dreams. That being said, educational researchers, policymakers and other concerned stakeholders must work with educators to leverage and build from the relationships students have with other individuals in the schooling environments they find themselves situated in (Cooper & Davis, 2015; Holland, 2011; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Sokatch, 2006). Malcolm X High School is not a unique case in the sense that educators care deeply for students and want them to be successful. In summary, using an explanatory sequential mixed-methodological design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007), the authors were able to demonstrate that (and how) educators can help students develop college aspirations and motivations, as well as increase the probability they will engage in the college-going process, via college-going cultures and care.

Considerations and Limitations

By virtue of their focus, empirical research studies in the social sciences are often hindered by limitations. This study is no exception. For instance, while the overwhelming majority of students at MXHS expressly aspired to go to college, a small minority of students that participated in the focus group interviews was adamant about exploring alternative pathways, largely the military and workforce. Their reasons varied. Some wanted to follow in family members' footsteps by entering the military, whereas others saw the military as an avenue towards a full-tuition college scholarship (via GI Bill), complete with full benefits and a salary. Even still, others were turned away from pursuing college altogether as a result of not being

engaged at school. Rather than treat MXHS's student body as a homogenous group of college aspiring individuals, one must actively take all perspectives and experiences into account. While the authors advocate for greater access to college for students from marginalized backgrounds, they do not argue that all students must enroll in college but rather that all students be prepared to do so if they so choose. Failure to prepare all students for college reproduces existing disparities, further perpetuates the illusion of choice, and gives little credence to the widely held view that public schooling is a public good.

Considering its nascent status in the school climate literature base (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Maxwell, 2016; O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015), there are numerous topics worth exploring in future empirical studies on college-going cultures. Of note, educational researchers must shift their gaze towards nuancing the ways in which educators, administrators, and other school site actors negotiate power, ideologies and interests (e.g., micropolitics) to develop schooling environments that work for all students (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993). To date, studies have focused somewhat exclusively on the ways in which college-going cultures impact students at the expense of assessing how these cultures are created and sustained over time (Welton & Martinez, 2014). Ethnographic case study methodology is particularly well suited for pursuits of this nature (Anderson- Levitt, 2006). In addition, scholars should build on past studies (see Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011) that have framed the relationship between school culture and students' post-secondary plans with robust measures of school climate, college acceptance, intent to enroll, and actual enrollment, where possible. Findings from this study are not generalizable to the larger public; site and context matter a great deal.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, the authors have argued that macro-societal issues and the school's students attend affect their college-going opportunities. College-going cultures in comprehensive, urban public high schools have proven capable of mitigating longstanding barriers that obstruct college-access for Students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds. These educational settings can be a powerful remedy to this complex issue, contrary to the dominant and disparaging narrative regarding the success of (urban) public schools. The findings presented in this article suggest that while a school's college-going culture and care can be beneficial in helping students view college as a potential post-secondary educational opportunity, aspects of the school's culture and structure can also defer students dreams. Educators in these schooling contexts are uniquely poised to help ensure that the dreams of Students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds are no longer deferred.

Table 1
Summary Statistics

Variable	Percent/mean	Range
Free/reduced price meals	77%	0-1
Mother Educational Attainment (NO HS)	46%	0-3
Father Educational Attainment (NO HS)	41%	0-3
Female	45%	0-1
Black	18%	0-1
Latinx	51%	0-1
Asian Pacific Islander	28%	0-1
Native American	2%	0-1
Job	11%	0-1
Academy	46%	0-1
AVID	11%	0-1
AP & Honors Courses (NONE)	84%	0-4

Note: N= 684

Table 2
Means for all variables

	Mean/percent	Std. Dev.	Range
College Aspiration & Motivations	4.45	0.77	1-5
Engagement in the College-Going Process	79%		0-1
Family Educational Expectations	4.6	0.99	1-5
Clear College Expectations	4.16	0.77	1-5
Peer Support	3.74	0.75	1-5
Relevant Curriculum	3.47	0.72	1-5
Adult Care	4.07	0.9	1-5
Administrative Care	3.65	0.77	1-5

Strong Disagree = 1.00 to Strongly Agree = 5
No = 0 to Yes = 1

Table 3
Pearson Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1- College Aspiration & Motivations	-	.149**	.365**	.436**	.608**	.442**	.554**	.403**	-.018	.108**	.101**	.167**
2- Engagement in the College-Going Process	-	-	.075	.114**	.179**	.026	.176**	.055	.081*	.094*	.114**	.213**
3- Family Educational Expectations	-	-	-	.218**	.290**	.142**	.193**	.173**	.027	.090*	.006	.023
4- Clear College Expectations	-	-	-	-	.415**	.482**	.444**	.570**	-.014	.106**	.030	.043
5- Peer Support	-	-	-	-	-	.425**	.537**	.376**	-.023	.122**	.108**	.177**
6- Relevant Curriculum	-	-	-	-	-	-	.540**	.523**	.061	.059	.017	-.001
7- Adult Care	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.496**	.016	.118**	.042	.111**
8- Administrative Care	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.041	.050	-.001	.019
9- Job	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.024	.000	.047
10- Academy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.177**	.031
11- AVID	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.259**
12- AP & Honors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4
School Engagement, Perceptions of Climate, and Familial/Social Support on College Aspirations and Motivations
S ample: Students of Color, High School, Grades 9- 12, N= 684
O utcome: College Aspirations and Motivations

Variable	Base Model (1)		Add School Engagement Factors (2)		Add Climate and Familial/Social Support (3)	
	(R²=.038)		(R² =.076)		(R² =.514)	
	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β
Constant	4.09 (.090)		3.96 (.093)		.647 (.160)	
Black	.202 (.088)	.100*	.244 (.087)	.121	.185 (.064)	.092**
Latinx	.109 (.070)	.070	.115 (.069)	.074	.148 (.051)	.095**
Nat.Am	-.131 (.213)	-.024	-.047 (.21)	-.009	.041 (.153)	.008
Mother Educational Attainment	-.030 (.042)	-.031	-.031 (.042)	-.031	.002 (.03)	.002
Father Educational Attainment	.062 (.046)	.056	.047 (.046)	.043	.016 (.034)	.015
Free/Reduced Price Meals	.247 (.071)	.133***	.207 (.07)	.112**	.121 (.052)	.065*
Female	.156 (.059)	.100**	.127 (.058)	.081*	.018 (.044)	.012
Job			-.079 (.091)	-.033	-.074 (.067)	-.03
Academy			.165 (.06)	.106**	.011 (.044)	.007
AVID			.199 (.096)	.081*	.085 (.071)	.035
AP & Honors			.089 (.026)	.134***	.045 (.019)	.067*
Clear College Expectations					.081 (.035)	.081*
Adult Care					.19 (.032)	.22***
Adminstrative Care					.043 (.037)	.043
Peer Support					.342 (.037)	.328***
Relevant Curriculum					.092 (.039)	.086*
Family Educatioanl Expectations					.147 (.022)	.188***

Note: reference group for model 1 were male, non free/reduced price lunch, and Asian/Pacific Islander
Note: reference group for model 2 & 3 were male, non free/reduced price lunch, Asian/Pacific Islander, non-working, non-academy, non-AVID
* p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001

Table 5
School Engagement, Perceptions of Climate, and Familial/Social Support on Engagment in the College-Going Process
Sample: Students of Color, High School, Grades 9- 12, N= 684
Outcome: Engaged in College-Going Process; Control Group: male, non free/reduced price lunch, Asian/Pacific Islander, non-working, non-academy, non-AVID

Variable	Base Model (1)	Add School Engagement Factors (2)	Add BG Characteristics (3)
	Exp(B) (SE)	Exp(B) (SE)	Exp(B) (SE)
Clear College Expectations	1.267 (.16)	1.247 (.161)	1.306 (.165)
College Aspirations and Motivations	1.107 (.167)	1.013 (.172)	.984 (.179)
Adult Care	1.577 (.149)**	1.512 (.155)**	1.447 (.162)*
Adminstrative Care	.798 (.174)	.860 (.179)	.801 (.186)
Peer Support	1.427 (.167)*	1.337 (.177)	1.322 (.186)
Relevant Curriculum	.614 (.182)**	.632 (.187)*	.683 (.194)*
Family Educatioanl Expectations	1.02 (.102)	1.029 (.108)	1.002 (.110)
Job		2.597 (.393)**	2.723 (.406)*
Academy		1.499 (.209)	1.547 (.216)*
AVID		2.275 (.693)	2.255 (.472)
AP & Honors		1.711 (.131)***	1.676 (.132)***
Mother Educational Attainment			1.064 (.155)
Father Educational Attainment			.956 (.172)
Free/Reduced Price Meals			1.398 (.239)
Female			1.702 (.222)*
Black			1.609 (.349)
Latinx			.635 (.254)
Nat.Am			1.169 (.720)
- 2 log likelihood	656.287	615.485	596.420
Chi-square	37.04	77.845	96.909
Intercept	.471 (.642)	.386 (.652)	.366 (.706)

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Appendix A
Table 1B
Factor Loadings for Principal Axis Factor Analysis with Oblique Rotation of Measured Constructs

Items	Administrator Care	Peer Support	Adult Care	Relevant Curriculum	College Aspirations and Motivations	Clear College Expectations
The administrators at my school value students.	**0.695**	0.021	-0.127	0.103	0.072	0.034
I feel supported by the administrators at my school.	**0.586**	0.061	-0.281	-0.043	0.119	0.031
The administrators at my school are regularly in classrooms.	**0.576**	0.08	0.013	0.05	-0.044	0.084
Students at my school are treated fairly when they break school rules.	**0.57**	-0.011	0.051	0.024	0.096	0.062
The administrators at my school are visible on campus.	**0.516**	0.046	-0.027	-0.014	0.027	0.179
Adults at my school treat all students with respect in the classroom.	**0.4**	0.023	0.012	-0.232	0.002	-0.184
The campus and the buildings are well maintained.	0.39	-0.005	-0.043	-0.182	-0.022	-0.037
At my school, I have friends who help me when I am having a hard time.	0.043	**0.832**	-0.076	0.006	0.009	0.006
At my school, I have friends who talk with me about my problems.	0.013	**0.831**	-0.115	0.037	-0.043	0.018
At my school, I have a friend around my age who really care about me.	-0.032	**0.756**	-0.139	0.062	-0.054	0.072
I push my friends to do well in school.	-0.04	**0.685**	-0.06	-0.063	0.101	-0.055
I help my friends with academic challenges at school.	-0.021	**0.681**	-0.051	-0.064	0.102	-0.069
Friends at my school expect me to attend college.	-0.057	**0.679**	-0.003	-0.001	0.198	0.091
At my school, my friends do what is right.	0.119	**0.676**	0.146	-0.09	-0.034	-0.052
Friends at my school expect me to graduate from high school.	-0.041	**0.554**	0.012	-0.002	0.1	0.107
My friends do well in school.	0.073	**0.469**	0.111	-0.063	0.039	0.011
There are peer tutors available for me should I need them.	0.142	0.344	-0.077	-0.256	0.059	-0.011
At my school, there is an adult who always wants me to do my best.	0.025	0.041	**-0.829**	0.017	-0.086	0.03
At my school, there is an adult who believes I will be successful.	0	0.013	**-0.828**	0.007	0.048	0.042
At my school, there is an adult who listens to me when I have something to say.	0.03	0.065	**-0.804**	-0.008	0.035	-0.021
At my school, there is an adult who listens to me when I have something to say.	0.064	0.087	**-0.762**	-0.013	0.014	-0.057
At my school, there is an adult who tells me when I do a good job.	0.01	0.073	**-0.725**	-0.067	0.024	-0.024
My teachers have high expectations of me.	-0.021	0.041	**-0.566**	-0.05	0.167	0.147
Teachers at my school expect that I will go to college.	-0.029	0.047	**-0.414**	-0.082	0.191	0.276
During class, my teachers consistently reinforce the importance of going to college.	-0.014	0.115	-0.316	-0.307	0.113	0.191
My teachers give me opportunities for improvement when I don't do well on assignments.	0.171	-0.035	-0.275	-0.229	0.032	-0.045

The curriculum at my school is relevant to my cultural experiences.	-0.035	0.024	-0.02	**-0.732**	0.085	0.081
The lessons in my classes include examples from my race or ethnic background.	-0.067	0.027	-0.04	**-0.636**	0.058	0.015
The curriculum at my school is engaging.	0.114	0.071	-0.005	**-0.522**	0.048	0.011
Teachers show how lessons are helpful in real life.	0.236	-0.09	-0.133	**-0.488**	0.055	-0.101
The curriculum at my school is challenging.	-0.01	0.104	0.048	**-0.458**	-0.098	0.116
My teachers make explicit connections between high school course content and college course content.	0.121	0.026	-0.137	**-0.44**	0.066	-0.015
The feedback I receive from my teachers is helpful to being successful in my classes.	0.236	-0.003	-0.224	-0.301	-0.037	-0.089
There are several opportunities to collaborate with peers on in-class assignments.	0.183	0.061	-0.241	-0.288	-0.044	-0.011
I believe that I have the potential to succeed in college.	0.028	0.042	-0.057	-0.023	**0.798**	-0.002
I can imagine myself as a successful college student.	0.003	0.074	0.032	-0.081	**0.763**	0.029
I expect to attend college.	0.067	0.123	0.033	0.042	**0.607**	0.034
I feel confident that I am capable of doing well in school.	0.086	0.04	-0.079	0.011	**0.573**	-0.064
I know that college can help me achieve my career goals.	0.013	0.081	0.007	-0.042	**0.501**	0.091
I am motivated to do well in school.	0.063	0.053	-0.084	-0.119	**0.471**	-0.023
Teachers at my school expect that I will graduate from high school.	0.019	-0.039	-0.365	0.025	0.03	0.197
I have advance class (honors/AP) available for me to take within my grade.	0.017	0.196	-0.079	0.09	0.092	0.023
Teachers give ma chance to take part in classroom activities.	0.19	0.032	-0.215	-0.244	-0.012	-0.149
Students at my school are expected to attend college.	0.23	-0.013	-0.003	-0.158	0.043	**0.515**
Students at my school are being prepared to attend college.	0.392	0.027	0	-0.147	0.064	**0.404**
Students at my school are expected to graduate from high school	0.184	0.048	-0.041	-0.073	-0.101	**0.404**
Number of Items	6	9	7	6	6	3
Eigenvalues	4.34	2.84	2.34	1.68	1.23	1.3
% of variance	7.88	5.17	4.25	3.05	2.24	2.05
Cronbach Alpha	0.798	0.926	0.936	0.811	0.934	0.773

Note: Factor loadings greater than .40 appear in bold.

Note: Pattern Matrix

Appendix B

Table 1C
Demographic Profile of Interview Participants

Discussion Type	Group	Participants	Gender		Race			
			Male	Female	Black	Latinx	API	White
Focus Group	12th Grade, Non-Honors	10	9	1	5	3	1	1
Focus Group	10th Grade, Non-Honors	7	4	3	3	1	3	-
Semi-Structured Interview	English Teacher	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Semi-Structured Interview	History Teacher	1	-	1	-	-	-	1

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