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ABSTRACT

Sociopolitical consciousness refers to an individual's ability to critically analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping society and one's status in it. A growing body of scholarship reports that high levels of sociopolitical consciousness are predictive in marginalized adolescents of a number of key outcomes including resilience and civic engagement. The present study explored the role that urban secondary schools can play in fostering adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness through a longitudinal, mixed methods investigation of more than 400 adolescents attending "progressive" and "no excuses" charter high schools. Analyses revealed that, on average, students attending progressive high schools demonstrated sizeable shifts in their sociopolitical consciousness of racial inequality, and students attending no excuses high schools demonstrated sizeable shifts in their sociopolitical consciousness of social class inequality. Qualitative interviews with participating students offered insight into the curriculum, programming, and practices that these youth perceived as contributing to these differences in their sociopolitical consciousness.

Race and social class inequality are longstanding and persistent problems in the United States (Bonilla-Silver, 2006; Pikkety & Saez, 2003). A growing body of research suggests that sociopolitical consciousness can serve as a protective factor for adolescents marginalized by these inequities in race and socioeconomic status. Sociopolitical consciousness is the ability to critically analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping one's life (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Scholars report that such consciousness can foster in marginalized adolescents a number of key outcomes including resilience (Ginwright, 2010; O'Leary & Romero, 2011), academic engagement (O'Connor, 1997; Ramos-Zayas, 2003), professional aspirations (Diemer & Hsieh, 2008), and civic and political engagement (Diemer & Li, 2011; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Other scholars have found that both out-of-school and school-based programming designed to foster youth sociopolitical consciousness leads to increases in participating students' academic engagement and achievement (Cammarota, 2007; Dee & Penner, 2016) and enrollment in higher education (Rogers & Terriquez, 2013). In explaining these relationships, scholars have suggested that sociopolitical consciousness of oppressive social forces can replace feelings of isolation and self-blame for one's challenges with a sense of engagement in a broader collective struggle for social justice (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2014; Ginwright, 2010; Perry, 2003).

Given the leading role of young people in the recent Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter movements to deepen public awareness of race and class inequality (Kirshner, 2015), the present study is not responding to a perceived deficit in the sociopolitical consciousness of contemporary adolescents. Rather, we seek to contribute to a longstanding and important body of scholarship that calls for schools and educators to do their part in preparing young people to recognize and resist race and social class inequality (e.g., Freire, 1973; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 1992; Perry, 2003). The present study seeks to contribute to this scholarship by investigating the sociopolitical consciousness of race and class inequality of students attending progressive and "no excuses" urban secondary schools. The following section describes the conceptual frameworks guiding this investigation.

Theoretical framework

Two key conceptual frameworks guide this investigation. First, in his foundational work on psychosocial development, Erikson (1965, 1968) characterized

adolescence as a peak period in the lifespan for identity exploration. Erikson (1965) defined identity as one's sense of self and theorized that individuals possess both a personal identity and an ego identity. The personal identity develops within an individual while the ego identity develops from the individual's relationships with other persons, institutions, and socio-historical context. According to Erikson (1968), ego identity development entails adolescents moving beyond a basic adherence to the beliefs and values of their nuclear family, and seeking out additional ways of understanding the world around them. In so doing, adolescents confront for the first time the question: "How do I fit into the world around me?" Engaging in critical analysis of the social forces shaping one's life, then, fits into Erikson's (1968) framework as a normative dimension of adolescent identity exploration.

Such a perspective finds further support in work by Coll et al. (1996) to integrate the experiences of youth from marginalized groups into classic developmental models. Specifically, Coll et al. argued that developmental models such as Erikson's (1968), which focused on privileged youth, failed to adequately account for the sociocultural contexts of youth from marginalized groups. According to these scholars, ego identity development for these youth includes recognizing the effects of sociopolitical forces such as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. In this way, Coll et al. position sociopolitical consciousness as a key element of positive development for adolescents from marginalized groups. At the same time, these scholars cite the ecological contexts in which such development is taking place (e.g., home, neighborhood, school) as capable of "promoting" or "inhibiting" such development (p. 1901).

The present study was also guided by Watts and Flanagan's (2007) model of youth sociopolitical development. Sociopolitical development (SPD) refers to an individual's acquisition of the knowledge, skills, emotional faculties, and commitment to recognize and resist oppressive social forces (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). In early work on oppression and sociopolitical development, Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil (1999) characterized sociopolitical consciousness as the "cognitive cornerstone" for developing the capacity to challenge oppressive forces through social action rather than internalizing and accepting them (p. 259). In so doing, these scholars explicitly invoked Brazilian philosopher-educator Paulo Freire's (1973) foundational work on critical consciousness that likewise positions a critical understanding of oppressive social forces as a building block towards engagement in collective social action. Also in keeping with Freire's

(1973) work, Watts et al. (1999) focused on the development of oppressed people's sociopolitical consciousness about their own oppression. As such, these scholars' work may not be applicable to young people from privileged groups.

In the youth sociopolitical development model guiding the present study, Watts and Flanagan (2007) posit a bi-directional relationship between sociopolitical consciousness and action such that increasing marginalized youths' sociopolitical consciousness strengthens their commitment to sociopolitical action, and vice-versa. Watts and Flanagan also characterize the relationship between sociopolitical consciousness and action as moderated by the availability of meaningful opportunities to engage in such reflection and action ("opportunity structures"). These scholars' inclusion of opportunity structures as a mediating factor within their model aligns with both Freire's (1973) claims about the role of pedagogy in fostering or discouraging critical consciousness as well as Coll's et al. (1996) work on promoting and inhibiting environments. The current study sought to investigate the extent to which two sets of urban secondary schools featuring distinct pedagogical models serve as opportunity structures (or promoting environments) for the development of students' sociopolitical consciousness.

Schools as opportunity structures

Scholars offer divergent perspectives regarding the potential for schools to serve as opportunity structures for fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness. On one hand, numerous critical pedagogues argue that the curriculum, programming, and practices in K–12 schools typically reify or reproduce oppressive social conditions rather than challenging them (e.g., Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1981; Valenzuela, 2010). Evidence for this perspective can be found in the numerous research studies that have found language, literacy, and cultural practices in schools to align with White, middle class norms (e.g., Paris, 2012) and school discipline systems to disproportionately punish students from historically oppressed racial groups (e.g., Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

Other scholars, however, describe schools and school-based program that fostered participating youths' sociopolitical consciousness. Perry (2003) describes the segregated African American schools in the Jim Crow-era South as fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness by introducing counter-narratives that challenged oppressive social forces as well as strategies for resisting these forces. Other scholars have written similarly about the work of Freedom Schools

(Cobb, 2008), Black Panther Community Schools (Perlstein, 2002), and African-centered independent schools (Lee, 2008). Still other scholars have reported that school-based programs such as ethnic studies courses (Cammarota, 2007), youth participatory action research projects (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), and critical civic inquiry groups (Kirshner, 2015) can foster students' sociopolitical consciousness as well. While each of these examples of schools and programming might be characterized as sitting outside the traditional public school system, recall that charter schools—the focus of the current study— are positioned outside this system as well. As a result, charter schools may have greater autonomy to "open up space[s] in public schools that are explicitly liberatory in intent" (Payne, 2008, p. 2).

The extant research literature on charter schools and sociopolitical consciousness has, consisted primarily of case studies describing the efforts of particular charter schools to foster their students' sociopolitical consciousness including both progressive (e.g., Giles, 2008) and no excuses charter schools (e.g., Kelly & Lautzenheiser, 2013). There are also a small number of analyses of national data-sets that suggest adolescents attending charter schools are more likely than their district school peers to engage in civic actions such as volunteering, taking part in a debate, and learning to make comments in a public meeting (Buckley & Schneider, 2009; Campbell, 2012). However, we are aware of no scholarship that compares the sociopolitical consciousness of students attending charter and public schools, or charter schools featuring different pedagogical models. Given that "no excuses" and "progressive" pedagogies represent the most popular schooling models among specialized charter schools (McShane & Hatfield, 2015), the present study considered the development of sociopolitical consciousness in adolescents attending six schools that fall into these categories.

Two key measures of sociopolitical consciousness

The measures used to consider sociopolitical consciousness are presented in the Methods; however, we briefly describe here the extant research literature related to two measures that proved meaningful in our analyses: (a) awareness of racism; and (b) structural thinking about class inequality.

Awareness of racism

Racial identity refers to the significance and meaning that individuals place on race in defining themselves (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2008). According to Altschul, Oyserman, and Bybee (2006), racial identity includes three key dimensions: connectedness, embedded achievement, and awareness of racism. While racism takes multiple forms, these scholars focus on interpersonal biases in defining awareness of racism as the recognition "that others are likely to define one's self negatively and see the self only as a member of a negatively valued group" (Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001, p. 380). In keeping with this definition, our study's survey tool included an "awareness of racism" measure focused on interpersonal bias; however, we also included a second measure focused on systemic racial inequality.

There is evidence that children as young as six years old demonstrate awareness of stereotypes or other negative views about their racial group, and that most children from racial minority groups in the United States demonstrate an awareness of racism by early adolescence (Bigler, Averhart, & Liben, 2003). Such awareness of racism may serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of racial discrimination by offering an external (rather than self-blaming) framework for understanding others' negative responses (Oyserman et al., 2001). Specifically, scholars have reported that awareness of racism is predictive in African American adolescents of academic achievement (Bowman & Howard, 1985), engagement (Smalls, 2009), school identification (Wang & Huguley, 2012), mental health (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006) and ability to cope with discriminatory experiences (Scott, 2004).

Scholars have also investigated interactions between awareness of racism and other elements of racial identity. Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2003) reported that investment in school increases over time for African American high school students high in all three elements of racial identity. These scholars also found that academic persistence for African American adolescents only remains stable in the face of stereotype threat for adolescents high in all three elements of racial identity (Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). Drawing on a related model of racial identity, Chavous et al. (2003) found that high awareness of racism had a protective effect upon African American students' academic achievement when paired with high racial centrality and racial pride, but led to alienation and poor academic outcomes when paired with weaker racial centrality and pride. Likewise, Wang and Huguley (2012) reported that preparation for racial bias had a strong positive effect upon African American youths' educational aspirations only when paired with strategies intended to foster racial/ethnic pride. The relationship between individuals'

awareness of racism, aspirations, and resilience is considered in greater detail in the Discussion section.

Understandings of social class inequality

Scholarship on Americans' beliefs about the causes of social class inequality typically focus on individualistic and structuralist perspectives (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). The individualistic perspective offers character traits such as laziness, perseverance, and intelligence to account for differences between affluent and poor citizens while the structuralist perspective relies on societal factors such as job shortages, low wages, discrimination, and unequal schooling opportunities (Law & Shek, 2014).

A longstanding body of research has found that Americans tend to cite individualistic factors as the primary causes of economic inequality (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Stuber, 2006). However, researchers have also identified significant nuances within Americans' belief systems about the causes of social class inequality. For example, women tend to be more empathetic than men to the plight of the poor and more likely to attribute inequality to structural causes (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Mestre, Samper, Frias, & Tur, 2009). African Americans and Hispanic-Americans are more likely than White Americans to recognize structural biases leading to economic inequality (Hunt, 2004). Working-class Americans are more likely to offer structural explanations for inequality, and affluent Americans are more likely to offer individualistic explanations for inequality (Stephenson, 2000).

Less research has focused on adolescents' understandings of class inequality; however, older adolescents (Bowen, 2002; Cram & Ng, 2007), female adolescents (Flanagan et al., 2014), and adolescents from high-SES families (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999) are all more likely than their peers to cite systemic factors as contributing to poverty and inequality. Flanagan et al. (2014) also report that adolescents who frequently discussed current events with their families—and adolescents with classmates who frequently discussed current events with their families—were also more likely to offer structural explanations for poverty. Cumulatively, this scholarship suggests that older adolescents are more cognitively prepared than younger adolescents to consider complex explanations for social class inequality, and that higher-SES adolescents have more opportunities at home and at school to consider systemic factors that contribute to social class inequality. That said, McLeod (1987) highlights additional complexities in adolescents' thinking about social class inequality in describing two sets of low-income adolescents from the same housing

development with divergent beliefs regarding America's opportunity structure.

Finally, other scholars have reported that people's beliefs about the causes of social class inequality correlate strongly with their support for local, state, and federal policies to address class inequality (Law & Shek, 2014). Individuals with more structural understandings of social class inequality are more supportive of increased welfare spending and other government interventions to reduce poverty (Law & Shek, 2014) and to engage in social justice and anti-poverty activism (Weiss-Gal, Benyamini, Ginzburg, Savaya, & Peled, 2009). The influence of individuals' beliefs about social class inequality upon their sociopolitical consciousness and action is considered in greater detail in the Discussion section.

Research questions

The present study investigated the sociopolitical consciousness of race and social class inequality of adolescents attending two distinctive schooling models. Our conceptual frameworks suggest that the development of such consciousness is mediated by the availability of meaningful opportunities to learn, reflect, and take action against race and class inequality; however, the extant research literature is mixed about the ability of schools to serve as such opportunity structures. A minimal amount of prior research has compared the sociopolitical consciousness of students attending high schools featuring different pedagogical models, and no prior research has specifically focused on students attending the two most popular models among specialized charter schools. The research questions guiding this study were the following:

1. What differences, if any, emerge in the sociopolitical consciousness of race and class inequality in adolescents attending progressive and no excuses urban charter high schools?
2. How do adolescents attending these progressive and no excuses urban charter high schools describe and understand the schooling practices that contributed to their sociopolitical consciousness?

Methods

Participants

The study's participants are 458 adolescents who entered the ninth grade in September of 2013 at six urban charter high schools located in five northeastern cities in the United States. The sole criteria for participation in the study was membership in the Class of

2017, and this sample represents the entire ninth grade student body at each of the schools (with the exception of a handful of students absent on the day we administered the Time 1 survey). All of these students had been admitted to their respective schools via randomized registration lotteries. Within this sample, 198 students identify as male (43%) and 260 as female (57%). One hundred and ninety-five students (43%) identify as Black or African American; 93 (20%) identify as Latino; 140 (31%) identify as multi-racial; 14 (3%) identify as Caribbean; 11 (3%) identify as Haitian; and five (1%) identify as White. Nearly 80% of participating students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, a proxy for low socioeconomic status. These demographic characteristics are reported by school in Table 1. It is notable that these participants' teenage years came directly after one protest movement (Occupy Wall Street) and coincided with another (Black Lives Matter) that sought to raise national consciousness of race and class inequality.

All six schools attended by participants cited fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness or civic engagement as part of their educational mission, but three of these schools were guided by progressive schooling practices, and the other three schools by a no excuses model. Of the 6,500 charter schools in the United States, approximately 9% identify as progressive and 9% identify as no excuses (McShane & Hatfield, 2015). In the following sections, we describe the key features of each of these schooling models as well as brief descriptions of each of the participating schools. Pseudonyms are used for all schools and participants referenced in this article. Additionally, the precise wording of each school's mission or vision statement has been altered to protect its identity.

Progressive schools

Progressive schooling refers to schooling models that emphasize a caring and collaborative community in which students and teachers work together as partners as well as a curricular focus upon social justice, inquiry-based learning, and deep understanding (Kohn, 2008). The present study includes three progressive urban charter high schools associated with three different progressive organizations.

Make the Road Academy (MtRA) is located in a mid-size northeastern city. Associated with the Paulo Freire Institute, the school was founded with the explicit goal of utilizing Freire's problem-posing pedagogy to foster students' sociopolitical consciousness. Every course unit at MtRA begins with a "Freire Culture Circle" in which students discuss a relevant social problem, experiences they have had with the problem, why the problem exists, and what can be done about the problem.

Community Academy is located in a large northeastern city and is one of approximately 200 expeditionary learning schools in the United States. The expeditionary learning model emphasizes close and collaborative teacher-student relationships and conceptualizes powerful learning as involving inquiry and service in the "real world" (Expeditionary Learning Core Practices: A Vision for Improving Schools, 2011). At Community Academy, students refer to faculty and administrators by their first names, and the curriculum exposes students to "differing concepts of justice," "domestic and international resistance movements," "critiques of traditional versions of history," and "scientific issues that intersect with social justice."

Table 1. Descriptions of participating schools ($n = 6$).

School	Pedagogy	Urban context	Students of color	F/R lunch	Per pupil expenses	Mission, philosophy or core values
Community academy	Progressive: expeditionary learning	Large northeastern city	99%	75%	16,902	Philosophy: Develop in students the knowledge, skills and commitment to envision a better world and work toward achieving it.
Make the road academy	Progressive: problem-posing	Midsize industrial city	100%	76%	15,690	Mission: To offer students an education that strengthens our community by equipping them to address educational and social inequities.
Espiritu academy	Progressive: coalition of essential schools	Midsize industrial city	91%	78%	12,817	Mission: Community involvement and improvement are central goals at Espiritu Academy … Students engage in deep learning and reflection about their own experiences and relationships to others in our community.
Leadership academy	No Excuses	Large northeastern city	100%	81%	15,957	Mission: To educate socially responsible students for a life of active and engaged citizenship.
One vision high school	No Excuses	Midsize industrial city	100%	77%	16,878	Core Value: We work to improve our community and the world.
Freedom preparatory academy	No Excuses	Midsize industrial city	99%	73%	15,963	Mission: Freedom Prep graduates will possess the skills and drive to serve as the next generation of leaders of our community.

Espiritu Academy is located in a midsize northeastern city and is one of approximately 600 schools in the United States that belong to the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). The Coalition of Essential Schools: The Coalition of Essential Schools (2015) advocate an inquiry-based approach involving the "student-as-worker" and "teacher-as-coach" and call for curriculum that focuses on "deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity." Espiritu students and faculty participate together two afternoons each week on "community improvement projects" that focus on social issues such as environmental justice and homelessness.

No excuses schools

No excuses schooling describes an approach to education that seeks to eliminate "achievement gaps" facing youth from oppressed racial and SES groups through extended time in school, a college preparatory mission, strict disciplinary environment, intensive focus on traditional mathematics and literacy skills, and explicit instruction in the social skills of school (S. Carter, 2000). No excuses advocates often situate this approach within a socio-political context by characterizing their efforts to eliminate achievement gaps as "the civil rights issue of our time" (Raser, 2014). Importantly, the three no excuses schools in the present study explicitly supplemented this intensive focus on academic achievement with goals for youth civic engagement.

Leadership Academy is located in a large northeastern city and is guided by "the best practices of high performing, 'no excuses' charter networks." Additionally, Leadership Academy cites an explicit commitment to supplementing the no excuses model with efforts to foster a commitment to social action in all graduates. Students engage in a "Sociology of Change" course during their junior year of high school and then carry out year-long "Be the Change" capstone projects during their senior year.

Freedom Preparatory Academy is located in a midsize northeastern city and cites a "school culture guided by a no excuses philosophy" among its core values. The Freedom Prep mission statement also calls for preparing students "to serve as the next generation of leaders of their communities." Underscoring this goal is the Freedom Prep school building itself, which is decorated with enormous twenty-foot tall murals and quotations from African American and Latino activists that highlight the importance of challenging historical and contemporary inequity in the United States.

One Vision High School is located in the same midsized northeastern city as MtRA and has been cited as an exemplar of "no excuses" schooling in publications such as the *New York Times, Atlantic Monthly* and *Huffington Post*. Additionally, One Vision (OV) cites

social justice—"striving to improve our community and world"—among its core values. Essential questions guiding One Vision's English/Language Arts courses include: "To what extent do internal or external forces shape your life?" and "In an unjust society, what should be the role of a just individual?"

Data collection

Three types of data were collected as part of this research study. First, entering ninth grade students at the six participating schools completed surveys in September of 2013 ($n = 458$) that included previously validated measures corresponding with adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness of race and social class inequality. Prior to their participation, a letter was sent home to students and parents describing the research study and offering parents and students the opportunity to opt out. No parents or students explicitly opted out, though a small handful of students (<10) left their surveys blank or partially blank. Participants then completed this same survey in May, 2014 at the conclusion of their ninth grade year ($n = 450$) and in May, 2015 at the conclusion of their tenth grade year ($n = 396$). Surveys were completed in students' advisory/homeroom classes, and were administered by students' advisory teachers after a brief introduction of the research study by a member of the research team. Research team members introduced themselves to students as outsiders to the school community interested in learning more about the school's impact on students' beliefs about social issues.

During the spring of 2014, we also conducted 30–60 minute qualitative interviews with five faculty members (30 total interviews) and 10–12 ninth grade students (70 total interviews) from each of the participating schools. Students were randomly selected by our research team from course rosters of ninth grade advisory periods. These interviews were conducted at the school sites by faculty and doctoral members of our research team in spaces ranging from small conference rooms to unused classrooms to a quiet corner of the cafeteria. We then interviewed 60 of these students again in the spring of 2015 as they came to the end of their sophomore year of high school (10 students were no longer attending their respective schools). The protocol for our student interviews was adapted from earlier studies on youth sociopolitical consciousness (e.g., D. Carter, 2008) and designed to learn more about participants' sociopolitical consciousness (e.g., "Describe something in your community or the world that strikes you as unfair or not right") and the schooling practices that contributed to such development (e.g., "How has your school influenced your thinking about race and opportunity?").

The teacher interviews focused on educators' perceptions of how curriculum and programing at their respective schools impacted students' sociopolitical consciousness (e.g., "Are there curricular opportunities for your students to look at particular social issues affecting their community?").[1]

Finally, during the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 school years, our research team conducted a total of 157 day-long observations across the six participating schools (approximately 25 observation days per school). Field notes collected during each of these observations focused on how faculty and students communicated formally and informally with each other about the social forces impacting students' lives as well as strategies for navigating or challenging these forces. Due to space considerations, analyses of both our faculty interviews and field notes are not included in the present study; however, both sets of data informed our analyses reported below. We further plan to continue collecting data from participating students in their final years of high school (and beyond) as well.

Measures

In recent years, a number of measures have been developed to consider sociopolitical consciousness and related constructs (e.g., Diemer et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2014). Because this study focused particularly on sociopolitical consciousness of race and class inequality, we sought out measures focused specifically on these forms of oppression. We were also guided by Watts and Hipolito-Delgado's (2015) characterization of sociopolitical consciousness as allowing marginalized adolescents to become aware of oppression and exclusion and to recognize the links between marginalization and oppressive social forces. As a result, our pre-post survey tool included one measure focused on awareness of racism and two measures focused on recognition of societal factors contributing to race and class inequality respectively. Students responded to all of the items comprising these measures along a 5-point Likert scale in which a "1" represented "No way!" or "Not true at all for me" and a "5" represented "Definitely!" or "Very true for me." As described in greater detail in the following section, we analyzed participating students' shifts on each of these individual measures rather than merging them together into a single composite measure of sociopolitical consciousness. For each measure, exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were first conducted in SAS 9.4, and following these results, item responses were averaged to create a single score for each measure.

The Awareness of Racism measure is a five item sub-measure from Oyserman et al. (1995) Racial-Ethnic Identity Scale that assesses an individual's recognition of the presence of racism in the various communities of which he or she is a part. Specifically, the measure first asks students' to identify their racial identity and then solicits their level of agreement with particular statements into which they then 'insert' that racial identity. For example, one item reads: "Some people will treat me differently because I am _____." EFA (promax rotation) with these items resulted in a single factor with an eigenvalue greater than one (eigenvalue = 1.95) resulting in 65% of the variance and showing acceptable internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$).

The Structural Thinking about Racial Inequality measure consisted of four items adapted from Gurin, Nagda, and Zuniga's (2011) scale of the same name and assesses the extent to which an individual recognizes the systemic factors underlying racial inequality. For example, one item on this measure to which students respond reads: "Racism in the educational system limits the success of Blacks, Latinos and other racial minorities." EFA (promax rotation) with these items resulted in a single factor with an eigenvalue greater than one (eigenvalue = 2.11) resulting in 53% of the variance and showing acceptable internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$).

Finally, the Structural Thinking about Class Inequality measure consisted of five items adapted from the Poverty in America Survey (NPR-Kaiser-Harvard, 2001) that assesses the extent to which an individual conceptualizes social class inequality as caused by individual or structural factors. Specifically, each item solicits students' perspective along a 5-point Likert scale as to whether economic inequality is caused by individual or structural factors. A score of "1" on this scale correlated with attributing inequality to more individualistic causes while a score of "5" on this scale correlated with attributing inequality to more systemic or structural causes. For example, one item that comprised this measure read: "A shortage of jobs is a major cause of poverty." EFA (promax rotation) with these items resulted in a single factor with an eigenvalue greater than one (eigenvalue = 2.09) resulting in 42% of the variance and showing acceptable internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$).

Data analysis

Quantitative surveys
For each outcome measure, we plotted students' scores over time in order to determine whether fitting a linear

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[1] Please e-mail the first author for a copy of this study's interview protocol.

model would be appropriate. Next, we conducted longitudinal hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses wherein measurement occasions were nested within individuals. HLM analyses were conducted for each measure in order to consider (a) differences in the mean level of sociopolitical consciousness between school types; and (b) differences in the mean growth of socio-political consciousness between school types. Students with missing data for a particular measure were excluded from the HLM analyses for that measure.

These data would have been best modeled using a three-level model, with measurement occasions nested within students, nested within schools. Such a model would account for dependencies within students and within schools and would appropriately incorporate school type as a level-3 predictor. However, HLM is not recommended with $J = 6$ schools. Given that school type was central to the research questions of the study, one possible solution was to incorporate this variable as a student-level predictor. However, doing so would ignore the clustering of students within schools and subsequently increase the probability of committing a Type I error. Although reducing the alpha level would have guarded against the increased Type I error rate, doing so would have also reduced power to detect meaningful effects. Given these conditions, we chose to include school type at level-2, but reduce the alpha level to .01 and focus more on describing the substantive interpretation of coefficients than their statistical significance.

As a robustness check for this decision, we did attempt to model school type as a level-3 variable despite the small number of level-3 units. For all three outcomes, the level-3 variance components (i.e., between school variance in intercepts and/or slopes) were so small that they led to estimation issues. In effect, there was not enough school-level variability in intercepts and/or slopes to allow for the inclusion of random intercepts and/or slopes at level-3. Thus, we removed these level-3 random effects, thereby reducing the models to the planned two-level models. We describe the model-building process for the two-level models examined in the ensuing paragraph.

The first step of our HLM entailed testing an unconditional, intercept-only model, which allowed us to calculate the intraclass correlation (ICC) and assess the proportion of total variance in scores due to between-individual variation. In the current analyses, the Level-1 outcome variables were the various measures of sociopolitical consciousness. The second step involved building the level-1 model by adding a time variable to the intercept-only model indicating the year in which the survey was administered (centered at the most recent measurement period). At this step, intercepts and slopes were examined to determine whether

there was individual variability in intercepts (i.e., levels of sociopolitical consciousness) and/or slopes (i.e., growth in sociopolitical consciousness).[2] Finally, the level-2 model was built by adding student characteristics as predictors of any existing intercept and slope variability such as the type of school (progressive, no excuses) attended by the participant. Also included in these models were a number of control variables such as participating students' gender, race/ethnicity, and home city. These variables were included in the model due to prior scholarship that has found significant differences in various forms of civic engagement by gender (e.g., Jenkins, 2005) and race (e.g., Cohen, 2010). We also chose to include 'home city' as a control variable in our model due to our own qualitative and ethnographic data suggesting the impact of local civic and political events upon participating students' sociopolitical consciousness.

All models were estimated in SAS 9.4 using the PROC MIXED procedure, and restricted maximum likelihood estimation was used. An adjusted alpha level of 0.01 was used to flag statistical significance, though again, less emphasis was placed on statistical significance. The final fitted model for analyzing these longitudinal data for differences in mean level of sociopolitical consciousness and mean growth of sociopolitical consciousness in students attending progressive and no excuses schools was the following:

$$
\begin{aligned}
Sociopolitical\ &Consciousness\ Component_{ij} \\
&= B_0 + (B_1 + \mu_{1i})Year_{ij} + B_2SchoolType_i \\
&\quad + B_3Gender_i + B_4Latino_i + B_5MultiRacial_i \\
&\quad + B_6GPA_i + B_7CityA_i + B_8CityB_i + B_9CityC_i \\
&\quad + B_{10}CityD_i + B_{11}Year_{ij} * SchoolType_i + \varepsilon_{ij} + \mu_{0i}
\end{aligned}
$$

- B_0 is the intercept parameter (representing the average sociopolitical consciousness score at the latest measurement period)
- B_1 represents the time-varying Level-1 predictor, year, centered at the most recent measurement period
- B_2 represents the time-invariant Level-2 predictor, school type, on the outcome
- B_3-B_{10} represent the effects of Level-2 demographic control predictors on the outcome
- B_{11} represents the interaction between the growth parameter at Level-1 and school type predictor at Level-2
- ε_{ij} represents the level-1 residual error

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[2]If in this second step, there was not significant individual variability in intercepts and/or slopes or if allowing intercepts and/or slopes to randomly vary led to convergence issues, they were constrained to be equal to zero; otherwise, they were treated as random effects in the model and level-2 predictors were incorporated in a final step.

- μ_{0i} represents the residual random effects for each participant around the intercept
- μ_{1i} represents the residual random effects for each participant around the Year slope.

Qualitative interviews

All interviews with faculty and students were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Our analysis of these interviews was a multi-step process consistent with qualitative research methods that seek to balance etic/outsider and emic/insider perspectives (Erickson & Murphy, 2008). Beginning with an etic structure, during the spring of 2014, our research team utilized our research questions, interview protocols, and guiding conceptual frameworks to construct categories that represented key dimensions of our inquiry (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998).

Next, we worked collaboratively to populate these superordinate categories with code names drawn from *both* etic concepts from the extant research literature on sociopolitical consciousness and also emic descriptions by study participants emerging from our ethnographic field notes and qualitative interviews that added depth or texture to one or more of these superordinate categories (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Our selection of etic codes drew closely from the extant scholarship on critical pedagogy (e.g., Cammarota, 2007; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008) and civic development (Campbell, 2012; Watts et al., 2003).

Each qualitative interview was then coded independently by two members of the research team using NVivo Research 10 software. After coding each interview independently, two members of the research team then compared their analyses of each interview transcript, recoded, and then compared again until all coding discrepancies were resolved. Our team then utilized NVivo's "cutting and sorting" capabilities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to compile summary tables for each individual code, organized by the superordinate categories to identify emergent patterns and themes in the coded data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process was carried out independently of the quantitative analyses. After concluding the quantitative analyses, however, we identified key themes in our qualitative data that offered insight into our quantitative findings. Both sets of results are described in the following section.

Results

Student surveys

The descriptive statistics for participating students' scores on our measures of sociopolitical consciousness are presented in Table 2. The HLM models fitted for these measures are presented in Table 3. As is evident in Table 3, there were sizeable differences (also significant at $p < .01$) between the adolescents attending progressive and no excuses schools on two of these measures: Awareness of Racism and Structural Thinking about Social Class Inequality.

Awareness of racism

Along a 5-point Likert scale, students attending progressive high schools began the 2013–2014 academic year with a mean score of 3.05 ($SD = 1.00$) on the Awareness of Racism measure and concluded the 2014–2015 academic year with a mean score of 3.61 ($SD = 1.01$). In contrast, their peers at the no excuses schools began the 2013–2014 academic year with a mean score of 3.55 ($SD = .94$) on this scale and concluded the 2014–2015 year with a mean score of 3.80 ($SD = .97$).

The higher baseline scores of students attending no excuses schools across all three measures could be the result of unidentified differences in families that enroll their children in charter lotteries for no excuses and progressive schools. Another explanation is that the no excuses students in our sample had attended "feeder" middle schools that were part of the same charter networks as their respective high schools and emphasized similar sociopolitical programming. In contrast, the progressive schools in the study were independent charters that drew their ninth graders from a more heterogeneous group of middle schools. For this reason, our analyses focused particularly on mean growth in students' sociopolitical consciousness over their first two years of high school.

As is evident in Table 2, the HLM analyses revealed what appears to be an important interaction between school type and time in adolescents' awareness of racism. This coefficient of -0.15 ($p = 0.009$), represents the difference in average rates of change between no excuses and progressive schools when controlling for the other variables in the model, and indicates that students attending progressive schools demonstrated more rapid growth in awareness of racism than students attending no excuses schools. Concretely, students attending progressive schools had a yearly rate of change of 0.29 points (i.e., $B_1 = 0.29$), resulting in an average increase of approximately 0.58 points over the course of two years. Students attending no excuses schools had a yearly rate of change of 0.14 points (i.e., $B_1 + B_{11} = 0.29 - 0.15 = 0.14$), resulting in an average increase of approximately 0.28 points over the course of two years. The inclusion of school type (progressive, no excuses) explained approximately 11% of the variation in students' rates of change on this measure.

Table 2. Summary statistics (mean, standard deviation) of participating adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness of race and class inequality by school (n = 458 students).

	N	Structural thinking about class inequality			Awareness of racism			Structural thinking about race inequality		
		T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3
Freedom prep	131	3.38 (.66)	3.36 (.77)	3.43 (.81)	3.37 (.80)	3.45 (.91)	3.59 (1.06)	3.41 (.66)	3.60 (.92)	3.47 (.99)
Espiritu academy	49	3.20 (.54)	3.30 (.57)	3.63 (.69)	2.53 (.85)	2.73 (.94)	3.11 (1.00)	2.94 (.56)	3.17 (.66)	3.44 (.78)
Community academy	41	2.94 (.71)	3.13 (.75)	3.64 (.83)	2.99 (.92)	3.21 (1.03)	3.70 (.94)	3.45 (.70)	3.42 (.79)	3.73 (.67)
Leadership academy	82	3.36 (.62)	3.25 (.72)	3.51 (.70)	3.46 (1.05)	3.23 (1.03)	3.70 (.93)	3.67 (.66)	3.64 (.75)	3.72 (.68)
One vision high school	95	3.57 (.66)	3.64 (.70)	3.76 (.70)	3.90 (.94)	3.94 (.98)	4.20 (.77)	3.73 (.69)	3.66 (.81)	3.66 (.73)
Make the road academy	60	3.27 (.50)	3.38 (.72)	3.40 (.67)	3.52 (.96)	3.74 (.91)	3.97 (.91)	3.46 (.62)	3.84 (.78)	3.88 (.79)
Progressive (cumulative)	150	3.16 (.59)	3.28 (.69)	3.47 (.73)	3.05 (1.00)	3.26 (1.04)	3.61 (1.01)	3.28 (.66)	3.50 (.80)	3.69 (.77)
No excuses (cumulative)	308	3.44 (.65)	3.42 (.75)	3.55 (.75)	3.55 (.94)	3.54 (1.00)	3.80 (.97)	3.58 (.71)	3.64 (.84)	3.61 (.83)
All	458	3.35 (.65)	3.37 (.73)	3.52 (.74)	3.39 (.99)	3.45 (1.03)	3.74 (.99)	3.48 (.71)	3.59 (.83)	3.63 (.81)

There were less sizeable (and nonsignificant) differences between the two sets of schools on the Structural Thinking about Racial Inequality measure. However, the descriptive statistics for this measure demonstrate a similar trend to that of the Awareness of Racism measure. Students attending progressive schools began their freshman year with a mean score of 3.28 (SD = 0.66) on this measure and concluded their sophomore year with a mean score of 3.69 (SD = 0.77). Their peers at the no excuses schools began ninth grade with a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.71) and concluded sophomore year with a mean score of 3.61 (SD = 0.79). For this measure as well, students attending progressive schools demonstrated increases, on average, in their recognition of the systemic or structural elements of racial inequality while that of their no excuses peers remained more static.

Understandings of social class inequality

Along a 5-point Likert scale, students attending no excuses high schools began the 2013–2014 academic year with a mean score of 3.44 (SD = .65) on the Structural Thinking about Class Inequality measure and concluded the 2014–2015 academic year with a mean score of 3.55 (SD = .75). Their peers at the progressive schools began the 2013–2014 academic year with a mean score of 3.16 (SD = .59) on this scale and

concluded the 2014–2015 year with a mean score of 3.47 (SD = .73).

As reported in Table 3, students attending no excuses schools concluded their sophomore year of high school with a greater recognition of the structural factors underlying social class inequality than their peers attending progressive schools when controlling for the other variables in the model. The coefficient associated with school type (B$_2$ = 0.27) indicated that average structural thinking about class inequality at time 3 was approximately 0.27 points higher for students attending no excuses schools than for students attending progressive schools. In other words, the students attending no excuses schools were more likely to attribute social class inequality to structural factors such as unemployment than individual factors such as motivation or ingenuity. The inclusion of school type explained 2.7% of the variation in students' understandings of the causes of class inequality at the end of their sophomore year.

Student interviews

Given the quantitative findings reported above, we turn now to our qualitative interviews with students attending these two sets of schools to investigate their understandings of the programming and practices by which their respective schools sought to impact their

Table 3. HLM of participating adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness of race and class inequality (n = 458).

	Awareness of racism				Structural thinking about racial inequality				Structural thinking about class inequality			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	3.62	0.15	23.74	<.0001	3.7700	0.12	32.13	<.00010	3.20	0.11	29.12	<.0001
Year	0.29	0.05	6.18	<.0001	0.0700	0.02	3.25	0.0010	0.09	0.02	4.94	<.0001
T1gender	−0.16	0.07	−2.45	0.015	−0.0600	0.05	−1.17	0.2440	−0.07	0.05	−1.33	0.185
Latino	−0.13	0.08	−1.59	0.113	0.0100	0.06	0.23	0.8190	−0.07	0.06	−1.14	0.253
Multi-racial	−0.02	0.07	−0.23	0.816	0.0400	0.06	0.74	0.4590	0.08	0.06	1.36	0.174
City1	0.50	0.10	4.85	<.0001	0.0063	0.08	0.08	0.9400	0.26	0.08	3.35	0.001
City2	0.05	0.09	0.54	0.593	−0.1600	0.07	−2.12	0.0340	0.03	0.07	0.43	0.665
City3	−0.44	0.17	−2.50	0.013	−0.4900	0.14	−3.46	0.00060	0.30	0.13	2.31	0.021
City4	0.06	0.18	0.36	0.718	−0.1700	0.14	−1.19	0.2360	0.04	0.13	0.32	0.748
NoExcuses	0.08	0.13	0.61	0.545	−0.0200	0.09	−0.19	0.8480	0.27	0.09	3.03	0.003
year*NoExcuses	−0.15	0.06	−2.65	0.009								
% Variance explained in intercepts		1.371				0.000				2.6684		
% Variance explained in slopes		10.656										

sociopolitical consciousness of race and social class inequality.

Fostering awareness of racism in progressive schools

Students attending all three progressive schools characterized investigations of racism and racial inequality as an explicit and central goal of their respective curriculum. Interviews with these students revealed three distinct themes in their understandings of precisely *how* their respective schools sought to deepen their awareness of racism and racial inequality. While one could point to examples of each of these themes in the qualitative data across all of the progressive schools, they only emerged as recurring patterns in one school apiece, which we describe in the following section.

(1) Introducing a theoretical framework for considering racial oppression. One theme that emerged in our interview data was the explicit teaching of a theoretical framework for analyzing oppressive forces such as racism. Specifically, five of the 12 interviewed students at Make the Road Academy described learning in their ninth grade Social Engagement class about the three types of oppression: interpersonal, institutional, and internalized. For example, MtRA student Shawn explained of his ninth grade Social Engagement class and teacher: "We talk about the three I's: institutionalized, interpersonalized, and internalized … He gave us the definitions about it, and I just started getting the hang of it, and it just got interesting to me." His classmate Antoinetta added: "I am eager to learn about them because it's important, and this is what people go through on a day-to-day basis."

After this "Three I's" framework was introduced, MtRA students explained that both their Social Engagement teacher and other academic teachers then drew upon this framework in subsequent discussions of racism and racial inequality. For example, in response to an interview question about whether MtRA was equipping her to achieve her goals, Callie explained of learning about internalized oppression in Social Engagement class:

> Before I came here I knew life wasn't always fair, I knew racism doesn't end, but like, I never knew that it's more hurtful than it was back in like the 60's than now. Because now they, they hide in in magazines, ads, and things like that. And now, they have internalized oppression, a lot of people have internalized oppression. And um, like, it's just changed my whole point of view.

Other MtRA students described their learning about institutionalized forms of racism—the ways in which racial injustice is deeply embedded in American systems and structures. For example, Jasmine explained of her Social Engagement teacher: "He taught us a lot about incarceration rates and how it correlates with people's skin color." Her classmate Wesley described ways in which racism is embedded in popular culture such as television programming: "Last class in Social Engagement, we was talking about how TV could be a little bit racist … Like you would just see an African American kid with big lips and doing something crazy, and you think it's all funny, but if you think deeper, it's disrespecting our race." Learning about the "Three I's" of oppression offered MtRA students a powerful lens for recognizing and analyzing instances of racism and racial inequality.

(2) Connecting different experiences of racial oppression. A second theme that emerged in our interview data was curriculum that allowed students to make explicit connections between the oppression faced by their own racial group and that of other groups in the United States and abroad. Specifically, eight of 12 students from Community Academy described the impact of learning in their ninth grade humanities class about racial oppression in South Africa, and then in tenth grade about the oppression of American Indians in the United States. For example, in response to an interview question about her interest in learning about social issues like racism and inequality, one Community Academy student, Missy, described learning about the resistance put forth by Steven Biko and the African National Congress against South Africa's apartheid government:

> I mean it showed me a few things. Like before I came here I didn't have humanities so coming here learning about apartheid I don't know what the world has been through, so it's like, yeah, I like it. And I like how it gives me ideas too … To see what other people been through. People from back then, history, they went through a lot and they still managed to keep up [their spirits]. I mean I haven't even been through that much like starvation and all. It's crazy.

Herein, Missy described learning about the racial oppression and resistance in apartheid South Africa as both eye-opening and also a source of motivation to "do what I have to do" to contend with the contemporary challenges facing an African American teenager in the United States. Her classmate, Sasha, also described learning about apartheid South Africa as having impacted her mindset and response to racism in the contemporary United States. According to Sasha:

> I think that learning all of that actually opened my eyes first because I never knew it was happening … I see kids now being racist towards another race, and it makes me want to learn more just so I could tell them it's wrong and be able to give them the facts and say it's wrong.

A third student, Sydney, described making connections between their own history of oppression as African Americans and that of American Indians:

> We also learned about the Indians too, about their reservations and how they [are] actually just like Blacks. They are doubted all the time, they've been called drunkies, and they always had babies at a young age … And I just think that, you know, Blacks, we're not alone cause like Indians been through a lot that I never knew about … And I was like wow, Blacks aren't the only ones who go through this. There's other races that go through this as well.

For all of these students, Community Academy's humanities curriculum highlighted the workings of racial oppression and its reach beyond any single racial group or ethnicity.

(3) Educating each other about racial oppression. Finally, a third theme that emerged in interviews with 10 of 12 students at Espiritu Academy was the impact of explicit opportunities to teach classmates about racism and racial inequality. Specifically, Espiritu students and teachers spent two afternoons each week working in small groups on "Community Improvement Projects" (CIPs) focused on topics such as poverty, homelessness, and racial inequality. These groups subsequently made presentations, led workshops, and facilitated discussions for the entire student body at Espiritu's weekly community meeting about their work and learning. One student, Jada, explained her CIP spent several weeks learning about and then educating the rest of the student body about the extrajudicial killings of Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin:

> For a few Wednesdays we were talking about Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin, and we were talking about them based on the information we had to try to make it as educational as possible, and we try to educate the people at this school … What I did was I made a poster for how unequal it was. I was like you should ask questions first—something along those lines cause I don't think it's cool. It's not good to shoot people.

Another Espiritu student, Adriana, explained that her Schools & Society CIP both engaged her in learning—and then teaching her classmates—"about privilege. Like what privileges do you have as [a result of] race, ethnicity, sexual orientation."

Espiritu students also described opportunities for learning and teaching about racial inequality in their history classes. In response to the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Espiritu student Isaiah explained that his history class—which had been studying civil rights—led an extended community meeting in which "we did like a PowerPoint. And we kind of like clarified everything to the rest of school." Isaiah's classmate, Destiny, added:

> We did this whole school presentation. We all gathered evidence and our opinions and it was even from things back back back in the day like the 1940s from Emmitt Till and what happened with him, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X. All of those cases came together [with current ones] like Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, all those. And we put it into one presentation to show that us young children are watching the news, are actually paying attention to what is going on. And we walked out, and we had posters saying "Hands Up" when they said Michael Brown had his hands up. Everyone was there, everyone was participating. The crowd was participating. Everyone just cared.

For these and many other students, the opportunity to engage in teaching, learning, and dialogue with *each other* about the killing of these Black adolescents felt like a meaningful one.

Fostering a structural understanding of class inequality in no excuses schools

Across the three no excuses schools, 22 of 34 students who participated in qualitative interviews raised concerns about social class inequality in relation to college admissions or matriculation. One explanation for this pattern is that, at all three schools, an intensive focus on college readiness offered an important entry point for teaching and learning about social class inequality in the United States. Specifically, students at the no excuses schools participated in "College Readiness" courses during each year of high school that met as frequently as their other academic courses, and focused on the knowledge and skills that students would need to navigate college admissions, matriculation, and graduation. As described in the following section, lessons in these courses presented a space for reflection and discussion about privilege and inequality in the American opportunity structure.

Class inequality and obstacles to college success. Eight students attending no excuses schools described issues of social class inequality emerging in College Readiness lessons focused on the obstacles to college admissions and matriculation for students from low-income families. For example, in response to an interview question about what she had learned about college admissions, Freedom Prep student Tiana described learning in her College Readiness class about legacy admissions—the advantage conferred in the admissions process to children of a college's alumni—and the subsequent debate among her classmates regarding the equity of such policies:

> I learned the big, big difference between public colleges and universities and then private colleges and

universities. And like financial aid and like the, legacy college thing. If your parents went there, you have better odds of getting into that college … The rest of the [class]room thought it was unfair because the same thing with like racism, previously. They feel like everyone should be equal no matter like your race, gender, [or] ethnicity. Like you should be, have equal odds of getting into the school.

This lesson in Tiana's College Readiness class focused on challenges confronting first generation college students during the admissions process.

Tiana's classmate Justin described another College Readiness lesson focused on preparing students for the unique challenges they might experience as first-generation college students and low-income college students upon matriculation:

> In College Readiness, see, we learned about how certain things like financial aid and ethnicity and being a first timer of your family to go to college. These things can really affect your experience there because it's caused lots of people leave college because like they can't find a way to fit in. So like I'm trying to find a place where I can actually like socialize with other people and get used to the life living there so I can be successful in my four years of college.

Justin's College Readiness teacher encouraged him and his classmates to look beyond generic statistics about a particular university and investigate the specific resources that university might offer to support first-generation and low-income college students. In both of these examples, students described a College Readiness lesson focused, on one hand, on supporting their success in college, but which simultaneously engaged students in reflection upon the institutional obstacles that students coming from low-income families might experience in applying and matriculating to college.

Social class inequality and navigating obstacles to college success. Thirteen students attending no excuses schools also described discussions of privilege and class inequality occurring in College Readiness lessons focused on navigating the aforementioned challenges. For example, One Vision student Diamond explained, "[In] College Readiness, they teach us about financial aid and things that we're gonna need to know when it's time for us to graduate and head off to college. Like financial aid and how some schools will try to rip you off." Diamond went on to describe a lesson about avoiding on-line and for-profit colleges that take advantage of low-income and first generation college students who enter into the college admissions process with less information or social capital than their more affluent peers. Another student, Aniyah, who attended Leadership

Academy, described a lesson focused on seeking out college scholarships and grants available to students from low-income families. According to Aniyah: "Some of us were concerned about the money [for college], but then our College Readiness teachers told us about how most of the students here find ways to get the money paid, even if you can't pay it all. There's ways to get the tuition paid by other people you might not even know."

Finally, Freedom Prep student Kiara described a similar lesson in her College Readiness class about identifying and applying to colleges that provide significant financial aid to low-income students. In response to an interview question about something in the world that strikes her as unjust, Kiara described a lesson in College Readiness that revealed to her and her classmates that "a best fit school, if they have low-income, [is] probably a public school that doesn't cost them much or a private school that meets one hundred percent of the financial need." Kiara's description revealed a frank discussion in her College Readiness course of the sub-set of colleges and universities that are feasible for students from low-income families. In each of these students' explanations, one can see how lessons explicitly focused on navigating the college admissions and matriculation process also offered opportunities for discussion and reflection upon privilege and social class inequality in the contemporary United States.

Discussion

The present study compared the sociopolitical consciousness of race and class inequality of marginalized adolescents attending progressive and no excuses secondary schools. Below, we consider differences that emerged in the sociopolitical consciousness of these adolescents; differences in the programming of the schools themselves; and the implications for scholars and practitioners.

Differences in sociopolitical consciousness

Students attending both progressive and no excuses schools demonstrated positive increases, on average, over their first two years of high school on all three measures of their consciousness of race and class inequality. Both sets of adolescents also demonstrated sizeable shifts in their sociopolitical consciousness on particular measures of sociopolitical consciousness. Specifically, the students attending progressive schools demonstrated meaningful growth in their awareness of racism while their peers at the no excuses schools

concluded their sophomore year with greater consciousness of the structural causes of social class inequality.

The conceptual frameworks guiding this investigation offer a useful lens for considering these findings. The positive growth demonstrated by both sets of adolescents on all three measures of sociopolitical consciousness aligns with Erikson (1968) and Coll et al.'s (1996) framing of sociopolitical consciousness as a normative dimension of adolescent development. According to Coll et al. (1996), recognizing the effects of sociopolitical forces such as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression is a key component of ego identity development for youth from marginalized groups. Put another way, for the youth of color from low-income families who comprise our sample, considering the question central to adolescent identity exploration—"How do I fit into the world around me?"—necessarily involves consideration of oppressive social forces such as racism and classism (Erikson, 1968).

Additionally, the sizeable differences reported by these two groups of young people align with both Coll et al. (1996) and Watts and Flanagan's (2007) characterization of youth sociopolitical consciousness as mediated by environment and opportunity structures. Specifically, Coll et al. describe youths' home, neighborhood, and school contexts as capable of "promoting" or "inhibiting" the development of their sociopolitical consciousness. Likewise, Watts and Flanagan describe such development as moderated by the availability of meaningful opportunities to engage in learning and reflection upon sociopolitical issues. Both of these scholars' frameworks, then, suggest that the programming and practices at students' respective schools may have contributed to their shifts in sociopolitical consciousness along different dimensions of inequality. As discussed in greater detail in the following sections, analyses of our qualitative data suggest that the progressive schools served as promoting environments for learning and reflection about racial inequality, while the no excuses schools served as promoting environments for learning and reflection about social class inequality.

Both of these forms of sociopolitical consciousness predict key outcomes for marginalized adolescents. Awareness of racial inequality can serve as an important protective factor against the negative effects of racial discrimination by offering an external framework for understanding others' negative responses (Oyserman et al., 2001) and facilitate coping with racial discrimination (Scott, 2004). In these ways, the heightened sociopolitical consciousness of racial inequality exhibited by students attending this study's progressive schools can strengthen these students' ability to resist the negative effects of racial discrimination.

Likewise, a structural understanding of social class inequality correlates with greater support for government policies intended to address such inequality (Law & Shek, 2014). Individuals with more structural understandings of social class inequality are also more likely to engage in social justice and anti-poverty activism (Weiss-Gal et al., 2009). In these ways, the heightened consciousness of social class inequality exhibited by students attending this study's no excuses schools is an important step in their development of a commitment to challenge such inequality through activism and advocacy.

Differences in sociopolitical programming

More than 130 student interviews (and 150 observations) offered insight into the programming that may have contributed to differences in adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness across the two schooling models. Students attending progressive schools described three different ways in which issues of racism and racial inequality were foregrounded in their respective schools' curriculum and programming. Specifically, Make the Road Academy featured a Social Engagement course that was designed to introduce students to a theoretical framework (the three I's) for analyzing racial oppression. Community Academy combined English and History into a single "Humanities" course that allowed for deep inquiry, writing, and reflection about racial oppression of Black South Africans and American Indians. Finally, Espiritu Academy's weekly community meeting served as an explicit space for students to teach each other about the learning they were doing in their Community Improvement Projects about racial inequality and other social issues. All three progressive schools had established unique spaces within their schedules for their students to engage in critical social analysis of racial oppression.

In contrast, the students attending no excuses schools described issues of social class inequality emerging in the background of their College Readiness lessons. In other words, the explicit learning goal of students' College Readiness classes was strengthening their capacity to apply, matriculate, and graduate from college. However, this learning goal also led to discussions and reflection about the impact of privilege and social class on access to America's opportunity structure that students described as impacting their sociopolitical consciousness of these issues.

Because our qualitative data did not include interviews with College Readiness teachers at the no excuses schools (in large part because we hadn't anticipated College Readiness being a driver of sociopolitical

consciousness), it is difficult to argue conclusively whether fostering students sociopolitical consciousness was an explicit learning goal of the schools' College Readiness curriculum, or simply an ancillary result of learning about a topic in which issues of social class inequality are prevalent. However, no excuses schools are notoriously fastidious about the productive use of class time, with nearly every teacher that we observed using timers to keep themselves and the class on track. That being the case, the willingness of College Readiness instructors to engage the class in dialogue about issues of social class inequality embedded within college admissions and matriculation points to, at minimum, an implicit valuing of fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness of social class inequality in the university setting.

In identifying these patterns across the two sets of schools, we do not claim that issues of racial inequality were never raised in the no excuses schools or that issues of class inequality were never raised in the progressive schools. In fact, our field notes from observations at one of the no excuses schools reveal multiple discussions in a 10th grade English class reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* about how America's dominant standard of beauty contributes to internalized racial oppression. Likewise, our field notes from observations at one of the progressive schools depicts a ninth grade science unit focused on food deserts in low-income communities. Such a caveat is a particularly important one given that, because our quantitative survey tool separated structural thinking about race and social class inequality into independent constructs, our use of qualitative interviews for insight into findings about these measures could have resulted in missed opportunities to consider ways in which students' consciousness of race and class inequality are intertwined. That said, our qualitative analyses did suggest that, for participating students, issues of racial inequality represented the most salient sociopolitical issue in the curriculum and programming at the progressive schools, and issues of social class inequality represented the most salient sociopolitical issue at the no excuses schools. The present study cannot make causal claims about the effects upon students of these distinct approaches to fostering sociopolitical consciousness. However, these findings do raise important questions about the programming and pedagogy that can contribute to youth sociopolitical consciousness.

Complicating pedagogy for sociopolitical consciousness

Recall that much of the contemporary scholarship on fostering youth sociopolitical consciousness (e.g.,

Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kirshner, 2015) draws heavily upon Freire's (1973) writings about the importance of problem-posing pedagogy in fostering critical consciousness and, conversely, his critique of "banking models" of education. The present investigation complicates such binary claims about the relationship between pedagogy and youth sociopolitical consciousness. Although it would be overly simplistic to describe progressive schools as offering a problem-posing education and no excuses schools as featuring a banking model of education, the progressive schools *do* favor an inquiry-based, relational approach that foregrounds issues of oppression and inequality in ways similar to the problem-posing model. Likewise, the no excuses schools rely upon direct instruction and hierarchical teacher-student relationships in ways similar to the banking model of education. One might reasonably argue, then, that an a priori assumption underlying much of the contemporary scholarship on sociopolitical consciousness is that such consciousness is far more likely to develop in a progressive schooling context than a no excuses context. And, in fact, a number of contemporary scholars have critiqued no excuses schools for school cultures antithetical to students' civic development (e.g., Golann, 2015; Levinson, 2012).

Our study's findings, however, paint a more a complicated picture of the relationship between pedagogy and sociopolitical consciousness. Our descriptive statistics revealed that young people in both schooling contexts demonstrated increases, on average, across all three measures of sociopolitical consciousness. The students attending no excuses schools concluded their sophomore year of high school with higher mean scores on two of the three measures of sociopolitical consciousness while the students in progressive schools demonstrated larger increases, on average, across all three measures. Most importantly, our HLM analyses revealed that these two sets of students demonstrated sizeable shifts in their understandings of *different* dimensions of inequality. In other words, schooling context predicted the particular social forces about which adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness developed rather than whether or not such consciousness developed at all. Though unquestionably preliminary, we believe these findings raise important questions about the schooling conditions that can promote youth sociopolitical consciousness. Perhaps different pedagogical models are differentially suited to fostering consciousness about *different* forms of oppression. Perhaps a school's overarching goals for students' civic development are more impactful than the pedagogies through which the school seeks to achieve these goals. Or, perhaps, as historian Daniel Perlstein (2002) observed: "No single

pedagogical approach inherently serves the cause of social justice" (p. 269).

To be fair, scholars who have criticized no excuses schooling (e.g., Golann, 2015, Levinson, 2012) might reasonably question whether the present study demonstrates the role of the no excuses *model* in fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness or, rather, the singular practice within such schools of engaging students in College Readiness coursework. Put another way, perhaps no excuses schools' emphasis on college access supports their students' development of sociopolitical consciousness of social class inequality, but other elements of the no excuses model—such as the strict disciplinary environment—has null effects or even hinders such growth. Such questions are unequivocally worthy of further investigation given the substantive differences between no excuses pedagogy and the bulk of the extant research literature on critical pedagogies and sociopolitical development (e.g., Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kirshner, 2015; Lee, 2008).

Recall also from the Results section that the particular school which a student attended predicted more of the variance in his or her sociopolitical consciousness than that school's pedagogical model. This finding, too, suggests that the conditions that lead a particular school community to serve as an effective "opportunity structure" for youth sociopolitical consciousness involves a more complicated mix of factors than simply pedagogical model (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Drawing again from our school observations and field notes, it would be valuable going forward to consider additional school factors that can influence adolescents' sociopolitical consciousness including school connectedness, teacher race and class demographics, family-school interactions, and school-community partnerships.

Fostering a commitment to sociopolitical action

In this study, we reported differences in sociopolitical consciousness that emerged over the first two years of high school in youth attending progressive and no excuses secondary schools, as well as the programming and practices that may have contributed to these differences. In so doing, we sought to offer useful insights to educators and other stakeholders interested in carrying out this work in their own school contexts. That said, another important caveat is that the present study investigated the development of participating students' sociopolitical consciousness rather than their skills and commitments to sociopolitical *action*. This distinction is an important one in that scholars from Freire (1973) to Watts and Hipolito-Delgado (2015) have characterized the latter as the ultimate goal of sociopolitical development.

Given that the young people in the present study have only concluded their sophomore year of high school, there is reason to be optimistic about their burgeoning sociopolitical consciousness strengthening their commitment to sociopolitical action over the latter half of their high school careers and beyond (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). However, there would also be great value in continuing to investigate the extent to which the students at both sets of school develop deep and lasting commitments to collective social action. This is particularly true given that both our field notes and faculty interviews suggest that all six schools in our study offered students more frequent opportunities for sociopolitical *action* in the latter years of high school. From a six-week internship at a local non-profit organization at one of the progressive schools to a "Be the Change" capstone project at one of the no excuses schools, the programming at all six schools seemed to shift toward a greater focus on sociopolitical action as students moved into the later stages of their high school careers. We anticipate investigating the impact of these opportunities for sociopolitical action in the years ahead.

Limitations

One key limitation to the present study is the lack of random assignment to the two school types. Although students were admitted to participating schools via randomized registration lotteries, it is possible that particular types of students were differentially likely to enter lotteries for enrollment in these different schooling models. A related limitation was the difficulty of fully controlling for exogenous factors influencing students' sociopolitical consciousness, and a third was the use of socio-political consciousness measures that had not been explicitly designed to measure change over time.

Additionally, because our research team was only able to spend approximately 25 days at each school over a two year period, there were undoubtedly important practices and curriculum related to both forms of inequality that we did not observe or ask our participants about. Relatedly, participating adolescents appropriately regarded our research team as outsiders to the school community, and may have been less forthcoming in qualitative interviews as a result. Finally, our qualitative interviews with students across all six schools were carried out by eight different members of our research team—four of whom identify as African American and four as White. The students of color in our sample may have responded differently to White interviewers and interviewers of color.

Conclusion

Data for the present study were collected between the fall of 2013 and spring of 2015. This time period falls just after the Occupy Wall Street movement that protested social class inequality in the United States and coincides directly with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement against institutionalized racial oppression. Young people have played a central role in both movements (Kirshner, 2015). With this study, then, we seek not to ameliorate some perceived deficit in the sociopolitical consciousness of American adolescents marginalized by inequities in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, but, rather, to envision a greater role for schools in this work. We believe the growth in sociopolitical consciousness demonstrated by students attending both progressive and no excuses schools offers educators across a diverse set of schooling models deeper insight into effective levers for supporting such development in their own student bodies.

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