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Critical Consciousness in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review, Critical Assessment, and
Recommendations for Future Research

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Abstract

Critical consciousness refers to an individual's awareness of oppressive systemic forces in society, a sense of efficacy to work against oppression, and engagement in individual or collective action against oppression. In the past few decades, interest in critical consciousness as a resource that may promote thriving in marginalized people has grown tremendously. This manuscript critically examines the results of a systematic review of 67 studies of critical consciousness in children and adolescents, published between 1998 and 2019. Across these studies, major themes included the role of socialization experiences, relationships, and context in the development of critical consciousness. In addition, critical consciousness was associated with a number of adaptive developmental outcomes, including career-related, civic, social-emotional, and academic, outcomes—especially for marginalized youth. However, our analysis highlights several critical gaps in the literature. We highlight the need for further delineation of the impacts of parent and peer socialization on critical consciousness in specific developmental periods and for studying critical consciousness at multiple levels of the ecological system. We further note the dearth of rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental studies in the area of interventions to promote critical consciousness. In addition, we note that developmental questions—questions about the nature and function of critical consciousness over time—are largely unanswered in the literature, including questions about how critical consciousness manifests and develops during childhood. Leveraging the findings of our systematic review, we outline key next steps for this rapidly growing area of research.

Keywords: critical consciousness, child, adolescent, empowerment, marginalization, sociopolitical development, youth

Public Significance Statement: Critical consciousness is a person's awareness of oppressive social systems, their sense that they and their communities can work to resist oppression, and their

engagement in anti-oppressive action. This systematic review indicates that critical consciousness may promote thriving among adolescents experiencing marginalization based on their race, social class, income, gender, or other aspects of their identities. Adults such as teachers, parents, and mentors can help to promote critical consciousness in children and youth.

Critical Consciousness in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review, Critical Assessment, and
Recommendations for Future Research

In recent decades, applied psychological research has shown increasing attention to the role of oppressive systems in contributing to physical and mental health problems as well as to other maladaptive outcomes. Oppressive systems intersect and include racial, class, gender, and sexuality oppressions (Combahee River Collective, 1977/2014) that keep individuals from certain groups marginalized while maintaining power in the hands of individuals from other groups. As described by Feagin (2006), systems of oppression are embedded in major U.S. institutions, including employment, housing, education, and political systems. For example, research suggestive of systemic racial oppression shows that Black and Latinx adults are more likely to experience unemployment compared to White adults (Perry & Pickett, 2016), that homebuyers of color receive less financial assistance and are steered toward less affluent neighborhoods than White homebuyers (Santiago-Rivera, Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, & Benson-Flórez, 2016), that Black and Latinx families experience significantly higher exposure to environmental hazards than White families (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2016), and that Black and Latinx children are significantly more likely than White children to attend high-poverty schools (Ushomirsky & Williams, 2015). Such oppression shapes mental and physical health outcomes and leads to academic and employment challenges for people of color (Brondolo, Ng, Pierre, & Lane, 2016; Kaholokula, 2016).

How individuals navigate and resist oppressive systems has also gained attention in recent years. Critical consciousness (Freire, 1973, 2000) refers to an individual's awareness of oppressive systemic forces as well as a sense of efficacy and engagement in action against oppression. Building on Freire's work, Watts, Diemer, and Voight (2011) conceptualized critical consciousness as consisting of three components: (1) critical reflection, or engagement in critical analysis of inequality; (2) political efficacy

(sometimes called critical motivation), or perceived capacity to affect change; and (3) critical action, or engagement in activities intended to affect change. Critical consciousness has been characterized as a developmental asset (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016) and a resource that may promote empowerment (Christens, Winn, & Duke, 2016), fostering thriving in people who are marginalized based on race, social class, gender, and other factors. Although critical consciousness theory is grounded in Freire's work with adults (1973, 2000), extant scholarship primarily examines critical consciousness in children and adolescents, the focus of the current paper.

Goals of the Current Manuscript

The goals of this study were to systematically review and critically examine the extant literature on critical consciousness in children and adolescents, clarifying the accumulated knowledge base and raising key questions regarding the development of critical consciousness and potential impacts of critical consciousness throughout childhood and adolescence. We begin by reporting findings from a systematic review of the literature on critical consciousness in children and youths up to age 18. In the subsequent section, we identify key themes from our integrative review and, drawing on these themes, highlight growth areas for the child and adolescent literatures on critical consciousness, emphasizing the importance of grounding future research in developmental, relational, contextual, and identity characteristics of children and adolescents. In addition, we build on Godfrey and Burson's (2018) argument that critical consciousness scholarship should focus on "marginalizing systems" (p. 6) rather than on marginalized individuals, and we articulate a conceptualization of critical consciousness development through consciousness-raising systems.

In addition to the conceptual, theoretical, and applied motivations for this review, we conducted this review due to the recent surge in research on critical consciousness among youth. Of the 67 studies identified in our systematic review, 40 (60%) were published in 2016 or later (see Figure 1). Thus, the

present moment is an important one for reviewing the growing literature on this topic to synthesize findings and guide future research efforts.

--- Insert Figure 1 about here ---

Our study builds on prior reviews of the critical consciousness literature (including Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015; Diemer et al., 2016; Godfrey & Burson, 2018; Jemal, 2017) in several important ways. First, as we have noted, the empirical literature on youth critical consciousness has demonstrated tremendous growth since 2016; thus, the majority of studies in our review have not been included in previous literature reviews on critical consciousness. Second, no published review has taken a systematic, comprehensive approach to reviewing the literature on child and adolescent critical consciousness. In contrast, Diemer et al. (2015, 2016), Godfrey and Burson (2018), and Jemal (2017) each reviewed the literature selectively and did not provide details regarding search terms, databases, and other methodological characteristics of reviews. While appropriate for their purposes (e.g., advancing the conceptualization and measurement of CC for Diemer et al. [2015], pushing the field toward a deeper and richer integration of intersectionality for Godfrey and Burson [2018]), selective reviews with less comprehensive and systematic search methods do not meet the goals of our review to characterize, integrate, and critique the entirety of the empirical literature on critical consciousness in children and adolescents.

In addition, it is important to note that the body of work described in this review builds on decades of theoretical and pedagogical work by education scholars and critical theorists. For example, Geneva Gay has worked extensively in the areas of multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of connecting students' classroom learning to their lived experiences, including students' experiences of marginalization (e.g., Gay, 1994, 2010). Similarly, Gloria Ladson-Billings has applied critical race theory to teacher education and culturally responsive

pedagogy (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2009) and has long advocated for teachers to support the development of youths' critical consciousness. Other key influences include critical race theorists, critical feminist theorists, critical theorists of gender and those who have utilized, described, and called for viewing the world through a critical and systemic lens. We also acknowledge the groundbreaking work of scholars who initiated the work of developing empirical scholarship on sociopolitical development and critical consciousness in children and adolescents, including Roderick Watts, whose work to theorize about and systematically operationalize adolescent sociopolitical development and critical consciousness is the foundation on which much of the literature reviewed in this manuscript rests (e.g., Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1998; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003).

Systematic Review of the Critical Consciousness Literature in Children and Adolescents

In this section, we present a systematic review of the literature pertaining to critical consciousness in children and adolescents. Our aim for this systematic review was to establish a comprehensive understanding of extant research addressing: (1) relations between critical consciousness and other aspects of child and adolescent development (e.g., social-emotional functioning); (2) interventions utilized to foster critical consciousness; and (3) the measurement of critical consciousness—in order to characterize, integrate, and critique the entirety of the empirical literature on critical consciousness through the adolescent period. We conclude by highlighting growth areas and future directions for the child and adolescent literatures on critical consciousness.

The following databases were used for this review: ERIC, SocINDEX with Full Text, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and Criminal Justice Abstracts. Search terms were as follows: critical consciousness, critical reflection, critical motivation, critical action, political efficacy, sociopolitical development, critical social analysis, and sociopolitical action. All terms were combined with each of the following age delimiters (note: * indicates truncation):

child*, youth*, adolescent. In PsycInfo only, we also utilized age delimiters built into the database: Age: childhood (birth-12 years) or adolescence (13-17 years). All searches were title or abstract searches, and for the terms critical reflection, critical motivation, critical action, and political efficacy the search was limited to texts with “critical consciousness” in the full text. Our original search was conducted in early November 2018 and was updated in June 2019 to include all articles published through May 2019. While we did not restrict our search with respect to earliest possible date of publication, the earliest-published empirical article that we identified was published in 1998.

We utilized three initial inclusion criteria for our systematic review: (1) the study must be published as a peer-reviewed journal article; (2) the study must include participants ages 0 to 18 or specify childhood-adolescence as the developmental period of interest (note: studies that included individuals beyond age 18 but that focused on a youth-relevant context such as high school or a youth organizing program were included); and, (3) the publication must describe original research centrally focused on critical consciousness or one of the following related constructs: sociopolitical development, critical reflection, critical social analysis, critical motivation, critical action, sociopolitical action. With respect to the third inclusion criterion, sociopolitical development studies that did not include some focus on the development of a critical perspective or critical action—for example, studies that focused on youth’s acritical interest in politics—were excluded. Necessarily, due to page constraints and in an effort to bound our work conceptually, our search approach and inclusion criteria resulted in the exclusion of some studies that we consider to be adjacent to critical consciousness, such as research on ethnic studies curricula, system justification, empowerment, and racial identity development. Ultimately, in accord with our inclusion criteria, studies from these areas that explicitly used critical consciousness or sociopolitical development as a theoretical or analytic frame were included (e.g., Christens, Byrd, Peterson, & Lardier, 2018), while those that did not were excluded (e.g., Dee & Penner, 2017).

Our combined searches yielded 222 unique results. We evaluated the titles and abstracts of all publications identified through this initial search, screening based on our inclusion criteria. Next, we read the full text of 83 publications that appeared eligible based on titles and abstracts. Seventeen studies were excluded through our review of full texts, based on one or more of the criteria listed above. In addition, we reviewed the full text of eight articles that were recommended by expert reviewers and were not captured through our initial search process. Seven of these articles were ineligible for the review based on our inclusion criteria, while one was found to be eligible (note: this article was likely missed in our database query as it was published in spring 2019 and may not yet have been indexed when we conducted our search). Thus, as a result of our full-text review, we identified 67 studies for inclusion (see Table 1 for an overview of included studies and supplementary Tables S.1, S.2, and S.3 for more detailed information about the studies included in each section of the review). In reporting on the studies, we include details on the number of participants in the study, age of participants, ethnic-racial demographics, and participant socioeconomic status when these details were provided by the original authors.

--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

How Does Critical Consciousness Relate to Other Aspects of Child and Adolescent Development?

There is a substantial body of literature examining the relations between critical consciousness and other aspects of child and adolescent development, with 34 out of 67 studies addressing this issue. This scholarship is methodologically diverse and includes, for example, quantitative longitudinal studies establishing relations between critical consciousness and later developmental outcomes (e.g., occupational attainment) as well as qualitative studies demonstrating the complex associations among critical consciousness and various aspects of children's experiences such as identity development and social media use. In assessing this complex literature, we identified studies that demonstrated links

between critical consciousness and the following: parent and peer socialization, school climate, youths' experiences with marginalization and oppression, beliefs and knowledge production, community engagement, career development, occupational expectancies, occupational attainment, expected voting, voting behavior, social-emotional functioning, and academic functioning. Each of these themes will be described below. In addition, we identified studies that examined links among the sub-domains of critical consciousness.

Some studies reviewed in this section—particularly those focused on school climate, youths' marginalization experiences, parent and peer socialization, and community engagement—emphasized the contribution of other aspects of child and adolescent development to the development of critical consciousness. While the majority of these studies were cross-sectional, they often specified a theoretical stance in which a characteristic or experience reported in the study was expected to influence the child's or youth's level of development of critical consciousness (that is, they implied causality in the theoretical framing of the study). In other areas, particularly in studies focused on career development, occupational expectancies, occupational attainment, expected voting, voting behavior, social-emotional functioning, and academic functioning, it was hypothesized (through quantitative frameworks) or interpreted (through qualitative frameworks) that other aspects of development would change contemporaneously along with critical consciousness or would manifest as an outcome, as a result of higher levels of or change in critical consciousness. With some exceptions, these studies rarely employed longitudinal designs or used causal models to examine the relations between critical consciousness and its correlates. Thus, the interpretation of relations found in these studies leans heavily on theory—particularly when critical consciousness is conceptualized as a predictor of another variable—and, consequently, the use of longitudinal designs and causal modeling represents an area where future scholarship is sorely needed. Notwithstanding, the most robust findings from this area of

our review relate to school climate serving as a contributor to critical consciousness and critical consciousness contributing to occupational and civic outcomes. Finally, we note that the varied operationalization of critical consciousness represented in these studies, along with the varied associations being explored through this body of work, poses a challenge for synthesis. Thus, our aim here is to provide an overview of the scope and focus of studies as they align with identified themes existing in extant scholarship, synthesizing where appropriate.

Parent and Peer Socialization

Five out of 67 studies in our review examined relations between parent and peer socialization and critical consciousness. Generally, studies examining these relations have hypothesized that critical consciousness would be greater for youths' whose parents and/or peers engaged in discussion of social issues and were supportive of critical perspectives on issues of injustice. Scholarship in this area has not consistently assessed relations using the same dimension(s) or operationalization of critical consciousness or used consistent measures for parent and peer socialization, resulting in mixed findings (see Table S.1). Additionally, studies in this area have been exclusively quantitative—three cross-sectional and two longitudinal—leaving opportunity for additional longitudinal, qualitative, and mixed methods inquiry.

Across studies in this area, one found a positive, significant association (Diemer & Li, 2011), whereas another found a non-significant association (Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan, & Hsieh, 2006) among parent and peer socialization and critical action. Three studies (Bañales et al., 2019; Diemer et al., 2006; Diemer & Li, 2011) found positive associations between parent and/or peer socialization and critical reflection, and, similarly, two studies found positive associations between parent socialization and critical motivation (Diemer, 2012; Diemer et al., 2009).

Diemer and Li (2011) found that parent and peer sociopolitical support had a small to medium

effect on social action and sociopolitical control (a construct similar to critical motivation), while a separate cross-sectional mixed-methods study (Diemer et al., 2006) demonstrated that perceived support for challenging racism, sexism, and social injustice was associated with critical reflection but not with critical action. Diemer et al. (2009) examined the cross-sectional relations between parent support for sociopolitical development and two aspects of youth sociopolitical development (motivation and self-definition) in low-SES 12th grade students of color. This study indicated a significant positive association between parental influence and both sociopolitical development outcomes. Diemer et al. (2009) also examined peer socialization influences, but these were not associated with either sociopolitical development outcome.

In their longitudinal, quantitative study, Bañales et al. (2019) found that parental racial socialization and parental structural attributions in 10th grade contributed to higher levels of adolescents' structural attributions for racism two years later but were unrelated to individual attributions for racism. Similarly, Diemer (2012) used quantitative methods to examine the relations between parent socialization and youth critical consciousness in 10th grade and 12th grade and found that parent political socialization was associated with 10th grade sociopolitical development and with 12th grade sociopolitical development. Sociopolitical development was operationalized to reflect youths' sense of the importance of civic action to correct social and economic inequality.

Taken together, the most consistent evidence was for an association between parent and peer socialization and critical reflection/critical motivation, with findings for critical action being mixed. That said, studies generally focused on discussion of social issues in their operationalization of parent and peer socialization. An important next step for this area will be to examine the effects of other aspects of socialization, such as action-focused socialization (e.g., parent involvement in critical action witnessed by the child, such as when a parent participates in a community organizing meeting while their child is

present), which may reasonably have a stronger effect on youth critical action.

School Climate

A number of studies, using a range of methodological approaches, have established positive links between school climate, broadly conceived, and the development of critical consciousness. In particular, nine of 67 studies in our review addressed these relations. Across studies, school climate has most often been operationalized with respect to whether teachers in the school promote open discussion of social and political issues. However, some studies have examined other aspects of school climate, including the relationships between students and teachers (Pérez-Gualdrón & Helms, 2017), principal support for sociopolitical development (Diemer, Hsieh, & Pan, 2009), and the overall educational model in place at the school (Seider et al., 2016; Seider, Tamerat, Clark, & Soutter, 2017).

The operationalization of critical consciousness has also varied substantially across studies, with critical reflection or a proxy indicator of critical reflection most commonly assessed. Some studies used general measures of personal efficacy (Pérez-Gualdrón & Helms, 2017) and social efficacy (Seider et al., 2017) as proxy measures for critical motivation. While the methodological and construct variability across studies poses a challenge for integration of the literature, the finding is robust that school climate—and particularly a climate of open discussion of challenging social issues—shapes youths’ thinking about social issues, including issues of justice and oppression, and thus reflects a generally positive association between school climates supportive of youths’ reflection on and engagement with social issues and critical consciousness development.

For example, an ethnographic study by Cervantes-Soon (2012) found that educators’ commitment to critical education and the maintenance of a school climate focused on a critical examination of inequalities and social justice issues promoted critical consciousness development (assessed through analysis of youths’ *testimonios*, narratives in which experiences of personal and

community oppression are integrated with experiences of knowledge, theory development, agency, and healing) among high school aged Mexican youth. Similarly, in a qualitative case study exploring a 17-year-old youth activist's identity development and social media use, Fullam (2017) highlighted the importance of critical dialogue with adult mentors, including mentors at school, in the development of the youth's critical consciousness, specifically critical reflection and critical action. In another qualitative study primarily involving low-SES high school aged adolescents of color, thematic analysis by Clark and Seider (2017) identified three practices within schools that fostered adolescents' critical curiosity, defined as curiosity about power and oppression and a willingness to question dominant narratives—a construct posited to be a precursor of critical consciousness. These practices were: (1) providing new information: teaching material that students had not previously been exposed to, particularly related to social justice (including history, politics/government, and similar topics); (2) providing relevant, “real life” examples—students indicated that social justice topics that were personally or culturally relevant or that had contemporary relevance engaged their curiosity; and (3) providing new perspectives—some students noted that their interest was piqued by hearing the perspectives of their peers. The authors contend that the varied practices observed, which were consistent with Freirean dialogic pedagogical approaches, were supportive of critical consciousness development in marginalized youth.

In a quantitative, cross-sectional study examining the relation between critical consciousness development and sociopolitical participation in marginalized youth aged 15-25, Diemer and Li (2011) found that teacher sociopolitical support had a small association with youth sociopolitical control. Consistent with these findings, Godfrey and Grayman (2014) found that, among students of color, an open classroom climate predicted critical school efficacy and critical political efficacy. Open classroom climate was also associated with greater engagement in community service activities, which the authors

link to critical action. Another quantitative study, by Pérez-Gualdrón and Helms (2017), found that social justice orientation was associated with school relational climate in a sample of Latinx youth who were followed longitudinally from 8th to 12th grade. Social justice orientation was defined as “the motivation to end social inequities/unfairness and help others in one’s community” and “involves student awareness of societal inequalities and the desire to change them” (p. 14), and thus combines elements of critical reflection and critical motivation.

Similarly, Seider et al. (2016) found that adolescents attending “progressive” schools showed increased critical reflection skills over the course of a single school year as compared to students attending “no excuses” schools. Specifically, they were significantly more likely to make structural attributions for racial inequality. Qualitative analysis of interview data with students and faculty suggested that some progressive schools utilized historical and literary examples of structural racism to help students understand present-day structural racism; others utilized analysis of contemporary evidence of racial inequality to deepen students’ understanding of structural racism. However, in another study, Seider et al. (2017) found that students in no-excuses and schools using expeditionary learning pedagogies experienced greater growth in their commitment to activism than did students in progressive schools.

In contrast to other studies reviewed in this section, the quantitative, cross-sectional study by Diemer et al. (2009) found no relation between one aspect of school climate—operationalized as principal support for sociopolitical development—and sociopolitical developmental outcomes. This study examined the impact of principal support on two aspects of youth sociopolitical development, motivation and self-definition, in a sub-sample of low-SES adolescents of color who participated in the 12th grade assessment as part of the National Educational Longitudinal Survey of 1988 (NELS: 88).

Generally, research in this area showed robust support for the link between school climate and

both critical reflection and critical motivation. As in other areas of the literature, the operationalization of critical reflection and critical motivation varied across studies, and in some cases the two components were operationalized as a single construct. Further research delineating the aspects of school climate that promote each element of critical consciousness—including critical action, which received little attention in the extant literature—is an important next step.

Experiences of Marginalization, Oppression, and Violence

Four of the studies identified in our review examined the relations between critical consciousness development and youths' experiences of marginalization, oppression, and violence. All four studies were cross-sectional and two were qualitative; thus, the studies were not designed to assess for causality or to measure exposure to marginalization, oppression, violence, and development of critical consciousness in a time-sequential measure. Nevertheless, these studies theoretically posit that critical consciousness can be heightened by and/or is higher among those with personal exposure to oppressive systems. There is preliminary evidence to support this supposition.

In the ethnographic study by Cervantes-Soon (2012), high school aged adolescent women living in Juárez, México who experienced significant challenges with poverty, marginalization, oppression, and violence demonstrated identities in which critical consciousness was central. That is, these youth built narratives and practices reflective of awareness of oppressive systems, efficacy to resist oppressive systems, and engagement in action against oppressive systems—all driven by their lived experiences of oppression. Similarly, in a qualitative case study, Kelly (2018) found that 16- to 17-year-old Black girls attending a predominantly White middle-class suburban school developed critical consciousness in the form of: critical social analysis, or critical reflection; collective identification; political self-efficacy, or critical motivation, and sociopolitical/critical action (see Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015 for discussion of critical social analysis, political self-efficacy, and sociopolitical action). According to Kelly's (2018)

analysis, the development of critical consciousness in these youth came about through their engagement with oppressive and marginalizing structures within their school context, including racial microaggressions, harsh disciplinary practices, and other forms of marginalization.

Experiences with marginalization in the form of prejudice, discrimination, and violence have also been linked to critical consciousness development. In a nationally representative cross-sectional quantitative study using data from the Civic and Political Health Survey of 2006 (CPHS), Diemer and Li (2011) found that sociopolitical control was higher among youth of color, who experience racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination, than among White youth. Related to these findings, Roy, Raver, Masucci, and DeJoseph (2019) found in their cross-sectional quantitative study that neighborhood income inequality and youth exposure to violence were both positively associated with critical action in a sample of predominantly low-income, Latinx and African American urban youth.

Taken together, these studies suggest that experiences of marginalization and oppression can lead to the development of critical consciousness. However, this literature is small and contains no longitudinal work. Future studies should examine forms of marginalization and oppression that lead to critical consciousness, the process by which this occurs, and the steps that others (e.g., parents, teachers, peers) can take to support youths' development of critical consciousness against the backdrop of exposure to marginalization, oppression, and violence.

Beliefs, Knowledge, and Knowledge Production

Our review identified five studies that examined relations among critical consciousness and other types of beliefs or knowledge. Three of these studies were cross-sectional quantitative, one was a longitudinal quantitative study, and one used youth participatory action research (yPAR). Taken as a group, these studies provide compelling evidence that the degree to which critical consciousness is associated with other aspects of a youth's beliefs will vary depending on identity, context, and

experiences. Further, these studies highlight the need for further careful longitudinal research designed to examine the pathways proposed by the researchers whose work is reviewed in this section.

Diemer and Rapa (2016) used cross-sectional, quantitative data from CIVED to assess relations between poor and working class African American and Latinx youths' critical consciousness (including reflection, efficacy, and action) and their civic and political knowledge. Diemer and Li (2011) similarly examined the associations between critical consciousness and civic and political knowledge. While both studies were cross-sectional, both were premised on the assumption that civic and political knowledge would lead to increased critical consciousness. In the study by Diemer and Rapa (2016), critical reflection and critical action were measured using items identical to some on the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017), a 22-item measure designed specifically to assess critical consciousness in terms of its critical reflection and critical action components. Political efficacy was separated into internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. Diemer and Rapa (2016) found that civic and political knowledge was associated with increased critical reflection and internal political efficacy among Latinx 9th graders, while civic and political knowledge was associated with a decreased likelihood of critical action for African American 9th graders. Similarly, Diemer and Li (2011) found that civic and political knowledge had a small to medium association with social action (or critical action) and sociopolitical control. In another cross-sectional study with urban high school students, Diemer et al. (2019) examined political affiliation in relation to critical consciousness and found that Liberal students reported significantly higher levels of perceived inequality (a sub-dimension of critical reflection) and students who identified as Democrats reported marginally significantly higher levels of perceived inequality than students who identified as Conservative or as Republicans, respectively, though the effect sizes were small.

In their qualitative case study of a youth participatory action research (yPAR) designed to

support critical consciousness development, Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty, and Aoun (2010) found that engagement in a yPAR project using the ReACT Method—which includes problem identification and feedback, data analysis, and community dialogue—promoted critical consciousness in racially diverse youth aged 12-13 years-old. The study primarily focused on critical reflection, which was assessed via observation of youth dialogue as well as via focus groups. The authors identified involvement in the data analysis process as a particularly important contributor to the development of critical reflection.

A longitudinal study by Clark and Seider (2019) examined the relations between curiosity and sociopolitical development in a sample of majority low-SES youth of color, who were surveyed at the beginning and end of 9th grade and the end of 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Outcome measures included Social Analysis and Societal Involvement. The Values in Action Inventory for Youth—Curiosity sub-measure (Park & Peterson, 2006) was used as a measure of curiosity. In multivariate models, Curiosity was positively correlated with both Social Analysis and Societal Involvement at baseline and over time. The studies reviewed in this section suggest that intellectual engagement—curiosity about social issues as well as participation in knowledge production—is associated with higher levels of critical consciousness, particularly critical reflection. In contrast, attained knowledge of civic and political issues appears to be associated with higher levels of some aspects of critical consciousness for some but associated with lower levels of critical consciousness for others. A key direction for future study will be to examine for whom and under what conditions beliefs such as those examined in this section may be related to one another and to the various components of critical consciousness—for instance, the conditions under which liberal political views lead to critical action.

Community Engagement

Another theme in the studies identified in our review was that community engagement—defined as participation in community-based activities—relates to the development of critical consciousness. We

identified six out of the 67 studies in our review that probed this theme. Three studies were qualitative; one was a quantitative, cross-sectional study; and two were quantitative, longitudinal studies. Two studies found that engagement in the community was positively associated with critical reflection (Fegley, Angelique, & Cunningham, 2006; Fullam, 2017), one found that engagement in organized spiritual activities predicted lower social dominance one year later (Oosterhoff, Ferris, Palmer, & Metzger, 2017), and two found positive associations between community engagement and critical action (Fullam, 2017; Roy et al., 2019). Two studies, in contrast to the others reviewed, found that critical consciousness fostered increased community engagement (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Pérez-Gualdrón & Helms, 2017) rather than vice versa.

In general, these studies made a subtle distinction between community engagement and critical action; community engagement was defined as service, volunteering, attending meetings, or participating in after-school programs without explicit knowledge about whether youth were intentional about promoting more just social systems. In contrast, critical action was defined as action promoting more equitable conditions or social justice. The studies that addressed community engagement provided consistent evidence that engagement in the community can promote critical reflection and critical action. However, these studies leave open many questions regarding the characteristics of community-engaged experiences (e.g., access to mentorship, access to relationships with members of different social groups, engagement in service to others) that promote critical consciousness, as well as questions regarding the potential reciprocal relations between various dimensions of critical consciousness and community engagement.

Fegley et al. (2006), through analysis of primarily qualitative focus group data, found that youth aged 6-13 who participated in a community-based program had an enhanced ability to think critically about social issues; this enhanced ability was found both for youth who participated in a community

service project and for youth who learned to play chess at a community center, though the authors note that there was a greater increase in critical reflection for the group that performed community service. Fullam (2017) similarly found that adult mentorship by community activists at community meetings facilitated the development of critical analysis (i.e., critical reflection) and critical action for the youth activist in Fullam's case study. Roy and colleagues (2019) found that engagement in after-school programming and volunteering in community organizations were associated with critical action in their cross-sectional sample of 13- to 17-year-old youth. Oosterhoff et al. (2017), in their longitudinal study, found that greater church involvement at Time 1 was associated with lower social dominance values at Time 2, while greater social dominance values at Time 1 predicted lower involvement in volunteering at Time 2.

In one study, critical action—in the form of youth organizing to address community violence—promoted community engagement. Christens and Dolan (2011) used qualitative methods to analyze the impacts of youth organizing on community and youth outcomes, interviewing 20 young leaders (ages 16-20, 90% Latinx). The findings of the study showed that as youth engaged in action to understand and address violence in their communities, they experienced a shift in the response of adults in positions of power and authority to their work, with these adults becoming more likely to respond positively to youth organizers and to proactively seek their engagement. They also experienced a deep and positive connection to adults who engaged in organizing with them and an increasing capacity for building relationships across racial, ethnic, and other identities. In addition, youth organizers detailed how engagement in youth organizing led to the formation of deep, supportive relationships with other youth.

Finally, in a sub-sample of Latinx youth from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Pérez-Gualdrón and Helms (2017) longitudinally examined associations between youths' social justice orientation (a measure that combines elements of critical reflection and critical motivation) and

community engagement (involvement in community service) two years later. Specifically, mediated by youths' personal agency beliefs, social justice orientation in 10th grade was associated with greater community engagement when students were in 12th grade.

Thus, much as the possession of relevant knowledge is associated with critical consciousness, engagement with one's community is as well. Somewhat surprisingly, the studies reviewed in this section suggest that engagement in and with the community is associated with critical consciousness even when that engagement may not necessarily involve a critical perspective or social justice orientation. Future research is needed to better understand how and under what conditions community engagement without a critical perspective may lead to enhanced critical consciousness.

Career Development, Occupational Expectancies, and Occupational Attainment

Seven studies addressed career developmental and occupational outcomes associated with critical consciousness. Among these studies, three were cross-sectional quantitative studies, three were longitudinal quantitative studies, and one was a qualitative phenomenological study. All studies identified positive relations between critical action and/or action beliefs and career-related outcomes, including career expectancies, career exploration, career decision-making, sense of connection to one's vocational future, and the degree to which work is viewed as important to a person (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer, 2009; Diemer et al., 2010; Nicholas, Eastman-Mueller, & Barbich, 2019; Olle & Fouad, 2015; Rapa, Diemer, & Bañales, 2018). In addition, two studies linked critical reflection to career-related outcomes (clarity of vocational identity and career decision-making) (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Nicholas et al., 2019) and one study linked political efficacy to a career-related outcome (career decision-making) (Nicholas et al., 2019). Looking across these studies, the strongest evidence is for the positive link between engagement in critical action or belief in the importance of critical action and career development; however, future research will be needed to rule out potential third variables

explaining the link between critical action and career development and to confirm the causal pathways assumed in these studies, using longitudinal models.

In a cross-sectional sample of urban adolescents identifying as predominantly Black or Latinx and predominantly working class or poor, Diemer and Blustein (2006) found that sociopolitical control was strongly associated with adolescents' sense of connection to their vocational futures and work role salience, or the degree to which work is important to an individual. The authors further found that sociopolitical analysis was moderately associated with clarity of vocational identity including work-related goals, interests, and talents. In a more recent qualitative phenomenological study primarily involving White youth, researchers found that sociopolitical development—including political efficacy, critical awareness, and sociopolitical participation—was linked to career decision-making (Nicholas et al., 2019). And in a longitudinal study of poor and working class African-American youth assessing links between critical action and career expectancies in adolescence and occupational attainment in adulthood, Rapa et al. (2018) found that career expectancies one year after high school are predicted by career expectancies in high school and by critical action one year after high school.

In their quantitative study exploring career decision making among urban high school students, Olle and Fouad (2015) found that critical consciousness, measured using a four-item scale that emphasized youth's beliefs in the importance of various forms of social action, significantly predicted the goals/intentions of 11th and 12th grade students to participate in career exploration. Students in the study were predominantly Latinx and the majority reported qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch. Critical consciousness also moderated the relation between outcome expectations—the extent to which students expect a predictable outcome (such as higher grades) to follow from an action (such as working hard)—and career goals/intentions. Higher outcome expectations were associated with stronger goals/intentions, but the association between outcome expectations and goals/intentions was weaker

when critical consciousness was higher. This finding is consistent with the possibility that, in some cases, critical awareness may actually diminish critical motivation (which was not measured in the study), leading instead to hopelessness or disengagement (Olle & Fouad, 2015).

Diemer et al. (2010) examined relations among sociopolitical development, vocational expectancies, and work salience in a sample of low-SES African-American, Latinx, and Asian-American youth, surveyed in 10th and 12th grades as part of the National Educational Longitudinal Survey of 2002. Sociopolitical development in 10th and 12th grade was operationalized as a latent construct, with items serving as a proxy for critical motivation. The study found that sociopolitical development in 10th grade was positively associated with vocational expectations and work salience in 10th grade for all three racial groups. In 12th grade, sociopolitical development was positively associated with work salience for all three groups but was not associated with vocational expectations.

In a similar sample of low-SES youth of color who participated in the National Educational Longitudinal Survey: 1988 (NELS: 88), Diemer (2009) examined the associations between 10th and 12th grade sociopolitical development, 10th and 12th grade occupational expectancies, and post-graduate occupational outcomes. In this study, sociopolitical development in 10th grade was a latent variable comprised of indicators of critical reflection as well as indicators of critical motivation; sociopolitical development in 12th grade was a latent variable comprised only of indicators of critical motivation. In contrast to the author's hypotheses, 10th grade sociopolitical development was not associated with 10th grade occupational expectancies. However, 12th grade sociopolitical development was positively associated with 12th grade occupational expectancies and had an indirect effect (via occupational expectancies) on post-graduate occupational outcomes (assessed eight years after graduation).

Diemer and Hsieh (2008) also used NELS: 88 data to examine sociopolitical development—assessed using four items indicative of engagement in community or social action, discussion of social

and political issues, awareness of and motivation to reduce inequality, and motivation to help others in one's community—and vocational expectancies in 12th grade students of color. The results of a multiple regression analysis indicated that vocational expectancies were significantly associated with two indicators of sociopolitical development: perceived importance of helping one's community and discussing social and political issues with one's parents.

While in some respects the literature on critical consciousness and career development is more robust than other areas examined in this review, a weakness of this area of the literature is that most studies were published prior to the development and popularization of measures specifically designed to assess critical consciousness. The majority of studies reviewed in this section used secondary data to analyze critical consciousness; as a consequence, the operationalization of critical consciousness and its sub-domains in these studies is somewhat misaligned with contemporary measurement of critical consciousness in the psychology literature.

Expected Voting and Voting Behavior

Three studies—all quantitative—examined links between critical consciousness and voting, defined as expected or actual voting behavior. All three studies found generally positive relations between critical motivation (operationalized as sociopolitical control, sociopolitical development: commitment, and/or internal political efficacy) and expected or actual voting behavior (Diemer, 2012; Diemer & Li, 2011; Diemer & Rapa, 2016). In contrast, while one study positively linked critical action to voting behavior (Diemer & Li, 2011), another study found a negative link between these constructs (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Only one study looked at the links between critical reflection and expected voting behavior, revealing mixed findings for Latinx youth and no association for African-American youth (Diemer & Rapa, 2016).

Diemer and Li (2011) found in their cross-sectional study that social action and sociopolitical

control both had a small association with voting behavior, as measured by active voter registration, prior voting in the presidential election, and prior voting or intentions to vote in other local or national elections. Diemer's (2012) longitudinal study found that sociopolitical development: commitment in 12th grade predicted actual political participation for Asian-American and Latinx youth but not African-American youth two years out of high school. Diemer and Rapa (2016) found in their cross-sectional study that internal political efficacy predicted expected voting behavior among poor and working class Latinx and African-American 9th graders. In contrast, critical action, specifically protest behaviors, was negatively associated with expected voting for poor and working class Latinx 9th graders and was not significantly associated with expected voting for African-American participants. Critical reflection: egalitarianism was positively associated with expected voting and critical reflection: perceived inequality was negatively associated with expected voting for Latinx 9th graders; both critical reflection variables were uncorrelated with expected voting for African-American students. Future research—particularly qualitative research—may be useful in identifying explanations for the racial group differences identified in these studies. One possibility is that Latinx youth are more likely than African-American youth to have personal or familial experiences of immigration or undocumented legal status, with resultant engagement in different types of protests and different relations to voting.

The small set of studies focused on voting behavior raise intriguing questions about the process by which critical consciousness sub-domains might relate to voting in specific contexts and for specific groups. An important weakness of this area of research is that it fails to account for changing political realities that may impact expected or actual voting behaviors. Qualitative as well as additional longitudinal, quantitative research in this area will be essential to deepen understanding of the links between critical consciousness and anticipated or actual voting behavior.

Social-emotional Functioning

Our review revealed that critical consciousness has been conceptualized as a predictor of positive social-emotional functioning for youth, particularly youth who are marginalized. Four studies have explored the association between critical consciousness and such outcomes explicitly, through a mix of quantitative (two studies, one of which was longitudinal) and qualitative (two studies) approaches. Of these studies, three present evidence supporting the conceptual link between critical consciousness and adaptive social-emotional functioning, including positive youth development, resistance, and resilience; leadership skills; feeling that one's basic psychological needs are met; and, positive sense of self (Clonan-Roy, Jacobs, & Nakkula, 2016; Delia & Kransny, 2018; Luginbuhl, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2016); however, the fourth study identified social-emotional risks (including depression symptoms and low academic engagement) for youth with the highest levels of critical reflection (Godfrey, Burson, Yanisch, Hughes, & Way, 2019).

In a largely theoretical study adapting the positive youth development model (PYD; Lerner et al., 2005), Clonan-Roy and colleagues (2016) draw on qualitative ethnographic and interview-based data to suggest that, for high school aged girls of color, critical consciousness supports the development of PYD-related competencies, including competence, confidence, character, connection, caring, and contribution. The authors also contend that critical consciousness supports the development of two additional adaptive characteristics: resistance and resilience. Ultimately, through their revised PYD model, Clonan-Roy et al. (2016) posit that critical consciousness mediated the development of these competencies in girls of color. Similarly, in a qualitative study exploring links between PYD and environmental stewardship in urban settings, Delia and Kransny (2018) demonstrated that for 15- to 18-year-old youth of color involved in an agricultural internship, emergent critical consciousness (including elements of reflection, motivation, and action) was related to enhanced leadership skills and sense of self, as well as greater care for and contribution to one's community.

Luginbuhl et al. (2016) examined the association between sociopolitical development and a youth's sense that their basic psychological needs (e.g., for autonomy support) are being met. Participants in the cross-sectional, quantitative study were racially diverse high school youth (ages 13-18, most receiving free or reduced-price lunch). Sociopolitical development assessed an individual's belief that people are inherently unequal and support for unequal, hierarchical relationships among people. The study also used a modified form of the Measure of Adolescent Critical Consciousness (MACC, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016), which assessed awareness of and motivation to address racial and class inequality. The study found that youth with higher levels of sociopolitical development had significantly higher endorsement of basic psychological needs satisfaction. In contrast, others have identified potential negative social-emotional consequences of critical consciousness. Godfrey et al. (2019) studied racial and ethnic minority 7th graders and used latent class analysis to identify four groups of youth with varying levels of critical reflection, efficacy, and commitment to action. They found that the group lowest in the reflective elements of critical consciousness—a group that demonstrated low economic and racial critical reflection paired with high beliefs about U.S. fairness, high external and internal political efficacy, and midlevel commitment to action—had lower levels of depressive symptoms than a group with higher levels of critical reflection. Importantly, none of the four groups profiled had high critical consciousness across the domains of reflection, efficacy, and action; thus, the results of this study do not reflect the expected social-emotional outcomes for a youth who is high on all three dimensions of critical consciousness.

The trend across these studies focused on social-emotional outcomes suggested a positive relation between social-emotional functioning and critical consciousness, though some research fails to corroborate this association. The specific social-emotional outcomes under examination varied substantially across studies, so it is plausible that some outcomes (e.g., confidence and self-efficacy)

may be positively shaped by critical consciousness while others (e.g., depressive symptoms) are negatively shaped. It is also possible that different sub-domains of critical consciousness may differentially impact social-emotional outcomes; for example, youth who are high in critical reflection may experience increased anxiety due to their awareness of social injustice, while youth who are high in critical action may experience reduced anxiety due to their engagement with others and a concomitant sense of agency or purpose. Future research in this area will require clear theoretical grounding that specifies the direction of effects and processes by which these effects may occur. Notably, the work of Clonan-Roy et al. (2016) provides one potential framework that others could emulate for such research.

Academic Functioning

Seven studies in our review examined relations between critical consciousness and academic functioning. In their quantitative longitudinal study, Pérez-Gualdrón and Helms (2017) examined associations between social justice orientation and a number of academic outcomes. Social justice orientation in 10th grade was associated with higher grades, lower school behavioral disengagement, and a decreased likelihood of school dropout two years later, when students were in 12th grade, via the mediated pathway through personal agency beliefs. Godfrey et al. (2019) also examined academic outcomes in their latent class analysis study and found that youth with the lowest levels of critical reflection had higher grades than all other youth. McWhirter and McWhirter (2016) examined academic outcomes in Latinx youth aged 13-19 years-old. The study compared participants who were high in both critical agency and critical behavior (measured using the MACC) to participants who were low in agency and behavior and found that self-reported grades were higher for the group that was high in both critical consciousness domains. In addition, school engagement was higher in the high critical consciousness group than in the low critical consciousness group. In contrast to others, Seider et al. (2016) found no relation between grade point average (measured at the beginning of 9th grade) and

critical reflection skills (measured at the end of 9th grade).

In addition, Luginbuhl et al. (2016) examined associations between sociopolitical development and three academic or educational constructs: autonomous academic motivation, academic achievement (a latent variable combining grades and behavioral referrals), and educational expectancies (expectations for career and educational success). The study found that sociopolitical development was positively associated with all three outcomes; further, the association between sociopolitical development and academic achievement as well as the association between sociopolitical development and educational expectancies was partially mediated by autonomous motivation. Diemer et al. (2010) examined the cross-sectional association between sociopolitical development (operationalized similarly to critical motivation) and academic achievement (reading and math performance) in 10th grade among participants in the ELS of 2002. The authors found that sociopolitical development was negatively associated with academic achievement for Latinx and African-American youth; there was no relation between sociopolitical development and academic achievement for Asian-American youth. In contrast, Diemer (2009) examined the cross-sectional relations between academic achievement and sociopolitical development in 10th grade and found that sociopolitical development was positively associated with academic achievement. The Diemer (2009) sample was composed of low SES youth of color who participated in the 10th grade, 12th grade, and 8-year post graduation assessment points of the NELS: 88.

A significant limitation of critical consciousness research focused on academic functioning or achievement outcomes is the lack of research on the achievement of youth prior to high school. Given that 9th grade is a common time for school dropout to occur and that low-income youth of color are at increased risk of dropout, examination of the potential protective impacts of critical consciousness on achievement prior to this period represents an important but as of yet unexplored area of inquiry.

Relations Among Sub-Domains of Critical Consciousness (and Related Constructs)

In addition to the links between critical consciousness and other constructs, researchers have also examined associations between and among critical reflection, critical motivation, and critical action, both cross-sectionally and over time. Across the six studies reviewed in this section, three used longitudinal, quantitative methods; two used cross-sectional, quantitative methods; and, one used qualitative methods.

A recent longitudinal study (Bañales et al., 2019) drew on data from the Youth Identity Project to examine the development of critical reflection over a two-year period. In this study, the critical reflection dimension of critical consciousness was measured as a combination of structural and individual attributions for race-based academic achievement gaps. In the sample of Black adolescents, structural attributions increased from 10th to 12th grade, while individual attributions remained constant. Consistent with these findings, Clark and Seider's (2019) longitudinal study showed that both Social Analysis and Societal Involvement generally increased over the course of high school; for Social Analysis only, the rate of change was lower for youth who started high school with higher Social Analysis scores. In addition, Social Analysis and Society Involvement were correlated at baseline and over time. A qualitative, interview-based study (Christens & Dolan, 2011) of predominantly Latinx youth organizing leaders (ages 16-20) found that engagement in organizing (a form of critical action) led to increased critical reflection in the form of awareness of social power and the impacts of systems of power and privilege in local communities. The study also found that engagement in critical action by youth organizers led to increased critical motivation or political efficacy. Finally, Oosterhoff et al. (2017) analyzed a sample of predominantly White, socioeconomically diverse adolescents who were assessed at two time points separated by one year. Of greatest relevance to our focus on critical consciousness, the study assessed social dominance beliefs (e.g., "this country would be better off if we cared less about how equal people were") and authoritarianism (e.g., "it is important for children to learn

obedience to authorities”), both of which likely tap forms of thinking similar to measures of critical reflection. The authors found that, across the sample, endorsement of social dominance beliefs increased and endorsement of authoritarianism decreased over time. Higher social dominance values at Time 1 predicted greater authoritarianism at Time 2.

Among studies that used a cross-sectional approach, Diemer and Rapa (2016) found that egalitarian views positively associated with critical reflection were negatively associated with critical action among a sub-sample of Latinx youth. Additionally, perceived inequality was negatively associated with external political efficacy but positively associated with critical action for both Latinx and African American 9th graders. Others have used latent cluster analysis to examine how youth vary in their levels of critical reflection and critical motivation and to assess the relation between different reflection/motivation profiles and three constructs: civic engagement, social justice orientation, and sense of community (Christens et al., 2018). In this study, critical reflection was termed “cognitive component of psychological empowerment” and was assessed based on youths’ knowledge of social power. Critical motivation was termed “emotional component of psychological empowerment” and was measured using the Sociopolitical Control Scale for Youth (SPCS-Y, Peterson et al., 2011), which assesses perceived leadership abilities and perceived policy influence. Civic engagement was based on an 8-item scale using items similar to published measures of critical action. In their sample of racially and ethnically diverse 9th to 12th grade students, the authors identified seven latent classes based on students’ critical reflection and critical motivation. One group, labelled critical and exceptionally hopeful—a group in which both critical reflection and critical motivation were high—had higher levels of civic engagement than the uncritical and alienated group. This finding is consistent with theories regarding how the components of critical consciousness relate to one another (cf. Watts et al., 2011).

In general, the studies reviewed in this section suggest that critical consciousness increases over

time among youth of color. The one study in this section that examined critical consciousness over time in a predominantly White sample found the opposite; namely, social dominance beliefs inconsistent with critical consciousness increased over time for this sample. Future research is needed to further explore differences in the course of critical consciousness development for different racial groups. The sub-domains of critical consciousness are sometimes correlated, but not always. Thus, future research is needed to determine the conditions under which the sub-domains of critical consciousness relate to one another and the conditions under which they diverge.

What Interventions Have Been Used to Foster Critical Consciousness?

This area of study was one of the most prevalent in extant literature, with 29 of 67 studies reflecting a wide range of interventions, predominantly based in schools, that have been used to support critical consciousness development in children and youth. We present an overview of these interventions below, categorizing them as either “curricular” or “extra-curricular” to signify the extent to which they appeared to be integrated into core instructional activities (e.g., within a given content area) or took place outside of core instruction.

Curricular Interventions

Curricular interventions were evident across content areas, taking place in either specific content areas or integrated more comprehensively, in a cross-curricular fashion, into teachers’ core instructional activities. Most studies reflected interventions within literature and the arts (four studies) or science content areas (three studies). There were two studies that reflected cross-curricular interventions. Other content areas including critical consciousness interventions were ethnic studies (two studies), civic education (one study), and sex or health education (two studies). Notably, studies reviewed in this section were predominantly qualitative; no studies utilized explicitly quantitative analyses and only one study utilized mixed-methods.

Literature and the arts. Four studies, all using qualitative methodology, entailed the use of literature to facilitate the development of critical reflection skills. Across these studies, all emphasized how dialogic instruction was effective to promote critical reflection when: (1) a developmentally-appropriate amount of structure was provided to introduce the social justice issue at hand; (2) new information (e.g., from literature) was connected to students' personal experiences; (3) children were encouraged to engage in dialogue through open-ended questioning; and, (4) statements reifying bias were challenged, either by the teacher or by other students. Studies examined how discussions of literature and arts could be used to facilitate awareness and understanding of social action in children and youth (Tyson, 2002); social justice, including issues related to diversity, and human difference (Hawkins, 2014); power, privilege, oppression, and marginalization (Silva, 2012); and, socioeconomic and sociopolitical inequities (Osorio, 2018). Spanning from preschool (Hawkins, 2014) and early grades such as first (Silva, 2012) and second (Osorio, 2018) to middle school (Tyson, 2002), these studies suggested that interventions using literature can heighten awareness about societal inequities and provide opportunities for even very young children to develop an interest in both critical reflection and critical action.

For example, Tyson's (2002) qualitative study examined how African-American middle-school children related social dilemmas presented through children's and young adult literature to their own experiences. As children engaged with literature that included social action as a theme, their understanding of social action shifted from viewing it simply as helping others to viewing it as action taken on behalf of oneself and the community, sometimes in partnership with others. This definition is consistent with the Freirean perspective on critical consciousness, in which the goal of critical action is one's own liberation and the liberation of others from oppression. In a similar approach, Osorio's (2018) qualitative study examined the use of culture circles to engage second grade Latinx children in dialogue

about Latinx children's literature. In the culture circles, Osorio, who was also the children's teacher, used open-ended questions to encourage students to relate the content of the texts to their lived experiences. The study found that children engaged in critical reflection during the culture circles, which fostered an increased capacity for critical reflection and for making connections between self and others, particularly with respect to the systems that shape individual and collective experiences. Silva (2012) used ethnographic methods to study discussions of artists who had experienced bias of various forms in an ethnically diverse, predominantly Latinx, first-grade classroom. The study found that discussions of stereotyping and bias initially reinforced stereotyping because the classroom teacher did not challenge students' biases in dialogue and students did not challenge one another or connect material to their own experiences. However, after the teacher evoked students' emotional responses to bias by replicating Jane Elliott's brown eyes/blue eyes experiment (Peters, 1987), the children demonstrated a shift in their critical reflective skills and an increase both in the frequency with which they discussed power, privilege, and oppression and the degree to which they linked experiences of power, privilege, and oppression to contexts beyond the individual. Finally, Hawkins (2014) used a PAR approach in two preschool classrooms to examine how conversations with predominantly Anglo-Australian children about books that presented issues of unfairness, bias, injustice, and stereotyping could be used to promote children's critical consciousness. The authors found that, when teachers allowed time for discussion of texts after reading them, opened discussion with a brief orientation to the social justice issue raised by the text, and followed with open-ended questions that encouraged dialogue among children and between children and adults, children showed an increasing ability to critically reflect on the content of the text and, in so doing, to challenge their own and each other's developing biases.

Science and Social Science. Some interventions utilized science curricula to support critical consciousness development. As with studies focused on literature and the arts, the four studies identified

in this area used qualitative methods. Also, as with interventions focused on literature and the arts, interventions utilizing science curricula emphasized the importance of providing students the opportunity to connect the action of science to their lived experiences in order for science learning to promote critical consciousness. For example, Dimick (2016) reports on the use of an environmental science curriculum, within 10th-12th grade environmental science classrooms, to critically interrogate ecological injustice and inequities in an urban context. Drawing on Freirean pedagogical practices and utilizing a “critical pedagogy of place” (p. 814), Dimick reports that such a curricular approach supported youths’ (55% White, 45% youth of color) critical consciousness development by enhancing their critical awareness and supporting their engagement in challenging and transforming dominant cultural narratives. Others have used food practices, nutrition, and the food system (Tsurusaki, Barton, Tan, Koch, & Contento, 2012) and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills and knowledge (Kozan et al., 2017) as the focal content for interventions aimed at increasing critical consciousnesses by engaging youth of color in critical examination of scientific issues relevant to them. These studies have found increases in critical awareness (Kozan et al., 2017; Tsurusaki, Barton, Tan, Koch, & Contento, 2012), political efficacy (Kozan et al., 2017), and critical action (Kozan et al., 2017) among participants.

Focusing on a population occupying positions of (economic) privilege, Hoeg, Lemelin, and Bencze (2015) reported on the use of a social sciences curriculum with affluent 6th grade students attending a private school. Children in the study participated in a research project focused on child labor; as part of the project, they read about democracy, child labor, and human rights, conducted their own primary and secondary research, and developed a multi-media project on the issues they had studied. Field notes, artifacts of student projects, and group interviews were the primary sources of data in the study. The findings of the study were that children developed increasingly critical orientations toward

child labor and an empathic stance toward child laborers as they proceeded through the project; in addition, some changed their purchasing behaviors and, one year after the project was completed, some students described a goal of pushing their families and their school toward purchasing only fair-trade products (though evidence of activism toward this goal was not reported). At the same time, many students remained fatalistic about the potential for real change and greater justice, describing child labor as an inevitable component of global systems of production. Thus, although children demonstrated an increased capacity for critical reflection and some engaged in critical action, these changes did not appear to shift their critical motivation.

Cross-curricular interventions. A few interventions appeared to be cross-curricular, or manifested as intentional efforts by teachers to interweave instruction supportive of critical consciousness development throughout their teaching. In one such study (Bajaj, Argenal, & Canlas, 2017), researchers reported on data collected through a series of ethnographic case studies and established an approach called “socio-politically relevant pedagogy” (p. 258). Through this, they demonstrated how teachers supported critical consciousness development in high school aged youth by embedding opportunities for critical reflection and critical action throughout their curriculum. Specifically, teachers and students together explored issues related to: (1) water use and scarcity in an interdisciplinary unit spanning science and history content areas; (2) migration and migrant-immigrant experiences; and (3) civil disobedience. Through these instructional activities focused on critical reflection and critical action, youths’ critical consciousness development was enhanced.

In another study (Ngai & Koehn, 2011), researchers utilized a mixed-methods research design to study how teachers of first through fifth graders in a small Montana public school supported the development of critical awareness in their predominantly non-Native students through instruction focused on Indigenous education and critical democracy learning. This curricular approach supported

children's place-based awareness and socio-political knowledge (based on pre/post assessments), which were linked to enhanced critical consciousness related to "society, culture, place, people, and citizenship" (p. 252).

Other specific instructional areas. Some studies depicted critical consciousness-related interventions within the context of other specific core instructional activities, including ethnic studies, civic education, and sex education. For example, Cammarota (2016) used yPAR to detail the ways in which an ethnic studies curricular program in Tucson, Arizona (cf. Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014) served as an opportunity for youth of color to develop critical consciousness, including critical reflection and action. This occurred not only through the ethnic studies program itself, but also through subsequent efforts to maintain the program once it had been shut down by the State legislature. Similarly, another yPAR study revealed how an ethnic studies curricular intervention supported youths' development of critical consciousness through the identification of injustices in their lives and the formation of agency to confront and act to redress such injustices (Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, Desai, Sabac, & Von Torres, 2016). And Moya (2017) used qualitative methods to demonstrate how a civic education intervention—implemented within the context of a social studies classroom as well as in an out-of-school time, community-based youth program—provided opportunities for primarily low-income Latinx youth to develop "critical civic identities" (p. 457) characterized by critical consciousness. While the classroom promoted aspirational critical civic identities in participants, the community-based organization provided more opportunities for youth to develop and perform their identities as critical actors, and thereby to exhibit greater critical consciousness through their commitment to engage in critical action.

Jearey-Graham and Macleod (2017) reported on a sex education curricular intervention implemented in South Africa, primarily with Black Africans aged 15-16 years-old. The intervention

used Freirean dialogical pedagogical practices to move beyond traditional sex education by assessing and critiquing gendered and sexual norms as part of the educative process. The authors contended that critical consciousness was thus promoted regarding gendered inequities within the South African context. Similarly, Nicholas et al. (2019) reported on a community-based sexual health program through which predominantly White high school aged youth (at the time of their program participation) engaged in critical dialogue and social analysis, “confronting intersections between sexual health, sexism, racism, and other forms of systematic oppression” (p. 9). In this qualitative study, participants reported on the relation between their program participation and their sociopolitical development, including their own political efficacy, critical awareness, and sociopolitical participation. Thus, critical consciousness was enhanced through youths’ engagement in this sexual health programming.

Extra-curricular Interventions

Extra-curricular interventions were stand-alone programs targeting critical consciousness development, taking place outside of teachers’ core instructional activities. Some of these interventions appeared to take place within the school building during regular school hours. Other interventions, while school-based, were delivered during out-of-school time.

In-school programs targeting critical consciousness development. Three studies reported on interventions or programs that support critical consciousness development that, while implemented in schools, were stand-alone activities or programs disconnected from teachers’ regular instructional activities. For example, Watts and Abdul-Adil (1998) detailed the “Young Warriors” program, which was grounded in Freirean pedagogy and designed explicitly to support African American high school aged young men in critical consciousness development and in sociopolitical development more broadly. In the Young Warriors program, youth were encouraged to engage in dialogue, stimulated by open-ended questions, regarding the source of what they had seen, read, or heard, their perceptions of the

stimulus, their interpretation of the stimulus, the reasoning behind their interpretation, their emotional and intellectual response to the stimulus, and their ideas for action to transform systemic injustices that they have identified through engagement with the stimulus. Results of this action research study revealed that critical consciousness was enhanced through the program, which utilized artifacts from popular culture (e.g., rap videos and film) to support dialogue and critical reflection among participants. Similarly, Slaten, Rivera, Shemwell, and Elison (2016) reported on a culturally-sensitive social-emotional learning program called “Fulfill the Dream,” which was designed to promote social justice and support critical consciousness development among youth. Study participants included nine African American youth aged 17-19 years-old who lived in poverty and attended an urban alternative high school. Results of this qualitative, phenomenological study suggested the program enhanced youths’ self-awareness, hope, positive self-talk, and critical consciousness—particularly critical reflection. Finally, Jacobs (2016) reported on a curricular program grounded in Black feminist thought and critical media pedagogy that was implemented with approximately 30 Black girls from two high schools. Through her qualitative study, Jacobs posited that the curricular program provided a space for participants to take up “oppositional gazes of resistance and resilience in connection with media images and messages” (p. 234), and thereby fostered both critical reflection and a sense of positive collective identity for participating Black youth.

Out-of-school programs targeting critical consciousness development. Ten studies revealed programs focused on supporting critical consciousness development through out-of-school programs. These programs often utilized yPAR (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010; Groves Price & Mencke, 2013; Harper et al., 2017; Rodríguez, 2008; Sánchez Carmen et al., 2015) or service learning (Winans-Solis, 2014) activities that were designed specifically to promote critical reflection and critical action among youth. One study (Sánchez Carmen et al., 2015) detailed the use of a yPAR approach and an ethnic

studies curriculum to support critical consciousness development. Specifically, during a summer program for high school aged youth of color (predominantly Black or Afro-Caribbean) from historically marginalized communities, yPAR and ethnic studies were used in combination to support youths' sociopolitical development, raise consciousness about marginalization and oppression, and engender social action. Another study detailed how a six-week summer youth program brought together Vietnamese immigrant 14- to 21-year-olds in Philadelphia to engage in a political education program focused on the exploration of socio-historical and socio-political issues relevant to participating youth (Nguyen & Quinn, 2018). The program, called "Homeward Bound," supported youths' critical consciousness development by fostering their capacity to critically assess and challenge their knowledge of oppression, discrimination, interracial tension, and socioeconomic inequity.

Others used theater as a tool for critical consciousness development. For example, Ngo (2017) examined an out-of-school theater program that was implemented within the context of a culturally responsive community-based after-school setting. Participants included Hmong youth ages 16-19 years old. The study highlighted ways in which youth in the program grappled with stereotypes and negotiated identity within their school and community contexts and emphasized how youth identified and confronted marginalization and oppression based on ethnic-racial and immigrant identities. In line with Freire's conceptualization of critical consciousness (2000), youth participating in the theater program also engaged in "naming their world" by examining and critiquing societal inequities and developing agency to promote change (Ngo, 2017, p. 41). A second study similarly highlighted how a theater program for youth identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQQ) were empowered individually and collectively and developed critical consciousness (Wernick, Kulick, & Woodford, 2014).

A study by Brown, Outley, and Pinckney (2018) used a qualitative, multi-case methodology to

examine how culture-specific out-of-school programs impact sociopolitical development among Black youth. The authors studied three programs, all located in urban areas, and all rooted in Afrocentrism or Pan-Africanism. The sites served youth ranging in age from 5 to 18. The authors found that, across programs, sociopolitical development was fostered through education and socialization of youth to see their connection to history and positive Black identity, which included the ability to critique systems that are oppressive to Black Americans. Across all programs, critical awareness was fostered through exposure to the writings of Black authors. In addition, all programs utilized strong relationships between youth and program leaders to build trust in the organization and to empower youth to engage in shared decision-making, thereby fostering a sense of efficacy and developing youths' leadership skills.

Other Interventions

One study did not fit the curricular or extra-curricular intervention categories, despite taking place within a school setting. In an ethnographic study examining the relationship between a White teacher and two African American students, Houser and Overton (2001) explored issues related to personal control and freedom within a first-grade classroom. The authors contended that, through support for personal choice and freedom for students within the classroom, critical consciousness was enhanced in both teachers and students alike.

How Has Critical Consciousness Been Measured?

Across the studies identified for this review, there was substantial variability in the measurement of critical consciousness. While some studies developed or utilized measures designed explicitly to assess critical consciousness, others utilized proxy measures. For example, measures of social dominance orientation or social justice orientation were used to approximate critical reflection, and measures of global self-efficacy were sometimes used to approximate critical motivation. Critical action was sometimes indexed as a binary variable, reflecting any engagement in political or civic action versus

no such engagement; in other cases, critical action was operationalized as engagement in a specific activity, such as youth organizing. Some measures collapsed multiple sub-domains of critical consciousness. Of particular concern for studies involving critical motivation or action, the literature was inconsistent in whether measures focused on current motivation or action versus motivation for future work or anticipated future action—a problem particularly unique to children and adolescents, given barriers they face in engaging in some forms of sociopolitical participation (e.g., voting). Many studies created novel measures using a small number of indicators available in secondary data. In addition, while some studies emphasized critical consciousness and its sub-domains as general constructs, many focused specifically on critical consciousness of race and/or class. Of note, while proxy measures were commonly used in the literature reviewed, the use of measures designed explicitly to measure critical consciousness appears to be increasing in recent years, with five studies focusing explicitly on the development of instruments designed to measure critical consciousness, one of its sub-components, or a related construct.

In qualitative studies, codes for reflection, motivation, and action were generally specific to the participants in the study and reflected their lived experiences—often in the specific context in which the study took place. In this sense, these qualitative studies do not seem particularly focused on critical consciousness measurement, *per se*; however, qualitative research on critical consciousness clearly has the potential to contribute to the development of quantitative measures by broadening theory and elucidating the nature of critical consciousness and its sub-domains within particular contexts.

The substantial measurement variability in this literature presents a significant challenge for comparing findings across studies. As the field progresses, increased use of standardized measures of critical consciousness may lead to deeper integration and clearer patterns of results across studies, though, as discussed below, continued development of existing and new measures is needed to address

gaps in the measurement literature.

Our review surfaced two scales or instruments designed explicitly to measure critical consciousness (see also Diemer et al., 2015), each focused on the quantitative measurement of critical consciousness in adolescents. A third study focused on the quantitative measurement of youth anti-racist action, akin to critical action specifically focused on racism. A fourth study used mixed-methods to develop a measure of sociopolitical consciousness.

Diemer and colleagues (2017) developed and validated a 22-item Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS) relying on a sample of 326 youth aged 13-19 years-old. The sample was predominantly youth of color, with approximately 80% identifying as Black/African American or bi-/multi-racial. The CCS comprises three internally-consistent factors: (1) *critical reflection: perceived inequality*, which measures consciousness of ethnic-racial, class, and gender-based inequities; (2) *critical reflection: egalitarianism*, which measures endorsement of societal equality; and (3) *critical action: sociopolitical participation*, which measures engagement in activities to address or change perceived societal inequities.

McWhirter and McWhirter (2016) developed and validated a measure of critical consciousness for use with Latinx adolescents. The authors first tested a measure of critical consciousness, using exploratory factor analysis, with a sample of 476 Latinx youth aged 14-19 years-old. Next, the authors carried out confirmatory factor analyses with the items established through their initial inquiry with a separate sample of 680 Latinx youth aged 13-20 years old. The resultant Measure of Adolescent Critical Consciousness (MACC) comprises two factors: (1) *critical agency*, which accounts for youths' commitment to and efficacy beliefs regarding acting against racism and discrimination; and (2) *critical behavior*, which measures actions taken to promote justice and end racism.

Aldana, Bañales, and Richards-Schuster (2019) used yPAR to develop a measure of anti-racist

action, the Anti-Racism Action Scale (ARAS) for use with racially diverse adolescents. The authors first tested the measure using exploratory factor analysis with a sample of 249 racially and socioeconomically diverse youth aged 13-19 years-old. They then used confirmatory factor analysis to test the factor structure identified through exploratory factor analysis in a nationally representative sample of 384 racially and socioeconomically diverse youth aged 14-18 years-old. The final 16-item ARAS assesses three domains: *interpersonal action* (individual responses to racism), *communal action* (involvement in collective anti-racist efforts at school or in the community), and *political change action* (involvement with elected officials or formal political organizations). The authors also assessed the convergent validity between the ARAS and the CCS, finding medium-to-large and large correlations between the communal action and political change action subscales of the ARAS and the Critical Action subscale of the CCS ($r(373) = 0.42$ and $r(373) = 0.51$), respectively. The correlation between the interpersonal action subscale of the ARAS and the critical action subscale of the CCS was low ($r(373) = .21$), which is unsurprising given that the critical action items on the CCS emphasize both political and collective action.

Baker and Brookins (2014) used photovoice to understand the perspectives of Salvadoran adolescents (two groups: one group of five 11- to 14-year-olds and one group of six 17- to 19-year-olds) on their communities. All participants in the photovoice study lived in a low SES rural community. Youth engaged in guided discussion of images captured and selected for discussion by the youth researchers, and transcripts of these discussions were then analyzed using a thematic analysis informed by theories of youth sociopolitical development. Through their analysis, the authors identified five themes: *sociopolitical awareness*, which included awareness of community issues and needs; *opportunity, inequality, and justice*, which appeared primarily in the discussions of older participants and reflected an understanding of the impacts of economic and other forms of marginalization; *social*

responsibility, which reflected the sense that institutions and individuals hold responsibility for improving unjust conditions; *methods of change and action*, which reflected that youth identified many and varied means of making change for greater justice; and *efficacy*, which reflected the belief that young people are able to work collectively to resolve community issues.

Based on these themes, which were generally consistent with the literature on youth sociopolitical development, Baker and Brookins (2014) then developed and tested a quantitative measure of sociopolitical consciousness in a new sample of Salvadoran high school students. Using exploratory factor analysis, the researchers identified seven factors from the 35-item scale. These are: sociopolitical awareness, global beliefs about the extent to which society is just and equal; collective responsibility for the poor; equality and rights; belief in collective action; localized community efficacy; and, problem-solving self-efficacy.

While not focused on measuring critical consciousness at the individual level, Byrd (2017) developed a new quantitative measure of school racial climate that included *critical consciousness socialization*, a sub-component of a broader school racial socialization domain. Youth in Byrd's sample were 12-18 years-old enrolled in 6th to 12th grade at the time of the study. According to Byrd, critical consciousness socialization accounts for a school's efforts to teach youth to recognize and address power and privilege inequities among racial groups; thus, Byrd's measure focuses primarily on the knowledge and awareness component of critical consciousness—critical reflection. Notably, measurement of critical reflection in this way—that is, as an attribute of the socialization practices of an educational institution as a whole—suggests that critical reflection may manifest as a characteristic of a collective as well as an individual (for additional discussion, see Diemer et al., 2016 and Sánchez Carmen et al., 2015).

Other quantitative studies have established proxy measures of critical consciousness, mainly

through the use of items within large-scale studies that, when pooled together, represent critical consciousness-related constructs. Examples identified through our review include Diemer and Li (2011), who utilized items within the nationally representative Civic and Political Health Survey of 2006 (CPHS) to measure adolescents' critical action via items tapping sociopolitical control and sociopolitical action. As another example, Diemer and Rapa (2016) used items within the nationally representative CIVED study to assess adolescents' critical reflection, critical motivation (or, political efficacy), and critical action. More recently, Bañales et al. (2019) utilized items within the longitudinal Youth Identity Project to explore the development of critical reflection, conceptualized as individual or structural attributions, regarding racial achievement gaps. Earlier work on critical consciousness and/or sociopolitical development (e.g., Diemer, 2009; Diemer, 2012; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Diemer et al., 2009; Diemer et al., 2006; Diemer et al., 2010) relied almost exclusively on such proxy measures.

Others have used qualitative methods to better understand how critical consciousness manifests by examining the perspectives of youth. For example, in a recent qualitative study exploring the perceptions of Latinx youth about what they can do to make a difference in their communities, McWhirter, Gomez, and Rau (2018) found that responses from youth were aligned with themes related to sociopolitical development and critical consciousness, including speaking out to address injustice, fighting against racism and discrimination, and fighting for equality, among others. The authors characterized participant responses and related themes as manifestations of critical consciousness, specifically in terms of critical reflection, critical agency, and critical action. Another recent qualitative study assessed the nature of Black youths' critical reflection through the use of focus groups in which youth ages 10-14 (66% receiving free or reduced-price lunch) were asked to discuss challenges in their schools and communities, including the nature of the challenge, cause of the challenge, responsibility for

addressing the challenge, and solutions for the challenge (Hope & Bañales, 2018). Thematic analysis was used to identify four themes in youths' responses: System Attributions – Macrosystem (e.g., failures of the criminal justice and education systems), System Attributions – Microsystem (e.g., failures of parents), System Justification and Individual Blame (e.g., individuals making poor choices), and Critically Reflective Discourse (e.g., consideration of the individual's choices within larger systems). The authors note that their findings reflect the complexity of critical reflection in early adolescence, which may not be fully captured by existing measures.

Given the predominant focus on quantitative measurement of critical consciousness at the individual level, there are opportunities to advance scholarship in this area by expanding measurement efforts through additional qualitative work, including approaches that entail the use of mixed-methods as well as those focused on measurement of multiple, overlapping, and intersecting forms of marginalization or oppression (cf. Godfrey & Burson, 2018). The development and validation of critical consciousness scales in recent years has the potential to unify critical consciousness conceptualization and measurement (Diemer et al., 2015), but until the use of these scales becomes more prevalent, differences in the measurement of critical consciousness may obfuscate conclusions about how it develops, changes over time, and shapes other outcomes of interest.

Bringing it Together and Setting a Research Agenda: Perspectives on Critical Consciousness

Development in Children and Adolescents

In this final section of the manuscript, we build on our systematic review of the critical consciousness literature to make recommendations for next steps in research about critical consciousness in children and adolescents. Our systematic review revealed substantial growth in the literature focused on critical consciousness in recent years; given this growing interest in the topic, it is essential to clarify what we know and what we do not yet know about critical consciousness during childhood and

adolescence. In this concluding section of the manuscript, we build an argument regarding key foci for future research to guide scholarship for the years to come. For the sake of parsimony, we emphasize those areas in which we see the greatest need for growth and the greatest potential for work that will have a high impact on our knowledge of critical consciousness or on applied practice. We do not intend for this section to be viewed as an exhaustive summary of the work that remains to be completed in this area of research, nor do we consider areas of inquiry that we do not address in this section to be unimportant.

Understanding Critical Consciousness in Context

One of the more robust areas of evidence within the child and adolescent critical consciousness literature is for the impact of school and family contexts on critical consciousness development. We identified several studies, utilizing a range of qualitative and quantitative methods that found evidence of the relation between school climate and critical consciousness. Specifically, school climates and classrooms that fostered open dialogue about controversial issues, particularly issues of social justice, and that promoted positive relationships among students and between students and adults in the school, were positively associated with youths' critical consciousness. These findings are consistent with Freirean pedagogical theories, which emphasize the importance of open dialogue and learning through questioning and problem-posing (Freire, 1973) rather than through direct instruction. Consistent with the school climate findings, parent and peer socialization around issues of inequity, injustice, and racism was also positively associated with critical consciousness (Bañales et al., 2019; Diemer, 2012; Diemer et al., 2006; Diemer et al., 2009; Diemer & Li, 2011). Across these studies, the strongest evidence was for the impact of parent and peer socialization on critical reflection. The developmental literature clearly shows that the influence of parents, peers, and other adults varies over the course of development; thus, a key next step for research on child and youth critical consciousness will be to examine parent and peer

socialization as distinct constructs that may differentially influence child and adolescent critical consciousness at different points in development, as well as to explore mechanisms by which and for whom such socialization practices are supportive of critical consciousness development. In addition, a promising direction for future work will be to examine how well-studied aspects of parental socialization with clear relevance to critical consciousness—for example, racial socialization—relate to the development of each dimension of critical consciousness.

These insights are also consistent with our review of interventions designed to enhance critical consciousness, which generally aimed to engage youth in discussion of social justice issues, racism, classism, and related topics and in action for social justice. Across developmental periods, future work on critical consciousness-related interventions will be enhanced by further integration of rigorous quantitative methodologies applied to this sub-area of the literature. None of the intervention studies identified contained a control group or utilized experimental or quasi-experimental methods; such methods would enhance the degree to which conclusions from critical consciousness-focused literature could be generalized beyond the youth involved in the research and enhance understanding of the causal mechanisms supporting critical consciousness development. At the same time, we acknowledge that families experiencing marginalization—including families of color and low-income families—may hesitate to participate in research associated with the institutions in which they have experienced or anticipate experiencing oppression (e.g., K-12 schools and institutes of higher education). Researchers will need to build meaningful relationships and attend to issues of trust in attempting this research.

An additional direction for future research will be to assess the impact of existing interventions that address issues of social justice and critical consciousness. For example, ethnic studies curricula emphasize issues of identity, power, and privilege, often centering the experiences of people of color (Cabrera et al., 2014). Research on these curricula—including, for example, case-control studies

comparing schools implementing a particular curriculum to matched schools that have not implemented the curriculum—could shed light on how content and pedagogy contribute to the development of critical consciousness and would be policy-relevant, given that several states now mandate the inclusion of ethnic studies in K-12 settings (see Dee & Penner, 2017). The work of Seider and colleagues (Seider et al., 2016) provides foundational knowledge on how different schooling models (progressive vs. no excuses) promote growth in distinct dimensions of critical consciousness (critical reflection and critical motivation, respectively), raising exciting prospects for work that examines how practices from each model might be integrated into the other to promote broader growth in critical consciousness. In addition, work examining alternative pedagogical models and work examining traditional public and private schools (in contrast to the charters that were the focus of Seider et al.’s study) will extend this critical area of research.

Critical Consciousness as a Characteristic of Consciousness-Raising Systems

As we have noted, research consistently suggests that youth are more likely to demonstrate individual critical consciousness if they report being in school and family contexts that support discussions of race, social class, systemic injustice, and related topics. Considering these findings, and in light of Godfrey and Burson’s (2018) call for shifting the dialogue around critical consciousness to one focused on marginalizing systems rather than marginalized individuals, we in turn call for examining critical consciousness as a characteristic of consciousness-raising systems. We define these as systems in which the dominant values and practices are consistent with critical consciousness and children and youth are consistently supported in developing the ability to reflect critically on social issues, a sense of motivation to work against marginalizing systems, and a practice of engaging in action to promote equity. This perspective aligns well with work framing school-based critical consciousness as a source of fostering ontological healing, defined as “healing related to one’s existence as an agential subject in

the world” (Sánchez Carmen et al., 2015, p. 826) and with the call from Diemer et al. (2016) for research addressing critical consciousness as both an individual and a collective construct.

We argue that critical consciousness should be studied as a multilevel construct, measurable both at the contextual or relational level (where it reflects the values, culture, and norms of a dyad, group, or organization) as well as at the individual level (where it reflects the values, attitudes, and beliefs of an individual child or adolescent). The former has virtually no representation within the literature, whereas the latter reflects the predominant approach to critical consciousness measurement as it exists today. The broader conceptualization is consistent with Freirean theory, which situated the individual development of critical consciousness in the context of liberatory education within a community. Education—including about the nature of social groups, justice and injustice, their own political and social power, etc.—occurs in multiple formal and informal contexts. Thus, research on child and adolescent critical consciousness could reasonably examine critical consciousness as a characteristic of parent-child, peer-to-peer, or teacher-child interactions, schools and early childhood settings, after school settings, and other major contexts of child development.

Research on consciousness-raising systems would require new approaches to critical consciousness measurement; Byrd (2017) stands as the single example of what the measurement of setting- or context-level critical consciousness could look like, through a school-based measure of critical consciousness socialization. Research on critical consciousness as a characteristic of consciousness-raising systems could follow children across time in order to assess the degree to which critical consciousness fluctuates in various contexts—including contexts that typically persist, like the family context, and contexts that typically change, like the school setting. Longitudinal studies could also examine the intriguing question of whether early exposure to contexts in which the dominant beliefs and values are consistent with critical consciousness primes children to develop individual critical

consciousness later in life, or to show above-average responsiveness to interventions aimed at building critical consciousness. For example, retrospective interview research with adults has suggested that early moral development is foundational to the development of critical consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 1998); longitudinal research could be used to elaborate on the relation between moral development and critical consciousness development across time and settings. In addition, longitudinal studies could examine whether and under what circumstances early exposure to consciousness-raising contexts is associated with more adaptive social-emotional and academic outcomes versus with hopelessness and disengagement (see O'Connor, 1997 for a nuanced discussion of such circumstances).

Impacts of Critical Consciousness on Social-Emotional and Academic Functioning

Research examining social-emotional and academic functioning in relation to critical consciousness has been relatively limited; that is, many specific outcomes with hypothesized links to critical consciousness have been examined in only a single empirical study, and even those outcomes that have received more extensive attention have generally not been studied across demographic groups or across developmental periods. While other areas of functioning have received more extensive study—including career development and civic engagement, particularly in terms of expected or actual voting behavior—we argue that academic and social-emotional functioning are core aspects of developmental functioning that will require greater attention as the child and adolescent critical consciousness literature continues to develop.

Further, most studies in this area have been cross-sectional or qualitative and do not establish causal relations between critical consciousness and developmental outcomes. In the areas of academic and social-emotional functioning, the majority of studies that we reviewed found positive associations between critical reflection and academic functioning as well as between critical motivation and academic functioning. Similar findings were identified for social-emotional functioning, with all three

dimensions of critical consciousness being linked to adaptive social-emotional functioning. However, some studies contradicted this general trend. As an example, Godfrey et al. (2019) found, counter to theory and other research, that students lower in critical reflection had lower levels of depressive symptoms and higher levels of academic engagement than students higher in critical reflection; importantly, however, none of the groups identified by Godfrey et al. were high in critical action, and critical action generally did not differentiate groups at all. The authors note that this may reflect a measurement issue, as their measure of critical action examined commitment to future action, not engagement in present action (Godfrey et al., 2019). It may also be that it is the *combination* of critical reflection, efficacy, and action that is psychologically protective; no study identified in our review tested this possibility for any developmental outcome. An additional possibility, not yet examined in the extant literature, is that critical consciousness is particularly psychologically protective for youth who have experienced higher levels of marginalization, violence, or discrimination than their peers. Several studies in our review identified experiences such as these as being linked to the development of critical consciousness (Cervantes-Soon, 2012; Diemer & Li, 2011; Roy et al., 2019), but as a next step, researchers should examine whether positive academic and social-emotional outcomes are more likely to occur for high-critical consciousness youth who have experienced higher than average levels of marginalization, violence, and discrimination. An additional possibility is that discrepancies across studies are linked to inconsistencies in the operationalization of the outcome; for example, in the area of academic functioning, outcomes included standardized tests scores, grade point averages, questionnaire measures of academic engagement, and self-reported grades. As the body of research in this area grows, it will be important to examine whether findings are consistent across studies using the same outcome indicator.

We identified no studies that examined differences in the impact of personal critical consciousness on academic and social-emotional outcomes depending on contextual or institutional critical consciousness. This represents an essential growth edge for research on the sequelae of critical consciousness, particularly for marginalized youth. That is, might individual critical consciousness be protective in contexts in which contextual critical consciousness is high and psychologically harmful or maladaptive in contexts in which contextual critical consciousness is low? As children and youth move through multiple contexts—family, school, community—what is the impact of individual critical consciousness when system-level critical consciousness varies across these contexts versus when it is consistent across these contexts?

We consider existing findings on academic and social-emotional outcomes related to critical consciousness in adolescents to be too preliminary to form clear hypotheses regarding outcomes associated with critical consciousness in children. However, both theory and the empirical literature on racial stereotyping and racial bias suggest that young children of color are vulnerable to internalizing negative beliefs about their racial ingroup and positive beliefs about Whites (Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Corenblum & Annis, 1993; Katz & Kofkin, 1997). This phenomenon is consistent with Developmental Intergroup Theory (DIT) (Bigler & Liben, 2006, 2007), which posits that children tend to notice group differences and to infer—particularly when open discussion for the reason for differences is absent—that these group differences are meaningful and reflective of inherent differences between groups. Thus, when children of color notice status differences between people of color and Whites, they may infer that these differences are due to intrinsic differences between the racial groups, an inference that may be harmful to their positive identity development and social-emotional functioning. Critical consciousness may disrupt this process, fostering in racially marginalized children an understanding of systems of oppression that then contradicts the notion of intrinsic differences

between the racial groups. For White children, though, critical consciousness may contribute to the development of anti-oppressive racial attitudes, including a preliminary awareness of White privilege. Classrooms, families, and peer groups in which critical consciousness is present may be more likely to include open discussion of unjust systems that contribute to observed group differences and inequalities, thereby reducing prejudice both for marginalized and dominant groups of children.

Measuring Critical Consciousness

While the field of critical consciousness measurement itself is still nascent, scholars working in this area should consider both how critical consciousness might reliably be measured prior to the adolescent period and how it may be a characteristic of the varied contexts in which children develop. As an individual construct, our review of the literature emphasized that critical consciousness is cognitive, affective, and behavioral; thus, it is important to consider not only whether and in what contexts children demonstrate critical reflection, but also to consider whether and in what contexts they demonstrate critical motivation and critical action.

Next steps for the measurement of youth critical consciousness. Our review suggests that the field has made substantial progress with regard to measure development related to critical consciousness. Next steps will include greater attention to measuring critical consciousness in a range of contexts and as a collective rather than individual construct. In addition, further qualitative research is needed to better understand the nature of critical consciousness and its subdomains across identity groups and across contexts, and quantitative research is needed to establish the validity, reliability, and invariance of existing and newly developed measures of critical consciousness across groups. Much of the extant research on critical consciousness relies on secondary analysis of existing data; further research incorporating measures specifically aimed at assessing critical consciousness will be essential as the field grows. This includes testing and adapting or developing of instruments that will help

researchers measure the developmental trajectory of critical consciousness throughout childhood and adolescence, including whether such measures are invariant over time. As measures are developed and revised, it will be important to attend to issues such as who creates the measure (e.g., adult researchers, youth, adult community members), the contents of the measure (focus on a single axis of oppression/privilege versus multiple axes of oppression/privilege), and the local validity versus broad generalizability of the measure. For example, researchers will need to consider if the content of such measures will be based on indicators of critical reflection, motivation, and action that are particularly salient to a given population in a given geographic area or if they will be based on criteria that are general enough to apply across populations and geographic areas.

In addition, the measurement literature highlights the need for continued research to examine the nature of critical consciousness for different identity groups in and across various cultural and geographic contexts. Moreover, in line with emergent scholarship recommending new directions for critical consciousness measurement, this should incorporate the use of an intersectionality framework, attending to the ways that critical consciousness manifests among those with manifold marginalized and privileged social identities and incorporating a focus on marginalizing systems (Godfrey & Burson, 2018; see also Jemal, 2017). Finally, it is clear that continued research on critical consciousness must combine quantitative approaches with more flexible, inductive, qualitative approaches.

Developmental Pathways

Understanding the typical course(s) of development of critical consciousness over time is essential if the field is to move forward with the creation and testing of developmentally-tailored critical consciousness interventions. Among the studies we reviewed, we identified only two that reported data on critical consciousness within grade or age cohorts (Diemer & Li, 2011; Ngai & Koehn, 2011) and nine that measured critical consciousness longitudinally, reporting on change over time in critical

consciousness (Bañales et al., 2019; Clark & Seider, 2019; Diemer, 2009, 2012; Diemer & Li, 2011; Diemer et al., 2010; Ngai & Koehn, 2011; Oosterhoff et al., 2017; Rapa et al., 2018). Only one of these (Ngai & Koehn, 2011) included pre-adolescent children, and while the study reported data within grade cohorts (1st/2nd grade, 2nd/3rd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade), it was not designed or powered to examine age-related change in critical consciousness. Diemer and Li (2011) compared a cohort of 15- to 20-year-olds to a cohort of 21- to 25-year-olds, and therefore do not provide data on change in critical consciousness within the adolescent period.

Among the studies that examined change over time in multiple domains of critical consciousness, Clark and Seider (2019) found that both social analysis and societal involvement increased over the course of four years of high school and were moderately positively correlated over this period. Involvement in critical action at the start of high school also predicted greater growth in critical reflection over the course of high school. Oosterhoff et al. (2017) found that social dominance generally increased over time and authoritarianism decreased over time in their sample of adolescents assessed at two time points separated by one year; however, social dominance at Time 1 was positively associated with authoritarianism at Time 2. Bañales et al. (2019) examined changes over time in Black adolescents' critical reflection and found that structural attributions, but not individual attributions, increased over time, indicating an increase in critical reflection. In multiple studies using data from the ELS/NELS (1988 and 2002), Diemer (2009, 2012) and Diemer et al. (2010) found a moderate, positive association between sociopolitical development in 10th grade and sociopolitical development in 12th grade; however, none of these studies reported on mean change over time beyond reporting descriptive data on the indicators for sociopolitical development in each study. Rapa et al. (2018) found a moderate positive association between critical action at age 19 and critical action at age 21; critical action prior to age 18 was not reported in the study.

In general, the longitudinal critical consciousness literature suggests that critical consciousness increases over time during adolescence and that different domains of critical consciousness may be reciprocally positively associated over time. However, these conclusions are based on a relatively small number of studies and should be considered preliminary. No studies published to date provide guidance on developmental change in critical consciousness prior to adolescence, and many questions remain regarding trends within and across groups in the average level of critical consciousness or the relations among the different components of critical consciousness.

Within the theoretical literature, two possible general processes regarding developmental change in critical consciousness have been articulated: the first is that the components of critical consciousness develop sequentially, with critical reflection leading to critical motivation, which in turn leads to critical action. Following this initial sequential development, the components of critical consciousness begin to have reciprocal influences, such that engagement of critical action further enhances critical reflection and motivation, and vice versa (Watts et al., 2011). Freire's seminal work is the first place in which such a sequential developmental process was proposed, with critical action and motivation developing secondary to the ability to "read the world." However, Freire's work generally focused on adult literacy among populations with limited prior access to formal education, and did not address the development of critical consciousness across childhood and adolescence. Freirean models for enhancing critical consciousness appear to be based on an assumed developmental pathway, with students engaging in culture circles in which they discussed, collaborated on, and asked questions about the inequalities they were experiencing in their own lives. Through these culture circles, participants developed greater critical awareness, which then led to motivation and collective action (Diemer et al., 2016).

The second general process proposed in the theoretical literature is that the components of critical consciousness develop reciprocally; thus, engagement in critical action might lead to increased

critical motivation, which leads to further critical action that then leads to critical reflection. As summarized by Diemer et al. (2016), and consistent with our review, contemporary youth-focused interventions to promote critical consciousness often appear to presuppose such reciprocal processes, with youth engaging in activism contemporaneously with activities aimed at promoting reflection or reinforcing motivation. However, Diemer et al. (2016) also note that interventions that emphasize action without providing opportunities to develop reflection are less consistent with the principle of critical consciousness than interventions that do both. Likewise, interventions that focus solely on reflection but do not engender action are not well-aligned with critical consciousness theory (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015).

Many of the studies identified in our review focused on the experiences of a specific and clearly defined cultural and socioeconomic group. Few studies examined critical consciousness-related processes and experiences in multiple identity groups; however, those that did tended to find differences across racial and ethnic groups. For example, Diemer and Rapa (2016) found several differences between Latinx and African American 9th graders in the associations between civic and political knowledge, critical reflection, motivation/efficacy, and action; in some cases, relations between constructs were in the opposite direction for these two groups. Future research should examine both the experiences and contexts that lead to differences in critical consciousness-related processes between different racial and cultural groups among children and youth of color. Different groups have divergent experiences of racial identity, racism, language, discrimination, and other factors that may impact both the nature and function of critical consciousness (Diemer et al., 2016).

In addition, future research should examine the nature of critical consciousness and processes related to critical consciousness for children and youth with privileged identity statuses. Recently, critical consciousness scholars have raised questions about whether those who lack membership in a historically

marginalized or oppressed social group can exhibit critical consciousness or be critically conscious (Diemer et al., 2016; Watts et al., 2003). Freire (2000) wrote that the outcome of oppression is the “dehumanization” of both the oppressor and the oppressed—a “*distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human” (p.44). This suggests that critical consciousness might serve a humanizing function not only for those experiencing marginalization, but also for those in a position to uphold oppressive systems. Further, recent scholarship grounded in theories of intersectionality emphasizes that all individuals hold positions of relative privilege as well as positions of oppression (Godfrey & Burson, 2018). For these reasons, we consider questions regarding the nature and function of critical consciousness with respect to privileged identity statuses to be essential for moving the field forward.

Few of the studies we reviewed focused specifically on the critical consciousness of individuals who were privileged with respect to one or more of their identities (e.g., White children or adolescents with respect to critical consciousness of race; middle class or upper-class children or adolescents with respect to critical consciousness of class; adolescent boys with respect to critical consciousness of gender). This is consistent with the origins of critical consciousness, which was developed as a theory to explain the processes by which marginalized people become empowered to work in opposition to their marginalization. In studies that did include White youth, critical consciousness-related processes often looked different for these youth than for children of color. In one study, Diemer and Li (2011) found that critical consciousness was more predictive of sociopolitical participation for racially and socioeconomically marginalized youth than for White youth. Similarly, Godfrey and Grayman (2014) found that an open classroom climate enhanced sociopolitical efficacy specifically for students of color but not for White students. We would suggest that the relevant outcomes for White youth and children, particularly with respect to critical consciousness related to race, would be different than the relevant outcomes for youth of color. For White youth, who are already privileged in many ways with respect to

education and employment, critical consciousness would not necessarily be expected to relate to these domains. In contrast, critical consciousness among White youth might enhance their awareness of race, increase their awareness of racial diversity, lead them to critique Whiteness, and enhance their anti-racist allyship—a possibility for which some promising evidence exists (Ngai & Koehn, 2011). Aligned with the work of Clonan-Roy et al. (2016) with adolescent girls of color, we argue that models of positive youth development in White adolescents and of social-emotional thriving in White children should incorporate anti-racist allyship as a positive outcome and should examine the possibility that critical consciousness might serve to promote this positive outcome. Similar work could be done related to other privileged identity statuses. At the same time, it will be important for researchers to consider how systems of privilege may position White youth and others holding privileged identity statuses to develop and utilize a superficial form of critical consciousness as a tool for upholding their status. Likewise, a challenge for scholarship in the area of measurement will be to develop measures of critical consciousness that distinguish performative and superficial manifestations of the construct from a genuine, anti-oppressive stance and a commitment to action.

In addition, while some studies emphasized critical consciousness with respect to a particular aspect of identity (e.g., ethnic-racial identity), few of the studies attempted to compare individuals' critical consciousness across multiple identities, such as race *and* gender. As noted by Diemer et al. (2015), critical consciousness may be inconsistent across subjects or identities; for example, an individual might have high critical consciousness with respect to racial oppression but limited critical consciousness with respect to gender-based oppression or oppression at the intersection of race and gender. Examining consistencies and inconsistencies within individuals across the various domains about which a person may experience or demonstrate critical consciousness, and taking intersectionality into account, will be an important step for future research. In addition, it may be that critical

consciousness related to different aspects of identity varies systematically across the course of development as different aspects of identity become more or less salient (e.g., gender identity development during the pubertal period); future research should examine this possibility. Diemer et al. (2015) further note that individuals may have inconsistent levels of critical consciousness across the subdomains of reflection, motivation, and action; thus, an individual might report high levels of critical reflection but low motivation and little engagement in action. Godfrey et al. (2019) confirmed this point through their latent class analysis focused on profiles of critical consciousness. Future research should examine whether levels of critical consciousness across the critical consciousness subdomains vary systematically with age; with development in other cognitive, social, moral, and emotional domains; with identity or context; or, with experience (e.g., early life participation in activism).

An additional next step for the literature—relevant across childhood and adolescence—is to attend to the question of what happens when youth do not develop or have very low levels of critical consciousness. That is, what developmental outcomes can be expected for individuals when their critical consciousness has not been fostered? The developmental literature suggests that in-group and out-group bias co-develop with group awareness and group-based stereotyping, though in-group and out-group bias differ based on personal status. Majority group members, beginning around age four, typically show a strong preference for their own group (e.g., Aboud, 2003; Katz & Kofkin, 1997; Shutts, Kinzler, Katz, Tredoux, & Spelke, 2011); in contrast, members of minority or minoritized groups at the same age show undifferentiated or even pro-outgroup attitudes (Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Corenblum & Annis, 1993; Katz & Kofkin, 1997). Might critical consciousness serve as an antidote to these normative processes, promoting pro-ingroup attitudes for minority group members and inclusive attitudes toward out-group members for minority and majority group children and adolescents? Related to these findings, evidence is accumulating that suggests differences in group-based beliefs for individuals with high

versus low status. The theoretical literature suggests that people with more power are generally more prone to stereotyping, as they pay little attention to individual differences among those who are less powerful and have little motivation to do so (Fiske, 1993).

Overall, our review indicates a growing interest in critical consciousness as a developmental competency that may promote thriving for children and adolescents, particularly those experiencing marginalizing systems. Based on the findings of our review, we suggest that future research on critical consciousness engage carefully with the developmental, relational, contextual, and identity characteristics of research participants, and that questions and hypotheses regarding the development of critical consciousness and the function of critical consciousness be anchored in these characteristics. For example, how do parents foster or resist critical consciousness development in their young and pre-adolescent children? How does parenting related to critical consciousness change during the transition to formal schooling, later elementary and middle school, and high school? Do parents' racial, class, or gender identities impact their discussions of social justice issues and other critical consciousness-related topics, and if so, how? Are there systematic differences in neighborhoods, schools, homes, and geographic regions that predict average levels of critical consciousness in children and adolescents in those contexts? And if so, do these predictions hold across developmental periods and identity statuses, or does the impact of contextual characteristics on critical consciousness depend on a child's own developmental status and identities? Work that is specific with respect to developmental, relational, contextual, and identity characteristics may move the field toward greater understanding of, for example, the conditions under which critical consciousness leads to thriving and engagement versus the conditions under which critical consciousness appears to contribute to disengagement (as occurred for some outcomes reported, e.g., Diemer & Rapa, 2016).

In addition, we suggest that future research carefully consider the interplay of critical reflection, motivation, and action across developmental, relational, contextual, and identity characteristics. Longitudinal research will be essential to understanding how early exposure or lack of exposure to consciousness-raising systems, for children with various identities, contributes both to later critical consciousness and to functioning in school, peer, community, and family settings. Longitudinal research will also demonstrate how the relations among critical reflection, motivation, and action vary across development in different contexts and for children with varying identities.

Conclusion

The recent growth in the empirical literature points to a mounting interest in critical consciousness as a construct that promotes child and adolescent thriving within oppressive social systems. This systematic review of the literature revealed areas in which the extant literature is relatively robust—for example, research on the relation between adolescent critical consciousness and career development—as well as areas in which the extant literature is relatively weak—for example, research on critical consciousness prior to adolescence and research linking critical consciousness to social-emotional and academic functioning. It is our hope that this review provides guidance and motivation for future work to address the gaps identified and build knowledge in this essential area of study.

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Table 1
Overview of Studies Included in Systematic Review of Literature

Reference	Sample ^{ab}	Methodology	Thematic Alignment in Review
Aldana, Bañales, and Richards-Schuster (2019)	249 racially and socioeconomically diverse adolescents; aged 13-19 in the U.S.; mean age = 16.0	Quantitative; cross-sectional; confirmatory factor analysis	M
Bajaj, Argenal, and Canlas (2017)	Immigrant and refugee youth attending an urban public high school in Oakland, California in grades 9-12; aged 14-21	Qualitative; ethnographic case study	I-CC
Bañales, Marchand, Skinner, Anyiwo, Rowley, and Kurtz-Costes (2019)	454 Black adolescents enrolled in 16 high schools in the Southeastern U.S.; mean age (baseline) = 16.0	Quantitative; longitudinal structural equation modeling	PPS; M; CCSD
Baker and Brookins (2014)	Study 1: Salvadoran adolescents from rural communities and belonging to low SES; One group of five 11- to 14-year-olds and another group of 6 17- to 19-year-olds Study 2: 681 Salvadoran high school students, aged 14-22 years, mean age = 16.9	Quantitative; cross-sectional; exploratory factor analysis	M
Brown, Outley, and Pinckney (2018) Byrd (2017)	Black youths ranging from 5 to 18 in the U.S. Study 1: 315 6-12 th grade students in the U.S. recruited through nationwide panels by Qualtrics; mean age = 15.34 Study 2: 504 6-12 th grade students recruited by Qualtrics; mean age = 15.23	Qualitative; multi-case methodology Quantitative; cross-sectional; structural equation modeling	I-OST M
Cammarota (2016)	High school aged youth in Tucson, Arizona	Qualitative; youth participatory action research	I-OIA
Cervantes-Soon (2012)	2 high school aged youth in Juárez, Mexico	Qualitative; ethnography	SC; EMOV
Christens, Byrd, Peterson, and Lardier, (2018)	389 high school aged youth (predominantly youth of color) in the Northeastern U.S.	Quantitative; cross-sectional; latent cluster analysis	CCSD
Christens and Dolan (2011)	20 Latinx youth organizers in the U.S.; aged 16-20	Qualitative; interview	CE; CCSD
Clark and Seider (2017)	60 high school aged youth attending urban charter high schools in the Northeastern U.S.	Qualitative; semi-structured interviews	SC
Clark and Seider (2019)	659 youth in the U.S. with the majority belonging to low SES and people of color; surveyed at the end of 9 th , 10 th , 11 th , and 12 th grades	Qualitative	BKKP; CCSD

Table 1 (continued).

Reference	Sample ^{ab}	Methodology	Thematic Alignment
Clonan-Roy, Jacobs, and Nakkula (2016)	15 high school aged Black girls in grades 9-12 in the Northeastern U.S.	Qualitative; ethnography	SEF
Delia and Krasny (2018)	9 high school aged youth living in Brooklyn, New York, aged 15-18	Qualitative; narrative inquiry	SEF
Diemer (2009)	1,052 youth of color belonging to low SES; 10 th and 12 th grade students in the U.S.	Quantitative; longitudinal; structural equation modeling	CD; AF
Diemer (2012)	3,267 youth of color belonging to low SES; 10 th and 12 th grade students in the U.S.	Quantitative; longitudinal; structural equation modeling	PPS; EVVB
Diemer and Blustein (2006)	220 high school aged youth attending two urban high schools in the Northeastern U.S.; mean age = 15.57	Quantitative; cross-sectional; canonical correlation analysis	CD
Diemer and Hsieh (2008)	1,784 12 th grade students of color in the U.S.	Quantitative; cross-sectional; multiple regression analysis	CD
Diemer, Hsieh, and Pan (2009)	2,078 low-SES adolescents of color in the U.S.; 12 th grade	Quantitative; cross-sectional	PPS; SC
Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan, and Hsieh (2006)	98 high school aged youth attending two urban high schools in the Northeastern U.S.; mean age = 15.44	Mixed methods; cross-sectional	PPS
Diemer and Li (2011)	665 U.S. poor and working class youth drawn from the nationally representative Civic and Political Health Survey of 2006 (CPHS), aged 15-25; mean age = 20.6	Quantitative; cross-sectional; structural equation modeling	PPS; SC; EMOV; BKKP; EVVB; M
Diemer and Rapa (2016)	761 poor and working class U.S. 9 th grade students drawn from the nationally representative Civic Education Study of 1999 (CIVED); mean age = 14.6	Quantitative; cross-sectional; structural equation modeling	BKKP; EVVB; M; CCSD
Diemer, Rapa, Park, and Perry (2017)	326 youth from the Midwestern U.S., aged 13-19; mean age = 15.47	Quantitative; cross-sectional; structural equation modeling	M
Diemer, Voight, Marchand, & Bañales (2019)	237 urban high school aged youth from the Midwestern U.S.; mean age = 16.91	Quantitative; cross-sectional; structural equation modeling	BKKP
Diemer, Wang, Moore, Gregory, Hatcher, and Voight (2010)	2,627 African American, Latinx, and Asian American youth in the U.S. belonging to low SES; surveyed in 10 th and 12 th grade	Quantitative; longitudinal	CD; AF
Dimick (2016)	20 high school aged youth attending an urban high school in the U.S.	Qualitative; case study	I-S
Fegley, Angelique, and Cunningham (2006)	22 pre-adolescent and teenaged youth from central Pennsylvania, aged 6-13	Mixed methods	CE

Table 1 (continued).

Reference	Sample ^{ab}	Methodology	Thematic Alignment
Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty, and Aoun (2010)	19 middle school aged youth from the Midwestern U.S., aged 12-13	Qualitative; youth participatory action research and photovoice	BKKP; I-OST
Fullam (2017)	1 17-year-old high school student in Newark, New Jersey	Qualitative; case study	SC; CE
Godfrey, Burson, Yanisch, and Way (2019)	447 youth attending middle school in New York, NY, drawn from the longitudinal Early Adolescent Cohort study; data for study participants were collected when respondents were in 7 th grade	Quantitative; cross-sectional; latent class analysis	SEF; AF
Godfrey and Grayman (2014)	2,774 U.S. 9 th grade students drawn from the nationally representative Civic Education Study of 1999 (CIVED); mean age = 14.00	Quantitative; cross-sectional; multi-level regression	SC
Groves Price and Mencke (2013)	Native American youth participating in a residential summer camp in the Northwestern U.S., aged 13-17	Qualitative; youth participatory action research	I-OST
Harper, Sands, Horowitz, Totman, Maitín, Rosado, Colon, and Alger (2017)	8 middle, high school, and college aged youth from Holyoke, Massachusetts, aged 13-20	Qualitative; youth participatory action research	I-OST
Hawkins (2014)	38 preschool aged children in Australia, aged 3-5	Qualitative; youth participatory action research	I-LA
Hoeg, Lemelin, and Bencze (2015)	12 6 th grade students in the U.S.	Qualitative; interviews	I-S
Hope & Bañales (2018)	36 Black students in the United States, aged 10-14	Qualitative; focus groups	M
Houser and Overton (2001)	2 focal students drawn from a larger sample of 27 first grade students from the Middle Atlantic region of the U.S., aged 5-7	Qualitative; ethnographic case study	I-O
Jacobs (2016)	Approx. 25 Black girls in grades 9-12 in the Northeastern U.S.	Qualitative	I-ISEC
Jearey-Graham and Macleod (2017)	11 10 th grade students in South Africa, aged 15-17	Qualitative	I-OIA
Kelly (2018)	7 high school aged Black girls in 12 th grade, in a suburban area of a large city in the Northeastern U.S., aged 16-17	Qualitative; case study	EMOV
Kozan, Blustein, Barnett, Wong, Connors-Kellgren, Haley, ... Wan (2017)	9 urban high school aged youth from the Northeastern U.S., aged 15-18	Qualitative; content analysis	I-S
Luginbuhl, McWhirter, and McWhirter (2016)	1,196 diverse high school youth in the U.S.; aged 13-18; mean age = 14.7	Quantitative; cross-sectional	SEF; AF
McWhirter, Gomez, and Rau (2018)	686 Latinx youth attending 71 schools in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, aged 13-20; mean age = 16.3	Qualitative; thematic content analysis	M

Table 1 (continued).

Reference	Sample ^{ab}	Methodology	Thematic Alignment
McWhirter and McWhirter (2016)	Study 1: 476 high school aged Latinx youth, aged 14-19; mean age = 16.4 Study 2: 680 high school aged Latinx youth, aged 13-20; mean age = 16.3	Quantitative; cross-sectional; structural equation modeling	AF; M
Moya (2017)	24 high school aged Latinx youth from Southern California, aged 14-18	Qualitative; case study	I-OIA
Ngai and Koehn (2011)	Approx. 300 1 st -5 th grade students attending a public K-5 school in western Montana	Mixed methods; longitudinal	I-CC
Nicholas, Eastman-Mueller, and Barbich (2019)	6 youth attending a community-based sex education program in Southwest Missouri	Qualitative; phenomenology	CD; I-OIA
Ngo (2017)	9 low-income, second-generation immigrant Hmong youth from the Midwestern U.S., aged 16-19	Qualitative; ethnography	I-OST
Nguyen and Quinn (2018)	Approx. 16 Vietnamese immigrant and U.S.-born youth from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, aged 14-21	Qualitative; content analysis	I-OST
Olle and Fouad (2015)	137 11-12 th grade students attending an urban high school from the Midwestern U.S.	Quantitative; cross-sectional	CD
Oosterhoff, Ferris, Palmer, and Metzger (2017)	299 economically diverse youth in the U.S.; 88% White; aged 14-18; mean age = 15.49	Quantitative; longitudinal	CE; CCSD
Osorio (2018)	20 2 nd grade second generation (U.S.-born) emergent bilingual children	Qualitative; youth participatory action research	I-LA
Pérez-Gualdrón, and Helms (2017)	1,472 8 th grade Latinx youth drawn from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, aged 13-16; mean age (at baseline) = 14.46	Quantitative; longitudinal; structural equation modeling	SC; CE; AF
Rapa, Diemer, and Bañales (2018)	261 lower-SES African American youth, drawn from the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study; participants were 11 th grade at baseline, or aged approximately 17	Quantitative; longitudinal; structural equation modeling	CD
Rodríguez (2008)	50 high school aged youth and 45 undergraduate pre-service teachers from the Southeastern U.S.	Qualitative; youth participatory action research	I-OST
Roy, Raver, Masucci, and DeJoseph (2019)	461 urban youth predominantly from high-poverty neighborhoods in Chicago, IL aged 13-17; mean age = 15.32	Mixed methods; cross-sectional	EMOV; CE
Sánchez Carmen, Domínguez, Greene, Mendoza, Fine, Neville, and Gutiérrez (2015)	30 high school aged youth from across a mountain-region state	Qualitative; ethnographic case study and photovoice	I-OST

Table 1 (continued).

Reference	Sample ^{ab}	Methodology	Thematic Alignment
Seider et al. (2016)	552 Black, Latinx, or Multiracial youth predominantly low SES in the U.S.; aged 13-16	Mixed methods; longitudinal	AF; SC
Seider, Tamerat, Clark, and Soutter (2017)	335 high school aged youth attending urban charter high schools in the Northeastern U.S.	Mixed methods; longitudinal	SC
Silva (2012)	20 1 st grader students attending a K-8 public charter school in the central coast of California, aged 6-7	Qualitative; ethnography	I-LA
Slaten, Rivera, Shemwell, and Elison (2016)	9 African American youth attending an urban alternative school in the Midwestern U.S., aged 17-19	Qualitative; phenomenology	I-ISEC
Tintiango-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, Desai, Sabac, and Von Torres (2016)	25 students participating in an ethnic studies educational program in San Francisco, California, aged 7-21	Qualitative; case study and youth participatory action research	I-OIA
Tsurusaki, Barton, Tan, Koch, and Contento (2013)	6 th grade students from a single class, attending a school in an economically depressed Midwestern state	Qualitative; participant observation	I-S
Tyson (2002)	6 th grade students from a single class, attending an urban school	Qualitative	I-LA
Watts & Abdul-Adil (1998)	32 African American 9-10 th grade high school students attending an urban school in the Midwestern U.S.; mean age = 15.5	Qualitative; content analysis	I-ISEC
Wernick, Kulick, and Woodford (2014)	13 youth who were participants of a LGBTQQ youth organization in Ann Arbor, Michigan, aged 14-22	Qualitative	I-OST
Winans-Solis (2014)	3 12 th grade students attending a public charter high school in New York, New York	Qualitative; case study	I-OST

Note. AF = Academic Functioning; BKKP = Beliefs, Knowledge, and Knowledge Production; CD = Career Development, Occupational Expectancies, and Occupational Attainment; CE = Community Engagement; EMOV = Experiences of Marginalization, Oppression, and Violence; EV = Expected Voting and Voting Behavior; I-CC = Interventions: Cross-Curricular; I-ISEC = Interventions: In-School Extra-Curricular; I-LA = Interventions: Literature and the Arts; I-O = Interventions: Other; I-OIA = Interventions: Other Instructional Areas; I-OST = Interventions: Out of School Time; I-S = Interventions: Science; M = Measurement; CCSD = Critical Consciousness Sub-Domains theme.

^aSome studies did not report the precise age range or mean age of participants. Thus, we provide summary information here in parallel with the specifics reported in each manuscript.

^bIn Table 1 and throughout this manuscript, we use the term “Latinx” to describe research participants with a Latin American ethnic identity. Please note that, in some cases, the original articles reviewed may have used alternative terms (e.g., “Latino/Latina”).

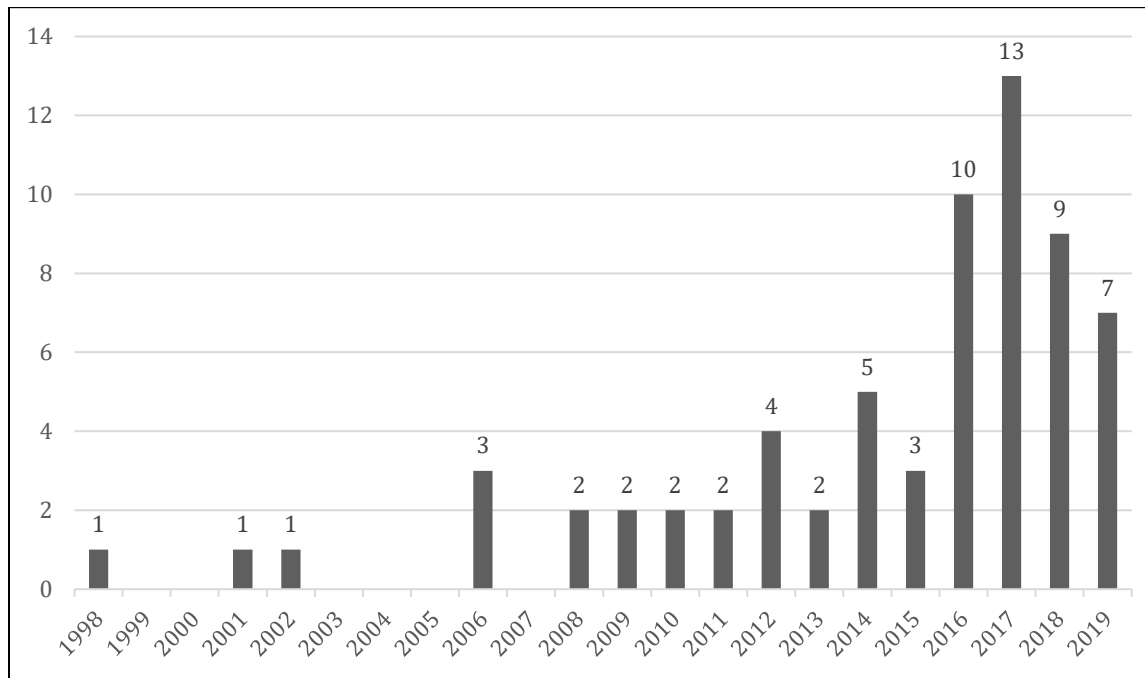


Figure 1. Number of studies on critical consciousness included in systematic review, published by year.