

(No) Harm in Asking: Class, Acquired Cultural Capital, and Academic Engagement at an Elite University

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Abstract

How do undergraduates engage authority figures in college? Existing explanations predict class-based engagement strategies. Using in-depth interviews with 89 undergraduates at an elite university, I show how undergraduates with disparate precollege experiences differ in their orientations toward and strategies for engaging authority figures in college. Middle-class undergraduates report being at ease in interacting with authority figures and are proactive in doing so. Lower-income undergraduates, however, are split. The *privileged poor*—lower-income undergraduates who attended boarding, day, and preparatory high schools—enter college primed to engage professors and are proactive in doing so. By contrast, the *doubly disadvantaged*—lower-income undergraduates who remained tied to their home communities and attended local, typically distressed high schools—are more resistant to engaging authority figures in college and tend to withdraw from them. Through documenting the heterogeneity among lower-income undergraduates, I show how static understandings of individuals' cultural endowments derived solely from family background homogenize the experiences of lower-income undergraduates. In so doing, I shed new light on the cultural underpinnings of education processes in higher education and extend previous analyses of how informal university practices exacerbate class differences among undergraduates.

Keywords

academic engagement, cultural capital, diversity, education, inequality, sense of belonging, trajectories

Marie:¹ I have such great fortune with professors. I have very personal relationships with one of them, two of them actually. We go out for dinner. I go to office hours all the time. My relationships with professors and teaching assistants are all pretty good.

Nicole: I say, "Let's get coffee." I have no qualms asking a teacher for help. If I need something, I'm more than willing to go; I e-mail often. It's valuable for your grades to know professors. I make it a point to know my teaching assistants, my professors. Since my high school had mandatory tutorial hours for teachers, I was like, "If I need help here, I'll just go to office hours." It wasn't a big thing.

A constant refrain rings out across campus, the social call of professors: "My door is always open." Many undergraduates welcome these invitations; some do not even wait for such offers before reaching out. Others run from them, finding such solicitations odd, intrusive, even terrifying.

Previous scholarship shows that differences in

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engaging authority figures in academic contexts affect students' access to institutional resources, acquisition of cultural and social capital, educational experiences, and postgraduation mobility (Calarco 2011; Carter 2005; Collier and Morgan 2008; Holland 2015; Lareau 2003; Rivera 2015; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995; Stephens, Fryberg, et al. 2012; Stuber 2011; Zweigenhaft 1993). Building on Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) work on the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, scholars argue that working-class youth are at a distinct disadvantage because (1) they have low stocks of dominant cultural capital to draw on when acclimating to college and (2) colleges privilege middle-class norms and behaviors (Aries and Seider 2005; Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Lehmann 2014; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Stephens, Townsend, et al. 2012; Torres 2009; Walpole 2003). Yet Marie is a legacy student and daughter of professionals, whereas Nicole is a first-generation college student and daughter of drug addicts whose addictions cost them custody of their children and their own freedom.

Drawing on interviews with undergraduates, I examine what Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum (2008:131) call the "experiential core of college life," the often-overlooked moments between entry and exit when undergraduates use different cultural competencies to navigate college. Rather than observing strict, class-stratified engagement strategies "marked by [their] earliest conditions of acquisition" (Bourdieu 1986:245), I show how the *privileged poor*—lower-income undergraduates who attended boarding, day, and preparatory high schools—enter college with a propensity for and an ease in engaging authority figures akin to middle-class students. In contrast, the *doubly disadvantaged*—lower-income undergraduates who remained tied to their home communities and attended local, often distressed high schools—tend to withdraw from engaging authority figures and feel uneasy when forced to interact with professors. In effect, privileged poor and doubly disadvantaged are Weberian ideal types (Weber 1978; see also E. Anderson 1999), analytic concepts used to represent the overlooked heterogeneity in the experiences of lower-income undergraduates.

It is important to understand how social class shapes how undergraduates navigate college. In outlining differences between the privileged poor and the doubly disadvantaged, however, I show how attributing individuals' cultural endowments solely to family background homogenizes the

experiences of lower-income undergraduates. Institutions—not exclusively the family—can equip students with the cultural competencies they need to succeed in college. Furthermore, I extend previous organizational analyses on how informal university practices exacerbate class differences among undergraduates. I show how colleges are biased toward not just undergraduates from advantaged class backgrounds but rather undergraduates with precollege experiences usually reserved for wealthier segments of society.

SOCIAL CLASS AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

From asking for help to developing mentoring relationships, engaging authority figures in academic contexts—a form of dominant cultural capital—is a mechanism through which youth gain access to institutional support and resources (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Calarco 2011; L. Erickson, McDonald, and Elder 2009; Holland 2015; Kim and Sax 2009; Lareau 2003; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). Researchers argue that social class stratifies how students engage teachers in primary and secondary school. Highlighting the role of parental socialization, Calarco (2011:873) states that "children's class backgrounds provid[e] them not only with different dispositions for choosing whether and when to seek help but also with different strategies to use in help-seeking interaction." Compared to working-class youth, middle-class children are better primed to engage teachers and feel more comfortable doing so (Calarco 2014a; Lareau 2003; Streib 2011). Moreover, teachers respond more positively to middle-class interactional styles, often spending more time with or favoring students who adopt them (Calarco 2014b; Carter 2005; Patrick et al. 2001; Willis 1977).

Scholars assert that youths' class dispositions, or *habitus*, persist into college and the cultural norms that govern campus life exacerbate class differences (Lareau and Weininger 2008; Lee and Kramer 2013; Lehmann 2014). Emphasizing how social class shapes behavior, Armstrong and Hamilton (2013:10) state that "students from similar class backgrounds share financial, cultural, and social resources, as well as lived experiences, that shape their orientations to college and the agendas they can readily pursue." Analyzing how institutional expectations related to faculty

engagement affect undergraduates' well-being and functioning, Stephens, Fryberg, et al. (2012:1180) argue that colleges too narrowly "focus on middle-class norms of independence as the culturally appropriate way to be a college student," thereby alienating working-class undergraduates (Lehmann 2007; Smith 2013). Collier and Morgan (2008:439) posit that first-generation college students' lack of cultural capital leads to emotionally taxing moments of miscommunication with faculty and "broad failures to understand faculty's expectations about the basic features of student performance." Furthermore, scholars argue that this contrast is starkest at elite colleges (Aries and Seider 2005; Mullen 2010; Torres 2009; see also Binder and Wood 2013). The cultural mismatch that working-class undergraduates experience increases stress (Stephens, Townsend, et al. 2012), heightens their sense of isolation (Aries 2008; Ostrove and Long 2007), threatens their academic identities (Collier and Morgan 2008; Tinto 1987), undercuts academic performance and persistence (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Pike and Kuh 2005; Terenzini et al. 1996), and can prompt them to withdraw from campus life (Bergerson 2007; Lehmann 2007; Suskind 1999). Social class limits undergraduates' acquisition of cultural and social capital (Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin 2014; Stuber 2011; Walpole 2003). These experiences, important in their own right, can also affect mobility after college (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Rivera 2015; Zweigenhaft 1993).

Clearly, social class is crucial to understanding undergraduates' college experiences. Previous investigations, however, treat lower-income undergraduates as a monolithic group by adopting fixed understandings of students' acquisition of dominant cultural capital that happens during early childhood. Consequently, this line of research does not show how interactions outside the home influence acquisition of cultural capital (B. Erickson 1996; Lamont and Lareau 1988; Young 1999) or how those experiences may moderate the relationship between social class and academic engagement in college.

College: Next Step or New World

When engaging authority figures in and navigating the "hidden curriculum" of academic institutions (Anyon 1980), undergraduates rely on cultural

competencies developed before college. Consequently, high schools play a powerful role in shaping students' cultural competencies, because they serve as judges of academic success and the associated social dynamics (Bowles and Gintis 2011; Carter 2012; Cookson and Persell 1985; Flores-González 2002; Gaztambide-Fernandez 2009; Mehan 2012; Nunn 2014; Tyson 2011). As middle- and working-class youth transition to adulthood, however, they typically do so separately from one another (Putnam 2015; Stephens, Markus, and Phillips 2013). Middle-class youth hail from more formally educated families, reside in safer neighborhoods, and attend well-resourced schools, whereas working-class youth come from less formally educated families, live in less secure communities, and attend less resourced schools (Logan, Minca, and Adar 2012; Massey 1996; Massey et al. 2003; Orfield et al. 1994; Ryan 2010; Sampson 2012). Such unstable social circumstances are compounded for disadvantaged blacks and Latinos (Kozol 1991; Neckerman 2007; Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Crowley 2006; Sampson and Wilson 1995; Sharkey 2013).

Scholars interested in disadvantaged undergraduates' college experiences tend to overlook the growing number of lower-income students of color who enter college from highly resourced high schools by participating in government-sponsored mobility programs (Carter 2012; DeLuca and Dayton 2009); joining agencies, like A Better Chance and Prep for Prep, that place them in private high schools, like Exeter and Andover (Holland 2012; Ispa-Landa 2013; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1991);² or receiving scholarships directly through diversity initiatives at boarding, day, and preparatory schools, like St. Paul's and Milton (J. Anderson 2012). Recent National Association of Independent Schools (2013a, 2013b) reports show that roughly 28 percent of private school students are students of color (e.g., black, Latino, and Asian) and 23 percent of all students receive financial aid, roughly an 8 percent increase over the past decade for both. Among undergraduates at elite colleges, 50 percent of lower-income black students come from private schools (Jack 2014), following the top college placement of their affluent classmates (Cookson and Persell 1985; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1991). I call lower-income undergraduates who travel this alternative path to college the *privileged poor*.

Although they come from economically disadvantaged homes and distressed neighborhoods, the

privileged poor are immersed in resource-rich, predominantly white, wealthy secondary schools (Cookson and Persell 1985; Gaztambide-Fernandez 2009; Ispa-Landa 2015). Importantly, these students experience these environments during adolescence, when they are developmentally malleable (Crone and Dahl 2012; Erikson 1980). In these schools, students forge academic and social identities in contexts that encourage independent thinking, open dialogue, and close, frequent contact with teachers (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Kane 1992; Khan 2011). Their precollege exposure to elite environments differs from that of their lower-income peers who remain in or near their home communities for school and socializing, those whom I call the *doubly disadvantaged*. Schools in lower-income neighborhoods typically reinforce notions that teachers are distant authority figures, adopt test-oriented curricula, deal with problems that interrupt learning, and lack formal structures that promote contact with teachers (Kozol 1991; Neckerman 2007; Paule 2013; Ryan 2010). Golann (2015:108), for example, notes that by focusing on discipline, “no-excuse” schools create “worker-learners—children who monitor themselves, hold back their opinions, and defer to authority.” Some lower-income students do attend magnet or charter schools. The cultural and resource differences between alternative public schools and private schools, however, are greater than that between alternative and public schools.

These studies outline the overlooked divergent high school contexts and experiences for lower-income students. They cannot, however, speak to how these disparate precollege experiences relate to lower-income undergraduates’ college experiences (Jack 2015). Consequently, the theoretical implications of how lower-income undergraduates from these disparate streams navigate college remain underexplored. I address this gap by documenting the different engagement strategies of the privileged poor and the doubly disadvantaged.

DATA AND METHODS

The Place

Renowned University (pseudonym) is a highly selective university in the United States with a long history of educating youth from wealthy families. Renowned accepts fewer than 15 percent

of applicants, the middle 50 percent of SAT scores are between 2000 and 2400, and roughly one third of undergraduates do not qualify for financial aid. The student body and faculty are predominately white. Although they serve fewer undergraduates than do large, public universities, elite colleges increase chances of upward mobility for lower-income and minority undergraduates more than lower-tier institutions (Bowen and Bok 1998; Dale and Krueger 2002). Renowned adopted progressive need-blind and no-loan admissions and financial aid policies to increase access for underrepresented groups. These financial aid policies reduce undergraduates’ need for outside loans and full-time employment, which are associated with academic and social disengagement (Bergerson 2007; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Additionally, Renowned is almost exclusively residential, which means all undergraduates are immersed in the same social milieu and are exposed to the social and cultural norms that govern campus life, even if they experience these norms differently.

The People

I conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews with 89 native-born black (B) and Latino (L) undergraduates. I limited the investigation to the experiences of native-born undergraduates to examine how exposure to structural inequalities in the United States shapes undergraduates’ college experiences. To gain analytic leverage on how lower-income undergraduates who travel different trajectories to college report navigating Renowned, I include Latino respondents for four reasons. First, much of the literature on inequality and undergraduate college experiences focuses on black/white comparisons or intraracial investigations of class differences (Small and Newman 2001). Second, Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States, making up 17 percent of the country’s population in 2013 (Lopez and Patten 2015). Third, black and Latino undergraduates have more similar precollege exposure to poverty, segregation, and the concomitant social dislocations, compared to white or Asian undergraduates (Massey et al. 2003). Fourth, boarding, day, and preparatory high schools and elite colleges and universities also target lower-income Latino youth for diversity initiatives (J. Anderson 2012). I did not interview middle-class Latino undergraduates. Over the course of fieldwork, I discovered that a significant

Table 1. Analytic and Racial Classification of Respondents.

Classification	Black	Latino	Total
Middle class	27	0	27
Privileged poor	9	11	20
Doubly disadvantaged	13	29	42
Total respondents	49	40	89

number of the middle-class Latinos at Renowned were born outside the United States.

I asked a number of questions to assess respondents' absolute and relative disadvantage, including how much financial aid they received (if any), what their parents' occupations were, if they were first-generation college students, whether they received a Pell grant, whether they received additional college scholarships to help with purchasing books or clothes, if they experienced economic hardships growing up, and whether they received government aid growing up (e.g., food stamps). As Table 1 shows, 27 respondents were from middle-class backgrounds, meaning their parents graduated from a four-year institution,³ and 62 respondents were from lower-income backgrounds, meaning they were first-generation college students or reported receiving significant financial aid (on average, over 80 percent of their tuition was covered by scholarship). I classified 20 lower-income respondents as privileged poor and 42 as doubly disadvantaged. Among respondents, 61 identified as female and 28 identified as male. This gender imbalance mirrors that of black and Latino undergraduates at Renowned and elite colleges more generally. Massey and colleagues (2003:40) show that for black and Latino undergraduates, there is a 2:1 and 1.18:1 gender ratio favoring women, respectively. I did not observe gender differences with respect to comfort in and strategies for engaging authority figures.⁴

I recruited respondents in three ways. First, I immersed myself in the community by eating in the cafeteria; attending social gatherings and informal events, like television show screenings; moderating discussions on race, class, and inclusion held by student clubs and organizations; and building rapport with different college administrators. Through these interactions, I engaged different student leaders of affinity groups. I used these connections to send invitations to participate in the study through the groups' e-mail lists. Second,

respondents referred friends, often making introductions at events or via e-mail. Third, I introduced myself to undergraduates at public events on campus and personally invited them to participate in this study.

I constructed my interview guide to investigate undergraduates' lives inside and outside of school before college. In the first part of the interview guide, I followed a targeted life history approach to investigate respondents' depictions of and experiences in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, and different organizations (see Young 1999). In the second part, I focused on respondents' college experiences. I began data analysis by listening to interviews to develop major themes. The primary data source for this article came from respondents' answer to the statement, "Tell me about your interactions with college officials," and instances where respondents described encounters with or perceptions of professors and other authority figures at Renowned. I asked about engagement in this open-ended manner to allow respondents to identify their most salient experiences and outline their modal engagement strategies, which I could then explore in more detail with probing questions (for a similar methodology, see Hirsch and Jack 2012). I created an "engagement" code in ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis program, to focus on respondents' engagement with authority figures (Charmaz 2006; Weiss 1994). I read transcript excerpts after classifying respondents as privileged poor, doubly disadvantaged, and middle class to assess general patterns within and across groups.

Given my background as a black man who is a first-generation college student and my (perceived) status as an authority figure, I thought critically about researcher effects—how who I am might influence respondents' openness and my analysis. I do not believe respondents withheld essential information in their interviews. On average, interviews lasted almost 2.5 hours. Respondents provided intimate details about their lives before Renowned. They were equally forthcoming about many aspects of their college experiences, from their engagement strategies to thoughts about fitting in on campus. Many respondents mentioned that interviews "felt like therapy" or said that the interview was one of the few times at Renowned that they felt someone cared about their story rather than just what they plan to do during (e.g., major) or after (e.g., job) college. I believe respondents came to see me more as an emotional outlet than as an authority figure.

Validity and Robustness Checks

I checked my analysis by sharing preliminary findings with individuals at Renowned. First, I shared observations with deans, professors, and support center personnel for feedback. Second, I presented findings at public forums and departmental meetings focused on strategies to engage first-generation college students for different support services. Feedback confirmed an unsaid institutional expectation that undergraduates should reach out if they want help. After meetings with student affairs officers at Renowned, I gave a public lecture that roughly 60 professors, deans, residential advisors, and undergraduates attended. Additionally, two student groups hosted open discussions on this research. These structured dialogues, along with informal discussions with undergraduates around campus, suggested that this analysis captured not only respondents' experiences but also those of undergraduates not in the sample. During question-and-answer periods, when outlining their engagement strategies, students often described their class background and high school in ways that largely aligned with my findings. Similar experiences occurred after a lecture at another college; for example, an undergraduate identified herself as doubly disadvantaged and explained why she and her friend (who subsequently identified as privileged poor) engaged faculty so differently from one another.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Middle Class

Middle-class respondents enter college with an ease for engaging adults. As Table 2 shows, the vast majority of middle-class respondents (22 of 27) described positive interactions with professors, deans, and administrators at Renowned. Many reported engaging authority figures to develop support networks and to extract key assets, like recommendation letters, research assistantships, and access to authority figures' professional and personal networks.

Middle-class respondents discussed being comfortable engaging authority figures, and many sought out professors early on in their time at Renowned. Antoinette (MC, B), a freshman whose parents also attended Renowned, called her transition from her days as a boarding school student to her days as an undergraduate at Renowned "smooth." She felt comfortable

reaching out to professors, intimating that Renowned and her boarding school had similar rules for engaging faculty:

Antoinette: It is possible to do it here because not all professors are scary. At my boarding school, it was a given. The same people who were your dorm parents were your teachers. It was easier to make close connections because you're living with them. Literally. Here, it's different. You have to go seek that relationship; it's not going to come to you.

Interviewer: Do you feel okay doing that?

Antoinette: I do. Because of my boarding school, I know it's possible. I've reaped the benefits of being close to faculty members in high school. Coming here, if I see someone who's awesome . . . I'm in this English class that clearly has an awesome professor. I have more confidence to go to office hours and meet her in person.

Going further, Antoinette said that, like Renowned, her boarding school reinforced "the independence thing. You learn how to talk to teachers yourself. You learn to do what you have to do on your own and be responsible for all the things you have to do. . . . The amount that they mix students and teachers makes you feel more grown up than you are." Prioritizing independence, her high school pushed students to be agents in their own development while also providing ample opportunities for personal contact with teachers. Although relationships with faculty at Renowned were less automatic, Antoinette felt comfortable cultivating them, even as a freshman.

Similarly, Joe (MC, B), son of health care professionals who attended local public schools that catered to surrounding middle-class enclaves, regaled me with accounts of positive relationships with faculty. In high school, where he "thrived in small classes," Joe loved opportunities to show adults his productivity and his personality, something he claimed has helped him at Renowned. In describing his bond with one professor at Renowned, he said, with a knowing smile, "I go to his office hours. I'm like his right-hand man; we're pretty cool." One less positive interaction, however, showcases his ease in engaging authority and advocating for himself. Joe recalled feeling slighted out of a higher grade:

I expect a lot of teachers: be compassionate, happy to help, make sure you understand

Table 2. Respondents' Precollege and College Experiences with Authority Figures.

Variable	Middle class	Doubly disadvantaged	Privileged poor
Family	Knowledgeable about college	Limited/no knowledge about college	Limited/no knowledge about college
High school	Resourced; culturally similar Expected/encouraged contact with teachers	Resource deprived; culturally dissimilar Limited contact with teachers outside of class Structurally and organizationally different	Resource rich; culturally similar Expected/encouraged contact with teachers Structurally and organizationally similar
Precollege contact with high school authority figures	High; encouraged Generally positive	Seen as <i>authority figures</i> (reinforced by parents) Generally distant; less personal; more deferential	Initially reluctant to engage then positive Seen as <i>facilitators</i> to short- and long-term goals
Transition to college	Relatively similar: continuity; familiarity	New world: discontinuity; difficult; stressful	Next step: continuity; familiarity; smooth
General relationship with authority figures at renowned	Positive At ease with and at Renowned Proactive in reaching out Engagement expected as part of college Seen as <i>partners</i> in all endeavors	Negative Dissonance fosters anxiety Withdraws from interactions and engagement, especially outside of class material Feelings of guilt associated with help seeking	Positive Similarities bolster comfort and confidence Proactive in reaching out Generally at ease with engaging professors, authority figures
Respondents reporting positive engagement	22/27	Reluctance to engage 15/42	16/20

and be understanding of where you are coming from, give advice. But, man, I had the weirdest encounter with a TA [teaching assistant]; it set me off. I hadn't done as well on the exam as I wanted to, so I went to her about a regrade. Brought the idea up to her. And she was like, "That probably won't work." I was like, "I explained my point." She was like, "Yeah, but you have to say this." She didn't seem like she cared and that kind of pissed me off. I talked to my TA about it when I went to class later.

Joe, the self-proclaimed "right-hand man" to a prominent professor, was comfortable arguing for a regrade and expected his teaching assistant to see things his way. He refused to simply accept the lower grade without a challenge. Although unsuccessful this time, future attempts may prove beneficial, as may his comfort in advocating for himself inside and outside the classroom.

Outside of office hours and class, middle-class respondents also discussed engaging authority figures on social and personal matters. One middle-class respondent partnered with his teaching assistants for tennis, and another reported befriending deans at social events. Misha's (MC, B) success in lobbying administrators to endorse housing for transgender students, and their support of his own gender transition, left him feeling welcomed at Renowned. Calling interactions "positive," he admitted,

I don't think I've had a bad one. I've had to meet with the housing coordinator; she was ridiculously nice. I don't know if the resident advisor counts, [but] the QueerPRIDE advisor is the nicest guy I've ever met. My residential advisor is nice enough, distant, but nice enough.

Similarly, Justin (MC, B), a junior, said that his strategy was to "reach out; I reach out to everyone." Going further, he explained how and why he bridges the academic and social:

Renowned is what I expected: a place of profound excess and profound wealth. Definitely try and get a slice of it. What I do really well for myself this past year, not only this past year, is reaching out to professors, reaching out to business people, reaching out to physicians. I'm interested in

medicine. Reach out to public health scholars; I'm interested in public health also. This place is becoming what it should be for me, a place where I have this opportunity, the privilege to understand how the world works [and] how I can effect change.

Hitting the books was not the only way Justin wished to make the most of college. He looked to the full community of scholars at Renowned to help him with on-campus endeavors and post-baccalaureate projects. His work on campus demonstrated this point: one semester he hosted conversations with leading scholars and activists that drew hundreds.

Generally, middle-class respondents reported proactively engaging authority figures, described these interactions positively, and argued that they reap benefits for building those relationships. Even freshmen, like Antoinette and Joe, reported hitting the ground running. Middle-class respondents saw professors and other authority figures as partners in their journey toward adulthood, whether it related to personal growth while at Renowned or advancement after graduation.

Doubly Disadvantaged

In contrast, the doubly disadvantaged experience more disruptive transitions to college than do their middle-class peers. Corinne (DD, B) quipped that everything at Renowned constituted culture shock "except for the fact I'm in the same country." As Table 2 highlights, these students reported fewer interactions with faculty and tense, negative interactions with adults. The doubly disadvantaged lack the skill set or desire to engage faculty, even as they perceive their peers reaping the benefits of forging relationships. Naturally, not all doubly disadvantaged respondents reported negative encounters with or withdrawing from faculty. However, only a third (15 of 42) reported positive relationships and, sometimes, even these more favorable relationships were strained.

Active disengagement was common for the doubly disadvantaged. Shaniqua (DD, B), a senior, said that before college, living "above the poverty line was high." With continued bouts of homelessness and living in shelters before Renowned, Shaniqua developed the grit to withstand tough times and excel academically in the four segregated, poor high schools she attended, where violent

fights between rival gangs disrupted learning almost daily. Yet the resilience that protected her before Renowned spawned an inability to advocate for herself in college:

Shaniqua: When you're poor *and* you're homeless, you get used to [taking] what is given. You don't complain. Someone gives you a shirt, even if it's ugly, you wear it. Of course you'll be grateful. It's made it harder for me to advocate for myself. Part of me is like, "I've been given enough." It wouldn't really be good to rock the boat when you're homeless and depend on others. I make myself likable, being okay with what is given. I've gotten better but it's hard for me to advocate for myself. It's taken time to not feel guilty asking for extensions.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to feel comfortable?

Shaniqua: I don't know how much of it is pressure or me feeling comfortable. Junior year was really good. I know I'm not comfortable now (as a senior) because I almost failed a class. I didn't reach out to the professor until he sent an e-mail. Even though he said if you don't turn in this paper you'll fail, it wasn't until I got that e-mail that I realized I needed to e-mail him. For weeks, I just kind of sat and didn't do anything.

Unlike Joe (MC, B), who felt comfortable enough engaging adults to argue for higher grades as a freshman, Shaniqua reported accepting what was given to her well into her junior year. Her strategy of withdrawing from her professor placed her grades in jeopardy, and the stress of it all paralyzed her.

Respondents also noted feeling uneasy with the expected style of engagement at Renowned; they believed that interactions with professors should be limited to discussing academic material. Daniel (DD, L), a junior, remembered the relationships between teachers and students in high school as strained: "Freshmen year, classes [are] mixed (honors and regular students). People heckle teachers, argue with them, text blatantly in their face, ignore them. My honors and AP [Advanced Placement] classes, we got yelled at for not doing homework." Not until junior year of high school, when he joined Scribe, a writing club, did Daniel begin engaging teachers because his work caught their attention. At Renowned, he avoided professors and his academic dean, even while on academic probation:

Daniel: I don't do office hours. I never thought of myself as an "office hours" person. In high school, I didn't talk to teachers. I walk in and sit down. I would take the test and then they'd be like, "You got a high grade. Congratulations!" I'd be like, "Oh cool. Thanks." That's how they would notice me. I didn't want to talk to them. In college, I was like, "I'll do the same thing." But no [laughs]. I wasn't smart enough. And then, these kids who go to professors after class and just talk to them. I have no idea what they're talking about. I don't have any questions beyond what they're teaching. They're kiss-asses. These people want recommendations, a spot in this guy's research team. I never wanted to grovel.

Interviewer: Are both strategies equally effective?

Daniel: Theirs and mine? Well, mine's not effective at all [laughs]. It worked in high school but that was high school. Now that I'm here, I never would've cut it as pre-med because I wouldn't have anyone to write my recommendations. I'm sure their strategy worked out. They're all going to get glowing recommendations.

Daniel drew moral boundaries between himself and those he labeled "kiss-asses," similar to how Willis' (1977) lads distanced themselves from the "ear'oles" (see also Lamont 2000). Finding his peers' behavior annoying and against his beliefs about how one should get ahead, Daniel wanted to focus on the work, like he did in high school, but he stumbled in adjusting to the social dynamics of academic life at Renowned. Even Daniel believed his strategy was ineffective compared to the "kiss-asses," who likely gained access to lab assistantships and glowing recommendations that will aid them in the future. Despite his fear of missing out, however, he could not shake old habits.

Respondents agreed that Renowned expects undergraduates to seek out authority figures. But unlike Antoinette (MC, B), who felt at ease doing so, the prospect made many doubly disadvantaged respondents feel anxious. Valeria (DD, L), a junior and top-performing student in her major, identified "building relationships with professors" as one of her biggest struggles. Explaining her limited engagement, she described mixed messages and unanticipated expectations:

My being uncomfortable going to office hours: that's the [social] class thing. I

don't like talking to professors one-on-one. That's negative because Renowned really wants you to be proactive. *And* raise your hand. *And* talk. Freshman year, I didn't say a word. People who I had small classes with, if I see them on the street, I recognize them. They won't recognize me because I didn't speak. My dad would always teach me, "You don't want to get where you are based on kissing ass, right? You want it based on hard work. It'll take longer, but there's more value to it. You'll feel more proud." That's bad in *this* context because Renowned totally wants you to kiss them.

The expectation to proactively seek adults' attention to curry favor with them contradicted life lessons Valeria heard growing up and strategies she used throughout high school. As she noted, "I just went to class; I didn't talk to them outside of class ever. I didn't feel a reason to except I guess when I had to apply [to college]." Counselors, she admits, did not help because she felt any question she had, like "What is the common app?" intruded on their time; they were "very preoccupied with students who were having disciplinary problems . . . or mental health issues" and thus could not help her navigate the college application process.

Many doubly disadvantaged students found engaging professors emotionally taxing. Isabel (DD, L) was a junior from an impoverished suburb where school counselors told students to "dream small" and teachers battled to stem growing heroin use among the students. Describing her transition to college, she remembered being "very stressed first semester. I would just cry sometimes." Reflecting on the absence of relationships with professors that existed into her junior spring, Isabel admitted,

It is actually a really bad thing; I still feel great hesitation talking to professors, even TAs. TAs are closer in age; you would think it is more comfortable. . . . I have never felt comfortable speaking to adults as equals or even asking them questions. It is something I have been cognizant of since I came here. I need to be able to talk to adults. How am I going to get some sort of recommendation? How am I going to ask for help? How am I going to build a relationship they say is "one of a kind" here? I can't even open my mouth.

Some doubly disadvantaged respondents discussed a lag in acclimating to the expected styles of engagement. Ariana (DD, L), a second-semester freshman, avoided engagement for fear of being judged: "I feel very self-conscious. I still don't feel comfortable speaking to school officials. I'm constantly wondering what's going through their mind, how they're perceiving me, which I probably shouldn't do but it's an instinct." Ariana showed progress, however. Over dinner in the cafeteria during her sophomore spring, she adopted a determined tone to discuss her growth since our last interview, mentioning that she involves herself more on campus and sees Renowned more as her own. Speaking to a group of high school students the following semester, Ariana shared with them that the culture shock of academic and social life overpowered her during her first three semesters. Reaching out for help was something she had to learn, but once she did—in part through working at the Equality Center, which placed her in contact with administrators, deans, and upperclassmen—she felt more comfortable at Renowned. Joshua (DD, B), a junior, experienced a similar learning curve: "I'm a lot more comfortable now. When I got here, I was intimidated by everybody. Now, I realize that most intellectuals ask a lot of questions. That's why I've been more open to asking questions, whether it be in class, office hours. With professors, not just TAs." Similarly, Charlotte (DD, B), a senior, recalled, "My first two years were tepid. I went to office hours once in a while but only because I really didn't understand something or if I ever really needed help. I rarely went just to talk, which they recommend us do. I never do that, which is bad." Many doubly disadvantaged respondents eventually adjust to what is tacitly expected of them, but they often lose out on more than a year of relationship building and access to institutional resources.

The doubly disadvantaged find the new style of engaging authority figures unsettling. As Valeria exclaimed, "Wow! Relationships are all that matter here." Consequently, most doubly disadvantaged respondents reported limited engagement with authority figures and feeling uneasy at the prospect. Highlighting the dignity of their strategies of getting ahead by focusing on the work, some doubly disadvantaged respondents drew moral boundaries against peers who networked with professors to advance their personal agendas, even if they shared similar goals.

Privileged Poor

The privileged poor's engagement strategies break from the class mold. Unlike the doubly disadvantaged, the privileged poor report being familiar with the expected styles of academic engagement at Renowned and being at ease in engaging authority figures. They attribute their smooth transitions to having previously navigated elite academic environments laden with similar unwritten rules. As Table 2 shows, the majority of the privileged poor (16 of 20) report being comfortable engaging authority figures at Renowned, and many are proactive in doing so.

Privileged poor respondents discussed feeling entitled to authority figures' time and resources. Ogun (PP, L), a freshman, lived in Section 8 housing in a highly segregated neighborhood before college. However, she received a scholarship to attend a celebrated New England boarding school with an endowment over \$200 million. Her family was unaware of this opportunity, but Ogun's middle school teacher recommended that she apply because she wanted Ogun to go to a school that would nurture her potential. Through institutionalized practices, like seated meals and monthly advising meetings (organized especially for scholarship students), engaging teachers and administrators became commonplace (Khan 2011; Kramer 2008). Ogun said her school encouraged everyone to develop a sense of entitlement in their academic endeavors, which she identifies with strongly. Unlike Ogun, Alice (DD, L) "rarely go[es] to school-sponsored people for things" and finds it anxiety inducing that "you have all these [professors] but they're not going to come find you, you have to find them. . . . It's been difficult; it's hard to find the help you want. You're too intimidated or too afraid to go and talk to people." Ogun, in contrast, reported "feel[ing] empowered to talk to professors and say, 'I want to meet with you, chat with you.'" She said, "My high school instilled in me that I'm allowed to do that and it's actually my *right*." Going further, Ogun equated her first year at Renowned to her fifth year of high school, something I never heard from the doubly disadvantaged:

I draw on skills I learned in high school. I have the same agenda except this time it says Renowned. My first month, I was like, "Wow, I like this." Another thing I learned was connecting with teachers.

They made it okay to say, "Hey, can you meet Tuesday at this time?" I had the small classroom experience in high school where it was okay to ask your teacher, "Can we meet about this paper?" I did that a lot my first semester here too. There was a TA, we had a final paper and he was in New York. I asked, "Can we talk?" He was like, "Sure, give me a call." I was perfectly comfortable with that. My friends are like, "You're crazy—on the phone with your TA?" Listen, I gotta go out for mine. When I talk about my fifth year, I learned to go out and get mine because I didn't have a network anywhere else. My high school was providing my network. I use the same mentality.

Ogun developed what she calls a "go-out-and-get-yours" attitude that prioritizes developing a support network that can give specific advice on how to navigate Renowned. She came to see authority figures as facilitators to her academic pursuits in elite contexts who could fill gaps her family could not. Similarly, Marina (PP, L) recalled reaching out constantly on academic matters early in her time at Renowned: "Academically, definitely my first-year academic adviser, I went to her for everything. I asked her so many questions. She was very helpful."

Many privileged poor respondents discussed the institutional structures and culture at their high schools when they outlined their engagement with adults. Sara (PP, L), who received a scholarship to attend a day school on the other side of town, said her school encouraged contact with teachers by building it into students' and teachers' daily schedules:

My high school was very nurturing. They had study hall incorporated into our school schedules. By study hall I mean 80 minutes of time to study or free time. They're like, "Take this time to meet with teachers. They're here. They're also free."

Sara and I reviewed what resources at Renowned have been important in how she navigates college. Quietly, she recalled, "Emotionally, an adult. It's happened once this semester when I reached to my residential advisor and I realized how much of a calming effect an adult has that perhaps a peer doesn't have. That was a really bad night.

Just talking to my residential advisor—wow!” The comfort Sara derives from adults stands in stark contrast to the anxiety the doubly disadvantaged endure when engaging authority figures.

Stephanie (PP, B), a senior, also described dense support networks at her boarding school. She engaged teachers who hosted informal, intimate dinners and faculty advisors who followed her development from convocation to graduation. Furthermore, she worked closely with her college counselor, who had a caseload of 12 students—1/21 of the *recommended* national average of 250 and 1/40 of the *actual* 2014 average of 500—to coach her through the college process (Harris 2014; McDonough 1997). Reflecting on interactions with faculty at Renowned, she offered a parable highlighting differences in preparation among lower-income undergraduates and where she saw herself along this spectrum:

I know what I ought to do. My friend struggles: “I don’t get this; I don’t know what to do.” I told her what to do: “Contact them.” That was very intuitive to me. Reaching out to your teacher and having one-on-one time was definitely something that was at [my boarding school]. I didn’t think it was a big deal but the fact that she was like, “You sure I can just e-mail them?” Not that she felt the professor wasn’t welcoming, but ‘cause she wasn’t used to that. I arguably have an advantage. I would have been meeting with my professor for a whole semester at this point and she would have been struggling. Let’s say there’s two students, both struggling. One of them gets a tutor, which I figure is normal at public schools. I would very intuitively e-mail the professor and say, “I’m not doing well. Please meet with me. This is my schedule.”

Bypassing auxiliary sources of support, Stephanie saw going to the professor, with times that best fit her own schedule, as the only option. This strategy was second nature by the time she entered Renowned.

Beyond academics, the privileged poor seek out authority figures for myriad reasons. In middle school, Damion (PP, B) skipped classes and “literally don’t remember studying ever in middle school, I don’t remember doing homework, I don’t remember studying” because the work was easy and teachers had low expectations. Wanting

to reinvent himself, Damion entered a private high school instead of the vocational school that his sibling and friends attended. His private school allowed him “to refocus on what was important because I didn’t have those social distractions keeping me from fulfilling goals I had for myself.” Diversity was central to his high school experience, as he often reflected on being one of the only minority students there. Lobbying administrators to increase diversity at his all-white, upper-middle-class Catholic school, he explained how he “catalyzed a minority initiative. By the time I was a senior, the school built a partnership with local communities and was siphoning students from there every year.” When Damion identified the resources at Renowned that most helped him overcome initial angst, he stated, “Definitely advisors.” Damion worked with three advisors—an alum, a professor, and the dean of admissions—to create a college-sponsored support group for lower-income and first-generation college students like himself. Moreover, Damion brought the president of the alumni association to speak and to pledge support for connecting alumni to first-generation college undergraduates.

When the privileged poor discuss adjusting to the expected styles of engagement that pervade elite academic settings, they refer back to their freshman and sophomore years in high school. Michelle (PP, L), who endured bouts of homelessness while at her posh day school, welcomed close, personal contact with professors at Renowned. It reminded her of relationships with teachers in high school, where they practiced holistic advising that bridged academic enrichment with personal development and “highly suggested” all students attend office hours. Her ease with this style of advising, however, was not automatic. It came only after enduring the culture shock of being around white, wealthy people and an initial resistance to her high school’s hands-on advising style. Over time, however, she said these connections provided stability when she did not know whether she would have a place to sleep when the school day was done:

Michelle: Freshman year (at Renowned), there’s a very good support system, a lot of advisors you could go to. Sophomore year, they don’t help you as much. I’m really good friends with my advisors. TAs, they’re most loyal to those who come to office hours quite frankly.⁵

Interviewer: How would you rate your interactions: positive, negative, in between?

Michelle: Advisor is great: out of 10, probably 9. Some TAs haven't been good and others have been excellent. I bother them a lot if I need help. I make it known I need help so they'd help me. So that would probably be a 7. There is this macroeconomics professor who's really legit. I would love to get to know him better. He's super chill. We got along really well. We chilled, had a good talk . . . best buds.

Accustomed to frank, open conversations about everything from being homeless to choosing where to study abroad in high school, Michelle brought an affinity for connecting with faculty to Renowned. Building on these positive experiences, she developed a relationship with her economics professor that went beyond supply-and-demand curves. As an economics major interested in finance, she plans to build on this relationship after completing his class.

Contrary to extant literature on lower-income undergraduates, the privileged poor generally do not feel nervous, uncomfortable, unprepared, or guilty when engaging professors and other authority figures at Renowned. Familiarity with approaching authority figures in similar environments before college attenuates or removes the shock of the expected engagement style at Renowned. Moreover, their proactive strategies resemble those of their middle-class peers more so than those of the doubly disadvantaged. Instead of withdrawing or waiting for authority figures to come to them, like the doubly disadvantaged do, the privileged poor report actively reaching out to them. They enlist authority figures as facilitators to their goals, rather than treating them as bystanders or adversaries.

DISCUSSION

Scholars argue that class-based engagement strategies lead to greater inequality in academic settings (Calarco 2014a; Lareau 2003; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995), especially colleges (Collier and Morgan 2008; Stuber 2011). I document how proactive engagement with authority figures is not as strictly tied to social class as social reproduction theory predicts. Rather, I show that scholars homogenize the experiences of lower-income undergraduates. Cultural

sociologists and education scholars must examine undergraduates' acquisition of cultural capital beyond early childhood socialization. Future studies should explore the circumstances that mediate the effects of class origins on youths' cultural endowments. Experience and exposure are powerful teachers.

The privileged poor enter college at ease with the expected style of engaging faculty and have previous experiences navigating institutional practices, like office hours. Accustomed to academic contexts that emphasize independent thinking and prioritize teacher contact, the privileged poor arrive primed to engage authority figures. They see authority figures as facilitators of their academic journeys in ways their families cannot be. They trust that their proactive engagement strategies will work to their advantage in college as they did in their preparatory schools. Even though the privileged poor come to see authority figures as *facilitators* of their advancement, and middle-class respondents see them as *partners*, their proactive outreach leads to similar experiences as middle-class undergraduates and potentially more equal access to resources than the doubly disadvantaged find.

The doubly disadvantaged report being uneasy navigating the new norms of engagement at Renowned. Compared to the privileged poor, the doubly disadvantaged lack exposure to elite academic environments before college and have limited experience navigating institutional structures like office hours. Expectations of continued, close contact with authority figures and treating adults as equals are so different and anxiety inducing that the doubly disadvantaged withdraw from such encounters, despite seeing their peers potentially reaping rewards for reaching out. Moreover, the doubly disadvantaged adopt a defensive stance toward engaging authority figures and draw moral boundaries against those who do. The expected manner for engaging faculty conflicts with the doubly disadvantaged's notions of how one gets ahead. In contrast, the privileged poor and middle-class respondents see these expectations as normal operating procedure. Consequently, the doubly disadvantaged engage less and experience greater stress when forced to interact with authority figures.

For the privileged poor, preparatory school served as a turning point (Maruna and Roy 2007; Sampson and Laub 1993). They left their distressed communities and entered resource-rich

environments where they learned new skills and attitudes toward relationships with adults in elite institutional settings. The privileged poor adjust to this style of engagement four to six years before college, at an age when they are developmentally more malleable (Crone and Dahl 2012; Erikson 1980). The doubly disadvantaged, however, enter college in early adulthood, when ideas of successful scripts for academic interaction may be well settled. With no explicit rules for when or how to engage professors (Collier and Morgan 2008), and with less coaching than the privileged poor had when they entered their preparatory schools (Kramer 2008), the doubly disadvantaged have trouble transforming their general understanding that engagement is positive into real relationships. The resulting cultural lag lasts into the sophomore and junior years of many doubly disadvantaged students. Such a lag is not insignificant. The first two years of college are the foundation for undergraduates' academic and social development as well as a time for expanding one's cultural toolkit (Charles et al. 2009; Stuber 2011). Respondents outlined some of the payoffs of being proactive. They noted how ties to and relationships with authority figures provide access to a host of resources, such as emotional support during rough points along their academic journey, additional help in various extracurricular activities, extra time for assignments, access to authority figures' social resources, and a host of other positive gains that can accumulate over time (Merton 1968; Tinto 1987). Sustained contact allows professors—who serve as gatekeepers to internships, fellowships, graduate school, jobs, summer travel, and many other opportunities (publicized and unpublicized)—to get to know undergraduates and their personal stories, interests, and qualifications. Not only are undergraduates who faculty know well more likely to receive greater favor and access to opportunities, but they are also more likely to procure stronger recommendation letters than students whom faculty know on a more cursory level.

Colleges must account for undergraduates' disparate cultural resources. Doing so can lead to more effective interventions to help the most disadvantaged undergraduates transition to college. Summer and preterm orientation programs can ease less socially prepared undergraduates' transition to academic and social life (Fiske 2010; Stuber 2011). These programs provide familiarity with the campus community and those who

populate it. Enlisting faculty as instructors and mentors can remove some of the social barriers that respondents identified as hindering their academic integration into college.

To be accessible *and* inclusive of more diverse student populations, however, colleges must do more than provide scholarships and create orientation programs. They must interrogate the institutionalized cultural norms that shape campus life, ask whether they help or hinder the progress of culturally diverse undergraduates, and actively work to adopt policies that create opportunities for success for all undergraduates. One policy suggestion is to change the campus culture by framing college in terms commensurate with interdependent norms, like collaboration and community, rather than independent norms of individualism. Such affirmation helps lower-income undergraduates feel like they share similar goals with the college, and this alignment can improve academic performance without negative repercussions for undergraduates from more affluent backgrounds (Stephens et al. 2014; Stephens, Townsend, et al. 2012).

These solutions may provide localized knowledge of particular colleges and can potentially adjust the college culture, but they are limited in scope. They do not represent the type of "durable" investments needed to address the structural inequalities that create the educational disparities that handicap students, preventing many from ever entering college (Sharkey 2013). The differences outlined between the privileged poor and the doubly disadvantaged, or rather, the similarities between the privileged poor and middle-class students, highlight the consequences of the opportunity gap in the United States. Given resources more equitable to those of their affluent peers, lower-income students can acquire and later use the skills needed to successfully navigate mainstream institutions, like colleges. However, programs that extract students from disadvantaged neighborhoods and schools and place them in resource-rich private institutions provide resources for the individual, not the collective. We must find ways to transform public education—especially in underfunded, under-resourced school districts—by creating structures in schools, such as scaffold advising, that integrate students into intergenerational, educated support networks. We need to develop curricula that promote self-empowerment and encourage faculty engagement within critical-thinking frameworks that not only engender

a “college-going culture” but also support the development of orientations and behaviors that align with the cultural norms of social and academic life in college (Mehan 2012). These changes require greater funding for public education and commitment to institutionalize practices, similar to those found in private schools. In doing so, the gulf between public schools and colleges, and the resulting culture shock, can be lessened.

Understanding the ways in which culture and inequality shape how individuals engage authority figures has import outside of academic contexts. Whether one is at ease with gatekeepers (Rivera 2015) or how one constructs a “developmental network” inside firms or organizations (Higgins and Kram 2001) influences access to information, guidance, and other resources that may enhance or undercut one’s mobility. Moving beyond traditional gender and racial dimensions of inequality, investigating the cultural underpinnings of different engagement strategies, and finding how such strategies are disparately rewarded can make explicit how endogenous value systems and norms operate in local environments and influence the acquisition of resources and the reproduction of inequality (Turco 2010).

The methodological choices made for this project result in some limitations. I do not investigate how undergraduates use alternative channels for institutional support. Future studies could document the frequency with which undergraduates use supplemental institutional resources, like career or advising centers, and the nature of those interactions, thereby broadening the analytic scope. I cannot account for how authority figures’ race plays out in these interactions, given that most of Renowned’s faculty and authority figures are white. Still, I show how undergraduates with disparate precollege experiences enter college with different orientations toward and skill sets for engaging professors, teaching assistants, and other authority figures. Exploring this relationship across organizational contexts and examining potential outcomes of using different support networks for access to institutional resources are important goals for future research.

Colleges serve as levers of mobility, especially for lower-income youth. Elite colleges, by opening their doors and coffers to economically disadvantaged undergraduates, are diversifying the demographic elite in unprecedented ways (Khan 2012). These colleges, however, must not stop with increased financial aid. Investment in

diversity must expand from access to inclusion. As the uneven experiences of the privileged poor and the doubly disadvantaged show, to make the most of college resources requires access to privileged environments long before receiving a college acceptance letter. Undergraduates from America’s forgotten neighborhoods and ignored schools are truly at a disadvantage as colleges continue to privilege the privileged. This stratification results not from any individual shortcomings of the doubly disadvantaged but rather from systemic structural inequalities that plague society.

RESEARCH ETHICS

The institutional review board at the university being studied reviewed and approved my research protocol. All human subjects gave informed consent prior to their participation in the research, and adequate steps were taken to protect participants’ confidentiality.

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NOTES

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. Programs like A Better Chance also partner with and place students in high-performing public schools, but the vast majority of participants attend private schools.
3. I do not intend to flatten the heterogeneity in middle- and upper-middle classes (for a critique, see Lacy 2007). To bring attention to overlooked differences between the privileged poor and the doubly disadvantaged, I use *middle class* to designate undergraduates from more advantaged backgrounds. Many

respondents from families where both parents have degrees are upper-middle or upper class. Respondents whose parents have degrees from four-year colleges but have lower-status positions exhibit similar proactive engagement strategies and report feeling more comfortable engaging faculty.

4. Women constitute equivalent portions of doubly disadvantaged (70 percent), privileged poor (77 percent), and middle-class (68 percent) respondents.
5. *Most loyal* is an urban colloquialism used to describe when a person is faithful or dedicated to another person, cause, or belief compared to an alternative option. In this case, Michelle believed teaching assistants devote more time and energy to undergraduates they know.
6. I use the abbreviations "B" for black and "L" for Latino to document respondents' race/ethnicity. To document how I classify respondents, I use the abbreviation "DD" for doubly disadvantaged, "MC" for middle class, and "PP" for privileged poor.

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