

Engaged Against the Machine: Institutional and Cultural Racial Discrimination and Racial Identity as Predictors of Activism Orientation among Black Youth

Elan C. Hope,¹  Resney Gugwor,² Kristen N. Riddick,¹ and Kristen N. Pender¹

Highlights

- We investigate institutional and cultural racial discrimination and Black youth activism orientation.
- Racial identity that emphasizes the importance of Blackness relates to low-risk activism orientation.
- Nationalist racial ideology promotes high- and low-risk Black community activism orientation.
- Relationship between racial discrimination and activism orientation varies by public regard.
- Teens and young adults need opportunities to process racism to support low- and high-risk activism.

© 2019 Society for Community Research and Action

Abstract The current study examines how experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination relate to orientations toward activism in the Black community among Black adolescents and emerging adults. Furthermore, we investigate the role of racial identity (centrality, public regard, nationalism) as moderators of those relations. In a national sample of 888 Black adolescents and emerging adults, we found that experiences of cultural racial discrimination, racial centrality, and nationalism ideology were related to a greater orientation toward low-risk Black community activism. For high-risk activism, nationalism was associated with a greater likelihood to participate in future social action in the Black community. The relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation was moderated by public regard. For Black adolescents and emerging adults who believe others view Black people negatively, more experiences of institutional racial discrimination were related to a greater high-risk activism orientation. Findings highlight the importance of investigating racial discrimination as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond individual interactions and microaggressions. Furthermore, these findings underscore

how phenomenological variation in experiences of racial discrimination and racial identity differentially influence adolescent and emerging adult orientations toward social action in and for the Black community.

Keywords Activism · Black youth · Racial discrimination · Racial identity · Social justice

Introduction

Activism and advocacy for social change are important developmental tasks for adolescents and emerging adults in a democratic society. For racially marginalized adolescents and emerging adults in the United States, these civic responsibilities are influenced by connection with one's racial group and how one understands racial marginalization within the broader sociopolitical context (Anyiwo, Bañales, Rowley, Watkins, & Richards-Schuster, 2018; Flanagan, Martínez, Cumsille, & Ngomane, 2011). Researchers have found that racial identity and interpersonal experiences of racial discrimination influence civic and political attitudes and behaviors for Black adolescents (Lozada, Jagers, Smith, Bañales, & Hope, 2017) and emerging adults (White-Johnson, 2012). Less is known, however, about how experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination interact with racial identity to affect Black adolescent and emerging adults' orientation toward activism. This question is critical to the democratic health of our society, as individual and community needs

✉ Elan C. Hope
ehope@ncsu.edu

¹ Department of Psychology, North Carolina State University, Durham, NC, USA

² Department of Comparative Human Development, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

are often met through democratic participation, yet young Black people are systematically disenfranchised within these very sociopolitical systems. Thus, it is important to understand factors associated with young Black people's propensity toward activism in and for the Black community. In the current study, we extend the existing literature on Black youth activism and investigate whether experiences with institutional and cultural racial discrimination relate to activism orientation among Black adolescents and emerging adults. We then consider whether racial identity moderates the relations between experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination and activism orientation.

Activism is typically described as grassroots organizing and social movements that seek to change formal political processes and policies (Dennis, 2016). Activism, however, can extend beyond protests and demonstrations to include formal political participation (e.g., contacting political representatives) and illegal extra-parliamentary actions (e.g., politically motivated violence; Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Similarly, activism orientation is an emotional and intellectual resolution to future social justice action (Corning & Myers, 2002). For racially marginalized adolescents and emerging adults, activism orientation is relevant to consider because low scores on behavioral measures of activism may reflect structural barriers to civic engagement rather than disengagement from social and political systems (Watts & Guessous, 2006). Corning and Myers (2002) conceptualize an orientation toward activism that is relatively safe and presents minimal risks (low risk) and activism that is perceived as likely to result in physical harm or arrest (high risk). By assessing activism orientation as a multidimensional construct, we can account for whether there are different psychological mechanisms that may lead to extra-parliamentary actions with differing levels of risk. Finally, researchers find that pathways to political participation may be different for Black youth than youth from other marginalized racial-ethnic backgrounds (Diemer, 2012; Hope, Keels, & Durkee, 2016; Hope, Velez, Offidani-Bertrand, Keels, & Durkee, 2018). This may be, in part, due to a lack of domain specificity with regard to the measurement of activism. Thus, we consider what relates to Black youth activism orientation with a model specific to the Black community.

Racial Discrimination and Activism

Racial discrimination is a common experience for Black people in the United States (NPR, RWJF, & Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, 2017) with physiological and psychological repercussions during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Benner & Graham, 2013; Hope, Hoggard, & Thomas, 2015). Scholars argue that racism

and discrimination on the basis of race operate and are reinforced at the individual, institutional, and cultural level (Jones, 1997; Pincus, 1996). Individual-level racism and racial discrimination manifests as bigotry, racial prejudice, and racial microaggressions (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2010). Institutional forms of racial discrimination are camouflaged systems of inequity embedded within the structures that support society, such as laws and policies (Jones, 1997; Saleem & Lambert, 2016; Utsey, 1999). This form of racism is upheld by personal beliefs that become rooted into institutional practices and are evidenced by unequal outcomes between groups (Jones, Dovidio, & Vietze, 2014). Cultural racism refers to the historical and cultural preeminence of the dominant group at the expense of subordinate groups (Jones, 1997; Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). This form of racism encompasses the beliefs and norms within our cultural milieu that form our normative practices. Racial discrimination extends beyond microaggressions, and includes discrimination experienced and maintained through institutions and sociocultural norms (Jones, 1997; Pincus, 1996; Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). By focusing on the institutional and cultural ways that racism and racial discrimination influence the well-being of individuals and communities, we orient our solutions toward factors that work to reduce the structural impacts of racism and racial discrimination.

Researchers have begun to examine how experiences of racial discrimination across various levels are related to action to dismantle structures that uphold racism. For Black youth who experience racial discrimination, political activism may function as one strategy to combat oppressive sociopolitical systems and to mitigate physical and psychological consequences of future instances of discrimination (Ginwright, 2010; Hope & Spencer, 2017). Research supports this assertion finding that more frequent experiences of racist events (Szymanski, 2012), more stress from experiences of racial discrimination (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015), and more experiences of racial microaggressions (Hope et al., 2018; White-Johnson, 2012) are related to more political and civic engagement among Black college students. With regard to institutional racism, Black youth who recognize institutional racism against Black people participate in more civic and political activities (Hope & Jagers, 2014). The current study extends this line of research by examining Black adolescent and emerging adult orientation toward activism specific to the Black community in relation to experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination. We also extend this line of research by investigating whether racial identity can strengthen or weaken the relation between experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination and activism orientation.

The Role of Racial Identity

During adolescence and emerging adulthood, youth explore who they are in relation to their community and broader society (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). For those from racially marginalized backgrounds, this includes identity exploration with regard to membership in one's racial group (Syed & Azmitia, 2010; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Racial identity beliefs reflect cognitions and attitudes regarding the importance and meanings of racial group membership (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1998) proposes four dimensions of racial identity. Racial salience is the momentary or situational relevance of race to one's self-concept and racial centrality refers to the general importance of race to one's sense of self. Racial regard is positive and negative affect toward and evaluation of one's racial group. Public regard refers to evaluative judgment of how positively or negatively others view Black people. Finally, racial ideology is an individual's philosophy of how members of their racial group should engage in society, politically, culturally, and economically.

In this investigation we consider racial centrality, public regard, and nationalist ideology. White-Johnson (2012) found that Black youth for whom racial group membership is important to their self-concept (high centrality) are more aware of structural inequities that affect the Black community and are more motivated to engage in behaviors in support of racial equity. By extension, we posit that Black youth who perceive that mainstream society does not value Black people (low public regard) may be oriented toward social change efforts that benefit and support the Black community. Similarly, the nationalist ideology is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the oppression faced by African Americans in the United States. Those who endorse a nationalist ideology seek to support the Black community through social, political, and economic means. A nationalist ideology may reflect internal consideration of the historical and contemporary nature of race in relation to the sociopolitical environment and therefore relate to a desire to pursue social action to change the marginalizing conditions faced by the Black community. Given their belief in the uniqueness of being Black, those who hold a nationalist ideology may also believe that Black people can work as a group to collectively promote social change that reduces marginalization and oppression experienced by the African-American community.

We also consider the role of racial identity (centrality, public regard, nationalist ideology) as a moderator. In previous research, experiences of racial discrimination have been found to vary by components of racial identity. For example, in a study of Black college students, high public

regard (feeling others view Black people positively) was related to feeling tense and angry, but not afraid, after experiencing discrimination (Jones, Lee, Gaskin, & Neblett, 2014). In another study of Black adult men, higher racial centrality was related to greater reports of racial discrimination (Chae et al., 2017). Given that experiences of racial discrimination are somewhat dependent on racial identity, we examined whether racial identity moderated the relations between experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination and activism orientations.

Responding to Oppressive Systems: A PVEST Approach

Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST; Spencer, 1995, 2006) guides our investigation. PVEST takes an ecological system's perspective to account for the influence of sociopolitical and cultural factors on identity development of marginalized youth (Spencer & Swanson, 2013). According to PVEST, contextual risk factors, such as racial discrimination, create vulnerabilities for youth of color, which contribute to stress and lead to negative life outcomes (Spencer, 2006). PVEST also suggests that adaptive coping strategies can mitigate the negative effects of vulnerability and stress caused by such risk factors. We situate activism as an adaptive coping strategy that youth may use to resist unjust sociopolitical conditions (see Hope & Spencer, 2017). Racial discrimination is both a chronic and ubiquitous stressor, which, for many, precipitates the need for an adaptive coping strategy (Priest et al., 2013). Activism functions as an adaptive coping strategy by providing Black youth with opportunities to take an active role in changing the very sociopolitical conditions that put them at risk. The current study presents an application of PVEST to better understand normative development of Black youth who live in a racially oppressive sociopolitical environment, by considering activism as an adaptive coping mechanism and the role of racial identity in relation to activism and experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination.

The Current Study

Activism can provide Black adolescents and emerging adults with a mechanism for resiliency through taking an active role in negotiating and changing oppressive sociopolitical conditions (Hope & Spencer, 2017). The current investigation extends the growing literature on Black youth activism, racial discrimination, and racial identity. Specifically, we examined whether experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination related to orientations toward activism in the Black community among Black adolescents and emerging adults. We also tested whether racial identity was related to low- and

high-risk orientation toward activism in the Black community. We predicted that youth who report more experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination, report race being central to self-concept (high racial centrality), and value the uniqueness of the Black community (high nationalism) would report a more positive orientation toward both low-risk and high-risk activism in the Black community. We expected that youth who believe that other groups view Black people in the United States positively (high public regard) would be less likely to report intended future activism in and for the Black community. Finally, we investigated whether racial identity moderates the relation between experiences of racial discrimination and activism orientation. We expected that a high racial centrality and nationalist ideology would strengthen the relation between experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination and each type of activism orientation. We also expected that a high public regard would weaken the relation between experiences of racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation.

Method

Participants

Participants were 893 self-identified Black adolescents and emerging adults aged 14–29 years old ($M = 19.7$ years; $SD = 4.78$). The majority of participants identified as female ($n = 602$; 67.4%). Less than 1% ($n = 5$) of the sample identified as nonbinary or indicated no gender. A majority of the sample identified as African American with 47.7% identifying as third generation or more African American and 18.4% identifying as first- or second-generation African American. Other ethnic backgrounds represented included Multiethnic (10.4%), African (9.7%), Afro-Caribbean or West Indian (5.9%), Afro-Latinx (5.3%), and other (2.6%). Sixteen percent of participants identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Participants were located across the United States with representation from 42 states and the District of Columbia. The states with the greatest numerical representation were Georgia ($n = 88$; 9.9%), Texas ($n = 74$; 8.3%), and Florida ($n = 73$; 8.2%). With regard to education, 73.5% of participants were students currently enrolled in middle school ($n = 50$), high school ($n = 396$), college ($n = 172$), and graduate school ($n = 38$). Just over a quarter of participants were not current students ($n = 237$; 26.5%) and of those participants, 7.6% had advanced degrees ($n = 18$), 23.6% earned a bachelor's degree ($n = 56$), 10% earned an associate's degree ($n = 24$), 27% completed some college ($n = 64$), 30% earned a high school diploma or equivalent ($n = 71$), and 1.7% completed middle school ($n = 4$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through Qualtrics Panels for the Race and Politics Study (RAPS). Potential respondents were sent an email invitation to participate in the research study, the expected duration of the study, and incentives available for participation. To reduce self-selection bias, the survey invitation did not include specific details about the content of the survey. Participants under the age of 18 were recruited through an email to their parent and participated with parental consent. All participants completed an eligibility questionnaire and were eligible to participate if they identified as Black and were between 14 and 29 years old. Participants received an incentive based on the length of the survey, their specific panelist profile, and target acquisition difficulty. The specific reward varied and included cash, airline miles, gift cards, redeemable points, sweepstakes entrance, and vouchers. Study protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the host university.

Measures

Activism Orientation

The low-risk and high-risk subscales of the Black Community Activism Orientation Scale (BCAOS; Hope, Pender, & Riddick, under review) was used to measure likelihood of future activism in and for the Black community. Participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert-type response scale (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 2 = *unlikely*, 3 = *equally likely and unlikely*, 4 = *likely*, 5 = *extremely likely*). Low-risk activism orientation is activism that is passive, conventional, and less risky, was measured using 14 items (e.g., “Wear a t-shirt or button with a political message about the Black community”). High-risk activism orientation, which includes highly visible, assertive, and risky actions, was measured using seven items (e.g., “Block access to a building or public area with your body for a cause related to the Black community”). Mean scores were created for each subscale and higher scores indicate a more positive orientation toward that type of Black community activism. Analyses indicated high internal consistency for low-risk ($\alpha = .95$) and high-risk ($\alpha = .89$) activism orientation.

Racial Discrimination

Experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination were measured using the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS; Seaton, 2003; Utsey, 1999). The IRRS measures stress that African Americans experienced as a result of racism and racial discrimination from individuals, institutions, and culture. Participants reported whether they had experienced a race-related event and the extent to which

the experience was bothersome or upsetting using a 5-point scale (0 = *this event never happened to me* to 4 = *this event happened to me and I was extremely upset*). To reduce skewness, responses were recoded as “1” to indicate experience of the race-related stressor and “0” to indicate no race-related stressor. A sum score was computed for both subscales. This approach has been taken in previous research on racial discrimination (Mercer, Zeigler-Hill, Wallace, & Hayes, 2011; Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Romero Diaz, 2012). Scores for experiences of institutional racial discrimination (e.g., *Been questioned about being in a White neighborhood for no reason*) ranged from 0 (no institutional racial discrimination) to 12 (all possible institutional racial discrimination experiences). Scores for experiences of cultural racial discrimination (e.g., *You seldom hear or read anything positive about Black people on radio, TV, in newspapers, or history books*) ranged from 0 (no cultural racial discrimination) to 8 (all possible cultural racial discrimination experiences). Internal reliability was high for experiences of institutional racial discrimination ($\alpha = .93$) and cultural racial discrimination ($\alpha = .87$).

Racial Identity

Racial centrality and public regard were measured using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Short (MIBI-S; Martin, Wout, Nguyen, Gonzalez, & Sellers, 2013). Participants indicated their endorsement of each statement on a 7-point response scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*). The centrality subscale consisted of three items (e.g., *Being Black is an important reflection of who I am*). A higher score indicates a more positive sense of self with regard to being Black. The public regard scale consisted of three items (e.g., *In general, others respect Black people*). A higher score indicates beliefs that others view Black people positively, and a lower score indicates beliefs that others view Black people negatively. Analyses indicate high internal consistency for centrality ($\alpha = .87$) and public regard ($\alpha = .88$). Nationalist ideology was measured using the eight-item nationalism subscale of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MIBI; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Participants indicated their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*. A sample item from the nationalism subscale is, *A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks* ($\alpha = .80$).

Covariates

Age, gender, and employment status were included in each model as covariates. Participants indicated their gender; female was coded “1” while male was coded “0”. Five

participants indicated a nonbinary gender and were not included in regression analyses. Participants also indicated current employment status which was coded as “1” if they were employed full time, part time, or with a temporary job and coded as “0” if they indicated they were unemployed and looking for work or unemployed and not looking for work.

Past activism was also included as a covariate in each corresponding model. Participants indicated whether they had participated in low-risk and high-risk activism in and for the Black community within the 12 months prior to the survey. Responses were coded as Yes (1) or No (0). Responses were then counted to create a total score for past low-risk activism and past high-risk activism. The range of possible scores was from 0 (*no past low-risk activism*) to 14 (*all possible low-risk activism activities*). The range for high-risk activism was 0 (*no past high-risk activism*) to 7 (*all possible high-risk activism activities*).

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis of the analytic sample ($N = 888$) was conducted using *STATA 14.2 S/E*, StataCorp, College Station, TX, USA. There was no missingness in the study variables. Given the inclusion of gender as a covariate, the five participants who did not specify a gender or indicated a nonbinary gender were not included in the regression analyses. Given previous findings that civic and political behaviors are related to gender (e.g., Malin, Tirri, & Liauw, 2015) and age (e.g., Hope & Jagers, 2014) we conducted descriptive analyses to investigate bivariate relations and mean gender and age-group differences among study variables. We then conducted hierarchical regression analyses predicting each type of activism orientation, controlling for corresponding past activism, gender, and age. All continuous covariates and independent variables were centered about the mean. In Step 1, we regressed the control variables onto each activism orientation variable. In Step 2, we added experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination. In Step 3, we added racial centrality, public regard, and nationalism. In Step 4, we tested whether each dimension of racial identity moderated each relation between experiences of racial discrimination and activism orientation. Significant interaction effects were tested using simple slopes analyses as outlined by Aiken and West (1991). Given the high number of tests run, we adopted a p value of .01 as the standard to report significance.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted to evaluate means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all study

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the study variables ($N = 888$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Low-risk activism orientation	–										
2. High-risk activism orientation	.58**	–									
3. Past low-risk activism	.58**	.33**	–								
4. Past high-risk activism	.24**	.47**	.56**	–							
5. Institutional racial discrimination	.17**	.34**	.32**	.44**	–						
6. Cultural racial discrimination	.29**	.08	.33**	.10*	.52**	–					
7. Centrality	.24**	.20**	.20**	.12**	.13**	.12**	–				
8. Public regard	–.02	.19**	.01	.29**	.10*	–.21**	.23**	–			
9. Nationalism	.29**	.38**	.24**	.31**	.36**	.21**	.34**	.08	–		
10. Age	.01	–.01	.11**	.04	.02	–.01	–.08	–.01	.03	–	
11. Gender	.08	–.06	.10*	–.08	–.16**	.02	.01	–.11**	.09*	.15**	–
Mean	3.16	2.38	4.64	0.77	3.70	5.78	5.93	3.88	4.40	19.75	0.68
Standard Deviation	0.98	1.06	3.95	1.69	4.04	2.56	1.24	1.74	1.08	4.79	0.47

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

variables (see Table 1). With regard to past activism, 18% of the sample had not participated in any low- or high-risk activism over the previous year. Ten percent of participants had been involved in at least one activism activity and 1.25% indicated participating in all 21 low- and high-risk types of activism. The most common forms of past activism were purposefully seeking social and political information about the Black community (51.2%) and following social or political causes related to the Black community on social media (48.6%). The least common forms of past activism were blocking access to a building or public area with the body (7.3%) and engage in an illegal activity as part of a political protest for the Black community (9.3%). With regard to orientation toward future activism, participants reported being more likely to participate in low-risk activism ($M = 3.16$) than high-risk activism ($M = 2.38$).

We examined mean group differences in racial identity, racial discrimination, and activism orientation by age and gender. To test mean group differences by age, we grouped the sample by adolescents (ages 14–17) and emerging adults (ages 18–29). *T*-tests revealed mean group differences in racial centrality by age. Adolescents reported higher racial centrality ($M = 6.05$, $SD = 1.14$) than emerging adults ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 1.32$), $t(886) = -2.87$, $p = .004$. There were also mean group differences in past low-risk activism by age, $t(886) = 4.14$, $p < .001$. Emerging adults reported more past low-risk activism ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 4.04$) than adolescents ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 3.74$). There were no mean group differences in past high-risk activism, activism orientation, public regard, nationalism, institutional racial discrimination, or cultural racial discrimination by age.

Females reported higher low-risk activism orientation ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.00$) than males ($M = 3.05$, $SD = .92$), $t(886) = -2.36$, $p = .018$. Females also reported more past low-risk activism ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 3.99$) than males ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 3.82$), $t(886) = -3.11$, $p = .002$. Males reported more past high-risk activism ($M = 0.96$,

$SD = 1.86$) than females ($M = 0.68$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(886) = 2.32$, $p = .02$. There were no significant gender differences in high-risk activism orientation. With regard to racial discrimination, males reported experiencing more institutional racial discrimination ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 4.50$) than females ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 3.73$), $t(886) = 4.71$, $p < .001$. There were no gender differences in experiences with cultural racial discrimination. With regard to racial identity, males reported higher public regard ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.76$) than females ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.72$), $t(886) = 3.38$, $p < .001$. Males also reported higher nationalism ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.14$) than females ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(886) = 2.73$, $p = .006$. There were no significant gender differences in racial centrality.

Low-Risk Activism Orientation

In Step 1 of the hierarchical regression model, we entered the control variables, age, gender, and past activism (see Table 2). The model was significant, $F(3, 884) = 148.31$, $p < .001$, and the model accounted for 33% of the variance in low-risk activism orientation. Past activism was positively related to low-risk activism orientation, $\beta = .58$, $p < .001$. In Step 2, we added experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination, and the model was significant, $F(5, 882) = 95.44$, $p < .001$. The model accounted for 35% of the variance in low-risk activism orientation. Experiences of institutional racial discrimination was negatively related to low-risk activism orientation, $\beta = -.09$, $p = .005$, while experiences of cultural racial discrimination was positively related to low-risk activism orientation, $\beta = .15$, $p < .001$. In Step 3, we added racial centrality, public regard, and nationalism to the model. This model was significant, $F(8, 879) = 69.28$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 38% of the variance in low-risk activism orientation. Racial centrality, $\beta = .08$, $p = .006$, and nationalism, $\beta = .16$, $p < .001$, were

Table 2 Hierarchical regression predicting activism orientation ($N = 888$)

Variable	Low-risk activism orientation					High-risk activism orientation				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	95% CI	<i>VIF</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	95% CI	<i>VIF</i>
Step 1										
Age	-.01	.01	-.06	[-.02, -.001]	1.06	-.01	.01	-.03	[-.02, .01]	1.04
Gender	.06	.06	.03	[.05, .17]	1.12	-.05	.06	-.02	[-.19, .08]	1.10
Past activism	.14	.01	.58**	[.13, .16]	1.26	.30	.02	.47**	[.25, .33]	1.44
Adj. R^2						.22				
Step 2										
Institutional racial discrimination	-.02	.01	-.09*	[-.04, -.01]	1.82	.05	.01	.20**	[.03, .07]	1.99
Cultural racial discrimination	.06	.01	.15**	[.03, .08]	1.74	-.02	.01	-.06	[-.05, .00]	1.69
Adj. R^2						.24				
Δ Adj. R^2						.02				
Step 3										
Centrality	.06	.02	.08*	[.02, .11]	1.38	.06	.03	.07	[.00, .11]	1.37
Public regard	-.01	.02	-.01	[-.04, .03]	1.28	.02	.02	.03	[-.02, .05]	1.33
Nationalism	.15	.03	.16**	[.09, .20]	1.36	.21	.03	.21**	[.15, .27]	1.39
Adj. R^2						.29				
Δ Adj. R^2						.05				
Step 4										
Institutional RD \times centrality	-.01	.01	-.03	[-.02, .01]	1.77	.01	.01	.03	[-.01, .02]	1.77
Institutional RD \times public regard	-.01	.00	-.04	[-.01, .00]	1.73	-.02	.01	-.12*	[-.03, -.01]	1.76
Institutional RD \times nationalism	.02	.01	.08	[.00, .03]	2.01	.02	.01	.07	[-.00, .03]	2.02
Cultural RD \times centrality	-.01	.01	-.04	[-.03, .01]	1.73	-.01	.01	-.04	[-.03, .01]	1.73
Cultural RD \times public regard	.00	.01	.02	[-.01, .02]	1.81	.01	.01	.04	[-.01, .03]	1.80
Cultural RD \times nationalism	-.03	.01	-.07	[-.05, .00]	1.67	-.02	.01	-.05	[-.04, .01]	1.68
Adj. R^2						.30				
Δ Adj. R^2						.01				

Past Activism corresponds with the type of activism examined as the dependent variable.

Bold indicates statistically significant findings.

RD, racial discrimination.

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

significantly related to low-risk activism orientation. In Step 4, we tested the interactions between racial discrimination and each racial identity subscale. The model was significant, $F(14, 873) = 40.73$, $p < .001$ and accounted for 39% of the variance in low-risk activism orientation. The model in Step 4 was not a significant improvement over the model in Step 3, $F(6, 873) = 2.02$, $p = .06$ and no interaction terms were statistically significant.

High-Risk Activism Orientation

Step 1 of the hierarchical regression model was significant, $F(3, 884) = 85.49$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 22% of the variance in high-risk activism orientation (see Table 2). Past activism, $\beta = .47$, $p < .001$, was significantly related to high-risk activism orientation. In Step 2, we added experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination, model was significant, $F(8, 882) = 58.48$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 24% of the variance in high-risk activism orientation. Experiences of institutional racial discrimination were positively related to high-risk activism orientation, $\beta = .20$, $p < .001$. In Step 3, we added racial centrality, public regard, and nationalism to the model. The Step 3 model was significant, $F(8, 879) = 47.24$,

$p < .001$, and accounted for 29% of the variance in high-risk activism orientation. Nationalism, $\beta = .21$, $p < .001$, was significantly related to high-risk activism orientation.

In Step 4, we tested the interactions between racial discrimination and each racial identity subscale. The model was significant, $F(14, 873) = 28.44$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 30% of the variance in high-risk activism orientation. The model in Step 4 was a significant improvement over the model in Step 3, $F(6, 873) = 2.65$, $p = .015$. There was one significant interaction effect: the relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation was moderated by public regard, $\beta = -.12$, $p = .002$ (Fig. 1). A test of simple slopes revealed that the relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation was significant at the mean of public regard ($B = .04$, $t = 3.64$, $p < .001$) and at one standard deviation below the mean ($B = .07$, $t = 15.80$, $p < .001$) of public regard. There was a positive relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation for with average and below-average public regard. The slope was not significantly different from zero at one standard deviation above the mean ($M = 5.62$, $B = .01$, $t = .64$, $p = .52$). For participants

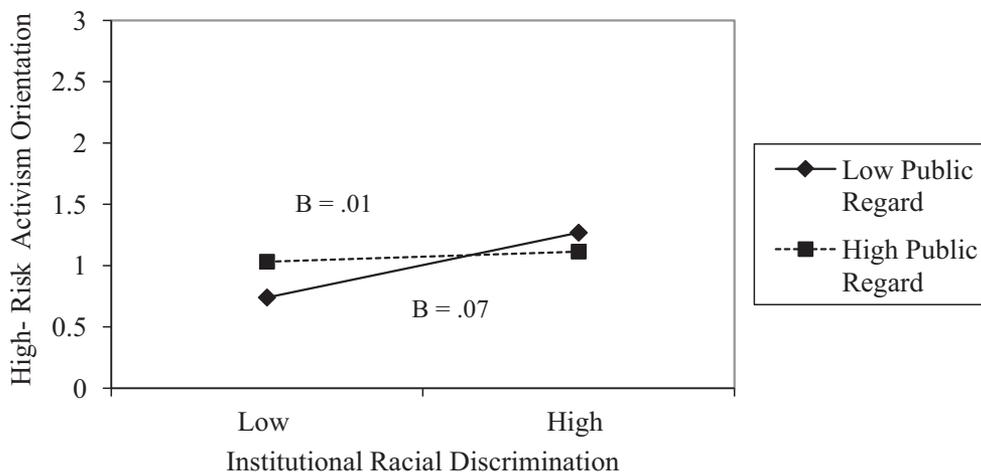


Fig. 1 Public regard as a moderator of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation

who reported above-average public regard, there was no relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism.

Discussion

This study examined the relations between experiences of institutional and cultural racial discrimination, and racial identity on Black community activism orientation among Black adolescents and emerging adults. We found that experiences of cultural racial discrimination, racial centrality, and nationalism are related to a greater orientation toward low-risk activism. With regard to high-risk activism orientation, nationalism is related to a greater orientation toward high-risk activism in and for the Black community. We also found that the relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation varies by public regard. There is a positive relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism orientation for Black adolescents and emerging adults who reported that other people view Black people negatively.

Scholars have proposed that activism is one coping strategy that can both alleviate the individual-level stress of racial discrimination and change the systems of racial oppression that cause race-related stress (Ginwright, 2010; Hope & Spencer, 2017). For Black youth, sense of belonging to one's racial group and an understanding of the systematic nature of racial oppression can influence decisions to engage in activism (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Our findings support theoretical assertions that collective sense of self is associated with an orientation toward activism. Findings from the current study extend theory and previous research by highlighting the differential ways that

racial identity supports youth orientation toward activism in and for the Black community, particularly in a hostile sociopolitical environment where one has experienced institutional and cultural racial discrimination.

Our hypothesis that experiencing institutional and cultural racial discrimination would relate to a greater orientation toward activism was partially supported. Experiences with cultural racial discrimination (e.g., you notice that the newspapers and TV play up stories that cast Black people in bad ways) were related to a greater orientation toward low-risk activism, but were not related to an orientation toward more risky activism. This is consistent with previous findings that even when controlling for individual and institutional race-related stress, cultural race-related stress was related to more activism in the African-American community (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Our findings extend this research by emphasizing how experiences of cultural racial discrimination were related to willingness to engage in lower risk types of activism, but not more high-risk activism. Compared to individual and institutional racial discrimination, cultural racism is the most pervasive and widely experienced (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Although entrenched in our macrosystem (e.g., societal norms and media), the distal nature of cultural racial discrimination may not motivate adolescents and emerging adults to envision future participation in actions perceived as risky due to threat of arrest or bodily harm. Equally, Black youth who recognize and have experienced the pervasiveness of racial oppression in the wider culture may be oriented toward less risky activism that is manageable and accessible to push against the massive social structures that perpetuate systems of racism.

With regard to experiences of institutional racial discrimination (e.g., you have been questioned about being in a White neighborhood for no reason) our hypothesis was not supported and there was a complicated statistical picture. In

the bivariate correlations, experiences of institutional racial discrimination were positively related to low-risk activism orientation. In the multivariate analyses with experiences of cultural racial discrimination and past activism in the model, experiencing more institutional racial discrimination was related to a smaller likelihood of engaging in future low-risk activism. One explanation for these findings is covariance with past low-risk activism. Within the 12 months prior to the survey, a majority of participants had participated in one to eight different types of low-risk activism and the correlation between past low-risk activism and low-risk activism orientation was .58. In our regression analyses, we found that experiences of institutional racial discrimination was related to a lower orientation toward low-risk activism when controlling for past low-risk activism. When we removed past low-risk activism, institutional racial discrimination was not a significant predictor. We retained low-risk activism in our model, however, because past activism is a strong predictor of future activism (Hope et al., 2016; Rapa, Diemer, & Bañales, 2017). Furthermore, research finds that past racial discrimination relates to future feelings of sociopolitical isolation among racially marginalized youth (Ballard, 2015) and feelings of institutional racial mistrust are related to low civic engagement for Black college students who do not believe the world is a just and fair place (Leath & Chavous, 2017). This finding should be examined further.

In this study, we also considered how experiences of cultural and institutional racial discrimination interact with racial identity to predict activism orientation for Black youth. Our hypothesis that racial identity would moderate the relations between experiences of racial discrimination and activism orientation was partially supported. We expected that experiences of institutional racial discrimination would relate to high-risk activism orientation, in line with previous research findings (Hope & Jagers, 2014). We also expected that public regard would weaken the relation between racial discrimination and activism orientation. Building upon past research, we found that the relation between experiences of institutional racial discrimination and high-risk activism varied by public regard—perceptions of how others view Black people. For Black adolescents and emerging adults that believe others have a negative perception of Black people (low public regard), experiences of institutional racial discrimination were associated with a greater orientation toward risky forms of activism. For Black youth who believe that Black people are valued by society (high public regard), experiences of institutional racial discrimination was not related to high-risk activism orientation. These findings suggest for Black adolescents and emerging adults who have experienced more racism and racial discrimination embedded in institutional policies and procedures, a public

regard that acknowledges the systematic devaluing of Black lives may support participation in more risky types of social justice action in and for the Black community. This finding is particularly important, as it suggests that it is not only the experiences of institutional racial discrimination alone but also one's racial identity, that can relate to adolescent and emerging adult orientations toward higher risk activism in and for the Black community.

Our findings also suggest that, for Black youth, racial centrality and nationalist ideology are positively associated with orientations toward activism in and for the Black community. Racial centrality, the importance of race to one's self-concept, is related to a greater orientation toward low-risk activism. This aligns with previous research that finds that Black youth with high racial centrality are oriented toward civic and political actions to support racial equality (White-Johnson, 2012). Similarly, Black youth who hold strong nationalist ideological beliefs and value the uniqueness of the Black experience in terms of economic, cultural, and political contributions are more oriented toward low-risk and high-risk Black community activism. This finding aligns with previous research which finds that a positive Afrocentric perspective that values Black identity and pride is positively related to Black activism, due to a connection and commitment to the Black racial group and racial self-acceptance (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). For Black youth, identity beliefs that emphasize the importance of being Black and the sociopolitical value of the Black community are related to an orientation toward social change actions in and for the Black community.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are some important limitations of this study that point to directions for future research. Our study is limited in that it is a cross-sectional design and we are unable to draw casual inferences from this study. Another limitation is that while our sample was drawn from across the United States, it was not nationally representative. Furthermore, although we had ethnic diversity within our sample, with participants identifying from a variety of African diasporic backgrounds, we did not have a large enough sample size to consider whether the relations differ by African diasporic background. Finally, there was potential for issues of covariance and multicollinearity. Even though the VIFs were in suitable range to continue with analysis, experiences of institutional racial discrimination was positively related to low-risk activism orientation in bivariate correlation analyses, and negatively related in multivariate analyses.

Strengths of our study are, however, that Black youth were represented from geographically and economically diverse backgrounds across the United States. Additionally, we explore racial identity through a multidimensional

framework that considers content (e.g., centrality, regard, ideology; Sellers et al., 1998). A process framework that considers facets of identity development, such as identity exploration and formation, may contribute to our understanding of racial identity as it relates to political activism (e.g., Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). Future studies should explore the influences of context on public regard and racial discrimination as it relates to activism. Qualitative inquiry can examine *how* Black youth make sense of both institutional and cultural experiences of racial discrimination and how those experiences may motivate or deter activism for youth with varying public regard. Our study also examined activism orientation among adolescents and emerging adults. Future studies should consider the developmental trajectories of activism and how racial identity and experiences of racial discrimination influence activism over time. Future investigations should also consider whether the relations between racial identity and racial discrimination operate similarly for youth from other racially marginalized groups. Finally, while our study provides important insight into orientations toward various types of activism, questions remain regarding if and under what circumstances these orientations predict actual activism behavior. Future research can leverage interventions, longitudinal studies, and experimental designs to test this empirical question.

Implications for Practice and Policy

These study findings have several implications for practice and policy, particularly within the contemporary landscape of political protest (e.g., Black Lives Matter; Women's March in Washington) and other sociopolitical resistance as a viable coping mechanism against oppression and discrimination (Zepeda-Millán & Wallace, 2013). First, our findings support the need for community organizations and youth programs that promote critical dialogue of racially oppressive sociopolitical systems as related to community advocacy. A growing contingency of scholars are integrating racial consciousness and sociopolitical (or critical) consciousness to understand how experiences of racial discrimination and racial identity can influence how young Black people are oriented toward activism in and for their racial community (e.g., Anyiwo et al., 2018). Our findings suggest that to help promote social justice action among Black youth, organizations and practitioners should purposefully integrate activities and conversations that help youth process who they are with regard to race and how structures within our society may (or may not) disenfranchise them. This includes working with youth to understand and combat oppression on the basis of race and at the intersection of race and other social identities (e.g., gender, class, sexual orientation, ability;

Velez & Spencer, 2018). Data from this investigation offer a complicated representation of how institutional and cultural experiences of racial discrimination shape to the orientation that Black adolescents and emerging adults have toward activism in the Black community. Experiences of cultural racial discrimination may matter more for lower risk activism, while experiences of institutional racial discrimination (along with public regard) may matter more for higher risk activism. From this complexity, we have a better understanding of how different facets of racial identity can strengthen or weaken the relations between institutional and cultural experiences of racial discrimination and activism to redress racial injustice. Together, this research extends our current conceptualizations of racialized individual and contextual factors that relate to Black youths' orientation toward activism in their own community.

References

- Aiken, L., & West, S. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Anyiwo, N., Bañales, J., Rowley, S. J., Watkins, D. C., & Richards-Schuster, K. (2018). Sociocultural influences on the sociopolitical development of African American youth. *Child Development Perspectives*, 23, 102–106.
- Ballard, P. J. (2015). Longitudinal links between discrimination and civic development among Latino and Asian adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 26, 723–737.
- Benner, A. D., & Graham, S. (2013). The antecedents and consequences of racial/ethnic discrimination during adolescence: Does the source of discrimination matter? *Developmental Psychology*, 49, 1602–1613.
- Chae, D. H., Powell, W. A., Nuru-Jeter, A. M., Smith-Bynum, M. A., Seaton, E. K., Forman, T. A., ... & Sellers, R. (2017). The role of racial identity and implicit racial bias in self-reported racial discrimination: Implications for depression among African American men. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 43, 789–812.
- Corning, A. F., & Myers, D. J. (2002). Individual orientation toward engagement in social action. *Political Psychology*, 23, 703–729.
- Dennis, A. L. (2016). Black contemporary social movements, resource mobilization, and Black musical activism. *Law & Contemporary Problems*, 79, 29–51.
- Diemer, M. A. (2012). Fostering marginalized youths' political participation: Longitudinal roles of parental political socialization and youth sociopolitical development. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50, 246–256.
- Ekman, J., & Amnå, E. (2012). Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology. *Human Affairs*, 22, 283–300.
- Flanagan, C., & Levine, P. (2010). Civic engagement and the transition to adulthood. *The Future of Children/Center for the Future of Children, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation*, 20, 159–179.
- Flanagan, C. A., Martínez, M. L., Cumsille, P., & Ngomane, T. (2011). Youth civic development: Theorizing a domain with evidence from different cultural contexts. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2011, 95–109.
- Ginwright, S. A. (2010). Peace out to revolution! Activism among African American youth: An argument for radical healing. *Young*, 18, 77–96.

- Hope, E. C., Hoggard, L. S., & Thomas, A. (2015). Emerging into adulthood in the face of racial discrimination: Physiological, psychological, and sociopolitical consequences for African American youth. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science, 1*, 342–351.
- Hope, E. C., & Jagers, R. (2014). The role of sociopolitical attitudes and civic education in the civic engagement of Black youth. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 24*, 460–470.
- Hope, E. C., Keels, M., & Durkee, M. I. (2016). Participation in Black Lives Matter & Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: Modern activism among Black & Latino college students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 9*, 203–215.
- Hope, E. C., Pender, K.N., & Riddick, K. N. (under review). Development and validation of the Black Community Activism Orientation Scale. *Journal of Black Psychology*.
- Hope, E. C., & Spencer, M. B. (2017). Civic engagement as an adaptive coping response to conditions of inequality: An application of phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST). In N. Cabrera & B. Leyendecker (Eds.), *Handbook on positive development of minority children and youth* (pp. 421–425). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.
- Hope, E. C., Velez, G., Offidani-Bertrand, C., Keels, M., & Durkee, M. I. (2018). Political activism and mental health among Black and Latinx college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 24*, 26–39.
- Jones, J. M. (1997). *Prejudice and racism* (2nd edn). New York: McGraw Hill Companies.
- Jones, J.M., Dovidio, J.F., & Vietze, D.L. (2014). *The psychology of diversity: Beyond prejudice and racism*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Jones, S. C., Lee, D. B., Gaskin, A. L., & Neblett, E. W. Jr (2014). Emotional response profiles to racial discrimination: Does racial identity predict affective patterns? *Journal of Black Psychology, 40*, 334–358.
- Leath, S., & Chavous, T. M. (2017). “We really protested”: The Influence of sociopolitical beliefs, political self-efficacy, and campus racial climate on civic engagement among Black college students attending Predominantly White Institutions. *The Journal of Negro Education, 86*, 220–237.
- Lozada, F. T., Jagers, R. J., Smith, C. D., Bañales, J., & Hope, E. C. (2017). Prosocial behaviors of Black adolescent boys: An application of a sociopolitical development theory. *Journal of Black Psychology, 43*, 493–516.
- Malin, H., Tirri, K., & Liauw, I. (2015). Adolescent moral motivations for civic engagement: Clues to the political gender gap? *Journal of Moral Education, 44*, 34–50.
- Martin, P., Wout, D., Nguyen, H. X., Gonzalez, R., & Sellers, R. M. (2013). *The multidimensional inventory of Black identity—short*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Mercer, S. H., Zeigler-Hill, V., Wallace, M., & Hayes, D. M. (2011). Development and initial validation of the inventory of microaggressions against black individuals. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(4), 457–469.
- National Public Radio, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, & Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (2017). Discrimination in America: Experiences and views of African Americans. Available from: <https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2017/rwjf441128>
- Pincus, F. L. (1996). Discrimination comes in many forms: Individual, institutional, and structural. *American Behavioral Scientist, 40*, 186–194.
- Priest, N., Paradies, Y., Trenerry, B., Truong, M., Karlsen, S., & Kelly, Y. (2013). A systematic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism and health and wellbeing for children and young people. *Social Science & Medicine, 95*, 115–127.
- Rapa, L. J., Diemer, M. A., & Bañales, J. (2017). Critical action as a pathway to social mobility among marginalized youth. *Developmental Psychology, 54*, 127–137.
- Saleem, F. T., & Lambert, S. F. (2016). Differential effects of racial socialization messages for African American adolescents: Personal versus institutional racial discrimination. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 25*, 1385–1396.
- Seaton, E. K. (2003). An examination of the factor structure of the Index of Race-Related Stress among a sample of African American adolescents. *Journal of Black Psychology, 29*, 292–307.
- Sellers, R. M., Rowley, S. J., Chavous, T. M., Shelton, J. N., & Smith, M. (1997). Multidimensional inventory of Black identity: Preliminary investigation of reliability and construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*, 805–815.
- Sellers, R. M., Smith, M., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. J., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 2*, 18–39.
- Spencer, M. (1995). Old issues and new theorizing about African-American youth: A phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory. In R. L. Taylor (Ed.), *Black youth: Perspectives on their status in the United States* (pp. 37–69). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Spencer, M. (2006). Phenomenology and ecological systems theory: Development of diverse groups. In W. Damon, & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical Models of Human Development* (6th edn, pp. 829–893). New York: Wiley.
- Spencer, M., & Swanson, D. (2013). Opportunities and challenges to the development of healthy children and youth living in diverse communities. *Development & Psychopathology, 25* (4pt2), 1551–1566.
- Sue, D. W. (Ed.) (2010). *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Syed, M., & Azmitia, M. (2010). Narrative and ethnic identity exploration: A longitudinal account of emerging adults’ ethnicity-related experiences. *Developmental Psychology, 46*, 208.
- Szymanski, D. M. (2012). Racist events and individual coping styles as predictors of African American activism. *Journal of Black Psychology, 38*, 342–367.
- Szymanski, D. M., & Lewis, J. A. (2015). Race-related stress and racial identity as predictors of African American activism. *Journal of Black Psychology, 41*, 170–191.
- Torres-Harding, S. R., Andrade, A. L., & Romero Diaz, C. E. (2012). The Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS): A new scale to measure experiences of racial microaggressions in people of color. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*(2), 153–164.
- Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Quintana, S. M., Lee, R. M., Cross, W. E., Rivas-Drake, D., Schwartz, S. J., . . . & Seaton, E. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity during adolescence and into young adulthood: An integrated conceptualization. *Child Development, 85*, 21–39.
- Utsey, S. O. (1999). Development and validation of a short form of the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS)-Brief Version. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 32*, 149.
- Utsey, S. O., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1996). Development and validation of the Index of Race-Related Stress (IRRS). *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43*, 490–501.
- Vandiver, B. J., Fhagen-Smith, P. E., Cokley, K. O., Cross, W. E., & Worrell, F. C. (2001). Cross’s nigrescence model: From theory to scale to theory. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 29*, 174–200.
- Velez, G., & Spencer, M. B. (2018). Phenomenology and intersectionality: Using PVEST as a frame for adolescent identity formation amid intersecting ecological systems of inequality. In C. E. Santos, & R. B. Toomey (Eds.), *Envisioning the integration of an intersectional lens in developmental science. New directions for child and adolescent development*, 161, 75–90.

- Watts, R. J., & Guessous, O. (2006). Beyond resistance: Youth activism and community change. In G. Dimitriadis (Ed.), *Sociopolitical development: The missing link in research and policy on adolescents* (pp. 59–80). New York: Routledge.
- Watts, R. J., & Hipolito-Delgado, C. P. (2015). Thinking ourselves to liberation? Advancing sociopolitical action in critical consciousness. *The Urban Review*, *47*, 847–867.
- White-Johnson, R. L. (2012). Prosocial involvement among African American young adults: Considering racial discrimination and racial identity. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *38*, 313–341.
- Zepeda-Millán, C., & Wallace, S. J. (2013). Racialization in times of contention: How social movements influence Latino racial identity. *Politics, Groups and Identities*, *1*(4), 510–527.