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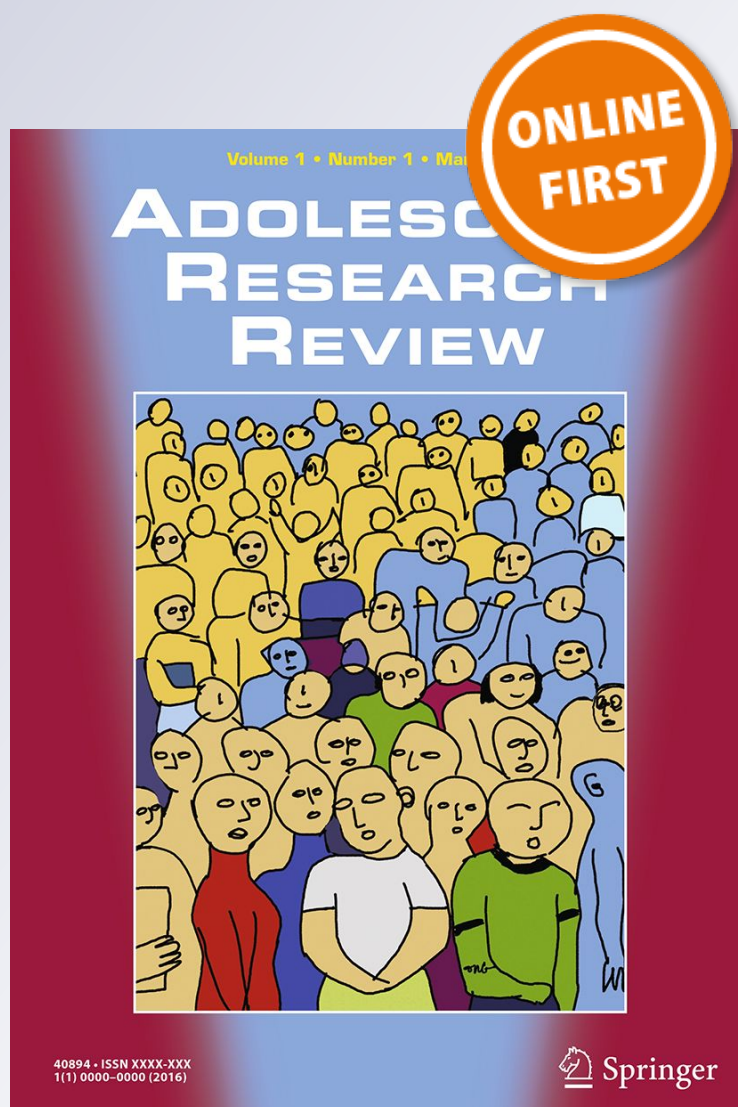
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# Youth Anti-Racist Engagement: Conceptualization, Development, and Validation of an Anti-Racism Action Scale

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## Abstract

Scholarship on youth engagement indicates that adolescents address social issues of public concern, but it is not clear how youth challenge racism. This gap in the literature stems from indirect conceptualizations and a lack of quantitative measurement of adolescents' acts to oppose racism. Correspondingly, this study presents the validation of a measure of youth anti-racism action. Study 1 describes the youth participatory approach used in the development of the Anti-Racism Action Scale and presents the results from an exploratory factor analysis that examined the measure's initial factor structure and reliability. The factor structure of the 22-item measure was explored with a diverse sample of adolescents ( $Mage = 16.00$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ; 61.7% girls, Black/African American [29.3%], Asian/South Asian [21.1%], White/European American [24.4%], Arab/Middle-Eastern [17.5%], Latino/Hispanic [4.5%], and Multiracial [3.3%]) enrolled in a race dialogue program ( $n = 249$ ). The results indicated the measure consisted of three subscales: *Interpersonal Action*, *Communal Action*, and *Political Change Action*. In Study 2, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with an independent, nationally representative sample of youth ( $n = 384$ ) from diverse backgrounds ( $Mage = 17.00$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ , 51.0% girls, White/European American [26.1%], Black/African American [25.6%], Latino/Hispanic [19.3%], Asian/Pacific Islander [13.6%], Multiracial [9.9%], Native American [5.2%] and "other" [0.3%]). The results confirmed a three-factor model that resulted in a 16-item measure. Furthermore, tests of convergent validity tests were pursued between the Anti-Racism Action Scale and the Critical Consciousness Scale, a widely used measure of youths' awareness of the structural causes of various forms of oppression, sense of sociopolitical agency, and social action. This study suggests that youth engagement in anti-racism is multidimensional and that notion of adolescent social action are more diverse than represented in the literature.

**Keywords** Sociopolitical development · Social action · Critical consciousness · Anti-racism · Scale development

## Introduction

American democratic society depends on the civic and political engagement of all young citizens. Yet, social marginalization threatens youths' civic life and opportunities (Ginwright 2011). For instance, racism has and continues to disenfranchise people of color from traditional political institutions, limiting their social, economic, and political capital. Despite these barriers, young people participate in community initiatives and social movements that address racism. Young people participate in cross-cultural programs that reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations (Sweifach 2009). Youth engage in dialogues that raise awareness of racism (Aldana et al. 2012) and provide opportunities for collaborative action (Richards-Schuster and Aldana 2013). Youth engage in organizing efforts that challenge racial inequality in various institutions, such as schools (Cabrera et al.

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2013). There is also growing evidence of youth activism on various race-related topics (Noguera et al. 2006). To fully understand youth engagement in civil society, an examination of how youth address racism is needed, yet there is a paucity of research about youth anti-racist engagement. This study focuses on the development and validation of a youth-created measure of anti-racism action.

### Conceptualizing Anti-Racism

Anti-racism is a continuous process of change to eradicate racism. Anti-racism theory critiques racism and presents ideas on how to eliminate racial oppression (Berman and Paradies 2010). For instance, Rozas and Miller (2009), suggest that because racism manifests at various societal levels, then anti-racist actions must be taken at the corresponding domains to create a “web of resistance.” The web of resistance is a social work pedagogical tool used to illustrate internal and external strategies for change within six realms of influence to dismantle racism. The societal realms—or contexts for anti-racism action—include the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community, cultural discourse, and political realms (Miller and Garran 2007). For example, antiracism in the intrapersonal realm may include educating oneself about racial disparities or practicing introspection of one’s cultural biases. Antiracism in the organizational realm might involve voicing concerns about racially biased practices at one’s work or school. In short, the web of resistance indicates that through awareness of racism, connection to others, compassion, and activism one can challenge racism at various levels of oppression. In this study, youth anti-racism action is defined as social and civic behaviors that address racial bias, racial disparities, or the promotion of racial justice through interpersonal and collective efforts.

The developmental nature of anti-racism engagement in the United States (U.S.) is not fully understood. For one, theoretical approaches to understanding anti-racism have primarily focused on pedagogical strategies for educators (Rozas and Miller 2009) and adult learners (Dei and McDermott 2014). Another constraint to operationalizing youth anti-racism engagement is that much of the scholarship on anti-racism strategies have been conducted outside of the U.S. (Lentin 2016). Similar to pedagogical research, anti-racism scholarship on sociopolitical strategies has mainly examined the actions taken by adults as political agents. It is plausible that anti-racism has universal elements that are relevant across age and national borders. It is also likely, however, that the strategies young people use to address racism are contingent on their social contexts. More research is needed to examine how young people in the U.S. define and engage in anti-racism. To better envision what youth anti-racism engagement might look like, the literature on sociopolitical development, critical consciousness, and

youth participatory action research are discussed given the relevance of this scholarship to an understanding of youth participation in anti-racist efforts.

### Youth Engagement in Challenging Racism

Youth engagement in civil society is a process in which young people act to address issues of public concern. A fundamental belief of the social action approach to youth development is that young people are ultimately their own best advocates and are strategically positioned to assess their community needs and enact social change (Checkoway 1998). Scholarship has categorized youth civic engagement as prosocial participation in a range of actions that benefit the individual, others, and civil institutions (Balsano 2005). Others, from critical theoretical perspectives, have discussed youth engagement in terms of collective voice and social action (e.g., protest, activism) to push forward a social justice agenda, particularly among marginalized youth (Noguera et al. 2006). Theory and empirical research on youths’ critical consciousness and sociopolitical development, for instance, provide evidence that youth engage in critical action and civic engagement against social issues related to racial disparities and discrimination.

Sociopolitical development theory (Watts and Flanagan 2007) and critical consciousness (Diemer et al. 2016) are related frameworks that posit how young people—particularly marginalized youth—come to reflect on and against systems of oppression, including racism, sexism, and classism. These bodies of work also indicate that a lack of formal civic participation outlets might have resulted in distrust in government systems among people of color (Diemer and Li 2011), forcing them to devise more diverse ways to engage in the sociopolitical system. Both theories have unique terminology to describe youths’ awareness of societal oppression, sense of agency to alter inequitable social conditions, and engagement in behaviors that address oppression (see Watts et al. 2011 for a review of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development terminology). Nevertheless, researchers often use these terms interchangeably to describe the same developmental processes (Rapa et al. 2018).

The sociopolitical development model articulates the process by which marginalized youth come to think critically about their world and become active participants in society (Watts et al. 2003). Taking the sociopolitical context of youth of color into consideration, Watts and colleagues (1999) first coined the term sociopolitical development to refer to the process of growth in a young person’s knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and capacity for action in social systems. Further theorizing proposed that sociopolitical development includes building young people’s sense of agency and providing opportunity structures that make engagement in community action accessible for



diverse groups, which in turn moderates the relation between social analysis and societal involvement in a full range of civic engagement activities (Watts and Flanagan 2007). In general, sociopolitical development theory provides insights into the process by which youth develop a multileveled sociopolitical analysis of oppression, such as awareness of inequitable distribution of resources across racial groups, to build capacity for social action within systems of inequity.

Critical consciousness is a related, yet distinct, theory that addresses how and why youth challenge societal oppression. Originally articulated by Paulo Freire (1970), this theory explains the process by which marginalized communities perceive and act upon oppressive social conditions. According to recent applications of critical consciousness theory (Watts et al. 2011), youths' critical consciousness development is multidimensional, and comprised of three factors: critical reflection of perceived inequality (i.e., beliefs about the structural nature of societal disparities), political efficacy (i.e., one's sense of confidence to create social change), and critical action (i.e., engagement in behaviors that challenge the political status quo). However, critical consciousness theory is less explicit than the sociopolitical development theory in describing the role of socialization in youths' critical reflection, political efficacy and critical action (Diemer et al. 2016). Whereas, the sociopolitical development theory directly acknowledges opportunity structures that socialize youth such as schools, parents, peers, have in adolescents' sociopolitical development (Watts and Flanagan 2007). Together, these bodies of literature suggest that youth engagement in anti-racism is likely multifaceted and contextually informed.

Youth participatory action research is one approach that may foster adolescents' sociopolitical and critical consciousness development (Kornbluh et al. 2015), which provides concrete examples of youth engagement in social action projects that address racism. Youth participatory action research leverages the voices of adolescents as active participants in scientific inquiry that directly affects their lives. Youth participatory action research uses various methodical approaches, such as photo mapping to learn about youth of color's lived experiences in their neighborhoods (Teixeira 2015) or semi-structured interviews with African American adolescents to explore experiences with racial discrimination in school (Hope et al. 2014). Through youth participatory action research projects young people have challenged racially biased curriculum (Cammarota and Aguilera 2012). Students of color have also used participatory action research to advocate for improved educational opportunities (Stovall 2006). As another example, Duncan-Andrade (2007) documented how a group of students used participatory action research to create counter-narratives that contradicted prevailing stereotypes and provided a more accurate representation of urban youth of color.

Although scholarship highlights the experiences of racialized youth, it does not suggest that anti-racism is exclusively relevant to youth of color. Few participatory action research projects—and basic research in general—have examined White youth's engagement in anti-racism. White youth may confront racism by critically examining whiteness using participatory research methods (Tanner 2016). For instance, a participatory action research investigation with White boys and their educators in an elite private school served to interrogate and interrupt the role of whiteness, privileged social class, and gender performance in school incidents around bullying (Stoudt 2009). Youth participatory action research may serve to engage youth from diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds in anti-racism, but more scholarship is warranted.

In general, youth participatory action research facilitates youth organizing and advocacy efforts against racially biased policies and other manifestations of racism. Social action in youth participatory action research projects typically involve decision makers, community involvement in organizing efforts, and disseminating findings to the general public (Dolan et al. 2005). Thus, the literature on youth participatory action research suggests that youth engagement in anti-racism involves political acts such as reaching out to leading officials and protest, along with other forms of collective action that directly address race and racism.

## Measurement Considerations

There has been an uptick in measures that assess youths' critical consciousness development (see Diemer et al. 2015 for a complete review). Some measures assess young adults' critical reflection of racism, sexism, and classism in separate subscales, informing an understanding of how young people reflect of the structural underpinnings of multiple systems of oppression (Shin et al. 2016). Measures that solely assess young people's critical reflection development (Thomas et al. 2014) often neglect to consider *how* young people engage in behaviors to challenge these systems of oppression. One measure—that attends to this limitation—assesses adolescents' motivation to address systems of oppression, including racism, and other societal injustices (McWhirter and McWhirter 2016). However, the nature of youths' anti-racism behavior and location in which these behaviors (e.g., school, community) occur are still unclear. Thus, research that determines how youths' critical consciousness development overlaps with race-specific measures of critical reflection and action is needed (Bañales et al. 2019).

A commonly used measure of critical consciousness—the critical consciousness scale—assesses youths' critical reflection of multiple forms of societal issues (racism, classism) and critical action against sociopolitical issues that are not specific to racism (Diemer et al. 2017). Similarly, the critical motivation subscale of the critical consciousness scale

(Rapa 2016) measures youths' sense of confidence to alter inequitable social conditions that are not necessarily related to racial oppression. Since current measures of critical consciousness lack clarity on youths' anti-racism action, it is conceptually unclear whether non-race specific dimensions of youths' critical consciousness relate to youths' actions against racism. It could be that youth are generally aware of the presence of inequitable social conditions in society, feel efficacious to counteract these issues, and challenge societal inequities through traditional and less-traditional civic behaviors, but are not inclined to challenge racism, in particular. The current research intends to shed light on these speculations.

## The Current Study

Youth social action is multidimensional, in that youth may use various behaviors in different social contexts to promote social change (Watts and Hipolito-Delgado 2015). Social action engagement includes behaviors that challenge racism (McWhirter and McWhirter 2016). Although the literature shows that youth reflect on and counteract racism in their lives, the meaning of youth anti-racism action remains opaque and quantitative measures that assess these behaviors are limited. Meanwhile, youth participatory action research suggests that young people document, interrogate, and contest racism using various research methods (Cammarota and Fine 2008). Alongside researchers, adolescents can shape research questions, methodological approaches, and data interpretation of studies in ways that advance racial justice. Nevertheless, few studies involve young people in the development of standardized measures for use in social science research. Partnering with youth can ensure that measures are socially meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and psychometrically valid (Leff et al. 2006). Correspondingly, this study puts forth a youth-developed measure, the Anti-Racism Action Scale, that can be used to examine the nature of anti-racism action behaviors among adolescents from diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds.

Addressing gaps in research on youth anti-racist engagement, the current study sought to explore (Study 1) and validate (Study 2) the Anti-Racism Action Scale (ARAS). The current study had three research aims. In Study 1, an exploratory factor analysis explored the initial factor structure and reliability of the ARAS. It was hypothesized that youths' anti-racism action would be multidimensional, in that the types of behaviors enacted would categorize their actions. Although the development of the anti-racism action scale was not theory driven, as the youth who developed the original scale were not privy to psychological theory, theory on youth social action was used to guide the psychometric analysis and interpretation of the youth-developed measure.

Therefore, no specific dimensions of anti-racism action were hypothesized. Background on the participatory approach used with youth to create the measure is detailed below.

In Study 2, a confirmatory factor analysis replicated the factor structure identified in Study 1 with an independent sample of participants. It was speculated that the factor structure identified in Study 1 would be replicated in Study 2. An analysis of the ways in which critical consciousness development overlaps with race-specific measures of critical reflection and action is needed (Bañales et al. 2019). Thus, Study 2 also explored the ARAS's convergent validity with the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS; Diemer et al. 2017; Rapa 2016); a widely used measure of critical consciousness that assesses youths' awareness of the structural causes of various forms of oppression, sense of agency to challenge sociopolitical issues, and actions that address these issues. It was hypothesized that the ARAS would display convergent validity with the CCS subscales.

In 2007 a youth evaluation team, which consisted of two program staff and three high school students who participated in a summer youth dialogue program on race and ethnicity program in 2006, created an "action scale." The summer youth dialogue program is a nine-week curriculum, which enables adolescents of various ethnic-racial backgrounds to come together in intergroup dialogues to discuss ethnic-racial issues in a large Midwest metropolitan region. Intergroup dialogues are face-to-face encounters between a group of people from diverse social backgrounds meeting over a sustained period. The summer youth dialogue program, like intergroup dialogues conducted with college students, is grounded in intergroup relations theory (Stephen and Stephen 2001) and critical-dialogic pedagogy (Nagda and Gurin 2007). Unlike dialogues conducted with college students, youth dialogues take place in community settings, rely on experiential learning rather than readings, and lead to collaborative community-based action projects (Fisher and Checkoway 2011). Participation in intergroup dialogues has been shown to raise critical awareness of race and racism, foster communication across difference, and motivate engagement in social action (Richards-Schuster and Aldana 2013). An in-depth discussion of the summer youth dialogue program is beyond the scope of this study but provides useful contextual information about the relevant experiences held by the group of youth that worked on the development of the anti-racism action measure.

Each year a subset of summer youth dialogue alumni volunteer to be a part of the program's youth evaluation team. On any given year, a youth-led evaluation team may use various methods of data collection (e.g., interviews, photovoice, case-studies) to document dialogue participants' experience in the program and offer suggestions for improvements. In 2007, the youth-evaluation team sought to create an "action scale" to document the ways their peers

challenged racism after participating in the summer dialogue program. A youth-led participatory evaluation approach was used to create the scale (Flores 2008), in that the authors, who are adults, sought to support youths' efforts to create a developmentally appropriate measure of social action for program evaluation purposes. Although youth participatory action research and youth participatory evaluation reflect similar processes, and some use the terms interchangeably, a distinction between the two approaches is that the latter seeks to use findings to make judgments about the process and effectiveness of the services used by the young people.

In addition to the youth-led evaluation, each year the program staff also conduct a separate evaluation using a pre- and post-test survey to assess whether participation in the program raised racial consciousness and fostered youth engagement (for more program and evaluation details see: Richards-Schuster and Aldana 2013). Initially, the youth evaluation team planned to create the social action scale for inclusion in the program's pre- and post-test survey to report if, indeed, participants were more likely to engage in actions that address racism after intergroup dialogue participation. Program staff continued to use the action scale in subsequent program evaluations. After several years of use, the authors decided to validate the measure with an independent, nationally representative sample of adolescents. The following section describes the methods used to explore the factor structure of the youth-developed measure (Study 1), confirm the factor structure and explore its convergent validity (Study 2).

## Methods

### Measures

#### Anti-Racism Action Scale

To generate an initial list of items, the youth evaluation team used an inductive, grounded theory approach rooted in the experiences and words of other adolescents rather than a theory-driven methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967). More specifically, the team reviewed qualitative interviews and survey responses from the previous year's evaluation materials to identify types of actions reported by dialogue participants. After reviewing the 2006 evaluation materials, the youth team identified many "actions" that previous participants had described as having done as a result of the program or that they intended to do in the future. The youth evaluation team "tested" their list of actions with other youth to check for wording and understanding. After obtaining feedback from their peers (e.g., dialogue participants, high school friends), the youth evaluation team revised the scale into a final instrument that included 22-items. The scale asked dialogue participants to report whether they

had engaged in any of the actions in the previous 2 months with a binary (0 = *No*, 1 = *Yes*) responses. This time frame was selected to capture actions before, during, and after their engagement in the program. Sample items included "[I] challenged or checked an adult who uses a racial slur or makes a racial joke who is not a family member" and "[I] researched/investigated issues or social problems in my community." Higher scores indicated more engagement in anti-racism action.

#### Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality

Youths' awareness that certain marginalized groups have fewer chances to get ahead in society, and thus face educational, economic and other disadvantages throughout society was assessed using the Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality subscale of the Critical Consciousness Scale, or the CCS (Diemer et al. 2017). A sample item included: "Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education," with higher scores indicating a greater critical reflection of perceived inequality (1 = *Strongly disagree*—6 = *Strongly agree*).

#### Critical Motivation

Youths' sense of agency to create social change was measured using the Critical Motivation subscale of the CCS (Rapa 2016). This subscale was published after the original CCS subscale was released. A sample item included: "It is my responsibility to get involved and make things better for society," with higher scores reflecting a greater critical motivation (1 = *Strongly disagree*—6 = *Strongly agree*).

#### Critical Action: Sociopolitical Participation

Youths' participation in individual and collective action via non-traditional and traditional outlets was measured using the Critical Action: Sociopolitical Participation subscale of the CCS (Diemer et al. 2017). A sample item included: "[I] participated in a political party, club or organization," with higher scores indicating greater involvement in sociopolitical action (1 = *Strongly disagree*—6 = *Strongly agree*).

## Sample

### Study 1

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) consisted of 249 youth who were enrolled in the summer youth dialogue program in 2007 (n = 81), 2008 (n = 61), 2009 (n = 40), 2010 (n = 36) and 2011 (n = 31). Sixteen community-based agencies in the city and (six) suburbs of a major Midwest metropolitan region helped the program recruit dialogue

participants. Adolescents' ages ranged between 13 and 19 years ( $Mage = 16.00$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) and were predominately girls (61.7%). The majority of the participants were U.S. born (83.1%). The highest education level of adolescents' first-reported guardian was used as a metric for socioeconomic status. The largest proportion of the sample had parents who had obtained at least a college diploma (26.5%), 18.1% had parents with a graduate/professional degree (e.g. MA, MD, PhD), 14.9% had parents with some college experience, 12.4% had parents with a high school diploma or GED, 6.0% had parents whose highest level was junior high school or less, and 8.4% reported that their parent had "other" education or that they were "unsure." 13.7% had missing data for this variable. Adolescents' ethnic-racial identification included Black/African American (29.3%), Asian/South Asian (21.1%), White/European American (24.4%), Arab/Middle-Eastern (17.5%), Latino/Hispanic (4.5%), and Multiracial (3.3%).<sup>1</sup>

## Study 2

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) consisted of 384 youth who responded to a Qualtrics survey. Their ages ranged between 14 and 18 years ( $Mage = 17.00$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ) and were predominately girls (51.0%). The majority of the participants were U.S. born (88.0%). Approximately less than half of the sample had parents with a high school diploma or GED (46.1%), 15.6% had parents with a graduate/professional degree, 14.3% had parents with some college experience, 11.5% of parents received a college diploma, 9.4% had parents whose highest level was junior high school or less and 3.1% reported that their parent had "other" education or that they were "unsure." Adolescents' ethnic-racial identification included White/European American (26.1%), Black/African American (25.6%), Latino/Hispanic (19.3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (13.6%), Multiracial (9.9%), Native American (5.2%) and "other" (0.3%).

## Procedure

An EFA (Study 1) was conducted on the original 22 ARAS items, and the CFA (Study 2) was conducted on the items that were retained from the EFA analysis. These steps are standard practice in the scale validation literature (DeVellis 2003; Worthington and Whittaker 2006). Study 1 included summer youth dialogue participants' pre-test scores on the ARAS's before they completed the dialogue program.

<sup>1</sup> Youth were given the option to select among these ethnic-racial categories in Study 1 because they represented the ethnic-racial demographics of the program participants. Thus, these categories are different from the racial/ethnic categories assessed in Study 2.

Participants who were 18-years-old gave consent to complete the survey, whereas youth who were below this age gave assent and their parents gave consent for youth to participate. The Institutional Review Board at the co-authors' institution granted permission for the use of the program evaluation survey for research data analysis.

Study 2 used CFA to validate the ARAS's factor structure with an independent sample of youth who were recruited with Qualtrics Panel Services. Qualtrics Panel Services is an online survey panel platform that aids in the development and administration of surveys. The platform's panel partners randomly identified youth who fit the authors' criteria for participants. Prospective participants had to identify as an adolescent boy or girl (age 14–18) of diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds (e.g., Black, White, Latino/Hispanic, Asian). The contact information of ethnically/racially diverse adolescents in the panel database are proportioned to the demographics of the U.S.'s ethnic-racial population. Qualtrics panel services randomized the names of prospective participants in this panel base before the survey was administered. After randomization, youth were selected and sent a link to the survey. To avoid self-selection bias, the survey invitation did not include details about the contents of the survey. Assent and consent procedures were similar to those in Study 1. The survey lasted approximately 20 min and youth received incentives for their completion in the form of cash, airline miles, gift cards, redeemable points, sweepstakes entrance, or vouchers. Distribution of incentives was managed by Qualtrics Panel services. The Institutional Review Board at the co-authors' institution granted permission for the administration of the Qualtrics survey.

## Results

### Study 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis

The EFA was conducted using Mplus 8.0 (Muthén and Muthén 2017). The Kaiser-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.75 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the ARAS items were related enough to pursue factor analysis (Worthington and Whittaker 2006). Due to the binary nature of items (i.e., items were scored as "No" or "Yes"), the Weighted Least Squares, Mean, and Variance adjusted estimator (WLSMV) was used. Geomin rotation, an oblique rotational method, was used because factors were hypothesized to be correlated (Furr and Bacharach 2013). The amount of missing data was minimal, ranging from 0.04 to 1.6% across items. Missing data were addressed under Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) conditions; a technique that includes all data in analysis instead of deleting cases pairwise or listwise (Muthén and Muthén 2017).



A factor solution was obtained using multiple criteria. Kaiser's criterion (retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than one), the interpretability of factors, and goodness-of-fit model fit indices provided by Mplus were used to compare obtained models. A scree plot was not examined as Mplus does not provide this option for EFA with categorical indicators (Muthén and Muthén 2017). Fit indices included the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Models with a CFI and TLI at 0.90 are an adequate fit to the data, with values of 0.95 indicating a very good fit. SRMR and RMSEA values at or below 0.08 are considered a good fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Kline 2010). The EFA guided the removal and retention of items (Worthington and Whittaker 2006). For items to be retained, they had to load at or above 0.40 onto a factor, and factors needed to have at least three items (Kline 2010). Items were removed if they did not load onto a factor. In the case of cross-loadings, the item that loaded at or above 0.40 onto a factor and was more conceptually related to the other items on the factor was retained. Cross-loading items that loaded above 0.32 were removed (Worthington and Whittaker 2006).

Guided by scholarship on youth civic engagement, an EFA that estimated 1–7 factors was conducted (Checkoway and Aldana 2013; Diemer et al. 2015). This factor range was set because it allowed for theoretically plausible factors to emerge while allowing for other unanticipated factors to appear. The one- and two-factor models were dismissed because they did not fit the data well, according to goodness-of-fit indices. According to Kaiser's criterion, a seven-factor model was the best fit to the data. However, upon inspection, this model, as well as the five- and six-factor models, were incongruent with theory and failed to meet the factor and item retention criteria mentioned above. The three- and four-factor models fit the data well, but one factor in the four-factor model had fewer than three items. Therefore, the three-factor model, which consisted of 18 items, was retained as the final EFA solution as it met retention criteria and was more interpretable than the other factor-solutions (see Table 1 for a review of items that were deleted).

Model fit indices indicated the three-factor solution was a good fit to the data: RMSEA = 0.04, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93. SRMR was slightly higher (0.09) than the standard cut-off value. The three factors represented conceptually meaningful factors of the ARAS (see Table 1). The first factor, *Interpersonal Action*, consisted of seven items that measured adolescents' individual responses to racism in their social contexts. These behaviors included "challenging" or "checking" friends, family members, and adults who made racial slurs or jokes. These behaviors also included defending strangers or friends who were targets of racial slurs or jokes. The second factor, *Communal Action*, consisted of

four items that centered around youths' involvement in collective efforts at school or in the community that addressed issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation. The third factor, *Political Change Action*, consisted of seven items that highlighted youths' engagement with political officials and outlets and participation in protests. Additionally, this factor captures youths' individual initiative to conduct research on and inspire others to address issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation. Table 1 depicts item loadings on their associated factors.

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and mean inter-item correlation (IIC) statistics were used as measures of subscale reliability. Cronbach's alpha may be a misleading estimate of internal consistency because the number of items is related to the reliability estimate (i.e., a scale with fewer items tends to be less reliable) (DeVellis 2003). Therefore, mean inter-item correlations (IIC) were also estimated. An acceptable mean inter-item correlation ranges from 0.15 to 0.50, with larger values reflecting higher levels of internal consistency (Clark and Watson 1995). According to these metrics, internal consistency was established for the Interpersonal Action ( $\alpha = 0.62$ , IIC = 0.19), Communal Action ( $\alpha = 0.69$ , IIC = 0.35), and Political Change Action scales ( $\alpha = 0.66$ , IIC = 0.23). These scales were significantly related to one another (see Table 2). Overall, Study 1 suggested that the ARAS consisted of three factors—Interpersonal Action, Communal Action, and Political Change Action—that had moderate to strong internal consistency and were significantly related.

## Study 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The three-factor model, which consisted of 18 items, established using EFA was cross-validated using CFA with an independent sample of youth (i.e., sample recruited using Qualtrics panel services). The CFA was conducted using Mplus 8.0 (Muthén and Muthén 2017). The CFA determined how well-observed items loaded onto their respective latent factor (Kline 2010). To identify the model, the first item of each loading was freed to vary, and the variances of the latent constructs were set to one. Because factors were hypothesized to be correlated in the EFA, the latent constructs were correlated in the CFA. The WLSMV estimator was used for these categorical items. The amount of missing data for each social action item was minimal, ranging between 0.5% and 3.1%. FIML was used to address these missing data.

The fit of the CFA was assessed using the same goodness-of-fit indices as in the EFA. In addition, the weighted root mean square residual (WRMR), an additional fit index computed for a CFA with categorical items, was interpreted. The results for the WRMR index can be dismissed when other goodness-of-fit indices suggest a good fitting model (Muthén

**Table 1** Factor loadings of exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis

	Study 1: EFA Factor Loadings	Study 2: CFA Factor Loadings
<b>Items</b>		
<b>Factor 1: interpersonal action</b>		
1. Challenged or checked a friend who uses a racial slur or makes a racial joke	0.51*	0.46***
2. Challenged or checked a family member who uses a racial slur or makes a racial joke	0.46*	0.49***
3. Challenged or checked an adult who uses a racial slur or makes a racial joke who is not a family member (i.e. parent's friend, coach, boss, teacher, etc.)	0.40*	0.74***
4. Defended a friend who is the target of a racial slur or joke	0.60*	0.55***
5. Defended a stranger who is the target of a racial slur or joke	0.53*	0.76***
6. Challenged or checked myself before using a racial slur or making a racial joke	0.59*	
7. Talked with friends about issues of race, ethnicity, discrimination and/or segregation	0.56*	
<b>Factor 2: communal action</b>		
8. Attended a meeting on an issue related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation	0.85*	0.77***
9. Joined a club or group working on issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation	0.84*	0.83***
10. Tried to get into a leadership role or committee (i.e. student council, etc)	0.41*	0.68***
11. Participated in a leadership group or committee working on issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation (i.e. youth organizing group) etc.	0.77*	0.82***
<b>Factor 3: political change action</b>		
12. Called/written/emailed the media (i.e. newspaper, TV, internet) when you have seen something that is offensive		0.88* 0.68***
13. Called/written/emailed an elected official (i.e. city council, mayor, legislator)		0.46* 0.74***
14. Attended a protest on an issue related to race, ethnicity, discrimination and/or segregation		0.85* 0.83***
15. Organized your own action project on an issue related to race, ethnicity, discrimination and/or segregation		0.58* 0.82***
16. Invited someone to a meeting or protest related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation		0.46* 0.85***
17. Inspired others to work on issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation		0.53* 0.66***
18. Researched/investigated issues or social problems in my community		0.43* 0.55***
<b>Deleted items</b>		
19. Paid attention to news articles/media stories about issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation		
20. Talked with a family member about issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation		
21. Made efforts to get to know others of diverse backgrounds		
22. Sat with others who are different racially/ethnically different from me in the school cafeteria or an event		

EFA exploratory factor analysis, CFA confirmatory factor analysis

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

and Muthén 2017). Items that loaded at or above 0.40 were considered to represent their respective latent constructs well and thus were retained. Items that loaded below 0.40 were removed from the analysis.

The initial CFA fit was an adequate fit to the data: CFI (0.91), TLI (0.90), RMSEA (0.07), WRMR (1.43). However, two items from the Interpersonal Action scale (Action 4 and Action 5) loaded below 0.40 and thus were removed from the scale. After their deletion, the CFA fit the data well, as indicated by CFI (0.95), TLI (0.94), and RMSEA (0.06). WRMR was slightly above the 1.00 cutoff (1.15). Modification indices, as suggested by Mplus, indicated the error of two pairs of items in the Interpersonal

Action scale (Action 1 with Action 2; Action 1 with Action 7) were related. Thus, their error covariances were estimated in the final CFA. The final ARAS subscales, which consisted of 16 items total, were internally consistent: Interpersonal Action ( $\alpha = 0.77$ , IIC = 0.29), Communal Action ( $\alpha = 0.65$ , IIC = 0.21), Political Change Action ( $\alpha = 0.76$ , IIC = 0.24). The subscales were significantly correlated in the expected directions (see Table 2). Overall, Study 2 confirmed that the ARAS consisted of the same three factors—Interpersonal Action, Communal Action, and Political Change Action—as proposed by the EFA in Study 1.

**Table 2** Correlations between anti-racist social action subscales

	Inter-personal action	Communal action	Political change action
<b>EFA</b>			
Interpersonal action	1.00		
Communal action	0.17**	1.00	
Political change action	0.36***	0.41***	1.00
<b>CFA</b>			
Interpersonal action	1.00		
Communal action	0.32***	1.00	
Political change action	0.37***	0.71***	1.00

\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### ARAS's Convergent Validity with the Critical Consciousness Scale

The ARAS's convergent validity was explored using bivariate correlations between the means of the ARAS subscales confirmed in the CFA and the subscale means of the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS; Diemer et al. 2017), including Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality, Critical Motivation and Critical Action (Rapa 2016). Correlations were conducted in SPSS 24 (IBM Corp 2017). Positive correlations between the ARAS and the CCS indicated convergent validity (Kline 2010).

Bivariate correlations indicated that Interpersonal Action was positively associated with Critical Action ( $r(374)=0.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Critical Motivation ( $r(376)=0.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Unexpectedly, there was no relation between Interpersonal Action and Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality ( $r(377)=0.07$ ,  $p = .18$ ). Communal Action was positively associated with Critical Action ( $r(373)=0.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and was, surprisingly, negatively associated with Critical Motivation ( $r(376) = -0.12$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Communal Action was unrelated to Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality ( $r(377)=0.05$ ,  $p = .37$ ). Political Change Action was positively associated with Critical Action ( $r(373)=0.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ), negatively associated with Critical Motivation ( $r(376) = -0.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and unrelated to Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality ( $r(377)=0.02$ ,  $p = .64$ ). In all, the ARAS subscales displayed convergent validity with some of the CCS subscales.

### Discussion

Youth participate in a variety of civic engagement behaviors. Yet, there is a paucity of research that examines the range of behaviors they participate in to challenge racism. Scholarship on sociopolitical development (Watts and Flanagan

2007) and critical consciousness (Diemer et al. 2016) indicate that youth reflect on and act against racism. Youth engagement in democratic processes that subverts racism is particularly evident in youth participatory action research contexts (Torre 2009). These disparate, but related, bodies of research provide evidence of youth engagement in efforts to thwart racism, even when an anti-racism framework is not overtly cited in its scholarship. However, quantitative measures that solely capture anti-racism actions of adolescents do not exist, which makes it difficult to examine anti-racism engagement amongst adolescents. Moreover, these measures are rarely developed from the perspectives of young people (see Diemer et al. 2015). Thus, the purpose of this study was to validate a youth-developed measure, the Anti-Racism Action Scale (ARAS), of adolescent engagement in social action that confronts racism.

The psychometric analysis confirmed that youths' anti-racism action is multidimensional and consists of three components: Interpersonal Action, Communal Action, and Political Change Action. The findings suggest that anti-racism action is a multidimensional construct ranging from individual (e.g., I challenged others) to collective (e.g., I engaged in a protest) actions. These findings coincide with existing scholarship that categorizes adolescents' participation in civic engagement behaviors that may occur at interpersonal or community levels. The Political Change Action factor, which includes engagement with political officials and outlets and participation in protests to address racism, is similar to the conceptualization of critical action in the critical consciousness literature (Diemer et al. 2017). Watts and Hipolito-Delgado (2015) argue, however, that personal action is not how structural change typically happens and suggest that young people should engage in structural activism or strategic behavior directed at the causes of inequality. Thus, the current study's results more closely align with the perspective that youths' sociopolitical engagement is diverse and might not be distinctly "political" to observers (Bañales et al. 2019). In this way, the Anti-Racism Action Scale has the potential to broaden conceptualization of sociopolitical action to include overtly political and informal acts of racial resistance in youths' proximal contexts.

The current study's findings support the theoretical perspective of Rozas and Miller (2009), which suggest that anti-racism actions must be taken at multiple levels to develop a "web of resistance." The results specifically coincide with external strategies listed in the web of resistance. External strategies are enacted in an alliance or coalition with others and aim to dismantle the many manifestations of racism (Rozas and Miller 2009). External strategies occur in various social contexts, or realms of resistance, like in interpersonal relations, organizations, or community environments. For instance, the Interpersonal Action factor (e.g., Defended a stranger who is the target of a racial slur or joke) indicates

that, for young people, interactions that disrupt the racial prejudice and bias of others are social interactions that resist racism.

Similarly, the Communal Action factor (e.g., Joined a club or group working on issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation) indicates that activities that bring young people together to explore issues of race and build their capacity for community involvement are also conceptualized as a form of social action. Even though the actions specified in the communal action factor may not be overtly political (e.g., grassroots organizing, working on a political campaign), the findings suggest that activities that involve youth locally or build their leadership skills to address racism may contribute to social change. This finding coincides with research that highlights the relational nature of youth civic empowerment (Christens 2012). Previous scholarship, however, has mainly focused on collective political action or community-organizing rather than the processes in small groups that foster critical reflection, positive intergroup relations, and action. It is in cooperative processes that political change strategies are often developed (Watts and Hipolito-Delgado 2015), and the inclusion of these types of engagement in future research may better depict youth social action.

Similar to critical consciousness theory (Watts et al. 2011), the web of resistance indicates that internal strategies—which include tactics that focus on enhancing self-awareness and critical reflection—are necessary to engage in external strategies of social action. Indeed, Freire (1970), argued that critical reflection is a form of action (p. 123). As opposed to internal actions against racism specified by the literature, most of the social action behaviors generated by the youth evaluation team (and ultimately retained in the analysis) focused on action in reaction to or in collaboration with others. The youth evaluation team only included one item in their “action scale” that could be considered an internal strategy (i.e., Paid attention to news articles/media stories about issues related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation), which was not retained after statistical analysis. It may be that the youth evaluation team’s list referenced more external anti-racism actions given the prominence of such forms of political action (e.g., engaging in protests) in the media and public discourse.

The critical consciousness (Diemer et al. 2016) and sociopolitical development (Watts and Flanagan 2007) literature assert that critical reflection and critical motivation are precursors to action; thus it was expected the Anti-Racism Action Scale would display convergent validity with all of the Critical Consciousness Scale subscales. However, the results were inconsistent with this hypothesis. For instance, youths’ interpersonal action against racism was positively associated with critical action and critical motivation but was unrelated to their perceptions of inequality. It appears

that it is not guaranteed that youth who are aware that certain marginalized groups (e.g., women, people of color, poor people) face unequal opportunities in society (i.e., endorse a critical reflection of perceived inequality) will engage in anti-racism action at various levels of change. The insignificant association between youths’ interpersonal action against racism and critical reflection of perceived inequality, in particular, might signal the need for opportunity structures, as posited in the sociopolitical development model (Watts and Flanagan 2007). Opportunity structures, such as schools or community organizations, may be necessary to connect youths’ understanding of societal inequality with the specific racial issues in youths’ proximal social context that require action. Future research should continue to explore associations between the Anti-Racism Action scale and other measures of critical consciousness.

The scale, while developmentally appropriate and validated with a diverse sample, was developed by a small group of adolescents. Expressions of youth civic engagement in a diverse society are varied (Checkoway and Aldana 2013), and youth may participate in social actions that are appropriate for the demands of a particular moment or context. Therefore, future measures should consider the various ways adolescents engage in anti-racism action that are relevant to their developmental contexts by considering both internal and external strategies of resistance. For example, some young people may consider forms of self-reflection (e.g., reading about racism, reflecting on one’s privileges) as a form of anti-racism action. As another example, a measure of internal action might consider the notion of achievement-as-resistance or the extent to which people of color consider their personal, academic success as a means of counteracting notions that academic success is a White attribute (Seider et al. 2018).

Despite the encouraging findings presented in this study, it will be necessary to evaluate the external validity of the scale periodically. It is likely that scale items will need to be revised to accommodate the changing nature of youth engagement in anti-racism. For example, youths’ use of technology may facilitate social actions that challenge racism not depicted in the Anti-Racism Action Scale. Moreover, given the rapid change in youth culture, it is expected that the language used to depict specific actions may need to be updated. Nevertheless, the Anti-Racism Action Scale can be used by researchers to assess anti-racism engagement empirically.

Given the mixed results for the convergent validity tests, more research is also necessary to examine how critical reflection and racism awareness, in particular, relate to anti-racism action. Understanding the role of racism awareness is also essential to consider in the measurement of civic and social action because it may influence future civic and political engagement. Hughes and Bigler (2011) found that,



for most adolescents, perceptions of current racial disparities and the role of racism in producing these disparities significantly predicted their support of race-conscious policies. Moreover, learning about historical racism has been associated with increased valuing of racial fairness among African American and European American children (Hughes et al. 2007). These studies suggest that examining adolescents' beliefs about racial inequality appears to be pertinent to the study of youth civic action and beliefs. Additionally, young people's general perceptions of social inequality are not always related to their engagement in diverse sociopolitical behaviors (e.g., protests, voting), suggesting that youths' analysis of specific social issues, such as racism, might better predict their engagement in behaviors that address that social issue (Bañales et al. 2019).

Future research should also investigate how adolescents define anti-racism action. The items that failed to meet the retention criteria might provide insight into this question. For instance, two items that were deleted in the exploratory factor analysis (e.g., Made efforts to get to know others of diverse backgrounds; Sat with others who are different racially/ethnically from me in the school cafeteria or at an event") suggest that youth might consider engaging in intergroup relations as a form of anti-racism action. Additionally, one item that failed to meet the item and factor retention criteria in the confirmatory factor analysis (i.e., Talked with friends about issues of race, ethnicity, discrimination and/or segregation) indicates that youth might consider behaviors researchers define as racial socialization as a form of anti-racism action. Conducting individual interviews or focus groups with adolescents would be ideal to explore this line of inquiry.

## Conclusion

This study described the development and validation of an instrument designed by youth to measure anti-racism action. In accordance with the existing literature on sociopolitical development (Watts and Flanagan 2007) and critical consciousness (Diemer et al. 2016), the study findings suggest that youth anti-racism engagement involves the iterative process of critical reflection and action. In other words, social action to address racism includes responding to perceived forms of racial bias and inequality that range from interpersonal offenses (e.g., stereotyping) to systemic oppression (e.g., mass incarceration of people of color). The conceptualization and validation of the Anti-Racism Action Scale provide insight into how youth from diverse racial backgrounds act upon racism, which contributes to our understanding of research on adolescents in a diverse democracy.

Young people of diverse social backgrounds may benefit from a broader definition of sociopolitical action, as

confirmed by the Anti-Racism Action Scale. The factor structure was intentionally explored and confirmed with two samples of adolescents from diverse ethnic-racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring the scale's applicability to a wide range of adolescents. Challenging racism has long been conceived as a developmental competency that people of color are expected to obtain as they endure and overcome systemic oppression (García Coll et al. 1996). The extant research recognizes that youth of color, in particular, face racial marginalization; however, it has yet to adequately address how youth of color and White youth engage in anti-racism. This conceptual oversight extends White youth the privilege of opting out of anti-racism and placing the responsibility of contesting racism onto marginalized youth of color. Nevertheless, youth of color and low-income adolescents might particularly benefit by the conceptual expansion discussed in this study as they have disproportionately been pathologized for their lack of engagement in traditional civic engagement behaviors (Fox et al. 2010). The results of this study suggest that with a broader definition and measurement of sociopolitical action, research will more readily document the full range of social actions diverse adolescents and emerging adults partake in as legitimate forms of civic engagement.

In the current study, youth engagement in measurement development enhanced the contextual relevance and item wording of the Anti-Racism Action Scale. Although research on youth social action has advanced our understanding of the ways young people engage in social change, this body of work has broadly operationalized youth engagement in social change. For instance, survey instruments often measure civic engagement in general terms, such as youths' expectations to "work with a group to solve a problem in the community where [they] live," making it difficult to discern the types of social issues youth are addressing (Flanagan et al. 2007). Centering youths' voices in the research process is a form of social justice, as youth are marginalized in research and political institutions (Cammarota and Fine 2008). Additionally, the use of participatory action research to engage community stakeholders, such as youth, in measurement design is a culturally responsive approach to the development of sound research measures (Gonzalez and Trickett 2014). Previous scholarship shows that children and youth are appropriate research partners in the validation of psychometric measures (Leff et al. 2006). The youth-led approach used to develop the Anti-Racism Action Scale validated in this study may also contribute to the design of future empirical research, evaluation approaches, and community programs intended to work with young people.

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## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflicts of interest** The authors report none.

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