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EDITED BY

Seanna Leath,
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United States

REVIEWED BY

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University of California, Riverside,
United States
Lauren Mims,
Steinhardt School of Culture,
Education, and Human Development,
New York University, United States

*CORRESPONDENCE

Gabrielle Kubi
gkubi@umich.edu

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School ethnic-racial socialization and critical action among Black youth

Gabrielle Kubi^{1*}, Christy M. Byrd² and Matthew A. Diemer¹

¹Combined Program in Education and Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, United States, ²Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, United States

We explore the interaction of different types of school ethnic-racial socialization, youth's perceptions of the messages that schools and their agents broadcast about race and ethnicity, as it shapes Black youth's critical action, the individual and collective action that youth engage in to combat oppression and racism. In particular, the co-occurrence of *critical consciousness socialization* (emphasizes racial inequity; CCS), *cultural socialization* (celebrates youth's culture/s; CS), and *color evasive socialization* (de-emphasizes and thus delegitimizes the importance of race; CES) are explored. The adaptive culture and Mustaffa's conceptualization of Black lifemaking, an aspect of freedom dreaming in which Black people define and care for themselves in ways (such as critical action) that counter dominant, anti-Black ideologies, serve as the overarching theoretical frameworks. As both the adaptive culture paradigm and critical action necessitate a target of resistance, we hypothesize that CES, in providing Black youth something to resist against, may actually serve as a positive moderator between CCS and/or CS and their critical action. We investigate these questions among a sample of Black adolescents ($n = 285$, $M = 15.09$ years, and $SD = 1.38$ years). Benjamini-Hochberg corrected hierarchical moderations with age as a covariate and socialization type and interaction between types as predictors revealed that the interaction between CCS and CES significantly predicted critically conscious action [$\beta = 0.25$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(193) = 2.54$, and $p < 0.05$] and political anti-racist action [$\beta = 0.21$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(193) = 2.38$, and $p < 0.05$]. Critically conscious action was more frequent among Black youth who perceived greater CES. The relationship between CCS and political anti-racist action was stronger among those who perceived greater CES. These findings may provide comfort to those worried about CES' impact. Black youth simultaneously socialized with CCS seem to develop a critical consciousness that allows them to trouble CES and to be critically active despite it. Engaging in varied, frequent critical action allows Black youth to continue the life-making which improves the Black American experience and drives their freedom dreaming.

KEYWORDS

adaptive culture, antiblackness, ethnic-racial socialization, activism, critical action, Black youth, Black adolescents

Introduction

Thomas and King (2007) discuss the importance of racial socialization¹, how knowledge, viewpoints, and ideals about ethnicity and race are transmitted to children (Hughes et al., 2006), in raising African American youth². Intentional socialization holds the potential to protect youth from the adverse effects of racism and to promote a positive racial identity (Hughes et al., 2006; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Neblett et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2020). While the field of ethnic-racial socialization has heavily studied ethnic-racial identity as an outcome (Hughes et al., 2006; Bañales et al., 2019; Byrd and Ahn, 2020), other assets have been understudied. This begs the question of what protective and promotive possibilities *critical consciousness* (critical analysis of historical and modern systemic oppression and inequity and corrective actions against it; Watts et al., 2011) development, specifically *critical action* (individual or collective action taken against oppressive and racist forces; Watts et al., 2011; Aldana et al., 2019), holds for Black youth. Thus, the current study will use García Coll et al. (1996) integrative model as well as Mustafa's (2017) conceptualization of Black-life making to explore the implications of ethnic-racial socialization, specifically within schools, for Black youth's critical action.

Integrative model and school ethnic-racial socialization

García Coll et al.'s (1996) integrative model of developmental competencies in minority children posits that children of color develop within macrosystemic and microsystemic contexts alongside their white counterparts, but that their positive development is limited or thwarted given others' receptions of their minoritized racial and ethnic identities. These receptions lead children of color to encounter discrimination and prejudice on the micro-level, as well as racism and oppression on the macro-level³, particularly through the

ramifications of broader policy and decision-making. Such policy and decision-making trickle down to influence whether the environments young people of color find themselves in, such as schools, promote or inhibit their development.

Sociocultural compatibility between a school's contextual norms and demands and the history and culture of its students of color largely determines whether or not said school will promote or inhibit these students' development. Educational institutions, at the collegiate and K-12 levels, reinforce white supremacy. They serve as sites of antiblackness, falsely communicating the inferiority of Black beauty, culture, knowledge, and life prospects (Dumas, 2016; Mustafa, 2017; Humphrey and Davis, 2021). In particular, middle and high schools are spaces in which Black youth are socialized to accept a deficit view of themselves via interactions, physical artifacts and spaces, and curricula that reinforce white supremacy (Bañales et al., 2019).

If contextual norms and demands are not compatible with a student's history and culture, they may find themselves enacting the values of the *adaptive culture*, or "a social system defined by sets of goals, values, and attitudes that differ from the dominant culture" (García Coll et al., 1996, p. 1896). In other words, the adaptive culture encompasses the goals, values, and attitudes of a marginalized group's culture, as well as their contemporary and historical resistance to the dominant culture and/or oppressive forces. It is characterized by ways of thinking, being, and acting that support young people's development while implicitly or explicitly allowing them to resist social mechanisms that would thwart their development. Literature often theorizes the adaptive culture to be a "cultural asset," in more cognitive, mental, and/or affective terms (e.g., a strong ethnic-racial identity/pride and/or enacting cultural traditions and values, rather than assimilating to the dominant culture; Perez-Brena et al., 2018), but "it is important to note that [it] was originally defined in neutral terms as a coping mechanism" (García Coll et al., 1996, p. 721).

The adaptive culture is often considered in terms of cognitive coping mechanisms. Two dimensions of critical consciousness, critical reflection and motivation (Watts et al., 2011), can be thought of as such cognitive coping mechanisms. However, it is important to go beyond considerations of the adaptive culture's cognitive components, such as critical reflection and motivation (Diemer et al., 2020). While such critical cognition is necessary to inform and give meaning to action, foundational (Freire, 1970) and contemporary (Watts and Hipolito-Delgado, 2015) critical consciousness scholarship has always emphasized the need for consciousness-raising to ultimately manifest in liberation-oriented action. The goals

1 Wherever mentions of "racial socialization" appear, I (GK) am using the author's/authors' terminology. In most current literature, it is more so the case that the term 'ethnic-racial socialization' is used, given the considerable overlap between racial socialization and ethnic socialization, and because ethnic-racial socialization "refer[s] to the broader research literature and focus[es] on other definitional and conceptual issues that [are] regard[ed] as more important [than distinguishing ethnic from racial socialization]" (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 749).

2 Here again, the term "African American" is used per the authors' terminology. I (GK) will refer to the youth of interest in this study as Black, as not all youth who are or who are racialized as Black are African Americans.

3 Although García Coll et al. (1996) original paper frames, racism, oppression, discrimination, and prejudice as part of the same class of social mechanisms, since its publication in 1996, scholars have parsed

oppression and racism to generally reflect macro-level mechanisms, and discrimination and prejudice to be interpersonal, micro-level mechanisms of degradation.

of such cognition are to encourage youth to practice their culture/s and to engage in sociopolitical resistance (Hope and Bañales, 2019), so that they may more effectively cope with marginalization (Diemer et al., 2020; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2020). Thus, it is of particular importance to consider what the adaptive culture entails in terms of active resistance and behavior via critical action, the third dimension of critical consciousness. Moreover, adolescence represents a developmental period during which middle and high school students of color develop the social-cognitive faculties to reflect on their ethnic-racial identities, as well as how the treatment they receive or their life prospects may be implicated by their race (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Given that the evolution of Black American culture has been consistently punctuated by sociopolitical movements (Wang et al., 2020), Black youth's clarity about and commitment to their ethnic-racial identity may spur them to engage in critical action as a way to reify the importance of their ethnic-racial identity (Mathews et al., 2019). Engaging in such action has been theorized to iteratively and reciprocally encourage critical reflection and motivation (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011; Mathews et al., 2019).

Critical consciousness has historically and contemporarily been postured as an antidote to oppression given its emphasis on resistance and liberation (Watts et al., 1999; Jemal, 2018). Critical action has been increasingly and specifically studied as a means by which Black people can resist and cope with oppression (Hope et al., 2020; Mosley et al., 2021). While the onus is not on young Black people (or Black people of any age) to transform oppressive systems that they did not create, work by Hope et al. (2020) have shown direct and indirect relationships between racial stress and critical action among Black adolescents. They concluded that while racism is stressful and harmful for these young people, critical action provides a resource for them to cope as individuals and to resist and transform the systems that perpetuate racism and accompanying stress. Given this evidence and its original emphasis on coping, critical action—and critical consciousness more broadly—is studied and framed as part of the adaptive culture in the present paper. Consequently, the current study also theorizes youth's critical action as a function of sociocultural compatibility. In other words, the extent to which youth engage in critical action is a function of *school ethnic-racial socialization's* (the messages about ethnicity and race that youth perceive their schools and the agents within them to be broadcasting; Byrd, 2017) promotion or inhibition of their critical consciousness.

Literature on the adaptive culture heavily studies ethnic-racial identity as a value or asset of the adaptive culture (Perez-Brena et al., 2018), but understudies critical consciousness. Accordingly, recent literature has called for critical consciousness, and specifically critical action, to be further studied (1) in its own right, (2) as an outcome of school processes, namely, school ethnic-racial socialization,

and (3) as the result of combined contextual influences (Diemer and Li, 2011; Byrd and Ahn, 2020; Heberle et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2020), all calls to which the present study intends to respond. By definition, critical action must be enacted against oppressive forces. Despite this, little to no prior work has studied the interaction between school ethnic-racial socialization that *counters oppression* (critical consciousness and cultural socialization) and school ethnic-racial socialization that *is oppressive* (color-evasive socialization). Similarly, little to no prior work has investigated critical action as the desired outcome of such an interaction. The present study also aims to fill these gaps by including both empowering and oppressive forms of socialization within a model estimating critical action, as schooling contexts can simultaneously empower and oppress marginalized students.

While certain socialization practices promote critical consciousness, others inhibit its development. It is intuitive and well established by the literature that positive forms of school ethnic-racial socialization, which emphasize systemic racial inequality (*critical consciousness socialization*; Byrd, 2017) and which encourage young people to celebrate their own culture(s), *cultural socialization*; Byrd) aid the development of critical consciousness (Bañales et al., 2019; Byrd and Ahn, 2020; Lambert et al., 2020; Seider and Graves, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). On the other hand, *color-evasive socialization*⁴, a negative form of school ethnic-racial socialization that de-emphasizes systemic oppression and racial disparities, constrains critical thinking about racism (Aldana and Byrd, 2015) and is negatively related to anger toward injustice (Bañales et al., 2019). In ignoring systemic causes of oppression and racism, color-evasive socialization encourages individual-level attributions for poor life circumstances. Such an attribution style is characteristic of lower levels of critical consciousness, and thus lesser likelihood of engaging in critical action (Watts et al., 2011).

Despite the co-occurrence of positive and negative forms of school ethnic-racial socialization, few studies have interacted with these socialization practices, and even fewer, if any, have done so in models estimating critical action. Studying the co-occurrence of these conflicting forms of school ERS is important, as both the adaptive culture and critical consciousness require the presence of an entity to act against or resist. In the case of the adaptive culture, the target of this resistance is (assimilation to) the dominant culture, and thus resistance to marginalization and oppression. In the case of critical consciousness, the target of resistance is also oppression. With heightened perceptions of critical consciousness socialization and cultural socialization come

⁴ Byrd and other cited authors use the terminology "colorblind." Despite the term being used in academic literature to mirror the wording advanced by wider, non-academic society in popular racial discourse (Ansell, 2008), it is ableist, and thus will be reworded as "color evasive" in the present study.

higher levels of critical consciousness, which may increase students' ability to "read the world." The growth in their critical consciousness likely positions these students to be more capable of identifying problematic and oppressive socialization messages, such that they perceive higher levels of color-evasive socialization. Critically conscious students will likely trouble color-evasive socialization's downplaying of racial disparities and stigmatization of conversation about systemic oppression and critical action. As such, color-evasive socialization likely serves as the target of resistance to these students' critical consciousness and adaptive culture engagement.

School ethnic-racial socialization, Black life-making, and critical consciousness

The present study posits that school ethnic-racial socialization (hereafter school ERS) plays a hand in whether schools serve to promote or inhibit the development of students of color, and thus in their engagement with the adaptive culture. So far, the existing literature on school ERS focuses more on academic outcomes and/or ethnic-racial identity (Hughes et al., 2006; Bañales et al., 2019; Byrd and Ahn, 2020), rather than critical consciousness. Accordingly, recent literature has called for critical consciousness to be studied as an outcome of school ERS (Diemer and Li, 2011; Byrd and Ahn, 2020; Heberle et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2020).

The adaptive culture and critical action by definition necessitate the presence of something to adapt to, act against, and resist. Black students may adapt to and resist socialization that minimizes the existence and ramifications of racial inequities, given that such socialization comprises a tenet of and reproduces racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1998). *If these young people are receiving efficacious critical consciousness socialization and cultural socialization, as a product of their heightened critical consciousness and cultural awareness, they may be more apt to name and perceive this color-evasive socialization, which seeks to counter and delegitimize the importance of race. In other words, Black students who are well-socialized in terms of critical consciousness and their own culture(/s) may identify greater levels of color-evasive socialization in their schooling, and may implicitly or explicitly identify this socialization as something to resist against.* For example, a Black student learning about racial disparities in home ownership that disadvantage Black people (critical consciousness socialization) and/or about the history of Chicago's Contract Buyers League (cultural socialization) in one of their courses may be incensed by a teacher in another class saying that race does not impact people's life prospects (color evasive socialization). This student's critical consciousness, cultivated by critical consciousness socialization, allows them to perceive the latter message as color-evasive and oppressive rather than as benign and true. They may thus be driven to

engage in critical action, deriving from a heightened critical consciousness and from their resistance to and problematizing of color-evasive socialization. Another student, receiving little to no critical consciousness socialization, may not be critically conscious enough to trouble their color-evasive socialization. Such a student may make individual-level attributions for their own and/or their ethnic-racial group's hardships without realizing the role systemic oppression and racism play in those hardships. Without receiving critical consciousness socialization in concert with color-evasive socialization, they may also be less likely to engage in critical action. Lacking an adaptive, consciousness-raising coping mechanism, this student may suffer from negative mental health outcomes (Barr and Neville, 2014) and lower school self-esteem (Constantine and Blackmon, 2002), contributing to a poorer self-concept (Lambert et al., 2020). While cultural and critical consciousness socialization provide youth with the knowledge to act critically, color-evasive socialization provides a target for this action. Thus, including color-evasive socialization in models predicting Black youth's critical action may strengthen the relationship between critical consciousness socialization and critical action, and/or cultural socialization and critical action. Results from such moderation analyses may improve our understanding of how these school messages interrelate, as well as what engenders critical action among Black youth.

Relatedly, the current paper seeks to advance critical consciousness as part of *Black life-making*, or Black people's ability to define and care for themselves in ways that counter those dictated by dominant, anti-Black ideologies (Mustaffa, 2017), as no prior work has done so explicitly. The current paper also posits that Black life-making encompasses, if not complements, Black students' engagement in the adaptive culture. When there is low sociocultural compatibility between these students' culture/s and their schools' norms and demands, it becomes imperative to engage in the adaptive culture. Black life-making is a means through which students can do so. It is a means of coping with antiblackness via celebrating and reflecting on Blackness and resistance/critical action. Thus, the present paper also conceptualizes Black life-making as part of the adaptive culture for Black students.

Predictably, educational contexts meant to produce white supremacy are unwilling to concede room for "the creative spaces of possibility and freedom Black people produce when practicing self-definition, self-care, and resistance" (Mustaffa, 2017, p. 712). Despite this, Black people have been life-making as far back as (and even further back than; see Grant et al., 2016) the 1860s. During this time, enslaved Black people fled plantations to attend contraband schools to "catch a lesson," learning to read and write. There, they built the intergenerational knowledge necessary to survive and combat the post-emancipation evils of Jim Crow laws; segregation; political and economic disenfranchisement; police brutality; and myriad other forms of institutionalized antiblackness

(Nelson and Williams, 2018). By investigating the school ERS Black students perceive, we can better understand how schools are or are not co-conspirators in Black life-making.

Critical consciousness is a developmental asset (Ginwright and James, 2002; Yosso, 2005; Clonan-Roy et al., 2016; Diemer et al., 2016) that has been shown to relate to a host of other positive outcomes among youth of color (Jearey-Graham and Macleod, 2017; Pérez-Gualdrón and Helms, 2017; Delia and Krasny, 2018; Rapa et al., 2018; Seider et al., 2019). By studying a sample comprised exclusively of Black adolescents and investigating their levels of critical action, part-and-parcel to their critical consciousness, the current study combats traditional deficit-based views of Black students' educational and psychological experiences (Yosso, 2005; Dumas, 2016; Dumas and Nelson, 2016; see also Researcher Subjectivity). Amidst this theorizing on schools' roles in Black life-making, the current study also asks specifically how different types of school ERS may interact to shape Black youth's critical action.

Similarly, ethnic-racial socialization is moving toward the study of the combined, simultaneous influences of multiple ethnic-racial socialization messages on young people's critical consciousness (Hughes et al., 2006; Byrd and Ahn, 2020). Among a sample of racially diverse adolescents, critical consciousness socialization and color-evasive socialization were significantly positively correlated with each other (Byrd and Ahn, 2020; also seen in Byrd, 2015, 2017). It is likely the case that school personnel give both of these types of messages simultaneously and/or that certain students perceive both of these socialization styles simultaneously (Saleem and Byrd, 2021), hence the positive correlation. In addition, schools are contexts in which students receive a variety of socialization messages from different sources (e.g., teachers, administrators, curriculum, and peers). The roles and specific impacts of these varying sources are a burgeoning area of study within the school ethnic-racial socialization literature (Saleem and Byrd, 2021). However, it may be the case that some sources may emphasize critical consciousness socialization while others may emphasize color-evasive socialization. Moreover, literature on white parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices (e.g., Abaied and Perry, 2021) shows that white parents commonly give contradictory messages about race (e.g., race doesn't matter, but all races are equal and valuable despite their differences). Seeing as white teachers dominate the American public school teaching workforce (Bell, 2021; Schaeffer, 2021), it would follow to reason that color-evasive socialization and critical consciousness socialization are both broadcast by teachers. As the adults in the school who play a paritable socializing role to that of parents, and as the adults in control of the school culture, similar contradiction in teacher-delivered school socialization messages as in parental socialization messages may occur. For these reasons, Bañales et al. (2019, p. 15) call for "further investigation of the nature and measurement of school racial

messages and their role in youth critical consciousness around racism." Moreover, Lambert et al. (2020) state that future research should consider a variety of mechanisms Black youth may employ to cope with discrimination as a means of better understanding ethnic-racial socialization; critical consciousness has been shown to be one such mechanism (Hope et al., 2020; Mosley et al., 2021). These calls necessitate more ethnic-racial socialization research within schools; the need for this research to focus on critical consciousness as an outcome; and the need to study the combined influence and interplay of different types of school ERS.

Researcher subjectivity

As a young Black race scholar engaged in research for, about, and with my community, I (GK) am uninterested in research that dehumanizes Black people implicitly or explicitly. School ERS is conceptualized as a component of school climate research, which repeatedly resorts to comparing Black and white students (McGiboney, 2016). I believe it is important to illuminate disparities between these groups' experiences and outcomes, but I also believe that past a point, it is unproductive. More often than not, such studies fail to justify the use of racial comparisons. Similarly, they often fail to ground comparisons in systemic disparities, instead situating them as perceived individual deficits. Growth in my own critical consciousness and conceptualizations of race have led me to the conclusion that these failures aid and abet antiblackness. I feel that they result in myopic deficit views of Blackness, ignoring the diversity of strengths Black students hold, and the diversity of possible futures they can achieve. Such comparisons contribute to the idea that Black people engage in/disengage from certain attitudes, values, aspirations, and behaviors not of their own volition but to counter or foil those of whiteness or white people. As such, I felt it important and necessary to analyze responses from an all-Black sample, and I advocate for the importance and necessity of all-Black samples more broadly.

My engagement in meaningful critical action was minimal until I became an undergraduate student. This was the first time in my life I was exposed to coursework which deeply engaged the sociopolitical and racial dimensions of society and schooling, expanding the cognitive dimensions of my critical consciousness. I began my first semester of college during the 2016 election and ended my last semester of college as the racial reckoning of the summer of 2020 commenced. My undergraduate education was punctuated by critical action. I attended protests and sit-ins, engaged in campus organizing, and used my campus involvements to find ways to support similarly marginalized students. Coming to understand race, resistance, and education as they intersect with human development brought me to pursue a Ph.D., and thus to the present study.

Then and now, I wonder what it would mean or look like for Black students to begin meditating on these important topics

earlier on in their schooling. Growing up in predominantly white spaces, I never would have come to see the world and my place in it the way that I do were in not for my college education – I came to these views much later on than I would have liked to in retrospect. I am grateful, but I find it very troubling that this may be true for many other Black students. Contrasting the school ERS I received prior to college, during college, and now as a doctoral student encouraged me to pursue the current study. I feel it is imperative to reimagine K-12 schooling such that socialization that encourages Black life-making and critical action reaches as many young Black people as early as possible. Ignoring or mishandling the ethnic-racial socialization of Black youth, particularly in schools, poses the danger of stigmatizing or stifling the development of their critical action. Young people spend a significant portion of their days and lives in K-12 classrooms. Moreover, a linear pursuit of college or a pursuit right after high school may not make the most sense or be feasible for some students and their families. Youth for whom this is true are still engaged in resistance (Clonan-Roy et al., 2016) and still life-make (Mustaffa, 2017), but intentional, promotive K-12 school ERS may be of especial import to them. Such school ERS aids consciousness raising and critical action, which have improved and defined the Black American experience for generations. Additionally, the communities we serve as scholars of race, education, and psychology, and we ourselves, need to know more about what critical action young people are engaged in before they reach college. We also need to know more about what drives their resistance. With this knowledge, it is my hope that we can reimagine schooling to further encourage said action and the critical consciousness that drives it.

Current study

Thus, the current study seeks to investigate the interplay of different types of school ERS to see if said interplay shapes Black middle and high school students' critical action. Given that multiple forms of socialization can shape critical action, we hypothesize that color-evasive socialization may serve as a positive moderator, or something that strengthens the relationship between critical consciousness and/or cultural socialization and critical action.

Materials and methods

Participants

Participants in the current study comprised the 285 Black adolescents drawn from a larger data collection in a study of various contexts of ethnic-racial socialization among a larger, racially diverse group of youth (Byrd and Ahn, 2020). This Black

subsample was aged 13–17 years old ($M = 15.09$, $SD = 1.38$, based on $n = 284$, given that one young person did not provide their age). Among this sample, six young people were bi-/multiracially/-ethnically Black and white; one young person was African American and Native American; another was Black and Hispanic; and one more young person was Black, Japanese, and Filipino. There was also one young person who was a Black African. The sample was approximately equally comprised of girls ($n = 136$; 48.1%), boys ($n = 147$; 51.9%), and two youth who did not provide their gender. No youth indicated being genderqueer/gender non-conforming/non-binary.

Measures

School ethnic-racial socialization

The School Ethnic-Racial Socialization subscales from the School Climate for Diversity Scale-Secondary (Byrd, 2017) measured school ERS. Using a Likert-type scale from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 5 (*Completely true*), youth were asked to think about their school and whether statements regarding (1) Critical Consciousness Socialization (seven items, e.g., “In your classes you have learned about how success in life can depend on your race/ethnicity,” $\alpha = 0.75$); (2) Cultural Socialization (five items, e.g., “At your school, you have chances to learn about the history and traditions of your culture,” $\alpha = 0.76$); and (3) Color Blind Socialization (here, color evasive; five items, e.g., “Your school encourages you to ignore racial/ethnic difference,” $\alpha = 0.77$) were true of their experience. All subscales showed good reliability, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.75 to 0.77.

Critical action

Nine items from the Critical Action: Sociopolitical Participation Subscale of the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer et al., 2017) measured critically conscious action. These items measure the frequency with which youth engage in various, more traditional forms of civic engagement, on a Likert-type scale from 1 (*Never did this*) to 5 (*[Did this] At least once a week*). An example of an item is, “In the past year, how often have you . . . contacted an elected official by phone, mail, or email to tell him or her how you felt about a social or political issue?” This subscale showed good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75.

Given the face validity of scales meant for youth that are co-developed by youth and the recognition that the forms of critical action available to youth may differ as a function of their developmental stage and the opportunities available in their community, the Anti-Racism Action Scale (ARAS; Aldana et al., 2019) was also used to assess Black youth's critical action. Youth indicate whether they did (coded as 1) or did not (coded as 0) engage in various forms of (1) interpersonal anti-racist action (calling out/defending others against the usage of racist names or phrases; five of the original seven items, $\alpha = 0.79$), (2)

communal anti-racist action (institution-specific efforts against racism in youth's schools or communities; four items, $\alpha = 0.71$), and (3) political anti-racist action (more direct engagement with and/or combatting of wider systems of racism and/or their agents; seven items, $\alpha = 0.69$). All subscales showed good reliability, Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.69 to 0.79.

Participants' scores on all items except for those from the ARAS were summed and then divided by the number of items on a given subscale, for mean scores equal to the participants' average score on each subscale. For the ARAS, scores were summed for composite scores. In either case, higher scores indicated a higher degree of perception of a certain type of school ERS or a higher frequency/amount of engagement in critical action. Each item on the ARAS is binary, unlike the critically conscious action items, which use Likert-type scales. This binary coding prevents ARAS sum scores from fulfilling the interval-level data assumption of linear regression. As such, the average of each participant's response for each ARAS subscale, rather than the sum score, was calculated to provide an interval-level measure of anti-racist action.

Procedure

Per Byrd and Ahn's (2020) study, participants were recruited via an online survey platform that connects researchers to study participants, Qualtrics panels. Parents were asked to provide consent for their child to participate. For a young person to be eligible for participation, their parent also had to verify that their child was between the ages of 13 and 17 and that they attended a public or private school. The young people then provided demographic information. If they were white, African American (in the current study, Black), Asian American, or Latinx, they were allowed to complete the rest of the survey. After ethnic-racial group quotas (around 250 young people per group) were reached, the survey was closed. Participants' parents were compensated with Qualtrics credit that could be "traded in" for gift cards and other rewards.

Planned analyses

To see how different types of school ERS may interact to have a combined effect on the critical action of Black youth, hierarchical moderation analyses were employed. Descriptive statistics were calculated (see Table 1), as was a matrix of correlations (see Table 2). Given that the socialization style predictors were highly correlated ($r = 0.47$ – 0.66), variance inflation factors (VIFs) were also calculated to further investigate possible multicollinearity. As all VIFs were valued below 10 (Field et al., 2012), predictors were not assumed to be collinear. The correlations between socialization styles are explored in further depth in the "Discussion" section.

Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was used to account for missing data. Rather than overly restrictive methods of dealing with missing data, such as pairwise or listwise deletion, FIML makes use of all datapoints and is appropriate to use when data are assumed to be Missing At Random (MAR; Kline, 2015). Data were indeed assumed to be classified as Missing At Random (MAR), although this assumption was made in differing ways according to the items in question. Firstly, 98.9–99.6% of participants had complete data on the school ERS items; with so few missing responses among these subscales (Little and Rhemtulla, 2013), data here were assumed to be MAR.

Secondly, missingness was assessed among the critically conscious action items. Although more responses were missing among these items (28.1–28.4% depending on the individual item), t -tests revealed that there were no significant differences in the mean responses to any of the nine items between a sample comprised solely of participants who completed all nine items and a sample that included all participants, regardless of their completion of the critically conscious action items. In addition, neither age, gender, nor time taken to complete the survey predicted missingness on these items; time duration was included as a possible predictor of missingness, given that these items were toward the end of the survey, such that missingness might be attributed to fatigue. Thus, the assumption of MAR classification was tenable.

Lastly, missingness was assessed among the ARAS items. There was also an appreciable number of missing responses among these items (28.1–29.1% depending on the individual item), such that MAR classification could not be assumed on the basis of the complete response percentage. Because individual ARAS items are dichotomous, chi-square tests were used. These tests revealed that neither age, gender, nor time taken to complete the survey predicted missingness on these items. Thus, the assumption of MAR classification was once again tenable. Moreover, missingness was only marginally correlated with one of the three auxiliary variables (age, with the other two being

TABLE 1 Means and standard deviations of study variables.

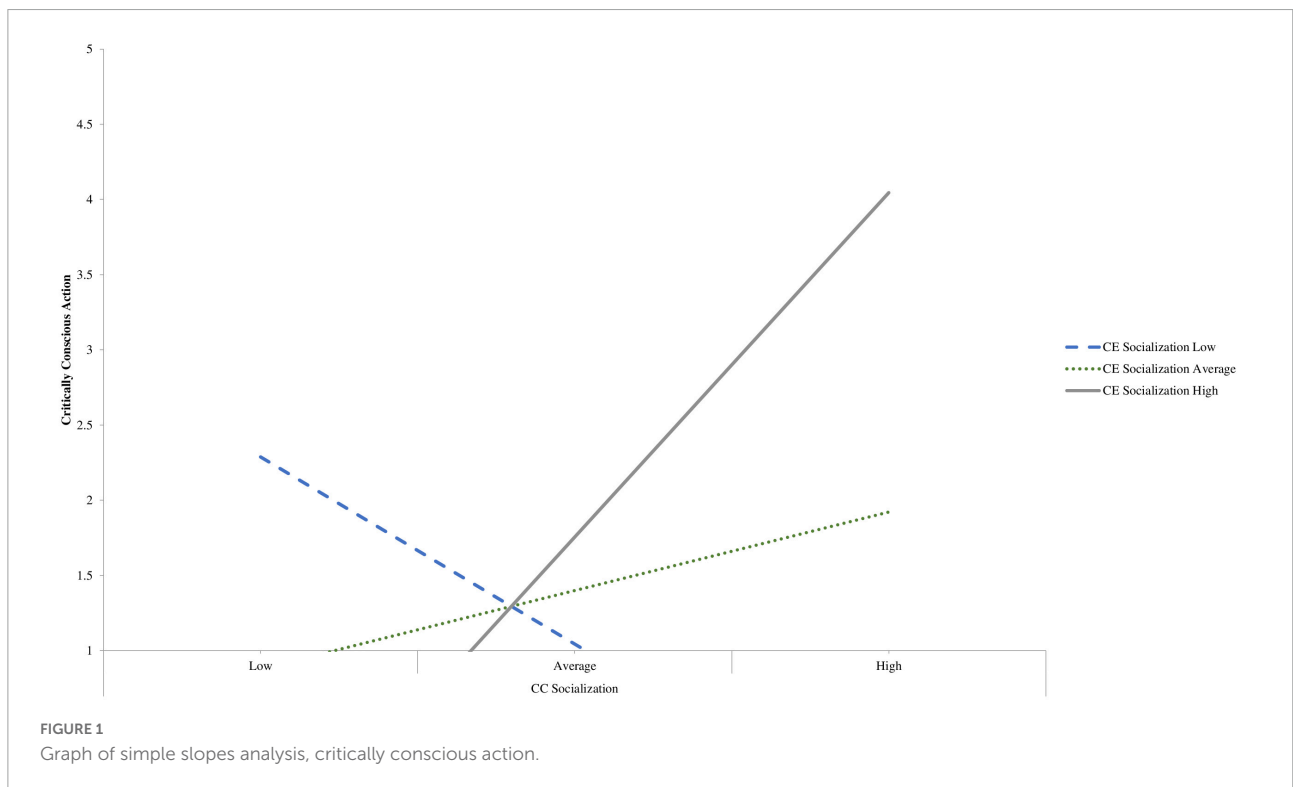
Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	15.09	1.38
Median household income	59832.56	13436.24
Critical consciousness socialization	3.07	0.86
Cultural socialization	3.23	1.00
Color evasive socialization	2.74	0.94
Critically conscious action	1.40	0.72
Interpersonal anti-racist action	2.08	1.96
Communal anti-racist action	0.66	1.24
Political anti-racist action	1.21	1.77

Scores could range respectively from 1 to 5 for all variables cultural socialization through critically conscious action; from 0 to 7 for interpersonal and political anti-racist action; and from 0 to 4 for communal anti-racist action.

TABLE 2 Correlations between study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age	–									
Gender	0.02	–								
Income	0.01	0.11	–							
CCS	0.06	–0.04	0.01	–						
CS	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.66*	–					
CES	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.49*	0.47*	–				
Critical	–0.02	0.06	0.14	0.26*	0.22*	0.28*	–			
Interpersonal	0.08	–0.03	0.05	0.26*	0.12	0.09	0.32*	–		
Communal	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.34*	0.25*	0.34*	0.63*	0.45*	–	
PAA	0.04	–0.01	0.04	0.44*	0.36*	0.44*	0.60*	0.48*	0.74*	–

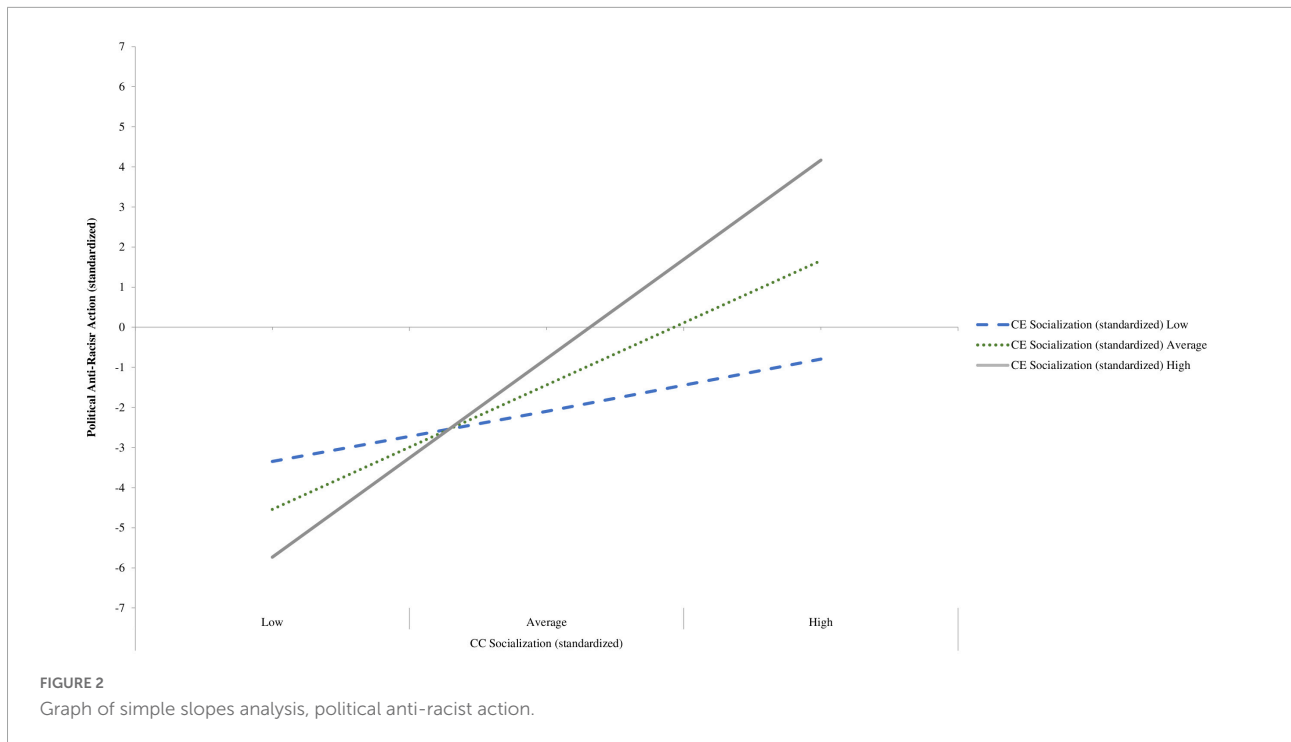
Gender: 0 = girl, 1 = boy. Income, median household income; CCS, critical consciousness socialization; CS, cultural socialization; CES, color evasive socialization; Critical, critically conscious action; Interpersonal, interpersonal anti-racist action; Communal, communal anti-racist action; PAA, political anti-racist action. * $p < 0.002$.



gender and duration) for the second Critical Consciousness Socialization item ($r = 0.12, p = 0.05$).

Four hierarchical regressions, one for each type of critical action (i.e., critically conscious, interpersonal anti-racist, communal anti-racist, and political anti-racist action), with an alpha criterion of 0.05, were conducted to explore how different types of school ERS may interact to have a combined effect on Black youth's critical action. Following these regressions, simple slopes analysis was employed to parse apart significant interactions indicative of moderation. Only coefficient estimates with values significant at the 0.05 level were corrected using the Benjamini–Hochberg correction, as the

Bonferroni correction uniformly shrinks p -values rather than adjusting them according to their effect size, leading it to be an at-times overly conservative correction (Hochberg, 1988; Field et al., 2012; Rubin, 2021). It is well established by the literature that critical consciousness socialization and cultural socialization bolster critical consciousness's development, and so they were entered ahead of color-evasive socialization in each step. Step 0 included the covariates of age, gender, and median household income for the zip code in which students lived; Step 1 included these covariates and each of these three socialization styles; and Step 2 included covariates, individual socialization styles, and all possible two-way interactions



between predictors (cultural-critical consciousness, cultural-color-evasive, and critical consciousness-color-evasive). The third step, including a three-way interaction between each socialization style, was not included in the present paper as not to detract from the variance explained in the main effects. Because the proposed interactions were entered exploratorily, there was no theoretical underpinning to the order in which they were entered. It was hypothesized that (1a) at least one of the interactions involving color-evasive socialization would be significant, and that (1b) model fit would improve between Steps 1 and 2.

Results

Four three-step moderations were run for each outcome: critically conscious, interpersonal anti-racist, communal anti-racist, and political anti-racist action. For the sake of brevity, only regression models with significant interaction terms (the models for critically conscious and political anti-racist action) are reported below. Those models which lacked significant interaction terms (the models for interpersonal and communal anti-racist action) are reported in the [Supplementary material](#).

Critically conscious action

A moderation using FIML regression was executed (see [Table 3](#)). The covariate of median household income was standardized to allow execution of the FIML estimation

command (Biesanz, 2022) in RStudio Desktop 2022.07.1 + 554. All predictors were centered beforehand, and the suspected moderator of color evasive socialization was entered last in Step 1.

Overall, the Step 0 model, including only the study covariates, was not significant, $F(3,176) = 1.56$, $p = 0.20$, $R^2 = 0.03$. The Step 1 model of the covariates and critical consciousness; cultural; and color evasive socialization was significant, $F(6,173) = 4.64$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.14$. The Step 2 model of the covariates; critical consciousness, cultural, and color evasive socialization; and the two-way interactions between these modes of school ERS were also significant overall, $F(9,170) = 3.94$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.17$. Fit improved significantly between Steps 0 and 1, and differed marginally between Steps 1 and 2. Supporting our hypothesis, the interaction between critical consciousness and color-evasive socialization was significant [$\beta = 0.25$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(193) = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$]. The only other significant “main effect” predictors in this model were critical consciousness socialization [$\beta = -0.02$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(218) = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$] and color evasive socialization [$\beta = 0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(206) = 2.25$, $p < 0.05$]. All significant predictors in this model remained significant after the Benjamini–Hochberg correction was applied.

Simple slopes analyses

There was a significant, positive relationship between critical consciousness socialization and critically conscious action for youth scoring one standard deviation *above* the mean perception level of color evasive socialization ($b = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). This means that when students perceived high

levels of color-evasive socialization, there was a positive link between critical consciousness socialization and critically conscious action.

There was not a significant relationship between critical consciousness socialization and critically conscious action for youth scoring one standard deviation *below* the mean perception level of color-evasive socialization ($b = 0.03, p = 0.71$). This means that when students reported low levels of color-evasive socialization, critical consciousness socialization was unrelated to critically conscious action. **Figure 1** depicts the simple slopes analysis visually.

Political anti-racist action

A moderation using a FIML regression was executed (see **Table 4**). Given the binary nature of the items from

the Anti-Racism Action Scale, all covariates, predictors, and the outcome variable of political anti-racist action were standardized beforehand. The suspected moderator of color-evasive socialization was entered last in Step 1.

Overall, the Step 0 model, including only the study covariates, was not significant, $F(3,176) = 0.24, p = 0.87, R^2 = 0.004$. The Step 1 model of the covariates and critical consciousness; cultural; and color evasive socialization was significant, $F(6,173) = 8.23, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.22$. The Step 2 model of the covariates; critical consciousness, cultural, and color evasive socialization; and the two-way interactions between these modes of school ERS was also significant overall, $F(9,170) = 6.29, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.25$. Fit improved significantly between Steps 0 and 1 and differed marginally between Steps 1 and 2. Supporting our hypothesis, the interaction between critical consciousness and color-evasive socialization was significant [$\beta = 0.21, SE = 0.09, t(193) = 2.38$,

TABLE 3 Ethnic-racial socialization’s effect on critically conscious action.

Variable	Step 0					Step 1					Step 2				
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	-0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.34	0.74	-0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.45	0.66	-0.008	-0.02	0.03	-0.22	0.83
Gender	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.78	0.44	0.06	0.96	0.10	0.61	0.54	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.40	0.69
Income	0.10	0.14	0.06	1.83	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.05	1.72	0.09	0.08	0.10	0.05	1.55	0.12
CCS						0.16	0.17	0.07	2.25	0.02*	0.18	0.20	0.07	2.54	0.01*
CS						0.02	0.04	0.06	0.25	0.80	0.01	0.05	0.06	0.16	0.88
CES						0.17	0.21	0.06	2.80	0.01*	0.14	0.16	0.06	2.25	0.03*
CCS × CS											-0.03	-0.05	0.06	0.16	0.57
CCS × CES											0.20	0.25	0.08	2.54	0.01*
CS × CES											-0.07	-0.08	0.07	-1.03	0.30
R^2		0.03					0.14					0.17			
ΔR^2							0.11**					0.03			

Gender: 0 = girl, 1 = boy. Income, median household income; CCS, critical consciousness socialization; CS, cultural socialization; CES, color evasive socialization. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 4 Ethnic-racial socialization’s effect on political anti-racist action.

Variable	Step 0					Step 1					Step 2				
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	0.34	0.05	0.64	0.53	0.60	0.26	0.04	0.57	0.45	0.65	0.36	0.05	0.56	0.64	0.53
Gender	-0.02	0.009	0.12	-0.21	0.83	-0.05	-0.02	0.10	-0.47	0.64	-0.08	-0.04	0.10	-0.78	0.44
Income	0.03	0.04	0.06	0.46	0.65	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.23	0.82	0.0005	0.0005	0.06	0.004	0.99
CCS						1.04	0.30	0.25	4.22	0.001**	1.08	0.32	0.24	4.41	0.000**
CS						0.29	0.14	0.22	1.35	0.18	0.32	0.14	0.22	1.42	0.16
CES						0.38	0.13	0.18	2.04	0.04*	0.28	0.09	0.19	1.44	0.15
CCS × CS											0.03	0.02	0.07	0.50	0.62
CCS × CES											0.22	0.21	0.09	2.38	0.02*
CS × CES											-0.07	-0.09	0.08	-0.89	0.38
R^2		0.004					0.22					0.25			
ΔR^2							0.22**					0.03			

Gender: 0 = girl, 1 = boy. Income, median household income; CCS, critical consciousness socialization; CS, cultural socialization; CES, color evasive socialization. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$.

$p < 0.05$]. The only other significant predictor in this model was critical consciousness socialization [$\beta = 0.32$, $SE = 0.24$, $t(218) = 4.41$, $p < 0.001$]. All significant predictors in this model remained significant after the Benjamini–Hochberg correction was applied.

Simple slopes analyses

There was a significant, positive relationship between critical consciousness socialization and political anti-racist action for participants scoring one standard deviation *above* the mean perception level of color-evasive socialization ($b = 1.11$, $p < 0.001$). This means that when students perceived high levels of color-evasive socialization, there was a positive link between critical consciousness socialization and political anti-racist action.

There was also a significant, positive relationship between critical consciousness socialization and political anti-racist action for participants scoring one standard deviation *below* the mean perception level of color-evasive socialization ($b = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the previously described relationship between critical consciousness socialization and political anti-racist action was also experienced among Black students who perceived lesser color-evasive socialization.

It would seem that this relationship is stronger among students who perceive greater amounts of color-evasive socialization, but it is still evident among those who perceive lesser amounts of color-evasive socialization. Moderators can either change the direction of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome, as was the case for critically conscious action (see [Figure 1](#)), or the size of this relationship, as is the case here for political anti-racist action. [Figure 2](#) depicts this simple slopes analysis visually.

Discussion

Integrative model of developmental competencies in minority children

Color-evasive socialization emerging as a significant positive predictor of critical action in both Step 1 models (see [Tables 3, 4](#)) contradicts the notion that color-evasive socialization cultivates inhibitive, critical action-stifling school environments ([Joseph, 1995](#); [Pollock, 2004](#)). Through the lens of the integrative model, one might expect a negative relationship between these variables, such that young people would engage in less varied and frequent critical action in the presence of greater color-evasive messages. The Step 1 model findings are surprising because they indicate that young people engaged in *more varied and frequent* critical action in the presence of greater color-evasive messages. This association could be construed as promotive of young people's development, despite the fact that color-evasive messages are harmful. Even the validation

article for the School Climate for Diversity Scale-Secondary speaks to contradictory quantitative findings that show positive relationships between color-evasive socialization and desirable developmental outcomes. [Byrd \(2017\)](#) writes: “[A]lthough research has hypothesized negative outcomes due to [color-evasive] socialization; the vast majority of existing research is qualitative and based on researcher evaluations of [color evasion]. Few studies have examined adolescents’ perceptions of [color-evasive] messages. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the role of the messages for youths’ outcomes” (p. 18). While school is the socializing context under investigation in the current study, it is not the sole source of ethnic-racial socialization. Seeing as color-evasive messages represent a form of racial discrimination ([Bonilla-Silva, 1998](#)), students may draw on the preparation for bias ([Hughes et al., 2006](#)) socialization they’ve received from their parents or within their communities to resist color-evasive school socialization. This might allow them to similarly identify color-evasive socialization as a target for their resistance and may explain the positive relationship between color-evasive socialization and critical action. Alternatively, ethnic-racial composition ([Byrd](#)), racial stress and racial identity ([Hope et al., 2020, 2021](#)), and anger toward injustice ([Bañales et al., 2019](#)) may also help to explain (i.e., mediate) and unpack this unexpected relationship, placing it in better alignment with the integrative model. However, such analyses were outside of the scope of the current project.

School ethnic-racial socialization (and critical consciousness)

Speaking specifically about Black adolescents’ lived experiences with school ethnic-racial socialization presents possibilities for nuancing the results of the current study. As the current measures of school ethnic-racial socialization, regardless of their specific type, gauge students’ *general perceptions* of school messages surrounding ethnicity and race, it is also important to think about the *lived experiences* students may be having. These “day-to-day” experiences are what shape the perceptions endorsed on the aforementioned subscales.

Firstly, cultural socialization did not emerge as a significant positive predictor of critical action, neither on its own in Step 1 models, nor as a member of the interaction terms within the Step 2 models. In other words, messages encouraging young people to celebrate their culture(/s) had no main or combined effect on the frequency or varied types of critical action young people engaged in. This finding is surprising, given that this positive form of socialization has been shown to encourage critical action ([Byrd and Ahn, 2020](#); [Lambert et al., 2020](#); [Seider and Graves, 2020](#); [Wang et al., 2020](#)). It may be the case that because cultural socialization centers pride in a *single* ethnic-racial group, it fails to highlight the *intergroup* nature of power dynamics between ethnic-racial groups. Critical

action assumes the existence of a power differential between groups that must be resisted, and so a focus on a singular group may not be enough to cultivate such resistance. It may also be the case that school messages about social justice and critical interpretations of history, those characteristic of critical consciousness socialization, are of paritable salience or inherently co-occur when socializing Black students around their culture (Byrd and Hope, 2020). Black American culture is heavily influenced by social justice and action in resistance to systemic racial oppression and marginalization (Wang et al., 2020), given the tradition of Black life-making (Mustaffa, 2017). Cultural socialization and expressions of Blackness and Black Americans highlight (but are not limited to) awareness of the following: (1) that Black people have been negatively racialized in American society, (2) that life prospects differ as a function of one's minoritized and/or dominant racial identities, and (3) that American culture and history privileges white perspectives. As such, messages that elevate and celebrate Black American culture simultaneously revolve around a critical consciousness of racism. This notion is supported by the current study's significant and positive correlation between critical consciousness and cultural socialization ($r = 0.66, p < 0.002$). This correlation may indicate that these two positive forms of socialization tend to be delivered at once for Black students. This correlation may also indicate that an increased perception or an increase in the salience of one of these forms of school ERS is related to an increase in the perception or salience of the other.

Another finding in need of such nuance was color-evasive socialization, in and of itself, serving as a positive predictor in each Step 1 model. As discussed previously, this finding may indicate that a greater perception that one's schooling downplays race is related to more frequent and varied critical action. While these results should not be interpreted as an endorsement for color-evasive messages, it may be the case that certain youth endorse color-evasive socialization as a rejection of race as a barometer by which to judge or to hold prejudices against other people. Such a stance would be similar to that advanced by egalitarian/pluralist ethnic-racial socialization messages in the parental ethnic-racial socialization literature. The distinction between color evasion as a mechanism of egalitarianism and color evasion as a mechanism to downplay the structural constraints created by racism has also been identified in the parental ethnic-racial socialization literature (Hughes et al., 2006; Juang et al., 2016). It could also be the case that the association between color-evasive socialization and critical action is only present among those who receive critical consciousness socialization as well. This notion could potentially be supported by the presence of significant, positive interactions between critical consciousness and color-evasive socialization in the Step 2 models (Tables 3, 4). These interactions indicate a unique, combined effect of critical consciousness and color-evasive socialization left uncaptured by the Step 1 models, which did not include interaction terms.

More plainly stated, simple slopes analyses showed that greater color-evasive socialization was only (in the case of critically conscious action) or more greatly (in the case of political anti-racist) associated with critical action for young people receiving high levels of critical consciousness socialization (Figures 1, 2; $b_{\text{critical}} = 0.30, p < 0.001, b_{\text{political}} = 1.11, p < 0.001$). Thus, the present study's interaction terms and simple slopes analyses reveal that color-evasive socialization in its own right is not promotive, but has the potential to undergird/serve as a target of young people's critical action when received in concert with high levels of critical consciousness socialization.

We must also think about how color-evasive and critical consciousness socialization are interfacing in students' lives. Seeing as schools' contextual demands and norms often center whiteness and white supremacy, color-evasive socialization may be the default mode of ethnic-racial messaging Black students receive. They may receive color-evasive socialization throughout most of their school day, but with particular(/particularly or even singularly impactful) moments of critical consciousness socialization. This thought aligns with the idea of color-evasive and critically conscious messages co-occurring, as well as with the significant interactions found between these two modes of messaging (Tables 3, 4). Moreover, latent profile analysis including school ERS subscales has shown that youth often perceive comparable and/or comparably high levels of both positive and negative forms of socialization (Byrd and Ahn, 2020; Golden and Byrd, 2022). Another possible explanation could be that race is especially salient or non-salient to certain students. Students with high racial salience may be more likely to perceive a message's racial tones, whether they are positive (like critical consciousness socialization) or negative (like color-evasive socialization). On the other hand, students for whom race is less salient may perceive low levels of socialization on the whole, regardless of whether that socialization is positive or negative. Thus, future qualitative research exploring the lived experiences these young people have with school ethnic-racial socialization is warranted. Such work would lend further insight into what this co-occurrence actually looks like during the school day.

Moreover, the positive correlations between color-evasive and critical consciousness socialization ($r = 0.49, p < 0.002$) and between color-evasive and cultural socialization ($r = 0.47, p < 0.002$) are unexpected on theoretical grounds, despite being fairly common in prior studies (Bañales et al., 2019; C. M. Byrd, personal communication, 2/25/21; C. M. Byrd, personal communication, 4/3/22). There are two reasons why these correlations are surprising. Firstly, critical consciousness and color-evasive socialization are theorized to be opposites, and thus would be expected to be negatively correlated. Secondly, cultural socialization, being a positive form of school ethnic-racial socialization akin to critical consciousness socialization, may also be expected to negatively correlate with color-evasive socialization. As stated previously, it may

be the case that racial salience shapes students' overall ability to perceive school ERS, regardless of whether that socialization is positive or negative. It may also be the case that with increased perceptions of critical consciousness socialization, and accompanying increases in students' critical consciousness, comes an increase in their ability to perceive and name socialization that would thwart this consciousness, such as color-evasive socialization (see School Ethnic-Racial Socialization, Black Life-making, and Critical Consciousness). Cultural socialization often accompanies critical consciousness socialization for Black students as discussed previously. Thus, an increased perception of cultural socialization may similarly increase the ability to name and perceive problematic color-evasive socialization.

While variance inflation factors were all below 10, and thus multicollinearity was not assumed to be an issue in these analyses (Field et al., 2012), the significant positive correlations between color-evasive and critical consciousness socialization and between color-evasive and cultural socialization may raise questions about the degree to which these messages are truly demarcated in their delivery from schools to students (see Bañales et al., 2019 for similar musings). If not this, it may be the case that these correlations speak to these forms of socialization being simultaneously delivered or simultaneously, highly salient to young people, as has been postulated in other analyses of these data (Byrd and Ahn, 2020; Golden and Byrd, 2022). Future qualitative work, particularly with observational or ethnographic elements, may be especially vital to better understand the points of similarity and divergence in the "live" delivery and reception of school ethnic-racial socialization (for interview-based work that fulfills this call, see Byrd and Hope, 2020).

Black life-making and critical consciousness

Black life-making, or the ways in which Black people define and care for themselves in educational settings despite dominant anti-Black ideologies (Mustaffa, 2017), was introduced as a framework to establish critical consciousness, and critical action specifically, as a key feature of the Black student and broader Black American experience. Taking up the analytic lens of Black life-making allows for a nuancing of the scope of the critical action this socialization shapes. *Given the focus on school ethnic-racial socialization in the present study, some may have expected the interaction between color-evasive and critical consciousness socialization to be significant in the communal anti-racist action and interpersonal anti-racist action models, instead of or in addition to the critically conscious action and political change action models. Through the lens of Black life-making, however, it can be argued that critically conscious and political anti-racist action are of "parallel scope" to the*

socialization items. Schools and the people within them can be understood as microcosmic sites and agents of systemic, anti-Black educational violence (Mustaffa, 2017). With this understanding, we can move away from viewing schools primarily or solely as microsystemic community spaces, the "scope" highlighted within communal and interpersonal anti-racist action. Instead, we can move toward viewing schools as sites of macrosystemic oppression. We can also move toward viewing the people within them not as individual actors, but as potential agents of said macrosystemic oppression. This notion is supported by the fact that interpersonal ($r = 0.09$) and communal anti-racist action ($r = 0.23$) were the forms of critical action most weakly correlated to color-evasive socialization. If the target of resistance is color-evasive socialization, then we would expect the forms of critical action of "parallel scope" (i.e., the forms of critical action most related to resisting color-evasive socialization) to be those more strongly correlated to it. Instead, we see stronger correlations between critically conscious action and color-evasive socialization, and political anti-racist action and color-evasive socialization ($r = 0.28$ for both). Seeing as the critically conscious and political anti-racist action items have "scopes" in which the targets of resistance are wider systems and their agents, the presence of the significant interactions in these models, rather than the communal and interpersonal anti-racist action models, aligns with this study's hypotheses and frameworks.

Black life-making also allows for a speculative nuancing of the temporal aspect of socialization. Black life-making is perpetuated, defined, and undergirded by an intergenerational, time-stretching, or even time-defying quality. The knowledge and critical consciousness of Black ancestors and Black students from many generations ago is passed onto and remains relevant for today's Black students. Thus, troubling, mystifying, or lending lesser credence to the quantification of the portions of time that constitute simultaneity may be of the essence (Brand, 2011; Mustaffa, 2017). Earlier in this manuscript, the simultaneity of positive and negative forms of ethnic-racial socialization seemed to speak to the co-occurrence of these opposing socializations happening "in the same breath." However, this simultaneity may be better understood as these messages being delivered in a commensurate or sequential timeframe. For the interactions between critical consciousness and color-evasive socialization to shape critical action in the ways found in this study may be more a product of comparable *impact or perception* of these forms of socialization, rather than of *comparable saturation* of these forms of socialization. Simple slopes analyses revealed that in order for more varied and frequent critical action to emerge, it was necessary for Black students to perceive high levels of both critical consciousness socialization and color-evasive socialization. *Black life-making stretches across generations and thus defies linear conceptions of time. Thus, the amount of time it takes students to reach such high levels of perception, or how frequently instances*

of these socialization forms must occur to garner such high perception, may be of lesser import than the impact of pivotal instances of socialization. Future longitudinal work researching ethnic-racial socialization's bearings on critical action may investigate this notion. The survey data used were cross-sectional, such that these notions or hypotheses and analyses revolving around time and ordinality could not be appropriately investigated. Regardless, Black Americans have repeatedly life-made in response to the denial of the right to schooling and education; dilapidated and/or overpoliced school buildings; outdated, inadequate, or disempowering educational materials; inequitable funding and educational policies; and countless other oppressive forces. *Despite the ever presence of white supremacy in educational institutions (here, through color-evasive socialization), Black students (aided by the simultaneous reception of critical consciousness socialization) have and will continue to life-make, to resist antiblackness, and to strive toward liberation.*

Limitations

Despite the nuanced connections between the current study and the theoretical frameworks and literature that scaffolded it, there were a few limitations of note we would like to address. In terms of statistical limitations, the small sample size of the current study may have rendered its analyses underpowered. Future research may replicate this study using a better-powered, larger sample size to ensure that effect sizes are robust, and that the significant and null results still hold true and reflect real-world phenomena as accurately as hypothesis testing allows for.

Moreover, sensitivity checks, such as (1) including *critical reflection* (mental attributions of inequality to systemic factors rather than individual shortcomings; [Watts et al., 2011](#)) as a predictor or covariate in this study's models and/or (2) investigating critical reflection as a mediator between color-evasive and critical consciousness socialization, may have made the analyses more rigorous. However, it should be noted that the critical reflection items included in the dataset were not all specifically oriented around antiracist reflections or musings about race. The same could be said of the critically conscious action items, but this "gap" was filled by the inclusion of items from the Anti-Racism Action Scale ([Aldana et al., 2019](#)). No such "buffer" of antiracist reflection items was available in this dataset. To ensure that all variables were appropriately and specifically tied to resisting racism, these sensitivity checks were not pursued.

Given the strong, positive correlations between the critical action measures and their conceptual relatedness, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) may have been advisable. Rather than keeping the outcomes separate, a CFA may have revealed a multi-dimensional factor structure that would have allowed for the usage of a simple composite score and thus a single

moderation analysis. The utility of keeping the critical action outcome measures separate was to better understand the impact of ethnic-racial socialization on different forms of action—collapsing these forms onto a composite measure would not have allowed us to distinguish the varied ways socialization may shape more proximal or microsystemic "scopes" of action versus more distal or macrosystemic "scopes" of action (see the Black-Life-making and Critical Consciousness section).

Although inclusion in the current sample was reliant on young people selecting "Black" on a forced-entry ethnicity/race question, these young people, particularly those who are bi/multiracial; lighter-skinned; or who have what white supremacy deems "white" features, may be racialized differently ([Hunter, 2007](#); [Reece, 2019](#); [Rosario et al., 2021](#)). While these young people are Black or may identify with whatever aspects of Blackness help them to life-make, others may temper anti-Black tendencies when interacting with these young people depending on how they racialize them. This tempering may differently valence their school's ethnic-racial socialization.

[Grant \(1979\)](#) argued that previous studies only saw socialization as a process of "socializing" the student, without any recognition of how teachers are socialized within a classroom context. Teachers facilitate classroom time according to the (school) ethnic-racial socialization they received not only when they were students but perhaps too from their coworkers and the students they teach. Peers also serve as socializing agents to one another, and as thought partners in processing adult-delivered socialization messages ([Hagerman, 2018](#)). The current study was unable to explore these particular impacts of teachers and peers on socialization. The school ethnic-racial socialization items ([Byrd, 2017](#)) are constructed to measure *student* perceptions of the ethnic-racial socialization facilitated by their teachers, classes, and schools more broadly, rather than the intentions of teachers or impacts of peer-driven socialization. Future research may investigate teachers' experiences socializing and being socialized. Researchers should also study the role of peers in school ethnic-racial socialization. Lastly, future research may investigate the distinction between implicit and explicit socialization ([Bartoli et al., 2016](#); [Hagerman, 2018](#)).

Future directions

Despite cultural socialization perhaps being the socialization style best suited to promote sociocultural compatibility ([García Coll et al., 1996](#)) between a school's demands and norms and the history and culture of its Black students, cultural socialization never emerged as a significant predictor of critical action. It may be the case that this form of socialization is of paritable salience or especially likely to co-occur with critical consciousness socialization for Black youth. The reason for this may be the overlap between what constitutes cultural socialization for Black Americans and critical consciousness socialization. Further

study of what school ethnic-racial socialization entails for Black students is warranted. A school ethnic-racial socialization scale designed with their particular experiences in mind could be especially generative for the above reasons.

Additionally, greater accountability to intersectional and gendered experiences in school ethnic-racial socialization than this *quantitative* work could afford would also be fruitful. Gender differences in ethnic-racial socialization have not been consistently found when measured quantitatively (Hughes et al., 2006). Statistical significance, however, is not the only means by which empirical research can speak to real-world significance in the form of individuals' lived experiences. There is a need for qualitative work to trouble and guide quantitative ethnic-racial socialization work, perhaps in the form of an exploratory sequential design with greater accountability to gender and intersectionality. Similarly, Black women have traditionally served as driving agents of Black life-making (as well as leadership in social movements, educational institutions, and, most pertinent to most of the ethnic-racial socialization literature, in families), despite their contributions being understudied and understated. Conducting further qualitative work that centers their ethnic-racial socialization experiences and their conceptualizations of their intersectional, critically conscious experiences as Black women would enrich our understandings of gendered ethnic-racial socialization (see Leath and Mims, 2021 for a generative example of such work). Simultaneously, such work would enrich our understandings of Black life-making.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the interplay of different forms of school ethnic-racial socialization as they shape Black youth's critical action. Color-evasive and critical consciousness socialization interacted such that young people who perceived higher levels of critical consciousness socialization as well as higher levels of color-evasive socialization were more frequently involved in critical action and were involved in more varied forms of this action. These findings lend support to the idea that if critical consciousness socialization is effective, young Black people who perceive it should be apt to name and perceive the color-evasive socialization that seeks to counter their critical consciousness. Interpretation of these results added nuance to theoretical conceptualizations of the adaptive culture; Black life-making; school ethnic-racial socialization; and critical consciousness, while still leaving room for such work to be more specifically accountable to Black American culture and to gendered and intersectional experiences. Interacting socialization styles is informative, given (1) the co-occurrence of these forms of ethnic-racial socialization within schools, and (2) both the adaptive culture and critical consciousness requiring the presence of an entity to act against or resist. The present

study is significant in that it attempts to fill these theoretical and empirical gaps.

This study's results should not be read to mean that color-evasive socialization is beneficial for Black students. These findings may provide comfort to parents, educators, and other concerned parties worried about the impact of schooling that de-emphasizes the reality of racism. More frequent and varied critical action among young Black people functions as a benefit not only on the individual (Hope et al., 2020; Mosley et al., 2021) and systemic levels (Watts et al., 1999; Jemal, 2018), but also a benefit of intergenerational importance. Critical action provides a means for these young people to carry on the tradition of life-making, loving, and defining their Blackness in spite of systemic anti-Black educational violence, thus contributing to the improvement of the broader Black American experience.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions in this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation. Requests to access these datasets should be directed to CMB, cmbyrd3@ncsu.edu.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the North Carolina State Institutional Review Board and North Carolina State University. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants' legal guardian/next of kin.

Author contributions

GK conceived the study and its design, analyzed and interpreted the data, and drafted the manuscript. CMB provided and cleaned the data and provided feedback on the final manuscript draft. MD provided feedback on data analysis and manuscript drafts. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2022.924930/full#supplementary-material>

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