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A Preliminary Investigation of Longitudinal Associations Between Ethnic–Racial Identity and Critical Consciousness Among Black and Latinx Youth

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Objectives: In order for parents, educators, and communities to support racially/ethnically minoritized youth to resist and heal from White supremacy, it is important to examine how youths' beliefs about their ethnic–racial identity (ERI) and critical consciousness (CC) around racism inform one another. Despite this need, limited empirical research examines whether these processes are related across adolescence. ***Method:*** The present two-wave longitudinal study investigates whether ERI content (i.e., centrality, private regard) and CC (i.e., critical social analysis, interpersonal antiracism actions) are associated with one another among Black and Latinx youth $N = 233$; young women (55.6%); young men (44.4%); $M = 14.96$ years old, $SD = 1.46$. ***Results:*** Autoregressive cross-lagged panel models suggested that youths' centrality at W1 was positively and significantly associated with a critical social analysis at W2, and critical social analysis at W1 was positively and significantly associated with private regard at W2 for both groups. Involvement in interpersonal antiracism actions at W1 was positively and significantly associated with private regard at W2 for both groups. Group differences existed in the link between centrality at W1 and interpersonal antiracism actions at W2. ***Conclusion:*** Results indicate that ERI and CC may be viable entry points into stimulating youths' capacity to challenge racism, although there is promise in activating antiracism action to further stimulate ERI development.

Public Significance Statement
Black and Latinx youth may develop ethnic–racial identities and engage in a critical consciousness of racism that supports their thriving, healing, and resistance in a U.S. society that is structured by White supremacy. Present study findings indicate that how central youth view their racial/ethnic group to their self-concept may be an entryway into youths' ability to identify and critique structural inequality that minoritized communities face, and youths' involvement in actions that challenge racism may support how positively youth feel about their racial/ethnic groups. Results have implications for opportunities that aim to facilitate youths of color connection to their racial/ethnic groups while being critical of the reality of racial oppression their communities face in U.S. society.

Racially/ethnically minoritized youth in the United States are raised in a country deeply rooted in and continuously shaped by White supremacy, xenophobia, colonialism, and other systems of dominance (García Coll et al., 1996; Neblett, 2023; Spencer et al., 1997). Within these systems, youth are tasked with developing positive and central ethnic–racial identities (ERI; Rivas-Drake et al., 2022; Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2014). At the same time, youth are forming attitudes, beliefs, and an understanding of structural racism and behaviors that aim to challenge this system of oppression, also known as a critical racial consciousness (Bañales et al., 2023; Watts et al., 2011). Theoretical work postulates that youths' ERI and critical consciousness are intricately connected (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Mathews et al., 2019). However, empirical research that investigates associations between these psychological phenomena is severely lacking (see Kiang et al., 2021; Mathews et al., 2022, for exceptions), especially longitudinal research.

The present two-wave, longitudinal study investigates associations between youths' ERI content (i.e., centrality, private regard) and critical consciousness (i.e., critical social analysis, interpersonal antiracism actions) with 233 Black and Latinx youth. Because of limited extant empirical evidence, this research aims to test theoretical models that link ERI and critical consciousness (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022; Mathews et al., 2020). An understanding of how basic developmental processes inform one another across adolescence may inform how parents, educators, and communities support youth to develop a sense of pride in their racial and ethnic groups with an orientation that challenges the very systems of oppression that aim to threaten their self-love and well-being of their racial and ethnic communities.

Ethnic–Racial Identity and Critical Consciousness as Developmental Assets

ERI is an important developmental asset among racially/ethnically minoritized youth. For example, ERI may reduce the negative impact of racial/ethnic disparities in formative developmental outcomes (Neblett, 2023; Umaña-Taylor & Rivas-Drake, 2021). ERI is a multidimensional phenomenon that consists of *content* dimensions, or the attitudes and beliefs youth have toward their racial/ethnic groups, and *process* dimensions, or the processes by which youth develop these beliefs and attitudes toward the racial and ethnic groups to which they belong (Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2014). The present study focuses on content dimensions of ERI, which include youths' *ERI centrality* (i.e., how central youths' racial/ethnic background is to their sense of self) and *ERI private regard* (i.e., how positively youth view their racial/ethnic background; Sellers et al., 1998). These dimensions were considered, as previous theoretical work identifies them as psychological predictors of Black and Latinx youths' critical consciousness development (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022). Further, this study aimed to advance empirical work that investigates associations between how youth feel about themselves as individuals (i.e., the expression of attitudes and beliefs youth have about their personal racial/ethnic groups) and the behaviors they use to challenge racism in their immediate spheres of influence.

Similarly, critical consciousness is a multidimensional, developmental asset among minoritized youth (Diemer et al., 2016). Critical consciousness is often conceptualized as consisting of psychological and behavioral processes (Heberle et al., 2020), which include a *critical social analysis* (i.e., the ability to identify and critique the structural roots of oppression), *critical action* (i.e., involvement in individual and collective actions that challenge the sociopolitical status quo) among other dimensions. Youths' involvement in antiracism actions is a race-specific form of critical action (Bañales et al., 2019), which includes involvement in interpersonal antiracism action, where youth challenge racist behaviors among friends, family, and strangers (Aldana et al., 2019).

Dimensions of critical consciousness have been associated with positive developmental outcomes among racially/ethnically minoritized youth (see Heberle et al., 2020; Maker Castro et al., 2022, for reviews). For example, Black and Latinx youth who expressed a greater critical social analysis and were involved in more critical actions at the beginning of high school had higher Scholastic Aptitude Test scores (Seider et al., 2020). Overall, research suggests that ERI and critical consciousness are assets in the lives of racially/ethnically minoritized youth; thus, there is practical promise to disentangle how these assets are associated with one another.

Theoretical Evidence Linking Ethnic–Racial Identity and Critical Consciousness

Multiple theoretical frameworks aim to explicate how racially/ethnically minoritized youth think about themselves, others, and society in the context of systems of oppression and how youth challenge these systems. Anyiwo et al. (2018) suggested that Black youth with high ERI centrality may use a racial lens to interpret their experiences, which may, in turn, allow them to engage in more activism behaviors that advance the well-being of Black communities (Hope et al., 2020). Bañales and Rivas-Drake (2022) described how Latinx youth develop an understanding of what it means to be Latinx in a White supremacist and xenophobic United States, which may inform the behaviors they take to challenge the oppression Latinx communities and other minoritized communities face. Other conceptual work suggests that racially/ethnically minoritized youths' awareness of their racial/ethnic group's racialized history, coupled with a positive connection to their racial/ethnic group, may result in involvement in actions that challenge social injustice (Mathews et al., 2020). Informed by these frameworks, it is clear that scholars recognize that ERI and critical consciousness processes are inextricably linked, although empirical research that tests how these developmental processes inform one another is needed.

Empirical Evidence That Ethnic–Racial Identity Informs Critical Consciousness

It is speculated that youth who feel that their racial/ethnic background is central to their sense of selves may be more likely to seek out information to learn about and critique societal oppression and/or engage in behaviors that challenge White supremacy (e.g., Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022). For example, among a sample of racially/ethnically diverse youth, including Black and Latinx youth, ERI centrality was positively associated with youths' critical social analysis (Kiang et al., 2021). In research with Black youth, emerging adults, and adults, results indicated that individuals who expressed an ERI centrality and attitudes that highlight the importance of Afrocentric perspectives in their life reported greater orientations and behaviors to engage in activism on behalf of the Black

community (Hope et al., 2019; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Volpe et al., 2023). Yet, other work with racially/ethnically diverse youth suggested that higher ERI centrality was unassociated with critical action (Kiang et al., 2021).

It is also possible that youth who feel positively about their racial/ethnic groups (e.g., high ERI private regard) may be more critical of White supremacy (Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996) because they understand the role of racism in their communities' social standing in the United States (Hordge-Freeman & Loblack, 2021; Mathews et al., 2020). As a result, these youth may engage in actions that challenge racism to create social conditions that promote the liberation of their racial/ethnic communities and other communities of color (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Mathews et al., 2020). Because the system, and not their communities, needs fixing, youth with more positive private regard may engage in more antiracism actions to challenge racism their communities directly encounter. The above work suggests that youth who feel that their racial/ethnic backgrounds are important to their sense of self and feel positive about their racial/ethnic groups may be more likely to be critical of societal oppression and engage in actions that challenge racism.

Empirical Evidence That Critical Consciousness Informs Ethnic–Racial Identity

There is also empirical evidence that suggests that youths' critical consciousness may inform their ERI. For example, Black young people who engaged in more critical action behaviors in high school were more likely to explore the meaning of their racial/ethnic backgrounds in their lives during the first year of college (Mathews et al., 2022), which could lead to higher centrality. Racially/ethnically minoritized youth who recognize that they and their ancestors can resist and heal from White supremacy may experience a greater sense of pride in their communities' ability to experience love, joy, and success as they resist oppression (Lu & Steele, 2019). Other research highlights the role spaces that support activism play in youths' social identity development. Youth form and reinforce social identities in civic and political spaces (Aldana et al., 2012; Ballard & Ozer, 2016). When activism spaces are connected to the experiences of youths' racial/ethnic groups, feeling connected to others in these spaces can foster positive feelings toward their groups and a sense of importance placed on youths' self-concept (Carey et al., 2021). Overall, the above work suggests that youths' critical social analysis and involvement in antiracism actions may ignite youths' ERI; however, additional empirical evidence is needed to further support these findings, especially with longitudinal data.

Racial/Ethnic Differences in Associations Between Ethnic–Racial Identity and Critical Consciousness

Frameworks acknowledge the unique racialized and sociopolitical experiences of Black and Latinx youth (e.g., Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022). For example, issues related to police violence may be more salient for Black youth (Cohen, 2010), whereas issues related to language discrimination and immigration status may be more salient for Latinx youth—although immigration is connected to the carceral state (Espinola et al., 2019). Youths' differential racialized experiences in the system of white supremacy may shape unique associations between their ERI and critical consciousness development. At the same time, empirical research

finds no differences in associations between ERI and critical consciousness among Black youth and youth who do not identify as Black (Kiang et al., 2021). The present research will further investigate whether associations between ERI and critical consciousness may differ between Black and Latinx youth.

The Present Study

The present study investigated bidirectional associations between ERI and critical consciousness outcomes. We hypothesized that ERI centrality and private regard at Wave 1 (W1) would be positively associated with critical consciousness, which included a critical social analysis and interpersonal antiracism actions at Wave (W2). Similarly, we hypothesized that critical consciousness outcomes at W1 would be positively associated with ERI centrality and private regard at W2. We hypothesized that there would be differences in associations between ERI and antiracism action between youth groups. However, given the limited work assessing differences in associations between ERI and critical consciousness across groups (e.g., Kiang et al., 2021), the hypothesized nature of these associations was exploratory.

Method

Participants

Participants were 233 youth who identified racially or ethnically as Black ($n = 152$) or Latinx ($n = 81$).[1] At Wave 1, youth ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old ($M = 14.96$, $SD = 1.46$). The majority of youth (.4% missing data) identified as young women (55.4%), and the rest of the youth identified as young men (44.2%). No youth identified as transgender, and .4% of youth did not indicate their gender. Parents provided information on their family's income, with reported incomes distributed across three categories: $0–$29,999 (33.0%), $30,000–$69,000 (40.0%), and $70,000 or higher (27.0%). Given that the study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, youth reported whether they attended school fully online (59.5%), in person (19.4%), or through a hybrid online–in-person option (21.1%).

Procedure

The present two-wave study was embedded in a large longitudinal, daily diary study that began in September 2019. This study assessed school and parental racial socialization and developmental outcomes among racially/ethnically diverse youth across the United States. Black and Latinx youth (and their parents) from this larger study were contacted as follow-up to complete measures for the present study. The larger study did not include the same validated measures of ERI and critical consciousness as the present annual study. The annual survey collected self-report data from youth and their parents in March 2021 (W1) and then again in January 2022 (W2). Youth who were under the age of 18 years old assented to participate in the study and their parents provided consent on their behalf. Youth who

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[1] Youth had the opportunity to select multiple categories to identify their racial or ethnic background. Fifteen youths identified as both Black and Latinx. However, only monoracial youth (or youth who selected their race or ethnicity as only Black or Hispanic/Latino) were included in the sample, and multiracial youth were excluded from the sample given the unique racialized experiences of multiracial individuals in the United States (Atkin et al., 2022).

were 18 years old consented for themselves. At W1, youth were compensated with a $20 gift card and were compensated a $25 gift card after at W2 for completing the survey.

The initial sample was recruited through Qualtrics, a research company, to ensure a national sample of youth and parents via random sampling. To offer additional youth the opportunity to complete the annual survey, youth who were in the larger longitudinal study were informed that they could share the study flyer with other youth through "word of mouth." Four youth were recruited through this recruitment approach. Ninety percent of Black and Latinx youth from the original sample were retained in the present sample. In terms of the present longitudinal study, 77.3% of youth had two waves of data (or were retained across Wave 1 and Wave 2), and 22.7% of youth had only one wave of data. This study protocol was approved by the institutional review board at the first author's institution.

Measures

Ethnic–Racial Identity—Content

ERI centrality and private regard were assessed using subscales from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity–Teen (Scottham et al., 2008).[2] ERI centrality assessed whether youth considered their ethnic group central to their sense of self (e.g., "If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would tell them is my ethnicity") with three items that were scored on a 5-point scale (1 = really disagree to 5 = really agree). The ERI private regard subscale assessed whether youth were proud to be a member of their ethnic group (e.g., "I am happy that I am my ethnicity") with three items on the same 5-point scale. Mean scores were calculated with higher scores indicating a greater ERI centrality and ERI private regard. As shown in Table 1, measures of ERI centrality (Latinx youth, W1 α = .73, W2 α = .75; Black youth, W1 α = .70, W2 α = .79) and ERI private regard (Latinx youth, W1 α = .78, W2 α = .87; Black youth, W1 α = .85, W2 α = .88) displayed moderate to high internal consistency according to Cronbach's α. The ERI centrality and ERI private regard measures have been used in previous research with Latinx and Black youth and measures have shown high internal consistency in these samples (Durkee & Gómez, 2022; Hoffman et al., 2019).

Critical Consciousness

Critical social analysis was measured using the mean of eight items from the *Critical Reflection of Perceived Inequality* subscale of the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer et al., 2017). The measure assessed youths' awareness that marginalized communities have fewer chances to get ahead in society (e.g., "Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education"). Higher scores represented a greater critical social analysis of inequality (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). As shown in Table 1, the measure displayed high internal consistency at both Waves (Latinx youth, W1 α = .95, W2 α = .95, Black youth, W1 α = .95, W2 α = .96). The critical social analysis subscale has been used in previous research with Latinx and Black youth, and measures have shown high internal consistency in these samples (Golden & Byrd, 2022).

Interpersonal antiracism action was measured with the interpersonal antiracism action subscale of a youth-developed measure of antiracism action that assessed whether youth challenged racism from their family, peers, non-parental adults, and strangers in response to "in the moment" racism using a *No* (0) or *Yes* (1) scale (e.g., "Challenged or checked a family member who uses a racial slur or makes a racial joke;" Aldana et al., 2019). Sum scores were calculated to indicate the total number of antiracism actions. The measure displayed moderate to high internal consistency at both Waves (W2 α = .73, Black youth, W1 α = .83, W2 α = .85, see Table 1). The internal consistency for interpersonal antiracism action at W1 for Latinx youth was slightly weaker (W1 = .69). The interpersonal antiracism action subscale has been used in previous research with Latinx and Black youth, and measures have shown moderate consistency in these samples (Bañales et al., 2019; Golden & Byrd, 2022).

Covariates

Youths' age was included as a covariate in study models, as previous research suggests developmental changes in ERI and critical consciousness among youth (Heberle et al., 2020; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Previous research also identifies indicators of youths' socioeconomic status as predictors of youths' critical consciousness (e.g., Bañales et al., 2019). Thus, parent reports of their families' total income were included as an additional covariate. Finally, given that youth participated in the study during the COVID-19 pandemic—a time that provided young people an opportunity to further reckon with race and racism in the United States (Quiles et al., 2023)—youths' reports of whether they attended school in person or remotely/in a hybrid option were also included as a covariate.

Methodological Approach

Data Analysis Strategy

Descriptive statistics in the form of means, standard deviations, correlations, and independent samples *t* tests were calculated in SPSS 28 to assess the nature of the data. Given the longitudinal nature of the data, longitudinal measurement invariance tests were estimated to determine whether the same constructs were measured on the same scale over time (Meredith, 1993). To determine whether ERI content (i.e., centrality and private regard) and critical consciousness (i.e., critical social analysis and interpersonal antiracism action) were associated with one another over time, autoregressive cross-lagged panel (ARCLP) models that relied on path analysis were estimated. ARCLP is a suitable analysis to test temporal links, as it tests whether variable X at W1 (e.g., ERI) has an effect on variable Y at W2 (e.g., critical consciousness), while simultaneously modeling previous levels of both constructs and the relation between variable Y at Time 1 and variable X at Time 2 (Kuczynski, 2003). Thus, ARCLP provides a more conservative estimate of associations between variables over time.

Multiple-group models were conducted to examine potential racial/ethnic differences between Black and Latinx youth in relation to ERI

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[2] This measure was developed with African American youth. To make the measure more relevant to the racially/ethnically diverse sample, we replaced any mention of identifying as Black or African American with "my ethnic" group, as consistent with previous research (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2009).

Table 1

Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	Latinx youth (n = 81)					Black youth (n = 152)				
	α	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Age (W1)		14.84	1.34	.27	−1.07		15.03	1.52	.25	−.98
2. ERI: Centrality (W1)**	.73	3.53	.85	−.39	−.38	.70	3.86	.88	−.46	−.38
3. ERI: Centrality (W2)*	.75	3.62	.95	−.60	.40	.79	3.97	.87	−.34	−.99
4. ERI: Private regard (W1)	.78	4.28	.76	−.87	−.04	.85	4.42	.77	−1.14	−.08
5. ERI: Private regard (W2)	.87	4.36	.68	−.84	−.48	.88	4.41	.75	−1.23	.43
6. CC: Critical social analysis (W1)***	.95	3.39	1.43	−.23	−.82	.95	4.11	1.41	−.61	−.47
7. CC: Critical social analysis (W2)	.95	3.69	1.32	−.54	−.25	.96	3.88	1.49	−.41	−.85
8. CC: Interpersonal antiracism action (W1)	.69	1.67	1.50	.52	−.91	.83	1.91	1.83	.45	−1.29
9. CC: Interpersonal antiracism action (W2)	.73	1.86	1.55	.51	−.74	.85	1.72	1.82	.57	−1.12

Note. W = Wave; ERI = ethnic–racial identity; CC = critical consciousness.
Group comparisons: * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

and critical consciousness. To do so, freely estimated models were compared to models that constrained coefficients in hypothesized pathways (i.e., relations between ERI and critical consciousness) between groups. Chi-square (χ^2) difference tests were conducted to examine model fit differences. Models that differed in fit suggested that Latinx and Black youth expressed a difference in some hypothesized paths. Models that did not differ in fit indicated no differences between groups in relation to ERI and critical consciousness. In this case, constrained models were selected as final models for interpretation. All models accounted for associations between covariates on outcomes at W2.

Primary analyses and measurement invariance tests were conducted in M*plus* 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2022). Full information maximum likelihood was used to account for missing data, which was minimal across items (see Table 1). Maximum likelihood estimation was used as variables were conceived as continuous and were slightly skewed and kurtotic (see Table 1). Model fit was assessed using five goodness-of-fit indices: the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). Models with a CFI of .90 and TLI at or above .95, and an SRMR and RMSEA at or below .08 were considered a good fit (Grimm et al., 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2023). A satisfactory model fit was based on a holistic assessment of model criteria and not solely on one goodness-of-fit index.

Results

Preliminary Data Analysis

Given the short-term longitudinal design of the study, longitudinal measurement invariance tests were conducted to determine whether the same constructs were measured on the same scales over time (Meredith, 1993). As shown in Supplemental Tables S1–S4, all measures reached scalar invariance, indicating that measures are in the same scale at each wave. Thus, descriptive statistics and ARCLP models with longitudinal variables could be pursued.

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all study variables were estimated for both groups (Tables 1–3). Black youth reported higher centrality than Latinx youth at W1, *t*(226) = −2.75, *p* < .01, and W2, *t*(176) = −2.50, *p* < .01, and a greater critical social analysis at W1, *t*(224) = −3.62, *p* < .001. No other significant group differences in study variables were detected.

Autoregressive Cross-Lagged Panel Models

Model fit statistics for ARCLP models are presented in Table 4. Only statistics relevant to study the research questions are reviewed below. Results related to within-time associations between variables, stability coefficients of variables over time (e.g., the stability of

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations Between Study Measures Among Latinx Youth

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age (W1)	—								
2. ERI: Centrality (W1)	−.28*	—							
3. ERI: Centrality (W2)	−.24	.68***	—						
4. ERI: Private regard (W1)	−.19	.40***	.44***	—					
5. ERI: Private regard (W2)	−.18	.40***	.57***	.51***	—				
6. CC: Critical social analysis (W1)	.08	.07	.13	.24*	.23	—			
7. CC: Critical social analysis (W2)	.01	.22	.00	.06	−.02	.57***	—		
8. CC: Interpersonal antiracism action (W1)	−.03	.23*	.12	.19	.13	.35**	.42***	—	
9. CC: Interpersonal antiracism action (W2)	.10	−.16	−.07	−.07	.00	.31*	.36**	.57***	—

Note. W = Wave; ERI = ethnic–racial identity; CC = critical consciousness.
* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Table 3
Bivariate Correlations Between Study Measures Among Black Youth

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age (W1)	—								
2. ERI: Centrality (W1)	−.10	—							
3. ERI: Centrality (W2)	−.12	.56***	—						
4. ERI: Private regard (W1)	−.07	.60***	.42***	—					
5. ERI: Private regard (W2)	−.23*	.34***	.68***	.48***	—				
6. CC: Critical social analysis (W1)	.03	.19*	.27**	.16	.34***	—			
7. CC: Critical social analysis (W2)	.04	.33***	.31**	.16	.30**	.67***	—		
8. CC: Interpersonal antiracism action (W1)	.12	.12	.16	.17*	.29**	.29***	.30**	—	
9. CC: Interpersonal antiracism action (W2)	.01	.17	.08	.11	.11	.19*	.24**	.60***	—

Note. W = Wave; ERI = ethnic–racial identity; CC = critical consciousness.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

critical consciousness from W1 and W2), and associations between covariates and W2 outcomes can be reviewed in Figures 1 and 2.

The first ARCLP model tested whether ERI content at W1 was associated with critical social analysis at W2 and/or whether critical social analysis at W1 was associated with ERI content at W2. Model fit for the constrained model, Model 1: CFI (.96), TLI (.94), RMSEA (.07), and SRMR (.07), and the freely estimated model, Model 2: CFI (.97), TLI (.93), RMSEA (.07), and SRMR (.08), fit the data well according to CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. The models were an adequate fit to the data according to TLI. A chi-square difference test indicated that models did not significantly differ in fit, suggesting no racial/ethnic differences in relations between ERI and critical social analysis over time. Therefore, results from the constrained model were interpreted. As shown in Figure 1, ERI centrality at W1 was positively and significantly associated with a critical social analysis at W2. ERI private regard at W1 was negatively and significantly associated with a critical social analysis at W2. A critical social analysis at W1 was positively and significantly associated with ERI private regard at W2. In terms of associations between covariates and study outcomes, Latinx youth with parents who reported higher family incomes expressed a more positive ERI private regard at W2. For Black youth, younger youth reported a more positive ERI private regard at W2, as compared to older youth.

The second ARCLP model tested whether ERI centrality and private regard at W1 were associated with interpersonal antiracism action at W2 and/or whether interpersonal antiracism action at W1 was associated with ERI content at W2. Model fit for the constrained model, Model 3: CFI (.94), TLI (.90), RMSEA (.08), and SRMR (.08), and the freely estimated, Model 4: CFI (.96), TLI (.92), RMSEA (.07), and SRMR (.08), both fit the data well according to CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. The models were an adequate fit to the data according to TLI. A chi-square difference test indicated that models significantly differed in fit (see Table 4), suggesting racial/ethnic differences in a path or paths that estimated associations between ERI content and interpersonal antiracism action. Given this difference, additional multiple-group ARCLP models that freely estimated paths between ERI content and interpersonal antiracism action in a sequential order and constrained other paths were conducted.

As shown in Table 4, the model that freely estimated the association between ERI centrality at W1 and interpersonal

antiracism action at W2 (or Model 5) had a slightly stronger fit to the data and significantly differed in fit, as compared to the model that fully constrained all paths between ERI content and interpersonal antiracism action (or Model 3), suggesting a difference between Black and Latinx youth in the association between ERI centrality at W1 and interpersonal antiracism action at W2. Thus, this model, or Model 5, was interpreted as the final model. No other models that freely estimated associations between ERI content at W1 and interpersonal antiracism at W2 or associations between interpersonal antiracism action at W1 and ERI content at W2 significantly differed in fit, as compared to the fully constrained model.

As shown in Figure 2, there was a significant and negative association between ERI centrality at W1 and interpersonal antiracism action at W2 among Latinx youth, and there was no association between ERI centrality at W1 and interpersonal antiracism action at W2 among Black youth. Private regard at W1 was unassociated with interpersonal antiracism action at W2 for both groups. Involvement in interpersonal antiracism action at W1 was positively and significantly associated with private regard at W2 among both groups. In terms of associations between covariates and study outcomes, Latinx youth with parents who reported higher family incomes expressed a more positive ERI private regard at W2. For Black youth, younger youth reported a more positive ERI private regard at W2, as compared to older youth.

Discussion

Racially/ethnically minoritized youth are coming of age in a society deeply entrenched in racism and other systems of oppression. Understanding how youth reflect on their racial/ethnic groups and engage in actions that challenge racism is of critical importance to actualizing a more racially just society for all people, but especially for racially/ethnically minoritized youth and their communities. Recent scholarship suggests that ERI and critical consciousness are key processes in supporting youths' capacity to challenge racism (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022; Mathews et al., 2020). However, few empirical studies examine how these processes are associated with one another. The present study disentangled associations between youths' ERI and critical consciousness to better understand how these processes inform each other across two waves of adolescence among Black and Latinx youth.

Table 4
Fit Indices for Multiple-Group Autoregressive Cross-Lagged Panel Models

Model fit index	Model 1 ERI content and CSA-constrained	Model 2 ERI content and CSA-freely estimated	Model 3 ERI content and IARA-constrained (all paths)	Model 4 ERI content and IARA-freely estimated (all paths)	Model 5 ERI content and IARA-centrality W1 → IARA W2 freely estimated	Model 6 ERI content and IARA-private regard W1 → IARA W2 freely estimated	Model 7 ERI content and IARA-IARA W1 → centrality W2 freely estimated	Model 8 ERI content and IARA-IARA W1 → private regard W2 freely estimated
CFI	.96	.97	.94	.96	.96	.93	.93	.94
TLI	.94	.93	.90	.92	.93	.89	.89	.90
RMSEA	.07	.07	.08	.07	.07	.08	.08	.08
SRMR	.07	.08	.08	.08	.07	.08	.08	.08
$\chi^2(df)$	37.56(26)	33.21(22)	43.49(26)	33.78(22)	36.77(25)	43.32(25)	43.33(25)	41.81(25)
χ^2 difference (df)	4.35(4), $p = .36$		9.71(4), $p = .05$		6.72(1), $p = .01$	0.17(1), $p = .68$	0.16(1), $p = .69$	1.68(1), $p = .19$

Note. The chi-square statistics for Models 5–8 were compared to Model 3, or the fully constrained model that investigated associations between ERI content and interpersonal antiracism action. ERI = ethnic–racial identity; CSA = Critical social analysis; IARA = Interpersonal antiracism action; W = Wave; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual.

## Associations Between ERI and Critical Social Analysis

In partial support of our first hypothesis, results indicated that Black and Latinx youth who felt race was a central part of who they were at W1 were more likely to report a greater analysis of systemic inequities at W2. This finding aligns with previous theoretical work that suggests youth who feel that their racial and ethnic groups are central to their sense of selves may be more attuned to their communities' lived experiences, which informs their ability to identify and critique structural oppression that impacts their communities (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). It may be that youth with higher centrality seek out educational and experiential opportunities about their racial/ethnic group that then expose them to critical analyses of race relations. For example, ethnic studies courses are associated with a number of positive outcomes, including increased civic engagement (Nelsen, 2021; Pinedo et al., 2021).

Although the present study did not consider mechanisms that undergird associations between ERI and critical consciousness outcomes, it could also be that youths' sense of linked fate with other racially/ethnically minoritized groups facilitates links between ERI centrality and critical social analysis. As youth identify and reflect on how their racial and ethnic groups have experienced oppression, they may consider how their community's experiences with injustice are similar to or different from those of other minoritized groups (Lozada et al., 2017; Rivas-Drake et al., 2022). Such reflection may allow youth to develop a sense of linked fate with other racial and ethnic minoritized groups, which may empower youth to engage in further reflection and identification of social injustices that impact various marginalized communities in society (Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022; Kiang et al., 2021). Future research should consider the psychological and contextual mediators and moderators of the association between youths' ERI centrality and a critical social analysis over time.

Inconsistent with study hypotheses, there was a negative association between ERI private regard at W1 and critical social analysis at W2 for both groups. These findings suggest that the construction of a positive identity may not involve a critical view of systemic inequities. To our knowledge, no previous studies have found a significant and negative link between private regard and critical social analysis. To better understand this finding, it is important to consider how private regard may function among racially/ethnically minoritized youth alongside other social identity correlates. Theoretical frameworks explicate how social identity (e.g., private regard) may function as a coping process in response to discrimination (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). For instance, the rejection identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) articulates that minoritized groups who face discrimination based on their racial or ethnic background may strengthen their identification with their marginalized group as a way to cope with prejudice (e.g., Meca et al., 2020). Youths' increased identification with a minoritized identity may allow them to maintain a positive sense of self or a private regard around their racial/ethnic group (Sellers et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2014). In an effort to maintain a positive sense of self, Black and Latinx youth who possess a robust private regard may not actively pursue opportunities for understanding or contemplating systems of oppression. This includes refraining from engaging in the critical social process, such as involvement in

Figure 1

Fully Constrained Autoregressive Cross-Lagged Panel Model of ERI Content and Critical Social Analysis at W1 and W2 With Youth Age, Parent-Reported Income, and Youth Remote Schooling Status as Covariates
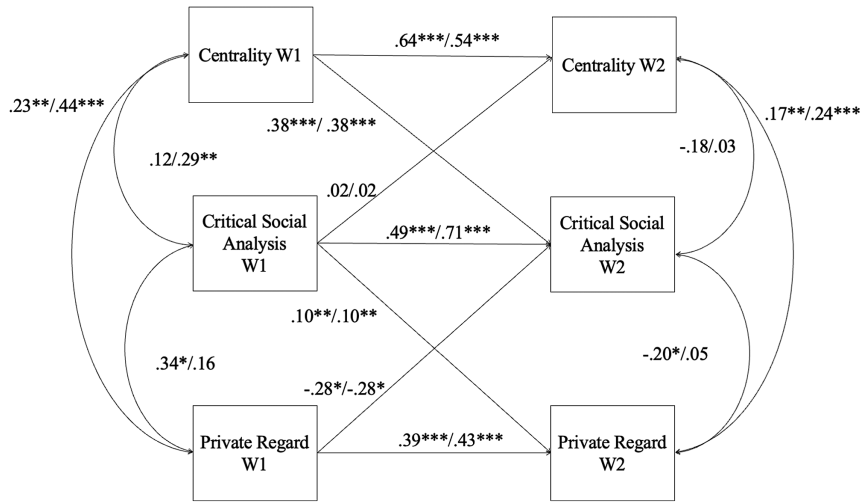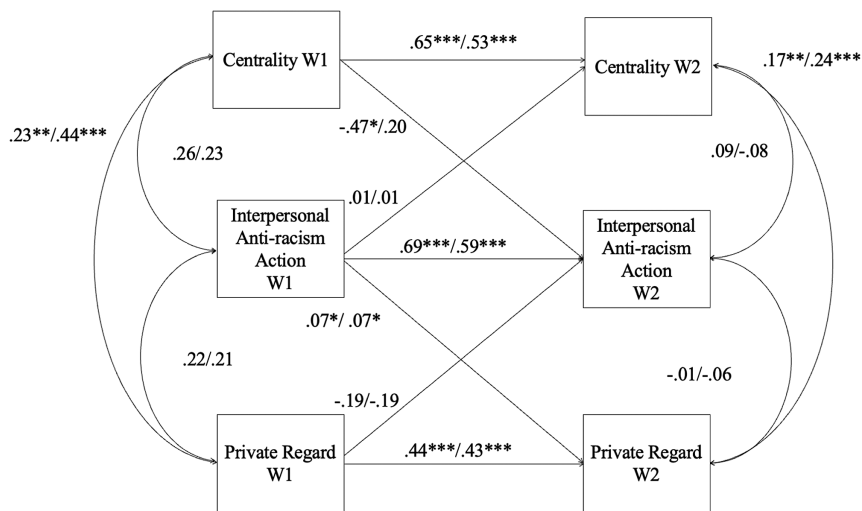

Note. Parent-reported income was associated with private regard at W2 for Latinx youth, and age was associated with private regard at W2 for Black youth. Unstandardized coefficients are depicted for Latinx and Black youth (i.e., Latinx/Black). W = Wave; ERI = ethnic–racial identity.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

activities that might be perceived as potentially compromising their positive self-image.

Indeed, developing a critical analysis can be a difficult process for youth as they are exposed to the realities of historical and contemporary racism (e.g., Richards-Schuster & Aldana, 2013). This reality is offered in light of the finding that a critical social analysis at W1 was positively and significantly associated with private regard at W2, indicating that youth who expressed the ability

Figure 2

Autoregressive Cross-Lagged Panel Model of ERI Content and Interpersonal Antiracism Action at W1 and W2 With Freely Estimated Path Between ERI Centrality at W1 and Interpersonal Antiracism Action at W2 With Youth Age, Parent-Reported Income, and Youth Remote Schooling Status as Covariates

Note. Parent-reported income was associated with private regard at W2 for Latinx youth, and age was associated with private regard at W2 for Black youth. Unstandardized coefficients are depicted for Latinx and Black youth (i.e., Latinx/Black). W = Wave; ERI = ethnic–racial identity.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

to critique oppression also displayed positive feelings toward their racial/ethnic groups. Another possible explanation for the negative association between ERI private regard and a critical social analysis is that youth who construct positive identities may be unlikely to report on the reality of discrimination, as they are reared in social contexts that encourage them to perceive social structures as fair (Bahamondes et al., 2021). Results around bidirectional associations between private regard and critical social analysis presented in the present study underscore the need for additional research that investigates mechanisms that undergird associations between ERI and critical consciousness, as well as an examination of how and why these processes function in unique ways in response to racism.

Associations Between ERI and Interpersonal Antiracism Action

The association between ERI centrality and interpersonal antiracism action across the study differed between Black and Latinx youth. That is, unexpectedly, ERI centrality at W1 was negatively associated with interpersonal antiracism action at W2 among Latinx youth, and ERI centrality at W1 was unassociated with interpersonal antiracism action at W2 for Black youth. These findings suggest that associations between certain dimensions of ERI and critical consciousness might operate differently among different racially/ethnically minoritized youth groups. It could be that connections between ERI centrality and interpersonal antiracism action differ based on the types of interpersonal antiracism actions youth engage in or the level of risk associated with actions. For example, a recent study found that support for critical action, which may include connection to one's racial/ethnic group, did not predict critical action for Hispanic Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students, but this association did exist for those Hispanic students with U.S. citizenship (Cadenas et al., 2018). Such findings suggest that though Latinx youth may find deep meaning in their identities as Latinx, but the consequences of taking action within a climate of ongoing immigrant violence may lead youth to stray away from critical action as a form of self, family, and community preservation. For Black youth, though internalization of Black identity has been shown to be a predictor of activism beliefs (e.g., Hope et al., 2019; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015), such beliefs may not always translate into action. We encourage future research to contend with the meaning Black and Latinx youth ascribe to their involvement in antiracism action and how their conceptions inform associations between ERI and critical consciousness development.

Similarly inconsistent with study hypotheses, youths' reports of private regard at W1 were unassociated with interpersonal antiracism action at W2 for both groups. This finding is surprising given theoretical (e.g., Anyiwo et al., 2018; Mathews et al., 2020) and empirical work suggesting that connections to identity might motivate individuals' involvement in activism (Hope et al., 2019; Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). It may be the case that a deep connection with youths' racial/ethnic group may make "calling out" a close friend, family member, or adult, in general, more difficult than someone who is more distantly affiliated with the Black or Latinx community. For Latinx youth, principles such as familismo (i.e., obligation to family support and obedience to family values) may lead youth to prioritize connections between close family and friends over challenging a problematic remark made by individuals

(Villalobos Solís et al., 2017). For Black communities, intergenerational families are often a key source of Black racial socialization, given elders' experiences of explicit discrimination and participation in the civil rights movement (Nunnally, 2010). Such family members may be a key source of Black pride for Black youth but may limit the younger generation's ability to challenge perspectives that no longer align with their evolving racial worldview. Overall, these results indicate that feeling good, happy, and proud of one's racial/ethnic group may not be enough for Black and Latinx youth to challenge racism that occurs within their interpersonal spheres of influence.

Despite the nonsignificant association between ERI private regard and interpersonal antiracism action, interpersonal antiracism action at W1 was positively and significantly associated with a more positive private regard at W2 for both groups of youth. This finding aligns with emerging work that suggests engagement in critical forms of action may strengthen identity over time and subsequently influence future forms of critical action (Mathews et al., 2022). It could be that youth who engage in interpersonal antiracism actions practice this sociopolitical skill in the context of intergroup dialogues about race. Such settings are focused on increasing students' connection to their racial/ethnic groups and involvement in racial justice activism (Aldana et al., 2012). Similarly, and consistent with study hypotheses, Black and Latinx youths' expression of critical social analysis at W1 was positively and significantly associated with youths' private regard at W2. These findings are connected to previous research that articulates the benefits of youths' learning about historical and contemporary realities of race and racism in the United States (Bañales et al., 2019; Byrd & Hope, 2020; Pinedo et al., 2021). Present study findings provide evidence that youth who identify and critique structural oppression faced by minoritized communities are more likely to express a sense of pride in being a member of their racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Briggs et al., 2023; Mathews et al., 2019). Overall, the present study findings suggest that Black and Latinx youths' engagement in critical consciousness processes may serve as an entry point into their ERI development.

Limitations and Future Directions

Present study findings must be interpreted in the context of the limitations of this study. The present study examined associations between ERI content and critical consciousness; however, associations may exist between other dimensions of ERI (e.g., oppressed minority ideology, exploration) and critical consciousness (e.g., political agency). For example, work indicated that ERI exploration motivated critical action across college and that critical action also informed ERI exploration among Black young people (Mathews et al., 2020). Future longitudinal research should include multiple measures of ERI content, process, and critical consciousness to disentangle the temporal ordering of these processes.

Further, this study did not investigate within-group differences in associations between ERI and critical consciousness among Latinx and Black youth communities, given the relatively small sample sizes of each group. The diverse racial/ethnic experiences of youth within these groups may impact how ERI and critical consciousness processes unfold. For example, there may be differences in ERI and critical consciousness development based on immigrant generational status, such that later-generation immigrant-origin youth may exhibit a greater awareness and critique of oppression in the United

States, given that their families have resided in the country for a longer duration, experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination over time (e.g., Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022). At the same time, later-generation immigrant-origin youth may be considered more "American" than recent immigrant-origin youth by other group members, which may impact youths' ERI development. Mixed-method research that investigates how youth reflect on their racial/ethnic experiences in the context of U.S. societal inequality is needed to understand youths' ERI and critical consciousness development over time.

Implications and Conclusion

The present study offers empirical support on associations between two developmental assets—ERI content and critical consciousness—that Black and Latinx youth may rely on to challenge racism. Overall, findings indicated that different dimensions of ERI are associated with unique dimensions of critical consciousness in varying ways between youth, although more similarities than differences existed. Results suggested that youths' ERI may be an entryway into developing a critical consciousness for youth. At the same time, youths' reports of ERI did not consistently promote critical consciousness development. Youths' engagement in critical consciousness processes served as an entry point into youths' ERI development as well. Study findings have implications for how parents, schools, and communities create opportunities for youth to engage with their racialized experiences and broader sociopolitical inequities in the United States. For instance, if youth-serving programs intend to cultivate youths' ERI private regard, programs may consider providing youth with opportunities to practice skills that encourage them to challenge racism on interpersonal levels in their lives. In all, to support youths' ability to promote racial justice and healing for themselves and their communities, it is imperative that we—youth development researchers, practitioners, and adults—provide youth with opportunities that cultivate their ERI and critical consciousness development.

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