

**The Identity of Activism: How Gender and Racial Identity Relate to Activism Among
African Americans**

Ja'Chelle Ball

Georgetown University

ABSTRACT

In response to the murders of several unarmed African American citizens by police officers and the emergence of movements such as #BlackLivesMatter in the past 10 years, there has been a resurgence of activism in the African American community. Research shows that racial identity influences an individual's motivation for engagement in activism while gender predicts the type of activism that one might engage. The current study examined gender differences in activism and the associations between gender, racial identity, racial discrimination, and activism. The study included 326 college students (142 men and 183 women) who completed a survey that assessed perceived discrimination, racial identity, and black activism. Correlation and regression analyses were used to examine the associative questions, and an independent t-test was used to examine gender differences in activism. The results indicated that private regard and perceived discrimination are positively associated with activism, however, racial centrality and gender did not predict activism. The findings suggest that racial identity and experiences of discrimination are important determinants of activism. Therefore, this research is relevant as awareness of the interrelatedness of social identities is becoming more prevalent to contemporary activist motivation.

Key Words: *activism, African American, racial identity, gender, political participation*

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Activism has been a cornerstone of the historical and contemporary experience of African Americans and has focused on combating racial oppression and pursuing equality and justice. Generally, activism refers to all actions directed towards influencing governmental decisions and political outcomes (Ekman & Amnå, p.290). For African Americans, activism has taken on many meanings with various goals and purposes, challenging injustices within America centered around race. However, there have been distinct peak moments in which activism defines American and African American history and experiences, such as the women's rights movement, the Civil Rights movement, LGBTQ rights era, and so forth.

Though these mark significant aspects of American history, there has been a resurgence of activism as new social inequalities and injustices have arisen that continues to marginalize various communities. Recent studies have found that this resurgence has surfaced in distinct communities, often involving students and young adults, who are more involved in political and social change than ever before. For instance, a recent study of undergraduates nationwide found that 1 in 10 students are expected to partake in protests while in college, the highest rate since 1967, additionally Black students were the most likely to participate in protests (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Bates, Aragon, Suchard, & Rios-Aguilar, 2016). Simultaneously, resources such as technology and social media have become instrumental assets in modern day movements, serving as a platform for dissemination of information, generating awareness, vocalization, and mobilization.

In addition to the newly evolved tactics and resources, activism is influenced by numerous demographic and psychosocial factors. Demographics such as race, age, gender, and

socioeconomic status contribute to the creation of an individual's identity. While these various demographics contribute to an individual's identity, the significance of these demographics to an individual's identity aid in shaping one's perception of the world, themselves in relation to the world, and the understandings of various experiences, which may influence behaviors like activism. Thus far, research has examined race, age, gender, and socioeconomic status independent of one another in relation to activism. Research suggests that demographics like gender and age influence the level of risk in political participation one is willing to take, while socioeconomic status and race influence frequency and motivation towards political participation (Gibson & Williams, 2019; Hope, Gugwor, Riddick, & Pender, 2019).

In contrast, little research has been conducted to analyze associations between intersections of these various demographic factors and activism, especially in African Americans. For African Americans, the centrality of race to one's identity along with other social identities one holds may shape activist tendencies. Therefore, more research examining the intersections of sociodemographics and activist behaviors is needed, particularly for African Americans who have a unique tradition and history with activism in America. This will serve as the purpose and goal of this study, to contribute to the limited research examining African American activism and examine associations between social identities, such as gender and race, and activism. This study aims to investigate the relationship between interconnecting social identities and activism among African Americans to provide more literature focused on simultaneous influences on activism, emphasizing interrelatedness.

Literature Review

What is Activism?

Activism is a common term used in political discourse, taking on a variety of synonyms such as social justice, political participation, civic engagement and even extra-parliamentary activities. Scholars propose a broader definition of activism along with a specific definition of activism unique to African Americans. Generally, activism is described as actions directed towards influencing governmental decisions and political outcomes (Ekman & Amnå, p.290). These actions stretch from a wide range of activities as minimal as wearing political messages on clothing and as grand as participating in a protest resulting in physical disruption within the community to bring awareness to a specific issue (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

In contrast, African American activism has been identified as more complex and intentional as there are specific goals, demands, and strategies this community uses to enact social and political change. Scholars define African American activism as intentional action aimed towards social and political change, especially concerning race, while also aiming to enhance the everyday experiences of African Americans (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Scholars have proposed that African American activism is also fixed upon a spectrum as proposed by scholars ranging from non-confrontational or informal activism to traditional, confrontational activism.

Although these two types of political engagement have unique distinctions, the various forms that encompass these two types have similar forms of activities individuals participate in, invoking similar feelings and motivations for civic engagement. These forms or activities can be defined as legal extra-parliamentary activities or unconventional extra-parliamentary activities often known as forms of civil disobedience. Legal extra-parliamentary activism includes demonstrations, strikes, marches, and membership in political action groups (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). These activities invoke feelings of inclusivity, equality, and belongingness as there are

little to no hierarchical organizations. Instead, these activities establish widespread networks of individuals working together to make a difference.

On the other hand, “unconventional” extra-parliamentary activism resembles activities such as illegal demonstrations or protests, riots, and so forth. These types of activities, though considered illegal, are prevalent within American activist history and unique to African American activist traditions as they embody the essence of democracy, challenging and addressing freedom, equality, and representation disparities. In both conventional and unconventional forms of activism, individuals feel as though their action is providing a direct change to the social and political injustices.

Shifts in Activism

For African Americans, these feelings of belongingness, inclusivity, and equality have been key to motivating and continuing actions towards social and political change. Historically, African American activism has focused on two main goals: redistribution of resources and redress justice (Cook, 2019). Redress justice refers to recognition, acceptance, and preservation of an ethnic group’s social, cultural identity (Cook, 2019). Distributive social justice refers to the impartial allocation of economic resources, commodities, and social services interrelating with financial status and economic related circumstances such as tax paying laws, wealth distribution, health care, and educational opportunities (Cook, 2019). Strategies such as student-led organizations and movements, nonviolent action, and physical disruption of spaces, especially during the 1960s Civil Rights era, highlight the ways in which these goals were obtained. By focusing primarily on the physical discrimination, inequality, and other injustices African Americans faced, Civil Rights activists in particular worked to advance the race as a whole.

However, this also led to other oppressed groups within the community such as poor African Americans and African American women to become an afterthought in the struggle towards social justice.

Despite this limitation of early African American activism, contemporarily this activism encompasses a variety of legacies from past movements while modernizing activist strategies and goals. Strategies that remain include marches, modern day versions of sit-ins, and student-led initiatives with the inclusion of new techniques such as the use of technology and more acceptance of inclusive allyship. Research has found that technology usage has become of significant relevance to contemporary African American activists, such as a 2018 survey which found that 54% of African American users believe social media is an important tool for them to use in expressing their opinions about social and political issues (Roberts, 2018). Reports show that young activists are looking for a way to collectively respond to injustices beyond police brutality, and social media is often their preferred microphone (Roberts, 2018). Technological resources such as social media permit widespread accessibility between activists and activist groups unlike past movements shedding more light onto present social justice issues.

Similarly, research has found that present student and young adult activists are more conscious and willing to incorporate other oppressed groups as allies in the social justice movement (Love, Booysen, & Essed, 2015). This suggests that the need for a leader serving as the voice of the African American community is not needed but rather the implementation of a collective voice, which depicts a visible difference from past movement work where African American activists relied exclusively on individuals in the community to enact change. These shifts in activism portray the continuing evolution of African American activism within the United States and the significance of activism to the African American community. While there

have been shifts in activism that researchers have examined, there have also been changes in motivation for activism. Additionally, demographic and psychosocial factors differentially predict activism and shifts in influence has also become a relevant aspect of activism. These influences include age, gender, and race which researchers have examined to some extent.

Age and Activism

Many studies have examined the associations between age and activism; however, most studies have specifically focused on students and emerging adults. Limited studies have researched differences in activist tendencies between older and younger generations. Studies have found that in African American women, there are generational differences in activism, specifically, the willingness to transfer activist leadership and experiences of discrimination subsequently influencing activist tendencies. Research finds that Millennial and Generation-Xers agree that the Baby Boomers' generation are reluctant to give up their power and allow the younger generations to lead (Love et., al, 2015). The inability of Baby Boomer's to share leadership creates a divide within the group as some activists are aspiring towards new strategies to enact change that are consistent with the social context, and are opposed by previous generations of activists (Love et., al, 2015). Additionally, Millennials are less likely to agree that they experienced discrimination in school compared to the Baby Boomers (Love et al., 2015), suggesting an association between the social context one is raised in and an individual's perception of the world and injustices enacted towards them. As a result, this may influence the impetus towards activism in various individuals.

In addition, studies have found that the way youth activists are oriented towards activism stems from transgenerational knowledge. African American students are influenced by their

parents, who racially socialize them to participate in activism and emphasize the importance of thriving in college and giving back to the African American community through organizational involvement (Hotchkins, 2017). Hotchkins (2017) notes that African American students become student leaders at predominantly white institutions because they are aware that institutional injustices repeat themselves unless interventions occur. Therefore, by family members and elders informing youth of their earlier experiences as background knowledge for their children and youth, African American student activists are provided with the tools to navigate the world and racially stress provoking experiences. This transferring of knowledge allows African Americans to develop their identity or self-perception, preparing the individual to cope with society and the different aspects of self that affect their identity such as gender and race.

Gender and Activism

Studies on gender and activism for African Americans have been dominated by exploration of male leadership ideologies and tactics and their implications on activism. Recently, research has begun to place a spotlight on African American women's efforts in social justice. Even though studies on these social identities are beginning to emerge, few have discussed the differences in motivation or behaviors in activism between males and females.

Studies have shown that women are more motivated to participate in activism because of a desire for a better future for their descendants and unborn children, while men are motivated by anger and personal identification with incidents of racial injustice (Gibson & Williams, 2019). Additionally, women have been found to consistently engage in activism that addresses the intersectionality of their identities, being African American and being a woman, which shapes the ways in which women participate in activism or identify areas needing change (Love et al.,

2015). Consequently, for African American women, activism has evolved in behavioral tendencies in which these women police themselves to avoid affirming negative societal perceptions, while also reshaping the way in which they participate in activism to counter white narratives that portray African American women as overly aggressive and/or hypersexual.

In contrast, African American males understand and participate in activism much differently from their female counterparts. Studies have found that the physical attributes of activism have become uniquely gendered, favoring men. Research shows that men are more likely to participate in riots and violence as a form of activism while women are 47 percent less likely to be a riot participant compared to men (Briody & Santoro, 2014). Reports of police brutality and physical intimidation towards men are more common, or at least commonly known, than towards women, with 64 percent of men reporting unwarranted and unjust police stops compared to 32 percent of African American women (Parker, Menasce Horowitz, Anderson, 2020). Because of the more physical intimidation tactics used against African American men by police, men posit a need to utilize force to express similarities between Caucasian men and African American men. Violence perpetrated against African American men seems to be a motivation for and influence the ways in which African American males participate in activism. Since male activists appear to be motivated by personal identification with the violence enacted upon them and other men in their community (Gibson & Williams, 2019), this suggests that they participate in activism because they do not wish for this to be the normalized reality for African American men. These gender differences suggest some importance to activist orientation; however, an additional factor appears to be a driving force in activism specific to African Americans, — race.

Racial Identity and Activism

Research shows the importance of racial identity to African Americans' social, behavioral, and psychological outcomes. More recently, researchers have begun to investigate the influence of racial identity on activism. Racial identity, as defined by Sellers et al (1998) in the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity, is the significance and qualitative meaning individuals attribute to being Black in their conceptualization of self. Racial identity includes four dimensions: salience, ideology, centrality, and regard (private and public). Salience refers to the extent to which a person's race is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular moment in time. The centrality dimension refers to the significance of race to self, while the regard dimension refers to the person's judgment of their race with private regard being one's own judgment of their race, while public regard refers to how the individual understands others' judgment of their race (Sellers et al., 1998).

Racial identity seems to serve as a protective coping strategy for African Americans against race-related stressful events. Racial identity has been found to promote resilience in African American girls, allowing for increased persistence in academics (Butler-Barnes, Leath, Williams, & Byrd, 2018). These results suggest that racial identity serves as an influence to behavioral outcomes such as never giving up or working to overcome an obstacle in academia. Similarly, African American men who report higher private regard and encounter racism in their lives internalize fewer depressive symptoms, suggesting a psychological benefit to racial identity (Bynum, Best, Barnes, & Burton, 2008). Results like such seem to suggest that one's racial identity serves as a protective barrier against negative psychological experiences and an individual's well-being.

Additionally, research has found various associations between racial identity and activism in various aspects. Research demonstrates that African Americans who have experienced cultural racial discrimination identify race as central to their identity and have nationalist ideologies tend to orient towards low-risk activism such as wearing a shirt with a political message about the African American community (Hope et al., 2019). In contrast, experiences of institutional racial discrimination are positively correlated to high-risk activism orientation within the African American community (Hope et al., 2019).

Other studies have reported the significance experiences of racism have on orientation towards group activist efforts in African Americans, invoking a sense of collective identity in African American activists. Ginwright (2007) argues that African American youth respond to social and economic conditions through forms of civic engagement often overlooked. Ginwright further posits that African American youth engage in activities that build social capital which as a result develops a sense of collective racial and cultural identity that motivates youth to advocate for their community and themselves. Studies such as these suggest the significance of racial identity on activism is centered in strong identification with a particular racial group serving as a key component in civic engagement. Therefore, an individual's racial identity may influence activism because one's racial identity may shape the way in which an individual perceives certain experiences and perceptions. Subsequently this may motivate the individual to participate in activism in order to change these broader societal perceptions or experiences they encounter.

Theoretical Framework

To guide this study, Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Theory, PVEST (1997) is used, which highlights the significance of integrating individuals' intersubjective experiences with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory posits that the environment one grows up in affects every aspect of one's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory is significant to the current study which is focused on examining experiences such as racism in relation to activist orientation. It is important to understand and analyze the influence one's environment may have on an individual's motivation to participate in activism. In examining ecological influences on behaviors such as activist participation, we have the ability to theorize the extent to which the environment is a motivating and/or moderator in activism. This is especially relevant in relation to examining African Americans given their history in America with social environments such as experiences of racism and racial discrimination, in addition to social discrimination such as gender inequality.

However, utilizing Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Theory (1997), includes the aspect of intersubjective experiences which focuses on how the individual perceives or understands a certain experience in a given cultural or social context. This is especially useful and prevalent within the current study as measures within the current study assess how the individual perceives certain experiences as either racist or not, then analyzing the data to determine associations between perceptions and activism. By integrating intersubjective experiences with the examination of individuals' relationships within the community and broader society, this study will be able to better pinpoint how Black individuals understand themselves, society, themselves in relation to society, and what behaviors and attitudes are appropriate. This will contribute to the understanding of the bilinear relationship between social and cognitive experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals (see Figure 1). Using this framework to guide

this study will contribute to a better understanding of the influences and motivation towards activism among African American because this framework posits how an individual perceives social and cognitive experiences and how various experiences shape the responses an individual has towards specific events.

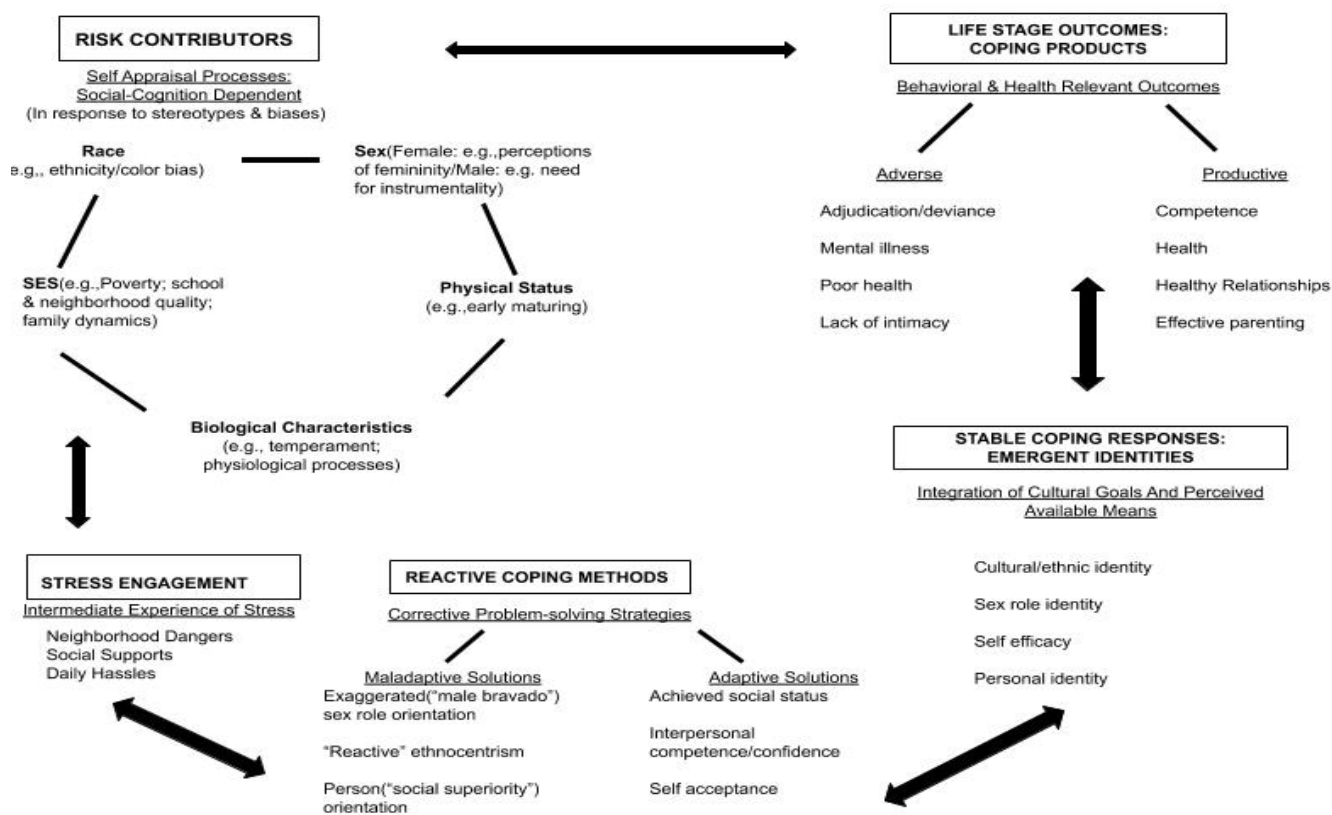


Figure 1. A Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory(PVEST) Flow Diagram (Spencer, 1997).

Purpose of the Present Study

Previous research demonstrates that sociodemographic and psychosocial factors relate to activism. However, there is a dearth of studies that have examined associations between racial identity and activism. Also, few studies that examined whether gender predict level of activism,

if gender and racial identity interact to predict activism. In the present study, we examine the associations between gender, racial identity, and activism among African Americans. As the world continues to redefine itself and individuals come to better understand themselves in relation to the world, it is important to examine the associations and influences these different entities have on one another separately and simultaneously. Especially for African Americans and their experience, elaborate and extensive study on their experience aids in defining who this group is and how they have come to be. This serves as the aim of this study, to contribute to literature regarding the psychology of African American activism in the contemporary day along with discussions on the implications sociodemographic factors have on African American activism. This will grant further guidance to scholars and African Americans about the essence of Blackness and encourage further work that analyzes African American experiences. There are three guiding questions within the current study:

1. Are there sex differences in activism among African Americans?
2. How does racial identity relate to activism?
3. Does racial identity and gender interact to predict activism?

These questions are interested in both the independent and interactive associations between gender, racial identity, and activism to better understand the interconnectedness of social identities and their influence on activist orientation in African Americans.

Recently, African American women have been at the center of contemporary activist leadership and representation, creating human rights movements such as the BlackLivesMatter Movement, organizing independent protests and movements and more (Bennett, 2020; Garza, 2014). Given the significance of women leadership and representation in activism, current literature that addresses associations between women and participation in low-risk activism, as

well as literature finding associations between racial centrality, regard, and activism we hypothesize three main assumptions:

H1: Women will report higher rates of activist participation than men.

H2: Racial centrality and private regard will be positively associated with activism.

H3: Women with high racial identity (e.g. high racial centrality and private regard) will report more activism.

Method

Participants

The study sample included 326 (142 males and 183 females) African Americans. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 70 (Mean age=34.17, SD= 12.44). Four individuals were removed from the analyses due to an incomplete demographic questionnaire, resulting in a final sample of 322 African Americans.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. Basic demographic information (age, income, educational level, and gender) was obtained for each participant.

Racial Identity. The Multidimensional Inventory of Racial Identity (MIRI; Sellers et al., 1998) was used to measure racial identity. The MIRI is a 51-item assessment consisting of three subscales: Centrality, Regard, and Ideology. For the purpose of this study only Centrality and Private Regard subscales were used. The Centrality subscale includes eight items that measure the degree to which race is a core aspect of one's self-concept (i.e., *Overall being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself*). In this study, the Racial Centrality scale had an alpha of

.61. Additionally, the Private Regard subscale consists of seven items that measure the extent to which an individual feels positively or negatively towards African Americans and their membership in the group (i.e., *I feel good about Black people*). The Private Regard scale had an alpha of .66. The subscales were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Activism. The African American Activist Participatory Behavior subscale of the Multidimensional Model of Black Activism (Thomas, 2001) was used to assess activism. The behavior scale consists of 18 items designed to assess whether one engaged in actual activism within the past 5 years. A sample item (*Participated in a Black/African American social, civic, or professional organization*). Responses were answered on a 4-point Likert scale with 1 (Frequently) to 4 (Never) with average scores being commuted. In the current study, the African American Activist Participatory Behavior Scale had an alpha of .87.

Perceived Racism. The Perceived Racism Scale (McNeilly et al., 1996) was used to measure the experience of racism in African Americans. This scale provides a measure of the frequency of exposure to racism (i.e., individual and institutional, overt and covert) while also assessing the emotional and behavioral coping responses to racism. This scale was utilized for its goal in facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the experience of racism among African Americans.

Research Design

The current study is a secondary data analysis of results from a cross-section study on activism (Livingston et al., 2017). Self-reported surveys were used which gathered demographic

information and assessed the racial identity, perceived racism, and behavioral participation in activism among African Americans.

Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 23; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL) descriptive statistics were run along with an independent sample *t* test to determine gender differences in activist participation. A Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to examine any associations between racial identity (i.e., *centrality* and *private regard*), perceived racism, and activism among African Americans.

Results

Descriptive information and statistics for participants can be found in Table 1. The sample was mainly female and middle aged (Mean age = 34 years old). Analysis found that there were no significant effect for sex differences in activism, despite men ($M = 42.4$, $SD = 14.9$) attaining higher levels of activist participation than women, ($M = 41.2$, $SD = 16.5$). Correlational results between variables can be found in Table 2. Racial centrality and activism were not significantly correlated ($r = .089$). However, analysis showed a moderately positive correlation between private regard and activism ($r = .125$, $p < .05$). Additionally, perceived racism and activism was found to have a positive correlation ($r = .190$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics and Statistics Table

Variables	N
Age	
N	322
Mean \pm SD	34.17 \pm 12.44
Min-Max	18-71
Median	33
Gender(%)	
Female	183(56.1)
Male	142(43.6)

Table 2. Correlations between racial centrality, private regard, perceived racism, and activism

	Centrality	Private Regard	Perceived Racism	Black Activism
Centrality	1.00			
Private Regard	.32**	1.00		
Perceived Racism	.22**	-.058	1.00	
Black Activism	.089	.125*	.190***	1.00

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to determine gender differences in activism participation and to examine associations between racial identity, perceived racism, and activism among African Americans. To our knowledge, no prior studies have examined the simultaneous interactions between gender and racial identity in relation to activism among African Americans.

We found that: **1)** There is no significant mean difference between men and women in activism, **2)** There is a moderately positive correlation between private regard and activism, **3)** There is no significant correlation between racial centrality and activism, and **4)** There is a positive correlation between perceived racism and activism. These results suggest that some aspects of racial identity (private regard) and racist experiences relate to activism, however gender and racial centrality do not seem to have an influence on activism.

Previous studies have not revealed similar findings that racial centrality is not significant to activism among African Americans. In fact, studies have found racial centrality and public regard to be significant to activism among African Americans (Hope et al., 2019). However, the current study did not examine public regard but instead private regard, suggesting that the regard subscale has a significance to motivation to activism. These differences in findings support the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory due to the intersubjective experiences and perceptions one encounters. For instance, the extent to which race is central to one's identity may influence the perceptions one has about a racial experience, subsequently influencing one's motivation towards activism. Similarly, studies have not found a significant correlation between private regard and activism (Livingston et al., 2017). This suggests that there may have been external factors that influenced the results of the current study. For instance, the current study examined gender, racial identity, perceived racism, and activism as the primary variables of interest within the available dataset. However, the primary study that collected the data utilized racial identity, psychological empowerment, and activism as the primary variables of interest. Given this, the analyses of the variables of interest may have influenced the different results such as the influence racial identity has on psychological empowerment, and therefore activism versus the influence racial identity and gender has on activism. Additionally, this study examined

gender and racial identity simultaneously in relation to activism while other studies have not which may have influenced the results due to differences in variations among variables.

However, the current study's findings of a significant correlation between private regard, perceived racism, and activism does seem to support Spencer's PVEST. In PVEST, the phenomenological experience of the ecology or environment one is in has an effect on behaviors, abilities, and identities one believes they can obtain or participate in. For instance, as individuals perceive an experience as racially negative, they may develop a stronger sense of private regard in which they feel positive about their race and as a result, respond to the negative experience by seeking out participation in activism as a coping strategy (Szymanski, 2012). This highlights how the understanding an individual has about a certain experience can then affect their development and self-perception, resulting in a variety of responses to events. This theory along with these findings are especially important among African Americans as there are a myriad of ways to understand cultural and social experiences which impacts the identity/beliefs one may hold about their racial group and membership within the group. Additionally, this is important and significant as it identifies how phenomena interact with the environment to cause individuals to respond in different ways to stressful or negative experiences.

There are important limitations to this study which help to point to future directions to research. This study is limited due to it being a cross-sectional design hence, we are unable to draw causal inferences from the results of this study. Within this study the participants were primarily African American instead of a sample that included the entirety of the Black community (i.e., African diaspora) in order to allow for a better understanding of how the Black experience in general may influence activism. Another limitation to this study is that it examined sex differences rather than gender differences amongst African Americans. As sex differences

refers to the physical differences between male and female, gender identity and differences refers to the individual's own self-perception of their gender. By conducting a study that does examine gender as a social identity and not solely as a demographic may provide more information regarding gender differences in activist participation. Furthermore, the current study does not examine the entirety of the dimensions within racial identity in relation to activism. By conducting a study that includes all of the dimensions to racial identity, the results may suggest a more significant correlation between racial identity and activism since dimensions like ideology, which could motivate individuals to participate more or less in specific types of activism, would be assessed. By assessing these aspects of racial identity, researchers may be able to better understand how significant various dimensions of an individual are interrelated, simultaneously influencing perceptions of experiences and activist orientation.

Though this study does have limitations, it does include strengths as well that are important to the research. This study contributes to the scarce research focused on African American activism, in particular implementing contemporary knowledge and experiences to the forefront of psychological research. This research examines what factors simultaneously influence or motivate activism among African Americans which to our knowledge, no prior studies have examined. As a result, there is more information revealing the complexity of activism among African Americans along with the significance activism plays in the everyday experience of African Americans. Additionally, this research allows for accessible information to use when identifying who activists are along with developing strategies and resources to elevate current activism. The more information available that explains what is motivating activism among African Americans, the more individuals can develop resources to alleviate some of the inequalities that propel individuals to become activists.

Overall, future studies should aim to examine the specific aspects of identity (i.e., gender, public regard, ideology, and salience) and how these aspects of identity influence activist participation and orientation among African Americans. In doing so, these studies would contribute to a better understanding of how the individual understands him/herself in relation to society in general as well as the different social groups they hold membership to. As a result, having a better understanding of this can build upon the way in which we understand the motivation to participate in activism among African Americans while subsequently adding to the limited research on African American activism post-Civil Rights era. Also, this research can help to support the development and health of activists as we become more aware of the factors motivating individuals to become activists. These motivations for activism may be negative experiences that affect the social, behavioral, and psychological outcomes for a particular individual or their communities, therefore by better understanding the impetus for activism we can provide better support and resources. Together with studies like such along with studies similar to the current study, this research expands our conceptualization of the African American experience and the factors that relate to activist orientation and participation.

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