

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# Critical action among Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth: Identifying a multidimensional measure and exploring within-group differences

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## Abstract

Critical action—behaviours aimed at dismantling systems of oppression—must be examined within youths' racialized experiences and should incorporate cultural and sociohistorical factors. We considered an expansive list of items capturing youth behaviours to create a novel four-factor (service, community change, expression, and care) measure of critical action for Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth. Multiple distinct profiles of critical action were identified within both racial-ethnic groups, and associations between the profiles and sociodemographic and contextual support variables were explored. Gender differences in the type of critical action were found in both racial-ethnic groups, pointing to the potential influence of gender roles on critical action among these populations. Differences in critical action patterns were also found between those born in the U.S. versus those born outside the U.S.; access to critical action may differ within racial-ethnic groups depending on birthplace and associated nuances in familial and cultural contexts. This paper demonstrated a need for attending to variation between and within groups in the study of critical action in order to effectively support racialized youth's coping within and resistance against systems of oppression.

## KEYWORDS

Asian youth, critical action, critical consciousness, Hispanic youth, latent profile analysis, Latinx youth, youth civic engagement

*We are all part of one another.*

Yuri Kochiyama

*I never thought in terms of Fear, I thought in terms of Justice.*

Emma Tenayuca

Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth are a rapidly growing demographic in the United States, and comprise almost a quarter of all young people under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). However, they are developing within the context of a dominant ideology that privileges whiteness, meaning that their developmental contexts are marked by racism and xenophobia (Findling et al., 2019; Yip, Cheah, Kiang, & Hall, 2021). Nevertheless, Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth today stand on the shoulders of fierce ancestors who modelled effective political battles, community organizing, and care for one another (Fernández, 2019; Schlund-Vials, Wong, & Chang, 2017). In the Hispanic/Latinx community, the Young Lords prioritized communal care and interracial solidarity by working alongside the Black Panthers to advocate for health and education equity. Figures like Emma Tenayuca and Lolita Lebrón fought fearlessly for the rights of communities impacted by the U.S. legacies of land theft (Mexico) and colonization (Puerto Rico). Kiyoshi Kuromiya, Yuri Kochiyama, Haunani-Kay Trask, and Anna May Wong are among powerful activists that defy the 'model minority' mould directed at Asians, and the Yellow Brotherhood serves as a successful example of collective civic empowerment. We strive to honour and uplift this history via a careful investigation of Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth's involvement in their communities.

It is developmentally appropriate for all youth to participate in civic engagement (i.e., individual and collective acts aimed at positive contributions to self and others; Adler & Goggin, 2005; Sherrod, 2015), and, these behaviours are an integral act of coping and resistance for youth who experience marginalization due to their racialized identities. Through civic engagement, young people of colour including Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth may find ways to navigate and challenge a society that has and continues to impose systems of racial oppression. In the words of Hope and Spencer (2017), Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth may be engaged in 'a revolutionary act of self-preservation in direct response to broadly under-acknowledged conditions of sociopolitical inequality' (p. 422). Hence, youth of colour's civic engagement may also be considered part of their critical consciousness (CC); specifically, their civic engagement may be considered the critical actions that form one half of the praxis of CC. CC captures youths' engagement in an iterative dialectic of reflection and action on oppression; it is a process through which youth may realize individual and social transformations towards liberation (Freire, 2016; Heberle, Rapa, & Farago, 2020). Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youths' individual and collective acts of civic engagement can support them to resist within and dismantle systems of oppression (Hope & Spencer, 2017); thus, their civic engagement may be considered akin to the behavioural component of CC, or critical action.

Although the literature has examined youth of colour's critical action as an important CC-related outcome (Heberle et al., 2020), there are limitations to how critical action has been conceptualized. Most existing research has taken an etic approach to defining and measuring critical action, wherein researchers have applied parameters for what constitutes 'critical action' based on conceptions of traditional versus non-traditional civic engagement. Traditional forms of civic engagement that take place within established institutions for participating in civic life, such as community service and voting, are considered 'acritical'. On the other hand, non-traditional forms of civic engagement, that often involve agitation against or appeals to social systems, are considered 'critical'. Under this definition, critical action is a unidimensional construct that emphasizes activities like participating in protests, boycotting products, signing petitions, and taking part in groups that focus on issues of anti-oppression (e.g., LGBTQ+ rights; Diemer et al., 2020). Although these activities, especially when sustained and collective in its implementation, may be integral to effectively disrupting and repairing harmful systems of oppression (Diemer et al., 2021), they may not encompass the full range of activities that young people of colour value as contributions to their communities. Furthermore, the existing research has not considered how youths' critical action may be influenced by their culture as well as the different sociohistorical locations their communities occupy. Typically, the diversity in experiences of

racialization among youth of colour is ignored in the literature on critical action—indeed, much of the studies on critical action have considered larger, conglomerated racial groups (and sometimes with white youth). Additionally, existing work on critical action has not considered how variation in youths' specific sociodemographics (gender, immigration status, etc.) and the availability of social supports in their environment may shape their ability to perform various critical actions.

In this paper, we used a data-driven approach to generate a more expansive and multi-dimensional formulation of critical action among Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth, and considered how youth vary within each racial-ethnic group when critical action is considered in this manner. We generated a new measure of critical action by conducting an exploratory factor analysis on a broad set of activity involvement items that had previously been developed for youth samples. After confirming the factor structure of the measure, we conducted a group-differential analysis (latent profile analysis) in order to explore heterogeneity within each racial group in their critical action engagement. We investigated sociodemographic differences between profiles of critical action to explore how Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth vary in their critical action based on their gender, immigration status, and socioeconomic status, and also investigated how the availability of social supports in youths' context were associated with distinct profiles of critical action.

## 1 | CRITICAL ACTION

New scholarship is emerging which acknowledges how youths' sociocultural backgrounds relate to their critical action. For example, Hope, Pender, and Riddick (2019) in developing the Black Community Activism Orientation Scale found that nationalist ideology, which captures whether Black youth who hold beliefs about the uniqueness of being Black, had associations with high-risk and formal political Black community activism orientation. Black youth who identified with the collective struggle of Black people were more likely to be willing to engage in critical actions for their community.

Other recent work suggests, however, that what has heretofore been defined as critical action may not be capturing all that encompasses the behaviours young people who experience oppression are engaging in to cope with and also to disrupt/repair harmful systems of oppression. The existing literature on critical action focuses on behaviours that are typically associated with 'non-traditional' civic engagement and seldom takes into account other behaviours that may also be acts of resistance and healing. For example, in a study that included Black youth, Heberle, Wagner, and Hoch (2022) explored critical actions targeting racial injustice as measured by the Anti-Racism Action Scale (Aldana, Bañales, & Richards-Schuster, 2019). Administered items encompassed interpersonal (defended a friend who is the target of a racial slur or joke), communal (attended a meeting on an issue related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation), and political actions (attended a protest on an issue related to race, ethnicity, discrimination, and/or segregation). Generally, the researchers found that the Black youth did not experience well-being as a result of engaging in these critical actions, and, in fact, experienced poorer mental health outcomes when engaging in interpersonal critical actions. Critical actions, as part of the process of critical consciousness, ideally set youth on paths towards greater wellness. Exploring additional forms of critical action may be important for understanding the relationships between critical action and the well-being of youth who experience oppression. For example, the critical actions that are political may only be promotive of better mental health when accompanied by other behaviours (expressing oneself fully through art, caring for and being close to others) that build youth's capacity to perform these critical actions.

It is possible that critical actions are only liberatory when youth have sufficient social supports. This idea is supported by Heberle et al. (2022): in their study, critical actions of the communal type led to greater well-being for Black youth when they had parents who supported their critical action engagement. In a different study with Black and Latinx college students, Pinedo, Durkee, Diemer, and Hope (2021) found that engagement in cultural affinity spaces on college campuses reduced Black and Latinx students' decline in critical action over time. Hence, their

engagement with peers who shared their cultural values helped sustain engagement in critical action. Overall, more work is needed which integrates the role of social supports with Asian and Latinx youths' critical action, while also taking into account the sociocultural context within which critical actions may be occurring.

## 2 | CRITICAL ACTION AMONG ASIAN YOUTH

Asian youth may engage in critical actions to defy experiences of oppression. In an adult sample, Asians were more likely to be engaged in critical actions when they had greater experiences of discrimination and stronger identification with their racial group (Tran & Curtin, 2017). Notably, critical action had a negative association with endorsement of 'model minority' beliefs. Those who subscribed to the negative stereotypes engaged in less critical action.

The myth of the 'model minority' has contributed to the erasure of critical actions among Asian communities—for example, critical actions against the Chinese Exclusion Act and the internment of Japanese Americans—and suggests that Asians should be striving to achieve acceptance and achievement within the status quo of society by working hard and working on conforming and assimilating.

Critical action among Asian youth against this backdrop may take a variety of forms. In a study with college students, Maker Castro et al. (2022) found that Asians scored lower than their white peers on an existing, unidimensional measure of critical action. However, instead of surmising that Asian youth are less engaged in critical actions, we propose that the existing metric for critical action may not be capturing the full extent of critical actions among Asian youth. For example, the unidimensional scale focused on 'traditional' political action including participation in civil rights organizations and political groups. What may be missing are more diverse ways of taking critical action, for example, through service that is intended to address a structural inequality. The same sample of Asian youth demonstrated very high scores on critical reflection, and further, critical action was associated with lower hopefulness (Maker Castro et al., 2022).

## 3 | CRITICAL ACTION AMONG HISPANIC/LATINX YOUTH

Critical action among Hispanic/Latinx youth may be intertwined with the cultural values of familismo which encourage strong social bonds between those considered family (Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Castellon, & Dornhecker, 2013). For example, within Hispanic/Latinx communities, parents' pair the cultural socialization of their children with sociopolitical socialization (Pinetta, Blanco Martinez, Cross, & Rivas-Drake, 2020). And, researchers have found that students who were high in critical action had higher engagement in activities such as translating for family members, caring for younger children, and helping others at school (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2015). In a qualitative study by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) with Hispanic/Latinx 18–25 year-olds, participants communicated how both a sense of social responsibility and an awareness of injustices motivated them to engage in a variety of behaviours ranging from attending rallies, mentoring others, being a leader in community organizing groups, volunteering, to committing to professions with social contributions (e.g., teaching).

When considering critical action among this group, it is also important to consider how certain critical actions may carry more risk due to factors such as immigration status. Cadenas, Bernstein, and Tracey (2018) found that support for critical action predicted critical action among Hispanic/Latinx students with U.S. citizenship but not among those who were Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students. In particular, their study included items asking about high-risk critical actions where participants may be in confrontations with police—even with ample support, some youth will forgo critical actions that have the potential to jeopardize their legal status and ability to stay in the country.

## 4 | CURRENT STUDY

In this study, we used an exploratory approach to examine critical action within and between Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth, and explored associations between youths' sociodemographics and their critical action. In order to inform future practice, we also investigated the role of contextual factors in supporting critical action. Our research was guided by the following questions:

- Research question 1: What are the multiple factors of critical action that emerge when centering data from Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth?
- Research question 2: What is the variation within each racial-ethnic group in critical action? That is, are there profiles of critical action engagement within both Asian youth and Hispanic/Latinx youth?
- Research question 3: What is the relationship between identified profiles and both sociodemographic factors (gender, U.S. born, work, parental education level) and contextual factors (school support, parent civic engagement, peer civic engagement)?

## 5 | METHOD

### 5.1 | Procedure

We used publicly available data from the first wave of the Stanford Civic Purpose Project: Longitudinal Study of Youth's Civic Engagement in California (Damon, 2017). The study focused on the civic engagement of high school students in 2011 who were diverse in terms of state region, racial-ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and immigrant-origin status.

### 5.2 | Sample

We identified 397 Asian and 712 Hispanic/Latinx high school students primarily in the 12th grade (98.92%). The average age of Asian youth was 16.84 ( $SD = 0.52$ ), and 16.90 ( $SD = 0.54$ ) for Hispanic/Latinx youth. Among the Asian subgroup, 49.37% were girls, and 49.62% were boys. Among the Hispanic/Latinx subgroup, 55.76% were girls, and 43.40% were boys.

### 5.3 | Measures

#### 5.3.1 | Critical action

A 22-item adaptation of the Youth Inventory of Involvement (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007) was administered. All items started with the prompt 'How often have you participated in each of the following activities since the time you started high school?' and was followed by a short description of the activity, and then the response options 'Never,' 'Once or twice,' 'A few times,' and 'Regularly' (for full list see Appendix A).

#### 5.3.2 | Sociodemographic variables

Participants' were asked to identify their gender as well as report whether or not they were born in the United States. Participants were also asked if they worked for pay. Youth reported their mother's and/or father's

highest level of education; a binary variable was computed that indicated whether at least one parent was a college graduate.

### 5.3.3 | Contextual variables

Opportunities at school for civic engagement were measured using six items ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ). An example item is: 'Be involved in making decisions about the school'. Participants were also asked about their parents' civic engagement four items ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ). An example item is: 'My parents/guardians are active in the community'. Lastly, peers' civic engagement was measured using three statements ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ). An example item is: 'I talk to my friends about problems in society and political issues'.

During preliminary analyses, a multi-factor confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for the three contextual variables. Results can be found in Appendix B.

## 5.4 | Analytic strategy

To develop a measure of critical action from the Youth Inventory of Involvement, we conducted descriptive analyses of items using SPSS 27.0, and then split our data into two random samples to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using one half, and the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in the other half. The EFA was conducted in *Mplus* 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) using an oblique geomin rotation as we expected critical action factors to be correlated with one another. We fit models with different numbers of factors until models no longer converged and compared models with different factors using the Hull method (Auerswald & Moshagen, 2019). The CFA conducted to verify our measurement model was evaluated by comparing model fit indices—the RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and SRMR—against their respective cut-offs (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The  $\chi^2$  of each model was not used to assess model fit because the null hypothesis of perfect fit is rarely plausible with models with large samples. Items were examined for cross-loadings and low loadings.

We assessed whether our final measurement model was invariant across Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth; although we aimed to independently explore distinct patterns of critical action within each racial-ethnic group, we wanted to be able to make conclusions on the foundation that the measures of critical action were equivalent across subgroups. Configural, metric and scalar invariance across the two racial-ethnic groups were assessed: invariance at each step was indicated by a change in CFI smaller than 0.01 paired with a change in RMSEA smaller than 0.02 (Chen, 2007). The approach of using CFI coupled with RMSEA was preferred over consulting  $\chi^2$  difference tests, given the large sample size.

We next explored patterns of critical action among Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth separately, using latent profile analysis (LPA) in *Mplus* 8.4. The process of finding the best fitting model in LPA involves comparing models with different numbers of profiles and different specifications of the variance–covariance matrix (Masyn, 2013). In an LPA, although the means of indicators are assumed to vary between profiles, the variances and covariances may be constrained to equality across profiles or may even be constrained to 0. This gives rise to the possibility of estimating models with an increasing numbers of profiles within each variance–covariance matrix specification. Models were compared by examining several model fit statistics both as a table of output, and as a graphical plot. Classification diagnostics were also consulted when selecting the best-fitting model (Masyn, 2013). Consideration was also given to the substantive interpretability of models.

Finally, we considered associations between identified profiles and sociodemographic and contextual variables using the Bolck-Croon-Hagenaars procedure (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2021). For binary sociodemographic variables we computed the odds ratios between profiles, comparing the statistical significance and magnitude of the associations. For continuous demographic variables, we conducted Wald  $\chi^2$  tests in a pairwise manner to compare the mean

values of the sociodemographic variables across profiles. Throughout all analyses we accounted for missing data using full information maximum likelihood (FIML; Enders & Bandalos, 2001) due to the relatively low levels of missing data (ranging from 1.77% to 8.70%).

## 6 | RESULTS

### 6.1 | Defining a measure of critical action for Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth

Initially, all 22 items of the adapted Youth Inventory of Involvement were entered into an EFA on half of the sample; however, it became clear that some items needed to be removed as they were not loading onto any of the factors or were loading onto multiple factors. Items 4 and 16 were removed for the reason of not loading on any factor. The reason that item 4 had low loadings may be because it represented prosociality broadly, and the reason that item 16 had low loadings may be because it was about earning money. Items 1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 18, and 22 all cross-loaded meaning that the items were not uncovering unique critical action dimensions within the data. The remaining items were analysed using the Hull method (unweighted least squares extraction). Both CFI and RMSEA criteria indicated that the four-factor model was the best-fitting model using the Hull method. Therefore, the four-factor model was chosen as the final EFA model (see Table 1 for loadings). CFA results for the four-factor model ( $\chi^2 [48] = 122.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ) demonstrated a strong fit (Table 2). The RMSEA was 0.05 (90% CI: 0.04, 0.07), below the cut-off of 0.08; the CFI of 0.98 and TLI of 0.98 were above the threshold of 0.95. The SRMR of 0.04 was below the 0.08 cut-off. Thus, we finalized our measurement model as consisting of the following four critical action factors: service, community change, expression, and care. The service factor encompasses actions traditionally related to volunteering and donating. The community change factor covers actions that allow one to participate in efforts to make progress on issues in one's community and includes actions like signing petitions and participating in groups that work on political issues. The expression factor was so-named because the included actions involve voicing one's opinions on a social

**TABLE 1** Exploratory factor loadings for randomly divided sample A ( $n = 555$ )

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
V3 helped with a fund-raising project	0.716			
V11 volunteered at a school event	0.934			
V13 gave money to a cause	0.560			
V15 volunteered with a community service organization	0.885			
V8 signed a petition		0.484		
V10 attended a protest march, meeting, or demonstration		0.850		
V20 interacted with people or groups about political issues		0.365		
V9 contacted a political representative to tell him/her how you felt about a particular issue			0.596	
V19 expressed my own opinions or beliefs about issues through clothing, buttons, or bumper stickers			0.663	
V21 used art, music, or digital media (art/graffiti/music/spoken word/dance/videos/rap) to express my views about political or social issues			0.866	
V2 took care of other families' children (unpaid)				0.430
V17 provided care for younger siblings, disabled, or elderly members of my family				0.790

Note: All loadings were significant at  $p < .05$ . Loadings smaller than 0.350 are not displayed.

**TABLE 2** Confirmatory factor loadings for randomly divided sample B (*n* = 554)

	Standardized estimate	Standard error	R <sup>2</sup>
Service			
V3 helped with a fund-raising project	0.843	0.018	0.711
V11 volunteered at a school event	0.890	0.016	0.792
V13 gave money to a cause	0.718	0.026	0.516
V15 volunteered with a community service organization	0.862	0.018	0.743
Community change			
V8 signed a petition	0.687	0.042	0.472
V10 attended a protest march, meeting, or demonstration	0.610	0.047	0.372
V20 interacted with people or groups about political issues	0.618	0.050	0.381
Expression			
V9 contacted a political representative to tell him/her how you felt about a particular issue	0.573	0.055	0.329
V19 expressed my own opinions or beliefs about issues through clothing, buttons or bumper stickers	0.876	0.036	0.768
V21 used art, music or digital media (art/graffiti/music/spoken word/dance/videos/rap) to express my views about political or social issues	0.711	0.039	0.506
Care			
V2 took care of other families' children (unpaid)	0.396	0.051	0.157
V17 provided care for younger siblings, disabled, or elderly members of my family	0.781	0.075	0.610

**TABLE 3** Measurement invariance (*n* = 1,109)

Model	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta$ CFI	$\Delta$ RMSEA	Decision
Configural	290.517 (96)	0.979	0.060	-	-	
Metric	369.303 (104)	0.971	0.068	<0.01	<0.01	Pass
Scalar	434.980 (124)	0.966	0.067	<0.01	<0.01	Pass

issue through various mediums. The care factor captures young people's care work that is unpaid: that is, caring for family members, elders, as well as helping out other families.

Changes in CFI and RMSEA were below their respective cut-offs for metric and scalar invariance (Table 3), establishing measurement invariance across the two racial-ethnic groups. A scale score for each of the four critical action factors—service, expression, community change, and care—was calculated by taking the mean of the items. Descriptive statistics for these factors are presented in Table 4 along with descriptive statistics for the three contextual variables. Bivariate correlations among the critical action factors as well as the sociodemographic and contextual variables are presented in Table 5.

**6.2 | Variation in critical action by racial-ethnic group**

**6.2.1 | Asian youth**

In the latent profile analysis (LPA) for Asian youth (Appendix C) the models with a variable-variances, equal-covariances structure fit the best according to plots of the fit indices. Within this variance-covariance structure, the



**TABLE 4** Descriptive statistics

	Asian youth		Hispanic/Latinx youth		Both groups	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Service <sup>a</sup>	2.811	0.841	2.463	0.834	2.591	0.853
Expression <sup>a</sup>	1.762	0.744	1.905	0.777	1.852	0.768
Community change	1.647	0.573	1.691	0.634	1.675	0.613
Care	2.591	0.887	2.698	0.862	2.659	0.872
SchoolCivic <sup>a</sup>	3.687	0.676	3.564	0.721	3.608	0.708
ParentCivic	2.452	0.874	2.593	0.845	2.541	0.858
PeerCivic <sup>a</sup>	3.203	0.894	2.857	0.910	2.984	0.919

<sup>a</sup>Indicates mean difference between Asian versus Hispanic and Latinx youth was statistically significant at  $p < .01$ .

four-profile model had the smallest Akaike information criterion and sample size adjusted Bayesian information criterion. It also had the largest Bayes factor. Classification in this four-profile model was good: the relative entropy was 0.79, the odds of correct classification ranged between 5.60 and 78.93, and average posterior class probabilities were between 0.86 and 0.91. A plot of the chosen four-profile model is presented in Figure 1.

The first profile, with 8.56% of the sample, is characterized by low levels on all critical action indicators and was therefore named *Low Critical Action*. The second profile, with 30.48% of the sample, had levels of service and care close to the average for Asian youth, but low expression and community change scores. This profile was therefore named *Emerging Service and Care*. The third profile (14.61%) had high levels on all critical action factors, and was named *High Critical Action*. The fourth and largest profile, with almost half the sample (46.35%) had levels of service and care close to the average, and levels of expression and community change slightly above average. This profile was named *Emerging Critical Action*.

## 6.2.2 | Hispanic/Latinx youth

In the LPA for Hispanic/Latinx youth (Appendix C), the class-invariant, unrestricted variance–covariance structure was preferred after examining plots of the fit indices. Within this structure, the four-profile model fit best according to the consistent Akaike information criterion, Bayesian information criterion, and Bayes factor. It also had the highest approximate correct model probability of all models in this variance–covariance structure. This model had good classification, with a relative entropy of 0.70, odds of correct classification ranging between 10.24 and 26.31, and average posterior class probabilities ranging between 0.75 and 0.90. A plot of the model selected for Hispanic/Latinx youth is depicted in Figure 2.

The first profile (22.47% of Hispanic/Latinx youth) had levels of service and care slightly above average, levels of community change slightly below average, and high levels of expression. This profile was therefore named *Expression Focus*. The second profile (41.03%) had low scores on all factors and was named *Low Critical Action*. Profile 3 (24.75%) had high service, low expression, and community change and care slightly above average. This profile was named *Service Focus - Low Expression*. The last profile (11.75%) had high scores on all critical action variables and was named *High Critical Action*.

## 6.3 | Identified profiles relation to sociodemographic and contextual factors

### 6.3.1 | Asian youth

Among Asian youth, boys were more likely to be in *Low Critical Action Overall* than all other profiles (Table 6). Furthermore, those born in the U.S. were over four times more likely to be in *High Critical Action* than *Emerging Critical*

TABLE 5

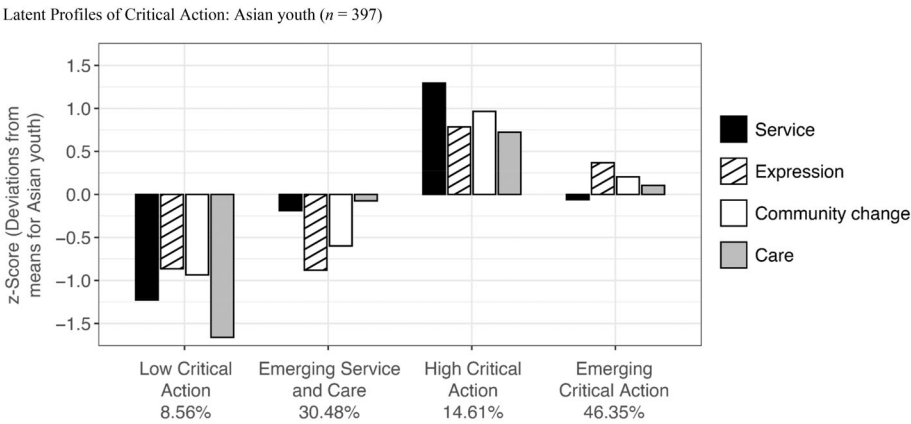
Correlations (n = 1,109)										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1. Service										
2. Expression	0.393**									
3. Community change	0.457**	0.346**								
4. Care	0.359**	0.322**	0.281**							
5. Girl	0.186**	0.013	0.037	0.220**						
6. BornUS	0.031	−0.013	0.026	0.045	0.006					
7. Work	−0.006	0.128**	0.076*	0.060	−0.038	0.039				
8. ParentCollege	0.136**	0.062	0.075*	−0.019	−0.070*	−0.037	−0.006			
9. SchoolCivic	0.324**	0.097**	0.235**	0.171**	0.108**	−0.033	−0.021	0.012		
10. ParentCivic	0.195**	0.273**	0.207**	0.144**	−0.017	0.003	0.076*	0.165**	0.181**	
11. PeerCivic	0.461**	0.326**	0.339**	0.227**	0.015	−0.008	0.015	0.153**	0.277**	0.387**
Correlations for Asian youth (n = 397)										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1. Service										
2. Expression	0.289**									
3. Community change	0.368**	0.335**								
4. Care	0.286**	0.277**	0.258**							
5. Girl	0.186**	0.004	−0.002	0.214**						
6. BornUS	0.066	−0.060	0.042	0.035	0.007					
7. Work	0.066	0.127*	0.092	0.113*	−0.002	0.038				
8. ParentCollege	0.053	0.128*	0.027	−0.060	−1.110	0.012	0.003			
9. SchoolCivic	0.351**	0.096	0.180**	0.209**	0.080	−0.022	−0.017	−0.053		

(Continues)

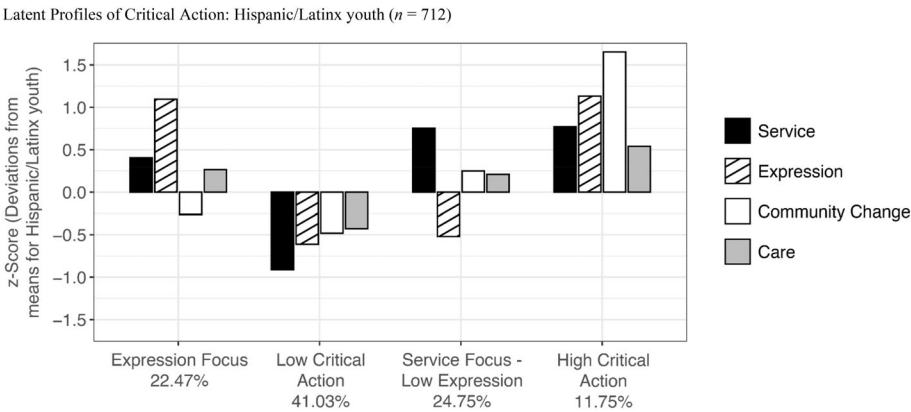
5 (Continued)

Correlations for Asian youth (n = 397)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. ParentCivic	0.126*	0.289**	0.131*	0.143**	-0.073	-0.068	0.110*	0.169**	0.170*	
11. PeerCivic	0.425**	0.373**	0.307**	0.261**	0.006	0.003	0.093	0.007	0.231**	0.395**
Correlations for Hispanic/Latinx youth (n = 712)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Service										
2. Expression	0.495**									
3. Community change	0.528**	0.351**								
4. Care	0.436**	0.343**	0.293**							
5. Girl	0.211**	0.010	0.053	0.219**						
6. BornUS	0.046	<0.001	0.011	0.042	-0.008					
7. Work	0.035	0.107**	0.076	0.032	-0.057	0.033				
8. ParentCollege	0.079	0.064	0.128**	0.048	-0.022	0.001	0.067			
9. SchoolCivic	0.295**	0.111**	0.268**	0.158**	0.130**	-0.024	0.003	0.004		
10. ParentCivic	0.271**	0.256**	0.247**	0.138**	0.008	0.038	0.035	0.214**	0.200**	
11. PeerCivic	0.450**	0.338**	0.373**	0.231**	0.039	0.018	-0.029	0.156**	0.287**	0.420**

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01.



**FIGURE 1** Latent profiles of critical action: Asian youth (n = 397)



**FIGURE 2** Latent profiles of critical action: Hispanic/Latinx youth (n = 712)

*Action.* School support for civic engagement was lowest in the *Low Critical Action* profile (Table 7). Parent/guardian civic engagement was higher in the *Emerging Critical Action* profile than *Low Critical Action* and *Emerging Service and Care*. Peer civic engagement was higher in the *High Critical Action* profile than all other profiles, and higher in the *Emerging Critical Action* profile than all other profiles except *High Critical Action*.

### 6.3.2 | Hispanic/Latinx youth

Girls were over four times more likely to be in *Service Focus - Low Expression* than *High Critical Action* (Table 6). Girls were also more likely to be in *Service Focus - Low Expression* than *Expression Focus* or *Low Critical Action*. Those born in the U.S. were more than twice as likely to be *Service Focus - Low Expression* than *High Critical Action*, and those who had a parent with college education were more likely to be *High Critical Action* than *Low Critical Action*.

The mean level of school support for civic engagement was higher in the *Service Focus - Low Expression* profile than *Expression Focus* and *Low Critical Action*, and higher in *High Critical Action* than *Low Critical Action* (Table 8). Parent civic engagement was higher in *High Critical Action* than all other profiles, and higher in *Expression Focus* than *Low Critical Action*. The average level of peer civic engagement was higher in *High Critical Action* than all other

**TABLE 6** Associations between profiles and sociodemographic variables for Asian youth and Hispanic/Latinx youth

		Odds ratio	95% CI
Asian youth			
Low critical action versus emerging service and care	<b>Girl</b>	<b>0.254</b>	<b>0.079, 0.814</b>
	BornUS	1.118	0.357, 3.506
	Work	0.473	0.116, 1.931
	ParentCollege	0.638	0.155, 2.626
Low critical action versus high critical action	<b>Girl</b>	<b>0.162</b>	<b>0.048, 0.543</b>
	BornUS	0.319	0.064, 1.599
	Work	0.295	0.074, 1.168
	ParentCollege	0.419	0.105, 1.677
Low critical action versus emerging critical action	<b>Girl</b>	<b>0.297</b>	<b>0.103, 0.856</b>
	BornUS	1.419	0.521, 3.863
	Work	0.441	0.124, 1.568
	ParentCollege	0.566	0.158, 2.029
Emerging service and care versus high critical action	Girl	0.640	0.281, 1.457
	BornUS	0.285	0.068, 1.189
	Work	0.624	0.261, 1.491
	ParentCollege	0.656	0.275, 1.565
Emerging service and care versus emerging critical action	Girl	1.172	0.644, 2.134
	BornUS	1.269	0.645, 2.496
	Work	0.934	0.458, 1.906
	ParentCollege	0.888	0.439, 1.793
High critical action versus emerging critical action	Girl	1.832	0.846, 3.969
	<b>BornUS</b>	<b>4.448</b>	<b>1.093, 18.102</b>
	Work	1.498	0.684, 3.279
	ParentCollege	1.352	0.619, 2.954
Hispanic/Latinx youth			
Expression focus versus low critical action	Girl	1.579	0.923, 2.701
	BornUS	1.300	0.609, 2.774
	Work	0.992	0.566, 1.738
	ParentCollege	0.961	0.359, 2.573
Expression focus versus service focus - low expression	<b>Girl</b>	<b>0.370</b>	<b>0.191, 0.719</b>
	BornUS	0.740	0.298, 1.834
	Work	1.257	0.686, 2.304
	ParentCollege	0.929	0.335, 2.574
Expression focus versus high critical action	Girl	1.734	0.802, 3.750
	BornUS	1.964	0.736, 5.234
	Work	0.621	0.283, 1.363
	ParentCollege	0.400	0.129, 1.239
Low critical action versus service focus - low expression	<b>Girl</b>	<b>0.235</b>	<b>0.129, 0.425</b>
	BornUS	0.569	0.263, 1.233

TABLE 6 (Continued)

		Odds ratio	95% CI
Low critical action versus high critical action	Work	1.267	0.734, 2.187
	ParentCollege	0.966	0.418, 2.235
	Girl	1.098	0.587, 2.053
	BornUS	1.511	0.723, 3.158
	Work	0.626	0.326, 1.202
Service focus - low expression versus high critical action	ParentCollege	<b>0.417</b>	<b>0.183, 0.947</b>
	Girl	<b>4.682</b>	<b>2.159, 10.152</b>
	BornUS	<b>2.656</b>	<b>1.039, 6.793</b>
	Work	0.494	0.237, 1.030
	ParentCollege	0.431	0.169, 1.099

Note: Odds ratios in bold are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

TABLE 7 Comparison of estimated means of contextual variables associated with profiles of critical action - Asian youth

	Low critical action	Emerging service and care	High critical action	Emerging critical action
SchoolCivic	3.110 <sup>abc</sup> (0.176)	3.781 <sup>a</sup> (0.072)	4.093 <sup>bd</sup> (0.097)	3.622 <sup>cd</sup> (0.050)
ParentCivic	2.015 <sup>e</sup> (0.196)	2.227 <sup>f</sup> (0.104)	2.512 (0.163)	2.619 <sup>ef</sup> (0.062)
PeerCivic	2.367 <sup>gh</sup> (0.214)	2.880 <sup>jk</sup> (0.100)	3.941 <sup>gij</sup> (0.119)	3.305 <sup>hjk</sup> (0.064)

Note: Pairs of superscript letters indicate significant differences at  $p < .01$ .

TABLE 8 Comparison of estimated means of contextual variables associated with profiles of critical action - Hispanic/Latinx youth

	Expression focus	Low critical action overall	Service focus - low expression	High critical action overall
SchoolCivic	3.514 <sup>a</sup> (0.074)	3.331 <sup>bc</sup> (0.052)	3.866 <sup>ab</sup> (0.054)	3.835 <sup>c</sup> (0.101)
ParentCivic	2.706 <sup>de</sup> (0.084)	2.316 <sup>df</sup> (0.061)	2.651 <sup>g</sup> (0.081)	3.131 <sup>efg</sup> (0.118)
PeerCivic	3.083 <sup>hi</sup> (0.086)	2.345 <sup>hjk</sup> (0.068)	3.076 <sup>il</sup> (0.075)	3.574 <sup>ikl</sup> (0.117)

Note: Pairs of superscript letters indicate significant differences at  $p < .01$ .

profiles, and higher in *Expression Focus* than *Low Critical Action*. Peer civic engagement was also higher in *Service Focus - Low Expression* than *Low Critical Action*.

## 7 | DISCUSSION

For young people experiencing oppression and marginalization in the U.S., critical action can be instrumental to paving liberatory pathways marked by coping, resistance, and individual and collective transformations (Diemer et al., 2021; Hope & Spencer, 2017). We considered an expansive framework for critical action among Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth, a rapidly growing demographic in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Our paper contributes to the limited literature on critical action specific to these two youth groups by highlighting that young people may be

engaging in critical action in diverse forms that are aligned with their cultural values and impacted by sociohistorical context.

We found that for Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth, critical action may 'look like' different compilations of service, care, expression, and community change. A four dimension critical action model was identified which suggests that critical action may be more expansive and encompassing than traditionally conceived within the civic engagement literature. We thus build on recent scholarship identifying actions like service to fall within the scope of action against structural inequalities for ethnically/racially diverse late adolescence (Tyler, Olsen, Geldhof, & Bowers, 2020). We further argue that care is also a part of critical action; for youth whose families contend with structural discrimination, care may in fact be a radical act of support and resistance in the face of daily oppression.

Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth have resisted oppressive circumstances through critical action for as long as these oppressions have existed. To harken back to the Asian and Hispanic/Latinx activists of decades past, groups like the Young Lords demonstrated how expression and community action occurred alongside service as they tackled racialized poverty in urban centres (Fernández, 2003). Notably, the data for the current study were collected in 2011. While there has been significant shifts in the U.S. sociopolitical context since that time, xenophobic rhetoric festered during the 2016 election of Donald Trump (Wray-Lake et al., 2018) and anti-Asian hate crimes have spiked against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic (Stop AAPI Hate, 2021). Increases in interpersonal and institutional discrimination against Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth have affected the ways in which these youth engage in critical action (Wilf, Maker Castro, Gupta, & Wray-Lake, 2022).

## 7.1 | Patterns of critical action among Asian youth

Diverse profiles of critical action were found among Asian youth, reflecting a need to consider how youth may focus on unique forms of critical action based on their social locations beyond race. In fact, over three times as many youth participated in critical action with a focus on expression and community change, than youth who participated at high levels on all four forms of critical action. Gender differences among Asian youth were found such that boys were more likely to be low on all forms of critical action, and points to the need to consider the influence of gender roles in critical action. One national study found that Asian boys are over 2.5 times more likely to be a victim of racially-motivated hate speech than Asian girls in the school setting (Cooc & Gee, 2014); critical action may serve as a coping response for these boys.

Among Asian youth, those born outside of the U.S. were less likely to be in *Emerging Critical Action* (compared to *High Critical Action*), and relatedly, parent civic engagement was strongly correlated with *Emerging Critical Action*. Asian youth who were born outside of the U.S. may be experiencing a lack of parental support for critical action in the forms that focus on advocating for issues (through contacting elected officials, and through personal expression) and engaging in community change actions like protest and interacting with organizations around political issues. Chan (2011) highlighted the tensions that Asian immigrant youth experience as their parents perceive civic engagement or commitments to social justice-focused civic actions as 'American' and 'a waste of time' (Chan, 2011, p. 200) and potentially harmful to acculturation and family obligations.

For Asian youth, school support for civic engagement differentiated between those who had *Low Critical Action* and all other profiles of critical action. Although opportunities at school do not map directly onto the critical action dimensions, skills like taking on leadership and decision-making roles through school-based organizations, or being exposed to volunteering and other forms of civic engagement through school, appears to play an important role in the critical action of Asian youth (Seider & Graves, 2020). Being in *High Critical Action* was also associated with peer civic engagement; support from peers may buffer against low support in other domains (e.g., gaps in parental support).

## 7.2 | Patterns of critical action among Hispanic/Latinx youth

Hispanic/Latinx youth born in the U.S. were more than twice as likely to be in *Service Focus - Low Expression* than *High Critical Action*, a unique pattern that was not found among Asian youth. Here, we may be seeing the influence of trauma-inflicting immigration policy that pushes families to deter their children's more noticeable and expressive forms of critical action. Gender differences were also illuminated such that girls were significantly more likely to be in *Service Focus - Low Expression* than all other profiles. In Hispanic/Latinx culture, marianismo, and its focus on self-sacrifice, is emphasized as a gender ideal for girls and women. Although marianismo can be harmful, Latina women and girls have leveraged aspects of these virtues to inspire others to join movements for liberation (Gallardo, 2017). Hispanic/Latina girls must contend with these cultural values as they decide their place within liberatory movements (Gloria & Castellanos, 2016).

For Hispanic/Latinx youth, critical action was supported by school, parents, and peers, suggesting a potentially complex constellation of supports across youth's ecology. There may also be interplays between contextual supports and sociodemographics that need to be examined: for example, youth with at least one college-educated parent were more likely to be in *High Critical Action*, a profile strongly associated with parent levels of civic engagement. Parents who are college educated may have more access to civic life which in turn fosters the critical action of their children.

## 7.3 | Limitations

Our study offers important insights into the nuances of critical action among Asian and Latinx/Hispanic youth. Nonetheless, findings must be interpreted with certain limitations in mind. The current sample consists only of students (primarily seniors in high school), and thus we are missing youth who may have dropped out. We recommend future scholarship consider youth from various educational statuses and furthermore examine how their educational trajectories may inform or be informed by their critical action. The sample also was confined to measures of gender on a binary scale; we do not know who in our sample may have identified as other genders. We recommend future scholarship carefully consider how youth's gender identity development influences critical action development. Furthermore, the sample is presented using pan-ethnic labels that obscure important differences within these labels; researchers should seek out the complexities in youth's racial-ethnic identities when exploring the critical action development of racialized groups of youth. Finally, the data for this study were collected in 2011, which was in ways a sociopolitically distinct moment.

## 7.4 | Future directions

To this end, qualitative work that illuminates how Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth conceive critical action in their own words may be essentially informative. Future scholarship should further iterate critical action items using youth-informed items that directly reflect their approaches to action, following the lead of scholars like Aldana et al. (2019). In the meantime, we suggest the continued use of multidimensional critical action scales that optimize variety in action approaches.

## 8 | CONCLUSION

Our study strove to illuminate important nuances in critical action for Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth, two groups for whom critical action may be notably influenced by sociocultural factors and the broader sociopolitical climate.



Through examining resultant, distinct critical action profiles by both sociodemographic and contextual factors, we were able to speak to the expansiveness and multidimensionality of critical action among Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth. We encourage researchers of critical action to continue exploring and expanding definitions and measures for critical action that inductively build upon youth's distinct strengths and approaches to change making. Collectively, these efforts to further advance the study of critical action can support a culturally and sociohistorically informed understanding of how two of the U.S.'s largest racialized groups, Asian and Hispanic/Latinx youth, confront and transform systems of oppression to create a more just society.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available in ICPSR at <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/civicleads/studies/36561> (reference number 36561).

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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