



# What Are We Fighting For? Lay Theories About the Goals and Motivations of Anti-Racism Activism

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## Abstract

Social psychology has primarily focused on activism as action toward social change; little is known about how laypeople think about activism. The present research sought to investigate lay theories about the goals ( $N=434$ ) and motivations ( $N=428$ ) of anti-racism activism produced by U.S. participants in an online survey. Using the Meaning Extraction Method and a qualitative-inductive approach, six anti-racism activism goals were identified: challenging the status quo, tackling systemic racism, reducing interpersonal racism, addressing police brutality, promoting equality, and raising public awareness of racism. In addition, participants attributed engagement in anti-racism activism to six motivations: caring for close others, media influence, understanding racial disparities, fighting for a better world, personal experience of discrimination, and witnessing racialized violence. The present study is the first to shed light on lay beliefs of anti-racism activism goals and motivations with implications for how to encourage anti-racism activism.

**Keywords** Lay theories · Activism · Anti-racism · Meaning Extraction Method · Qualitative

## Introduction

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis. (Freire, 1986, p. 52).

In *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, Paulo Freire highlights the inextricable link of critical reflection and activism actions in liberating oppressed people. In other words, social changes do not come from only action but also reflection on the current and the desired states of the world (Freire, 1986). Social psychology, however, has heavily focused on the former but not the latter in studying social change. That is, the field has primarily conceptualized activism as action toward social change (e.g., Hope et al., 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2008); little is known about how everyday people think

about activism and specifically anti-racism activism—also known as lay theories of anti-racism activism. In an effort to bridge this gap, the present research sought to examine lay theories of anti-racism activism goals and motivations.

## Lay Theories of Social Issues

Lay theories are explanations that everyday people construct to account for different social phenomena (e.g., Anderson & Lindsay, 1998; Heider, 1958). Such theories offer everyday people predictive power in daily life and help them navigate their social environment more efficiently (Anderson & Lindsay, 1998). Researchers have investigated lay beliefs about various social issues, including prejudice, privilege, and gender (e.g., Andersen et al., 2021; Chaney & Wedell, 2022; O'Connor et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2017, 2018). Importantly, this body of work has examined how people, both privileged and oppressed, navigate intergroup relations and attempt to eliminate discrimination. For instance, lay theories of prejudice, specifically about its malleability and generalizability, have been shown to influence oppressed people's responses to identity threats (e.g., Chaney et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2018) and privileged people's interest in diversity work (Carr et al., 2012). Moreover, a lay belief that gender is biologically determined increased

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opposition to women and transgender people's legal rights (Wilton et al., 2019). Considering the utility of the lay theories framework in understanding social justice issues and the fact that, unlike other social issues that are commonly understood through a scientific lens (e.g., prejudice, gender), activism is significantly shaped by everyday people, examining lay theories of anti-racism activism is critical. Most notably, just as lay theories of prejudice are associated with justifications for stigmatization and discrimination (Crandall, 2000; Esses & Hodson, 2006) and expectations of stigma (Chaney et al., 2018), lay theories about anti-racism activism may also influence justifications for activism engagement (or lack thereof) and the ways in which people engage (if at all) in racial justice activism.

In the early stages of investigating lay perceptions of a social issue, researchers can greatly benefit from using qualitative methodologies. For instance, Hodson and Esses (2005) employed open-ended questions to explore the different ways in which people define ethnic prejudice and explain the causes of and solutions to racism, setting the stage for more recent research on the implications of these lay beliefs for prejudice reduction and other social justice efforts (Chaney & Wedell, 2022). Similarly, Brown and Ostrove (2013) used open-ended questions to unveil Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)'s perceived characteristics of anti-racist allies (e.g., expressing interest and nonbiased attitudes), which subsequently informed a racial allyship scale. Open-ended measures are particularly helpful as they afford participants an opportunity to freely express their most chronically activated thoughts and feelings about an issue (Esses & Maio, 2002; Esses et al., 1993). This qualitative approach has been integral in understanding how everyday people conceptualize other social issues such as transgender identities and rape, including how structural changes may impact lay definitions (e.g., Anderson, 2022; Buck, 2016; Haugen et al., 2018). For example, as definitions of rape proposed by the U.S. Justice Department have changed, qualitative work has examined how lay definitions of rape have changed in response (Haugen et al., 2018; Mackinnon, 2005). Similarly, the conceptualizations of anti-racism activism, including its goals and underlying motives, may evolve over time, perhaps dramatically so following record-breaking engagement in activism after the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020 (ACLED, 2020). Therefore, studying how lay people define the goals and motivations behind anti-racism activism in this pivotal moment affords a unique contribution to the social psychological work on activism.

In the context of lay theories of anti-racism activism, while goals refer to the "what", or the desired end results of activism behaviors, motivations refer to the "why", or the reasons of conducting those behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2012). Indeed, people may pursue a goal via different motives, highlighting the difference between these

two constructs; for example, two persons may both sign a petition (same behavior) to demand a persecution of an anti-Black perpetrator (same goal), but due to two different motives: while one is morally motivated believing that signing the petition is the right thing to do, the other is angered by the lack of justice. Despite their distinctions, both goals and motivations are two critical dimensions of anti-racism activism because identifying them helps understand people's performance and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Importantly, similar to the importance of understanding causes and solutions to racism (Chaney & Wedell, 2022), understanding lay beliefs about the goals and motivations of anti-racism activism is a critical step to increasing activism efforts.

Most relevant to the current study, prior work has taken the lay theories approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, to examine how BIPOC define characteristics of effective allies to racial justice: informed action (e.g., acknowledging own awareness and taking initiative to create changes) and affirmation (e.g., cultivating positive relationships with BIPOC; e.g., Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Ostrove & Brown, 2018). This research has laid the groundwork to help understand BIPOC's perceptions of White allies (i.e., the extent to which White allies are lacking), and propose strategies to increase effective anti-racism activism on the ground (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Burns & Granz, 2023), demonstrating both the theoretical and practical importance of identifying lay theories of activism as in the present study. However, while this literature has unveiled the different ways in which BIPOC conceptualize effective allyship, it remains unknown how people explain the goals of anti-racism activism and motivations of people who engage in such activism.

### What Are the Goals of Anti-Racism Activism?

Current scholarship has provided a variety of definitions for the goals of anti-racism activism. Whereas some claim that anti-racism activism should aim to promote inclusiveness, interdependence, and respect of racial differences (Griffith et al., 2007), others propose challenging the status quo as the core component of racial justice work (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014). Among such a diversity of viewpoints, though specific aims may differ, most definitions agree that anti-racism activism must empower oppressed communities while confronting and abolishing racism and privilege (Bonnett, 2000; Came & Griffith, 2018; Griffith et al., 2007). Particularly, an anti-racism activism framework must address the multiple fundamental dimensions of racism: individual, institutional, and cultural (Corneau & Sergiopoulos, 2012). In line with this multi-level view of discrimination, Aldana et al.'s (2019) Anti-Racism Action scale is comprised of three components: interpersonal action (e.g., confronting racist jokes/comments and defending targets of such discrimination), communal action (e.g., participating in meetings/clubs

that are designed to tackle race-related issues), and political change action (e.g., contacting officials, attending protests). Extending this definition, intersectionality theory suggests that anti-racism work should aim to not only target race issues but also the broader, intersecting systems of power and oppression (e.g., sexism, heterosexism; Calliste & Dei, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

Despite the diverse views on the goals of anti-racism activism defined by experts in varied fields, little is known about how everyday people conceptualize them. One study revealed several solutions to racism proposed by college students: education, open-mindedness, and increased intergroup contact (Hodson & Essen, 2005); yet, these solutions do not necessarily map onto anti-racism activism goals because anti-racism activism goals may also include, for example, developing strategies to empower BIPOC (Came & Griffith, 2018), going beyond merely addressing the existing racism. A more recent study highlighted lay people's perceived goals of the *Black Lives Matter* movement: equality and justice, ending police and state-sanctioned racialized brutality, and awareness-raising regarding the Black experiences in the U.S. (Hendricks et al., 2022). While not found as a theme, social media was highlighted as an important tool in bringing awareness to the police murders of Black men (Hendricks et al., 2022). This study, while providing initial insights into lay perceptions of anti-racism activism goals, merely focused on activism against anti-Black racism among college students. More research is therefore needed to determine lay understandings of anti-racism activism goals.

### What Motivates People to Engage in Anti-Racism Activism?

Social psychology has documented several factors that increase people's engagement in anti-racism activism. For BIPOC specifically, greater discrimination predicts greater activism against ingroup discrimination (e.g., Cronin et al., 2012; Szymanski, 2012; Tran & Curtin, 2017; Tropp et al., 2012). This desire to engage in activism, consistent with the required multifaceted analysis of racism for racial justice work, can arise from experiencing discrimination of different levels: institutional, cultural (Hope et al., 2019), and interpersonal (Cronin et al., 2012). While experiencing discrimination is a motive for oppressed people, witnessing racial discrimination can encourage racially privileged (i.e., White) people to participate in anti-racism activism (Uluğ & Tropp, 2021). Critically, for both racially/ethnically privileged and marginalized people, intergroup contact, either experienced or imagined, is an effective tool for prejudice reduction (Allport, 1954) and a reliable predictor of participation in activism (Bagci et al., 2019).

In addition to intergroup factors, identification with one's identity group or a social movement has been shown

to impact one's engagement in activism. Racial identity, for example, predicted high-risk activism orientation in Black queer youth (Pender et al., 2019). Among White Americans, recognizing their White privilege was related to more positive attitudes toward the *Black Lives Matter* movement (Cole, 2020). Notably, identification with a politicized identity not only directly motivates activism but also indirectly inspires it through two pathways: perceived activism efficacy (problem-focused coping) and anger about injustice (emotion-focused coping; Sabucedo et al., 2019; van Zomeren et al., 2008). In sum, much of psychological research on antecedents of activism reveals that people are mobilized to engage in activism for two main reasons: via interactions with people of social groups different than their own (e.g., discrimination) and via the self (e.g., anger toward injustice, identity).

In addition, critical race theory (Bell, 1980) and relevant empirical work (Kutlaca et al., 2020; Radke et al., 2020) provide some understanding for why White allies, in particular, engage in anti-racism activism. According to the principle of interest convergence—a foundational tenet of critical race theory, racial equity is only attained when the interests and needs of BIPOC converge with White people's (e.g., Bell, 1976, 1980; Milner, 2008). As a result, White people may only engage in anti-racism activism to pursue their own self-interests, especially given that forgoing their own power and privilege can be destabilizing (e.g., Harris, 1993; Lopez, 2003; Milner, 2008). In line with the interest-convergence principle, maintaining White people's social status and satisfying personal needs are two common reasons White allies participate in anti-racism activism for BIPOC (Radke et al., 2020). Alternatively, White allies may also have a genuine interest in promoting BIPOC's rights and/or a need to adhere to moral beliefs (Kutlaca et al., 2020; Radke et al., 2020). Overall, this body of work underscores certain motives that distinctively applies to White people in anti-racism activism.

While previous work on racial activism and allyship has shed light on varied motivations for engaging in such work, less is known about the extent to which everyday people hold similar or different ideas from these psychological findings. This uncertainty is demonstrated by recent work, in which Black people perceived White allies as holding ambiguous motives (i.e., as being motivated by both a desire to enhance their social image and a desire to act on their personal values such as egalitarianism; Burns & Granz, 2023). Such findings highlight the need for research to concretely identify what lay people think the goals and motives are of people who engage in anti-racism activism.

### Current Study

In response to research on activism that has predominantly focused on people's self-reported beliefs and behaviors

(e.g., Iyer & Achia, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008) and the increasing call for embracing subjectivity and employing qualitative approaches in research on social justice issues (Watson-Singleton et al., 2021), the present study adopted a linguistic approach to examine how laypeople conceptualize the goals and motivations of anti-racism activism. Indeed, the linguistic approach has provided important insights in activism research, especially on hashtag activism (i.e., how people use hashtags on social media to promote awareness of social justice issues; Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Whiting et al., 2021). Moreover, the richness of language analyses offers an opportunity to take into account cultural nuances, such that they expand our understanding of activism by and for various oppressed groups around the world, such as the activism of Uyghurs in China through language blogs (Clothey et al., 2016) or debates about criminalization of homosexuality in Ghana (Otu, 2021).

Given the utility of language analysis, the current investigation used the Meaning Extraction Method (MEM; Chung & Pennebaker, 2008), a text analytic procedure that extracts salient themes from selected texts, operates based on word clusters, and is typically conducted using Meaning Extraction Helper (MEH; Boyd, 2022) in combination with factor analysis (e.g., Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2012; Rodríguez-Arauz et al., 2017). This methodology has been used extensively to extract themes in studies of various social issues, such as culture (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2012; Rodríguez-Arauz et al., 2017), mental health (Currin-McCulloch et al., 2021; Wolf et al., 2010), and health behaviors (Blackburn et al., 2018; Entwistle et al., 2021). For example, the MEM has helped to show different common themes from online conversations surrounding food (Blackburn et al., 2018) and that self-schemas in personality descriptions varied as a function of the language used by Mexican–American bilinguals (Rodríguez-Arauz et al., 2017). Although the MEM has never been applied to investigate activism, one study has used theme extraction to investigate the link between social activism and trauma and identified some recurrent themes, such as linkage between re-traumatization and activism, and transformation via activism (Milo Haglili, 2020). Thus, the MEM was employed to qualitatively examine how laypeople presently understand anti-racism activism. Particularly, the present research sought to use the MEM to examine open-ended responses from a racially/ethnically diverse community sample to determine their perceptions of the goals of anti-racism activism and why people are involved in such activism (i.e., activism motivations in *other people*, not necessarily themselves). While we expect that lay perceptions may, to some extent, mirror the understandings about anti-racism activism proposed by activists and psychological research, this study is exploratory in nature. Data are available: [https://osf.io/hzyj5/?view\\_only=fa2c64d0ec6140a497188038a81cc3cb](https://osf.io/hzyj5/?view_only=fa2c64d0ec6140a497188038a81cc3cb).

## Method

### Participants & Procedure

A total of 474 U.S. participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in Spring 2022, but 11 participants failed at least one of two attention checks (i.e., two items that asked participants to select “Strongly disagree” and “Disagree”, respectively, to demonstrate their attention), leaving the final sample of 463 participants (53.4% cisgender women, 42.6% cisgender men, 1.7% transgender women, 0.2% transgender men, 1.3% non-binary, 0.4% not listed, and 0.4% missing;  $M_{age} = 37.79$ ,  $SD = 11.73$ , range = 18–74). In terms of race/ethnicity, 202 participants were White, 161 Black, 68 Asian, 12 Latine/x, 10 Biracial/Multiracial, 3 American Indian/Alaska Native, 3 Middle Eastern/North African, 2 not listed, and 2 missing. Regarding sexual orientation, 70.6% identified as heterosexual, 5.4% as lesbian/gay, 16.2% as bisexual, 2.2% as pansexual, 1.7% as queer, 0.9% as questioning, 1.1% as asexual, 0.9% self-identified, and 1.1% missing. More than half of the sample (55.5%) identified as 5th-generation immigrant, followed by those who were 2nd generation (17.7%), 4th generation (11.7%), 1st generation (8.2%), and 3rd generation (6.5%; 0.4% missing). The sample was leaning liberal ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.80$ ; scale ranged from 1-*Very Conservative* to 7-*Very Liberal*).

Upon consenting to participate, participants read that, “In the following sections, we are going to ask your opinions about **anti-racism** activism. Please keep that in mind as you progress through the survey” and then completed the two critical open-ended questions for the present investigation in the beginning: “In your opinion, what is the goal of anti-racism activism?”, and “In your opinion, what motivates people to participate in anti-racism activism?” To encourage participants to contemplate the prompts and respond to them, we asked that they must spend at least eight seconds on each prompt (i.e., they could choose to proceed to the next question or write however longer they would like, after the first eight seconds). The required time was brief because we aimed to capture the most salient beliefs about anti-racism activism. After, participants completed a battery of questions and scales about lay theories of anti-racism activism that are not presented here for brevity. Participants then provided demographic information (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender), were carefully debriefed, and received monetary compensation for their time.



## Analytic Plan

For the MEM to extract the central themes from participant responses most meaningfully, responses that failed to answer the questions were excluded,<sup>1</sup> leaving 434 responses for activism goals ( $M_{\text{word count}} = 16.01$ ,  $SD = 11.94$ ) and 428 for activism motivations<sup>2</sup> ( $M_{\text{word count}} = 16.81$ ,  $SD = 13.32$ ) for the final text analyses. The MEM was applied to each set of participant responses using the Meaning Extraction Helper (MEH; Boyd, 2022).

First, the most frequently used words from all responses were identified. Due to the relative short length of each response, the cut-off point was set at 0.5% of all documents for responses of both activism goals and activism motivations. Excluded from the analyses were closed-class terms (e.g., pronouns, prepositions, auxiliary verbs), terms included in the prompts (e.g., define, activist, activism, anti-racist, anti-racism, racism, end, goal), or words whose meanings were ambiguous (e.g., today, due, day, notion, finally, term). In addition, word conversions (e.g., equal\* to equal, discriminat\* to discrimination; see Appendix A for Stop List and Conversions) were conducted to group words with the same root under one term in order to centralize the themes. The final frequency lists included 152 content words for activism goals and 132 content words for activism motivations (see Appendices B & C).

The MEH also provided a binary output, in which each of the content words in the final frequency list was either shown as 1 (presence) or 0 (absence) for each participant response. The final data files can be described as a matrix of 434 responses  $\times$  152 words for activism goal and a matrix of 428 responses  $\times$  132 words for activism motivation, with each cell representing whether a content word was present for each response. Principal component analyses with varimax rotation were conducted on these outputs; in each output, the extracted factors would be determined as salient goals

<sup>1</sup> Excluded responses were either meaningless (e.g., “OK”, “No...”; 38% and 40% of the exclusions, for goal and motivation, respectively), or irrelevant (e.g., “Anti-racism activism is a good approach...”; “Racism has wide-reaching negative effects on individuals, families, communities, and entire societies.”; 62% and 60% of the exclusions). We excluded participants’ response to the specific prompt that they failed to answer (instead of responses to both prompts) because we aimed to retain as many responses as possible for each prompt for the MEM to extract themes meaningfully (e.g., Chung & Pennebaker 2008; Markowitz, 2021). However, extracted themes were similar when the MEM was conducted on the 417 participants that answered both the activism goal and motivation questions (see Supplement).

<sup>2</sup> Two chi-square tests of independence indicated that there was no racial differences (White versus BIPOC) between those who were included versus excluded from the analytic sample, for both activism goals and motivations,  $\chi^2(1, N=463)=0.41, p=.523$ ;  $\chi^2(1, N=463)=0.38, p=.540$ .

and motivations of anti-racism activism. Following common practice (e.g., Blackburn et al., 2018; Chung & Pennebaker, 2008; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2012; Rodríguez-Arauz et al., 2017), words with factor loadings  $\geq |.20|$  were retained.

## Results

### Activism Goals

Diagnostic tests indicated that a factor model was appropriate for the entered terms (KMO = 0.481, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (11,476) = 21,194.96,  $p < 0.001$ ). Based on the scree plot of Eigenvalues and a qualitative-inductive approach, the six-factor solution was chosen, and each of the factors was named. The first six factors accounted for 14.09% of the total variance, and as presented in Table 1 and Fig. 1, form a psychologically meaningful and coherent narrative of what the goals of anti-racism activism look like to laypeople.

Factor 1 (Challenging the status quo) indicated that when thinking about the goals of anti-racism activism, people considered the process of navigating the current state of affairs (e.g., *identify, idea, behavior, policy, belief*) and challenging them (e.g., *challenge, change, oppose*). While challenging the status quo is primarily prevention-oriented, or more specifically focused on addressing existing issues so that they would not further worsen the lived experiences of marginalized populations, Factor 5 (Promoting equality) reveals promotion-oriented goal pursuits, referring to the efforts to eradicate racially motivated mistreatment (e.g., *abolish, judge, skin, background, treatment, daily*), working towards equity for oppressed people (e.g., *justice, equal, fair, chance, culture, peace*).

Factor 2 (Tackling systemic racism) indicates that anti-racism work requires identifying the deep-rooted causes of racism (e.g., *structural, systemic, White, supremacy, wealth, government*) and demanding structurally focused changes accordingly (e.g., *reparation, future, generation*). Relatedly, Factor 4 (Addressing police brutality) captures lay awareness of an epitome of systemic racism in the U.S.—police brutality (e.g., *police, brutality, system, issue, black, look, bias, attention*)—and efforts to alter it (e.g., *correct, recognize, prevent*). Together, these factors demonstrate that a core goal of anti-racism activism, as defined by lay people, is a focus on systemic, structural racism.

According to our lay participants, tackling systemic racism must be accompanied by strategies to address interpersonal racism as well. Factor 3 (Reducing interpersonal racism) highlights the necessary steps to educate people on prejudice and discrimination with respect to daily interpersonal interactions, such as helping them understand individual uniqueness and the detrimental impact of discriminatory

**Table 1** Factor loadings of a 6-factor solution from the principal component analysis on the most frequent words extracted from responses about goals of anti-racism activism

Word	Factor 1 Challenging the status quo	Factor 2 Tackling systemic racism	Factor 3 Reducing interper- sonal racism	Factor 4 Addressing police brutality	Factor 5 Promoting equality	Factor 6 Raising public awareness
Active	.895					
Process	.851					
Challenge	.811					
Perpetuate	.802					
Identify	.782					
Belief	.766					
Idea	.751	.291				
Policy	.672					
Behavior	.663					
Oppose	.637					
Action	.591					
Change	.461					.356
Reparation		.683				
Future		.657				
Generation		.644	.465			
Wealth		.621				
Supremacy		.609				
White		.569				
Structural		.562				
Government		.551				
Systemic		.307				
Live		.258				
Attitude			.671			
Socially			.632			
Prejudice			.566			
Harm			.549			
Negative			.538			
Understand			.435			
Individual			.349			
Stand			.259			
Educate			.258			
Difference			.218			
Acknowledge			.212			
Correct				.466		
Recognize				.448		
Brutality				.411		
Police				.383		
System				.377		
Injustice				.370		
Attention				.365		
Black				.352		
Issue				.326		
Occur				.299		
Look				.257		
Bias				.243		
Inequity				.232		

**Table 1** (continued)

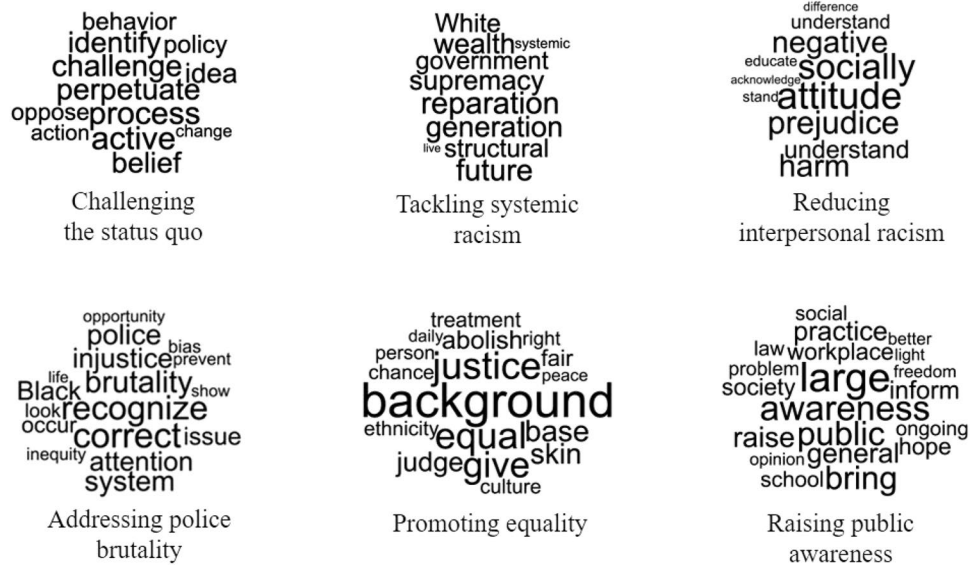
Word	Factor 1 Challenging the status quo	Factor 2 Tackling systemic racism	Factor 3 Reducing interper- sonal racism	Factor 4 Addressing police brutality	Factor 5 Promoting equality	Factor 6 Raising public awareness
Prevent				.226		
Show				.222		
Opportunity				-.221		
Life				-.213		
Background					.569	
Justice				.210	.445	
Equal					.440	
Give					.426	
Base					.349	
Skin					.335	
Judge					.324	
Abolish					.296	
Fair					.273	
Treatment					.247	
Chance					.243	
Ethnicity					.242	
Culture					.240	
Person					.232	
Right					.228	
Peace					.202	
Daily					.201	
Large						.496
Awareness						.435
Public						.409
Bring				.209		.400
Raise						.351
General						.336
Practice						.326
Inform						.310
Society						.292
Hope						.292
Workplace						.291
School					.245	.274
Law						.250
Social						.246
Ongoing						.243
Problem						.240
Better						.212
Freedom						.211
Opinion						.211
Light						.201

Only terms with factor loadings  $\geq |.20|$  were retained

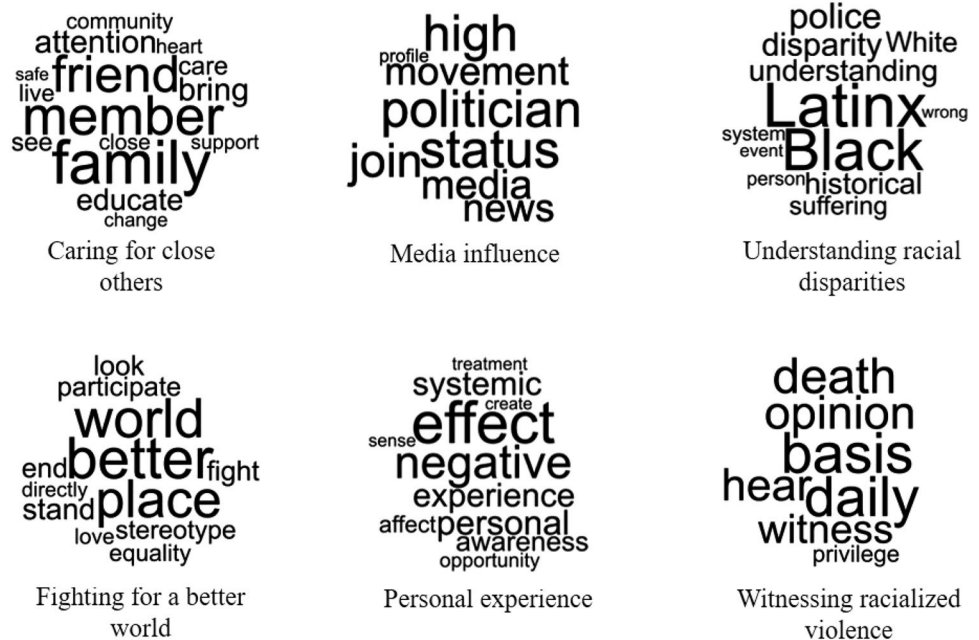
attitudes on BIPOC (e.g., *educate, understand, negative, attitude, harm, prejudice, acknowledge, difference, individual*). Whereas Factor 3 focuses on the need for education on an interpersonal level, Factor 6 (Raising public awareness)

emphasizes the importance of mass education about racism (e.g., *raise, bring, awareness, inform, large, general, public, opinion*) in various realms (e.g., *society, workplace, school, law*) as an integral goal of anti-racism activism.

**Fig. 1** Six themes representing lay theories about the goals of anti-racism activism



**Fig. 2** Six themes representing lay theories about the motivations of anti-racism activism



## Activism Motivations

As with activism goals, a factor model was appropriate for the responses of activism motivations ( $KMO = 0.444$ , Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $8646$ ) =  $13,096.84$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and via a qualitative-inductive approach, the six-factor solution was chosen (see Table 2 and Fig. 2). The first six factors accounted for 12.48% of the total variance and construct a psychologically meaningful, cohesive narrative of lay explanations for people's participation in anti-racism activism.

Factor 1 (Caring for close others) shows that people attributed one's participation in anti-racism activism partly to one's need to take care of (e.g., *bring, attention, support,*

*care, safe*) one's loved ones who experience racism (e.g., *family, member, friend, live, close, community, heart*). As with activism goals, Factor 4 (Fighting for a better world) demonstrated a promotion focus for anti-racism activism motivations, indicating a lay belief that people are involved in activism as a result of their desire to stand up to build a better world (e.g., *fight, stand, participate, better, world, place, equality*).

In addition, Factor 3 (Understanding racial disparities) points out the recognition of the long-standing disparities between White people and BIPOC (e.g., *understanding, Latino/x/e, Black, White, disparity, suffering, wrong, historical*) in various forms (e.g., *police, system, person*) as a



**Table 2** Factor loadings of a 6-factor solution from the principal component analysis on the most frequent words extracted from responses about motivations of anti-racism activism

Word	Factor 1 Caring for close others	Factor 2 Media influence	Factor 3 Understanding racial disparities	Factor 4 Fighting for a better world	Factor 5 Personal experience	Factor 6 Witnessing racialized violence
Family	.690					
Member	.642					
Friend	.580					
Bring	.361					
Attention	.360					
Educate	.343					
Care	.293					
See	.286					
Live	.268			.202		
Close	.255					
Community	.252		.226			
Support	.234					
Heart	.234					
Change	.223					
Safe	.205					
Status		.627				
Politician		.621				
High		.598				
Join		.558				
Media		.486				
Movement		.469				
News		.466				
Profile		.222				
Latinx			.758			
Black			.724			
Police			.445			
Disparity			.397			
Understanding			.374			
Historical			.366			
White			.354			
Suffering			.318	-.208		
System			.250			
Person			.241			
Event			.224			
Wrong			.213			
Better				.582		
World	.279			.550		
Place				.534		
Stand				.299		
Fight				.284		
Look				.282		
End	.243			-.275		
Participate				.267		
Stereotype				.265		
Equality				.237		
Love			.208	-.221		

**Table 2** (continued)

Word	Factor 1 Caring for close others	Factor 2 Media influence	Factor 3 Understanding racial disparities	Factor 4 Fighting for a better world	Factor 5 Personal experience	Factor 6 Witnessing racialized violence
Directly				-.214		
Effect					.731	
Negative					.575	
Personal					.517	
Experience					.430	
Systemic					.407	
Awareness					.341	
Affect					.288	
Opportunity					.253	
Treatment					-.217	
Sense					.215	
Create					.212	
Basis						.628
Daily						.617
Death			.308			.549
Opinion						.517
Hear						.495
Witness				-.218	.260	.452
Privilege						-.256

Only terms with factor loadings  $\geq |.20|$  were retained

lay explanation for engagement in racial justice work. That is, seeing inequality was identified as a motive for engaging in anti-racism activism among lay people. One specific manifestation of such recognition is revealed in Factor 6 (Witnessing racialized violence) – exposure to daily casualties caused by racism (e.g., *death, daily, basis, hear, witness*). Similarly, Factor 5 (Personal experience) captures the same notion of exposure to racial discrimination, but from a personal perspective (e.g., *personal, experience, negative, effect, affect, marginalize*) and thus may have been thought of as the motives of BIPOC but not of White people.

Last, Factor 2 (Media influence) reflects a lay theory that people derive inspirations for anti-racism activism from the mass media, such as social protests and politicians (e.g., *high, status, profile, politician, movement, news, media*). This factor suggests that the media serve as a critical platform by which people may not only see or learn about discrimination, but also learn about ongoing social movements.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Supplement for (1) statistical analyses indicating endorsement of the demonstrated lay theories did not significantly differ as a function of social identities (i.e., race, sexual orientation, gender) and for (2) correlations between these lay theories and some relevant exploratory variables (i.e., discrimination, political orientation, past engagement in racial activism). Given the exploratory, correlational nature, these are reported in the Supplement.

## Discussion

While past research has shed light on the different ways academics and activists conceptualize anti-racism activism goals, and factors that motivate anti-racism activism behaviors (e.g., Hope et al., 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2008), less is known about how laypeople understand anti-racism activism. The present research, for the first time, identifies common lay theories about the goals and motivations of anti-racism activism.

### Lay Theories of Anti-Racism Activism Goals

The current study revealed six goals of anti-racism activism commonly held by laypeople: challenging the status quo, tackling systemic racism, reducing interpersonal racism, addressing police brutality, promoting equality, and raising public awareness of racism. Broadly, these themes suggest lay agreement with the idea proposed by activists and psychological research that efforts to combat racism are multifaceted and must simultaneously account for different levels of racism, from individual, cultural, to systemic (Corneau & Sergiopoulos, 2012). First, challenging the status quo was identified by anti-racist activists as a critical pillar for sustainable collective action (Rao & Power, 2021). Further, in line with our lay awareness of the need to wrestle with the

systemic roots of racism, anti-racist activists highlight the importance of analyzing the joint operation of sociohistorical forces (e.g., White supremacy, globalization, capitalism) to identify the root causes of oppression, as a means to psychological liberation and wellness (Collins et al., 2020). Police brutality, a conspicuous topic in activists' discussion of U.S. based anti-Black racism (Elliott-Cooper, 2018; Hendricks et al., 2022), also emerged as an embodiment of systemic racism in our lay sample. Importantly, this perceived need to address police brutality, along with the lay need to tackle systemic racism, bolsters community gun violence activists' advocacy for decentering the police and investing in community-based organization in order to tackle the root issue of racism (Bernstein, 2022).

Critically, integrating the present study with Hendricks et al.'s (2022) perceived goals of the *Black Lives Matter* movement, we propose that, in engaging in anti-racism activism, while some people may be more focused on reducing the negatives, such as challenging the status quo and reducing discrimination, others may be more oriented toward increasing the positives, such as bringing about equality and justice for BIPOC. These two differential orientations mirror Higgins' (1998) regulatory focus theory that while some people have a prevention focus (i.e., focusing on minimizing loss), others have a promotion focus (i.e., focusing on achieving gains). As these two foci are differently associated with various behavioral and health outcomes (Higgins, 1998), examining the differential impact of holding prevention-focused versus promotion-focused anti-racism activism goals might be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Finally, consistent with past work demonstrating education as a form of coping with racism (Wei et al., 2010) and as a common lay solution to racism (Hendricks et al., 2022; Hodson & Esses, 2005), our lay sample deemed education a critical component of anti-racism activism. They highlighted the importance of education on both group and individual levels: conducting mass education to raise awareness of racism in various sectors of society (e.g., law, school) while equipping privileged individuals with the knowledge and skills to reflect on their roles in interpersonal racism and help eradicate discrimination in daily life. Indeed, anti-racism education has shown to increase lay knowledge about structural racism (Bonam et al., 2019; Onyeador et al., 2021) and confrontation of it (Wedell et al., 2022). Overall, together with past work highlighting the importance of affirmation (e.g., White-privilege awareness) and informed action (e.g., taking initiative to tackle racial issues) in racial allyship (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Ostrove & Brown, 2018), the present study underscores the need for a holistic and flexible integration of knowledge and action in anti-racism activism.

Critically, the documented lay goals of anti-racism activism are novel to the literature in several ways. First,

challenging the status quo is identified as a separate goal from raising public awareness of racism. This distinction, albeit not receiving much attention in previous research, demonstrates that raising awareness brings to light the existing racial problems but, for anti-racism efforts to be maximized, it must go hand in hand with reimagining social structures and establishing novel ways of thinking and existing (Rao & Power, 2021). Second, lay people seem to believe that education is most effective when it occurs at various levels and simultaneously targets awareness and skills. Such insights may help inform future anti-racism education programs. Finally, the emergence of police brutality as a separate theme from systemic racism highlights the lay perception of police as a distinctive manifestation of anti-Black racism that potentially requires in-depth investigations and a unique approach from other systemic issues, encouraging future work to specifically investigate lay theories of police.

### Lay Theories of Anti-Racism Activism Motivations

Lay people in the current study provided six common explanations for engagement in anti-racism activism: caring for loved ones, mass media, understanding racial disparities, fighting for better conditions, personal experience of racism, and witnessing racialized violence. Consistent with psychological research, most of these lay theories suggest that while personally experiencing racial injustices is a strong, consistent motivation for participating in anti-racism activism (Hope et al., 2019), knowledge about racialized violence (Uluğ & Tropp, 2021) and engaging in positive intergroup contact (Bagci et al., 2019) may be sufficient to encourage people to stand up against racism. Further, supporting past work on the role of social media in illuminating social injustices (e.g., Hendricks et al., 2022; Kelly, 2018), the current study reflects a lay belief that people made be motivated to engage in anti-racist collective action after seeing media that highlights ongoing social movements and the growing normative nature of racial activism. While this media motive focuses more on the role of one's environment, potentially implying a minimal understanding of racial issues and/or connection to the cause on the part of activism actors, most of the other documented motives highlight the roles of one's beliefs, values, and feelings in engaging in anti-racism activism.

Critically, the present study unveils two novel motives of anti-racism activism that can be experimentally examined and applied to develop future interventions to boost anti-racism activism. First, though education is a common avenue to help eradicate racism in psychological research (Bonam et al., 2019) and awareness of privilege is believed to be an important quality of an ally (Brown & Ostrove, 2013), the specific strategy of expanding people's understanding of racial disparities is understudied. Future research is

warranted to investigate the type(s) of racial disparities (e.g., income, health, housing) that is most effective in committing people to anti-racism activism. Second, while interracial contact is a common strategy in psychological research to reduce prejudice and increase activism (Tropp & Uluğ, 2019), desire to support one's community has not previously been examined as an activism motivation. This community-oriented motivation may be a healthy and sustainable route for BIPOC to work against inequities as it centers caring for their own people and strengthens their racial identities, through which positive emotions may be reaped in their journey of fighting oppression (e.g., Pender et al., 2019).

While providing novel insights, our lay perceptions also overlook a few major motives of anti-racism activism in psychological research. For instance, while the perceived desire to make the world better implies some awareness of hope—an important motive of activism (Włodarczyk et al., 2017), some other motivating emotions, such as anger (van Zomeren et al., 2008), guilt, and shame (Iyer et al., 2003), were not captured. These factors did not emerge perhaps because our lay sample seemed to focus more on macro-level motives. That is, if lay people were asked to contemplate specific behaviors of activism, such as donating money and participating in protests, they would likely think of micro-level motives such as anger and guilt. Similar to self-focused emotions such as guilt and shame, desires to maintain own racial group's status and meet one's own needs as a motivator of collective action (e.g., Kutlaca et al., 2020; Radke et al., 2020) are not present in the current themes. These motives may be more likely among White, high-status people and may have been counter to people's lay definition of anti-racism activism. That is, the reference to anti-racism activism may have made BIPOC salient as prototypical activists, hence White and high-status people, and their motivations, were not salient in our participants' perceptions. Indeed, a consideration of the actor's identity is important in this literature. Some of the observed themes may apply more to certain groups; for example, while personal experience of racism likely primarily serves as a motive for BIPOC (compared to White) activism actors, understanding racial disparities may be more of a motive for White actors. Future work that asks participants to consider activism goals and motives of different social groups are necessary to test such speculations and reveal more group-specific lay theories.

The current meaningful themes of goals and motivations highlight the distinction between these two constructs among laypeople, particularly in the context of anti-racism activism. All the reported goals, especially challenging the status quo and tackling systemic issues, refer to end results that are expected to come out of anti-racism efforts. Similarly, most of the reported motivations

are indistinguishably motives (i.e., they cannot be activism goals), reflecting varied reasons people may engage in activism, such as personal experience of racism and media influence. Note, though, that the difference between goals and motivations in lay perception may not always be clear-cut. For instance, the motive of fighting for better conditions emerged as a motive in the current study, but it can also be conceptualized as a goal. Future work is needed to further investigate where and why goals and motivations for anti-racism activism may overlap for everyday people.

### Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

Recruiting a relatively racially diverse community sample (i.e., approximately 57% identifying as BIPOC), the current study identifies lay theories that are generalizable to people of different races/ethnicities.<sup>4</sup> Further, while research on anti-racism activism has often used a quantitative approach and self-report measures, the present investigation employs a qualitative technique called Meaning Extraction Method (MEM) that helps unveil the linguistic connections to beliefs about activism that are likely unknown to participants, and reduce issues associated with self-report (e.g., memory biases). Importantly, our qualitative approach is only susceptible to subjectivity during few steps of MEM such as theme determination; otherwise, text analysis was systematically conducted via a tool called MEH (Boyd, 2022) and factor analysis.

However, a few limitations are noteworthy. First, for the MEM to extract the themes meaningfully, only responses that answered our prompts were included in the text analyses. Second, the MEM operates based on the mere co-occurrence of words and thus only captures themes that are repeated frequently enough. In other words, our study could not capture weakly endorsed lay theories, such as a potential lay belief that people participate in activism due to guilt (Iyer et al., 2003). Finally, because participants spent little time on providing the responses, their responses were relatively short. While this method can capture the most salient beliefs about anti-racism activism, some responses may have lacked substance and therefore some themes were missing. Future research should require that participants provide response of a certain length and/or spend at least a few minutes on their responses, in order to capture participants' theories about anti-racism activism more completely; this way, less salient theories may emerge.

<sup>4</sup> See Supplement for reports of null racial differences in endorsing the demonstrated lay theories.

Despite certain limitations, the present qualitative investigation of anti-racism activism helps guide future quantitative work on lay theories of anti-racism activism. For example, current findings revealing the most salient themes can help inform efforts to develop community-based measures of the goals and motivations of anti-racism activism. In addition, it will be important to examine the antecedents and consequences of the demonstrated lay beliefs.<sup>5</sup> For instance, how may people's racial bias and motivations to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998) influence their endorsements of such beliefs? Further, what would be the implications of believing that the goal of anti-racism activism is to reduce interpersonal racism versus to demand systemic changes? If holding a structural (rather than interpersonal) belief about racism increases recognition of racial inequities in the criminal justice system (Rucker & Richeson, 2021a, 2021b), would perceiving systemic changes (compared with solutions to interpersonal racism) as the primary goal of racial justice work prompt White people to engage in efforts to eliminate racial inequities in various sectors of society and hence appear as more effective allies to BIPOC? Finally, which motivation(s) among the observed themes would support the most sustainable participation in racial justice work? Future research can adopt a more quantitative approach by developing scales that capture the demonstrated lay theories and examining their associations with above-mentioned outcomes.

## Implications

Extending for the first time the lay theories framework to account for social activism, the present study provides initial understanding of lay theories about anti-racism activism. As suggested, our qualitative findings afford a rich foundation to investigate these lay theories and their implications in a more targeted and applied fashion in the future. Notably, basing future studies on the lay beliefs highlighted in our study would harness the power of community-based participatory action research (i.e., research that not only considers lay perspectives but also uses them to form the foundation for future research programs; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995), particularly allowing researchers and community members to collectively work toward equity and social transformation (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2018). Further, by demonstrating the utility of thematic analysis and broadly linguistic analysis in understanding activism, the current study highlights

the value of mixed-method research in addressing social justice issues.

As activism is constructed by and for everyday people, the examination of anti-racism activism is particularly invaluable from the lay perspective. Descriptively, our thematic analyses offer a historical snapshot of what anti-racism activism means to everyday people during a “double pandemic,” when people are particularly motivated to engage in anti-racism activism (Grant & Smith, 2021). Additionally, current findings can serve as a progress check, highlighting the more visible and the less visible aspects of anti-racism work, and therefore offer several feasible strategies for future social justice efforts. For instance, while structural racism was not widely acknowledged among laypeople several years ago (Rucker & Richeson, 2021a), our study demonstrates lay awareness of systemic racism and police brutality as an exemplar of it, perhaps due to the increased public attention to police murders of Black people in 2020. Beyond that, current findings amplify the need to abolish racism on different levels, including individual, cultural, and systemic. Despite the progress in lay understanding of racial issues, their understanding is lacking in some critical aspects. For instance, the foregrounded goals did not entail empowering oppressed communities, such as by amplifying their voices and celebrating their joy in daily lives (Bonnett, 2000; Came & Griffith, 2018; Griffith et al., 2007), and addressing broader axes of power and oppression that intersect with racism (Crenshaw, 1989; e.g., heterosexism, sexism, ableism). Future interventions can aim to increase lay knowledge of these issues to more fully attain the goals of anti-racism activism.

## Conclusion

Incorporating the lay theories framework in the activism literature, the present study is the first to examine how lay people conceptualize the goals of anti-racism activism and explain why people participate in it. Current findings provide a unique snapshot of lay perceptions of anti-racism activism, propose promising avenues into the novel research program on lay theories of anti-racism activism, and help develop strategies to effectively work toward racial justice.

<sup>5</sup> Exploratory quantitative analyses (see Supplement) demonstrate some potential correlates of the documented lay theories (e.g., conservatism is positively associated with belief that people engage in activism due to media influence).



## Appendix A: Stop List and Conversions

### 1. Activism Goal

Stop List (in addition to the default list in MEH, Boyd, 2022)

color  
mean  
meant  
Kendi  
scholar  
activist  
racially  
due  
today  
describe  
thought  
under  
day  
said  
type  
encompass  
great  
range  
result  
activism  
anti-racism  
anti-racist  
racism  
people  
end  
goal  
racist  
race  
define  
racial  
notion  
finally  
term  
ideally  
ideal  
matter  
view  
fact  
allow  
concept  
form  
focus  
situation  
circumstance  
increase  
important  
longer

oppressed  
oppress  
marginalized  
marginalize  
minorities  
minority  
minoritized  
group  
effect  
time

#### Conversion List:

equal\*^equal  
discriminat\*^discrimination  
aware\*^awareness  
institution\*^institutional  
treat\*^treatment  
active\*^active  
move\*^movement  
educat\*^educate  
public\*^public  
fair\*^fair  
ideal\*^ideal  
reduction^reduce  
eliminat\*^eliminate  
counter^oppose  
systematic\*^systemic  
systemic\*^systemic  
income^wealth  
brutal\*^brutality  
unconscious^conscious  
subconscious^conscious  
combate^combat  
historically^historical  
history^historical  
ethnic^ethnicity  
prejudice\*^prejudice  
free\*^freedom  
bahavior^behavior  
centur\*^century

### 2. Activism Motivation

Stop List (in addition to the default list in MEH, Boyd, 2022, except for world and willing)

mean  
mean  
racially  
activism  
anti-racism  
anti-racist

racism	see*^see
people	negative*^negative
racist	empath*^empathy
race	acknowledge*^acknowledge
racial	unjust*^justice
fact	injustice^justice
allow	compassion*^compassion
motivation	recogniz*^recognize
problem	unfair*^fair
reason	mistreat*^mistreat
nature	histor*^historical
motivate	stereotype^stereotype
drive	violen*^violence
form	guilt*^guilt
big	accept*^accepted
simply	move^movement
due	act*^act
perceive	cop^police
concern	public*^public
social	opression^oppression
matter	victim*^victim
lead	recogniz*^recognize
aspect	brown^latinx
show	latino^latinx
point	suffer*^suffering
think	understand*^understanding
believe	participat*^participate
depend	oppress*^oppressed
number	marginalize^marginalized
work	wrongful^wrong
engage	unit*^unite
sure	suffer*^suffering
color	harm*^harm

**Conversion List:**

equal*^equal
discriminat*^discrimination
aware*^awareness
institution*^institutional
treat*^treatment
active*^active
fair*^fair
eliminat*^eliminate
systematic*^systemic
systemic*^systemic
brutal*^brutality
combate^combat
prejudice*^prejudice
free*^free
bahavior^behavior
personal*^personal
moral*^moral

**Appendix B**

**Top 202 Content Words for Activism Goal (as provided by MEH; Boyd, 2022)**

Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage
Equal	138	131	30.18433
Treatment	61	61	14.0553
Change	47	41	9.447
Stop	40	39	8.98618
Society	38	36	8.29493
Eliminate	35	35	8.06452

Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage	Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage
Awareness	33	32	7.37327	Hate	7	7	1.6129
Bring	30	29	6.68203	Equity	6	6	1.38249
Discrimination	27	27	6.2212	Peace	6	6	1.38249
Systemic	23	22	5.06912	Provide	7	6	1.38249
Policy	22	20	4.60829	Inequality	6	6	1.38249
Reduce	18	18	4.14747	Freedom	6	6	1.38249
Opportunity	18	18	4.14747	Prevent	6	6	1.38249
Live	18	18	4.14747	Better	6	6	1.38249
Educate	18	18	4.14747	Public	6	6	1.38249
Behavior	18	16	3.68664	Understand	6	6	1.38249
Skin	19	16	3.68664	System	6	6	1.38249
Bias	15	15	3.45622	Sure	5	5	1.15207
Law	15	15	3.45622	Opinion	5	5	1.15207
Action	15	15	3.45622	Practice	6	5	1.15207
Life	14	14	3.22581	Accept	5	5	1.15207
Create	15	14	3.22581	Historical	5	5	1.15207
Fair	14	14	3.22581	Affect	5	5	1.15207
Promote	13	13	2.99539	Movement	5	5	1.15207
Social	13	12	2.76498	Inequity	5	5	1.15207
Prejudice	11	11	2.53456	violence	5	5	1.15207
White	13	11	2.53456	Recognize	5	5	1.15207
Spread	11	11	2.53456	Process	5	5	1.15207
Right	11	11	2.53456	Background	6	5	1.15207
Belief	11	11	2.53456	Structure	4	4	0.92166
Attention	11	10	2.30415	Political	4	4	0.92166
Oppose	10	10	2.30415	Call	4	4	0.92166
Idea	10	10	2.30415	Find	4	4	0.92166
Institution	10	10	2.30415	Implement	4	4	0.92166
Rid	9	9	2.07373	Equitable	4	4	0.92166
Injustice	9	9	2.07373	Look	4	4	0.92166
Exist	9	9	2.07373	Culture	4	4	0.92166
See	10	9	2.07373	Hope	4	4	0.92166
Base	9	9	2.07373	Word	4	4	0.92166
Individual	9	9	2.07373	Safe	4	4	0.92166
Raise	8	8	1.84332	Activity	6	4	0.92166
Achieve	8	8	1.84332	Police	4	4	0.92166
Challenge	8	8	1.84332	Common	4	4	0.92166
Fight	8	8	1.84332	Support	4	4	0.92166
Work	9	8	1.84332	Supremacy	4	4	0.92166
Perpetuate	8	8	1.84332	Community	4	4	0.92166
Justice	8	8	1.84332	Eradicate	4	4	0.92166
Country	9	8	1.84332	School	4	4	0.92166
Active	13	8	1.84332	Influence	4	4	0.92166
Identify	8	8	1.84332	Ethnicity	5	4	0.92166
Place	7	7	1.6129	Light	4	4	0.92166
Human	7	7	1.6129	Show	4	4	0.92166
Issue	7	7	1.6129	Stand	4	4	0.92166
Respect	7	7	1.6129	Attitude	4	4	0.92166
Ensure	7	7	1.6129	General	4	4	0.92166

Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage
Black	5	4	0.92166
Abolish	4	4	0.92166
Difference	4	4	0.92166
Complete	4	4	0.92166
Dismantle	4	4	0.92166
Manner	4	4	0.92166
Wealth	4	4	0.92166
Problem	3	3	0.69124
Strive	3	3	0.69124
Negative	3	3	0.69124
Century	3	3	0.69124
Person	3	3	0.69124
Benefit	3	3	0.69124
Correct	3	3	0.69124
Mitigate	3	3	0.69124
Improve	3	3	0.69124
Relation	3	3	0.69124
Brutality	3	3	0.69124
Quality	3	3	0.69124
Judge	3	3	0.69124
Reparation	3	3	0.69124
Current	3	3	0.69124
Harm	3	3	0.69124
Workplace	3	3	0.69124
Chance	3	3	0.69124
Socially	3	3	0.69124
Occur	3	3	0.69124
Large	3	3	0.69124
Feeling	3	3	0.69124
Humanity	3	3	0.69124
Oppression	3	3	0.69124
Protect	3	3	0.69124
Play	3	3	0.69124
Inform	3	3	0.69124
Overt	3	3	0.69124
Structural	3	3	0.69124
Future	3	3	0.69124
Generation	4	3	0.69124
Daily	3	3	0.69124
Ongoing	3	3	0.69124
Destroy	3	3	0.69124
America	4	3	0.69124
Give	3	3	0.69124
Earth	3	3	0.69124
Government	3	3	0.69124
Acknowledge	3	3	0.69124
Teach	3	3	0.69124
Effort	3	3	0.69124

## Appendix C

### Top 132 Content Words for Activism Motivation (as provided by MEH; Boyd, 2022)

Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage
See	70	68	15.88785
Experience	73	65	15.18692
Equality	63	62	14.48598
Participate	65	58	13.5514
Treatment	50	45	10.51402
World	38	37	8.64486
Change	38	35	8.17757
Justice	39	35	8.17757
Fair	36	35	8.17757
Personal	37	33	7.71028
Society	32	32	7.47664
Desire	33	30	7.00935
Discrimination	31	29	6.7757
Belief	29	29	6.7757
Better	29	29	6.7757
Right	28	26	6.07477
Moral	22	22	5.14019
Sense	20	18	4.20561
Empathy	18	18	4.20561
End	19	18	4.20561
Love	17	17	3.97196
Live	18	16	3.73832
Victim	18	15	3.50467
Human	16	15	3.50467
Happen	16	14	3.27103
Place	14	14	3.27103
Minority	13	13	3.03738
Group	13	13	3.03738
Affect	14	13	3.03738
Wrong	13	12	2.80374
Skin	12	12	2.80374
Life	12	12	2.80374
Friend	11	11	2.57009
Effect	13	11	2.57009
Family	11	11	2.57009
Support	10	10	2.33645
Negative	10	10	2.33645
Base	10	10	2.33645
Injustice	11	10	2.33645
White	10	9	2.1028

Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage	Word	Frequency	Responses Containing Word	Observation Percentage
Community	9	9	2.1028	Societal	4	4	0.93458
Individual	11	9	2.1028	Hear	4	4	0.93458
Stand	10	9	2.1028	Attention	4	4	0.93458
Guilt	9	9	2.1028	Realize	4	4	0.93458
Face	9	9	2.1028	Privilege	4	4	0.93458
Black	8	8	1.86916	Accept	4	4	0.93458
Difference	8	8	1.86916	Generation	4	4	0.93458
Oppress	11	8	1.86916	Respect	4	4	0.93458
Witness	8	8	1.86916	Money	3	3	0.70093
Strong	8	8	1.86916	Institutional	3	3	0.70093
Future	7	7	1.63551	Profile	3	3	0.70093
Media	7	7	1.63551	Together	3	3	0.70093
Create	7	7	1.63551	Peer	3	3	0.70093
Stop	8	7	1.63551	Stereotype	3	3	0.70093
Care	7	7	1.63551	Outcome	3	3	0.70093
Bring	7	7	1.63551	Type	3	3	0.70093
Understanding	8	7	1.63551	Public	3	3	0.70093
Close	7	7	1.63551	Educate	3	3	0.70093
Tire	7	7	1.63551	Heart	3	3	0.70093
Mistreat	7	7	1.63551	Political	3	3	0.70093
Compassion	7	7	1.63551	Marginalize	3	3	0.70093
Anger	7	7	1.63551	Status	3	3	0.70093
Historical	6	6	1.40187	Hope	3	3	0.70093
Violence	6	6	1.40187	Safe	3	3	0.70093
News	6	6	1.40187	High	3	3	0.70093
Awareness	6	6	1.40187	Death	3	3	0.70093
Event	6	6	1.40187	Daily	3	3	0.70093
Fight	6	6	1.40187	Basis	3	3	0.70093
Person	6	6	1.40187	Benefit	3	3	0.70093
Hurt	7	6	1.40187	Eliminate	3	3	0.70093
Past	6	6	1.40187	Directly	3	3	0.70093
Harm	6	6	1.40187	Voice	3	3	0.70093
Opportunity	5	5	1.16822	Disparity	3	3	0.70093
Free	5	5	1.16822	Firsthand	3	3	0.70093
Power	5	5	1.16822	Politician	3	3	0.70093
Movement	5	5	1.16822	Member	3	3	0.70093
Humanity	5	5	1.16822	View	3	3	0.70093
Opinion	5	5	1.16822	Chance	3	3	0.70093
Great	5	5	1.16822	Ensure	3	3	0.70093
Improve	6	5	1.16822	Real	4	3	0.70093
Look	5	5	1.16822	Latinx	3	3	0.70093
Suffering	6	5	1.16822	Unite	3	3	0.70093
Hatred	4	4	0.93458	Join	3	3	0.70093
Day	4	4	0.93458				
Pressure	4	4	0.93458				
Police	4	4	0.93458				
Systemic	5	4	0.93458				
Frustration	4	4	0.93458				
System	4	4	0.93458				

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval** This research was conducted with institutional IRB approval.

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