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ARTICLE

Validation of an abbreviated Sociopolitical Control Scale for Youth among a sample of underresourced urban youth of color

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Abstract

Empowerment is a higher order multilevel framework that is used to understand and evaluate individuals, groups, organizations, and communities as they engage in the practice and execution of the participatory process. The intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment has been examined through sociopolitical control and occupies two dimensions: leadership competence and policy control. Though the Sociopolitical Control Scale for Youth (SPCS-Y) has been examined using a 17-item scale, Christens, Krauss, and Zeldin (2016) recently assessed the factorial validity of an abbreviated SPCS-Y among a sample of Malaysian adolescents. Yet, there is a need to further examine this abbreviated SPCS-Y among a sample of U.S. adolescents. This study tested the factor structure of the abbreviated SPCS-Y among a sample of urban youth of color ($N = 383$). Using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) we examined the relationship leadership competence and policy control had with conceptually related variables. Analyses supported the bidimensional factor structure and the factorial validity of the abbreviated SPCS-Y. MANOVA results also indicate that participants with both higher leadership competence and policy control also had higher composite scores among conceptually related variables.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Empowerment has been designated as a higher order multilevel framework (Peterson, 2014) that is used to understand and evaluate individuals, groups, organizations, and communities as they engage in the practice and execution of the participatory process (Rappaport, Rappaport, Swift, & Hess, 1984). As an interdependent process at the individual (i.e., psychological), organizational, and community levels, empowerment focuses on how individuals obtain resources, gain control, and critically assess their environmental circumstances to understand the conditions that impact their lives (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2011; Zimmerman, 2000). Importantly, empowerment is context specific because it takes different forms for different people in different

contexts (Zimmerman, 2000). The nomological understanding of empowerment is, therefore, complex because the variety of intersections that each individual, group, and community possesses is intrinsic toward our understanding of empowerment and the processes that create vertical and horizontal considerations in the empowerment process (Anderson & Scott, 2012). This idea makes the understanding of empowerment, empowerment-related constructs, and measures of empowerment within—and among—different social contexts and groups critically important to the development of empowerment research and practice.

Conceptual and empirical research in empowerment has examined the variations empowerment takes for individuals in multiple contexts and circumstances (Peterson, 2014). The psychological empowerment (PE) component of empowerment has received the most attention (Christens, Krauss, & Zeldin, 2016; Peterson, 2014; Peterson, Powell, Peterson, & Reid, 2017). PE has been conceptualized as not solely an intrapsychic variable but also a psychosocial variable within—and among—reciprocating relationships (Christens, Peterson, & Speer, 2011). Zimmerman (1995) also articulated that examining PE as an individual-level variable ignores the ecological nature and cultural influence of PE.

The nomological network of PE is theorized to include an *intrapersonal*, *interactional*, and *behavioral component* (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). The intrapersonal component of PE includes perception of control and self-efficacy, specifically in the sociopolitical sphere (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). The interactional component of PE involves a critical understanding of one's social environment and has been largely theorized through community organizing, with residents understanding the source, nature, and instruments of social power (Speer, 2000; Speer & Peterson, 2000). Last, the behavioral component of PE has been understood through participatory and coping behaviors that focus on community and broader systemic social and community change (Zimmerman, 1995, 2000).

The intrapersonal component of PE has occupied an important role in the understanding and measurement of PE. Studies examining PE at the intrapersonal level have done so through sociopolitical control, which is considered a vital element of the intrapersonal component of PE (Christens et al., 2016; Christens et al., 2011). Sociopolitical control has been examined as a process of empowerment (e.g., bin Abdullah, Almadhoun, & Ying-Leh, 2015; Christens et al., 2011; Lardier, 2018; Ozer & Schotland, 2011), an outcome (e.g., Christens & Lin, 2014; Christens & Peterson, 2012; Christens et al., 2011), and an indicator of well-being (Christens, Peterson, Reid, & Garcia-Reid, 2015; Eisman et al., 2016).

Based on the work of Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991), sociopolitical control has been theorized as encompassing two dimensions: *leadership competence* and *policy control*. The scale developed, referred to as the Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS), was conceptualized as an integrated measure drawing on related aspects of sociopolitical control (e.g., political efficacy, perceived competence, and mastery). While some have examined this 17-item measure as a unidimensional construct (e.g., Holden, Crankshaw, Nimsch, Hinnant, & Hund, 2004; Holden, Evans, Hinnant, & Messeri, 2005), the majority of empirical evidence has shown this measure to represent two subscales referred to as leadership competence and policy control (Christens et al., 2016; Peterson, Peterson, Agre, Christens, & Morton, 2011; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006). Hence, the SPCS is a bidimensional, rather than a unidimensional construct.

The SPCS has been tested also in a variety of circumstances, including international venues such as in Azerbaijan (Cheryomukhin & Peterson, 2014), China (Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2011), and Estonia (Kasmel & Tangaard, 2011). Through the work of Peterson et al. (2011), the SPCS for youth (SPCS-Y) was developed and found to represent, like the SPCS tested among adults, two dimensions: leadership competence and policy control. This scale has been analyzed among youth both in the United States (Peterson et al., 2011; Peterson, Powell, Peterson, & Reid, 2017) and internationally such as in Malaysia (Christens et al., 2016). Such investigations, while limited, provide support for the SPCS-Y among youth. Despite such work, it is critical to continue to examine the SPCS-Y among various populations of young people and continue to assess the validity and reliability of measures among these diverse groups.

The most recent iteration of the SPCS, which was validated by Christens et al. (2016) among a sample of Malaysian adolescents, includes a reduced eight-item scale from the original 17-item version. Christens et al. (2016) showed there was support for the bidimensional model of the SPCS-Y among this sample of Malaysian adolescents and that the reduced eight-item scale had higher factor loadings and fit the sample data better than the original 17-item version. More recently, Peterson et al. (2017) tested both Likert-type and phrase completion formats of the abbreviated SPCS-Y. Results from this study supported the validity of both scale formats; although, the phrase completion format was superior to that of the Likert-type format.

Outside of such work, additional research is still needed to examine the factor structure of the eight-item measure of the SPCS-Y among a sample of U.S. adolescents. As Christens et al. (2016) stated, "As measures of sociopolitical control are tested among youth across different contexts, it may be possible to identify items that reliably outperform other items, leading to an abbreviated measure, which could have advantages for use in the field" (p. 535). Following similar methodology to that of Christens et al. (2016), the present study focused on further validating the abbreviated eight-item version of the SPCS-Y among a sample of youth of color from an underresourced urban community in the United States.

1.1 | The Relationship Between the Intrapersonal Component of Psychological Empowerment and Cognitive Empowerment, Neighborhood Sense of Community, Community Participation, and Ethnic Identity

Studies have examined the ways in which the intrapersonal component of PE relates to social participation and other mechanisms of empowerment (e.g., community participation, neighborhood sense of community [SOC], ethnic identity, and cognitive empowerment; Christens & Peterson, 2012; Christens et al., 2015; Christens et al., 2011; Christens et al., 2011; Eisman et al., 2016; Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, & Reid, 2018; Peterson, Peterson et al., 2011; Peterson, Speer, & Peterson, 2011; Speer, Peterson, Armstead, & Allen, 2012). There is a need, however, to unpack these relationships, particularly in today's U.S. society, where youth are engaging in critical and empowering social activities at higher rates than in previous decades (Forenza, Rogers, & Lardier, 2017). The identification of additional intervening and conceptually related mechanisms in empowerment and, specifically, those related to the intrapersonal component of PE can work toward uncovering factors that play a role in the participatory process and the ways in which individuals and groups critically understand their collective ability to participate in empowering social change.

Cognitive empowerment has been defined as encompassing those commitments to collective interests, leadership, and decision making, as well as the knowledge of how social and civic action unfolds (Speer, 2000; Speer & Peterson, 2000; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). Cognitive empowerment is theoretically associated with the intrapersonal component of PE (e.g., Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; Christens, Winn, & Duke, 2016; Peterson, 2014; Speer, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000) and has been empirically tested with, albeit minimally, intrapersonal PE (Christens, Collura, & Tahir, 2013; Rodrigues, Menezes, & Ferreira, 2018; Speer & Peterson, 2000). While recent scholarship have validated the Cognitive Empowerment Scale among youth and illustrated its relationship to the broader nomological structure of PE (e.g., Rodrigues et al., 2018), researchers largely contest that the relationship cognitive empowerment has with intrapersonal PE is complex because it is also associated with well-being and other intersecting relationships such as race and class (Christens et al., 2011; Christens et al., 2011; Peterson, Peterson, & Speer, 2002).

The intersecting relationships that complicate the association between cognitive empowerment and intrapersonal PE are critical to unpack: Racially and ethnically marginalized individuals in economically deprived spaces may have minimal access to community-based resources and activities compared to their nonminority and more economically supported counterparts (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012). Consequently, these community members may report lower levels of intrapersonal PE (Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018) and cognitive empowerment (Christens et al., 2011; Christens et al. 2013), which may impact their overall perceived empowerment potential. For instance, Christens et al. (2011) highlighted that individuals from oppressed social locations were more likely to experience greater power or control when they had opportunities to participate in more community-based activities.

Similarly, Christens et al. (2013) attempted to unpack the complex relationship between PE and cognitive empowerment among varying subpopulations of participants and, paradoxically, found that individuals of color with minimal access to resources were critically aware, but not necessarily hopeful, and that participants were unlikely to experience both high levels of cognitive empowerment and intrapersonal PE. Not only do such findings draw attention to empowerment as a fundamentally relational process in which knowledge, action, and critical awareness are part of a broader structure of power dynamics and empowerment processes, but the process between intrapersonal PE and the more critical cognitive component of PE may also manifest differently in varying social spaces (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010). Hence, given the context-specific nature of empowerment, even related theoretical components

may vary (Peterson, 2014), calling for further research to examine the empirical relationship between the intrapersonal component of PE and theoretically related constructs of the broader nomological structure, including cognitive empowerment (Rodrigues et al., 2018).

In addition to cognitive empowerment, intrapersonal PE has also been implicated in predicting neighborhood SOC, community participation, and ethnic identity. Numerous investigations show the relationship between intrapersonal PE and neighborhood SOC (i.e., collective efficacy and neighboring or sharing among neighbors and mutual assistance; Perkins & Long, 2002) intrapersonal (Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018), community participation intrapersonal (Christens et al., 2011; Eisman et al., 2016; Lardier, 2018; Speer et al., 2012), and ethnic identity intrapersonal (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2015; Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018). For instance, recent studies indicate that youth of color living in low socioeconomic status communities may have difficulty cultivating empowerment because they have limited access to both organizations and resources (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Speer et al., 2012); however, when provided access to empowering community activities, youth have been found to report higher rates of community belongingness and intrapersonal PE (Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018), particularly in the presence of supportive youth–adult partnerships (Zeldin, Krauss, Kim, Collura, & Abdullah, 2015).

More recently, Lardier (2018) drew attention to the empirical connection between community participation, neighborhood SOC, ethnic identity, and intrapersonal PE. These findings were particularly important: Although cultural group affiliation, community participation, the connection one has with their community, and ethnic identity have been theoretically associated (e.g., Gutiérrez, 1995; Tatum, 1997), there have only been a handful of investigations to empirically support the connection between ethnic identity and intrapersonal PE (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2015; Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018). Taken together, these studies suggest an important association between the intrapersonal component of PE, neighborhood SOC, community participation, and ethnic identity.

2 | STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to build upon the measurement of the SPCS-Y by testing the factor structure of an abbreviated version of the SPCS-Y among a sample of U.S. urban youth of color. This abbreviated version of the SPCS-Y was originally examined by Christens et al. (2016) among Malaysian youth and taken up in more recent scholarship (e.g., Peterson et al., 2017) among a U.S. sample of youth; yet, additional research is needed to further examine and validate this scale among U.S. adolescents.

We then tested the difference between the abbreviated SPCS-Y profile groups on a set of variables (e.g., cognitive empowerment, community participation, neighborhood SOC, and ethnic identity) that may be considered conceptually related to the intrapersonal component of PE and relevant to youth development. Based upon the extant research, we expected that those groups with both higher scores on the two sociopolitical control dimensions would report higher mean scores on cognitive empowerment (Christens et al., 2011; Christens et al., 2013), neighborhood SOC, community participation, and ethnic identity (Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018; Speer et al., 2012). We also expected, based on previous work by Peterson et al. (2011), that there would be certain sociopolitical control profile groups that would be more relevant for different outcomes, which would provide additional evidence on the bidimensional nature of sociopolitical control and the SPCS-Y.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Sample and Design

The sample comprised students ($N = 383$) from a northeastern underresourced urban school district in the United States. In 2013, these students were asked to participate in a needs assessment as part of a grant program that examined youth empowerment, as well as mechanisms that may buffer them from substance abuse and contracting and transmitting HIV/AIDS. Students were sampled through their high school physical education and health classes.

Those students who returned parental consent and student assent forms were eligible to complete the questionnaire. Students were in the 9th–12th grades, with 29.2% in 9th grade, 45.7% in 10th grade, 6% in 11th grade, and 19.1% in 12th grade. The majority of students identified as Hispanic/Latina(o) (75%), with the next largest group of adolescents identifying as Black/African American (24.3%). A nearly equal proportion of students identified as male (46.9%) and female (53.1%). Among these youth, 50.6% ($n = 193$) were 13–15 years of age and 49.4% ($n = 190$) were 16–18 years of age. A large proportion of youth received free or reduced lunch (75%), an indicator for low socioeconomic status.

3.2 | Measurement

3.2.1 | Sociopolitical control

Sociopolitical control was measured using the SPCS-Y (Christens et al., 2016; Peterson et al., 2006; Peterson et al., 2011; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Through confirmatory factor analysis, Peterson et al. (2011) illustrated and confirmed the SPCS-Y (overall scale: Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$) as a two-factor measure that examined leadership competence (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) and policy control (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$). For the current study, the eight-item measure (sample items: I am a leader in groups; I can usually organize people to get things done) of leadership competence (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$; mean [M] = 3.42, standard deviation [SD] = .71) and the nine-item measure for policy control (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$; $M = 3.20$, $SD = .69$) were combined (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$; $M = 3.30$, $SD = .62$). Participants rated items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Overall, participants responded with moderate perceived rates of PE.

3.2.2 | Conceptually related variables

Cognitive empowerment was measured using the Cognitive Empowerment Scale, developed by Speer and Peterson (2000), who illustrated and confirmed that the measure for cognitive empowerment encompassed three subscales: *power through relationships* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$; $M = 18.47$, $SD = 3.83$), *nature of problem/political functioning* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$; $M = 16.69$, $SD = 4.24$), and *shaping ideologies* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$; $M = 14.44$, $SD = 2.77$). For the current study, the four-item measure of power through relationships (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$; $M = 3.99$, $SD = .85$), the four-item measure of nature of power/political functioning (Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$; $M = 3.67$, $SD = .83$), and the six-item measure of shaping ideologies (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$; $M = 3.62$, $SD = .77$) were combined (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$; $M = 3.75$, $SD = .68$). Participants rated items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Neighborhood SOC was measured using nine items (sample item: I feel like a member of this neighborhood) from the Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS), which was based on the work of Peterson, Speer, and McMillan (2008) and McMillan and Chavis (1986). The BSCS was designed using four dimensions of SOC (i.e., needs fulfillment, group membership, influence, and emotional connection), theorized by McMillan and Chavis (1986). Youth participants rated items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Responses were totaled to represent higher levels of SOC or community belongingness (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$; $M = 24.47$, $SD = 6.60$). Overall, youth identified moderate levels of community connection.

Community participation was measured using nine items (sample items: How often do you participate in protests/marches? How often do you attend public meetings?) that examined how often participants engaged in community activities that had the possibility of manifesting in systemic social change (Speer & Peterson, 2000). Participants rated each item using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*one time*) to 5 (*about weekly*). Items were totaled to represent higher levels of community participation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$; $M = 13.58$, $SD = 6.69$). Youth participants identified overall lower levels of community participation. This result, however, is consistent with current discussions specifying that urban youth have limited access to community and afterschool-based organizations, which would promote empowering community-level activities (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Christens & Speer, 2015).

Ethnic identity was measured using a 6-item scale developed by the federal funding agency (sample item: I have spent time trying to figure out more about my ethnic group). Youth participants responded to each item on a 4-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Scores were totaled, with higher scores representing greater identification with one's ethnic group (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$; $M = 15.73$, $SD = 3.30$). Youth responded with moderate levels of ethnic identification. Prior studies using validated ethnic identity measures (i.e., Multigroup Ethnic Identity measure) have demonstrated similar levels of internal consistency and validity that range from .71 to .92 and showed useful and important findings (e.g., Phinney & Ong, 2007).

3.3 | Analytic Approach

Prior to main analyses, missing data were examined. Little's missing completely at random (MCAR) test was used to assess the level and type of missingness (Little & Rubin, 2014). Little's MCAR test revealed that the chi-square result was significant, $\chi^2 = [\text{degree of freedom } [df] = 23] 43.23$, $p = .006$, and that these data were most likely not missing completely at random. Further inspection of data revealed that no more than 5% of data were missing for any given variable. Although numerous missing data techniques are available (McGinniss & Harel, 2016), missing data for this study were handled using maximum likelihood (ML) through AMOS SEM software.

Following ML estimations of imputation, confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were conducted using structural equation modeling in AMOS (version 25) software to assess the validity of the SPCS-Y as a measure for two theorized dimensions of sociopolitical control: leadership competence and policy control. Three models were examined through CFA:

Model 1 examined the one-factor sociopolitical control model of SPCS-Y, using the 17-item scale measure.

Model 2 examined the two-factor model of the SPCS-Y, using the 17-item scale measure.

Model 3 examined the two-factor SPCS-Y using the abbreviated eight-item scale tested and validated by Christens et al. (2016).

Next, a multivariate analysis of variance using SPSS (version 23) software was used to determine if profile groups, which were created based on scores from the SPCS-Y (similar techniques used by Christens et al., 2016, as well as previous investigations), differed on a set of conceptually related variables: cognitive empowerment, neighborhood SOC, community participation, and ethnic identity.

Several fit indices were used to examine model fit (West, Taylor, & Wei, 2012). These model fit indices included chi-square test, discrepancy of fit (discrepancy/df), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), Akaike information criterion (AIC), Bayesian information criterion (BIC), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Non-significant χ^2 values indicate acceptable model fit; however, χ^2 must be considered in tandem with other fit indices because χ^2 may be too stringent and an often unrealistic standard of goodness-of-fit (West et al., 2012). Discrepancy of fit (discrepancy/df) indices less than 2.00 are desirable (West et al., 2012). Higher values that are greater than .95 on the CFI and goodness of fit index and smaller RMSEA values that are less than .09 are desirable (i.e., RMSEA that are $\leq .05 = \text{good fit}$, $.05-.08 = \text{acceptable fit}$ and $.08-.10 = \text{unacceptable fit}$; West et al., 2012).

Both the BIC and AIC were used to assess the better fitting model between the three models tested. The model with the smallest BIC and AIC tends to be the most favorable, or best fitting model (West et al., 2012). Both the BIC and AIC were used because AIC tends to be sensitive to smaller samples sizes, while the BIC often performs well with smaller sample sizes (West et al., 2012).

4 | RESULTS

Table 1 displays the correlation matrix for all variables. Results of the CFAs are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 displays fit indices for all three models of the SPCS-Y. Table 3 displays the standardized factor loadings for all three models. The first CFA (model 1) included all 17 items loading onto one single latent construct. The single-factor solution showed overall poor model fit; albeit, some measures of model fit such as GFI and CFI could be argued as adequate fit (although barely; West et al., 2012). Model 2 examined the two-factor solution with all 17 items. Eight items loaded onto one single leadership competence dimension (i.e., items one through eight) and nine items loaded onto one policy control dimension (i.e., items nine through 17). While model 2 showed slightly better model fit compared to model 1, and

TABLE 1 Correlation matrix and descriptive statistics for main study variables (N = 383)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Policy control	—	.55**	.11**	.43**	.10**	.05
2. Leadership competence		—	.25**	.25**	.14**	.17**
3. Cognitive empowerment			—	.12*	.15*	.60
4. Sense of community				—	.03	.12*
5. Community participation					—	.04
6. Ethnic identity						—
Mean (SD)	3.42 (.71)	3.20 (.69)	3.75 (.68)	24.47 (6.60)	13.58 (6.69)	15.73 (3.30)
Cronbach α	.81	.81	.89	.85	.90	.80

Note. SD = standard deviation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2 Model fit statistics for confirmatory factor analyses of the Sociopolitical Control Scale for Youth (N = 383)

Measures of fit	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
χ^2	277.40	181.91	23.69
df	93	91	15
p-value	.000	.000	.10
Discrepancy/df	3.01	2.10	1.50
GFI	.92	.93	.99
CFI	.91	.94	.98
TLI	.88	.92	.97
RMSEA	.08	.06	.03
	90% CI [.06-.09]	90% CI [.04-.08]	90% CI [.01-.05]
AIC	397.40	314.05	65.69
BIC	634.13	558.67	148.54

Note. df = degree of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

standardized item loadings improved (see Table 3), model 2 still performed less than adequately. Model 3, the third CFA model, with the proposed abbreviated eight-item scale, recently validated by Christens et al. (2016), showed superior model fit compared to both models 1 and 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, among the three models, model 3 had both the smallest AIC and BIC and nonsignificant χ^2 , which, taken collectively with other indices of model fit, indicates a better fitting model. The GFI, CFI, and TLI all fell within the cutoff criterion for acceptable model fit. In addition, RMSEA fell within the identified cutoff range, with the upper bound of the 90% confidence interval not exceeding .08 (West et al., 2012), which further specifies acceptable model fit. Descriptive statistics for the eight-item scale are as follows: four-item leadership competence dimension (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$; $M = 3.38$, $SD = 3.25$); the four-item policy control dimension (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$; $M = 3.13$, $SD = .77$); and the overall shortened PE scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$; $M = 3.26$; $SD = .66$).

Results from the MANOVA are presented in Table 4. Results show significant differences between SPCS-Y profile groups for all four conceptually related variables. Post hoc pairwise comparison showed that those in profile Group 1 (i.e., both high policy control and high leadership competence) had higher composite scores in cognitive empowerment, neighborhood SOC, and ethnic identity. Interestingly, those in profile Group 3 (i.e., low policy control and high leadership competence) had higher composite scores in community participation, which may indicate that those who perceive higher levels of leadership are also engaging in more community activities. Nonetheless, those in Group 4 (i.e., both low

TABLE 3 Standardized item loadings for confirmatory factor analysis of the Sociopolitical Control Scale for Youth (N = 383)

Item	Model 1 One-factor model	Model 2 Two-factor model		Model 3 Two-factor model	
		Lead comp.	Policycont.	Lead comp.	Policycont.
1. I am often a leader in groups	.51	.60		.63	
2. I would prefer to be a leader rather than a follower	.45	.50			
3. I would rather have a leadership role when I'm involved in a group project.	.63	.63		.65	
4. I can usually organize people to get things done.	.59	.59		.73	
5. Other people usually follow my ideas.	.60	.54			
6. I find it very easy to talk in front of a group	.42	.50		.55	
7. I like to work on solving a problem myself instead of letting someone else do it.	.58	.60			
8. I like trying new things that are challenging to me	.56	.60			
9. I participate in my school or community because I want my views to be heard.	.61		.61		
10. My friends and I can really understand what's going on with my community or school.	.42		.51		.50
11. I understand the important issues affecting my community or school.	.54		.54		
12. I am able to participate in community or school decision making.	.47		.59		.60
13. My opinion is important because it could make a difference in my community or school.	.41		.41		
14. There are many ways for me to have a say in what my community or school does.	.57		.58		.60
15. It is important to me that I participate in local issues affecting young people.	.59		.59		
16. Most community or school leaders would pay attention to me if I gave them my opinion.	.51		.60		.68
17. It is important to me to participate in many local activities	.39		.40		

Note. Lead comp. = leadership competence; policy cont. = policy control.

policy control and low leadership competence) had significantly lower scores on all four conceptually related variables, which is consistent with previous research (e.g., Lardier et al., 2018; Peterson et al., 2011; Rodrigues et al., 2018).

5 | DISCUSSION

Empowerment is a high order, multilevel theory that is context specific (Zimmerman, 2000). While recent scholarship has focused on further developing the nomological understanding of empowerment (e.g., Rodrigues et al., 2018), PE remains largely understudied, despite receiving the greatest attention in the empowerment literature (Peterson,

TABLE 4 MANOVA Results between policy control and leadership of the Sociopolitical Control Scale for Youth on cognitive empowerment, ethnic identity, neighborhood sense of community, and community participation (N = 383)

Variable	Group 1: Both high policy control and leadership (n = 137)	Group 2: High policy control and low leadership (n = 110)	Group 3: Low policy control and high leadership (n = 75)	Group 4: Both low policy control and leadership (n = 118)	Univariate F (3, 378)	Mean difference, p < .05
Cognitive empowerment	4.08	3.82	3.98	3.66	4.23***	1 > 2, 3 > 4
Sense of community	29.05	24.60	22.85	21.50	23.83***	1 > 2, 3, 4
Community participation	13.76	12.89	15.33	12.23	3.35**	3 > 1, 2, 4
Ethnic identity	16.17	15.42	16.21	15.15	2.61*	1, 3 > 2, 4

Note. Wilks' Lambda = .79, $F(12, 981.87) = 7.56, p < .001$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

2014). The intrapersonal component of PE has occupied a particularly critical role in the understanding and measurement of PE. Through sociopolitical control, scholars have focused on conceptualizing and developing the SPCS. As an integrated measure, the SPCS represents two subscales: leadership competence and policy control (Peterson, 2014).

Building upon earlier iterations of the SPCS, Peterson et al. (2011) developed the SPCS-Y to be used among youth and found this measure to also represent two dimensions of leadership competence and policy control. More recently, Christens et al. (2016) examined an abbreviated version of the original 17-item SPCS-Y and found that this abbreviated eight-item scale fit the sample data better than the original 17-item version. While more recent scholarship (e.g., Peterson et al., 2017) has examined both the factor structure of the abbreviated SPCS-Y and varying scale formats among youth (e.g., Likert-type versus phrase completion formats), there is a need to continue examining the factorial validity of the abbreviated eight-item measure of the SPCS-Y among a sample of U.S. adolescents.

Results from this study support the bidimensionality or the hypothesized two-factor model of the SPCS-Y. Our findings also show that the abbreviated eight-item scale had superior model fit compared to previous model iterations of the SPCS-Y.

Furthermore, results demonstrate important differences between sociopolitical control profile groups on measures of cognitive empowerment, neighborhood SOC, community participation, and ethnic identity. For instance, higher levels of both policy control and leadership seemed to be an important indicator of cognitive empowerment, neighborhood SOC, and ethnic identity. This is a particularly notable finding because cognitive empowerment, while theoretically associated to intrapersonal PE, has observed limited empirical connection, particularly among youth. In addition—and interestingly—higher levels of leadership seemed to be related to higher composite scores of community participation, whereas, policy control was less crucial in this instance.

Similarly, higher levels of leadership also appeared to have a unique connection with higher composite scores of ethnic identity, which is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018), and may point toward the role collective engagement and connection with one's racial-ethnic group members has with leadership competence. Taken together, findings provide empirical support for the validity of the abbreviated version of the SPCS-Y, the bidimensionality of sociopolitical control, and the empirical relationship sociopolitical control has with conceptually related mechanisms.

The main implication of our findings is that sociopolitical control can be conceptualized and measured bidimensionally among youth populations. Results also reinforce more recent scholarships' examination of the abbreviated version of the SPCS-Y (e.g., Peterson et al., 2017) and call for future research to consider the further analysis of the abbreviated SPCS-Y among youth in diverse contexts in both the U.S. and internationally.

And although this study validated the intrapersonal component of PE and illustrated its empirical and conceptual relationship to cognitive empowerment, it is critical for future work to assess the full nomological network of PE among youth (notable exceptions include Rodrigues et al., 2018). Questions also remain as to whether the interactional and behavioral components of PE differ between adults and youth (Peterson et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2018) and if the SPCS-Y measure captures all nuances specific to youth of color, specifically related to their ethnic-racial identity (Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018). Therefore, future investigations need to consider the role of ethnic identity within the SPCS-Y and among related empowerment predictors. Still, recent qualitative studies (e.g., Lardier, Herr, Garcia-Reid, & Reid, 2018) add that youth PE may be manifested through, and among, adult-youth relationships and therefore such relationships might be considered as part of an overall framework or measurement model for youth PE. Hence, a deeper understanding of these relational processes needs to be teased apart in the development and adaptation of the SPCS-Y and among related empowerment scales.

Findings from the current study also have important implications for policy and program design related to sociopolitical control among youth. As more recent scholarship has highlighted (e.g., Christens & Peterson, 2012; Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2018), sociopolitical control can be defined as a promising indicator of both behavioral and developmental outcomes. As Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al. (2018) found among a sample of youth of color, not only is there an empirical connection between a stronger ethnic identity and higher levels of sociopolitical control, but youth who

experience greater sociopolitical control also are more likely to respond with higher composite scores of community belongingness and community participation and view the use of drugs and alcohol as risky.

Similarly, Christens et al. (2011) found longitudinally that an increase in sociopolitical control can be achieved via greater community participation. Therefore, future research should continue to examine the broad array of conceptually related variables, including ethnic identity, neighborhood SOC, community participation (Lardier, 2018; Lardier, Garcia-Reid, et al., 2015), critical consciousness (Christens, 2016), and those theoretically related variables to the intrapersonal component of PE such as cognitive empowerment (Peterson, 2014). In addition, an abbreviated version of the SPCS-Y could be particularly important for community programs interested in understanding youth sociopolitical control, particularly when time and limited resources are available. Finally, studies need to think about the diverse contexts that empowerment manifests, whether in the community or in organizational spaces, which not only produce greater sociopolitical control among youth but also, and more importantly, allow for actionable social change.

5.1 | Limitations

Despite the importance of findings from this study, further research is needed to test the factor structure of the abbreviated SPCS-Y among youth from varying sociocultural and contextual backgrounds. Such scholarship will push investigators and practitioners of empowerment to better understand the empowerment process among diverse groups of youth both in the United States and internationally. One limitation of this study is that findings are context bound to the northeastern corridor of the United States. Because sociopolitical control takes different forms, for different people, in different contexts, it is important that this abbreviated SPCS-Y be examined and validated with youth located in other communities and regions across the United States. As Zimmerman (1995) stated, sociopolitical control and empowerment are context specific; thus, a single measure of sociopolitical control is not appropriate and should be examined among varying populations before widespread use.

In addition, the current study used a Likert-type scale response system, and while this may be a small limitation, more recent scholarship (e.g., Peterson et al., 2017) has found that a phrase completion format may help reduce bias and improve the validity of future research. Therefore, future research should examine both the phrase completion format and Likert-type scale response format between both the full 17-item SPCS-Y and the abbreviated SPCS-Y that was tested and validated in this study.

Last, the cognitive empowerment scale used in this study, while validated internationally among youth (e.g., Rodrigues et al., 2018) has not been tested and validated among U.S. youth. Similarly, the BSCS used in this study—to understand neighborhood SOC—has yet to be validated among youth (Lardier, 2018). Future scholarship should consider examining the factor structure of both the cognitive empowerment scale and the BSCS among youth.

5.2 | Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to test the factor structure of the abbreviated SPCS-Y among a sample of urban youth of color. It is critical to develop measurement tools that capture the perceptions of intrapersonal PE among youth from diverse social, cultural, and contextual backgrounds. While this study found support for an abbreviated SPCS-Y and its relationship to conceptually related variables, there is still a need to not only test this abbreviated measure among youth from diverse social settings but also examine the full nomological network of PE among youth. Empowerment has the potential to bring about positive transformational change in individuals, groups, and communities.

In addition, the continued development of empowerment measures may allow for greater inclusion of empowerment in both the developmental and prevention sciences as a way to understand power, take power, and engage in effective social and liberating community change. However, again, this is contingent on the continued development of empowerment measures to understand the diversity of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities in both the United States and our world.

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