

Empirical Article

Construction and validation of a scale for assessing critical social justice attitudes

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Two large studies (combined $n = 5,878$) set out to construct and validate a scale for assessing critical social justice attitudes. Studies assessed the reliability, factor structure, model fit, and both convergent and divergent validity of the scale. Studies also examined the prevalence of critical social justice attitudes in different populations and the scale's correlations with other variables of interest, including well-being variables: anxiety, depression, and happiness. Participants for Study 1 ($n = 848$) were university faculty and students, as well as non-academic adults, from Finland. Participants responded to a survey about critical social justice attitudes. Twenty one candidate items were devised for an initial item pool, on which factor analyses were conducted, resulting in a 10-item pilot version of critical social justice attitude scales (CSJAS). Participants for Study 2 were a nationwide sample ($n = 5,030$) aged 15–84 from Finland. Five new candidate items were introduced, of which two were included in the final, seven-item, version of CSJAS. The final CSJAS scale had high reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$, $\omega = 0.88$) and a good model fit (comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.04, standardized root mean residual [SRMR] = 0.01, $\chi^2(14, 5024) = 132.8$ ($p < 0.001$)) as well as convergent and divergent validity. Overall, the study sample rejected critical social justice propositions, with strong rejection from men. Women expressed more than twice as much support for the propositions ($d = 1.20$). In both studies, CSJAS was correlated with depression, anxiety, and (lack of) happiness, but not more so than being on the political left was. The critical social justice attitude scale was successfully constructed and validated. It had good reliability and model fit.

Key words: Critical social justice attitudes, critical social justice, critical social justice attitude scale, anxiety, depression.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 2010s and early 2020s, a particular variety of social justice became a central topic of public discussion in the US and many other Western countries. Aspects of this orientation towards social justice have been discussed in the media under many names, for example, “intersectionality,” “antiracism,” and “wokeness.” Political scientist Yascha Mounk termed this version of social justice “the identity synthesis” (Mounk, 2023). Mounk, while acknowledging the oppression minorities have faced in societies, and the understandable desire to promote identities in order to combat prejudice, describes the coming to prominence of an ideology that seeks to center identities in nearly every aspect of life. In a similar vein, author Tim Urban distinguished two varieties of social justice: *liberal social justice* (focusing on individual rights) and *social justice fundamentalism* (focusing on group identities and with a more authoritarian flair; Urban, 2023). In the present study, “critical social justice attitudes” refer to this latter kind. The study takes critical social justice to mean what Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) described in the following way:

A critical approach to social justice refers to specific theoretical perspectives that recognize that society is stratified (i.e., divided and unequal) in significant and far-reaching ways along social group lines that include race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Critical social justice recognizes inequality as deeply embedded in the fabric of society (i.e., as structural), and actively seeks to change this.

Having critical social justice attitudes (CSJA) can thus be said to reflect a propensity to:

1. perceive people foremost as members of identity groups and as being, witting or unwitting, perpetrators or victims of oppression based on the groups' perceived power differentials; and
2. advocate regulating how or how much people speak and how they act if there is a perceived power differential between speakers, and intervening in action or speech deemed oppressive

These are henceforth referred to as the perception and regulation aspects of critical social justice attitudes. While critical social justice (or intersectional or “woke”) discourse draws mainly from dynamics within American society, reports indicate many other Western countries have begun to see it becoming more prevalent in their public discussion and institutions, for example, the UK, Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia, and Sweden (Boztas, 2022; Hamilton, 2023; Lyons, 2021; Pollara, 2023; Rozado, 2023; Sande, 2023; Smith, Boag, Keegan & Butler-Warke, 2023).

This is true in Finland as well, where the arrival of a critical social justice (often called “woke”) discourse has sparked much debate in the media (e.g., Koskela, 2021; Parikka, 2022). This debate has been largely data-free and it can thus be considered a worthwhile question to study how prevalent these attitudes are. Thus far, no reliable and valid instrument has existed to assess the extent and prevalence of these attitudes in different populations.

Theoretically, critical social justice propositions derive in part from various academic disciplines dealing with forms of oppression, for example, intersectional feminism and critical race theory (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013).

These disciplines derive a portion of their underlying epistemology from critical theory, postmodernism, and post-colonialism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Mounk, 2023). A broader scope of relevant fields would also encompass, but not be limited to, black feminism, queer theory, and transgender studies (Butler, 1990; Collins, 2020; Combahee River Collective, 2014). Ideas deriving from these theoretical continuums come together in the perception component of critical social justice attitudes.

Previously esoteric ideas in the mentioned fields have made it into the mainstream recently, aided by best-selling authors (e.g., DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019). These disciplines point out varieties of oppression that cause privileged people (e.g., male, white, heterosexual, cisgender) to benefit over marginalized people (e.g., woman, black, gay, transgender). In critical race theory, some of the core tenets include that: (1) white supremacy and racism are omnipresent and “colorblind” policies are not enough to tackle them; (2) people of color have their own unique standpoint; and (3) races are social constructs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013).

Queer theory on the other hand can be roughly summarized as a mechanism for problematizing boundaries of concepts and categories like “man,” “woman,” “straight,” “gay,” etc. (Butler, 1990; McCann & Monaghan, 2019). This process is called “queering,” and results, for example, in beliefs that there are no real boundaries between men and women and that gender, and possibly even sex, are social constructs. Queer theory and its offshoot transgender studies influence, and are influenced by, trans activism (McCann & Monaghan, 2019). They also often go hand in hand with current race activism: the critical race theory-influenced black identity movement Black Lives Matter (BLM), for instance, explicitly state their aims to include “to dismantle cisgender privilege” and “to foster a queer-affirming network”, even though BLM is best known for its activism against racist policing (Mathews & Jones, 2022).

Intersectionality thus ties together different kinds of oppression-related identity politics. Post-colonial theory derives from post-modernism and aims at opposing colonialism in all aspects of culture (Mishra & Hodge, 1991). Its most visible manifestations in contemporary culture have included, for example, attempts to “decolonize” university reading lists, that is, make them less white and European in favor of marginalized identities and attempts to get rid of statues of persons deemed controversial (e.g., slave-owning founding fathers in the US) and combating cultural appropriation (a privileged group adopting, e.g., traditions or dress from an oppressed group).

The regulating aspect to CSJA manifests most clearly in support to various challenges to speech and action. Often speech contested in this way can be seen to add to perceived oppression of marginalized identities, but is also typically legal and considered by others to be within the realm of a “marketplace of ideas” in a liberal democracy. These include combating *microaggressions* (small slights that are perceived to be offensive to marginalized people) and cultural appropriation, and attempting to enact *safe spaces* (where speech is limited to what is considered inoffensive to marginalized people), attach *trigger warnings* to, for example, texts (warnings that the text may contain offensive depiction or language), and persuade people into declaring their *gender pronouns* online (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Bellet, Jones &

McNally, 2018; McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018; Rogers, 2006; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino *et al.*, 2007). In contemporary culture, most visibly in social media and university campuses, various people have now experienced different degrees of negative repercussions both online and offline after saying or writing something that caught the attention of online activists (da Silva, 2021; Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 2023; Ng, 2020).

Taking these theoretical and contemporary cultural notions as a starting point Study 1 set out to create a psychometrically reliable and valid measure for assessing critical social justice attitudes. I then tested the scale in a university wide study. The aims for Study 1 were to construct a pilot CSJA scale and measure convergent validity via the scale’s correlation with a global CSJA item. Study 2 set out to refine and further validate the pilot CSJAS created in Study 1 and replicate results in relation to scale reliability and factor structure. This plan was implemented via a large-sample nationwide study drafting its sample from readership of Finland’s largest circulation newspaper. Both studies also performed exploratory analyses on the scale’s relationships with several variables. For instance, as critical social justice attitudes appear to mostly manifest in the political left, and because identifying as being on the left has been seen to correlate with weaker mental health, the studies looked at whether having critical social justice attitudes had a relationship with participants’ mental health beyond that of simply being on the left (Bernardi, 2021; Gimbrone, Bates, Prins & Keyes, 2022).

The studies were done in Finland with large samples. Since the critical social justice phenomenon has been in the spotlight in recent years, determining how prevalent the attitudes are in the general population and in academia was of public interest. Studies 1 and 2 set out to fill the need, construct a new measure to study the attitudes, and use it to determine the prevalence of CSJA in Finland. However, the scale was designed to be used and validated in other Western and possibly other populations as well.

STUDY 1

Method

Data files and a codebook for the study are posted online on Open Science Framework and are found here: (<https://osf.io/k2qx9/files/osfstorage>).

Participants and procedure. Study participants ($n = 851$) were staff ($n = 382$) and students ($n = 266$) of the (University of Turku) as well as staff ($n = 11$) and students ($n = 53$) of other Finnish universities, students of foreign universities ($n = 2$) and Finnish-speakers not associated with a university ($n = 134$). In total there were 648 participants from (University of Turku) and 714 from universities altogether. Three participants were removed for extremely anomalous answer patterns and claiming affiliation with departments that do not exist at universities they claimed to study or work in. The survey was administered via the Webropol online survey service and distributed via internal mailing lists of (University of Turku).

Of the respondents 48.9% (415/848) were female, 44.7% male, 1.3% classified themselves as “other,” and 5.1% declined to

answer. Average respondent age was 35.9 (26.0 for students, 44.3 years for faculty) years ranging from 18 to 74 years. Out of the 714 university respondents, 406 gave voluntary additional information about their department and/or faculty at the university. 74 (55 faculty, 19 students) were from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), 68 (11, 57) from the department of social sciences (sociology, social policy, social work), 61 (51, 10) from medicine, 42 (3, 39) from political science, 35 (6, 29) from psychology, 32 (20, 12) from humanities, 29 (21, 8) from business, 21 (10, 11) from “other” social sciences (e.g., philosophy), 20 (16, 4) from education, 17 (1, 16) from speech-language pathology, and eight (5, 3) from law school.

Critical social justice attitude scale creation. Candidate items for the scale were designed based on the most prevalent ideas in critical social justice literature (e.g., Butler, 1990; Collins, 2020; Combahee River Collective, 2014; Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019; McCann & Monaghan, 2019; Rothblum & Solovay, 2009) and its manifestations in contemporary culture, including non-fiction

books, podcasts, newspaper articles, social media trends, and discussions with pilot testers of the items from different academic disciplines (e.g., Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020; see complete list of items and their factor loadings in Table 1). Mainstream ideas from intersectional feminism, critical race theory, queer theory, and post-colonial theory were taken as a starting point, as well as items involving limiting speech that could be termed problematic, hurtful, or coming from privilege. Twenty candidate items were then devised based on sentiments commonly appearing in contemporary culture and deriving from critical social justice literature. Some items introduced reversed sentiments and were reverse-coded in analyses.

Four additional items of interest were included to assess qualities adjacent to critical social justice ideas. Twenty items were to be tested and the ones that did not perform well enough psychometrically were then to be excluded. The scale was designed to have only one factor, measuring an underlying critical social justice orientation, but should exploratory factor analysis indicate multiple factors, another factor solution could just as well be taken as the scale’s proper form. Prior to collecting data, the 20 candidate

Table 1. Study 1 and 2: Candidate items and factor loadings for CSJAS (reversed items marked (r); altered wordings with superscript numbers)

Item	Study 2		Study 1		
	20-item	7	21-item	10	
CSJAS1	<i>If white people have on average a higher level of income than black people, it is because of racism.^a</i>	0.80	0.81	0.79	0.79
CSJAS2	<i>University reading lists should include fewer white or European authors.</i>	0.80	0.80	0.81	0.80
CSJAS3	<i>Microaggressions* should be challenged often and actively. (* = verbal communication or act, which can be seen to reflect negative attitudes towards a minority group, regardless of original intent)</i>	0.80	0.78	–	–
CSJAS4	<i>Trans* women who compete with women in sports are not helping women’s rights. (* = born male, identify as female)^b (r)</i>	0.76	0.73	0.77	0.79
CSJAS5	<i>We don’t need to talk more about the color of people’s skin. (r)</i>	0.60	0.62	0.62	0.62
CSJAS6	<i>A white person cannot understand how a black person feels equally well as another black person.^c</i>	0.59	0.59	0.57	–
CSJAS7	<i>A member of a privileged group can adopt features or cultural elements of a less privileged group. (r)</i>	0.59	0.59	–	–
CSJAS8	<i>If a white person doesn’t admit they are racist, they are still probably racist.</i>	0.65	–	0.59	–
CSJAS9	<i>Trans* women are women. (* = born male, identify as female)</i>	0.70	–	0.75	0.77
CSJAS10	<i>We should have more safe spaces in society (=a space where agreed-upon rules aim to eliminate prejudices, conflicts, criticism, or potentially offensive actions, ideas, or discussions).</i>	0.79	–	–	–
CSJAS11	<i>Content warnings do not need to be added to text that may cause people to experience disturbing emotions. (r)</i>	0.60	–	–	–
CSJAS12	<i>Cisgender* people should state their gender pronouns in, for instance, their social media profiles (* = people who feel they are the sex assigned in their birth)</i>	0.56	–	–	–
CSJAS13	<i>Every act is either racist or antiracist, and there are no alternatives.</i>	0.53	–	0.48	–
CSJAS14	<i>Limiting speech rights of privileged people is not justified. (r)</i>	0.45	–	0.61	0.60
CSJAS15	<i>There are two biological sexes in the human species. (r)</i>	0.67	–	0.72	0.73
CSJAS16	<i>You should not say things that might offend an oppressed person.</i>	0.62	–	0.66	0.66
CSJAS17	<i>The police are institutionally racist.^d</i>	0.68	–	0.67	0.62
CSJAS18	<i>The ideas of Karl Marx should not have more influence in national politics. (r)</i>	0.53	–	0.61	0.60
CSJAS19	<i>Other people or structures are more responsible for my well-being than I myself am.</i>	0.49	–	0.55	–
CSJAS20	<i>Rioting or looting are not justified even if they are carried out by an oppressed person. (r)</i>	0.47	–	0.48	–
CSJAS21	<i>A black person can be racist. (r)</i>	–	–	0.33	–
CSJAS22	<i>There are no biological differences between men and women.</i>	–	–	0.48	–
CSJAS23	<i>Being fat should not be considered an identity and doctors are right to counsel fat patients to lose weight.^e (r)</i>	–	–	0.45	–
CSJAS24	<i>Feminism should also advance the rights of white women. (r)</i>	–	–	0.03	–
CSJAS25	<i>I don’t care about the ethnic origin of a person. (r)</i>	–	–	–0.11	–
CSJAS26	<i>There has been significant progress in human rights within the last century. (r)</i>	–	–	–0.12	–

Note: Study wordings: ^a“If white people have on average a higher income than black people, it is because of oppression”; ^b“Transwomen in the Olympics are not helping women’s rights”; ^c“A white person cannot understand how a black person feels”; ^d“The police are fundamentally a racist institution.”; and ^e“Being overweight should not be considered a lifestyle choice and doctors are right to counsel overweight patients.” Factors forced to load on the single SJAS factor.

items were piloted with five people in and outside of the research group. All piloters had a graduate degree, and they had backgrounds in diverse academic disciplines including philosophy, social science, psychology, medicine, and fine arts as well as an interest in critical social justice phenomenology. The scale was edited based on their feedback. English translations of the items were provided by the author and a psychology researcher who is a native speaker of both Finnish and (American) English. In the study, the scale was offered in Finnish and items were translated for the manuscript.

Data collection. All faculties of (University of Turku) received an email asking university students and staff to answer a brief survey on critical social justice attitudes and well-being. In addition, students and staff from other universities as well as people not affiliated with any university were allowed to answer, but the survey was not advertised to them in any way. The survey was in Finnish. All survey items had to be answered in order to proceed (except for one anxiety item).

Measures Critical social justice attitudes. Critical social justice attitudes were measured with 20 candidate items and four additional items of interest designed for the study. All items were devised by the author, using feedback from pilot testers to fine-tune details in phrasing. Answer options for these items were 1 = “completely disagree,” 2 = “somewhat disagree,” 3 = “somewhat agree,” and 4 = “completely agree.” See Table 1 for a full list of items and Table 2 for a full list of the original Finnish items.

Additional items. Four additional items were included to assess attitudes or qualities that were thought to be critical social justice attitude related, but not necessarily within the domain of the scale. These items were “*I think of myself as being in a good socio-economic position,*” “*I have experienced significant oppression from others during my life,*” “*Other people and/or structures are more responsible for my well-being than I am,*” and “*I think violence against politically dangerous people is justified.*” Answer options for these items were 1 = “completely disagree,” 2 = “somewhat disagree,” 3 = “somewhat agree,” and 4 = “completely agree.” One additional item, the global critical social justice attitude item, asked participants to self-assess their critical social justice orientation (“*If my friend called me ‘woke’ in good faith, I would agree with them, regardless of whether I approve of the term or not.*”) in order to compare the answer to the score given by the CSJAS.

Anxiety. Anxiety was measured with the brief generalized anxiety measure, the GAD-7 (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams & Löwe, 2006). It measures anxiety over the last two weeks with seven items (e.g., asking participants how often they have been bothered by “*Not being able to stop or control worrying*”), each with four answer options ranging from 0 (“*not at all*”) to 3 (“*nearly every day*”). Scores for GAD-7 range from 0 to 21. Minima for all of the scales on the questionnaires were 1 (e.g., GAD-7 items ranged from 1 to 4) and scale sum scores were later transformed to start from 0. The scale was internally consistent ($\alpha = 0.91$, $\omega = 0.91$).

Depression. Depression was measured with the Finnish modification of the two-factor revised Beck depression inventory (R-BDI; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen & Laippala, 1999). The Finnish R-BDI has 13 items. The items consist of collections

Table 2. Study 1 and 2: Candidate items for CSJAS in original Finnish (reversed items marked (r); altered wordings with superscript numbers)

Item	
CSJAS1	<i>Jos valkoihoisilla ihmisillä on keskimäärin korkeammat tulot kuin tummaihoisilla ihmisillä, se johtuu rasismista.^a</i>
CSJAS2	<i>Korkeakoulujen kurssikirjallisuuden tulisi sisältää vähemmän valkoihoisia tai eurooppalaisia kirjailijoita.</i>
CSJAS3	<i>Mikroaggressioihin (=verbaalinen viesti tai käytös, jonka voi tulkita viestivän negatiivisia asenteita vähemmistöryhmää kohtaan, riippumatta alkuperäisestä tarkoituksesta) tulee puuttua usein ja aktiivisesti.</i>
CSJAS4	<i>Transnaiset*, jotka kilpailevat naisten kanssa urheilussa eivät edistä naisten oikeuksia.^b (* = syntynyt mieheksi, identifioidu naiseksi) (r)</i>
CSJAS5	<i>Ihönväreistä ei tarvitse puhua nykyistä enempää. (r)</i>
CSJAS6	<i>Valkoihoinen ihminen ei voi tietää milta tummaihoisesta ihmisestä tuntuu yhtä hyvin kuin toinen tummaihoisen ihminen.^c</i>
CSJAS7	<i>Etuoikeutetun ryhmän jäsen saa ottaa käyttöönsä vähemmän etuoikeutetun identiteettiyrhmän piirteitä tai kulttuurituotteita. (r)</i>
CSJAS8	<i>Mikäli valkoihoinen ihminen ei myönnä olevansa rasisti, hän on silti todennäköisesti rasisti.</i>
CSJAS9	<i>Transnaiset* ovat naisia. (* = syntynyt mieheksi, identifioidu naiseksi)</i>
CSJAS10	<i>Yhteiskunnassa tulisi olla enemmän turvallisia tiloja (=tila, josta on sovittu säännöin pyrittä poistamaan ennakkoluulo, konflikti, kritiikki tai potentiaalisesti loukkaavat teot, ideat tai keskustelut).</i>
CSJAS11	<i>Sisältövaroituksia ei tarvitse lisätä sellaisiin teksteihin, jotka saattavat altistaa ihmisiä kokemaan häiritseviä tunteita. (r)</i>
CSJAS12	<i>Cis-sukupuolisten* ihmisten olisi suotavaa ilmoittaa sukupuoli-identiteettiänsä liittyvät pronominit esimerkiksi someprofileissaan. (* = ihminen, joka kokee olevansa syntymässä määrättyä sukupuoltaan)</i>
CSJAS13	<i>Jokainen teko on rasistinen tai antirasistinen ja muita vaihtoehtoja ei ole.</i>
CSJAS14	<i>Etuoikeutetun ihmisen puheoikeutta ei ole oikein rajoittaa. (r)</i>
CSJAS15	<i>Ihmislajilla on kaksi biologista sukupuolta. (r)</i>
CSJAS16	<i>Ei tule sanoa asioita, joista sorretti ihminen voi loukkaantua.</i>
CSJAS17	<i>Poliisi on rasistinen instituutio.^d</i>
CSJAS18	<i>Karl Marxin ideoilla ei tulisi olla nykyistä enempää vaikutusvaltaa kotimaan politiikassa. (r)</i>
CSJAS19	<i>Muut ihmiset tai rakenteet ovat hyvinvoimistani vastuussa itseäni enemmän.</i>
CSJAS20	<i>Mellakointi tai ryöstely ei ole oikeutettua, vaikka sitä tekevä kuuluisi sorrettuun vähemmistöön. (r)</i>
CSJAS21	<i>Tummaihoisen ihminen voi olla rasisti. (r)</i>
CSJAS22	<i>Miesten ja naisten välillä ei ole biologisia eroja.</i>
CSJAS23	<i>Lihavuutta ei tule pitää elämäntapavalintana ja lääkäreiden on perusteltua valistaa lihavia.^e (r)</i>
CSJAS24	<i>Feminismin tulisi ajaa myös valkoihoisten naisten asiaa. (r)</i>
CSJAS25	<i>Ihmisen etnisellä alkuperällä ei ole minulle väliä. (r)</i>
CSJAS26	<i>Ihmisoikeuksissa on tapahtunut merkittävää edistystä viimeisten sadan vuoden aikana. (r)</i>

Note: Study wordings: ^a“Jos valkoihoisilla ihmisillä on keskimäärin korkeammat tulot kuin tummaihoisilla ihmisillä, se johtuu sorrosta”; ^b“Transnaiset olympialaisissa eivät edistä naisten oikeuksia”; ^c“Valkoihoinen ihminen ei voi tietää milta tummaihoisesta ihmisestä tuntuu”; ^d“Poliisi on lähtökohtaisesti rasistinen instituutio”; and ^e“Ylipainoa ei tule pitää elämäntapavalintana ja lääkäreiden on perusteltua valistaa ylipainoisia.”

of five statements such as “*How do you see the future?*” with options ranging from 0 (“*I am hopeful about the future*”) to 4 (“*The future feels hopeless to me*”). ($\alpha = 0.88$, $\omega = 0.88$).

Happiness. Happiness was measured with a global happiness item from UN's World Happiness Report, where participants are asked to rate their quality of life on a scale from 0 to 10 (Helliwell, Layard, Sachs & De Neve, 2020).

Compliance with ethical standards. All procedures performed involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. As participants were adults and the results anonymous, ethical board review was not required in Finland where the study was performed. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Before answering the survey, participants were presented with the following consent message: "The answers to this survey will be used in a study on social justice attitudes and well-being. Your answers will be saved and analyzed anonymously in the study. By continuing to fill out the survey you indicate you have understood the above and give your consent to your answers being used as anonymous research data."

Analysis plan. Interitem correlations were to be calculated for all of the 20 candidate items and four additional items for the CSJAS. Exploratory factor analyses (EFA, in SPSS) would be used to evaluate the factor structure of the scale and how excluding some of the worst-performing items would affect the factor structure and reliability of the scale. The factor solution would be obtained using principal axis factoring and corroborated using parallel analysis. The rotation method was oblique ("direct oblimin" in SPSS) to allow correlations between factors. The analysis plan was amended to confirm EFA with separate analyses for men and women due to large gender differences in results. If feasible, the scale was expected to have reliability over $\omega = 0.80$ and explain at a minimum $\geq 50.0\%$ of variance. Finally, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA, in R) would be used to evaluate model fit for the scale. The scale was expected to have comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95 or better, standardized root mean residual (SRMR) < 0.05 and the scale be of economical length, in the range of 7–11 items. Study subpopulations (faculty, students, non-university Finnish adults) would be compared to each other in terms of critical social justice attitudes and well-being.

RESULTS

Scale reliabilities, EFAs, and CFAs

One of the additional four items (CSJAS19) was noticed to be moderately correlated with several scale items, and was included in the EFAs. The first reliability analysis was run for all 21 candidate items (CSJAS1-2, CSJAS4-6, CSJAS8-9, CSJAS13-26, Table 1) resulting in $\alpha = 0.89$ and $\omega = 0.94$, already indicating good reliability. The first EFA was run for 21 items to find out the scale's factor structure and which items could possibly be excluded to further improve the scale's reliability. The items had KMO = 0.95 and Bartlett's sphericity $\chi^2(210) = 6569.2$, $p < 0.001$, indicating an excellent starting point for factor analyses, and these indices remained good-to-excellent throughout analyses. Parallel analysis indicated two potential factors explaining 33.1% and 4.8% of variance (eigenvalues for parallel

analyzed factors 1, 2, and 3: 7.47 vs. 1.29, 1.69 vs. 1.24, and 1.09 vs. 1.20). However, only three items (CSJAS24-26) had their strongest loading on the second factor. These three items would not load on the common factor, even when confined to a single factor. Thus, to simplify the scale, the three items were removed from the next EFA. Two more items (CSJAS22-23) were excluded based on item 22's low ability to differentiate between respondents (97.4% completely or somewhat disagree, 2.6% completely or somewhat agree) and a human error in the survey phrasing of item 23. One item (CSJAS21) had a substantially lower factor loading than the rest of the items (0.33 vs. > 0.48) and was discarded, resulting in 15 items with 42.2% of variance explained by a single factor and loadings 0.47–0.81 ($\alpha = 0.91$, $\omega = 0.92$).

Next, five items with lowest factor loadings (CSJAS6, CSJAS8, CSJAS13, CSJAS19-20) were removed to optimize scale length and variance explained by the factor. This resulted in a 10-item scale (CSJAS1-2, CSJAS4-5, CSJAS9, CSJAS14-18) with one factor ($\alpha = 0.90$, $\omega = 0.91$; 49.2% of variance explained, loadings 0.60–0.80; women: $\alpha = 0.86$, $\omega = 0.86$; 39.5%, 0.50–0.80; men: $\alpha = 0.89$, $\omega = 0.89$; 46.6%, 0.49–0.82). Confirmatory factor analysis for the 10-item, single-factor model indicated decent fit: CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, SRMR = 0.04, $\chi^2(35, 848) = 229.5$ ($p < 0.001$), root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.08 (women: CFI = 0.94, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93, SRMR = 0.04, $\chi^2(35, 848) = 112.5$ ($P < 0.001$), RMSEA = 0.07; men: CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, SRMR = 0.04, $\chi^2(35, 848) = 109.3$ ($P < 0.001$), RMSEA = 0.08).

Correlations, descriptive statistics, and t-tests. All final scale items for CSJAS were weakly positively correlated with anxiety ($r = 0.16$ – 0.22) and very weakly positively correlated with depression ($r = 0.06$ – 0.14) and with lack of happiness ($r = 0.01$ – 0.10). Self-reporting as "woke" (global CSJA item) and CSJAS items were strongly correlated ($r = 0.62$), indicating the scale had convergent validity. Self-reporting as woke was also correlated with depression, anxiety, and (lack of) happiness. Anxiety, depression and (lack of) happiness were strongly correlated with each other. Higher CSJAS scores were weakly correlated with depression, anxiety, and lack of happiness in students ($r = 0.39$, 0.27 , -0.17 for anxiety, depression, and happiness, respectively). In faculty (0.17 , 0.07 , -0.06) and non-academic (0.19 , 0.14 , -0.11) respondents these correlations were very weak.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) are displayed in Table 3 for all respondents, men, women, those who responded "other" for gender, students, faculty, non-academic respondents, and the departments/faculties whose number of respondents exceeded $n = 18$. Overall, women (CSJAS: 1.44 [1.38–1.50]) scored around two times higher than men (CSJAS: 0.76 [0.70–0.83]) on CSJAS. Cohen's d was 1.07 for the difference between men and women indicating a large effect. Lowest well-being as well as highest CSJAS scores were in the "other" category for gender, though with only $n = 11$ respondents. Social sciences students had low well-being and high CSJAS scores relative to others, whereas psychology students had high CSJAS scores but moderate well-being. Non-academic respondents and STEM students had the lowest CSJAS scores.

Table 3. Study 1: Descriptive statistics for study populations

	AN (0–21)	DE (0–52)	HA (0–10)	GS (0–3)	CSJAS (0–3)
All	4.43	10.81	7.62	1.33	1.13
Men	3.57	10.30	7.68	0.96	0.76
Women	5.17	11.00	7.62	1.68	1.44
Other	7.36 ¹	16.18 ¹	6.36 ¹	1.80 ³	1.82 ¹
Student	5.27	11.96	7.34	1.49	1.21
Soc	6.82 ²	13.81 ²	7.11 ²	1.86 ¹	1.66 ³
Pol	4.97	11.46	7.41 ³	1.45	1.31
Psych	4.72	9.79	7.55	1.85 ²	1.73 ²
STEM	3.89	9.89	7.53	1.36	.75
Faculty	3.91	9.78	7.89	1.40	1.26
STEM	4.27	10.22	7.85	1.39	1.19
Med	4.22	10.08	7.86	1.39	1.20
Busin	2.24*	8.05*	7.90*	1.23	1.10
Hum	4.05	10.70	7.35	1.61	1.57
Non-acad	3.96	11.07	7.49	0.78*	0.56*
Low-CSJAS	3.98	10.30	7.68	–	–
High-CSJAS	5.97 ³	12.54 ³	7.41 ³	–	–

Note: Superscript for three subpopulations with highest score, asterisk for subpopulation with lowest score (happiness reversed). AN = Anxiety; DE = Depression; HA = Happiness; GS = Global CSJA; Soc = Social Sciences; pol = Political Sciences; psych = Psychology; med = Medicine; busin = Business; hum = Humanities; non-acad = Non-Academic.

The differences between student populations were mitigated, but did not entirely disappear, when controlling for gender. Overall, men rejected every critical social justice item on the scale, whereas women expressed support for half and rejected half (see Table 4 for percentage support for each scale item by gender).

A binary variable for CSJAS scores below ($n = 656$) and above ($n = 192$) the scale midpoint (1.5) was constructed for t -tests. Respondents with high CSJAS scores were more anxious ($t[569.2] = 5.32$) and depressed ($t[551.8] = 3.26$) than respondents with low CSJAS scores. They were also less happy ($t[556.3] = -1.75$) and more likely to report being in a good socio-economic position ($t[663.7] = -4.32$), having experienced less oppression than other respondents ($t[623.6] = 2.87$) and to find violence against “politically dangerous people” justified ($t[689.9] = 1.93$). Being more anxious and depressed and less happy was more pronounced in high-CSJAS students relative to other high-CSJAS respondents. Percentage-wise, differences between high-CSJAS and low-CSJAS students were 67.9% for anxiety, 32.5% for depression, and 4.5% for happiness.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants and procedure. Study participants ($n = 5,030$) were 2,634 (52.4%) men, 2,112 (42.0%) women, 120 (2.4%) people with “other” gender, and 164 (3.3%) unwilling to specify a gender. Participant ages ranged from 15 to 84 with mean at 41.2 years. Four participants were removed due to their very young age (11–14) and one participant for highly anomalous answers. 2,974 Of the participants (59.1%) had an academic degree: bachelor’s (7.7%), master’s (26.0%), licentiate (2.1%) or a doctoral degree (3.9%), 1,542 (30.7%) had either an upper

secondary (15.4%) school or vocational degree (15.3%), and 222 (4.4%) only had secondary school training or less (211 N/A, 4.2%; 81 “other,” 1.6%). Political party preferences roughly corresponded to a national *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper poll the same month, with some exceptions (Luukka, 2022). Of the respondents 11.8% said they do not vote (N/A 18.3%). Out of people who said they vote, the National Coalition Party had 23.9% support (vs. 24.2% nationally), Finns 15.6% (vs. 17.3%) and Swedish People’s Party 2.6% (vs. 4.6%). Substantial overrepresentation was seen for the Green Party (19.1% vs. 9.0%) and Left Alliance (16.9% vs. 8.3%) and underrepresentation for the Social Democratic Party (10.0% vs. 19.0%) and Centre Party (3.4% vs. 10.4%). 8.5% said they support another party.

One thousand two hundred twenty-six participants worked ($n = 275$) or studied ($n = 951$) at a university whereas 3,690 did not (114 N/A). Biggest university representation was from University of Helsinki ($n = 236$), University of Turku ($n = 110$), and University of Tampere ($n = 102$), followed by 85 from University of Eastern Finland, 79 from University of Jyväskylä, 76 from University of Oulu, and 15 from Åbo Akademi (378 were from applied universities, 115 from technical universities, 93 from “other” Finnish university, and 51 from a university abroad). Biggest fields were natural sciences/technical ($n = 309$; 205 students, 52 faculty, 52 N/A), applied sciences (any; $n = 225$; 183 students, 23 faculty), humanities ($n = 147$; 98, 30), business/economics ($n = 118$; 97, 4), social sciences ($n = 98$; 73, 15), political science/philosophy ($n = 84$; 61, 13), medicine ($n = 83$; 49, 17), education ($n = 75$; 57, 12), law ($n = 54$; 43, 3), and psychology ($n = 39$; 30, 4), 81 “other.” Participants were from all over Finland with the most participants from Helsinki ($n = 1,133$), Uusimaa ($n = 1,011$), and Central Finland/Pirkanmaa/Häme ($n = 1,010$). The study was preregistered (*redacted for peer review*). Preregistration included the study design and planned primary analyses.

Critical social justice attitude scale refinement. Five new items were designed to be studied with the best performing 15 items from Study 1. New item creation was based on the observation that items in the Study 1 reflected the propensity to perceive oppression aspect of CSJA better than advocating regulation of oppressive speech or actions aspect. These new items all reflected the regulating aspect of CSJA. The aim was to investigate whether the new items would perform well when compared to other CSJAS items. The new items were on microaggressions, cultural appropriation, content warnings, safe spaces, and online gender pronouns. English translations of the items were provided by the author and a psychology researcher as per Study 1. In the study, the scale was in Finnish and items were translated for the manuscript.

Data collection. Data were collected using the Webropol online survey tool. In October 20, 2022 the highest circulation newspaper in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat*, ran a story on Study 1. The story included a link to the Study 2 survey. This resulted in thousands of answers to the survey with a nationwide sample of all ages, genders, and party preferences.

Measures Critical social justice attitudes. Critical social justice attitudes were measured with the 15 best performing items from

Table 4. Study 1 and 2: CSJAS item answer distribution in percentages (1–5 in Study 2, 1–4 in Study 1; all items unreversed)

Item	Men (%)					Women (%)					
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
CSJAS1	<i>If white people have on average a higher level of income than black ...</i>	51.6	29.1	5.4	10.5	3.4	19.0	24.7	8.0	35.9	12.4
CSJAS2	<i>University reading lists should include fewer white or European authors.</i>	55.4	22.4	12.5	6.7	3.0	21.0	21.9	17.7	23.4	15.9
CSJAS3	<i>Microaggressions* are to be challenged often and actively.</i>	44.8	23.9	8.3	16.1	6.8	13.2	15.5	8.1	33.4	29.8
CSJAS4	<i>Trans* women who compete with women in sports are not helping ... (r)</i>	5.3	5.4	6.0	16.2	67.0	20.2	19.4	11.8	21.0	27.7
CSJAS5	<i>We don't need to talk more about the color of people's skin. (r)</i>	8.6	11.6	10.4	24.5	44.9	20.1	26.6	9.1	22.5	21.7
CSJAS6	<i>A white person cannot understand how a black person feels equally well ...</i>	30.6	29.4	7.3	22.3	10.5	9.3	17.9	5.3	33.1	34.4
CSJAS7	<i>A member of a privileged group can adopt features or cultural ... (r)</i>	6.7	8.5	11.7	26.1	47.0	13.7	27.6	16.7	25.7	16.4
CSJAS8	<i>If a white person doesn't admit they are racist, they are still probably ...</i>	69.2	17.1	5.3	5.6	2.8	37.6	27.4	10.9	19.1	4.9
CSJAS9	<i>Trans* women are women. (* = born male, identify as female)</i>	40.4	21.9	7.9	19.0	10.8	13.4	14.3	8.2	26.8	37.3
CSJAS10	<i>We should have more safe spaces in society.</i>	42.6	19.4	13.5	14.0	10.4	12.7	12.2	12.8	25.0	37.3
CSJAS11	<i>Content warnings do not need to be added to written text that may ... (r)</i>	49.7	20.8	7.2	15.3	7.0	18.6	32.1	7.6	20.7	21.0
CSJAS12	<i>Cisgender* people should state their gender ...</i>	71.6	10.4	12.3	3.0	2.7	47.9	18.8	19.2	8.2	5.8
CSJAS13	<i>Every act is either racist or antiracist and there are no other alternatives.</i>	88.3	6.8	2.4	1.3	1.2	66.0	22.9	5.7	4.0	1.5
CSJAS14	<i>Limiting speech rights of privileged speakers is not justified. (r)</i>	10.1	7.2	3.9	14.4	64.4	10.1	25.5	8.0	23.8	32.7
CSJAS15	<i>There are two biological sexes in the human species. (r)</i>	7.3	6.0	2.3	16.0	68.4	20.4	21.1	4.7	22.1	31.6
CSJAS16	<i>You should not say things that might offend an oppressed person.</i>	34.8	30.4	5.8	20.7	8.3	9.7	22.5	5.8	35.0	27.0
CSJAS17	<i>The police are institutionally racist.</i>	75.6	14.9	2.7	4.3	2.6	46.8	27.7	7.3	13.6	4.6
CSJAS18	<i>The ideas of Karl Marx should not have more influence in national ... (r)</i>	6.7	8.1	16.0	13.0	56.3	5.1	14.7	32.3	19.2	28.7
CSJAS19	<i>Other people and/or structures are more responsible for my well-being ...</i>	53.9	30.2	6.6	7.0	2.3	32.6	42.0	10.4	13.2	1.8
CSJAS20	<i>Rioting or looting are not justified even if they are carried out by an ... (r)</i>	2.1	3.4	1.9	10.2	82.4	1.9	6.0	3.0	19.3	69.9
CSJAS21	<i>A black person can be racist. (r)</i>	89.2	5.8	1.3	3.7	x	72.8	20.0	5.1	2.2	x
CSJAS22	<i>No biological differences exist between men and women.</i>	87.9	10.6	1.3	0.3	x	70.8	26.5	1.7	1.0	x
CSJAS23	<i>Being fat should not be considered an identity and doctors are ... (r)</i>	5.3	9.0	33.5	52.2	x	5.5	19.0	46.5	28.9	x
CSJAS24	<i>Feminism should also advance the rights of white women. (r)</i>	4.7	2.9	24.8	67.5	x	2.4	3.9	32.3	61.4	x
CSJAS25	<i>I don't care about the ethnic origin of people. (r)</i>	12.4	11.3	30.3	45.9	x	2.4	16.1	37.8	43.6	x
CSJAS26	<i>There has been significant progress in human rights within the last ... (r)</i>	8.4	4.7	19.3	67.5	x	4.3	3.4	30.8	61.4	x

Note: Items CSJAS1-20: 1“completely disagree”; 2“somewhat disagree”; 3“not agree, not disagree”; 4“somewhat agree”; and 5“completely agree.” CSJAS21-26: 1“completely disagree”; 2“somewhat disagree”; 3“somewhat agree”; and 4“completely agree.”; x = option “not agree, not disagree” not available in Study 1.

Study 1 and five additional new items (CSJAS3, CSJAS7, CSJAS10-12; Table 1) designed for the study. All items were devised by the author, using feedback from pilot testers to fine-tune details in phrasing. Answer options for these items were 1 = “completely disagree,” 2 = “somewhat disagree,” 3 = “not agree, not disagree,” 4 = “somewhat agree,” and 5 = “completely agree.” New items were based on contemporary social media conversation, news items, podcasts, popular books, and academic discourse on topics the items cover (e.g., Arao & Clemens, 2013; Bellet *et al.*, 2018; McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018; Rogers, 2006; Sue *et al.*, 2007).

Anxiety. Anxiety was measured with the brief generalized anxiety measure, the GAD-7 (Spitzer *et al.*, 2006). It measures anxiety over the last 2 weeks with seven items (e.g., asking participants how often they have been bothered by “Not being able to stop or control worrying”), each with four answer options ranging from 0 (“not at all”) to 3 (“nearly every day”). Scores for GAD-7 range from 0 to 21. Minima for all of the scales on the questionnaires were 1 (e.g., GAD-7 items ranged from 1 to 4) and scale sum

scores were later transformed to start from 0. The scale was internally consistent ($\alpha = 0.94$, $\omega = 0.91$).

Depression. Depression was measured with a single item devised for the study: “I have experienced symptoms of depression during the last month.” Its scale ranged from 1 = “Not at all” to 5 = “Very much.”

Happiness. Happiness was measured with a global happiness item from UN’s World Happiness Report, where participants are asked to rate their quality of life on a scale from 0 to 10 (Helliwell *et al.*, 2020).

Other additional items. Participants were asked for their gender, their year of birth, their level of education, whether they study or work at a university, which one and which field, party they typically vote for, are they politically left or right (1 = “very much left,” 2 = “somewhat left,” 3 = “in the center,” 4 = “somewhat right,” 5 = “very much right”), how liberal/conservative they are (1 = “liberal,” 2 = “somewhat liberal,” somewhat conservative,” 3 = “conservative,” 4 = “radical”; when

calculating correlations, option 4 was excluded as it can refer to both left and right radicalism), how much they appreciate democracy, capitalism, the welfare state, individualism, and three prominent public persons (Greta Thunberg, Barack Obama, and J. K. Rowling; scale in all appreciation items from 1 to 5, “not at all” to “very much”). The following questions from the previous CSJAS study were also included: “*I have experienced significant oppression from others,*” “*I think violence against politically dangerous people is justified,*” “*If my friend called me ‘woke’ in good faith, I would agree with them, regardless of whether I approve of the term or not*”; global critical social justice attitude item).

Compliance with ethical standards. As with Study 1, all procedures performed involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Similar to Study 1, as participants were adults and the results anonymous, ethical board review was not required in Finland where the study was performed. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Before answering the survey, participants were presented with the same consent message as in Study 1: “The answers to this survey will be used in a study on social justice attitudes and well-being. Your answers will be saved and analyzed anonymously in the study. By continuing to fill out the survey you indicate you have understood the above and give your consent to your answers being used as anonymous research data.”

Analysis plan. Interitem correlations were to be calculated for the highest loading 15 items from Study 1 CSJAS study and the five new candidate items for the Critical Social Justice Attitude Scale. Scale reliabilities measured in Cronbach’s alpha and McDonald’s omega were to be evaluated for each version of the scale starting from 20 items. Correlations versus control variables (left–right and liberal–conservative axes) were to be compared with correlations to the global CSJA item, and, to increase the scale’s divergent validity, items with highest relative correlations with control variables were to be cut from the scale (cutoff was set at ≥ 0.05 the item’s correlation with global CSJA).

Exploratory factor analyses (EFA, in SPSS) would then be used to evaluate the factor structure of the scale and how excluding some of the worst-performing items would affect the factor structure and reliability of the scale. The factor solution would be obtained using principal axis factoring and corroborated using parallel analysis, with the final scale expected to explain at least 50.0% of scale variance and have reliability above $\omega = 0.80$. Rotation method was oblique (“direct oblimin” in SPSS) to allow correlations between factors. The analysis plan was amended to confirm EFA with separate analyses for men and women due to large gender differences in results.

Finally, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA, with the lavaan package in R, using maximum likelihood [ML] estimation) would be used to evaluate model fit for the final scale. Analysis plan was amended to include inspecting residual correlations to arrive at the best fitting model with optimal length, if item removal was consistent with retaining content validity. The final scale was

expected to have model fit of CFI = 0.95 or better, SRMR < 0.05, and RMSEA = 0.06 or lower, have economical scale length with preferably 7–11 items, have good content validity with diverse items representing the main aspects of the item pool, and at least two items measuring both aspects of CSJA (perception and regulation). EFA and CFA would also be replicated in two halves of a file split at random ($n = 2,515$ for each), with EFA on the other half and CFA on the other. Study subpopulations (genders, education level, different party preferences, left–right, liberal–conservative, students vs. others, university vs. non-university) would be compared to each other in terms of critical social justice attitudes and well-being. Finally, the procedure would be compared to preregistration to point out possible changes to protocol.

Results

Scale reliabilities, EFAs, CFAs, and item refinement. The first reliability analysis was run for all 20 items (15 best performing items used in Study 1 and five new items; CSJAS1–20, Table 1) resulting in $\alpha = 0.93$, $\omega = 0.93$. The items had KMO = 0.97 and Bartlett’s sphericity $\chi^2(190) = 36126.2$, $p < 0.001$ indicating a good starting point for EFA, and these indices remained good-to-excellent throughout analyses. The first exploratory factor analysis was run for the 20 items and indicated two factors (40.9% and 3.2% of variance explained) with loadings 0.45–0.80. Each item’s correlations with control variables (left–right, liberal–conservative) were then compared to the item’s correlation with the global CSJA item. Four items had ≥ 0.05 higher correlations with the left–right axis than with global CSJA and were discarded: “*Other people and/or structures are more responsible for my well-being than I myself am*” ($r = 0.45$ vs. 0.34), “*Rioting or looting are not justified even if they are committed by an oppressed person*” (0.38 vs. 0.29), “*The ideas of Karl Marx should not have more influence in national politics*” (0.55 vs. 0.49), and “*The police are institutionally racist*” (0.51 vs. 0.46; CSJAS17–20). No items had higher correlations with the liberal–conservative axis than with the global CSJA item. Two items, “*Microaggressions* are to be challenged often and actively*” (CSJAS3), “*You should not say things that might offend an oppressed person*” (CSJAS16) were noticed to be very similar in their content, rendering one of them redundant. The former item performed better in EFA and the latter item was discarded. Finally, a possible content problem was identified with another item, “*There are two biological sexes in the human species*” (CSJAS15): it is possible to support this claim for reasons not having to do with CSJA, namely for a different scientific interpretation of the definition of biological sex (to include chromosomal or hormonal anomalies, for instance). Additionally, the claim that there are multiple biological sexes (instead of genders) is not central to critical social justice. This item was discarded from analyses. Exploratory factor analysis was then run for the resulting items.

The remaining 14 items formed a unifactorial scale (parallel analysis: 0.92 vs. 1.09), explaining 44.1% of variance, with loadings 0.45–0.80 ($\alpha = 0.92$, $\omega = 0.92$). EFAs were then run dropping the worst performing item each time until 11 items remained, with 49.2% of variance explained and loadings 0.60–

0.80 (including CSJAS1-11, discarding CSJAS12-14; $\alpha = 0.91$, $\omega = 0.92$). Confirmatory factor analysis was thus run for a single factor model with 11 items. CFA indicated moderate fit: CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.02, χ^2 (44, 5,024) = 832.3 ($p < 0.001$). As the χ^2 statistic was fairly high, residual correlations were inspected for the items. Four items with the highest residual correlation with other items were removed one at a time (CSJAS8-11), resulting in a seven-item scale explaining 50.2% of variance, with loadings 0.59–0.81 ($\alpha = 0.87$, $\omega = 0.88$). CFA indicated good fit: CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.01, χ^2 (14, 5024) = 132.8 ($p < 0.001$). For comparison, the also seven-item, well-established and much used GAD-7 anxiety questionnaire had CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.09, SRMR = 0.03, χ^2 (14, 5004) = 617.2 ($p < 0.001$), a somewhat worse fit.

Splitting the file into an EFA half and CFA half gave nearly the same results: one factor explained 49.8% of variance and had 0.60–0.81 factor loadings in the EFA half and CFI = 0.995, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.03, SRMR = 0.01, χ^2 (14, 2513) = 49.6 ($p < 0.001$) in the CFA half. Also, separate analyses for women ($\alpha = 0.90$, $\omega = 0.90$; 1 factor: 43.5%, 0.56–0.72) and men ($\alpha = 0.79$, $\omega = 0.79$; 1 factor: 38.8%, 0.44–0.79) gave the same factor structure. When evaluating genders separately, model fit was good for women (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.02, χ^2 (14, 2112) = 76.2 ($p < 0.001$)) and men (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.02, χ^2 (14, 2633) = 72.1 ($p < 0.001$)).

Next, university students and teaching/research staff at universities ($n = 951$) were compared with people who currently were not students or teaching/research staff ($n = 4,079$). In the university sample, the scale accounted for 55.5% of variance, with loadings 0.64–0.84 ($\alpha = 0.90$, $\omega = 0.90$). CFA indicated excellent fit: CFI = 0.998, TLI = 0.996, RMSEA = 0.02, SRMR = 0.01, χ^2 (14, 951) = 21.8 ($p < 0.001$). In the non-university sample, the scale accounted for 48.9% of variance,

with loadings 0.58–0.80 ($\alpha = 0.87$, $\omega = 0.87$). CFA indicated good fit: CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.02, χ^2 (14, 4073) = 119.7 ($p < 0.001$).

Answer distributions for male and female participants are shown in Table 4. Overall, male support for scale items was much lower than female. Regarding the extent to which select study subpopulations accepted, felt neutral about, or rejected scale items, people with “other” gender, Left Alliance voters, Green Party voters, and female social science students accepted most scale propositions. Men and male medicine students rejected all but one scale item and male humanities students and Finnish voters rejected all scale items (Table 5).

Two items (CSJAS4 and CSJAS6) had wording issues that were identified when revising the scale with help from outside evaluators, and their wordings were modified slightly after collecting the data for the study. CSJAS4, “A white person cannot understand how a black person feels” was modified to “A white person cannot understand how a black person feels equally well as another black person” CSJAS6, “Trans women in the Olympics are not helping women’s rights”, was modified to refer to sports in general and clarifications were added to indicate the definition of trans women and that they were competing with women: “Trans* women who compete with women in sports are not helping women’s rights. (*=born male, identify as female)” (Table 1). A very slight modification was also applied to the last word in CSJAS1, “If white people have on average a higher level of income than black people, it is because of oppression”, which was changed to the more specific formulation “racism.” Definitions for microaggressions (CSJAS3) and cisgender (CSJAS12) were moved to be at the end of the item and marked with *.

Correlations, descriptive statistics, and t-tests. All final scale items for CSJAS were again weakly positively correlated with anxiety ($r = 0.17$ – 0.28) and depression ($r = 0.13$ – 0.24), and very weakly positively correlated with lack of happiness ($r = 0.06$ –

Table 5. Study 2: Agree/in-between/reject CSJAS items by participant group (reversed items marked (r); alternate wordings with superscript numbers)

Item	O	LA	SSF	GP	W	UTA	MSF	A	MSM	NC	M	HM	F
CSJAS1 <i>If white people have on average a higher level of income than ...</i>	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CSJAS2 <i>University reading lists should include fewer white or ...</i>	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CSJAS3 <i>Microaggressions* are to be challenged often and actively.</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-
CSJAS4 <i>Trans* women who compete with women in sports are not ... (r)</i>	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CSJAS5 <i>We don't need to talk more about the color of people's skin. (r)</i>	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-
CSJAS6 <i>A white person cannot understand how a black person feels ...</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-
CSJAS7 <i>A member of a privileged group can adopt features or ... (r)</i>	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agreeing with items, total	6	6	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
In-between, total	1	1	4	5	5	7	6	3	1	1	1	0	0
Rejection of items, total	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	6	6	6	7	7

Note: O = Other Gender; LA = Left Alliance; SSF = Social Sciences Student Female; GP = Green Party; W = Women; UTA = University of Tampere teachers/researchers; MSF = Medical Student Female; A = All; MSM = Medical Student Male; NC=National Coalition; M = Men; HM = Humanities Student Male; F = Finns.

0.14; Table 6). CSJAS1, “If white people have on average a higher income than black people, it is because of racism”, had the largest positive correlations with anxiety and depression, and the largest negative correlation with happiness. Self-reporting as “woke” and CSJAS items were again strongly correlated ($r = 0.70$), indicating the scale had convergent validity. Self-reporting as woke had substantially lower correlations with left–right ($r = 0.55$) and liberal–conservative ($r = 0.43$) axes indicating the scale had divergent validity. Self-reporting as woke was also weakly correlated with anxiety and depression, and very weakly with lack of happiness. Anxiety, depression, and lack of happiness were, again, moderately-to-strongly correlated with each other. However, being on the political left had similar or slightly higher negative mental health correlations than CSJAS and the global CSJA item. Being politically liberal had weaker positive correlations with anxiety and depression, and negative with happiness, than CSJAS or being politically left had.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) are displayed in Tables 7–9 for all respondents, men, women, those who responded “other” for gender, students, faculty, non-academic respondents, and select party voter, student, and faculty subpopulations. Taken together, the sample cautiously rejected critical social justice attitudes, with CSJAS score (0–4) for all being 1.55 [1.52–1.58]. Women had more than twice higher CSJAS scores (2.13 [2.09–2.17] vs. 1.03 [1.00–1.06]); Cohen’s d : 1.20), and much higher self-reported “wokeness” (2.11 [2.05–2.17] vs. 1.11 [1.06–1.17]; Cohen’s $d = 0.76$) than men. Men had modestly better well-being. Lowest well-being, highest CSJAS scores, and strongest belief in political violence being justified were in the “other” category for gender. Female social sciences students had high CSJAS scores and low well-being relative to other participants. Male business, law, and medical students, and female STEM, education, and humanities faculty had the highest well-being. Finns voters and male STEM faculty had the lowest CSJAS scores.

A binary variable for CSJAS scores below ($n = 3,239$) and above ($n = 1,785$) the scale midpoint (2.0) was constructed for

t -tests. Large differences were noted between high-CSJAS and low-CSJAS participants in anxiety and depression ($t(3038.9) = -17.00$, and $t(3127.0) = -13.72$), and a moderate difference in happiness, belief that political violence is justified, and personal experiences in oppression ($t(3506.1) = 6.44$, $t(3665.4) = -3.11$, and $t(3571.1) = -5.24$). Looking at genders separately, results involving mental health held regardless of gender. High-CSJAS men felt political violence was more justified, and expressed they had experienced more oppression, than low-CSJAS men. However, this did not hold for women as much, with a small effect for political violence and next to none for oppression. Differences in mental health scores were likely to a large part due to being on the political left, which had similar or slightly higher correlations with anxiety, depression, and lack of happiness than CSJAS scores had.

All variables had < 10% missing data, except for left–right and liberal–conservative axes, voting preference, and global critical social justice item, which had < 20% missing and an item that was only meant for university staff and students (73.9% missing). The seven scale items for CSJAS had < 5% of data missing. Missing data were ML-estimated in CFAs and excluded pairwise in other analyses.

Preregistration. Preregistration for the study listed four nondirectional hypotheses which to investigate: (1) whether model fit and reliability for CSJAS are good; (2) CSJAS correlations with well-being variables; (3) possible changes to the scale from five additional items; and (4) investigate how political preferences and opinions relate to CSJAS. EFAs and CFAs were carried out as planned, though the investigation in the study was much broader than planned in the preregistration as genders were looked at in separate analysis and the file was also split into EFA and CFA halves for further model confirmation. Left–right and liberal–conservative axes were used for divergent validity evaluation, which was not explicated in the preregistration. All data used in the study are openly available at (<https://osf.io/pbtjm>).

Table 6. Study 2: Interitem CSJAS correlations and correlations with other study variables

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	CSJAS	GS	L-R	L-C	AN	DE	HA	VI	OP
C1		0.68	0.62	0.59	0.50	0.47	0.45	0.82	0.60	-0.63	-0.47	0.28	0.24	-0.14	0.06	0.11
C2			0.61	0.58	0.50	0.47	0.47	0.81	0.59	-0.59	-0.45	0.26	0.21	-0.11	0.05	0.10
C3				0.59	0.45	0.48	0.47	0.81	0.63	-0.55	-0.44	0.27	0.20	-0.08	0.05	0.08
C4					0.47	0.40	0.43	0.77	0.56	-0.55	-0.43	0.25	0.20	-0.08	0.04	0.08
C5						0.36	0.39	0.70	0.44	-0.44	-0.35	0.17	0.16	-0.08	0.07	0.06
C6							0.37	0.68	0.46	-0.42	-0.33	0.21	0.16	-0.08	0.06	0.01
C7								0.67	0.44	-0.41	-0.28	0.17	0.13	-0.06	0.04	0.06
CSJAS									0.70	-0.67	-0.52	0.30	0.25	-0.12	0.07	0.09
GS										-0.55	-0.43	0.28	0.22	-0.12	0.06	0.10
L-R											0.48	-0.30	-0.30	0.20	-0.05	-0.15
L-C												-0.18	-0.16	0.09	0.02	-0.07
AN													0.70	-0.54	0.15	0.26
DE														-0.63	0.12	0.25
HA															-0.10	-0.24
VI																0.11
OP																

Note: C1 = CSJAS Item Number 1 etc.; GS = Global CSJA; L-R = Left–Right; L-C = Liberal Conservative; AN = Anxiety; DE = Depression; HA = Happiness; VI = Violence Justification; OP = Oppression Experience.

Table 7. Study 2: Descriptive statistics for select subpopulations

	AN (0–21)	DE (0–4)	HA (0–4)	VI (0–4)	OP (0–4)	GS (0–4)	CSJAS (0–4)	L-R (0–4)	L-C (0–2)	CAP (0–4)	IND (0–4)	JKR (0–4)
All	4.19	0.95	7.51	0.76	1.37	1.60	1.55	2.03	0.77	2.03	2.24	2.00
Men	3.33	0.80	7.55	0.78	1.26	1.11	1.03	2.41	0.90	2.42	2.46	2.09
Women	5.07	1.07	7.53	0.68	1.42	2.11	2.13	1.64	0.63	1.60	1.98	1.97
Other	7.06 ¹	1.83 ¹	6.51 ¹	1.42 ¹	2.51 ¹	2.88 ²	2.74 ²	0.61*	0.25	0.93	1.97	0.89*
Student All	4.79	1.11	7.23	0.75	1.39	1.71	1.61	1.95	0.68	1.99	2.20	1.93
STEM M	3.76	0.83	7.31	0.75	1.16	1.07	0.96	2.52	0.91 ³	2.41	2.47	1.98
STEM F	6.09	1.28	7.22	0.78	1.38	2.45	2.02	1.70	0.54	1.84	2.21	1.74
Med M	2.29	0.77	7.69	0.24	0.81	1.17	1.18	2.43	0.83	2.72	2.56	2.09
Med F	5.24	1.29	7.20	0.33	1.33	1.76	1.83	1.76	0.80	1.95	1.79	2.60 ³
Busin M	2.91	0.79	7.65	0.69	1.00	0.94	0.91	2.83 ³	0.82	3.10 ¹	2.69 ¹	2.14
Busin F	3.88	0.71	7.63	0.92 ³	0.95	1.95	1.87	2.14	0.45	2.50	2.43	2.30
Hum M	4.13	1.25	6.56 ²	0.68	1.55	0.83	0.90	1.97	0.81	2.31	2.72	2.07
Soc M	3.56	1.38 ³	7.13	0.94 ²	1.88 ³	1.27	1.11	2.31	1.13 ²	1.94	1.80	2.71 ²
Soc F	6.89 ²	1.34	6.98 ³	0.57	1.77	2.67	2.54	1.19	0.35	1.23	1.66	1.83
Ed F	4.66	1.10	7.38	0.48	1.38	2.37	2.17	1.70	0.68	1.55	1.51	1.92
Faculty All	3.71	0.82	7.71	0.62	1.25	1.63	1.71	1.76	0.68	1.97	2.15	2.14
STEM M	3.26	0.77	7.03	0.89	1.17	1.00	0.82	2.47	0.90	2.31	2.61 ³	1.91
STEM F	3.60	0.54*	8.08	0.23	0.77*	1.42	1.74	1.42	0.67	2.31	1.92	2.54
Soc F	4.64	1.18	7.91	0.60	1.18	(1.78)	2.31	1.40	0.57	1.55	1.36*	1.80
Ed F	3.13	0.90	8.50*	0.20*	1.10	(2.00)	2.73	1.33	0.50	1.50	2.00	2.30
Hum F	4.08	0.62	8.31	0.69	1.92 ²	(3.00) ¹	2.61	1.00	0.44	1.00	1.54	2.91 ¹
Non-acad All	4.12	0.93	7.54	0.75	1.38	1.58	1.54	2.05	0.79	2.02	2.24	2.00
Low-SJAS	3.44	0.80	7.61	0.71	1.28	1.07	0.87	2.44	0.95	2.33	2.40	2.20
High-SJAS	5.96	1.31	7.27	0.86	1.58	2.84	2.80 ¹	1.10	.32	1.29	1.86	1.60
Left Alliance	6.13 ³	1.43 ²	7.09	0.92 ³	1.75	2.69 ³	2.69 ³	0.64	.28*	0.87*	1.69	1.57
Green Party	5.28	1.13	7.40	0.64	1.25	2.60	2.47	1.28	0.34	1.59	1.97	1.81
Nat Coalition	2.75*	0.56	8.05	0.66	0.95	1.03	1.03	3.02 ²	0.91 ³	2.93 ²	2.68 ²	2.39
Finns	3.12	0.74	7.51	0.79	1.39	0.57*	0.59*	3.07 ¹	1.37 ¹	2.64 ³	2.53	2.20

Note: Superscript for three groups with highest score, asterisk for group with lowest score (happiness reversed). Parentheses when $n < 10$. Item abbreviations same as in Table 6 plus CAP = Capitalism; IND = Individualism; JKR = J. K. Rowling. Med = Medicine; busin = Business; soc. = Social Sciences; ed. = Education; hum = Humanities; Non-Acad = Non-Academic.

Table 8. Study 2: CSJAS score (0–4) among participant groups 1

	All	Male	Female	Other
All	1.55	1.03	2.13	2.74
Secondary school degree	1.72	1.16	2.21	2.92
Vocational degree	1.27	0.91	1.91	2.28
High-school degree	1.53	1.10	2.09	2.73
Applied Sciences degree	1.49	0.98	2.09	3.15
Bachelor's degree	1.75	1.18	2.27	(2.59)
Master's degree	1.71	1.04	2.21	2.84
Doctoral degree	1.60	1.13	2.29	(1.62)
Left Alliance	2.69	2.31	2.77	3.21
Green Party	2.47	1.90	2.71	2.71
SDP	1.94	1.47	2.23	(2.29)
SPP	1.76	1.27	2.30	–
Centre Party	1.23	0.94	1.68	–
National Coalition	1.03	0.81	1.51	(2.71)
Finns	0.59	0.52	0.83	(0.71)

Note: Scores in parentheses when $n < 10$; “–” when $n = 1$ or 0.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of Study 1 and 2 was to construct a scale for assessing critical social justice attitudes. A pilot scale was constructed in Study 1 and it was then used as a basis for developing the final scale in Study 2. In the end, a seven-item

scale was devised from a total of 26 candidate items. The CSJAS had good-to-excellent psychometric properties: high reliability and a factor structure that had good fit in confirmatory factor analyses. The scale was strongly correlated with self-reported “wokeness,” indicating convergent validity. The scale also explained variance in self-reported “wokeness” unexplained by related concepts, left–right and liberal–conservative axes, indicating divergent validity. In the study samples, the scale’s psychometric performance was at least as good as those of standard psychiatric instruments for measuring anxiety and depression. The best model fit was in an academic subpopulation, but the model fit well with in the general population as well.

The studies also assessed how having critical social justice attitudes relates to well-being variables. Many authors have previously linked critical social justice attitudes to poorer mental well-being in their work implicitly, but have not studied them directly (e.g., Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). In our samples (Study 1 and Study 2), having high CSJAS scores was linked to anxiety, depression, and a lack of happiness. However, Study 2 indicated that this lower level of mental well-being was mostly associated with being on the political left and not specifically with having a high CSJAS score. The association between lower mental health and supporting the political left is in line with what other studies have found prior to this one (Bernardi, 2021; Gimbrone *et al.*, 2022).

Table 9. Study 2: CSJAS score (0–4) among participant groups 2

	All	Male	Female	Other	HU	UTU	UTA	UEF	Tech
University student	1.61	1.04	2.18	2.71	1.83	1.71	1.81	1.80	1.27
University teacher/researcher	1.71	1.17	2.28	(1.52)	2.00	1.56	2.17	(1.23)	1.07
University, not teacher/researcher	1.67	1.06	2.24	–	1.34	(1.57)	–	(1.71)	1.69
Students									
Business	1.13	0.91	1.87	(0.24)	(2.37)	1.17	(0.93)	(1.43)	0.82
Natural sciences	1.23	0.96	2.02	(1.69)	1.18	1.77	0.93	0.97	1.37
Medicine	1.45	1.18	1.83	–	(1.18)	(1.32)	(2.31)	(1.76)	–
Law	1.55	0.92	1.95	–	1.61	(0.43)	–	1.83	–
Applied Sciences	1.56	1.04	2.07	(3.35)	–	–	–	–	–
Humanities	1.91	0.90	2.33	(3.23)	2.02	1.88	(2.18)	1.26	–
Psychology	1.90	(1.18)	2.06	(3.50)	(1.52)	(2.36)	–	(3.10)	–
Political science and philosophy	2.05	1.60	2.35	(2.43)	1.60	2.08	2.38	(2.53)	–
Education	2.05	1.51	2.17	(2.48)	2.13	(1.98)	(2.18)	(2.12)	–
Social sciences	2.26	1.11	2.54	(3.52)	2.50	(1.82)	2.17	(2.84)	–

Notes: Values in parentheses when $n < 10$; “–” when $n = 1$ or 0. HU = Helsinki University; UTU = University of Turku; UTA = University of Tampere; UEF = University of Eastern Finland.

Critical social justice attitudes were somewhat prevalent in women, but not so much in men. Men rejected all but one item in the final CSJA scale, whereas women were cautiously supportive of scale items. Overall, study samples rejected the phenomenon with the 5,030 participants in Study 2, on average, agreeing with 0 items, in-between about three items, and rejecting four items, even though left-wing party supporters were overrepresented in the sample. In addition to CSJAS scores, this is also seen in somewhat low self-reported “wokeness.” People who supported left-wing parties and female university students in social sciences, education, and humanities, as well as people with “other” gender, were the most in support of the scale items. This indicates that, at least in Finland, what Yascha Mounk called “the identity synthesis,” Tim Urban “social justice fundamentalism” and others “intersectionality” or “wokeness” seems to currently be a gendered phenomenon with little to no support from men and moderate support from women. What accounts for this gender difference can perhaps be investigated in future studies.

Limitations and future directions

Some limitations should be noted. First, there were no previous critical social justice attitude scales to be used to assess convergent validity. Thus, a self-reported global critical social justice attitude item was used instead. A problem with this item was that 169 out of 848 respondents (19.9%) in Study 1 and 400 out of 5,030 respondents (8.0%) in Study 2 reported they did not understand the meaning of the term “woke” and their answer was not used in analyses involving the global CSJA variable. However, the item was strongly ($r = 0.62$ and 0.70 in Study 1 and 2, well above the $r = 0.5$ threshold given by Abma, Rovers and van der Wees (2016) correlated with CSJAS which in itself gave proof of convergent validity. It also had robust positive correlations with all of the individual CSJAS items. Second, the wording of a scale item (CSJAS6) had to be corrected after the studies and there was an error in the Finnish grammar of CSJAS23 that may have affected responses to it. Very slight modifications were also made to other items after the studies. The English and Finnish versions of the items in Tables 1 and 2

indicate the items’ proper wording, but the ones used in the studies may have resulted in slightly biased answers.

Third, both study respondents were somewhat more educated than Finns are on average, due to having samples from a university and based on the readership of the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper. Sampling based on newspaper readership may have resulted in other forms of selection bias as well. There was also overrepresentation of people who supported left-wing parties, which probably biases the results in the direction of stronger social justice attitudes somewhat. Fourth, the study would have benefitted from the inclusion of a measure of socially desirable responding, given many items involve ethics or social justice, which to many respondents are not neutral topics. Fifth, due to questionnaire length concerns, depression in Study 2 was measured with a single item. Ideally this study would have employed the R-BDI as Study 1 did, and the single item measure may have compromised reliability of the depression scores in Study 2.

The critical social justice attitudes scale has now been validated in two large scale studies and can be used by other researchers to assess levels of CSJA in populations of interest. At least in the two studies thus far conducted with the scale, support for CSJA has been somewhat low overall, though the attitudes are relatively popular in several female subpopulations (e.g., social sciences students) and among left-wing party supporters. This was the case in Finland and other researchers can look at how things are in various other populations of interest.

Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from all subjects. The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at <https://osf.io/k2qx9/>.

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