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Saba Modaresi

Critical Race Theory: An Empirical Investigation of its Benefits

Critical Race Theory

- Critical Race Theory in education argues that: (Ladson -Billing & Tate, 1995).
 - (1) racism is endemic and engraved into society,
 - (2) Civil Rights Laws have been ineffective in desegregating schools
 - (3) education needs to emphasize the importance of challenging claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy by amplifying the voices of minority communities.
- CRT is a “framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform that structural and cultural aspect of society that maintains the subordination and marginalization of People of Color” (Solorzano, 1997, p. 6).
- A critical race curriculum has been developed based on CRT.

Background Literature

- Multicultural education courses have been found to be effective in reducing 19.2% of stereotype attitudes (Tran et al., 1994).
- Previous literature has found that completing a multicultural education course effectively improves students' attitudes toward the concept of multicultural education (Wasanga, 2005).
- When comparing support for CRT based on political party, research has found that fewer than 10% of Republicans support Critical Race Theory while 85% of Democrats are in support of CRT (Kaufmann, 2021)
- Group Empathy Theory explains that historically disadvantaged groups, such as women or racial/ethnic minorities, will find it easier to empathize with other disadvantaged groups (Sirin et al., 2016).

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: After exposure to the critical race theory course, students will have reduced beliefs in negative stereotypes.
- Hypothesis 2: After exposure to the critical race theory course, students will have a more positive attitude toward critical race theory.
- Hypothesis 3: After exposure to the critical race theory course, students who identify as liberal will develop a more positive attitude of critical race theory than conservative students.
- Hypothesis 4: After exposure to the critical race theory course, marginalized students will have a greater reduction in their belief in negative stereotypes than non -marginalized students.

Participants

- 19 undergraduate students who are enrolled in IES 102: The Social Construct of Difference at Chapman University.
- Mean age: 19.05
- Gender: 19 Females (100%)
- Race/Ethnicity:
 - 52.6% White/European American
 - 5.3% Black or African American
 - 36.8% Hispanic/Latino
 - 5.3% Asian American
 - 5.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - 5.3% Middle Eastern

Participants (continued)

- Political ideology affiliation:
 - 10.5% Slightly conservative
 - 10.5% Moderate
 - 26.3% Slightly liberal
 - 36.8% Very liberal
 - 15.8% Preferred not to say
- 78.9% of participants identified with one or more of the following minority communities:
 - Racial/ethnic minority
 - LGBTQIA+
 - Identification with a non-Christian faith

Method

- Quasi-experimental, one-group pretest & posttest study design
- Recruitment from three sections of the course, IES 102: The Social Construct of Difference, at Chapman University.
- Students were instructed to take the following surveys three weeks after enrollment in the course and three weeks before the end of the course.
 - Demographic survey
 - Pro-Black and Anti-Black Scale (Katz & Hass, 1988)
 - A modified version of the revised Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (Ponterotto et al., 1998)
- Statistical analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses

H1: After exposure to the critical race theory course, students will have reduced beliefs in negative stereotypes.

- Stereotype beliefs were measured by Katz & Hass' (1988) Pro-Black (H1A) and Anti-Black (H1B) scales.
 - A high score on the Pro-Black inventory means the individual holds low negative stereotype beliefs while a high score on the Anti-Black inventory means the individual possesses significant negative stereotype beliefs.
- A paired samples t-test was run to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in stereotype beliefs among participants before and after exposure to a critical race curriculum.
- There was no significant difference in participants' belief in negative racial stereotypes before and after exposure to a critical race curriculum, H1A: $t(18) = -0.8, p=0.225$; H1B $t(18)=0.3, p=0.402$.
- Hypothesis one was not supported.

H2: After exposure to the critical race theory course, students will have a more positive attitude toward critical race theory.

- Attitudes toward Critical Race Theory was measured utilizing a modified version of the revised Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (Ponterotto et al., 1998)
 - A high score on this inventory indicates a positive attitude toward critical race theory while a low score indicates a negative attitude toward critical race theory.
- A paired samples t-test was run to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in attitude toward critical race theory among participants before and after exposure to a critical race curriculum.
- There was not a significant difference in participants' attitudes toward critical race theory before and after exposure to a critical race curriculum, $t(18) = -0.8, p = 0.215$.
- Hypothesis two was not supported.

H3: After exposure to the critical race theory course, students who identify as liberal will possess a more positive attitude of critical race theory than conservative students.

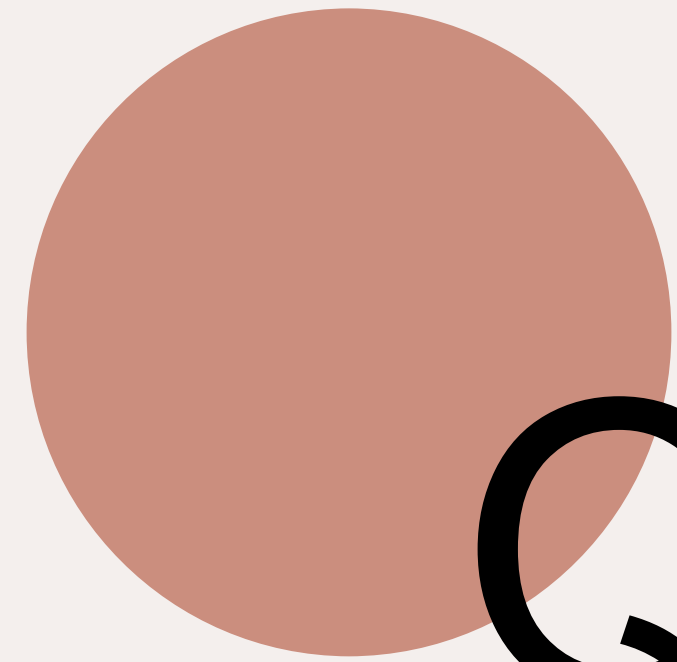
- Participants self-reported their political ideology affiliation through the demographic questions on the posttest (1=Very liberal to 5=Very conservative)
- The revised Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS) measured attitudes toward critical race theory.
 - A high score indicates a positive attitude toward critical race theory while a low score indicates a negative attitude toward critical race theory.
- There was a significant correlation between political ideology affiliation and attitude toward critical race theory, $r=-0.4$, $p=0.031$. Participants who identify as more liberal scored higher on the modified TMAS, indicating a greater positive attitude toward Critical Race Theory.
- Hypothesis three was supported.

H4: After exposure to the critical race theory course, marginalized students will have a greater reduction in their belief in negative stereotypes than non marginalized students.

- Participants were identified as a minority if they identify with any of the following communities: racial/ethnic minority, LGBTQIA+, identify with a non-Christian faith (e.g., Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism)
- Belief in negative stereotypes measured through the Pro-Black and Anti-Black Scale (Katz & Hass, 1988)
- There was a significant negative difference between participants' identification with a minority community and belief in stereotypes through the Pro-Black scale, $t(17) = -2.7$, $p = 0.007$; this correlation was not present through the Anti-Black scale H4B: $t(17) = -0.3$, $p = 0.392$.
 - According to the Pro-Black inventory, participants who identified with a minority community had a greater reduction in belief in stereotypes after the course than non-minority identifying participants.
- Hypothesis four was partly supported.

Discussion

- Limitations:
 - Small sample size/low statistical power
 - Lack of diversity in the sample (primarily female, minority-identifying, more liberal)
 - Late data collection due to IRB delays
- Implications for practices
 - Raise awareness toward the tenants of CRT to reduce the misconception that prevails amongst conservative populations about critical race theory in education.
 - Educators should focus on integrating empathy and perspective-taking activities when teaching DEI-related curricula.
- Implications for future research
 - Examine the efficacy of general DEI-related courses in reducing stereotype beliefs and improving attitudes toward controversial topics, such as Critical Race Theory
 - Replication of this study utilizing a larger sample size may find more significant results.



Questions?

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