Self-Efficacy and Critical Race Theory: The Emotions and Identity of a Montessori Teacher

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Abstract

This action research project investigated how anti-critical race theory (CRT) legislation in public education has impacted the perceived self-efficacy and emotions of one Montessori educator. This 4-week self-study consisted of daily assigned reading, weekly media, and a weekly conversation to aid in multicultural critical reflective practice (MCRP). Data was measured using a pre-and post-self-assessment on Qualtrics, a daily mood app, and daily critical journal reflections. The pre-and post-assessment demonstrated an increase in self-efficacy to speak with confidence about the origins of CRT in education research. Daily critical journal reflections displayed an increase in the ability to critically reflect on the educator's own positionality, suggesting that daily critical engagement with material aimed at increasing awareness of racial inequities in education builds confidence and empathy in educators. Further research should include small groups of teachers utilizing this intervention for professional development, longer or shorter daily intervention, a biometric measurement in place of the daily mood measurement, and follow-up assessments over a longer study period to determine the lasting effects of the intervention. This research has impacted my future in education both personally and professionally, with confidence in my critical thinking skills and greater awareness of how my positionality interacts with structural inequities within education as my greatest perceived benefits.

Keywords: critical race theory, teachers' emotions, positionality, self-efficacy, education legislation, multicultural critical reflective practice

Self-efficacy and Critical Race Theory: The Emotions and Identity of a Montessori Teacher

The events of the year 2020 read like a dystopian novel. A highly contagious, deadly virus swept across the globe and disproportionately took the lives of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Native American people in the US. Racial tensions reached a climax after the brutal murder of George Floyd by a Minnesota police officer. Public education was dealt a blow when conservative media started a movement to increase tensions between political ideologies by targeting critical race theory (CRT) as a catchall term to incite violent rage from parents against school boards for allowing teachers to utilize any curriculum or attend trainings related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It was amidst this landscape that I started to read every article in my news feed about CRT and investigated many of the House Bills being enacted across the country. I felt angry about yet another curveball being thrown at teachers when we were already underpaid, undervalued, and expected to be frontline workers during the pandemic, putting our own physical health in danger while attempting to learn new technologies to pivot to online learning when necessary. I felt a sense of responsibility as a Jewish woman in the Montessori world to encourage critical thinking about established societal norms in the classroom and not let this sensationalized legislation distract me from that goal. More than anything, I felt tired.

I started to look at the complexities of teacher positionality within the framework of CRT. As I began my reading, I found myself asking new questions about my own family history. I was surprised to find out new details about my own family's immigration. Those details impacted my reading of everything. Additionally, I grappled with a latent bias I had against personal narrative storytelling as a legitimate tool in research. I had not anticipated the extent to which my identities as a female and as a Jew would factor into my reading. The critical reflection I engaged in mostly engendered more questions about each of those identities and epistemologies.

To find answers to these questions I created a detailed syllabus curated by Montessori scholar Dr. Valaida L. Wise who has expertise in CRT in education. I took a deep dive into the origins of critical race theory, its past and future role in education, and challenged myself to reflect critically utilizing the frameworks of scholars such as Melissa Crum, Keonna Hendricks, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Adrienne

Dixson, and Celia Rousseau Anderson. It is my belief that every professional in the education field should be given the time to seriously engage with their positionality, their narrative, their perceptions of reality, and their understanding of the forces that have shaped their chosen career field. How can we possibly respond to the current needs of our students or truly hear their questions unless we have first done some deep digging into our own perceptions of the world and improved our own critical reflection and thinking skills?

I have utilized these materials to explore how legislation around CRT in public education has impacted my self-efficacy as an educator to speak with knowledge about CRT in education research and my emotions as a teacher. I define self-efficacy as my perceived ability to effectively communicate and implement activities and discussions based on my understanding. Further, I have explored how these impacts have affected my future career choices. At the outset, I predicted that the effects of the stress and emotional toll of this legislation would significantly impact my decision to keep working in the classroom setting. Additionally, I predicted that my increased understanding of CRT in education and my ability to converse with others about the subject after critical self-reflection would positively impact my self-efficacy and curb negative emotions.

Theoretical Framework

Social constructionism and multicultural critical reflective practice (MCRP) are two lenses I utilized to view and understand my action research. Social constructionism addresses how individuals actively shape their perception of reality and construct the self through social interactions (Saunders, 2013). Multicultural critical reflective practice (MCRP) is a theoretical framework created and utilized by museum art educators in aiding practitioners to "engage in critical self-reflection to interrogate their identities, critical reflection with peers to gain different perspectives, critical reflection in teaching to be responsive and accountable with learners, and critical reflection on teaching to consider lessons learned and alternatives for the future" (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2016, p. 29).

Social constructionism provided an opportunity to view teachers' responses to the complex power dynamics inherent in school systems in a cyclical way; teachers' perceptions shape their responses, and their responses are shaped by the larger social context in which they reside (Karami-Akkary, R. et al., 2018; Saunders, 2013). When viewed as social constructions, emotions are experienced by the individual while being "co-constructed by interaction with others and directly linked to the organisations, cultural and social contexts in which they occur" (Saunders, 2013, p. 305). This framework lent itself well to capturing my emotional reality in reflection on legislation aimed at changing school board policies around the teaching of what is labeled CRT in schools. Although no public school directly teaches critical race theory to students, these policies mainly affect curriculum related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (Taylor, 2021). The question is, will these politicized policy decisions by the state influence teachers' emotions, pedagogical choices, and ultimately their ability to continue in their careers as educators? And the aim of this action research is to begin to answer some of these questions by engaging in my own critical self-reflection.

A critical perspective on educators' power, race, and identity was a necessary component of the framework because the action research subject revolved around critical race theory. I have been heavily influenced by the work of Dewhurst & Kendrick (2016); Hendrick & Crum (2014), who have created a framework for reflection and accountability, encouraging educators to explore their positionality in the world through the sharing of personal stories guided by critical self-reflection (Dewhurst & Kendrick, 2016). The MCRP framework is pragmatic for this type of research because I used critical reflection daily after engaging with my reading or media materials. I allowed myself to have the space to do the emotional labor at my own pace and with great care for my well-being while also bravely confronting uncomfortable or hidden biases.

To measure my responses to the controversy around CRT in the school system, which will largely revolve around emotional and psychosocial factors, I needed to use lenses that allowed me to understand the myriad of forces shaping the political environment around me. Additionally, I used critical analysis

(MCRP) to navigate the emotional challenges the content brought to the surface while being aware of my positionality.

Literature Review

A brief review of the literature was conducted to examine how challenging discussions around critical race theory have been impacting the perceived efficacy of teachers. The conflict has been unfolding and evolving daily, which has resulted in the need to include articles from news sources. My aim for this review was to unearth the existing knowledge and best practices surrounding teacher efficacy in times of great emotional stress. I have started with a brief history of critical race theory and current state legislation related to pedagogy in public schools. I then moved on to examine the literature related to teachers' emotional responses to educational policies and instructional demands. And finally, I explored the current research related to teacher efficacy in response to challenging world events.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory stemmed from the realization that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s had plateaued and many of its gains had been lost (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). The theory, first asserted in the 1970s by scholars Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, grew out of the need for scholars of the law to find new tactics and theories to "understand and come to grips with the complex interplay among race, racism, and American law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 461). Building on this theoretical framework for legal scholars, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) produced a seminal article titled, "Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education," which asserted that this framework could address the "theoretical void" of "race as a topic of scholarly inquiry in education" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2018, p. 121). Despite the authors' (Dixson & Rousseau, 2018) assertion that "the role of CRT in education scholarship has expanded significantly" in the past two decades, the authors warn of a crucial need to define and refine the boundaries of critical race theory in education. They offer a particularly prescient alarm bell that the CRT framework could fall into the same dangerous trap that it did in the legal field: "CRT was a name with no clearly identifiable thing" (p. 129).

Current anti-CRT legislation

National Education Association (NEA) president Becky Pringle stated that the proliferation of legislation against critical race theory is, "manufactured outrage designed to divide communities along racial lines for political purposes" (Taylor, 2021, p. 2). Indeed, CRT has become "a name with no clearly identifiable thing" deftly utilized by pundits and politicians to create confusion and chaos, not just in the public education system, but in the popular media itself. "…Critical race theory is generally not taught in public schools and is not specifically cited in some of these new laws" (Taylor, 2021, p. 1). However, it has become the catchall term used at school board meetings to stir up conflict amongst parents. As of this writing, 42 states now have legislation or other restrictions that limit how teachers can discuss racism and sexism (Schwartz, 2021).

In order to illustrate the current reality for public school teachers in this political climate, I will elaborate on the example of the state of Indiana. As of this writing, Indiana HB1134 stated that no employee of a qualified school adopts or adheres to the following in its tenets:

> (7) That any individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of the individual's sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, or political affiliation.
>
> (8) That meritocracy or traits such as hard work ethic are racist or sexist, or were created by members of a particular sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, or political affiliation to oppress members of another sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, or political affiliation (Education matters bill, 2021).

It appears that Indiana's representatives were trying to legislate individual emotions. In protecting the individual's emotional state above historical investigation, Indiana's representatives have begun to blur the lines between subjective interpretation and examination of our country's past and present trauma. It goes without saying that this has become difficult territory for a teacher to navigate. One could also argue that minoritized students have already felt psychological distress on the basis of their identities and begs the question, "who is at the heart of this protection?" Just as an example, my family only exists because my

great-grandmother was the *one* member of her Polish family able to escape the Holocaust alive. According to this bill, a Polish classmate of mine who had Nazi ancestors should not feel discomfort or guilt upon learning about the Holocaust while we are in school together, even if we are friends and they know my family history.   The HB1134 detailed the consequences for any school employee that does violate these tenets:

> On the written recommendation of the secretary of education, the department may
> suspend or revoke a license of a teacher, principal, superintendent, or any other individual
> licensed by the department under this chapter if the individual willfully or wantonly
> violates IC 20-28-10-20, IC 20-33-1.5, or IC 20-34-3-27 [detailed above] (Education
> matters bill, 2021).

This is a real piece of legislation that was passed in America. Fortunately, the Senate of Indiana did not have enough votes to put the law into motion. But it passed with flying colors in the House of Representatives. In Missouri, Texas, and Tennessee, schoolteachers and administrators have already lost their jobs and face lengthy court procedures to defend their own right to teach critical thinking skills to their students (Green, 2022; Lopez, 2021; Staten, 2022). In the following paragraphs I will briefly explore the larger context of politics and pedagogy in America.

Politics and pedagogy

Since the 1791 ratification of the tenth amendment in the U.S. Constitution, which states that, *the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people*, the role of the Federal Government in education policy has remained largely hands-off. For centuries, states have been, and largely continue to be, in control of education policy (Hales et al., 2018). A few noteworthy exceptions to this rule are the National Defense Education Act (1957), which contributed to greater STEM funding to compete with the U.S.S.R., and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), later reconfigured by the Obama administration to become Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which contributed to high-stakes assessments and tracking student progress to secure school funding at the state level (Hales et al., 2018).

Despite the relatively hands-off relationship with the Federal Government, States have played an increasingly large role in the classroom within the past year. As of April 2022, "42 states have introduced bills or taken other steps that would restrict teaching critical race theory or limit how teachers can discuss racism and sexism, according to an Education Week analysis" (Schwartz, 2021).   This means that nearly 85% of the states in America have started down a path of increased politicization and partisanship centered around classroom conversation about topics deemed as CRT, creating fear, anxiety, and confusion for teachers, school board administrators, and parents alike. Robert Kim, former civil rights attorney, and Deputy Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights in the Obama administration noted that state lawmakers have opted to deliberately cause uncertainty by creating confusion about whether speech around CRT is permissible within the school setting (2021). The implications for this type of partisan fear mongering are that "a significant percentage of our nation's political leadership appears to approve of snuffing out schools' efforts to encourage students to think critically about the history and impact of race, gender, and systemic inequality in the U.S... in other words, an assault on pedagogy itself" (Kim, 2021, p. 65).

Teachers' emotional responses to educational policies and instructional demands

Teachers engage in emotional labor daily by consciously making the effort to engage in positive interactions with their students and colleagues throughout the workday. The intensity of emotional labor can play an important role in emotional exhaustion and subsequent teacher burnout (O'Toole, 2018). Conversely, Benedicte (2017) argued that emotional competency, the ability to respond appropriately to a situation given the particular environment, can *increase* the capacity for individuals to regulate their emotions and facilitate a learning process. A more familiar term for emotional competency which was cited in several studies, was the term cognitive appraisal. Cognitive appraisal is a process in which a person assesses a situation to decide the correct emotional response. Teachers engage in this process routinely throughout the day. When teachers were able to have the time and space to engage in cognitive re-appraisal, such as finding out new contextual information about why a student acted in a particular

way, researchers found that the re-appraisal was able to relieve emotional exhaustion and contribute to a more positive affect (O'Toole, 2018).

The literature revealed that when school leadership teams offered differentiated social-emotional support to their teachers' they were able to elicit positive emotions and openness to change on both a systems and individual level (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). Long-term, sustainable, systems-changing innovations or reforms are more likely to occur "when teachers' self-efficacy and emotional resilience are emphasized at the outset" (Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). However, frequent top-down educational reforms may undermine long-term, positive commitment to change because of the ambiguity and uncertainty teachers face in their daily classroom functions (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018).

Teacher efficacy in response to challenging world events

Multiple study authors have suggested that teachers' make decisions about their tasks, pedagogical methods, and content based on their perceived ability to effectively accomplish their goals (Burcu, 2016; Colson et al., 2017). There is evidence of the importance of individual teacher self-efficacy (TSE) in response to challenging world events. However, agency, efficacy, engagement, and emotional resilience can all be framed as *both* individual and collective traits (Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). Collective teacher efficacy (CTE), the term which describes the collective, agentic actions of empowered individuals working in concert, has generally been predictive of positive feelings, attitudes, greater job satisfaction, and less stress (Donohoo, 2018). Schools with greater CTE and TSE showed markedly better outcomes after natural disasters and disruptive curricular reforms (Wilcox & Lawson, 2018; O'Toole, 2018). Self and collective teacher efficacy can play an important role for teachers as they grapple with changes to education policy outside of their control. Much like a natural disaster or nation-wide roll out of a new set of assessments, state legislation and regulation around critical race theory regarding curricular choices, and even conversation within the classroom, function in similar ways. Teachers cannot assume a locus of control around these types of occurrences because they fall outside of their sphere of influence. However, embracing teacher efficacy may offer a respite for veteran and prospective teachers' alike. In an ideal world:

policy makers, system and school leaders and staff developers' efforts towards education reforms

might be better served by strategically and intentionally considering how to foster collective

efficacy throughout the conceptualization, design, delivery, and assessment of change initiatives

(Donohoo, 2018, p. 323).

In other words, successful implementation of new state legislation regarding critical race theory in the

classroom may best be handled by involving *teachers* in a conversation about *their* pedagogical choices.

After all, it is teachers and not state lawmakers who will be delivering classroom content to students.

Summary

Few studies have focused on the role of individual emotions experienced by teachers as

precursors to or consequences of emotional exhaustion (O'Toole, 2018). This action research self-study

is an attempt to address the gap in understanding the emotional toll of anti-CRT legislation in the

education system and find ways to give agency and collective support to teachers. I have briefly

highlighted the literature about the current state legislation regarding CRT in schools and situated it

within the larger context of politics and education policy to provide a snapshot of this moment in time.

Education in America is at a crucial juncture; will our government systems allow for increased

politicization of pedagogical choices, or will we allow educators, who are best suited to address their own

curricular choices, to maintain control of their classroom content? I propose that the effects of the stress

and emotional toll on prospective and beginning teachers because of this controversy may significantly

impact the teacher workforce.

Future studies related to teachers' opinions of legislation regarding CRT in the classroom in the

context of a longitudinal study, with study populations from multiple states and school types would

greatly improve understanding in this area of inquiry. Confidence in school leadership and emotional and

physical safety during emotionally charged school board meetings about race would be another fruitful

topic for future research.

Methodology

In my self-study, I utilized data collection methods that allowed me to gain a better understanding of how legislation around CRT in public education has impacted my self-efficacy and emotions as a teacher. Further, I have explored how these impacts have affected my future career choices. I measured (a) my moods after daily reading and/or video workshops or conversations with a friend or mentor, (b) my perceptions of my ability to converse knowledgably about my content, (c) what new concepts, theories, vocabulary I encountered and why I thought I might only be seeing them for the first time, (d) what biases I uncovered during my content reading/watching phase. I utilized three mixed methods of data collection in my intervention: online pre- and post- assessments, daily reflective journals, and a daily mood tracking app (see Appendices A & B). I utilized the online pre- and post- assessments to measure my knowledge, confidence in speaking with others about that knowledge and emotions at baseline and after the intervention (Appendix A). The daily reflective journals used the same template every day with three specific, open-ended questions aimed at exploring CRT in education with a critically reflective lens (Appendix B). The daily mood tracking app (daylio) was utilized every day *after* completion of my syllabus activities for the day (see Figure 1). The research was conducted over four weeks, Monday-Friday from my home. I spent an average of 30-45 minutes on self-assigned content each day, 10-20 minutes on journal reflections, and about two minutes checking in on my mood app. On days where I had scheduled conversations, it was an additional hour for each conversation.

The first day of my research study began with my online self-assessment (Appendix A) where I used a five-point Likert scale to determine my level of confidence conversing with various groups of people about CRT in education, utilized two open-ended questions to understand my current knowledge, and assessed my emotions about the subject with 14 choices of emotion descriptors with unlimited choices allowed. The assessment I devised for myself was focused on measuring both my self-efficacy to engage in meaningful, well-informed conversations about CRT in education as well as my emotional state related to the topic of anti-CRT legislation in education. Additionally, I began my syllabus curated by a

Montessori scholar with expertise in CRT in education (Appendix C). I read a chapter from the current book each day at an unspecified time. Typically, on Wednesdays or Fridays, I would engage in a conversation over the phone or Zoom with a colleague, mentor, or friend about what I had read about CRT in education. On Fridays, in addition to my reading, I also watched 30 minutes of a 90-minute PD seminar by Dr. Melissa Crum, a Race and Identity Toolkit for Educators as an additional supportive lens for engaging with critical reflection.

Directly after my reading, conversation, or viewing, I would rate my mood with the Daylio app (Figure 1). Then I would move on to my daily online journal prompts to critically reflect on the material and/or conversation (Appendix B). The prompts concentrated on what new concepts, stories, theories, or ideas I had engaged with in my material for that day. This helped me to focus my reflection on what was novel, rather than my previous knowledge. To build a more critical lens on my new knowledge, I focused on why I thought I had not encountered this knowledge before and if it was something I thought might be uncomfortable for the elite, white, majority in the US. For the days when I also scheduled a conversation, I had an additional reflective question aimed at assessing the fluidity of the conversation, what aspects of the conversation would I repeat in the future and what would I change.

Data Analysis

The aim of this study was to assess how anti-critical race theory (CRT) legislation in public education has impacted my self-efficacy and emotions as an educator. A sub-question of this study was to assess how these impacts have affected my future career choices. During the summer of 2021, I noticed that I was emotionally affected by political conflicts resulting in legislation banning the teaching of concepts or ideas related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in public schools, inappropriately classified as CRT. After gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, I started to work on answering my initial study questions. I began my data collection with a pre-assessment survey on Qualtrics to gather baseline data on my perceived self-efficacy to understand and communicate with others about the origins of the CRT framework, the origins of CRT in education, and my confidence to lead a group of teachers in a workshop about this topic. The survey included eight questions with a 5-

point Likert scale with levels of agreement, two open-ended questions, and one multiple-choice question

to select emotions I had felt after engaging in a conversation about CRT. I ended my study by taking the

same assessment, then compared the qualitative and quantitative data that was gathered from these tools

to see if there was any change in my self-efficacy.   The following section includes a detailed look at my

perceived improvement in self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy measurement of confidence

I used a pre-and post-assessment to measure my perceived change in self-efficacy before and

after the study (Appendix A).   I used a 5-point Likert scale of levels of agreement of my perceived self-

efficacy with 1 as "strongly disagree" and 5 as "strongly agree." Five questions from my 11-question

assessment indicated that I perceived some improvement in my self-efficacy. Questions number three

and four displayed that my greatest improvement in self-efficacy post-assessment was speaking about the

origins of critical race theory specifically in education and current topics related to the field. I also

showed a marked improvement in my perceived efficacy to speak about the historical origins and context

of critical race theory generally and in my ability to lead a focus group for educators on that topic,

questions two and nine respectively (Appendix A). Question five indicated that I had a slight decrease in

concern about my future as a teacher because of anti-CRT legislation in my state, which was a positive

result. Question nine indicated that I had a slight increase in self-efficacy related to leading a focus group

or workshop about CRT in education with people who have a different political ideology than mine. For

three questions my score remained the same in the post-assessment, see questions six, seven, and eight in

Appendix A. In addition to these more quantitative questions, I had a few qualitative, open-ended

questions which I will discuss in more detail in the following paragraph.

My pre- and post-assessment included two open-ended questions and one question which

measured my perceived emotions after having a conversation about CRT with a friend or colleague. The

pre- and post-assessments (Appendix A) revealed that I had a change in emotions with less anxiety but

more anger as *anxious* and *frustrated* gave way to *angry* and *irritated*. *Curiosity* and *concern* remained

constant in both assessments. By the end of the study, my assessment revealed that I did feel more

knowledgeable.

> The two open-ended assessment questions did reveal a perceptible change in my knowledge and

understanding. The question was as follows

> Please briefly write your current understanding of critical race theory in Education. Please
>
> include any relevant knowledge you have about the origins of the framework and any relevant
>
> legislation in your state and/or school district. Please do not look up this information to answer
>
> the question. It is important to be honest as this is just for baseline data.

In my pre-assessment response, I wrote a 165-word paragraph without any information on the theory

itself. The only information I could provide was that it was "first conceived of by law students in the

1970s" and that Gloria Ladson-Billings and her colleagues first applied this theory to education in the

1990s (Appendix A).   The post-assessment response was 535 words, nearly a page long, and very

detailed. The response included a detailed description of the process Ladson-Billings and Tate underwent

to get their seminal work published as well as clear, conceptual details about the theoretical framework.

For example, I wrote

> The central idea that racism is a normal, not aberrant, part of life in America and that
>
> constitutional rights are property rights, not human rights, readily applies to education…Interest
>
> convergence, (system change only occurs when it also benefits the white majority), anti-
>
> essentialism, counternarrative, and colorblindness all equally affect education structure within
>
> America just as much as they affect property law.

By this point, I had synthesized enough information about CRT in education through conversations,

journal reflections, and my reading that I was able to write this description without hesitation. To answer

the other part of my open-ended question, I included recent statistics from a study that I read towards the

end of my research period, that "35% of all public schools in the nation have succumbed to anti-CRT

legislation passed within their state…there is also evidence that many of these schools exist within

neighborhoods where the white population has recently DECREASED" (Appendix A). And I also noted

how this study summarized what teachers were feeling at the county level across the nation, "teachers are terrified to teach concepts related to racism, sexism, gender identity, ability, any topic that would fall under diversity, equity, and inclusion" (Appendix A).

The final open-ended question in both surveys was designed for me to measure what knowledge I hoped to increase during my intervention and what I actually learned over the course of those four weeks. The pre-assessment (Appendix A) question number 11 stated, "What do you feel is your biggest gap in knowledge about critical race theory? What do you hope to learn over the next [four] weeks?" My response conveyed that I felt my biggest knowledge gap was in the application of critical race theory to the field of education. I had hoped to learn about how my privilege as a Jewish, white, well-educated, middle-class woman might have contributed to certain "blind spots in my perception of reality." I also hoped to increase my knowledge of "the academic aspects of critical race theory in education…increase my capacity to have well-informed, factual, level-headed conversations about this topic with people from across the political spectrum so that I can relate to parents, teachers, and administrators to build bridges of understanding…" The final question on my post-assessment stated, "please reflect on your experience over the past [four] weeks. What was the greatest benefit, if any, you felt you gained from your reading, materials, conversations, and critical journal reflections?" In my response, I wrote about how I initially thought I would be spending most of my time thinking about concepts and facts related to the law and education scholarship. In the outcome, I found that I "encountered a multifaceted picture of history, that challenged me to look much more deeply into my own positionality…my own double consciousness as a white, Jewish woman…I kept coming back to issues of my own identity, my ancestors' struggles, how they benefited from their skin privilege in America." I had noted that this study allowed me to ask myself difficult questions and confront my privileged and biased perspective while also having deep empathy for the struggles of my friends of color. My critical reflective practice "renewed my interest in being able to speak knowledgeably about how the Jewish race was constructed as 'other' in Europe." I reflected on how current events led me to understand that because of my identity, I had a separate and much more in-

depth knowledge about the origins of anti-Semitism long before the rise of Hitler and how there is a gap in Jewish history knowledge in American public schools.
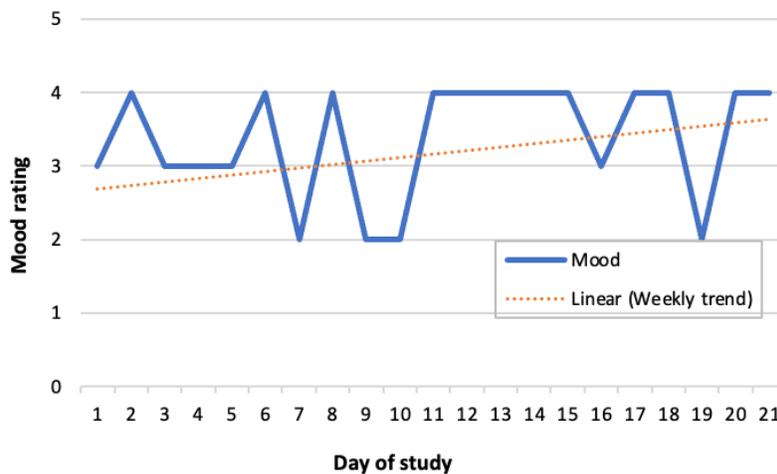
Daily Emotion Measurement

During the four-week study, I used a daily mood tracker, *Daylio*, to keep track of my emotions after engaging with my content for each study day. Figure 1 displays the overall picture of my emotions over the course of the entire study. The breakdown of my moods over the course of the study is as follows: 20% of my study days were identified as bad days, 24% were meh days, and 56% were good days. The app offered the following choices for my mood: *great, good, meh, bad, awful*. I have translated *meh* as a sort of neutral mood that is neither good nor bad, just okay. During the first week of the study, I experienced more neutral emotions. During the second week, I experienced many highs and lows, with the highest number of *bad* days. On the third week, I was stable and feeling *good*. By the final week of the study, I was trending more towards *good* days. However, I had a day that felt *meh* and a day that felt *bad*. Overall, my mood changed from trending towards *okay* and *bad* to trending toward *good*. The words that I used most frequently to describe the emotions I felt on bad days were *tired* and *disappointed*. The word that I used most frequently to describe the meh days was *upset*. My good days most frequently included the terms *empowered, validated, education, knowledge, and research*.

It is worth noting that this first week included more negative mood days than any of the other weeks of the study. During the first week of the study, I did not mention any ideas related to my future work in the education field. By the fourth week of the study, I had mentioned my future career aspirations twice in light of my newfound understanding. The second week of my study was mainly building on the themes of the first week. During this week, I finished my first assigned book for the study (Appendix C) and started on a new book. I had the greatest peaks and valleys mood-wise in the second week but still finished with an overall trend toward positive emotions. While in the third week I had barely mentioned anything at all about my own identity and it was also the week I had reported 5 days of "Good" emotions on my app which has led me to conclude that I had less intense emotional reactions when I applied my knowledge to a broader context rather than to my individual situation. Within the final

week of my study, I started to engage with questions about my future in the education field. While

thinking about my future and how I could positively impact the education field with my newfound

understanding, I started to have the greatest positive feelings.

Figure 1

Daily Mood Chart

The daily emotion tracker was a useful piece of data to allow me to measure the outcome of my

perceived understanding after engaging with my assigned daily material. At the outset of my study, I

hypothesized that my increased understanding of CRT in education and my ability to converse with others

about the subject after critical self-reflection would positively impact my self-efficacy and curb negative

emotions. This measurement allowed me to have a concrete format to understand my emotional trends

over the course of the four-week study and shed light on what materials correlated with certain emotional

reactions. However, because so many factors influenced my mood it was hard to infer causality.

Critical Reflective Journal Analysis

Throughout the four-week study, I engaged with daily material related to CRT. Each day after

either reading a chapter from a book or academic article, having a conversation with a friend or colleague,

or watching a video about race, I would immediately sit down to reflect critically in my online journal

(Appendix B). After completing the study, I began analyzing the qualitative data I had gathered from my

journal entries by compiling and then using a grounded theory open coding process, coupled with word

cloud generators to find keywords and themes that emerged as I read through the entries. I found five

major themes in my journal entries: critical reflection on assimilation and the racial binary; critical

reflection on my own family ethnic identity, history, and story; interest convergence leading to feelings of

distrust of U.S government institutions; epistemological bias and inequity in education; and how the

communities I've chosen as an adult have shaped my perception of identity. The following section details

a thematic analysis of my journal process.

Critical reflection on my assimilation story

I began the process of critically reflecting on my own ethnic identity as a result of my reading,

which led to some discoveries about my ancestor's immigration stories and grappling with how they were

able to overcome oppression in their former countries to find privilege in America because of their skin

color and willingness to give up certain parts of their identity. By day four of the study, I had started to

reflect on my Jewish heritage through the lens of critical white studies and the judicial system. I noted

how being Jewish can refer to either a religious affiliation or an ethnic one or both. But that Jewish

identity was effectively erased when we started taking a census with no category to identify ourselves

ethnically as Jewish. Currently, for the thousands of Jews in America with no religious affiliation, there

is no way to accurately identify oneself on the official government count. I noted that I don't have the life

experiences or customs of people who are Christian, Catholic, Irish, Italian, German, French, or English

so when I self-identify as "white" or "Caucasian" I am lumped in with those groups but realistically I

grew up in a vastly different culture. I also wrote about how confusing it is to be white and Jewish in

America because we are still a minority that is the target of regular hate crimes based on our identity, yet

we can go to the most prestigious schools and live in wealthy neighborhoods without fear of police

brutality.

During the second week of my study, I continued to grapple with the "concept of whiteness and

its relationship to property law" in the context of my ethnicity and ancestral assimilation. I noted how

despite the centuries of oppression my ancestors faced throughout European history when we arrived in

America, we were not considered property. Throughout Europe, Jews were considered property to be

used to build structures like railroads, roadways, and buildings in Eastern Europe and then brutally

murdered once they were no longer deemed fit to work, this predates the rise of Hitler. My reading and

reflection prompted me to ask more questions to my father about his grandparents. He revealed to me

that my great-grandmother came to this country alone in 1913 as a sixteen-year-old girl to escape the

pogroms in Poland and neighboring U.S.S.R. She never saw the rest of her family ever again. They were

locked in a synagogue and burned alive during the Holocaust. Before that day, my dad only ever spoke of

our relatives leaving Lithuania and Ukraine. I had no idea that my great-grandmother was from Poland.

My whole life I believed that my family had escaped the Holocaust. It was an emotional revelation. On

my mother's side, who was also Jewish, I have a lot of unanswered questions because she is no longer

alive for me to find out how her relatives escaped from Europe. I was struck by the uncomfortable truth

that despite the persecution my family had faced in Europe, we were not the oppressed in America. When

my great-grandmother arrived at Ellis Island, she was no longer considered property, but Black people

were still considered property by the laws and institutions of the American government despite hundreds

of years of living and toiling on American soil.

      Interest convergence

        Throughout the four weeks of my study, I noted how interest convergence, a key concept in

critical race theory (CRT) which asserts that the dominant group will only make a decision that is

favorable to the marginalized group if it also benefits them, re-shaped my understanding of political

structures in America. I wrote about the example of Mary Dudziak's work to expose the interpersonal

communication between the Department of Justice, the President, and certain members of the U.S.

Supreme Court about segregation in America. This one historical piece of information revealed that the

Brown vs. Board of Education trial ended with de-segregation as a way to prove that the U.S.S.R was

incorrect in its assertion that America was suffering from great racial inequity, was the most jolting piece

of information I received during the entire study. I wrote about this example many times and it was

included in every conversation I engaged in with a colleague or friend to discuss what I learned about

critical race theory. It was the most clear-cut example of how interest convergence has shaped American

society through the judicial system. The landmark decision was only favorable because it allowed the

American public to believe that federal officials were ready to champion the rights of Black people,

despite the state-level actions which effectively reversed that outcome through redlining and

redistribution of education funds. The example displayed how nationalism was boosted, riots were

averted, the international community perceived a "changed" America and yet in reality Black people had

no lasting economic benefit from this decision. The greatest benefit was assigned to those with the

greatest power and allowed them to maintain the status quo. I often noted how this example led me to

feel increasingly distrustful of the judicial system and American institutions in general. It is common for

the discourse around race in America to focus on issues of ideology, but CRT takes an intentional stance

on racism as it relates to material life as well. The concept of interest convergence allowed me to

understand exactly what is meant by structural racism and the books that I read gave me access to specific

historical examples of this concept over the centuries.

Epistemological bias and inequity in education

By the third week of my study, I had read a chapter in Gloria Ladson-Billings book (2021) about

racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. I reflected on the ways in which I was currently

operating under an epistemological bias in my own research. Through a conversation with a mentor and

this book chapter, I realized that storytelling and counternarrative are undervalued as a way of knowing in

Western scientific inquiry (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Up to that point, I had been trying to find ways to

conduct this action research in ways that would rely less on my own story from a Jewish woman's

perspective but would be as quantitative as possible. I did not realize I had this bias until I read this

chapter and had a conversation with my mentor. I wrote about how entire fields of research in education

and law have been subverted into the dominant culture by means of a "correct" way of being and knowing

in academia i.e., white, male, and European. Qualitative research, especially if it pertains to women or

emotions, is commonly dismissed as being less academic or scientific because of the identity of the

researcher. Ladson-Billings (2021) pointed out how this same problem applies to other ways of knowing

or speaking in communities of color within the public education system. Epistemology has been yet

another tool for inequity in education because of the broader institutional bias embedded in the US

education system by way of gifted programs, high-stakes test questions, and entrance exam questions

with origins in eugenics. The education community has a lot of work to do to uncover epistemological

bias within curricula from pre-school through the university levels. The ways in which academic

institutions, workplaces, and governments value a certain type of intelligence over another breeds

inequity both ideologically and materially.

>### **Assimilation and privilege**

Throughout the study, I grappled with confronting how the American judicial system has fostered

a Black-white binary and directly dictated what assimilation would look like for different racialized

groups. I noted how I was familiar with thinking critically about intersectionality and

nationalism/assimilationism, but I had never read about the ways in which the *law* directly affected the

structures of society based on these concepts. This theme was closely related to how learning about the

concept of *interest convergence* re-shaped my understanding of political structures in America. Within

this theme, I reflected on Gloria Ladson-Billings' concept of the social funding of race (Ladson-Billings,

2021). She used this concept to point out that race is a global phenomenon and "funded" differently

depending on the nation. In America, race is highly funded, meaning that every single American has a

fully formed meaning of what race is and we all collectively contribute to it every day in small ways.

This is not an explicit value judgment of one group being better than another; it is an implicit set of norms

that individuals within this culture uphold. I wrote that this analogy works well in a classroom setting.

When a *teacher* has a *negative reaction* to a young child trying to make sense of why their friend has a

different skin tone, they are just parroting the societal norms without any critical thought about how *their*

reaction may be the problem and *not the child's* curiosity. This kind of social funding has allowed our

society to maintain the "us" and "them" mentality materially as well. A Black person was not able to

assimilate and gain privileges in the way that other groups were able to because implicit bias was and still

is too uncomfortable for the white majority to confront.

Community and perception

Another theme that surfaced repeatedly throughout the course of the study was related to my chosen communities as an adult. I realized how my choice to be part of a global faith community as an adult afforded me new perceptions about identity, race, and ethnicity. While I am no longer formally affiliated with that community, during the nine years that I identified as a Baha'i, I lived with, befriended, and traveled to places with people who had ambiguous identities. For example, I had a roommate who had a Persian father, and a Jewish American mother but was born and raised in Colombia. This was common in my community during that time. If I asked someone to tell me their ethnicity, nationality etc. it was often hard for them to come up with a simple answer. As a result of that time, I learned to stop asking people the question, "where are you from?" or "where are your parents from?" My lived experience with this community changed my perception of identity. I no longer found such questions meaningful to understand a person's background. I realized that in the course of regular conversations I would find out what made that person unique. My new normal became people who could not easily identify their identity in a neat package. In a few of my journal posts, I noted how I was grateful for my time in that community because it helped me as I was grappling with themes related to assimilation and nationalism within the CRT framework. My past experiences allowed me to reflect on the complexity of identity and the racial binary with nuance.

In the final section of this paper, I will discuss how my action research process allowed me to engage with new questions about my future in the field of education.

Action Plan

At the outset of my study, I aimed to explore and assess how anti-critical race theory (CRT) legislation in public education has impacted my perceived self-efficacy and emotions as an educator. Further, I have explored how these impacts have affected my future career choices in the field of education. Within the framework of social constructionism, I found a useful lens to view the complexities of my journey over the course of this four-week study. The ebb and flow of the COVID-19 pandemic, the

unfolding dynamics related to anti-CRT legislation, and the conversations it sparked both locally and nationally all contributed greatly to my moods and perceptions of my assigned daily material. In the final section of my paper, I will discuss my three sources of data and the conclusions I came to through data analysis. Additionally, I will discuss my future recommendations and limitations of this study. Finally, I will outline the future actions I plan to take based on the conclusions of this study.

In my pre-and post-assessment of self-efficacy, I was able to quantify my perceived feelings of increased self-efficacy as a result of my intervention. What I found most interesting was how quickly my focus shifted away from issues of legislation and policy once I began reading the texts of origin on (CRT). Initially, I thought that my intervention would spark more interest in local politics, school board meetings, and news reports. But in reality, I turned inward to focus on my own understanding and knowledge of what CRT is about rather than focusing on the noise of the current political climate. I attribute this to a combination of factors including my current situation as a full-time caretaker rather than as a teacher in a classroom setting, the onslaught of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, and the material itself which was designed to make the reader think critically about their positionality. Although this shift in focus was unexpected, I was even more caught off guard by the perceptible difference in my concern about my future in education before and after the intervention. I was pleased to find that increasing my self-efficacy to speak about CRT in education and gaining a better understanding of my positionality in the context of CRT actually resulted in a practical way forward for me in the field of education. I will speak more about that in the final paragraph.

My most straightforward data collection tool may have also been my least useful. The Daylio app was a consistent way for me to track my moods after engaging with reading material, videos, or conversations about CRT in education. I was able to use the app every study day directly after my assigned material for the day. However, the data I analyzed from this tool was likely more correlational rather than causal. Many other factors affected my day outside of my assigned material, some of which were noted on my daily journal reflection, and others that I was not even aware of.

My daily critical reflection journal prompts offered the most bountiful source of data. From this qualitative, highly structured source, I was able to glean how both the material I was engaging with and the current events taking place at the time were shaping my internal reflections. It was curious to me that as I read through both of my assigned books, the days and weeks in which I reported the worst moods often correlated with a critical reflection on my own family history, assimilation, and privilege. The more that I felt a deep personal connection to the concepts within the framework, the more emotional turmoil I experienced. One mentor pointed out to me that, although she doesn't use this word lightly, she thought that my description of my reaction sounded like the material was triggering for me. I think it was very helpful for me to understand that I was uncovering traumatic stories of oppression within my own family and at the same time confronting how this was my *past* but for a person of color, it is their *present*. At one point, current events surrounding a celebrity remark that was construed as antisemitic coincided with pertinent information I was reading about CRT in my texts. It spurred me on to a contradictory realization that although my people were not structurally oppressed in America, we *are* currently victims of hate crimes and violent plots by white nationalists. I was able to synthesize concepts of counter-narrative, interest convergence, and anti-essentialism from the CRT framework to understand how American history as taught in public education has wiped out the lived experiences of segregation and structural racism that Jews dealt with for centuries in Europe in order to focus on how America was the hero that saved the Jews from the evil of Hitler. I realized the gap between my own lived experience as a Jewish woman and what the average American knows about Jews, their history, their culture, and how they did even deal with antisemitism in America long before the rise of the Nazi party. Because Jewish people make up a significant number of Hollywood celebrities, we are highly visible. But I think many people do not understand how often we have to deal with microaggressions about our appearance, stereotypes about money, and the reality that we have had armed guards at our houses of worship for at least the last 10 years. This gap in understanding was a major revelation for me in terms of my own positionality and future topics for research.

My realizations tied to the political motivations behind the Brown v. Board of Education case were also a major source of change as a result of this intervention. Although my own personal work in community organizations over the past 15 years has increasingly contributed to my awareness of structural racism, I had previously thought that the Supreme Court was an institution uncorrupted by politics. After I was made aware that this branch of government was not acting purely on principles of fairness and justice, but instead as a facade of justice to maintain the status quo as an example of interest convergence, I was awake to a new reality. Although I was angry and disappointed by the discovery of these facts, I was also able to better understand the importance of teaching critical thinking skills to the masses. The anti-CRT legislation took on a whole new level of importance for me. Now I knew exactly why politicians did not want any principles of CRT to reach teachers, let alone classrooms. I also had the long view to see the cyclical nature of history repeating itself. If anything, the backlash of anti-CRT legislation will spur on new generations of activists now made aware of the existence of CRT.

Three other themes emerged from my critical reflective journaling that did not engender a profound response like the two themes mentioned above. One conclusion that I have drawn is that this is because the other themes were much more novel for me. I did focus my critical journal reflection on new ideas, concepts, or theories, so that may offer some explanation. Another conclusion I have considered is that these other three themes were less personal to me and less important to my sense of identity.

Overall, the intervention did seem to have modest positive effects on my self-efficacy and emotions toward understanding the conflict surrounding anti-CRT legislation. Although I set out to answer a specific set of questions, as my research unfolded, I responded in ways that I had not anticipated at the outset. My focus shifted from legislation and broader political contexts to an inward exploration of my own privilege, bias, and understanding of my positionality. Because this study was successful, despite the different outcome than originally intended, I would recommend the intervention to be used, improved on, and adapted for other teachers interested in a similar goal. For future replications, I would consider eliminating the mood tracker or finding a different way to evaluate responses to the material. Biometrics might be a more interesting and useful approach. Anyone with a Fitbit, blood pressure monitor etc. could

potentially measure their heart rate, blood pressure, and core body temperature as they read, watch media, and engage in deliberate conversation about the material. Biometrics could also be measured during the journaling sessions to measure responses during the internalizing and synthesizing of information. I did find the pre-and post-assessments to be helpful, but I might look for assessments already in existence specifically related to self-efficacy and use those questions instead or in addition to the ones in my study. The critical journal reflection prompts were focused on novel ideas and concepts so it may be useful to decide on different criteria depending on the purpose and the participants of the action research. Ideally, this type of study could be done in a small group setting in a school or within a teacher education program. However, the self-study was a worthwhile approach on its own. There were several limitations to this study: it was undertaken in my home at my own discretion, the mood measurement had too many outside variables to measure causality, the study was very specific to my individual interests, positionality, and perceptions, and not generalizable to a larger population, my understanding of concepts was based on my biased stance as a Jewish, white, middle-class, liberally educated, female.

The most exciting part of this action research study has been the unexpected outcomes for my future plans. At the outset of the study, I was concerned that I would be so emotionally distraught from the conflict surrounding anti-CRT legislation in education that I would leave the field altogether. But my realization of the gap in public school education about the context of antisemitism in Europe prior to Hitler and being able to see my positionality more clearly in the context of structural racism in America has boosted my resilience to re-enter the education field. These two realizations coupled with the last article I read about critical race theory and the whiteness of teacher education (Sleeter, 2017) helped me to see that my future place in education may be in a university setting rather than in the K-12 system. In the meantime, I hope to apply my newfound perceptions as a program coordinator or manager in an educational company. As of this writing, I have reflected on how much of a paradox I am currently in: my physical and social reality has collapsed in on itself due to the pandemic but my consciousness has expanded because of this intervention. I look forward to the day that I can apply my realizations practically and test their real-world strength.

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Appendix A

Qualtrics Pre-Assessment

Q1 - Please briefly write your current understanding of critical race theory in education. Please include any relevant knowledge you have about the origins of the framework and any relevant legislation in your state and/or school district. Please do not look up this information to answer the question. It is important to be honest as this is just for baseline data.

Critical race theory (CRT) was first conceived of by law students in the 1970s. Gloria Ladson-Billings and colleagues began to explore ways to apply this theory to the field of education in the 1990s. As it stands, the theory is generally only studied in graduate school programs, mainly at the Ph.D level. However, in practice CRT may inform educational programming, curriculum choices, professional development and equity programs for teachers and administrators. The theory itself has never been a part of any actual lesson with children. Its principles may inform some teacher choices, but it is never taught directly in the classroom. In my current state of Pennsylvania, HB1532 was introduced in June of 2021. My understanding is that this bill has not been signed into law as of this writing on January 24th, 2022. I am currently not teaching in any district so I don't know how this is affecting the teachers, administrators, and students in the schools in my area.

Q2 - I feel confident speaking about the historical origins and context of critical race theory.

Q3 - I feel confident speaking about critical race theory in education.
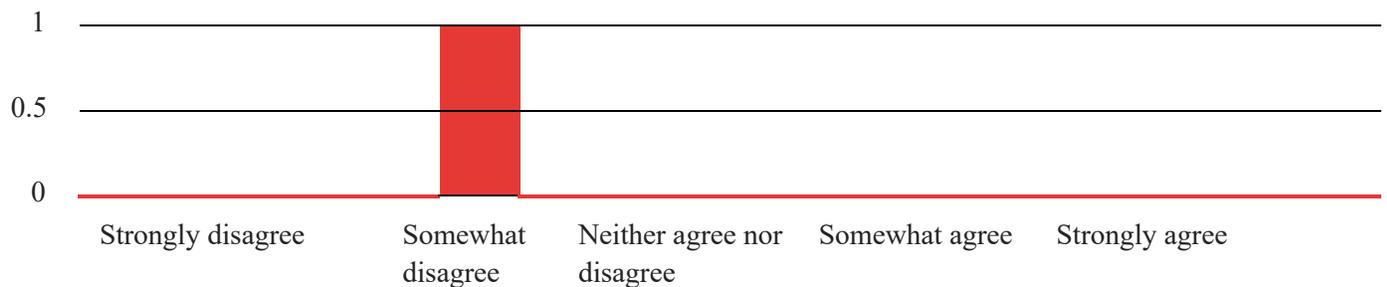
Q4 - I feel confident speaking about current legislation and topics related to critical race theory in education.
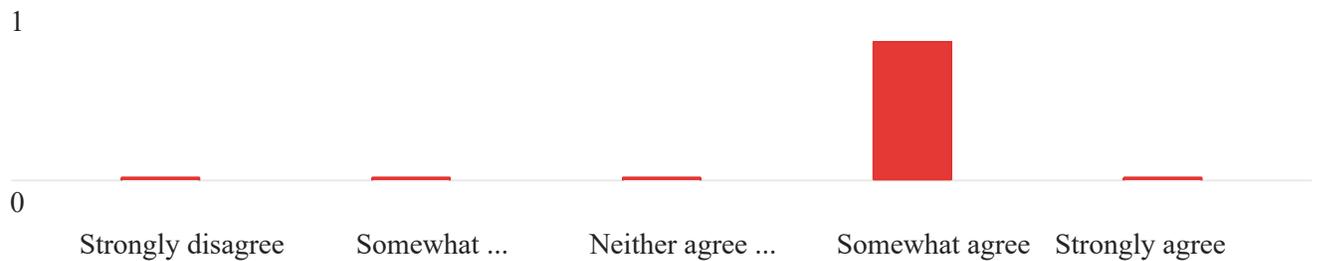

Q5 - I had a conversation with a colleague, administrator, parent/guardian, or friend about or related to critical race theory this past week.
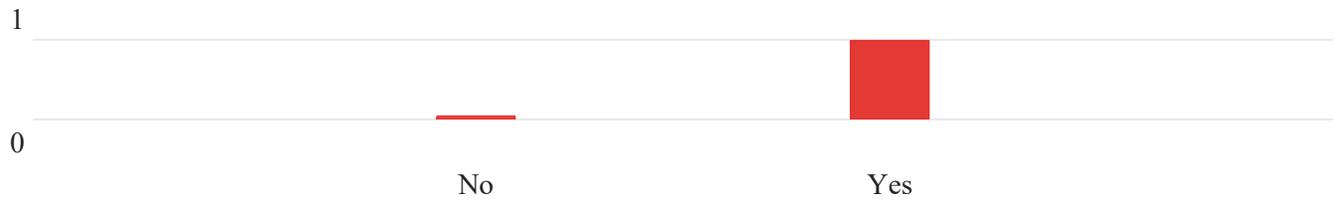
Q6 - When I had that conversation I felt (Please choose from the list below. You may choose as many as are applicable):
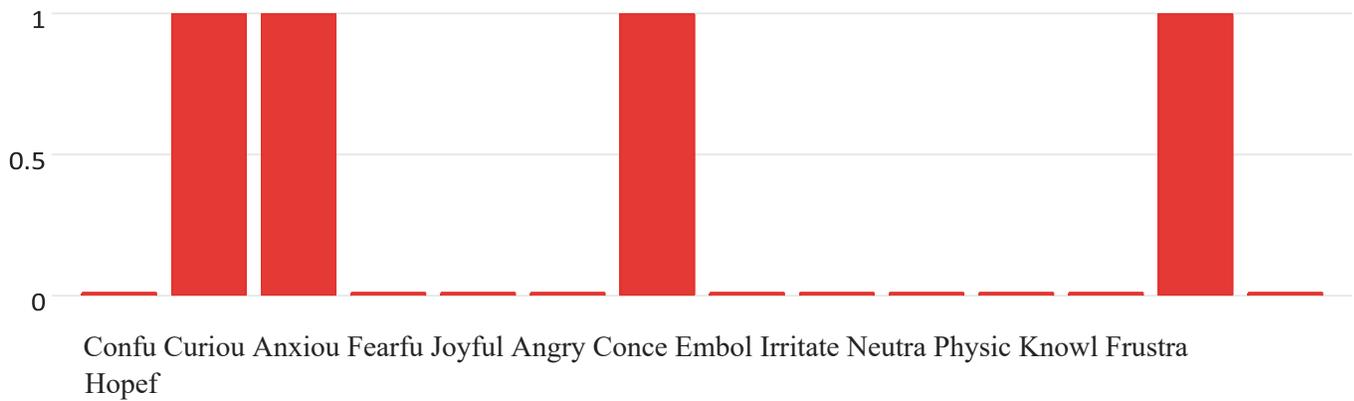
Q7 – I am concerned about my future as a teacher because of anti-CRT legislation in my state.

Q8 - I am afraid to speak openly about racism, sexism, equity, diversity, inclusion with potential employers or parents in my community.

1

0

Strongly disagree   Somewhat ...   Neither agree ...   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Q9 - I feel confident in my ability to lead a focus group or workshop for educators on the topic of critical race theory in education.

1

0

Strongly disagree   Somewhat ...   Neither agree ...   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Q10 - I feel comfortable leading a focus group or workshop about critical race theory in education with people who have a different political ideology than mine.

1

0

Strongly disagree   Somewhat ...   Neither agree ...   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Q11 - What do you feel is your biggest gap in knowledge about critical race theory? What do you hope to learn over the next five weeks?

I feel like I have a general understanding of the history of critical race theory, but I know very little about it's applications to education. I also think that my privilege as a Jewish, white, well-educated, middle-class woman has contributed to certain blindspots in my perception of reality. In the next five weeks I hope to uncover some of my blindspots and confront them while also increasing my knowledge of the academic aspects of critical race theory in education. Ultimately, I would like to increase my capacity to have well-informed, factual, level-headed conversations about this topic with people from across the political spectrum so that I can relate to parents, teachers, and administrators and build bridges to understanding rather than increase a political divide that only hurts our children.

Qualtrics
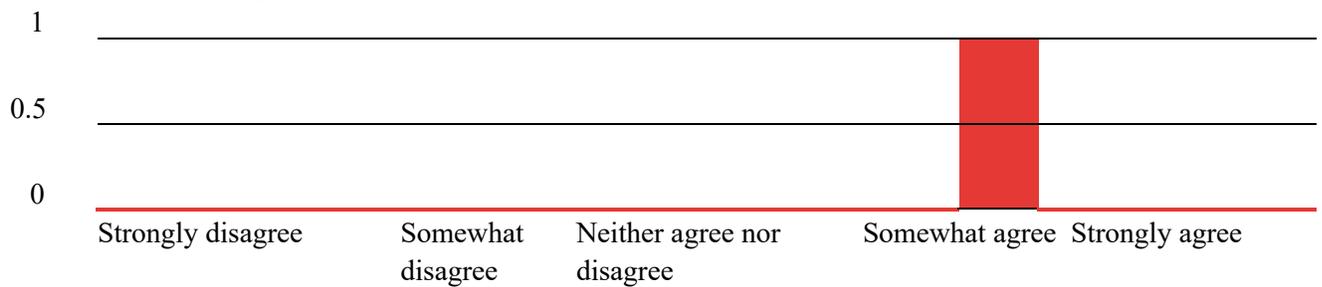
Post-Assessment Results

Q1 - I had a conversation with a colleague, administrator, parent/guardian, or friend about or related to critical race theory this past week.
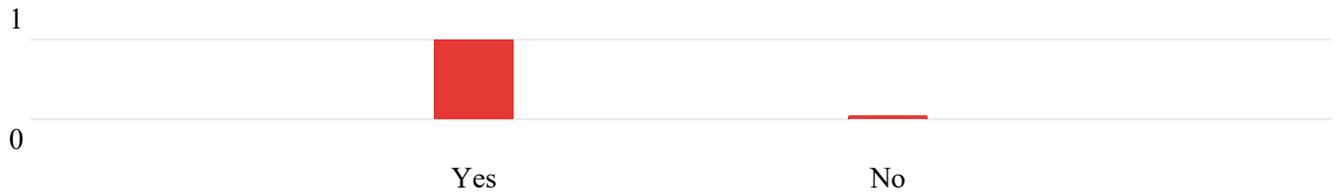
Q2 - I feel confident speaking about the historical origins and context of critical race theory.

Q3 - I feel confident speaking about critical race theory in education.

Q4 - I feel confident speaking about current legislation and topics related to critical race theory in education.
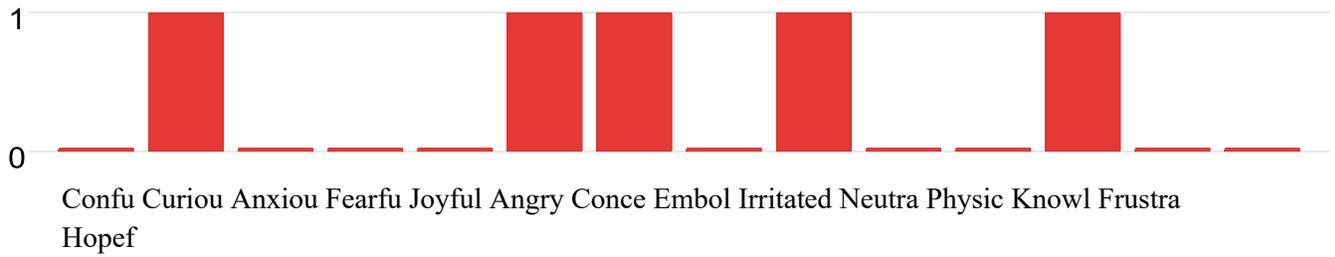
Q5 - Please briefly write your current understanding of critical race theory in education. Please include any relevant knowledge you have about the origins of the framework and any relevant legislation in your state and/or school district. Please do not look up this information to answer the question. It is important to be honest as this is just for baseline data.

Tate and Ladson-Billings published their seminal article, Towards a Critical Race Theory in Education in the mid-90s after a series of academic workshops. Ladson-Billings took the time to read law theory from Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Delgado and Stefancic in order to understand the origins of the framework. Once she realized that it was extremely applicable to education scholarship she brought this to the attention of her university colleagues. They offered helpful critique and guidance which helped her to get her ideas more polished. Then she brought her research to an academic conference where she was met with intense anger and scrutiny that she had "broken the code" to not make race the central issue in education, even amongst scholars of color. She and Tate very quickly sought to have their work published so that it could enter the conversation before other scholars could take it out of the spotlight. It was well-received in some circles, ignored in others, and sometimes despised. Her work opened up a vast reservoir of untapped knowledge in education research that is still in its beginnings. The central idea that racism is a normal, not aberrant, part of life in America and that constitutional rights are property rights, not human rights, readily applies to education. Additionally, the concepts of interest convergence (system change only occurs when it also benefits the white majority), anti-essentialism, counternarrative, and colorblindness all equally affect education structure within America just as much as they affect property law. The bottom line is that until the US government is willing to restructure laws, education, voting districts, property rights, and economic policy and confront how every single one of these systems was designed by and for White people to benefit (with Black people considered as White people's property until the late 19th century) then there is little hope of any real progress. I have honestly not paid attention to the legislative battles as much as I did at the beginning of this study or even when I first started to have the idea back in the summer of 2021. I do have a much better sense of the national picture at the local level thanks to outstanding research that was done by a group of scholars out of UCLA. There is quantitative evidence that 35% of all public schools in the nation have succumbed to anti-CRT legislation passed within their state. That is more than 1/3 of all schools within the nation. There is also evidence that many of these schools exist within neighborhoods where the White population has recently DECREASED. The schools with the most ethnically diverse student bodies are the LEAST likely to receive an education that fosters their critical thinking about racism in America. I mean, how much more obvious can legislators get? They clearly are afraid of losing their power. This study has also pointed out that teachers are terrified to teach concepts related to racism, sexism, gender identity, ability, any topic that would fall under diversity, equity, and inclusion. I don't know if there have been any new updates to the PA anti-CRT legislation. I have focused my attention on understanding the larger scholarly framework and reading research, rather than popular media.

Q6 - When I had that conversation I felt (Please choose from the list below. You may choose as many as are applicable):
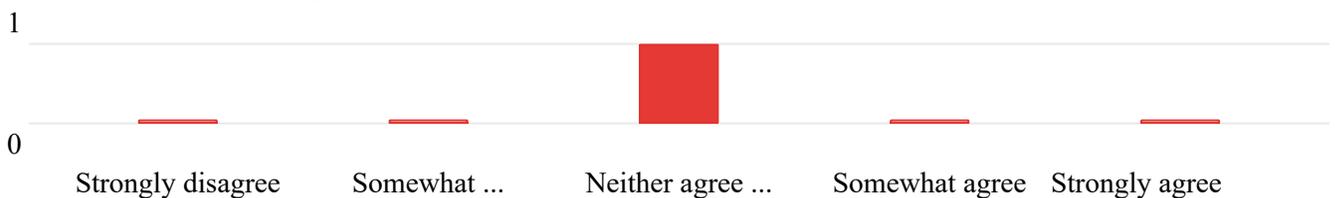

Confu Curiou Anxiou Fearfu Joyful Angry Conce Embol Irritated Neutra Physic Knowl Frustra Hopef

Q7 - I am afraid to speak openly about racism, sexism, equity, diversity, inclusion with potential employers or parents in my community.


Strongly disagree   Somewhat ...   Neither agree ...   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Q8 - I feel confident in my ability to lead a focus group or workshop for educators on the topic of critical race theory in education.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat ...   Neither agree ...   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Q9 - I feel comfortable leading a focus group or workshop about critical race theory in education with people who have a different political ideology than mine.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat ...   Neither agree ...   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

Q10 - I am concerned about my future as a teacher because of anti-CRT legislation in my state.

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    Strongly disagree    Somewhat ...    Neither agree ...    Somewhat agree    Strongly agree
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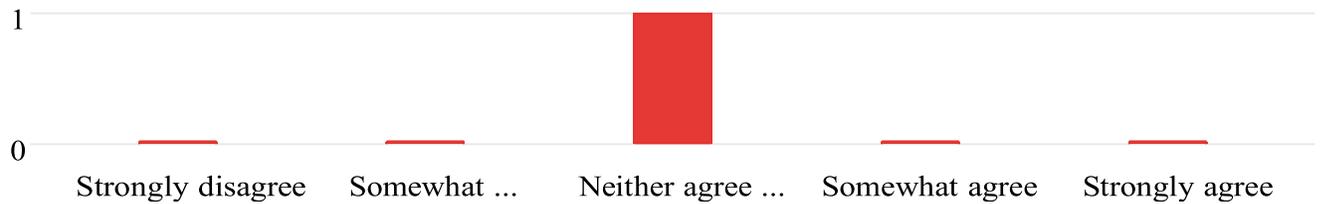
Q11 - Please reflect on your experience over the past five weeks. What was the greatest benefit, if any, you felt you gained from your reading, materials, conversations, and critical journal reflections?

It has been four weeks, not five. But that was all I needed! It has been an incredible journey. I started this process thinking that I would learn a lot about the law and education scholarship. What I actually encountered was a multifaceted picture of history, that challenged me to look much more deeply into my own positionality. I was confronted with my own double consciousness as a White Jewish woman. I kept coming back to issues of my own identity, my ancestor's struggles, how they benefitted from their skin privilege in America, how I directly benefitted from their bravery to leave their life of systemic oppression. Through this four-week journey, I was able to connect with colleagues and scholar friends on a really deep level, ask myself really hard questions, confront my reality, confront my privileged and biased perspective while also having a deep empathy for the struggles of my friends of color, specifically those who are Black. And now I know that there is a gap in understanding in America about Jewish history before the Nazis. I realized that I had a totally separate education in Judaism that I am only privy to because of my identity. It has renewed my interest in being able to speak knowledgeably about how the Jewish race was constructed as "other" in Europe, how that led to centuries of economic and physical oppression, which climaxed with the Nazis, but still did not end. American history books, popular media and pop culture focus on the Nazis and Anne Frank to the detriment of the whole picture. Hating the Nazis is a form of interest convergence for the WASP majority of America. If that is the focus of all history taught in America then the Italian, Spanish, Austro-Hungarian, Anglo-Saxon culpability for centuries of rape, torture, death, and oppression will not even enter the dialogue. White people with those backgrounds can just feel good about being the "good" Americans who "saved" the Jews from the Nazis and their evilness. I had never seen this quite so clearly before. And it has helped me understand how the "Jewish question" and the "question of Slavery" are completely parallels. Jews should have a deep and immediate understanding of the wrongs that are still being committed against all Black and Indigenous people in America. But because of the ease of assimilation for Jews in American society, there are just as many conservative Jews who now identify like their WASPy counterparts and have the privilege to deny their history as other. It is unlikely that will change. But I am grateful that I had the chance to dive this deep, push myself to such critical analysis, and confront my own biases about research, epistemology, and what to do going forward.

Appendix B

Critical Reflection Journal

Reflection Template

Date:

Time:

Location:

Weather:

Current events affecting my day:

Other factors affecting my day:

Did anything surprise you during your reading or video viewing today?

How did it make you feel?

If this was the first time you heard this concept, story, theory, or idea, why do you think that is? Would this cause the white majority to feel uncomfortable?

If you had a conversation about critical race theory today, how did it go? Was there anything that went well? What would you say differently next time?

Appendix C

Syllabus

Syllabus for Action Research Project

Monday, January 24th
- Take the pre-intervention assessment in Qualtrics *before* starting my reading
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. I & II
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Tuesday, January 25th
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. III
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Wednesday, January 26th
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. IV
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Thursday, January 27th
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. V
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Friday, January 28th
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. VI
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Monday, January 31st
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. VII
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Tuesday, February 1st
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. Critical Race Theory - Ch. VIII
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings

- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Wednesday, February 2nd
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Introduction to p. 17
- Have at least one conversation with a friend, former colleague, St. Kate professor, or family member about what I learned about the history of the academic movement, how I felt as I was reading the Critical Race Theory book by Delgado and Stefancic.
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the reading and my conversation
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Thursday, February 3rd
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 1
- Read Ladson-Billings, G. *We need to do a better job talking about race* article
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Friday, February 4th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 2
- Watch 30 minutes from Kirwan Institute October 8 Forum | Race & Identity Definitions Toolkit for Educators- Dr. Melissa Crum
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Monday, February 7th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 3
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Tuesday, February 8th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 4
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Wednesday, February 9th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 5
- Have at least one conversation with a friend, former colleague, St. Kate professor, or family member about what I learned about the origins of critical race theory in education so far, how I felt as I was reading the articles and watching the video by Melissa Crum.
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings and conversation(s)
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Thursday February 10th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 6
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Friday, February 11th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 7
- Watch 30 minutes from Kirwan Institute October 8 Forum | Race & Identity Definitions Toolkit for Educators- Dr. Melissa Crum
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Monday, February 14th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 8
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Tuesday, February 15th
- Ladson-Billings, G. Critical Race Theory in Education – Ch. 9
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Wednesday, February 16th
- Read the conflict campaign report pp.1-28
- Have at least one conversation with a friend, former colleague, St. Kate professor, or family member about what I learned about the origins of critical race theory in education so far, how I felt as I was reading the articles
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Thursday, February 17th
- Read the conflict campaign report pp. 29-57
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Friday, February 18th
- Read the conflict campaign report pp. 57-84
- Watch 30 minutes from Kirwan Institute October 8 Forum | Race & Identity Definitions Toolkit for Educators- Dr. Melissa Crum
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings

- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections

Monday, February 21st
- Read Sleeter, C.E. *Critical race theory and the whiteness of teacher education*
- Daily journal entry – critical reflection on the readings
- Daily mood monitor – enter my mood into the Daylio app after my readings and reflections
- Take the post-intervention assessment survey