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An Overview on the Validation of the Critical Race Theory Measurement

About the Author(s)

Dr. Campbell, Associate Professor and Program Director in the School of Social Work employs both Black feminist pedagogy and an intersectional approach in her teaching at both graduate and undergraduate levels. She brings expertise in developing and teaching online, hybrid and face-to-face courses such as Black Sexuality, Bodies, Cultures & Nations: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, Social Perspectives on Gender, Race & Class, Cultural/Human Diversity, Applied SWRK Research Methods, Integrative Technology in Advanced Social Work Practice and Social Statistics and Research.

Keywords

Critical Race Theory, Scale Development, Practitioners, Racial Competency, Assessment



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Abstract

The Critical Race Theory Measurement (CRTM) was developed to evaluate the understanding of the six major principles of CRT and the significance of race relating to the preparation of practitioners providing services to people of color. The objective of this study was to evaluate the scale's psychometric properties. The CRTM self-assessment instrument measures the six Critical Race Theory principles. It consists of 19 items assessing endemic racism, the social construction of race, differential racialization, convergence/determinism, racial narratives, and intersectionality. The validation of the CRTM was based on its administration to 175 social work and counseling practitioners. This paper discusses the importance and needs to develop tools like the CRTM scale that can be utilized in practice to assess practitioners' knowledge and understanding of CRT. The overall findings confirmed the CRTM items and the data was suited for parametric statistical analyses.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Scale Development, Racial Competency, Assessment

Introduction

Critical Race Theory in education has become the center of attention, especially for state legislation seeking to ban its use in K-12 educational settings. With the increased public awareness of police brutality, the disproportionate discipline of students of color, criminal justice reform, and the Black Lives Matter movement, the issue of race and racism has become controversial.

Critics of CRT suggest that the framework is destructive and divisive and rejects the fundamental understandings on which the Constitution was based. Other critics suggest CRT encourages discrimination against white people to create racial equity for people of color.

While there appears to be much opposition and a lack of understanding of CRT, it is evident that society is constructed and operated by race. CRT scholars acknowledge that racial, social, and economic inequality is rooted within our institutions, social systems, processes, and

practices. As a result of these existing social structures, people of color are likely to experience unjust and discriminative experiences throughout their lives (Campbell, 2014). Bell emphasized that racial oppression is embedded in the "psychology, economy, society, and culture of the modern world" (Closson, 2010, p. 268).

Acknowledging the cumulative impact race and racism have on people of color is imperative to the education of practitioners engaging with communities of color. CRT establishes a framework demonstrating the importance for practitioners to understand and critically examine racially oppressive thoughts, beliefs, and practices. Though there is much disagreement among policymakers, educators, and the public about CRT, educators, and practitioners need to be well-informed about the significance and functionality of race in the lived experiences of the clients and communities they serve.

Understanding Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework created by legal scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw, Derrick Bell, and Richard Delgado, among others, in the late 1970s. The core idea of CRT is that race is a social construction essential in maintaining racism and hierarchies of race embedded in legal institutions, policies, and practices. CRT shifts from the essential ideology of race by acknowledging the "racial realities," and experiences of people of color (Closson, 2010; Trevino et al., 2008; Campbell, 2014). In addition, CRT suggests racism is not merely an unjust process experienced by people of color but an unjust consequence leading to inequitable opportunities, power, and living conditions.

CRT identifies six principles: endemic racism, race as a social construction, differential racialization, interest convergence/materialist determinism, racial narratives, and intersectionality (Abrams & Moio, 2009). The first principle, endemic racism, suggests that racism in the U.S. is not aberrational but a shared experience of most people of color (Closson, 2010; Campbell, 2014). Instead of focusing on individual racial attitudes and beliefs, CRT explores existing structures of race, institutions, and legal practices that contribute to racial inequality and discriminative experiences for people of color. The legal and social implications of policies and practices, such as the Jim Crow laws and the denial of fundamental civil rights, have a cumulative impact on people of color. Numerous social indicators demonstrate the discriminative and racial experiences people of color continue to face. People of color are more likely to be

unjustly profiled and treated by law enforcement, victims of police brutality, denied housing loans, lack a quality education, receive poor healthcare, and experience microaggressions in their everyday life (Correll et al., 2007; Eberhardt et al., 2004). The second principle, the social construction of race, establishes that race is not biologically determined but a concept developed from historical and cultural practices that contributed to people of color being exploited and oppressed (Campbell, 2014).

CRT suggests that acknowledging race as a social construct encompasses refuting the biogenetic notion of race and the thought that people are categorized based on biological and physical differences instead of understanding the associations and conceptualizations of race have been consistently transformed by historical, social, and political processes (Campbell, 2014; Omi & Winant, 1994). The third principle, differential racialization, explores the distinct processes, controlling images, and stereotypes that negatively racialize people of color as deviant, aggressive, unworthy, subordinate, and criminals. Ultimately, the negative and differential racialization of people of color becomes a tool for placing people of color in the category of "otherness" (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Collins, 2002; Collins, 2005; Hooks, 1992). Interest convergence or materialist determinism is the fourth principle of CRT. This principle recognizes how factors such as power, access, and status function as manifestations of privilege for white people, thus creating legal, institutional, economic, and social advantages that people of color do not experience (Campbell, 2014; Closson, 2010; Coello et al., 2004). Interest convergence concedes to the understanding that social change can only be obtained if the dominant white group acknowledges existing systems of racial inequality and establishes a shared interest with people of color to eliminate racial injustice (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

The racial narrative is the fourth principle of CRT, which acknowledges the legitimacy and preservation of voices and lived experiences of people of color. This process of narration encourages a space inclusive of racial epistemologies often excluded and removed from history (Campbell, 2014). Lastly, intersectionality asserts that individuals may experience several forms of inequality resulting from their multiple identities, further recognizing that no individual should be reduced to a single identity or group. Intersectionality encourages a space where the intersections of race, gender, and class become essential points of analysis to understand the racial realities experienced by people of color fully.

Methods

Sample characteristics

Following the approval of the study by the Institutional Review Board, the CRTM was distributed to 175 social work and counseling practitioners located within four Midwest cities (Chicago, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and Saint Louis). Table 1 shows the sample characteristics for the study. Sixty-nine percent of practitioners identify themselves as white, 11% as Black or African American, 2% as Hispanic or Latino, 1% as Native American or American Indian, and 5% as Biracial. Seventy-two percent of practitioners identified as female, and 24% were malware. Many practitioners (43%) resided and practiced in Chicago, while 31% resided and practiced in Saint Louis, 11% in Kansas City, and 10% in Oklahoma City. Sixty-three percent of practitioners obtained a master's degree with licensure, 21% a doctoral degree, and 10% a master's degree (Refer to Table 1). The age distribution varied among the sample, with approximately 28% of practitioners aged between 31- 40, 25% between 41-50, and 20% between 51-60.

Tool Development

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify the published literature assessing knowledge of Critical Race Theory and racial competency. Questionnaires and scales used in the published literature were reviewed and evaluated. New scale items were developed after the elimination of irrelevant and duplicate items. The items were categorized into six subscales: endemic racism, the social construction of race, differential racialization, convergence/determinism, racial narratives, and intersectionality. The final scale consisted of 19 items seeking social work and counseling practitioners' responses related to their understanding of CRT and the significance of race. The possible response for each item was set using a 6-point Likert scale, with one corresponding to disagree and 6 to agree strongly.

Description of the Scale

The Critical Race Theory Measurement (CRTM) is a self-administered psychometric instrument consisting of 19 items measuring the six aspects of Critical Race Theory. The CRTM consisted of six subscales: endemic racism, the social construction of race, differential racialization, convergence/determinism, racial narratives, and intersectionality (Abrams & Moio, 2009). Each item of the CRTM can be rated on a 6-point Likert scale (with one corresponding to

"strongly disagree" and 6 "strongly agree"). Lower scores indicate a higher understanding of the six aspects of CRT, while higher scores indicate a lower understanding of CRT. The respondents were requested to rate their level of agreement with statements such as: "Race biologically determines one's personalities and abilities," "Race/ethnicity is the most effective way to categorize people," and "Race exists as a social construct." The CRTM was developed to assess the understanding of the six major principles of CRT and the significance of race relating to the preparation of practitioners providing services to people of color.

Pilot Study

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the CRTM, a pilot study was conducted prior to the initial research study. The pilot study allowed the researcher to explore further ambiguities of the instrumentation, rate of responses per item, potentially difficult questions, and the language and comprehension of questions.

Scale Validation

The prepared scale was subjected to inter-rater reliability and internal consistency reliability. The validation process included faculty members in the departments of Women's and Gender Studies, Social Work, Counseling Psychology, and Black Studies and representatives of the general public. The researcher provided the faculty members and representatives with a copy of the scale and explained the tool's purpose and the validation process. The faculty members and representatives were asked to validate each scale item for clarity, ambiguity, comprehension, difficulty, relevancy, and clarity. In addition, the scale was subjected to face validity and construct validity. Identified faculty members with expertise and knowledge of Critical Race Theory were asked to assess each item on the questionnaire relating to Critical Race Theory to evaluate if the item measured the intended construct.

Assessment Procedures

The participants were systematically selected from the following online directories: Network Therapy, Psychology Today, and Therapy Tribe. The sample participants were emailed the online research questionnaire consisting of the informed consent, the purpose of the study, and the questionnaire. All participants received three follow-up emails over three weeks encouraging their participation and completion of the study. The participants were asked to

record the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement measuring the six aspects of CRT.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest. All the necessary approvals for carrying out the research were obtained, and ethical procedures were approved by the University Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

Data Analysis

Cronbach's alpha (coefficient of reliability) was used to assess the construct validity. A Cronbach's alpha value of ≥ 0.5 in each subscale was considered adequate or satisfactory. Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to measure the correlation of each item score to the total scale score. In addition, factor analysis was performed using the principal component analysis and the Varimax with (orthogonal) rotation. A threshold value of 1.0 was set for the eigenvalue. The KMO and Bartlett's Test were performed to determine the sampling adequacy and the strength of relations among the variables. A value of 0.5 was set for the KMO and Bartlett's Test. All assessments were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-28).

Results

A total of 175 social work and counseling practitioners completed the CRTM questionnaire ($n = 175$). The CRTM scores ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with a mean of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 1.06. The CRTM characteristics are presented in Table 2. The KMO and Bartlett's Test concluded an acceptable relationship among variables with a value of 0.7, above the commonly recommended value of .6. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 (171) = 471.86, p < .05$). All the commonalities were above .3 (See Table 4), indicating that each item shared some common variance. Nineteen questions relating to the six aspects of Critical Race Theory were analyzed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. The principal component analyses revealed that the scale items were unidimensional. The analysis yielded seven factors explaining 60.155% of the variance for the entire set of variables. Initial eigenvalues indicated that the seven factors had eigenvalues over 1 (See Table 5). All items indicated a value of .3 or above for the primary

factor loading and the cross-loading. Five factors were retained based on the insufficient number of primary loadings and difficulty interpreting the sixth and seventh factors. The following five-factor labels (1-convergence/determinism, 2-endemic racism, 3-racial narratives, 4-intersectionality, and 5-social construction of race) suited the extracted factors. Table 3 provides the mean scores and standard deviation for each scale item. Overall, the analyses confirmed that five distinct factors were underlying responses to the CRTM items, and the data was suited for parametric statistical analyses.

Discussion

The CRTM scale was designed to assess the knowledge of CRT and the understanding of race relating to the preparation of practitioners providing services to people of color. CRT can provide practitioners with the tools to effectively assess racial experiences and understand how race functions in the lives of people of color. It necessitates an examination of existing legal, institutional, economic, and social systems and how these systems reproduce racial inequality and injustice. The application of CRT can offer practitioners the tools to examine the role of race and the etiology of challenges people of color often experience. While several studies discuss the importance of race and the usefulness of CRT, the literature review revealed an absence of tools to assess CRT and the understanding of race among practitioners.

This paper discusses the importance and needs to develop tools like the CRTM scale that can be utilized in practice to assess practitioners' knowledge and understanding of CRT. The overall findings confirmed the CRTM items and the data was suited for parametric statistical analyses. There are limitations of this study that are important to address. First, the limitation of this study includes a small sample of social work and counseling practitioners within four limited Midwest cities. The small sample of practitioners lacked a diverse racial and ethnic representation. Secondly, the Critical Race Theory Measurement scale is new instrumentation that has not been validated for use with specific populations and has not been used in previous research studies. Lastly, it is essential to note that the CRTM scale is based on the self-reporting of the practitioners and that self-reporting measures can be affected by many external factors, such as measurement biases and social desirability.

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Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	N	%
<i>N</i> = 175		
<i>Race</i>		
White	121	69%
Black/African American	19	11%
Latino/Mexican	3	2%
Asian/Asian American	1	1%
Biracial	9	5%
Other	9	5%
<i>Age range</i>		
30 or younger	20	11%
31-40	49	28%
41-50	43	25%
51-60	35	20%
61-70	18	10%
71 or older	5	3%
<i>Education</i>		
Bachelor's	6	3%
Masters	18	10%
Masters w/License	111	63%
Doctorate	36	21%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	126	72%
Male	42	24%
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	22	13%
Married	108	62%
Divorced	18	10%
Widowed	1	1%
Member of Unmarried Couple	20	11%
<i>Region of Practice</i>		
Chicago	72	43%
Kansas City	19	11%
Oklahoma City	16	10%
Saint Louis	53	31%
Columbia	2	1%

Table 2. Characteristics for the Critical Race Theory Measurement

Characteristic	Mean	SD	N
Fit in culture	2.45	1.400	174
Think of self as American	2.13	1.517	174
Race causes conflict	1.90	1.394	173
Race rare & isolated	1.55	1.045	174
Race social construct	3.82	1.761	171
Race biologically	1.29	.728	174
Race effective categorize	1.52	.875	172
The first thing to notice is race		3.09	1.519 172
Otherness	3.16	1.325	165
Race determines success	2.28	1.392	173
Equal chance of success	3.04	1.560	171
Same opportunities	4.46	1.423	170
Races determine services	4.08	1.322	167
Voice story	5.82	.492	172
History excludes narratives	4.58	1.310	171
Roles of listener	5.27	.899	172
Modify interventions	4.96	1.136	169
Social locations	1.58	.869	170
Women of DV	2.26	1.250	166

Table 3. Critical Race Theory Measurement Scale Scores

Item	Mean	SD
fit in culture	2.52	1.417
think of self as American	2.26	1.570
race causes conflict	1.93	1.442
race rare & isolated	1.61	1.126
race social construct	3.86	1.734
race biologically	1.30	.774
race effective categorize	1.55	.874
The first thing I notice is race	2.97	1.530
otherness	3.18	1.332
race determines success	2.25	1.369
equal chance of success	3.10	1.532
same opportunities as Whites	4.51	1.387
races determine services	4.12	1.328
voice story	5.84	.482
history excludes narratives	4.58	1.310
roles of listener	5.33	.849
modify or change interventions	5.02	1.118
social locations	1.57	.872
women of DV	2.26	1.263

Table 4. Critical Race Theory Measurement Communalities

Item	Communalities
fit in culture	.654
think of self as American	.634
race causes conflict	.561
race rare & isolated	.643
race social construct	.448
race biologically	.527
race effective categorize	.545
The first thing I notice is race	.676
otherness	.733
race determines success	.562
equal chance of success	.657
same opportunities as Whites	.687
races determine services	.636
voice story	.537
history excludes narratives	.438
roles of listener	.642
modify or change interventions	.669
social locations	.554
women of DV	.626

**Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.*

Table 5. CRTM Factor Loading based on a Principal Components Analysis

	Loadings				
	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor
	1	2	3	4	5
same opportunities as Whites	.787				
racism determine services	.767				
equal chance of success	-.736				
history excludes narratives	.451				
race social construct	.436				
race determines success	.375				
otherness		.835			
fit in culture		.584			
otherness		.835			
think of self as American		.561			
voice story			.635		
roles of listener			.717		
modify or change interventions			.734		
social locations				.533	
women of DV				.771	
race biologically					.681
race effectively categorize					.672