What Is Critical Race Theory in Education?

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**Historical background**

- Origins in legal scholarship (Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, Kimberle Crenshaw, Charles Lawrence, Neil Gotanda, Patricia J. Williams, Angela Harris)
- Response to Neo-Marxist Critical Legal Studies movement of 1970s
- Introduced to education in 1995 (Gloria Ladson-Billings & William F. Tate, IV)
Epistemological perspectives

Post-modern, post-structural theories

- Identity as a social construction;
- Discursive practices shape and constrain identity;
- Identities are not equal;
- People experience identity in inequitable ways;
- Institutions and institutional practices and policies are complicit in the construction of identity, inequitable practices and policies

- Race and gender as lived experiences
- Critique of capitalism
Basic Tenets

- Critical race theory (CRT):
  - recognizes that racism is endemic to American life
  - expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy
  - challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law
  - presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage
Basic Tenets, cont.

- CRT:
  - insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society
  - is interdisciplinary
  - works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression (Matsuda, 1993)
CRT Contructs

- Interest-convergence
- Whiteness as Property
- Voice/Counter-story
- Critique of liberalism & colorblindness
- Racial realism
- Restrictive vs. Expansive view of equality
- Social change
A) The interests of African Americans (and people of color) in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that converges with the interests of Whites who are in policy-making positions (Bell, 2004, p.69).

B) According to Bell, “even when the interest-convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policy makers fear the remedial policy is threatening the superior societal status of whites” (p. 69). He refers to these tacit agreements as “silent covenants.”
Whiteness as property

- property ownership confers particular *rights* and *privileges*; property ownership can be conferred to intangible objects
- Whiteness has a property value (in terms of rights), with the core characteristic of “…the status quo as a neutral baseline…masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination” (Harris, 1993, p. 1715).
- “The law has accorded ‘holders’ of whiteness the same privileges and benefits accorded holders of other types of property” (p. 1731).
- One of these privileges and benefits of property is the absolute right to exclude.
“recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6) used to counteract the stories of the dominant group

Use of personal narratives and stories as valid forms of “evidence” to document inequity or discrimination and respond to only quantitative data that measures discrepancies

“the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system” (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 58)
Critique of liberalism/colorblindness

- Questions and challenges the liberal notion of incremental, rather than sweeping changes to address or redress inequity.

- Questions and challenges the colorblind ideology as the refusal to acknowledge race, racial differences and racism.
Racial Realism/Permanence of racism

- Belief that racism is endemic to and permanent within American society given the history of racism in the U.S.

- Belief that although race is a social construct, its effects and racism are real.
The expansive view posits equality as a result and a redress to the effects of racial oppression and subordination.

The restrictive view posits equality as a process with little regard for outcomes or in redressing past wrong doing but preventing future wrong-doing.

this view of inequity is the result of isolated incidents experienced by individuals rather than policies that affect a group (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1341-1342).
Knowledge learned through examination of racial inequity should be used for social justice and to make social change.
CRT Constructs in Education

- Race and racism are endemic and significant in American public schooling (Racial Realism)

- Education is a property right, not a human right

- High quality education intersects with race and property rights (Whiteness as property)
Desegregation efforts have benefited White students and communities more so than students of color and communities of color (Interest-Convergence)

Multicultural paradigm as a depoliticized, assimilationist view that seeks incremental change rather than a radical change in the system (Critique of liberalism)
CRT Scholarship in Education

- Critique of liberal ideology of early multicultural education scholarship (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)

- Examination of “the curriculum” as property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 2001)

- Examination of school funding (Parker, 2001)
CRT Scholarship in Education

- Re-conceptualizing cultural capital (Yosso, 2006)
- Black parents and educators’ participation in schooling and school desegregation (Chapman, 2006; Donnor, 2006; Morris, 2006)
- School discipline policies (Dixson, 2006)
CRT Scholarship in Education

- The use of educational space and resources (Garrett, 2006; Rousseau, 2006)
- CRT and pedagogy (Stovall, 2006)
- Language, literacy and racism (Pendergrast, 2005)
- Affirmative Action (Taylor, 1999; 2000)
CRT Scholarship in Education

- CRT as a research methodology (Chapman, 2007; Dixson, 2004; Garrett, 2006; Lynn, et. al., 2002)

- Teachers’ perceptions of mathematics equity (Rousseau and Tate, 2003).
Future Directions

- Agenda for social change in educational policies and practices

- Examination of post-*Brown* policies and recent Supreme Court decision on Seattle and Louisville cases

- Further development of a CRT research methodology