Raising Youth Critical Consciousness: Exploring Critical Race Pedagogy as a Framework for Anti-Racist Programming

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Abstract

School counselors are challenged to cultivate critical consciousness (CC) among youth engaged in anti-racist advocacy (American School Counselor Association. (2016; Ieva et al., 2021; Moss & Singh, 2015; Ratts et al., 2007; Singh et al., 2010). However, review of youth-led anti-racist initiatives reveals a lack of clarity regarding intervention factors that promote consciousness. Recognizing this void, we turn to critical race pedagogy (CRP) as a potential framework for systematizing elements of CC development within advocacy interventions. The current study examines the effects of an anti-racist youth advocacy program grounded in CRP on the development of CC. Results demonstrate significant gains in consciousness among participating adolescents and provide practical insight into the integration of CRP with anti-racist programming.

Raising Youth Critical Consciousness: Exploring Critical Race Pedagogy as a

Framework for Anti-racist Programming

Recent societal outrage toward ongoing racial injustice has prompted counseling, education, and community sectors to turn deliberate attention to programs that effectually foster social change. Notably, anti-racist movements are increasingly being driven by younger populations, with adolescents playing a significant organizing role in nation-wide activism toward persisting racism (Barroso & Minkin, 2020; Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2021; CS Mott Children's Hospital, 2020). Evidence suggests that adolescents who are engaged in social advocacy across micro- and macro-level systems play a critical role in promoting positive change (Earl et al., 2017). Further, youth who possess critical consciousness are more likely to engage in advocacy against racism and oppression and for social change (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007). Critical consciousness is an awareness of racialization paradigms as well as the systems that oppress people based on race and other social indicators (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Freire, 1970). Critical consciousness comprises two essential aspects: awareness of socio-political forces, particularly involving race and racism, and adherence to anti-racist ideologies (Freire, 1970). As youth face the reality of oppression affecting them or their peers today, counselors, especially school counselors, are grappling with the task of helping students understand racism and other forces of oppression and empowering them to take action.

Critical consciousness (CC) is an important developmental outcome for youth. Youth who report CC exhibit high socio-political knowledge and strong social advocacy skills, in addition to experiencing a range of social, academic, and vocational benefits

(Heberle et al., 2020). Accordingly, greater emphasis is being placed on youth-directed interventions that foster CC (Bañales et al., 2019). While many youth advocacy interventions report raised CC among participants (Aldana et al., 2012), there has been limited investigation of overarching frameworks that contribute to consciousness development (Godfrey et al., 2019). Given the current surge in youth advocacy initiatives that address racial injustice, it would be advantageous to identify a pedagogical model that systematizes CC development among youth. Thus, the current study examines the effects of an anti-racist program grounded in critical race pedagogy on the development of CC among adolescents.

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is defined in terms of individuals' cognitive and evaluative awareness of race and racism and comprises: 1) a highly developed racial identity, or one's ability to recognize and analyze their realities within the context of race, as well as 2) adherence to anti-racist attitudes. Measures of racial identity and color-blindness are commonly used to quantify CC, as they measure ostensive qualities of the phenomenon. In particular, racial identity provides insight on one's degree of self-awareness regarding race and other socio-cultural identities (Phinney, 1990). While not a direct measure of CC, higher racial identity development has been associated with greater awareness of race and racism (Johnson & Jackson Williams, 2015), and has been employed in empirical investigations of CC (Aldana et al., 2012).

Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) argue that in order to accurately quantify racial paradigms, researchers must employ instruments that are representative of current society's manifestations of said paradigms. Accordingly, racial attitudes most commonly

manifest in the present time as color-blind rhetoric, in which racist ideologies are obscured in social discourse. Thus, empirical scholarship relies on measures of color-blindness to assess one's ascription to anti-racist attitudes. As such, lower scores on measures of color-blind ideology indicate anti-racist attitudes and, ultimately, a more developed critical consciousness.

CC is associated with numerous protective outcomes in youth, including vocational commitment, socio-emotional wellbeing, academic achievement, and civic engagement (Heberle et al., 2020). Moreover, among youth participating in social activism, individuals who report greater CC are more likely to engage in cross-cultural relationships, utilize strong social and leadership skills, and employ complex problem-solving approaches to social problems (Bañales et al., 2019; Richards-Schuster & Aldana, 2013). These qualities advance anti-racist advocacy by fostering higher-level understanding of complex social issues and promoting social action efforts that are comprehensive and sustained (Cammarota, 2011). On the contrary, research on CC among youth activists has also found that adolescents with underdeveloped CC engage in counter-productive behaviors such as problematizing oppressed populations and seeking superficial solutions to address systemic injustices (Kawecka Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

Raising Critical Consciousness

CC can be fostered through exposure to racial and socio-political stimuli (Heberle et al., 2020). Indeed, scholars have reported robust development of racial identity and anti-racist attitudes among youth engaged in various anti-racist advocacy interventions. Anti-racist advocacy interventions include initiatives that provide a context to explore

internal and external factors that produce racist outcomes, as well as a means to actively eradicate these factors. Anti-racist initiatives that expose youth to racial stimuli foster greater racial identity development and anti-racist attitudes by prompting individuals to recognize how one's racial status informs patterns of their lived experience (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). For instance, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2018) reported meaningful gains in participant racial identity after engaging high school youth in a self-explorative intervention. Similarly, experiential workshops (Aldana et al., 2012; Suyemoto et al., 2015) and service-learning initiatives (Simons et al., 2011) have also demonstrated success in promoting racial identity and anti-racist attitudes among adolescent participants. Social engagement within diverse contexts might also promote CC by normalizing feelings of discomfort related to racial discourse and by stimulating interpersonal empathy. Indeed, Aldana et al., (2012) reported decreases in adolescents' colorblind attitudes after participating in interracial group dialogues.

That stated, recent studies suggest that inconsistencies may exist in the development of CC among diverse youth (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Godfrey et al., 2019). For instance, while much of the literature suggests that people of color and individuals with high awareness of social injustice exhibit greater CC (Heberle et al., 2020), Godfrey and colleagues (2019) note discrepancies in the development of CC based on said indicators. Similarly, Alemán & Gaytán (2016) report resistance to CC narratives among a subset of youth of color. In investigating patterns of CC development, it would be advantageous to clarify the extent to which such individual characteristics influence CC development in youth.

Critical Consciousness and Critical Race Pedagogy. As civic engagement becomes a higher social priority, greater emphasis is placed on innovative and engaging strategies for raising CC, particularly among adolescent populations (Bañales et al., 2019). While many programs set out to promote CC among youth, Heberle et al. (2020) note a lack of consistency and clarity of intervention factors that foster CC. Pedagogical models used to organize anti-racist intervention curricula could ameliorate this issue by systematizing elements of CC development among youth. Critical race pedagogy (CRP) is one such framework that demonstrates promise in merging theory with praxis to promote CC. CRP introduces instructional philosophy and methodology to promote liberatory and reflexive learning (Lynn, 1999). In particular, CRP emphasizes adherence to the three primary practices: 1) integration of discussions and readings on race and racism within curriculum; 2) use of reflexivity as a learning tool; and 3) removal of power structures in learning contexts (Lynn et al., 2013). In sum, CRP aims to illuminate oppressive systems through interactive learning, and empowers students to take an active role in learning and in social action toward racial justice.

Programs that adhere to CRP frame learning content within the socio-political lens of race, allowing learners to consider the ubiquitous nature of racism within social systems. Simultaneously, youth learners in CRP classrooms are given opportunities for reflexivity, or active examination of their assumptions and beliefs, as they explore new content. In addition, interventions grounded in CRP establish nuanced learning environments that center students' working knowledge and lived experiences as the foundation for newly generated ideas.

School counselors rely on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2012) National Model and multicultural and social justice counseling competences (Ratts et al., 2016) to guide development of school-based anti-racist interventions. Such models possess a strong conceptual basis, which informs programmatic structures but provides limited concrete guidelines for instructional interventions. Alternatively, CRP is a useful framework for school counselors aiming to integrate anti-racist youth interventions because it outlines clear methodologies for anti-racist instruction. While CRP has been used within classroom contexts (Cati et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2017), there are no known studies that explore the use by school counselors in promoting anti-racist advocacy among youth. The present study aims to fill this gap by examining the effects of an anti-racist intervention grounded in CRP on the development of CC among high school advocates.

Current Study

The current study investigated the effect of an anti-racist program that incorporated CRP on the development of critical consciousness among adolescents. The following research questions were explored:

1. Does a critical race pedagogical intervention have an effect on critical consciousness among adolescent participants?

2. To what extent do student-related characteristics (race and previous social justice training) influence critical consciousness among adolescent participants?

Aligning with Hipolito-Delgado and Lee's (2007) personal empowerment theory for professional school counselors, the present research employs critical consciousness

as a precursor for action towards liberation of oppressed communities through anti-racist social advocacy. This study is important for educators and counselors, especially those in schools, as it may provide useful insights into intervention approaches that promote CC and illuminate environmental considerations that influence racial identity and attitude development among diverse youth.

Methods

Two research questions were used to guide statistical investigation. First, does a critical race pedagogical intervention have an effect on critical consciousness among adolescent participants? This quantitative study uses a one way repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess whether there were differences in the dependent variable of critical consciousness pre- and post-intervention. This quantitative design allows researchers to investigate significant differences in survey responses across time points. Second, To what extent do student-related characteristics (race and previous social justice training) influence critical consciousness among adolescent participants? This second research question was investigated using between-group ANOVA, allowing researchers to examine whether meaningful differences exist in measures of critical consciousness based on independent variables of race and previous social justice training.

Critical consciousness was investigated based on participant reports of colorblind attitudes and racial identity in alignment to the working definition of critical consciousness, described as one's cognitive and evaluative awareness of racialized social systems. We employed colorblind attitudes as one proxy of critical consciousness with greater critical consciousness denoted by lower scores on the colorblind attitudes

scale. Racial identity was a second proxy of CC such that greater CC was indicative of higher racial identity development.

Participants

Participants included 42 adolescents attending high school in a large northeastern town. Participants identified racially as White (52.4%), Black (11.9%), Asian (19.0%), Hispanic/Latino (2.4%), and Multi-Racial (14.3%). Based on the small sample size, racial groups were collapsed into White (52.4%) and Students of Color (SOC; 47.6%), describing individuals who self-identified racially as Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, or Multi-racial. This sample included 34 (81.0%) female and 7 (16.7%) male students of those who indicated gender. Participants ranged between 14 and 19 years of age, with a mean age of 15.96 years.

Program Description

The present study draws on data collected from youth who participated in the Peer Advocate Program, a week-long intensive training workshop with content and methodology grounded in critical race theory. The purpose of this workshop was to engage a select group of high school students in tenets of equity and anti-racism to prepare them for formal advocacy roles within their respective schools during the following academic year. The primary objective for the training workshop was to foster critical consciousness among student participants. The program was advertised to all students within the target high schools, and those who self-elected to participate were asked to complete an application for admission. The final sample ($n = 42$) included all students who were admitted to participate in the Peer Advocate Program.

Intervention Description. The five-day intensive training intervention included two, 2-hour workshops per day, along with three to five community building activities built into each day. Faculty members from a large northeastern university facilitated workshop sessions according to their area of expertise. Faculty facilitators were directed to generate lesson plans and adhere to methodologies that reflect the critical race pedagogical model. Specifically, the primary researcher generated learning objectives to inform curriculum development and ensure that intervention workshops aligned with tenets of CRP. Faculty facilitators were then provided with learning objectives and collaborated with the primary research to ensure that lesson plans adhered to the assigned learning objectives. Workshops covered the following topics: awareness of racial/ethnic identity and other social identities; exploration of racism and racist ideologies; identification of structural racism and bias within and beyond the school context; and equity in education and exposure to strategies for equity-driven advocacy within the education system. Aspects of CRP methodology included incorporating critical inquiry, engaging students in experiential learning activities, and grounding lesson content within a racialized paradigm.

The intervention also enlisted counselors-in-training (CIT) interns to aid in program implementation alongside faculty facilitators. Six counselor trainees representing school counseling and CMHC specialty areas provided support to adolescent participants by facilitating small-group breakout discussions, providing individualized socio-emotional support, and engaging participants in reflective processing of CRP curriculum. In particular, CIT interns employed core counseling skills when engaging with participating youth individually and in group settings. They also

collaborated with the primary researcher to develop and facilitate group icebreaker activities and breakout group discussion prompts.

Procedures

Participants were asked to complete pretest and posttest surveys tapping their racial attitudes and racial identity. Pretest surveys were completed during the program orientation, which occurred at the start of the intervention, and posttest surveys were completed directly after the conclusion of the week-long workshop. Further, surveys were completed on-site through an electronic platform, with survey links being emailed to each student upon arrival to the workshop. All students were supplied with school laptops and were allotted ample time to complete the 30-minute survey.

Measures

Demographic Variables. Participants provided information about their race, nationality, gender, age, school and grade. In addition, participants were asked to indicate previous social justice training experience and parental education.

Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAs). Anti-racist attitudes were assessed using the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAs), a 20-item measure used to assess color-blindness and racial attitudes (Neville et al., 2000). This self-report instrument uses a six-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree) to measure attitudes based on three subscales: Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination, and Blatant Racial Issues. Higher scores on the assessment indicate greater color-blind attitudes and lower anti-racist attitudes.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R). Racial identity was investigated using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R), a 6-item

scale that measures racial identity across two planes: 1) racial exploration and 2) racial commitment. The self-report MEIM-R asks respondents to indicate their sense of affinity towards their identified racial group based on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Higher scores represent more developed racial identities.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of an anti-racist program that incorporated CRP on the development of CC among adolescents. Primary analyses utilized repeated measure ANOVAs using a general linear model. Within-subject dependent variables included time and survey item responses. Between-subject variables included race and exposure to previous social justice training. A total of 42 high school students attended all days of the weeklong intervention. Post-hoc tests were utilized to compare means across between-subject categories.

Preliminary Analyses

An a-priori power analysis for repeated measures, within-between interaction with an effect size of 0.5, alpha level of .05 and power of .80 for 2 groups with a pre- and posttest using G*Power (Version 3.1) revealed that a minimum of 24 participants required to complete analysis. Missing data were addressed using best practice recommendations, which determined that data was missing at random (Schlomer et al., 2010). Cases on which at least 20% of data were missing were excluded from each variable computation (Enders, 2003). Data from 11 students met the set criteria and were eliminated from the analysis. The final sample included data from 31 participants, indicating a 74% response rate.

Results

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations are outlined in Tables 2 and 3. Average scores on the CoBRAs scale were statistically significant from pretest to posttest. Additionally, mean scores were statistically significant across binary groups of 1) race and 2) previous exposure to social justice training. The results are presented in the following sections.

Racial Identity

Repeated-measures ANOVAs were employed to investigate CC via racial identity, based on changes in student scores on the MEIM-R across time. Within-subjects measures included time (pretest vs. posttest) and racial identity scores (exploration and commitment). In addition, between-subjects measures included race and previous social justice training. Overall, participation in the intervention did not seem to largely influence racial identity. That stated, significant interactions were observed among variables of interest for environmental factors of race and previous training.

Firstly, there was a statistically significant main effect for race, with White participants indicating a higher racial identity than participants of color for composite scores, $F (1, 28)= 6.97$, $p< .05$, $\eta^2=.20$, as well as on the exploration subscale, $F (1, 28)= 7.09$, $p< .05$, $\eta^2=.20$. A similar result was observed for the commitment subscale, with effects approaching significance, $F (1, 26)= 3.64$, $p= .068$, $\eta^2=.12$. Based on the Greenhouse-Geisser criterion, a three-way interaction of Time x Identity x Previous Training exposure was also observed for the commitment subscale, $F (1, 26)= 4.98$, $p> .05$, $\eta^2=.16$, indicating a medium effect size. A post hoc split by previous training

exposure indicated an increase in racial identity commitment from pretest (M= 2.79) to posttest (M= 2.92) for participants with previous social justice training. Conversely, a decrease in racial identity commitment was observed from pretest (M=2.75) to posttest (M= 2.45) for participants with no previous social justice training, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Anti-racist Attitudes

Anti-racist attitudes were investigated using repeated measure ANOVAs based on student responses to the CoBRAs instrument. Within-subjects measures included time (pretest vs. posttest) and colorblind scores (RP, ID, and BRI). In addition, between-subjects measures included race and previous social justice training. Overall, participation appeared to have a meaningful impact on anti-racist attitudes over time. In addition, environmental factors of race and previous training also seemed to largely influence changes in anti-racist attitudes. Based on Greenhouse-Geisser criteria, a statistically significant main effect was also observed for race based on composite CoBRAs scores, $F(1, 29)= 14.10$, $p> .001$, $\eta^2=.33$, as well as for the three subscales of Racial Privilege, $F(1, 29)= 4.27$, $p> .05$, $\eta^2=.13$, Institutional Discrimination, $F(1, 29)= 11.61$, $p> .01$, $\eta^2=.29$, and Blatant Racial Issues, $F(1, 29)= 6.35$, $p> .05$, $\eta^2=.18$. The main effect was qualified by a significant Time x Attitude x Race three-way interaction for the Racial Privilege subscale, $F(1, 29)= 4.27$, $p> .05$, $\eta^2=.13$ (Figure 2). Further investigation of interactions demonstrated that participants of color reported higher Racial Privilege scores than did White participants at pretest (M=3.08 vs. M=2.14, respectively), which decreased at significantly higher rates between pretest and posttest, when compared to White participants (M=2.22 vs. M=1.76, respectively).

A statistically significant difference between participants with previous training experience was observed for the subscale of Racial Privilege, $F(1, 29)= 4.41$, $p> .05$, $\eta^2=.13$. This main effect was qualified by a three-way interaction effect for Time x Attitude x Previous Training Exposure, $F(1, 29)= 4.49$, $p> .05$, $\eta^2=.13$. Specifically, participants with previous training indicated lower color-blind attitudes in comparison to those with no previous training at the onset of the training, which remained consistent throughout the posttest. Conversely, scores for participants with no previous training decreased significantly from pretest to posttest. Likewise, there was an interaction effect for composite attitude scores, $F(1, 29)= 7.83$, $p> .01$, $\eta^2=.21$ (Figure 3), as well as for scores on the Institutional Discrimination subscale, $F(1, 29)= 8.71$, $p> .01$, $\eta^2=.23$. All interaction effects demonstrate high mean scores for participants with no previous social justice training exposure, which decrease at significant rates over time, in comparison to participants with previous social justice exposure.

Discussion

This study set out to investigate the impact of an anti-racist intervention program grounded in critical race pedagogy (CRP) on critical consciousness (CC) among adolescent participants. We found that adolescents displayed substantial growth in CC from pretest to posttest, particularly in terms of anti-racist attitudes. Further, race and previous social justice training appeared to significantly influence CC independent of intervention participation.

Research Question 1: *Does a critical race pedagogical intervention have an effect on critical consciousness among adolescent participants?*

Critical consciousness (CC) was first explored in terms of adolescents' reported racial identity development from pretest to posttest. Analyses suggest that racial identity remained consistent over time, as indicated by a lack of considerable change on responses to the MEIM-R measure. While unexpected, the lack of significance may signify a need for prolonged intervention in order to influence meaningful racial identity development among youth. In theorizing stages of racial identity, Phinney (1990) described processes of racial exploration and commitment as progressing across an extended span of time. That stated, an examination of pretest and posttest MEIM-R means indicated that racial identity exploration appeared to be trending in the desired direction over the course of the intervention (Table 2).

CC was also explored in terms of ascription to anti-racist attitudes over time. Indeed, involvement in the intervention program seemed to promote meaningful gains in anti-racist attitudes from pretest to posttest. In accordance with previous literature (Aldana et al., 2012; Chao et al., 2011), these findings substantiate the effectiveness of formalized training intervention in decreasing participants' colorblind racial attitudes, an indicator of CC. Based on the robustness of participants' growth, it can be stated that scholastic methodologies grounded in CRP promote both cognitive understanding of anti-racist concepts as well as internalized change in adolescents' beliefs regarding racialized attitudes.

Research Question 2: *To what extent do student-related characteristics (race and previous social justice training) influence critical consciousness among adolescent participants?*

In efforts to further extend literature on adolescent racial identity and anti-racist attitudes, the current study also considered the association between CC and additional participant factors. To begin, students were asked to indicate whether they had engaged in social justice training experiences prior to enrolling in the workshop. Consistent with Johnson & Jackson (2015), the current study found that adolescents with previous exposure to social justice training reported greater anti-racist attitudes during pretest, which remained consistent over the duration of the program. Effects for previous training across time are critical findings, as they provide evidence that: 1) ongoing exposure to CRP promotes development of CC among youth, and 2) rudimentary social justice competencies may elicit a ceiling effect for CC. One explanation might highlight the scaffolding function of early learning experiences in providing a foundation for development of future consciousness. This effect can be likened to Freire's (1992) notion of "decoding," whereby learners systematically begin to deconstruct and re-construct their understandings of a phenomenon while incorporating newly learned content. At the same time, previous training experiences may also elicit a ceiling effect for certain aspects of CC as indicated by the lack of meaningful change across time for participants that reported participation in previous training (Chao et al., 2011; Johnson & Jackson, 2015). Accordingly, it may be that participants' CC was circumscribed by the program's educational rigor. More challenging curricula may be needed to stimulate ongoing CC development.

The current study also explored whether participant race influenced CC development for adolescents who participated in the anti-racist program. Somewhat surprisingly, White participants within this particular sample reported considerably

higher consciousness, in comparison to participants of color. Alemán and Gaytan (2016) conclude that students of color may deny tenets of CC based on a lack of a positive racial identity, traumatization by one's marginalized identity, and embracing the mainstream or dominant ideology. Given that the current study took place in a predominantly White, northwestern college town, participant receptiveness to CRP may have been influenced, in part, by a limited presence of positive racialized messaging for youth of color. Future studies could further investigate racial identity and anti-racist attitudes among youth of color particularly in majority White settings.

Implications

Implications for School Counselors

The current study provides guidance for school counselors who aim to engage youth in anti-racist advocacy efforts. In particular, we highlight 1) the importance of preliminary training aimed at raising critical consciousness, and 2) the utility of CRP as a framework for raising consciousness. Advocacy is one of the four core themes of the American School Counselor Association (2012) National Model and underscores the responsibility of school counselors to identify and address ongoing educational inequities within their school communities. While school counselors employ a range of approaches to educational advocacy, the American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy Competencies, which inform the ASCA National Model, highlight "acting with students" through "student empowerment" as one instrumental strategy. ACA describes student empowerment initiatives as "efforts that facilitate the identification of external barriers and development of self-advocacy skills, strategies and resources in responding to those barriers" (ASCA, 2012).

In recent years, schools have employed a range of student empowerment initiatives in order to engage youth in anti-racist activism (Bañales et al., 2019; Earl et al., 2017; Richards-Schuster, & Aldana, 2013). However, little emphasis has been placed on the foundational work that is required in order for youth to effectively assume advocacy roles (Kawecka Nenga, 2011). The present study helps to highlight the importance of critical preliminary work in order to raise critical consciousness prior to engaging in advocacy efforts. That is, despite students in the present study demonstrating a strong interest in anti-racist advocacy, pretest results revealed that a majority of participants entered the program with underdeveloped anti-racist attitudes and racial identity, two key indicators of critical consciousness. This finding was particularly true for participants with no previous social justice training. Low CC has been linked to greater biases among youth advocates and superficial social activism (Kawecka Nenga, 2011; Swalwell, 2013).

Without students having a) transformational opportunities to opportunities for youth to increase awareness of their own racial identities and attitudes, and b) space to reflect upon how these ideologies influence their advocacy, efforts can be ineffective or even counterproductive (Swalwell, 2013). Conversely, when youth report greater consciousness, they are more likely to engage in authentic cross-cultural relationships and employ effectual problem-solving skills towards solving social problems. Indeed, Singh et al. (2010) identify 'consciousness raising' as one essential role of school counselors aiming to engage youth in social advocacy.

Review of anti-racist student empowerment initiatives has also revealed a lack of consistency and clarity regarding intervention factors that promote CC development

(Heberle et al., 2020). In response, the present study outlines a pedagogical framework, which school counselors and educators can employ to raising youth consciousness by promoting racial identity development and anti-racist attitudes. That is, by utilizing CRP as a framework for the anti-racist intervention program, facilitators of the present study fostered meaningful gains in youth consciousness across time. Similarly, school counselors can incorporate interventions grounded in CRP as a precursor to their comprehensive school counseling advocacy plan. Interventions that precede advocacy work should integrate the three core features of CRP, including: 1) engaging youth in reflexivity and critical inquiry, 2) grounding content within a racialized paradigm, and 3) structuring the environment to center students as co-creators of learning.

Finally, understanding meaningful contextual moderators that influence consciousness development can inform how content is partitioned for distinct cohorts of learners within anti-racist interventions. Within the present study, participating youth displayed varying levels of CC, which seemed to be influenced by their environmental contexts. Specifically, participants with higher levels of training exhibited less growth over time, in comparison to those with no previous training exposure. This finding suggests that it may be advantageous to offer interventions that span across an extended period of time and which progressively increase in depth and rigor. Increasing time and depth of program curricula could foster more pronounced increases in CC among students with diverse learning backgrounds (Chao et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is likely that increasing rigor, or intensity and degree of intellectual challenge of content (Johnson et al., 2018), would promote greater comprehension and higher-order learning among participants (Kurlaender & Howell, 2012; Morgan et al., 2018).

While we draw meaningful implications for the use of CRP in schools looking to engage youth in anti-racist advocacy, it is important to highlight potential challenges to such program implementation. The current study employs critical race pedagogy as a theoretical framework used to organize training content and instructional methodology. Critical race theory and related concepts, including CRP, have been the focus of contentious debate among educational and political spheres in recent years (Camera, 2021; Lang, 2020). Further, school personnel attempting to integrate CRP within academic curriculum have been met with pushback from community members, arguing that principles of critical race theory are divisive and inappropriate for school contexts (Richards & Wong, 2021). Thus, for scholars and academic personnel looking to model aspects of the present study, it is imperative to anticipate possible opposition and work with school and community constituents to devise a plan that allows for successful implementation.

Implications for Counselor Educators

The current study also offers meaningful implications for counselor educators in terms of preparing counselor trainees to engage youth in anti-racist intervention. School counselors-in-training are called to be active agents in empowering students to social advocacy (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Vera & Speight, 2003), and learn about advocacy strategies through the ASCA National Model and counseling model of social justice advocacy (ASCA, 2012; Ratts et al., 2016). However, there has been limited focus on CC as an essential precursor to anti-racist advocacy among youth. The present study addresses this void by revealing differences in youth CC based on preliminary intervention opportunities. Accordingly, counselor educators training school

counselors on advocacy approaches should first emphasize the importance of raising CC prior to engaging youth in advocacy and can offer CRP as a framework for developing CC among adolescents.

Nuanced outcomes of the study, in which students of color demonstrated lower racial attitudes and racial identity in comparison to white students, inform additional implications for preparing counselors-in-training for social advocacy. That is, the unexpected effect of race on critical consciousness for the sample of students residing in a predominantly white, rural community suggest that the socialization of racial identity and awareness might be more complex that once thought. Including community context as an indicator of critical consciousness development can inform possible adaptations for school counselors who integrate anti-racist programming within their schools. This peculiar finding suggests that racial socialization practices may differ widely for diverse youth in rural versus urban contexts and, as a result, training interventions that engage youth across these distinct domains will need to take environmental context into account when constructing student-directed interventions. For instance, based on the present findings, students of color in rural contexts may require more scaffolded training on the dynamics of race, racism and inequity in comparison to youth of color in urban contexts. Conversely, youth who reside in urban communities that are comprised predominantly of people of color may enter with a more informed understanding of racialized systems which they are advocating to change (Barr & Neville, 2014).

Limitations & Future Directions

It is important to recognize limitations of the present study in interpreting study results. Given that the program was limited to a five-day workshop for youth, time of the

intervention may not have been adequate to fully promote meaningful or sustained change within certain variables of interest. Also, the small sample size likely minimized power to detect statistical differences across identified variables. Moreover, condensing participants into two racial groups prevented analyses from fully exploring differences that may exist across racial groups. As a result, outcomes cannot be generalized to any single racially minoritized group. In addition, investigation relied on self-report from adolescent participants, which has been criticized as sole measure of race-related variables (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007). That is, response biases related to social desirability or other confounding factors may have influenced the ways in which participants responded to survey items.

We propose potential research directions for future studies. The overall purpose of this program was to prepare high school youth to assume anti-racist advocacy roles within their schools and communities. Further explanatory analyses could also investigate the impact of raised critical consciousness on advocacy efforts taken on by participating youth, as well as how and why the CRP curricula effactually stimulated critical consciousness. Additionally, results from the current study suggest a ceiling effect for participants with previous exposure to training. It could be that the identified measures were only partially effective in assessing critical consciousness. Future research should consider employing additional qualitative and quantitative analyses to explore various dimensions critical consciousness. As racial justice continues to rise to the forefront of socio-political agendas across education and public sectors, it is imperative that youth develop and maintain an informed understanding of the complex and dynamic manifestations of race and racism. Acknowledging the interconnection

between principles of critical race pedagogy and ongoing racial justice discourse, the present study aimed to substantiate the utility of CRP in promoting critical consciousness among youth advocates.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Descriptive Data of Sample Demographics

Variable	N	%
Race		
White	22	52.4
Black	5	11.9
Asian	8	19.0
Latino/Hispanic	1	2.4
Multiracial	6	14.3
Gender		
Male	7	16.7
Female	34	81.0
Previous Training		
Yes	18	42.9
No	24	57.1

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for MEIM-R & CoBRAs Scores

	MEIM-R				
	Race			Previous Training	
	Total	**White**	**POC**	**Yes**	**No**
Pre	2.65(.62)	2.93(.60)	2.30(.39)	2.69(.51)	2.71(.69)
Post	2.70(.76)	2.90(.68)	2.37(.82)	2.74(.64)	2.68(.86)
E Pre	2.54(.68)	2.85(.73)	2.15(.40)	2.54(.61)	2.63(.79)
Post	2.70(.88)	2.96(.73)	2.32(1.02)	2.67(.72)	2.76(1.01)
C Pre	2.75(.71)	2.98(.67)	2.42(.45)	2.79(.52)	2.75(.73)
Post	2.65(.73)	2.77(.56)	2.42(.96)	2.92(.72)	2.45(.72)
	CoBRAs				
	Race			Previous Training	
	Total	**White**	**POC**	**Yes**	**No**
Pre	2.09(.67)	1.83(.62)	2.50(.53)	1.80(.43)	2.27(.73)
Post	1.78(.51)	1.55(.36)	2.15(.51)	1.75(.50)	1.80(.53)
RP Pre	2.50(.93)	2.14(.78)	3.08(.86)	2.01(.52)	2.81(1.01)
Post	1.94(.70)	1.76(.59)	2.22(.79)	1.75(.57)	2.05(.77)
ID Pre	2.04(.66)	1.82(.68)	2.38(.46)	1.91(.58)	2.12(.71)
Post	1.92(.74)	1.58(.59)	2.45(.63)	2.05(.86)	1.83(.66)
BRI Pre	1.67(.66)	1.48(.54)	1.96(.73)	1.42(.39)	1.82(.75)
Post	1.43(.44)	1.30(.34)	1.63(.52)	1.43(.42)	1.42(.47)

Note. Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R). Two subscales of the MEIM-R included: Exploration (E) and Commitment (C). Color-blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAs). Three subscales of the CoBRAs included: Racial Privilege (RP), Institutional Discrimination (ID), and Blatant Racial Issues (BRI). Mean(SD).

Figure 1

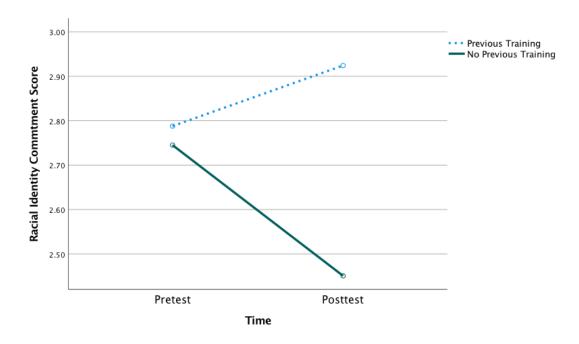*Interaction Effect for Time x Identity x Previous Training*

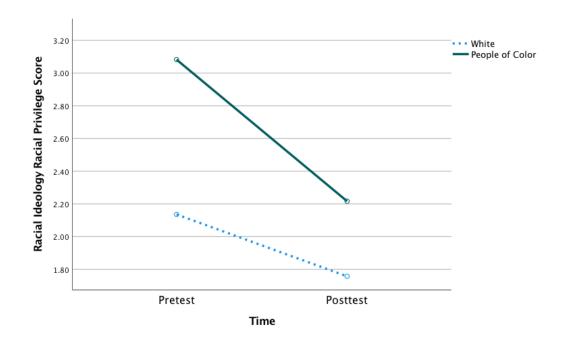**Figure 2**

Interaction Effect for Time x Attitude x Race

Figure 3

Interaction Effect for Time x Attitude x Previous Training