The Evasion Pedagogy of Anti-"Critical Race Theory" Policy Actions

Kara Mitchell Viesca, Alexa Yunes-Koch, & Tricia Gray

Abstract

In the summer of 2020, while the United States was immersed in the COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd became the catalyst for a national reckoning with persisting systemic racial injustice despite decades of civil rights efforts. While many Americans from all backgrounds became mobilized for justice, others perceived this movement as a threat, and politicians seized this opportunity to capitalize on that fear as a way of gaining political support. The academic concept of critical race theory (CRT) was quickly usurped as the catch-all term for any anti-racist effort, though few politicians or Americans understood what CRT is or what it aims to accomplish. Here, we provide a brief overview of CRT and how it has been intentionally misrepresented for political purposes since 2020. Then, we present a frame analysis of state and federal policy actions taking an anti-"critical race theory" stance in education and illustrate how an evasion pedagogy is being enacted across the United States that is grounded and fueled by extreme ideological thinking.

Keywords: *critical race theory, teaching/learning, pedagogy, equity, policy*

Introduction

Critical race theory (CRT) developed as a response to the stalled advances of the civil rights era during the mid 1970's (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Legal scholars acknowledged that while there had been significant progress in improving the racist state of the nation, racism persisted and largely became conceived as:

> A discrete and identifiable act of "prejudice based on skin color" [which] placed virtually the entire range of everyday practices in America—social practices developed and maintained throughout the period of formal American apartheid—beyond the scope of critical examination or legal remediation. (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xv)

Early CRT scholars thus called for expanding the legal scholarship and activism that led to the civil rights movement (Crenshaw, 1988) and reinterpreting civil rights laws to unmask the undermining systemic and institutional factors sustaining racial inequity (Tate, 1997). As a theory, CRT was developed to expose how "so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic and gender subordination" (Bernal, 2002, p. 108). In 1993, Matsuda and colleagues set forth six tenets often cited as defining CRT:

Critical race theory:

1. recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy.
3. challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law…Critical race theorists…adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
4. insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and [their] communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. is interdisciplinary.
   works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

As these tenets illustrate, CRT is an anti-oppressive theory that challenges assumptions embedded in American laws and politics. Ladson-Billings and Tate introduced CRT into educational research in 1995, and it has since framed innumerable diverse studies. However, many teachers and educators have only recently heard of CRT, and the following explains why.

In June of 2021, *The New Yorker* reported on how a conservative activist, Christopher Rufo, invented the conflict over "critical race theory[1]" (Wallace-Wells, 2021). Rufo analyzed varying diversity training materials and was introduced to CRT as he explored footnotes. He wrote about his findings and appeared in early September 2020 on Tucker Carlson's television show, naming "crt" an existential threat to the United States and calling on President Trump to issue an executive order "to stamp out this destructive, divisive pseudoscientific ideology" (Wallace-Wells, 2021, para 8).

Within the same month, President Trump formed the 1776 Commission (The President's Advisory 1776 Commission, 2021)and issued the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020), which became the first anti-"crt" policy action in a series of policy activities that at the time of this writing is still growing in number and reach. On March 15, 2021, Rufo tweeted:

Christopher F. Rufo ⚔ ✓
@realchrisrufo

Replying to @realchrisrufo and @ConceptualJames

We have successfully frozen their brand—"critical race theory"—into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put all of the various cultural insanities under that brand category.

2:14 PM · Mar 15, 2021 · Twitter Web App

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1. We are using quotation marks around critical race theory or "crt" whenever it is being used as part of the current cultural conflict versus its academic definition. When we use it without quotation marks or with the acronym CRT we are discussing critical race theory in academic terms, supported by research literature.

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As this tweet indicates, the use of "crt" as a label was deliberate to craft a cultural uprising that reaches far beyond how academics define CRT. In fact, this branding of "crt" remains so vague, varying, and all-encompassing that it prompts confusion and for many, fear. Further, the focal point of this cultural conflict is teaching and learning, particularly in K-12 schools, but also in higher education and other government sponsored teaching and learning.

In the context of this cultural moment where "crt" has sparked a series of political actions impacting teaching and learning, we began to recognize evasion pedagogies (Viesca & Gray, 2021) at play. Evasion pedagogies, described in more detail below, are essentially the ways in which teaching is operationalized as surveillance and learning as compliance, resulting in robotic performances where opportunities to authentically teach and learn as well as disrupt inequities were evaded. In an effort to both document and further investigate the anti-"crt" policy actions and their relationship to evasion pedagogies, we conducted a frame analysis of 23 policy actions taken by politicians at the federal and state levels. We asked:

- What are the messages regarding racism, teaching, and learning in recent policy actions opposing "critical race theory"?
- What are the ideologies imbued in these messages regarding racism, teaching, and learning in recent policy actions opposing "critical race theory"?

We found that through the use of policy actions that promote a cultural narrative against "crt" grounded in extreme ideological thinking, an evasion pedagogy is being enacted across the United States to proactively disrupt progress towards racial justice. Through our analysis of the content of the policy actions that are part of the anti-"crt" movement, we demonstrate how extreme ideological thinking constructs and perpetuates evasion pedagogies. These evasion pedagogies impact students, teachers, families, and schools as well as our broader society in general and mirror the evasion pedagogies found in classrooms.

Evasion Pedagogies

Recently, we forwarded the notion of evasion pedagogies as a way to explore, understand, and disrupt typical classroom practices that contribute to sustaining racial and other systemic, oppressive inequities (Viesca & Gray, 2021). The notion of evasion came from Annamma et al.'s (2017) work naming color-evasiveness as the more accurate description (and less ableist term) to expand a color-blind racial ideology in schools and society. They talk about evasion as about "avoidance or escape" and "not about explicitly creating solutions to problems" (p. 156). The avoidance or escape from responsibility for racial oppression and white supremacy has long been explored by race scholars and is an overt part of Mills's (1997) discussion of the racial contract and his theory of white racial ignorance. These evasions of responsibility are commonplace in our scholarly understandings of whiteness and in the behaviors, attitudes, policies, and practices that sustain white supremacy because they still play a major role in school and society today.

Matias (2022) recently called for critical whiteness scholars to construct a Black whiteness studies by, among other things, addressing the complicit actions that, regardless of their intention, sustain white supremacy. Matias warns that without such efforts, we risk "forever residing in the conundrum of racism without racists" (p. 6). Hayes (2022) also recently addressed the common place of evasion, even in the context of white liberals who claim to work for racial justice (like two of the three authors of this study). Hayes calls for more aggressive, color-conscious efforts to

disrupt daily interactions, thought processes, and social structures that subordinate people of color to white people. This work must include moving away from evasion to taking responsibility for any complicit actions, ideas, attitudes, and/or behaviors that sustain the inequitable status quo. Chang-Bacon (2022) underscores how common evasion is in teacher education and argues that race-evasion is "not a byproduct of passive omission, but instead involves active, discursive effort" (p. 1).

Essentially, there is a great deal of evidence that *evasion is the goal* and is carefully constructed rather than being an unintended consequence in the face of inequities and power imbalances. Evasion masks white complicity and ensures that racism and other oppressive projects are someone else's responsibility (perhaps even a historical someone), rather than the direct result of actions, attitudes, behaviors, and cultural practices perpetuated by real people, including us, every day.

For this reason, we linked evasion with pedagogies. As teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers ourselves, a great deal of our everyday actions, attitudes, behaviors, and cultural practices are linked to teaching and learning. However, we agree with Lee et al. (2020) who argue, "to be alive as a human being is to learn" (p. xviii). Therefore, we conceptualize pedagogy as an expansive concept that goes beyond the project of teaching and learning in classrooms to encompass the complex interplay of theory, method, orientation, and practice in various spaces with multiple, varied actors. Further, as Freire (1994) suggests, we see learning inextricably intertwined with teaching.

These deeply complex and meaningful connections between teaching and learning are at the heart of pedagogy and can occur anywhere in any kind of relationship. Yet, there is substantial evidence to suggest that beautifully complex and intricately meaningful teaching/learning are not consistently available to all students in US public schools (e.g., Lee, 2009; Morris, 2016). Education researchers and activists have fought for meaningful pedagogical changes in myriad ways—by developing multicultural education and expanding it to critical multiculturalism (Nieto, 1999). Advocating for culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2002) and more recently for culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Alim et al., 2020) and culturally revitalizing pedagogies (McCarty & Lee, 2014). Each of these conceptualizations of pedagogy offers radical ideas for liberation from racial oppression and continue to build pedagogical possibilities built on love, community, and pluralism. Yet, even with all this work over multiple decades, the needle on racial equity hasn't moved substantially.

Evasion pedagogies are so normalized and part of the typical cultural scripts that govern teaching/learning spaces that they are not always easily recognized. However, Matias et al. (2022) argue that "direct analysis of racism and white supremacy is dependent on interrogating how hegemonic racialized whiteness operates in automaticity" (p. 4). Therefore, examining how evasion pedagogies work and what comprises them is important for disrupting that automaticity as well as the white complicity in creating racialized harm that is so typically evaded. Through these mechanisms, evasion pedagogies are created and sustained, not only inside K-12 classrooms, but at a broader societal level as well. As we will illustrate through our analysis of the policy actions, politicians are engaging in evasion pedagogies through the ways in which they are weaponizing the language of democracy to subserve the democratic ideals that hold space for plurality and diversity of thought.

Methodology

Informed by the concept of evasion pedagogies, we conducted a frame analysis to explore the content of 23 anti-"crt" policy actions in order to document their messages as well as explore what relationship, if any, exists between the anti-"crt" policy actions and the notion of evasion pedagogies.

Frame Analysis

We selected frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) as our methodology for this study because it examines the frames, or the "vehicles for larger systems of belief" (Jefferies, 2009, p. 27) that shape meaning to convey and promote messages, claims, grievances, proposals, and policy. Frames work to structure systems of representation in society by articulating discourses, ideas, or sets of shared beliefs (Tucker, 1998). Therefore, frame analysis considers how messages are framed in various texts, including policy, to examine the ideologies linked to such frames (Viesca, 2013). Further, an important aspect of frame analysis is identifying the ways each frame legitimizes certain actions while shutting down and delegitimizing others (Coburn, 2006). To accomplish this in frame analysis, the metaphor of a physical frame is poignant. Bateson (1972) explained, "The frame around a picture, if we consider this frame as a message intended to order or organize the perception of the viewer, says, 'Attend to what is within and do not attend to what is outside'" (p. 187).

All message makers (or framers) use cultural resources like beliefs, ideologies, values, and myths to frame a message that legitimates, motivates, and persuades (Davies, 2002) by deliberately choosing what is contained within the frame and what is not. Therefore, as a methodology, frame analysis regards frames as methods of interrogating beliefs, ideologies, values, and myths by noting which of these resources are drawn on to create the frame as well as which of these cultural resources are not utilized.

As a methodology, frame analysis was especially suitable for this study because the policy actions are so similar. Most of the policy actions in the analyzed dataset used language and ideas that originated with President Trump's Executive Order from September 2020 (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). As such, our dataset functions as a cohesive set of texts constructing consistent messages and drawing on similar ideologies across the body of the policy actions. Frame analysis was thus useful to answer our research questions by interrogating the messages across the body of policy actions around racism and teaching/learning as well as to dig deeper into the ideologies imbued in those messages. By identifying the messages and related ideologies, we sought to tease out their relationship to evasion pedagogies.

Data Sources

Data collected for this study were selected based on the following criteria. First, we collected policy actions at the state and federal level that were intended (partially or fully) to impact K-12 teaching/learning. A policy action in this study is understood as any official action taken by a policymaker holding a position in government to impact or control various social and educational outcomes. Second, we collected the data in August of 2021 and only collected policy actions available at that time. There have since been additional policy actions proposed and/or enacted in various states that are not represented in our dataset. And, while the policy actions in our dataset are

deliberately consistent in content, the scope of their impact across varying geographies is important to document. Therefore, we included all policy actions in effect at the state level at the time of data collection. Third, because of the flow of policy actions beginning with President Trump's September 2020 Executive Order, we chose to include all policy actions that at the time of data collection had occurred at the federal level, though only one of them (an amendment to the budget reconciliation) passed and is in effect at the time of writing. Due to the volume of policy actions considered at the state level, as well as the replication in content of those policy actions, we have chosen to only focus on policy actions at the state level that were passed and/or put into effect in August 2021, our time of data collection. Finally, our representations of our dataset in Figure 1 illustrates the latest available information regarding each policy action as of mid-March 2022. Due to the ongoing and dynamic nature of this anti-"crt" movement, it is possible that the texts we analyzed and the information we provide regarding these policy actions will change, perhaps even before our study is published.

Figure 1: *Data Sources*

Name of Policy Action/ Dataset Code	History/ Timeline	Governing Body	Description
Federal Actions			
Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping (EO #13950) (Dataset: F1)	9.22.20 Enacted 01.20.21 Repealed	White House Executive Order	• Original executive order impacting all others in this study (provided wording for subsequent policies; see Figure 3) • Prohibits federal funding for education promoting "divisive concepts" "race scapegoating" or "race stereotyping."
Saving American History Act of 2021. S. 2035 (Dataset: F2)	6.10.21 Introduced	US Senate	• Bill proposed to prohibit federal funding to K-12 schools teaching the 1619 Project.
Ending Critical Race Theory in D.C. Public Schools Act. H.R. 3937 (Dataset: F3)	6.16.21 Introduced	US House of Representatives	• Proposed to prohibit the *compelling* or *directing* of students or teachers to *adopt* prohibited ideas around race or sex stereotyping or scapegoating in DC Public Schools.
Stop CRT Act. S. 2346 (Dataset: F4)	7.14.21 Introduced	US Senate	• Bill proposed codifying Executive Order 13950 into law.
Protecting Students from Racial Hostility Act. S. 2574 (Dataset: F5)	7.30.21 Introduced	US Senate	• Bill proposed to address racially hostile school environments caused by school curricula • Requires that state agencies report complaints to the state attorney general
Peace Act. S. 2682 (Dataset: F6)	8.9.21 Introduced	US Senate	• Proposes that federal education funds cannot be used for teaching divisive concepts.
CRT Amendment. Cotton Amdt. No. 3680 (Dataset: F7)	8.11.21 Senate. passed 8.24.21 House passed	US Congress	• Amendment to the budget resolution • Gives the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate authority to revise allocations relating to education so that critical race theory is not promoted in PreK-12 settings.

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Name of Policy Action/ Dataset Code	History/Timeline	Governing Body	Description
State Legislation			
House Bill 377 (Dataset: S-ID)	4.28.21 Signed	Idaho State Legislature	• Prohibits public education institutions from directing or compelling students to "personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to" divisive concepts • Prohibits state funding for teaching prohibited concepts
Oklahoma House Bill 1775 (Dataset: S-OK)	5.7.21 Signed	Oklahoma State Legislature	• Prohibits engagement with certain ideas
Public Chapter No. 493 Senate Bill No. 623 (Dataset: S-TN)	5.25.21 Signed	Tennessee	• Prohibits schools from including or promoting particular concepts • Commissioner of education can withhold state funds
H.R. 901 (Dataset – S-UT)	5.25.21 Finalized	Utah	• Resolution regarding "appropriate education on history, civil rights, and racism"
House File 802 (Dataset S-IA)	6.8.21 Signed	Iowa	• Prohibits "race and sex stereotyping training"
HBA No.A3979 SB 3 (Dataset S-TX)	6.15.21 HBA No. A3979 Signed 9.3.21 amended with SB 3 9.17.21 Signed	Texas	• On social studies curriculum--prohibits teachers from being *compelled* to discuss current events • Prohibits school use of private funding to teach outside the guidelines of this bill • Students cannot be punished for discussing prohibited ideas
H. 4100 (Dataset S-SC)	6.25.21 Signed	South Carolina	• Part of the funding appropriations bill • Prohibits state funding to teach certain concepts
House Bill 2 (Dataset S-NH)	6.25.21 Signed	New Hampshire	• Part of appropriations bill • Promotes freedom of discrimination in workplaces and education • Aggrieved persons may initiate civil action • Educators violating law will be subject to disciplinary sanction
AZ HB2898 (Dataset S-AZ)	6.30.21 Signed	Arizona	• Part of appropriations bill • Prohibits certain instruction • Educators in violation will face disciplinary action • Suits may be filed for violations • Court may impose civil penalties up to $5000 per school district or state agency

| Name of Policy Action/ Dataset Code	History/ Timeline	Governing Body	Description
State Boards of Education			
A Resolution of the State Board of Education of the State of Georgia (Dataset SBE-GA)	6.3.21 Passed	Georgia State Department of Education	• Lists beliefs and affirmations regarding Georgia and the US as not racist • No legal standing, but limits federal funding
R277-328. (Dataset SBE-UT)	6.3.21 Approved	Utah State Board of Education	• Board approved rules for S-UT • Provisions for parental oversight and public approval of curriculum
6A-1.094124 (Dataset SBE-FL)	10.10.21 Passed	Florida Board of Education	• States certain topics and documents that must be taught "faithfully"
Title 210 (Dataset SBE-OK)	9.23.21 Approved	Oklahoma State Department of Education	• Rules of S-OK • Schools cannot include listed discriminatory principles • Schools must develop and disseminate policies to notify teachers/students of their right to file complaints • Protections outlined for those filing a complaint
Other State Actions			
Action 1776 (Dataset SA-SD1)	5.3.21	South Dakota Governor	• Pledge for government officials to sign • Lists "beliefs" and "concrete steps"
Attorney General Opinion: Volume No. 58 Opinion No. 1 (Dataset SA-MO)	5.27.21	Montana State Attorney General	• Montana Attorney General's (AG) perspective on whether teaching CRT or "antiracism" is legal. • AG's opinion is that in many instances it is illegal.
Letter of Intent Regarding Federal Grants in History and Civics (Dataset SA-SD2)	8.18.21	South Dakota State Legislature	• Non-binding letter asking that no federal grants be applied for regarding education in history and civics until the legislature weighs in on various related issues.

Data Analysis

We read the policy actions independently multiple times and took extensive notes on various aspects of the policies like problem definition, participants, diagnosed causes, moral judgments, suggested remedies, and omissions (Bustelo & Verloo, 2006; Entman, 1993) to tease out the frames around racism and teaching/learning across the actions. We regularly met, discussed our notes, and proposed findings. This iterative process included revisiting research literature regarding various ideologies. We quickly noted the presence of white supremacy in our dataset as well as individualism, but some of the messages we found appeared to be in conflict with one another and perhaps drawing from conflicting ideologies. Extremist ideologies like illiberalism,

authoritarianism, and moral absolutism were evident in the data, but we struggled to make sense of the complexity of these ideologies and the simplicity and straightforward nature of the messages in the policy actions. As we continued to work through this conundrum, we continued to search and read research on ideologies and found a useful conceptualization for our study.

Zmigrod (2022) argues that sufficient research exists looking at individual ideologies and their components (like we were striving to do), but a focus on the components of ideological thinking is lacking. To drive such shifts, Zmigrod proposes a model of "ideological thinking" as a way to explore thinking across various ideologies. Her model illustrates thinking that rigidly adheres to doctrine and resists any updating of beliefs with the introduction of new evidence. Further, Zmigrod argues that ideological thinking has a relationship component that generates favorable orientations towards an in-group adherents and antagonism towards out-group adherents.

Figure 2: *Zmigrod (2022) "Components and subcomponents of ideology that are consequently psychologically reflected in ideological thinking."*
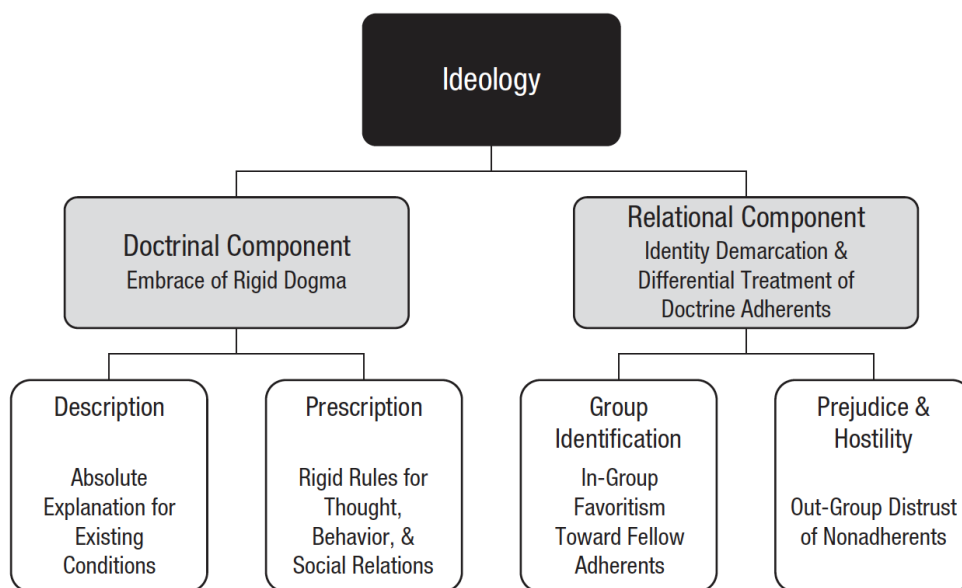
The need for such a model of ideological thinking is based on the findings from research that sometimes diverse and even opposing ideologies use similar tools and features to indoctrinate and motivate their followers towards collective action (Zmigrod, 2022). Therefore, ideological thinking can be engaged in by those on the political right or left and could also play a role in teaching and learning spaces, regardless of the political orientation of the context or people in that context. Notably, Zmigrod does not argue that some people do not engage in ideological thinking while others do, rather, he asserts a spectrum from moderate to extreme where ideological thinking at the moderate end allows for and expects diversity in thought, practice, and experience. Those at the moderate end of the spectrum also adjust their thinking based on the presentation of new evidence and ideas. In contrast, extreme ideological thinking is deeply entrenched and resistant to change. As we worked through our data analysis, this conceptualization of ideological thinking was pivotal in finalizing our understandings and findings. It is further applied in our discussion of the findings below.
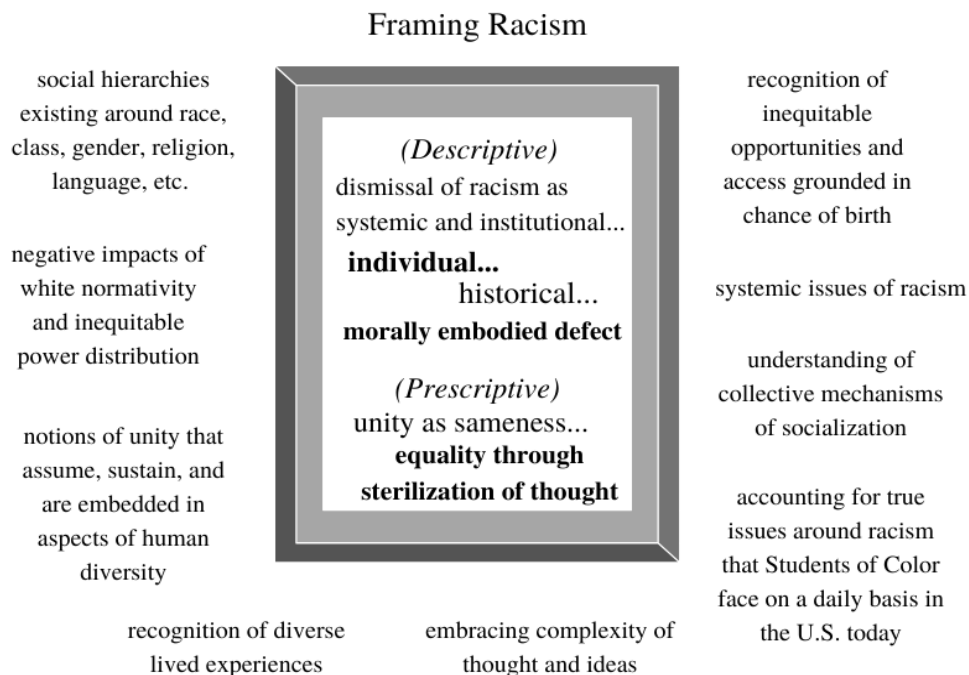
Findings

Based on our research questions, we identified two frames: racism and teaching/learning. Within those frames we identified powerful, consistent and, at times, contradicting messages. The following sections explore those messages as well as their relationship to evasion pedagogies and extreme ideological thinking.

Framing of Racism in the Anti-"crt" Policy Actions

Figure 3 offers an overview of our findings regarding the framing of racism in our dataset with details that are further explored below. Consistent with Zmigrod's (2022) conceptualization of extreme ideological thinking, there was a clear message within this frame that described the problem of racism as well as one that offered a solution for the problem. Further, in- and out-groups were clearly articulated, underscoring the presence of both the relational and doctrinal component of extreme ideological thinking across these policy actions.

Figure 3: *Framing Racism in the Anti-"crt" Policy Actions*

Framing Racism

social hierarchies existing around race, class, gender, religion, language, etc.

negative impacts of white normativity and inequitable power distribution

notions of unity that assume, sustain, and are embedded in aspects of human diversity

(Descriptive) dismissal of racism as systemic and institutional... **individual...** historical... **morally embodied defect**

(Prescriptive) unity as sameness... **equality through sterilization of thought**

recognition of inequitable opportunities and access grounded in chance of birth

systemic issues of racism

understanding of collective mechanisms of socialization

accounting for true issues around racism that Students of Color face on a daily basis in the U.S. today

recognition of diverse lived experiences

embracing complexity of thought and ideas

Racism is a Morally Embedded Defect in Individuals, Particularly Historically

A consistent message across the policy actions describes racism as a morally embedded defect in individuals, particularly historically. This message was constructed with the repeated use of words like "individual" (found in six of the eleven statements from the original executive order and replicated across most of the policy actions) and the fact that 89% of the policy action lists link racism to moral character. Further, across the policy actions, racism was framed as historical,

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suggesting that racism is a feature of the past and not a relevant or necessary topic for contemporary study or understanding of current contexts. For instance, in S-TX, an act that focuses on the allowed concepts in social studies curriculum, it explicitly lists permitted "historical documents" and "histories" like that of white supremacy (and how it is morally wrong) as well as leaders of various civil rights movements in US history like Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King, Jr. However, the section immediately following the list of what is permitted states, "a teacher may not be compelled to discuss a particular current event or widely debated and currently controversial issue of public policy or social affairs." While this does not prohibit teachers from exploring racism in current events, it does contribute to a framing of racism as historical rather than contemporary. Another example is in F1, the Trump Executive Order and original anti-"crt" policy action, which contains a discussion of the ideals and history of the United States. It suggests that because of the boycott in Montgomery and the Selma-to-Montgomery marches, children are now growing up in a country that is living out its creed, "that all men are created equal."

Across the policy actions, this framing works as the "absolute explanation for existing conditions," or the descriptive aspects of the doctrine of ideological thinking (Zmigrod, 2022). The message that racism is a morally embedded defect in individuals is very productive for evasion pedagogies and evading the responsibility of racist behaviors and impacts by citing moral innocence. With such a reductive, insufficient definition that serves as an absolute explanation for racism, evasion pedagogies are preserved, and racial violence and oppression ensured. Enacting this absolute explanation for existing conditions creates teaching/learning spaces, both inside and outside the classroom, that evade not just understanding what racism is and has been, but also the possibility of accountability where appropriate. Additionally, holding racism as an individual moral defect situates the responsibility for racism on individual human outliers rather than on systems, cultural practices, and social narratives. At its core, this message is an evasion pedagogy creating permission for humans who engage with these ideas and subscribe to them to evade their responsibility and complicity in sustaining white supremacy and racial oppression.

Sameness is the Solution

Across the policy actions, there is a clear message that serves as a "prescription" or the "rigid rules for thoughts and behavior" (Zmigrod, 2022) that suggest that issues of racism should be overcome through a consistent message around unity and equality grounded in sameness and sterilization of thought as the antidote to racism. Much of this messaging is born from the frequently cited idea that "all men are created equal." While there are certainly other interpretations of this statement, across our dataset, it is largely employed to mean that all men have equal *opportunity*. Thus, where inequities exist, it is the fault of the individual who did not take advantage of the opportunities provided to them.

This framing also constructs the relational component of the ideological thinking imbued in the messages across these policy actions, specifically suggesting those individuals who have been given equal opportunities and have not produced sufficient results are at fault for their own challenges and oppressions. Such individuals are constructed as the out-group, unwilling to conform, and unwilling to perform unity as sameness. They are the problem, not the extreme ideological thinking positioning them as a problem nor the evasion pedagogy that evades responsibility for the well-documented inequitable circumstances of American life.

Outside the Frame: Diversity and Complexity

As Figure 3 illustrates, there are a variety of important ideas that are outside the framing of racism across the analyzed policy actions. Specifically, any acknowledgement or embrace of diversity and complexity is outside the frame, underscoring the extreme ideological nature of these policy actions and their ability to support and perpetuate evasion pedagogies. Outside of the framing of racism is any understanding of racism as systemic and institutional, the way CRT emphasizes racism operates in society (now and historically). Also outside of the frame are different views of how racism operates and could be addressed. In contrast to an absolute definition of racism, across the scholarly and activist community working towards racial justice, there are myriad perspectives and nuanced differences (Tuck & Wang, 2018) that are substantively outside of this framing both in content and variation. This framing of racism holds no space for the exploration of complexities, diversity of thought, or life experiences regarding racism.

With the dogmatic nature and the extreme ideological thinking at work in the analyzed policy actions, it is also important to note that many people positioned as the "out-group" by these policy actions would actually agree with several statements in the policy actions themselves. For instance, the most consistent idea used across the policy actions is that no one race or sex is inherently superior to another. Considering CRT's commitment to end racial oppression and all forms of oppression, this idea is one that CRT scholars fervently endorse. However, because of the intellectually dishonest approach to defining "crt" occurring both inside and outside of these policy actions, the framing of racism across the policy actions suggests that those in the ideological out-group believe in and promote the racial superiority of one group over another, leaving the true perspectives of racial justice scholars and activists outside of the frame. Further it is through these false narratives that image over substance is used to create an evasion pedagogy. By creating a deceptive and incorrect image of racial justice advocates and scholars as those seeking to replicate racial injustices and oppression versus the substance of what those groups are truly seeking to do (dismantle racial oppression and hierarchies), an evasion pedagogy is constructed and perpetuated, evading truth for fiction and further skirting responsibility for racialized harm.

In terms of the message around racism that serves as the ideological prescription that sameness is the solution, the framing does not include a recognition of inequitable opportunities and access grounded in chance of birth nor the well documented social hierarchies that exist around race, class, gender, etc. Further, white normativity and how sameness in the context of white supremacy creates racial oppression is outside of the framing of racism in these policy actions. Similarly, notions of unity that assume, sustain, and are embedded in aspects of human diversity—a necessary concept for the success of democracy and democratic practices—are completely outside of the frame. Universalist notions of solutions grounded in sameness are largely constructed through the practices of whiteness that maintain white supremacy and are thus in and of themselves perpetuators of racial oppression. Further, they construct an evasion pedagogy that proactively overlooks and at times pretends the natural, normal, regular, and expected forms of human diversity do not exist. In such a case, evasion pedagogies truly evade reality.

This evasion of reality is further illustrated in how our dataset constructed in-groups and out-groups through extreme ideological thinking, leaving much outside of the frame. Research clearly documents myriad issues around the experiences of Students of Color (e.g., Morris, 2016) grounded in "adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race" (F1, F3, F4, F5, F6, S-OK, S-TN, S-IA, S-TX, S-SC, S-NH, S-AZ, SBE-GA, SBE-OK, SA-MO), Similarly, research has clearly documented the prevalence of Students of Color feeling (e.g., Lee, 2009) "discomfort, guilt,

anguish," and other forms "of psychological distress on account of his or her race" (F1, F3, F5, F6, S-OK, S-TN, S-IA, S-TX, S-SC, S-AZ, SBE-GA, SBE-OK). These policies are seeking to protect white students from such "adverse treatment," "discomfort, guilt," and "anguish." As such, the extreme ideological thinking that is imbued across this dataset clearly framed messages that evade reality and responsibility, thus enacting and promoting evasion pedagogies.

Framing of Teaching and Learning in the Anti-"crt" Policy Actions

Similar to our findings regarding the framing of racism across the policy actions, the framing of teaching and learning across the dataset also illustrates extreme ideological thinking and evasion pedagogies.

Figure 4: *Framing Teaching and Learning in the Anti-"crt" Policy Actions*
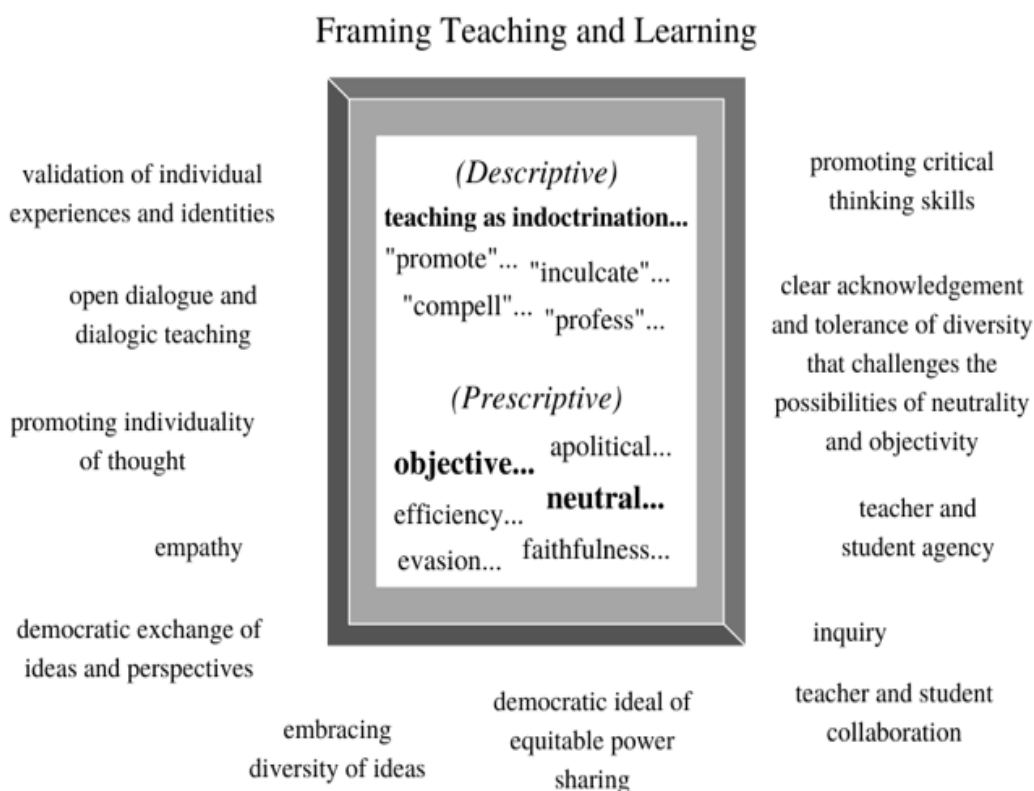
Teaching/Learning as Indoctrination

We found consistency in the verbs used to describe teaching and learning across the policy actions. The most frequently used verbs to describe teaching and learning across the policy actions were "promote" and "compel." Other frequently used verbs also suggest indoctrination, such as "inculcate," "profess," and "advocate."

The notion of teaching/learning as indoctrination is easy to understand as extreme ideological thinking. However, it also acts as an evasion pedagogy by limiting the kind of relationship that can exist between teacher and students as well as limiting the notion of teaching/learning itself. Teaching/learning as indoctrination is what Freire (1994) called the banking model of education.

In such a model, the teacher deposits information into a student's head—a head that is conceived of as empty. Such perceptions of teaching/learning do not account for diversity of thought, perspective, wishes, interests, and backgrounds on behalf of the teachers or the students. Nor does teaching/learning as indoctrination account for the ability of teachers to learn from students and students to teach their teachers. Teaching/learning as indoctrination is an evasion pedagogy. Such teaching is not about critical thinking, exploration, or creativity. It's about regurgitation, memorization, obedience, and dominance. Such teaching/learning is an evasion pedagogy—evading the natural and normal ways we teach/learn as well as the natural and normal forms of diversity. Teaching/learning as indoctrination is an evasion pedagogy that evades true teaching and learning while sustaining inequity.

Teaching/Learning as Apolitical, Objective, and Neutral

In contrast to the framing of teaching/learning as indoctrination, there is a consistent framing of teaching/learning as apolitical, objective, and neutral across the dataset. Once we applied Zmigrod's (2022) conceptualization of ideological thinking, this made sense to us as the prescriptive solution to the descriptive issue of indoctrination. However, without that conceptualization, these ideas felt in conflict. For instance, in S-TX the policy action states that teachers should, "strive to explore the topic from diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective." Such an approach is widely accepted by racial justice educators to allow students to understand the variety of perspectives in the world and construct their own ideas and opinions based on a free and open exploration. On the other hand, the way apolitical, objective, and neutral teaching is operationalized across the policy documents is akin to the ideologically prescriptive solution offered in how racism is framed: through sameness.

For example, in F2 what is considered neutral and objective is "teaching to generate a knowledgeable patriotic citizenship," with narrow definitions of what a knowledgeable patriotic citizen is. In SBE-FL, the language is often used that teaching should be done "efficiently and faithfully," also suggesting one clearly defined pathway for that to occur. These messages don't just illustrate extreme ideological thinking, they also are clear evasion pedagogy boosters. After all, evading the possibilities for difference and the open exploration of ideas is a sure way to not have to take responsibility for the issues those open explorations of ideas would uncover.

In terms of the relational component of ideological thinking, there are times when teachers are framed as an in-group across the policy actions (a group where "crt" is imposed on them) and times when teachers are the out-group (a group imposing "crt"). Overall, it appears that the in-group aspect of ideological thinking across these policy actions is largely constructed as innocent, morally upstanding "patriots" who treat everyone "equally." The out-group is then anyone who would suggest the group in power is anything but moral patriots dedicated to equality. This is clearly an instance of image mattering more than substance and, again, another tool through which evasion pedagogies thrive.

Outside the Frame: More Diversity and Complexity

Many things are left outside of the teaching/learning frame, including Freire's (1994) conceptualizations of dialogic teaching where power relationships as well as the roles between teachers and learners are blurred. What is further left outside of the frame is a clear acknowledgement

and tolerance of diversity that challenges the possibilities of neutrality and objectivity. As discussed above, such commitment to neutrality and objectivity, especially in the context of teaching and learning grounded in white normativity, becomes a tool for sustaining white supremacy in policy and practice. Further, embracing diversity and creating the context for it to be positively productive is outside of the framing around teaching and learning, thus leaving the democratic possibilities of creating and constructing varying citizen identities outside of the frame.

Conclusion

Our analysis illustrates that an evasion pedagogy is being enacted across the United States through policy actions that promote a cultural narrative against anti-racism grounded in extreme ideological thinking. This evasion pedagogy is not only evading the responsibility for racist issues and evading reality, but also proactively disrupting progress towards racial justice in schools and society. Further, as an evasion pedagogy, it is impacting teaching and learning in a variety of spaces, not just within schools. The narratives about "crt" and its dangers are thriving while actual racist harm and deadly violence continue to be consistently propagated against racially minoritized students, families, and communities. From K-12 classrooms to national policy movements, evasion pedagogies must be disrupted and replaced with humanizing, anti-racist, anti-oppressive teaching/learning opportunities that allow for individual and collective self-actualization in reciprocity and create the context for actual liberty and justice for all.

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