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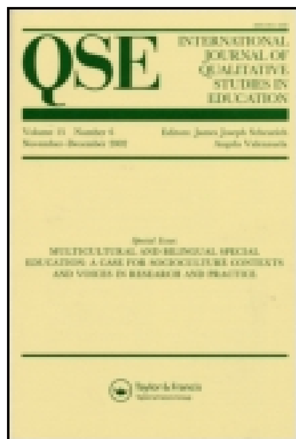

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Toward a white teachers' guide to playing fair: Exploring the cultural politics of multicultural teaching

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Toward a white teachers' guide to playing fair: exploring the cultural politics of multicultural teaching

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Multicultural education in teacher preparation programs can emphasize the study of whiteness so as to make whiteness visible, analyze white privilege, and offer ways that white privilege can be used to combat racism. While white race consciousness has been seen as part of the multicultural education agenda for some educators, recently the efficacy of such an approach has been questioned. White race consciousness or antiracist pedagogy has not been shown to bring about teacher competence in diverse classrooms or to raise the academic performance of students of color and poverty. I suggest here that the social relations in the larger society, deeply embedded with notions of deficit thinking, are mapped onto the reality of a largely white professorate preparing a largely white public school teaching force, thereby ensuring the academic failure of certain children. To play fair, then, requires that white teachers recognize when their classroom practices assume assimilation into the dominant culture and their actions exclude the contributions of diverse individuals and groups. I argue for a multicultural education discourse that includes a recognitive view of social justice for guiding white educators in the practice of fair play in diverse classrooms.

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Introduction

A month into her preservice placement in a racially diverse, predominantly low-income school, Anna repeatedly e-mails me about a student in her second-grade class. He is becoming increasingly assertive – verbally and physically – both with Anna and his classmates, and she needs suggestions. After talking by phone, we decide that I should do an observation of her interactions with him. On the following Wednesday afternoon when I visit to observe, I see none of the behavior she has previously described. Anthony is engaged in an assignment and working cooperatively with classmates. In our debriefing outside the classroom, Anna tells me what has happened since we last talked. As Anthony's threats escalated, she decided that these threats had something to do with the approaching Valentine's Day party. She decides this is the problem when Anthony threatens to destroy the other children's valentines and ruin the party. In response, Anna decides to take him aside at the end of the school day and speak to him in private.

"He said he hated Valentine's Day," Anna tells me sadly. Anthony's disclosure moves Anna to share the secret with him about herself. "I told him I loved homemade valentines much more than those gotten from a store and offered him some red, white, and pink construction paper to take home if he would like to try making his own." After the children leave for the weekend, Anna's supervising

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teacher gives her a stern warning: "You shouldn't give paper to those children – they will just take advantage of you." Anna is emotional as she relates to me her supervising teacher's rebuke.

"How did you feel when she told you that?" I ask her.

"I know I did the right thing because on Monday, Anthony came in with twenty-six homemade valentines – they were all taped together – really haphazardly. But each one was signed 'love, Anthony.' "

Anna is white, middle-class, and monolingual. Anthony is African-American, and at the time of the event described above, he was an eight-year-old second grader and lived with his single mother in an impoverished household. This depiction of a student teacher's encounter with difference comes from my experience observing and interviewing her at work with a class of second-grade students. Although it is a story of a critical incident in student teaching, Anna's experience is not unusual. I get similar calls for help from preservice teachers during their student teacher placements. And they are almost always requests by young white female teachers for help in teaching students from diverse social groups. Because this situation is representative of the kinds of problems white teachers have in teaching across differences of different sorts, I will use it here to explore the translation to teaching practice of Anna's preparation in multicultural education and, further, to examine the politics of equity pedagogy in the field of multicultural education.[1]

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I am a white, middle-class, female teacher educator, and my only experience teaching diverse students occurred in 1970 in rural Georgia. I am "culturally disadvantaged, experientially limited, and often linguistically deficient in both preparing and teaching the nation's recipients of this knowledge and service – children of color" (Sheets, 2000, p. 19). I readily admit I cannot solve Anna's dilemma in this classroom without resorting to what Rosa Hernandez Sheets (2000) calls, "narcissistic educational philosophies" (p. 19) or what I would call white race-consciousness pedagogy. As a consequence, I, like other white faculty teaching white students who will teach across many differences, occupy a highly controversial place in the contested terrain of multicultural education.

Discourse about who teaches multicultural education courses, how these courses are conceptualized and practiced in teacher education programs, and what they actually accomplish are central to this contested terrain (see, for example, Banks, 1996; Carter, 2000; Howard, 1999; McIntyre, 1997; Nieto, 2000; Sheets, 2000; Sleeter, 1996; Wills, 1996 among many others). Some important themes emerging from the second of two recent special editions of the *Teachers College Record* on the practice of multicultural education included "culturally relevant teaching; positioning the relationship of the self and other; motivating changes in the relationship of self to the world, social justice, and social change" (Torres-Guzman & Carter, 2000, p. 949). The educational promotion of antiracist goals, such as racial justice and racial tolerance, however, are typically seen to be distinct from multiculturalist goals of "respect for cultural distinctness, appreciation of the value of different national and world cultures, and the valuing of cultural plurality and its enrichment of national life" (Blum, 1999, p. 877).

[1] This story represents the practice of a white, middle-class preservice teacher who has agreed to share her struggle to teach children from economically and racially diverse backgrounds in her student teaching placement. She has given her permission for the story to be used confidentially.

While one strategy of the multicultural education movement in teacher preparation programs has been to provide white preservice teachers with the theoretical knowledge and procedural skills to adequately serve the diverse children they will teach, substantive equality in U.S. schools has not been achieved. The teacher preparation conundrum seems to pit instruction in culturally mediated teaching (which encompasses multicultural curricular content and the skills and techniques of equity pedagogy) against teaching white identity development (seen as essential to the transformation of white teachers into social "activists") (Sheets, 2000). Race consciousness or marking privilege in all its forms on the part of white teachers is assumed to be integral to eradicating racism and other forms of oppression in diverse classrooms taught by white, monolingual, middle-class teachers (Carter, 2000). But irrespective of the growing trend in teacher preparation to focus on forms of oppression and to include aspects of the white studies movement in multicultural education courses, raising the academic performance of students of color and poverty to acceptable levels remains elusive (Sheets, 2000). Rosa Hernandez Sheets (2000), in a review of the white movement in multicultural education, has concluded that "Presently, there is no data to substantiate a causal relationship between White racial identity development and teacher competency in culturally diverse classrooms or in segregated classrooms" (p. 16). Determining what an inclusionary field of multicultural education might look like is part of that discourse and what I would like to explore in this article.

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The contested terrain of multicultural education

Improving the educational outcomes for diverse students is generally thought to be linked to teachers and the ways they are prepared, and multicultural education has come to be viewed as a solution to an unjust educational system – a system that continues to deny equal educational opportunity to learn in school regardless of class, race, gender, exceptionalities, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation (see Banks, 1999; Holmes Group, 1986; King, Hollins & Hayman, 1997; Melnick & Zeichner, 1997). Multicultural education embraces the idea that all children should have an equal opportunity to learn in school, but questions remain as to how it exactly works to prepare teachers to do effective multicultural pedagogy. This is especially true when the content and purpose of multicultural education is focused on white race consciousness (see McIntyre, 1997; Sheets, 2000).

The multicultural education debates in the last decade have generally focused on ascertaining the value of the conceptual differences between multicultural education and antiracist education. In multicultural education, the focus on cultural competence as an avenue to greater individual tolerance is seen as too narrow, while the focus on targeting whites to reverse racism is seen as too rigid. Antiracist education is criticized for prioritizing institutional racism and political strategies over teacher attitudes (see Kailin, 19994; McCarthy, 1993; Sleeter, 1993; Troyna, 1993; Troyna & Williams, 1986). These various conceptions of multicultural education have not, however, succeeded in providing "preservice teachers with the theoretical knowledge and procedural skills needed to implement a learning–teaching process in specific contexts with particular children" (Sheets, 2000, p. 19).

In studying and practicing multicultural education, Sheets (2000) cautions those of us in the field that white scholars and teachers *may not be automatically*

positioned in their taken-for-granted dominant societal space. Yet, 88% of 35,000 full-time, regular, instructional faculty in the field of education are white, and 81% of them are between 45 and 60 or more years old (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Of the new teachers entering the field, 86% are white and only 3% of new teachers speak a second language (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). Since "teacher preparation is likely to be directed by white, middle-class professors and instructors" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 3) and filled with white, middle-class students, it is particularly important, says Ladson-Billings (2001), that teacher preparation faculty seek to (1) interrupt Eurocentric knowledge and practices in the nation's schools and (2) transform the parochial attitudes of future teachers. Nonetheless, understanding how aging white professors' pedagogies may perpetuate or interrupt social inequalities in the nation's classrooms has not been sufficiently studied.

While the faculty in these teacher preparation programs throughout the country communicate that they are willing to meet the needs of a changing school population, says Ladson-Billings (2001), "scholars have documented the fact that these efforts are uneven and unproven" (p. 12). Students of color and poverty continue to achieve at the lowest level in US schools. Consequently, Sheets (2000) argues that those in teacher preparation programs "must bear a major responsibility" (p. 19) for the continuing lack of educational success with these children.

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Déjà vu in equity pedagogy

What I see when I go out to supervise white student teachers is eerily reminiscent of 1970, my first year of teaching in what had formerly been a black segregated school in Georgia. I was assigned to teach Language Arts to five different groups of second-graders. The few white students left in the second grade were ability grouped into the highest level; children of color were all placed into low-performing groups. We used labels like "culturally deprived" and "disadvantaged" to explain these marginalized children, their abilities, and their academic performance, and with materials bought by Federal funds we set about to compensate for these deprivations or disadvantages. However, the blame for their poor academic achievement was always assigned to them, their families, or their cultural disadvantage, usually a combination of all three (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001).

In this first year of teaching, I accepted the notion that spending money on poor children of color for a better school and better materials to allow them to have what white children had would eventually lead to their successful assimilation into the larger society. But by February of that year, I was having doubts about the ability of my students to learn. One morning, working with Billy, I grew frustrated by his failure to write even the letters of his name correctly after months of instruction. And when I knelt down and looked into his face, I "got" the reason why school was having no impact on his academic success. Billy was cross-eyed. In all those months I had never seen Billy's individual circumstances. Over nearly 6 months I had never gotten close enough to really "see" his vision problem. Apparently, he was to me at the time just a stereotypical metaphor for a monolithic, disadvantaged social group, and I assumed his disadvantage, rather than my racism and my lack of attention to his real needs, explained his poor performance. Of course, even after I identified his vision problem, I blamed the crossed eyes on his parents. Analyzing the

educational problem of Billy in terms of his deficiency or disadvantage logically led in my mind to only one kind of action: to change him (Ryan, 1993). Billy's eyes got fixed, but the "Deficit thinking [that] intrudes where it should least be welcome" (Pearl, 1997, p. 228) did not get fixed.

Just as it did for me as a new teacher, deficit thinking continues to pervade the practice of my white preservice teachers even though I now bring to my multicultural and antiracist pedagogy a passion for transforming schools and preparing white teachers to be successful with students of difference. Similarly, even with the influence of the white movement in multicultural education on largely white professors teaching largely white preservice students, deeply embedded notions of deficit thinking continue to pervade both our pedagogy and our curriculum, ensuring that certain children *cannot* learn in U.S. schools. Arguably, the social relations in the larger society, deeply embedded with notions of deficit thinking, are mapped onto the reality of a largely white professorate preparing a largely white teaching force for the public schools.

It is, then, deficit thinking that is the deep structure that shapes classroom life, mine as well as Anna's, even when we think we are doing equity pedagogy. Dismantling deficit thinking in classroom relations at all levels will, therefore, require a language and an understanding that white teacher educators and white teachers can easily use to recognize classroom practices that have excluded and continue to exclude some children and some social groups from full participation. Dismantling deficit thinking at all levels will require inclusive discourses of difference that "do not assume that assimilation into the dominant culture is the preferred avenue through which diverse groups can be accepted and contribute to society" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 122). Dismantling deficit thinking will require white teacher educators and white teachers to do much more than just recognize or respect diversity.

In response to these needs, I will attempt to sketch out some parameters for a white teachers' guide for greater effectiveness in diverse classrooms that is intended to dismantle deeply embedded notions of deficit thinking in classroom social relations. I begin with a brief description and critique my own past approach to teaching white teachers how to teach the "other." Following that I offer an expanded explanation of deficit thinking and a description of how equity pedagogy can often mask deficit thinking. Then, I will illustrate how deficit thinking shaped the events in Anna's critical incident with difference. Finally, I will enter into the politics of multicultural teaching and argue for the inclusion of a "recognitive social justice" (see Gale & Densmore, 2000) approach to multicultural education. I will propose that this approach should be used to teach white teachers in predominantly white institutions how to play fair in diverse classrooms.

Preparing White teachers for equity pedagogy

Anna is a typical representative of the predominantly white female students, majoring in elementary education, whom I teach and supervise. The vast majority of these white students make it clear that they grew up with few or no peers of color, let alone people of color from low-income contexts or non-English speaking homes and families. Working as a critical multiculturalist (see Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997), I generally include topics on white positionality in the teacher preparation

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courses I design as well as including topics on other forms of social oppression. My goal is to use these topics to examine societal power relationships that give rise to race, class, ability, religious, sexual orientation, and gender inequalities in classrooms and schools. I try to help preservice teachers acknowledge themselves as having a positionality that affords them differing access to power, opportunity, and resources. Thus, the exploration of whiteness has come to occupy a predominant place in my pedagogy as it has in multicultural education generally (see McIntosh, 1989; McLaren, 1997; Roediger, 1991; Sleeter, 1993, 1996).

The assumption that "race consciousness is an essential predisposition to eradicating racist policies and practices in schooling" (Sheets, 2000, p. 16) informs all the foundations and methods courses that I teach in the Education Department curriculum. My pedagogy in those courses focuses on interrupting the acknowledged and unacknowledged assumptions of privilege whiteness, heterosexuality, middle-class status, and Euro-ethnicity that we may bring into educational settings (see Cochran-Smith, 2000; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Rains, 1998). Together, prospective teachers and I interrogate the ideological formations and dominant images of schooling practices (standards, testing, textbooks, tracking, systemized models of curriculum planning, gifted education, etc.). Racism and other forms of oppression and expectations of students' achievement are investigated and linked to school organization and institutional practices. In assigned readings, students learn how to trace the historical and cultural beliefs, hegemonic ideologies, pressure groups, and textbook markets to examine the construction of a particular knowledge. Representations of schooling practices (such as ability grouping) are connected through primary and secondary sources to their roots in "race betterment" and to one's fear of the 'other'. Finally, I try to teach them the skills to decenter color-blindness and the privilege associated with whiteness that is assumed to contribute to unequal academic success.

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As part of their sociological foundations course, my students read contrasting depictions of assimilationist education practice. Both Richard Rodriquez's (1982) autobiography *Hunger of memory* and *Of borders and dreams*, Chris Carger's (1996) case study of a Mexican-American student named Alejandro, depict the entrée of two non-English speaking students into the different social world of the school setting. Students analyze the rules and requirements necessary for Richard's and Alejandro's effective participation within those respective worlds to determine what it takes for them to cross successfully the non-neutral border between two very different worlds: the white European American world and the worlds of different peoples and cultures of color. They detail in two essays the personal costs endured by these students of difference as they struggle to acquire and employ the sociocultural and school-sanctioned discourse essential to academic success. They must explain the very different outcomes of Richard's and Alejandro's schooling experiences. This analysis underscores the differential treatment accorded these two Latino students and promotes a clearer understanding of the role phenotypic characteristics play in shaping ability and ethnic and racial identity.

I also introduce models of culturally mediated practice, such as Ladson-Billing's (1994) model of culturally relevant teaching, and ask my students to apply it theoretically to the education of students like Alejandro who come to school with a legacy of prejudice and discrimination. My education students also analyze their own whiteness as a site of racialized privilege when I ask them to attend to the segregated material environment of the college itself. I focus on their own

environment because discourses of and about the college hide the structure of race and class hidden in the racial segregation in the structure of the occupations. People of color hold the majority of the college's lowest-paid and least secure jobs at the college while rarely being represented in the college's classrooms.

This pedagogy of marking whiteness and privilege is supposed to unsettle my students and, it is hoped, spur in them an internal revolution, to "unmake" their experiences as being representative (hooks, 1994). It is supposed to train them to be multiculturally competent teachers – teachers conceptually ready to do diversity work. Being intellectually equipped to "expose the fingerprints of Whiteness" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 219) on schooling does not, however, necessarily motivate the white prospective teachers I teach and supervise to challenge ways of seeing that justify the status quo – that maintain notions of deficit thinking they carry around with them. Despite the work that I have tried to do with them, when my students begin their observations, fieldwork, and practice teaching in public school classrooms populated with low-income children of color, they witness (overt and covert), talk about (consciously and unconsciously), and engage (knowingly and unknowingly) in various forms of oppression that sustain deficit thinking.

Despite my failure and that of my students, the focus on whiteness in education discourses has been viewed by some scholars as "an opportunity to further unravel the complexities of racial markers, locations, and systems and offers some hope that effective interventions may be developed to interrupt and reverse racism" (Young & Rosiek, 2000, p. 39). The study of whiteness has moved into multicultural education courses ostensibly because teacher educators assume that white race consciousness is a precursor to, or somehow linked to, the teacher's use of effective multicultural pedagogy (Sheets, 2000). In a critique of this effort, Sheets (2000) has raised important questions about the effect of the white movement on "the conceptualization of multicultural education, its subsequent translation to practice, and its vision of educating all children equitably" (p. 15). Conceptualized as a white movement, multicultural education threatens "to recenter dominant voices and to ignore the voices and testimony of those groups of people whose dreams, hopes, lives, and very bodies are shattered by current relations of exploitation and domination" (Apple, 1998, p. xi).

I have tried to address these serious criticisms and the critical issue of being a white professor teaching white teachers how to successfully teach diverse children. I have relied on the work of diverse scholars and activists, such as those cited here, to provide me with the theoretical knowledge, the context-specific procedural skills for teaching particular students, the important curricular content, and the theories of equity pedagogy and culturally mediated teaching that they argue must be present in multicultural teacher education programs (see Banks, 1994; Hollins, 1996; King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Tatum, 1992). But, if I look at my multicultural pedagogy, I would have to characterize it as my asking white preservice teachers "to become 'competent' in relating to members of 'marked' cultural groups" (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 18).

Insofar as my pedagogy reflects and unconsciously promotes a teacher-centered, top-down, elitist representation of the educability of "marked" others it is linked to deficit thinking in the wider society (Valencia, 1997a). So at the level of our relationship – white student–white professor – our interactions imply a powerful pedagogical force that shapes both our imaginations of how we view ourselves, others, and the larger society (Gale & Densmore, 2000). The stance of that

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relationship in Anna's classroom is connected to the powerful discourse of deficit thinking, discriminates against Anthony, and works against Anna's capacity to create an equitable pedagogy. Our relationship is related to the relationship that gets practiced between Anthony and Anna – in a sense it gets imposed upon Anna's work and her vision of doing equity pedagogy. Our relationship tells Anna who she is, who does what in a classroom, who decides what to do in a classroom, and how Anna is told to feel. This relationship then gets reproduced in the relationship between Anna and Anthony. Clearly, how I am positioned in the critical incident presented earlier – a white professor teaching Anna, a white teacher, how to equitably teach Anthony – is much more complicated than my having to lead Anna and other prospective teachers to a place I have never been (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Equity pedagogy and deficit thinking

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In deficit thinking, the perspective that students who fail "do so because of alleged internal deficiencies (such as cognitive and/or motivational limitations) or shortcomings socially linked to the youngster – such as familial deficits and dysfunctions" has, over time, become a taken-for-granted belief about school failure (Valencia, 1997b, p. xi). Valencia has traced the evolution of this notion in educational thought and practice and labeled it the paradigm of "deficit thinking." At the core of deficit thinking, maintains Valencia (1997b), "is an endogenous theory" (p. 2) – and what is taken for granted is the premise that deficits are a result of limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior" (Valencia, 1997b, p. 2). One particularly problematic form of contemporary deficit thinking is illustrated by the concept of "at risk." Like the 1960s educational discourse of "cultural deprivation" and "disadvantage," which informed my beginning teaching practice, the at-risk concept serves to focus once again on the shortcomings of individual children and their families and ignores the strengths or assets they bring to classrooms (Swadener, 1995). At-risk theory "turns students into burdens and trades potential for risk" (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997, p. 196), and since it is a person-centered explanation for school failure, it deflects attention away from institutionalized injustices, such as inequitable school financing, segregation, and curriculum differentiation (Valencia, 1997b).

Deficit thinking "has held the longest currency among scholars, educators, and policy makers" (Valencia, 1997b, p. xv) and is "embedded in every aspect of modern life" (Pearl, 1997, p.211). While some research has focused on the larger question of education and linking the production of inequalities to the institution of schooling itself, the failure of equal access has more often been "read outward from institutions and teachers to the children and families they served" (Connell, 1994, p. 149). The most common understanding of school failure among low-income, children of color and the one deeply embedded in the individual consciousness of teachers, scholars, and policymakers "blames the victim." This understanding points to the condition of these children themselves, their homes, their communities, and their lack of social capital as the cause of their academic failure (Valencia, 1997a).

Attitudes and beliefs about the poor and working-class people of color that make up the paradigm of deficit thinking are "rooted in ignorance, classism,

racism, sexism, pseudoscience and methodologically flawed research" (Valencia, 1997b, p. xii). Even so, deficit thinking will not go away. A national survey done in 1990 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago found strong evidence to show that white Americans cling to racial stereotypes of a deficit nature (Valencia, 1997b). When Anna's supervising teacher labels Anthony as a student who will take advantage of Anna, she pathologizes him and deflects attention away from a close examination of injustices perpetrated on him by his teachers, by his school, by society. A concept such as "at-risk," with its deep structure of deficit thinking, conceals the whiteness of the problems in Anna's class. Consider how the unequal encouragement to participate in the class party gets seen as Anthony's problem. Consider how Anthony's exclusion, which is based on his social class status and a classroom modeled on a market economy, gets seen as Anthony's moral depravity – "he threatens to destroy the valentines and ruin the party." Consider how Anthony's humiliation around not being able to participate and belong gets seen as manipulation to get paper that others do not have. Consider the unlevel playing field of the class party, which requires the purchase of valentines. Consider that Anthony's responses get seen as deviant.

Deficit thinking continues to fit "comfortably into wider ideologies of race and class difference" (Connell, 1994, p. 150) in U.S. classrooms and society. Efforts such as multicultural competence and equity pedagogy are used to interrupt notions of deficit thinking but are often "contaminated by other forms of deficit thinking" (Pearl, 1997, p. 215). When Anna understands and tries to fix Anthony's behavior in terms of his deficit (not having valentines), she has narrowed her understanding of the problem and the kind of solution that can be generated (Gale & Densmore, 2000). Her solution is to fix it – to do something *for* him. The source of the problem (capitalist social relations influencing the classroom) gets concealed; Anna's practice appears to be equitable, but Anthony gets positioned as a disadvantaged "other." Such top-down efforts to combat disadvantage are typically and largely unsuccessful because such efforts are embedded with notions of deficit thinking.

A form of textual comparison called "metonymy" can be useful here in understanding how multicultural education courses in teacher education programs can manifest the very notions of deficit thinking they attempt to dispel, thereby reproducing deficit thinking in the practice of preservice teachers like Anna. "In metonymy, the nature of the part is read as if it is the whole or vice versa" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 61). That is, one thing (the white teacher educator) takes on the character of the other (the whole field of multicultural education) and leads to a fusion of two meanings. Metonymy is relied upon in teacher preparation programs to explain "the truth" of the broader social context of educational settings. Applying the thinking of Bourdieu (1997) to the above comparison makes it possible to track the deep structure of deficit thinking in teacher education programs and its relationship to the practice of white teachers.

Insofar as they are institutionalized as officials of the multicultural education field, white teacher educators are positioned to speak on behalf of the whole group, to exercise authority on behalf of the whole group, and to delegate the social capital of the whole group. How white teacher educators do that is explained by the distinction Bourdieu (1997) makes between two forms of social capital delegation: diffuse delegation and institutionalized delegation. Institutionalized as official

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delegates and bearing titles as a result of unjust economic systems and unequal social relations, white teacher educators "enjoy the concentration of the group's social capital" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 101) and the possibility of embezzling or misappropriating the social capital of the whole (Gale & Densmore, 2000). The value of this social capital is related to "the aggregate value of the cultural capital of one's networks" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 92) it multiplies, and it becomes an integral part of a one's identity, "to the extent that the person takes on its character" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 92).

The social and cultural capital of white professors can become metonymical and represent the whole field of multicultural education. The partiality of the multicultural field goes unmarked when the whole takes on the character of the part (white teacher educator). When a white teacher educator teaches how to teach the "other," there is an internal competition occurring between diffuse delegations (the "Others") and institutionalized delegations (white teacher educators) for the "monopoly of legitimate representation" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 101). Bourdieu (1997) says, "diffuse delegation requires the great to step forward and defend the collective honour when the honour of the weakest members is threatened" (p. 53). This is how white professors get positioned in relationship to the "Other." The nature of the comparison is such that the white professor who is teaching white teachers in a predominantly white institution about how to teach the "other" is the authority, is more legitimate, and is "doing for" the deficient, disadvantaged, weaker "other" (Gale & Densmore, 2000).

"Metonyms can also involve *parts* taking on the character of the *whole*. Such comparisons when applied by others can be disempowering" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 6, emphases in the original) as when people of color are asked to speak on behalf of all people of color. In teacher preparation classrooms, the focus is on individual white prospective teachers to be multiculturally competent, to learn equity pedagogy, to be transformed into "change agents" – to speak for the deficient "other." This focus renders the lives of prospective teachers as more important than "the life of being a student and/or how student lives differ from one group to another" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 104), and the despairing circumstances facing many students is thereby avoided in the classroom. The ability of the part – white student teachers' lives – to stand for the missing story of the "other" now becomes a kind of shorthand way of understanding the "other" as deficient.

If metonymy is relied upon to explain the broader social context of an educational setting, it will privilege certain knowledge about the world as unbiased. In my institution when I teach white teachers how to teach the "other," I am positioned as the expert in a way that embeds but hides a deficit understanding of difference. Anna relies on her white professor to teach her about Anthony because what is familiar to Anna is good and relevant – what is foreign is "either bad, irrelevant, or unknowable" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 105). Anthony is afforded no space to be "reasonable and *different* [emphasis in original], and there is no space to tell different stories in a context of respect" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 105). Is it any surprise that Anna's equity pedagogy is a narrowly conceptualized practice that (1) is derived from a conventionally liberal perspective, (2) positions Anthony as a deficit, and (3) pressures him to assimilate to the norms of the dominant culture? Is it any surprise that deficit thinking shaped the events of Anna's critical incident with difference?

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The mapping of deficit thinking onto Anna's equity pedagogy

The actions and language of Anna and her supervising teacher in the critical incident use very different criteria to respond to Anthony. They hold Anthony in different regard, and they practice very different views of playing fair – of practicing equity. When my preservice students read the story of Anna's interaction with Anthony that I provided at the beginning, they always cheer Anna's response to Anthony. They reason: Anna's pedagogy affords Anthony access to participation in the class party and helps him learn to behave. Because he is now liked by his teacher and his classmates and gets reinforced for it, his self-esteem and self-confidence will rise, and he will be transformed into an academic success. But is this equitable, multiculturally competent teacher practice?

Anna's justification for giving Anthony something other children will not get is that Anthony is good and only badly behaved because he does not have valentines to share. Anna tells me she has done the right thing giving Anthony school paper despite her supervising teacher's rebuke because he has used it to make valentines. On the surface of things, her practice seems equitable. After all, she is clearly attending to class and race differences that keep him from having what others in the class have. Her pedagogy in this critical incident can be defined as one of the two models of distributive justice. The intrinsic value and worth of an individual is the premise of distributive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000). This premise informs a rationale for how to think about dividing up the goods and resources of society such as public education. Fairness, in the distributive perspective, results when social benefits are shared with those deficient in them (see Rawls, 1971). Two principles – "liberty, or individual freedom (to the extent that this is compatible with the freedoms of others); and the equal distribution of material and social goods (except where an unequal distribution would contribute to the well-being of those who have favourable starting positions)" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 12) – are then used as a basis to justify any unequal distribution of society's resources to the disadvantaged.

Anna's practice with Anthony fits what Walzer (1983) calls a liberal-democratic form of distributive justice and is negatively referred to as a "deficit-model of social justice" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p.12). In the deficit model of distributive justice the emphasis is on having what all others have; an inequality imbalance calls for action "to compensate (or normalize) disadvantaged individuals" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 12). In the distributive view of social justice, all children, no matter their race, class, gender, ethnicity, or exceptionality, would be seen as having the same basic needs in terms of education. This deficit model of distributive justice solves an inequality imbalance by compensating or normalizing disadvantaged individuals – by "supplying them with basic material and social goods that meet their (dominantly) determined needs" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 12). Anna's practice certainly exhibits the premise underlying the deficit view of distributive of social justice, particularly when her practice is compared with the practice of her supervising teacher who, by her rebuke of Anna's pedagogy, approaches the incident out of a very different perspective of social justice – the retributive view (see Gale & Densmore, 2000).

Nozick (1976) explains that in the retributive perspective of social justice, "individuals 'deserve' and/or are 'entitled' to differential rewards in accordance with their differential contributions to productive and competitive processes" (in

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Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 14). From the comment of the supervising teacher, we may assume she sees the distribution of colored paper to Anthony as unfair. In her view, playing fair is not about equalizing the educational, social, or cultural capital available for distribution; rather, social justice (the meriting of rewards) is concerned with the "fairness in the competition for goods" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p.14). However, despite their differences, playing fair, concerning issues of who gets what and why, underlies the practice of these two teachers as well as educational systems and educational policy making and is certainly an aspect of the politics of multicultural education. The rationale behind Anna's solution to give Anthony the colored paper appears to be rooted in her belief that he lacks the means to buy the valentines he needs to be included in the class party. In essence, because Anthony lacks the basics to be equal to the other children in the class, he is disadvantaged.

In the deficit model of distributive of social justice, the premise operating is that Anthony has the same needs as anyone else in the class (Gale & Densmore, 2000). So Anna can justify the unequal distribution of class paper to me and her supervising teacher based on the argument that Anthony has the same need as everyone else to participate in the class party. "I know I did the right thing," she tells me. Anna "knows" she has done the right thing because Anthony now has valentines to trade like everyone else. Anna's pedagogy of distributive justice rooted in a deficit model pays no attention to the individual circumstances that Anthony brings to this classroom. Anthony is disadvantaged only because he lacks what Anna (who gets to arrange, albeit unconsciously, the social relations of the class to reflect a market economy) says he lacks. Her pedagogy extends to him a "'simple equality'" (Walzer, 1983, in Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 12) – access to the paper to correct the imbalance of valentines and to allow him to benefit from the party.

Gale and Densmore (2000) distinguish the deficit model of distributive justice utilized by Anna as an approach to equality that gives rise to a goal of sameness. This approach, they argue, works to mask an individual's circumstances and, as a result, promotes dominant social values and the individual's assimilation to them (Gale & Densmore, 2000). I point out to my students that Anna understands social justice as accessing Anthony's opportunity to engage in an experience that is ultimately determined by dominant others and will reproduce his place in the unequal social relations of a stratified society. Embedded in Anna's offer of paper – a teacher practice I want them to see as equalizing conditions for equal participation in the market economy of the class party – is a deficit view of his social class. Because Anna thinks about his difference from the vantage point of the dominant, her pedagogical task is to make him perform and behave, pressure him to assimilate. Hers is not a practice that will take into account Anthony's interests and afford him the opportunity to participate in a critique of the dominant social relations reproduced in a class activity that rewards wealth (the accumulation of valentines).

Anna's pedagogy positions Anthony as a deficit and not the moral equivalent of dominant group values, and her pedagogy represents the view that having what the other children have (valentines) will make him the same. Anna's equity pedagogy privileges a capitalist economy that requires Anthony view himself as deficient because it relies on the exploitation of disadvantaged others to work. Actually, Anna's pedagogy arises, unfortunately, out of *my* multicultural teacher preparation pedagogy. While I meant to interrupt inequality in the larger society, I ended up

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promoting "the reification of cultures and the erasure of the processes through which cultures as practices come into being" (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 18) because my position in this work relies on the exploitation of disadvantaged others.

Because of how we are socially positioned to reproduce deficit thinking, what Anna and I need is a pedagogy that "'begins from the standpoint of the least advantaged'" (Connell, 1993, in Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 21). We need a pedagogy that can disrupt notions of deficit thinking (such as, being multiculturally competent is giving "have-nots" what dominant groups have). We need a pedagogy that can disrupt assigning some children to marginal status under the guise of giving them something that dominant groups have (such as, teaching multicultural courses to promote equality and white teacher equity pedagogy). Conceptualizing how to play fair in teacher preparation programs that are themselves maintained by deeply embedded notions of deficit thinking is a critical issue that should be faced by white teacher educators. How to create teacher education programs to include a positive regard for social difference is a critical issue for both theory and practice in multicultural education.

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The cultural politics of teaching and views of social justice

Anna has taken courses in multicultural education that I have taught. These courses have focused on training her and other white teachers like her to confront their white privilege, to celebrate and appreciate social group differences, to use culturally mediated instruction, and to teach all children for high academic success. Typically, as I have described in Anna's and her supervising teacher's response to Anthony, "the problem is viewed as an individual's maladjustment rather than caused by flawed social systems or institutions" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 131). I have shown previously in this article that in the dominant neoliberal ideology of Anna's practice, notions of deficit thinking were deeply embedded, perhaps even mapped onto her conception of equity pedagogy by the social relations of her teacher education classrooms and multicultural courses. So while we both sought to disrupt the oppression of marginalized children in schools, our work invoked discourses of deficit thinking and our roles tended toward helping Anthony fit into the system – instead of devising strategies for changing the "unjust social structures and ideologies of special privileges" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 132) that underpin both our classrooms. When Anna acted to give Anthony the valentines he did not have, our efforts to combat deficit thinking came down to masking and maintaining deficit thinking.

In this article, I wanted to illustrate Anna's and my practice as providing Anthony access to social goods, but not access to the opportunity to acquire these goods in a capitalist market system that relies on exploitation of a marginalized social group. I wanted to illustrate that our pedagogy gave prominence to Anthony's having social and cultural capital. I wanted to illustrate that our pedagogy did not address the equal moral worth of Anthony to do or to produce social and cultural capital. I wanted to illustrate that no matter how I conceptualized her teacher preparation program in multicultural education, the deficit thinking in Anna's pedagogy was "*inevitable unless there exists an informing general theory that does not require some form of imputed deficits to explain inequity in society*" (Pearl, 1997, p. 214, emphasis in the original).

To fulfil this need for a general informing theory of schooling, Gale and Densmore (2000) propose their particular kind of radical democratic politics. I understand them to mean conceptualizing democracy as an approach to social justice in schools that replaces a focus on *having* (their emphasis) to a focus that gives primacy in teacher–student relations to *doing* (their emphasis). Pearl (1997) also argues for democracy to become "an operational concept capable of informing policy and practice [so] that inadequacies and cruelties of deficit thinking (and its analogue, competitive advantage) can be exposed and other alternatives found" (p. 214). Democratic education is not a new concept as an informing general theory for school reform (see Counts, 1997/1932; Dewey, 1916; 1938a, 1938b; and more recently Apple & Beane, 1999; Barber, 1992; Meier, 1995; Wood, 1992). But Gale and Densmore (2000) advocate a more radical approach to democracy – one that goes further than Count's imperative to teachers in *Dare the schools build a new social order* to lead the public schools and the public in "social regeneration" (quoted in Flinders & Thornton, 1997, p. 5).

Recently, I have read and applied the work of Gale and Densmore (2000) to try and understand how radical democratic politics that emphasizes a *politics of recognition* – (where prominence is given "to the meanings and material consequences associated with words and actions" (p. 2) of teachers) can democratize student–teacher relations at both the teacher preparation level and the classroom level. The above analysis of my and Anna's equity pedagogy is an attempt to apply their approach. In general, they describe their work as going beyond 'surface appearances' (Harvey, 1990, quoted in Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 3) to direct teachers in ways to ask questions about what it means for a teacher to act justly in a diverse classroom. And I extended this idea to include what it means for a white professor to act justly when she teaches white teachers how to teach in diverse classrooms. Gale and Densmore (2000) bring a number of theoretical perspectives to bear on a critique of the cultural processes in schooling that work to ensure that all students *cannot* learn. They frame their premise for a socially just educational system – a "just schooling" experience for all children – from a recognitive perspective of social justice. While their work is complex and a review of it beyond the scope of this article, it has provided some tools of analysis that helped me to see the shortcomings of my multicultural practice. In the remainder of this article, I will briefly argue for this view of social justice to be included in any conceptualization of multicultural or antiracist education that seeks to prepare white teachers for equity pedagogy.

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Recognitive justice as a guide to teachers playing fair

A recognitive view of social justice can serve as a guide for playing fair in the politics of multicultural teaching because it can begin to address the critical issues in the field that I have outlined above. Gale and Densmore (2000) propose a teacher's guide to playing fair may arise out of analysis of (1) the possible ways to define social justice, (2) the ways these different definitions fit into the cultural politics of teaching, (3) the ways teachers' words and actions in their classrooms advantage some students and disadvantage others, and (4) the ways a discursive analysis of classroom social relations can improve the quality of their students' experiences of schooling (Gale & Densmore, 2000). I will limit my discussion to the first of those

four, although my work in this article represents my attempt to construct my own guide to playing fair in these four ways. My analysis in this article is, in and of itself, an argument for making multicultural education inclusive in a different way than it has been previously been conceptualized.

The other views of justice – retributive and distributive, briefly introduced in this article, narrow the focus of justice to economic interests, say Gale and Densmore (2000), because these views tend to focus on the assets of people and the socially just distribution of goods. A narrow focus on economic interests ignores the cultural politics of an institution like schooling. The cultural politics operating in schools is concealed because retributive and distributive views *claim* impartiality with their underlying premise that all people are the same (Gale & Densmore, 2000).

Conversely, the recognitive perspective seeks to recognize that organizational structures in any classroom are "not independent from broader cultural norms" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 17). It is this idea that distinguishes recognitive social justice from the other two views introduced earlier in this analysis. There are two meanings of recognition implied in the recognitive social justice perspective – recognition "to *rethink* what we mean by social justice but also to acknowledge the place of social groups within this" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 17, emphasis in the original). In this way, recognitive social justice seeks to expose how retributive and distributive views "hide the assimilation of group difference by the dominant" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 18). Most importantly, recognitive justice seeks to create in classrooms the "the necessary conditions for individuals with different capabilities, needs, and interests, to develop their potential and to fully participate in determining their actions and the conditions of those actions" (p. 145). In such a conceptualization of just social relations between teacher and student, for example, Anna would subscribe to a belief in the democratic ideal of Anthony's equal moral worth. Gale and Densmore (2000) draw from the work of Berlin (1969) to describe and advocate three conditions for delivering social justice and fostering respect for the equal moral worth of Anthony. In any action with difference, Anna would seek to foster respect for Anthony through (1) his self-identification; (2) his opportunities for self-development and self-expression; and (3) his or his family's participation in making decisions that directly concern him through their representation on decision-making bodies (Gale & Densmore, 2000).

Within a recognitive view of justice, Anna fosters self-respect in Anthony by seeing his social class difference differently. Assigned group differences, like race and class, tend to ensure "'only the oppressed and excluded groups are defined as different'" (Young, 1990, in Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 20). In the critical incident, Anna's well-intentioned gift of paper threatens Anthony's self-worth by concentrating on his disadvantage "and displacing [his] view of [his] own identity formed within [his] family unit" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 21). Anthony is aware of his differences but they are "interpreted through an appreciation for relations and processes" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 21). Within a recognitive perspective Anna's practice must *begin* from the vantage point of Anthony and *generalize* his point of view "rather than separate it off" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 21).

To satisfy the second condition, Anna must address the institutional processes in her classroom that are oppressive to Anthony and inhibit his self-development and self-expression. While it seems her gift of paper satisfies this condition (he makes 26 valentines – isn't that self-development and expression?), in reality access to

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participate in the party is not social justice in the recognitive sense as I have illustrated previously. The way to think about measuring justice here is to move beyond the idea that this critical incident is about resources and should be conceptualized either as simply canceling the party or giving Anthony the paper to be a part of the party. Anna's practice must, instead, seek out the kinds of experiences of schooling – like the market-driven conception of Valentine's Day – that constrain the self-expression and development of all children. Anna is charged in the recognitive model of social justice to understand that Anthony does not enter her classroom with the same ability to communicate his experience of oppression. In this case, oppression from a market-driven conception of classroom relations that assume all children are the same and have the same needs.

Finally, in order for Anna to afford Anthony the third condition of self-determination, she must account for how participation in the classroom is determined – what processes are used and whether they take into consideration the interest of all or just those of dominant groups. To ensure that all views are engaged within the decision-making process, Anna must include opportunities for communication and dialogue where collaboration both (1) educates different interests groups about participatory democracy and (2) recognizes different interest groups both publicly and privately (Gale & Densmore, 2000). In the recognitive view of justice, if Anna includes all children and their families to help solve classroom problems and create classroom life, she is striving towards extending and enhancing democracy in the wider society as well as democratic dispositions in her classroom. A recognitive view of justice clearly provides a starting point from which to reconstruct teacher practice and teacher–student relations from the standpoint of the least advantaged, and it also provides a language to dismantle notions of deficit thinking in classrooms and teacher education programs.

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Conclusion

Multicultural education in teacher preparation programs can be conceptualized, in one perspective, to emphasize the study of whiteness – especially whiteness as a site of racialized privilege (Sheets, 2000). In studying whiteness, my students examined "the making and marking of whiteness: the cycling of race, culture, and nation as naming systems for difference read hierarchically" (Frankenberg, 1997, pp. 9–10) and assertions of cultural superiority and inferiority that have worked as alibis for racism for several hundred years (Frankenberg, 1997). One goal of analyzing whiteness in my multicultural education courses was to have white students "awaken" to their racial privilege, "awaken" and acknowledge that "whiteness as norm, as transparency, as national/natural state of being" is both an effect and an achievement of racial dominance (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 16).

Multicultural competence, however, extends beyond the challenges of race and ethnicity to creating a cohesive society. It includes the teacher's ability to address gender, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and exceptionalities – all forms of social exclusion that challenge the goal of a multicultural society in our school communities. While white race consciousness has been seen as part of that agenda for some educators, the efficacy of such an approach has recently been seriously questioned or problematized. For example, Rosa Hernandez Sheets (2000) argues that the "current White movement in teacher preparation,

positioned in multicultural education courses" (p. 15) empowers white individuals in the field of multicultural education at the expense of the perspectives of scholars of color – and at the expense of advancing inclusive, multicultural positions (Sheets, 2000). It has been the purpose of my analysis to add to that discourse and to suggest a way for white teacher educators to enter into multicultural education work in a way that does not rely on "narcissistic educational philosophies" (Sheets, 2000, p. 19) like white race consciousness, or on antiracist pedagogy that reproduces deeply embedded notions of deficit thinking in the equity pedagogy of white teachers in the nation's classrooms.

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