One White Teacher's Struggle for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: The Problem of the Community

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This is a case of one novice White teacher whose strong commitment to becoming a culturally relevant teacher was hindered by her struggle to develop meaningful connections to the home community of her mostly African American students. Using a hybrid methodology of action research, discourse analysis, and critical interpretive analysis of qualitative data collected over two years, I examine the practical, ideological, and discursive barriers this teacher faced while attempting to enact culturally relevant pedagogy. The deficit discourse of the school, the work life pressures on new teachers, and assumptions about Black families were significant barriers for this teacher.

Educational research has provided several accounts of teachers who have enacted culturally relevant practices and been successful in teaching students from historically marginalized racial groups in the United States. However, the vast majority of U.S. teachers of students of color are young White women who will either transfer to schools serving primarily White students or leave the teaching profession altogether within a few short years (Barnes, Crowe, & Shaefer, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2003). This high attrition rate among teachers of students of

color is a critical problem in education. Therefore, it is imperative that we begin to examine the experiences of these White teachers, particularly those who start out committed to teaching students of color and are working to develop a culturally relevant pedagogy. These teachers, who are culturally different from their students, yet have a desire to teach in culturally relevant ways, are the ones whose experiences may be informative to those interested in improving teacher quality for students of color. This case tells the story of one novice White teacher whose strong commitment to becoming a culturally relevant teacher was hindered by her struggle to develop meaningful connections to the home community of her mostly African American students. Herein, I examine the practical, ideological, and discursive barriers she faced while attempting to enact culturally relevant pedagogy.

In the following pages, I will describe the major characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy as derived from the literature, and then describe the case of Andrea Quinn,[1] who worked to develop this set of characteristics during her first three years of teaching. This paper particularly focuses on her considerable struggle to develop strong connections with her students' home community and to understand the worldview of members of this African American community.

What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

In the past two decades, researchers have begun to document some of the ways that cultural dispositions, values, and traditions can be adopted in the classroom and positively affect the educational experiences of students of color (Au & Jordan, 1981; Heath, 1982; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). More recently, it has become clear that successful teachers of students of color must not only incorporate and respect cultural practices and values, but must be able to understand and critique the oppressive relationship between the dominant US culture and the students' cultural group (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 1999).

As such, researchers have begun to document the pedagogical orientations of teachers who successfully use students' home cultures in their teaching, but are also seen as successful at mitigating the effects of racism and educational injustice for students from historically marginalized racial groups (Casey, 1993; Foster, 1997; Gutierrez, 1999; Klug & Whitfield, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lipman, 1995). From this research, a set of common characteristics of teachers who are successful in teaching students from historically marginalized racial and cultural groups has emerged. This set of pedagogical orientations has been termed many things (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 1999; Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002); for the purposes of this research, I will use the term *culturally relevant pedagogy*.

The set of teaching orientations described as culturally relevant pedagogy is drawn primarily from the scholarly descriptors of successful teachers of historically

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[1] **All proper names have been changed to preserve the identity of the participant.**

marginalized students of color. Ladson-Billings (1994) studied successful teachers of African American students and found the teaching styles of culturally relevant teachers to be diverse, but their pedagogical orientations, ideologies, and worldviews to be quite similar. Of the eight teachers whom she identified as culturally relevant, three were White and only one of those had a predominantly White-referenced personal history. Indeed, most of the teachers described in the culturally relevant literature have a cultural background like that of their students or have adopted a worldview similar to their students by living in their students' home communities for many years (Casey, 1993; Foster, 1997).

Ladson-Billings (1994), Gay (2000), Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999), Klug and Whitfield (2003) and others have contributed to an understanding of the key philosophical, relational, and political orientations, attitudes, beliefs, and related practices that mark culturally relevant pedagogy. This empirical work with culturally relevant teachers finds that culturally relevant teachers strive for excellence with their students by assuming most, if not all, of the responsibility for their students' success. "They believe that all of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25). Culturally relevant teachers share a belief that children are capable of academic excellence, which is matched with classroom practices that insure high academic performance. They view knowledge as socially constructed and teach their students to critically analyze information. Finally, they root learning in issues relevant to the students' lives and help students make connections between their home community and broader national and global issues.

The teachers in Ladson-Billings' (1994) study would go to great lengths to ensure their students' success because they not only understood this is their role as teachers, but also because of their deep connection to their students and the political struggle of African Americans in the US. Therefore the foundational belief, rooted in a deep connection to students and their communities, is that all students will succeed. These teachers were part of the students' home community and saw teaching as giving something back to the community. In short, culturally relevant teachers strive to build strong relationships with and understand the worldviews of people in that community (Murrell, 2001). In recent years, the consensus among educational researchers and teacher educators that successful teachers must come to know and build relationships with the historically marginalized communities of their students is evidenced by the growing examples of teacher education programs that include practicum experiences within communities of color (Barton, 1999; Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000; Burant & Kirby, 2002; Hyland, 2004, 2005; Murrell, 2001; Murtadha-Watts, 1998). While this growing research has indicated some success with preservice teachers, we have scant evidence about the ways that in-service, particularly novice teachers go about building relationships with communities across cultural and racial differences.

The following case study describes the challenges to building relationships across culture and race that Andrea Quinn faced as she studied about and attempted to enact culturally relevant pedagogy with her predominantly African American students. I highlight the relationship building aspect of culturally relevant teaching because it challenged Andrea's experience of what is both practical and possible for a new teacher. By examining a White teacher whose cultural and social frame is disconnected from her students' community, this study illuminates the challenges for teachers to make real connections with a community from which they are socially and culturally distant. By examining how Andrea's discourse, practice, and relationships function in relationship to the central tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, I hope to inform a larger conversation about how to support and retain motivated White teachers of students of color.

METHODOLOGY

I first met Andrea Quinn in the beginning of her second year of teaching fourth grade at Lincoln Elementary School. When Andrea first got out of college, she worked as museum educator for a year because she wasn't sure where to begin teaching. After getting married, she chose to begin teaching at Lincoln Elementary School, because it was the first school to offer her a job in the new city to which she and her husband had relocated. As she took on the role of a White teacher of primarily poor and working class Black students, she realized that she needed help.

At this time, I was working with a group of faculty and doctoral students to help bridge the barriers between Andrea's school, Lincoln Elementary School, and its local, predominantly working-class African American community. As such, she joined our group; in fact, she signed up for most workshops, research projects, and initiatives that came her way in an effort to become a better teacher. Over the next two years, Andrea continued to try to learn about her role as a White teacher of Black students and took an in-service course in anti-racist teaching (facilitated by me), one in diversity, as well as two workshops in multicultural education through other local organizations. She also agreed to participate in this research. My background as a White teacher of African American students in New York afforded me credibility along with my academic credentials as a teacher educator committed to anti-racist education.

The Lincoln School Context

Andrea taught at Lincoln Elementary School, which is located in a small city (population 65,000) in the Midwestern United States surrounding a large state university. It is located in the historically Black community of this racially and economically segregated town. Because of these segregated housing patterns, the

racial integration of the eleven elementary schools has traditionally been achieved by forced bussing of African American students. Like most school districts in the US, this city's schools operate with a form of *de facto* segregation by over-referring African American students for special education and under-referring them for gifted and talented classes (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

Of the eleven schools in this city, Lincoln School was unique in a number of ways. It was the only true community school located in the predominately African American community in the northwest section of the city. Lincoln was the only school in the district whose population of African American students exceeded the number of White students. Lincoln School also suffered from a number of changes of principals over the years, which contributed to its long-standing reputation as a "bad" school combined with its history of academic failure for students. Lincoln's image as a failing school was exacerbated by its addition to a state's watch list for failing schools. It was one of only a handful of schools in the state that had been identified as failing as a result of the students' standardized test scores.

At the time of this research, this K-5 school was staffed by twenty-five White female teachers, one White male teacher, five Black female teachers, and led by a Black female principal. Most of the White teachers had been teaching less than five years and four White teachers had been at Lincoln for over twenty-years. All of the Black teachers, including the principal, had been at Lincoln for over ten years.

Research Methods

The data for this research comes from twenty, one-hour participant observation sessions in Andrea's fourth and fifth grade classrooms over two years, three two-hour taped and transcribed formal interviews, innumerable informal conversations about which I took detailed written notes, Andrea's journal entries and participation in a seminar on antiracist teaching that I led for the school staff, and twelve email messages regarding this paper.

I analyzed the interview, journal, email, and observational data with regard to the constructs associated with culturally relevant pedagogy. I looked for evidence of this pedagogy and looked for contradictions as well. In so doing, I looked at Andrea's discourse as a lens to understanding her "affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions" (Gee, 2005) and how her language enacted specific social identities and activities in relationship to the idea of culturally relevant teaching. By examining her discourse around her struggle to connect with the local community, I attempted to deconstruct some of her language and examine with her how it might inhibit her goal of becoming a culturally relevant teacher.

I utilized critical and interpretive qualitative methodology for this research (Denzin, 1997). As such, this research, like all research, is an act of representation. However I attempted to work closely with Andrea in constructing the story of her

struggle with culturally relevant teaching. Because this research was enacted, at least in part, to assist Andrea in her development toward culturally relevant teaching, I worked toward egalitarian participation (McTaggart, 1997; Noffke, 1997; Reason, 1994). I adopted the role of "critical friend" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) to Andrea's self-reflection and discussed aspects of my interpretations and analysis with her. At times this negotiation became messy and difficult. As we interrogated her struggle with culturally relevant teaching and the discourses and ideologies that seemed to challenge her engagement with the local community, Andrea often felt deeply hurt and criticized. Therefore, in the following account, I include Andrea's reactions within much of my interpretation and analysis. This struggle to engage critically with my analysis of her discourse and practice is instructive in that it offers a lens through which to view the limitations and possibilities of deconstruction as a tool to use with teachers as they work toward culturally relevant practices.

THE CASE

In the sections that follow, I describe Andrea's practice and discourse in relationship to the tenets of culturally relevant teaching. I separate the aspects of culturally relevant teaching into two overarching categories: *Classroom Practices and Beliefs* and *Community-based Practices and Beliefs* because Andrea's struggle was primarily located in her practice and discourses with regard to the local community. It is this struggle that I highlight; however, I wish to foreground it in the significant ways that Andrea transformed her classroom practice during the two years that we worked together.

Classroom Practices and Beliefs

Andrea's classroom practices, that is, the day-to-day experiences in her class, were informative about her expectations for student achievement, and how she understood knowledge. Much of what she did in her classroom was reflective of the literature that describes culturally relevant teachers. First I describe where Andrea started and how she began her journey as a teacher. I then describe how she sets high expectations for her students; how she uses local knowledge in her curriculum; and how she helps her students to think critically about knowledge.

   How Andrea began this journey. When I first met Andrea, she was a struggling new fourth grade teacher. She was conscientious and dedicated and remained after school every day until late into the evening. In spite of this, she often felt ineffective with her students and recognized that the cultural difference between herself and her students was something she needed to look into.

>   In the beginning, I was just so new. I was listening to other teachers
>   who told me that you can't do "this" or you can't do "that" because

> "these" kids can't handle it. So, I bought into that my first year or so.
> I was just not sure what I was supposed to do. So, I had some behavior
> problems and I was teaching in ways that I didn't think were the best,
> you know? So, the obvious thing I needed to look at was the color
> difference, and also to see what was available to me.

Andrea's desire to be an excellent teacher and to improve her practice was reflected in the many professional development activities in which she began to engage, including two external workshops on multicultural education, two courses focused on anti-racist or diversity pedagogy (one of which was led by me), participation in a school-community arts project led by university doctoral students, participation in a science education research study led by a university doctoral student, participation in a reading research study about community oral histories led by faculty at the university, and finally her participation in the research presented here. Andrea was also a member of the PTA executive board for one year and a participant in a citywide discussion group about educational issues.

High expectations for student learning. By the second year I worked with Andrea, her classroom stood out because, unlike other classrooms at Lincoln, in it you would find students working collaboratively on writing, computer, and science projects. The atmosphere was busy with a moderate noise level and freedom of movement for children. Her students appeared happy and verbal. Below is an excerpt from my reflective field notes following one of my early second year visits to her class:

> It is so nice to enter a classroom in this school where kids are talking
> and learning and working in groups. AQ's class is really active, but
> on task. One group of students are on the computer looking up
> information for the science lesson they are studying, one group is
> with AQ doing an experiment and making many "ooh" and "ahh"
> sounds. Another group is working at a table on a poster to describe
> this science lesson.

One significant aspect of Andrea's classroom was that it was perceived among the rest of the staff and the school administration as "well-managed." Her students were generally hard at work and engaged in interesting activities that required critical thinking and collaboration. Many of Andrea's colleagues considered Andrea's "well-managed" and highly engaged class a fluke. Following a discussion in the teacher's lunchroom, where other teachers mentioned that Andrea, and a few other teachers, had gotten "the good kids" and that was why she had so few management problems that year, Andrea said:

> I just don't think that is true, you know. All of these teachers say that
> they believe all students can learn, but I don't think it's true. If you
> believe that your students aren't as good as somebody else's, you are
> kidding yourself. You just don't believe in them and value them, so

> of course they will act out. I also think that you need to value what
> they think and know, you know? So my kids are no different than
> anybody else's, I mean they are brothers and sisters and cousins –
> what is the difference?

This discourse about valuing students was counter to the dominant discourse at
Lincoln School, which typically pathologized students. Because she recognized the
destructiveness of the dominant discourse, Andrea worked to structure her
classroom in such a way that children felt important, capable, valued, and
empowered.

   Recognizing local knowledge. Andrea's practice represented her culturally
relevant belief that students should be given opportunities to make their own
decisions and feel powerful as learners. She also believed that students should see
themselves and members of their community as experts and as having something
valuable to say because, as she explained, "as African American students and poor
students, they have been ignored or treated as if what they think is not important."
She worked with the community oral history project to connect school knowledge
to students' lives. This project was started by a group of students in the history
department at the local university. It was aimed at documenting the oral histories of
the local community and sharing them with students. Periodically, history students
from the university would come to Andrea's class to read selections from the oral
history project and lead the class in discussions about what was read.

   Viewing knowledge critically. Andrea initially expressed discomfort with the
culturally relevant idea of teaching students to view knowledge critically. She felt
ignorant not knowing all of the answers for her students' questions about race,
equity, and history. She felt that if they questioned knowledge, she would not know
how to help resolve those issues with her students. Through the seminar on anti-
racist teaching and another in-service course on diversity, she developed
a confidence in this area.

   During the second year that we worked together, I observed Andrea teaching
numerous lessons in which children asked questions about the representation of
African Americans in a lesson. For example, when discussing the US Senate, one
student asked if there were any senators who were not White. Andrea answered by
saying that she didn't know, but they would research it. By this time, the students
had a "Questions List" posted on the wall, filled with questions like "Were there any
Black explorers?" and "Why do so few women become firemen?" Andrea later
explained that she decided to start encouraging her students to ask questions about
race and gender and to start a questions list. In her view, by framing a critical
approach to knowledge as questions, she could incorporate it into her project-based
style of teaching. This kind of critical approach to knowledge that incorporates
issues of race and gender eventually became comfortable for Andrea.

> I am amazed at my students and their ability to ask questions and think critically. I guess I always thought I believed it, but now I see it everyday and really believe it. You know, so many teachers don't do that and tell you that you can't or it is not possible with *these* kids, you can easily start to forget what you know is true about kids.

This insight is significant in understanding the struggle to develop culturally relevant practices. Preservice teachers are often taught that they should teach using inquiry methods and constructivist methods; however, once they get into the context of real schools in which other teachers tell them that their students aren't capable, they opt for what their colleagues are telling them, rather than trusting their training. Andrea had developed her own professional development and continued training. This combination of support allowed her to engage her students in the culturally relevant practice of critically examining knowledge in spite of the school culture, which dismissed this as a possibility. She described it this way:

> When I first started here, the kids were really not good at asking questions and pursuing questions. They had a hard time doing stuff unless I was totally in charge. Lots of people told me this was all they could do and to stop trying to get them [the students] to think. I mean, it is crazy, but during my first year, I had them doing lots of worksheets just to keep them focused – and people thought this was fine. After a while, and after I started meeting other people and taking classes, I realized that the kids just never had any practice doing anything but worksheets. So, I started the science projects with Chris [university doctoral student] and I started reading book clubs, and the questions list, and slowly they got used to it. It wasn't easy and all along people kept telling me not to do it, to give up.

Andrea was able to go against a school culture that encouraged rote, teacher-directed instruction, by finding external resources to support instructional practices that she believed in.

Andrea's classroom-based practices came to reflect many of the tenets of culturally relevant teaching. Her students were valued; knowledge was looked at critically; community issues were brought into the classroom through the oral history project and the community-arts project; Andrea went against school culture and engaged her students in project-based learning and held high expectations for students. However, many of the challenges that Andrea faced in her quest to become a culturally relevant teacher were revealed in her discourse about relationships with students and the local community, and her discourse about her views of herself as a teacher of students of color. These discursive contradictions reveal a site of struggle for Andrea as she worked toward engaging the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. In the following sections, I go into greater detail about Andrea's struggle with the community-based aspects of culturally relevant teaching, highlighting her

practices and discourse that, at times, contradicted her work as a culturally relevant classroom teacher.

Community-Based Practices and Beliefs

It was clear in observing Andrea's class and talking with her about her classroom practice that her belief in social justice and student empowerment dictated many of her pedagogical decisions and discourse. Andrea also recognized the centrality of the local community in effective teaching practice. She articulated that, "students need to be active in their local communities." However she exhibited a great struggle to temper deficit discourses about and to develop relationships with her students' families and the local community. In this section, I highlight some of the struggles and contradictions in Andrea's culturally relevant teaching practice. First, I describe how the ways that Andrea linked the curriculum to the local community functioned to simultaneously connect and distance her from the community. I then describe some of the ways that Andrea both participated in and tried to resist deficit discourse and helping discourse. Finally, I describe the obstacles she saw to building relationships with the Black community.

Creating social distance when linking the community to the curriculum. Over the course of the two years that I worked with Andrea, she became more and more comfortable co-constructing knowledge with students and volunteering for community-based projects. These community projects were always facilitated by a university-based partnership. Through the Oral History Project, history students connected to community members and transcribed their oral histories. They then shared the transcribed stories with Andrea's students. In the Community Arts Project, doctoral students did art projects with Andrea's class and organized some larger community events in which students, their families, and community members worked on public art together. However, Andrea did not take the initiative to make community connections independently. While working with these projects, Andrea's interactions were almost exclusively with university students, not with community members; Andrea focused on her students and admittedly did not form any relationships with community members. Andrea's initial response to my reflection that she had not used these opportunities to build relationships with the community was defensive:

> So what am I supposed to do? Am I NOT supposed to take advantage of the opportunities that come my way? Do I have to do all of this work myself? I participate in everything because I think it will be good for my students and these opportunities are available. I see the value of doing this, and I guess if these projects didn't exist, I might not think of it, or it might feel overwhelming, but what am I supposed to do?

Upon reflection and further conversation, Andrea was able to describe the reasons for her defensiveness:

> I just feel like I know I have to make community connections, but it is hard for me to do. So, I guess I am lucky to have you and the others available at the school. There is just so much to do and cover and I am working so hard as it is, I don't think I could or would do it otherwise. I might feel guilty for a while, but my reality is that without structures in place, I wouldn't do it.

Andrea felt that if she had to establish these projects and develop relationships with the community on her own, it would have been too much work for her as an inexperienced teacher with a husband and social life. The cultural divide between White teachers and communities of color are often quite vast and to expect new teachers to bridge that divide without support may be unrealistic.

Discursive struggle to value students' families. Teachers at Lincoln often attributed their own dysfunctional classrooms to pathology within their students and their families. This deficit discourse is institutionalized in many schools that serve students of color (Anyon, 1995; Fine, 1991; Haberman, 1991; Nieto, 2000). The discourse is often marked by negative assumptions about families that are based on little evidence and can serve as a divide between schools and communities of color. Andrea often resisted this deficit discourse, but succumbed to it as well.

Andrea spent considerable time thinking about how she was culturally different from her students and part of a dominant culture. She stated that at the beginning of her teaching career, she struggled to see Black culture in positive terms. However, even in our work together, this discourse of dysfunction was evident at times:

> I don't want to put a cultural ideal on the students that is not their own. And so I'm kind of ...its always a struggle with say the kind of language I am using and the kind of language the kids are using at home, [I don't want to be] saying 'this is right, this is wrong.' 'You should be reading at home.' 'Well, we don't read at home.' 'Well then your parents are bad and wrong.' You know? It's very tricky.

After rereading this quote, Andrea recognized how that quote could sound like she believed that Black families do not read to their children, and stated that it was "not exactly" what she believed. She struggled because she knew that some of her students' parents did not read to them but many did. This diversity in the home practices of her students was difficult for Andrea to reconcile because she has been influenced by dominant messages about a monolithic Black culture. She struggled against generalizing from the few cases of families who failed to facilitate their children's learning. The interview excerpt below is an example of this struggle:

A: I know not all families don't read to their kids, but I still think that there are a lot of problems in these families and education is not stressed.

    N [author]: In all the families?

    A: I guess not all. I mean, it seems like all sometimes, but I guess I really don't
    even know them all that well to say, do I?

Comments like these were common in discussing families. When I pressed her as the "critical friend," Andrea could see some of the generalizations and assumptions she was making, but her deficit discourse was still evident.

    Andrea's struggle with deficit discourse is captured in the quote below about what is considered "normal." Because she is White, she feared that her students and their families would interpret her attempts to get to know them to be disingenuous. As a result, she was very uncomfortable attempting to build relationships with the Black families in her class. When I asked her about this, I learned that this discomfort was rooted in her sense that her cultural frame was "normal" and her students' cultural frame was inferior and abnormal.

> I don't think there is something wrong with how they [students and families] live, but when I think of myself as trying to get an understanding of who they are, I feel like I would be seen as nosy and interrogating. Thinking about this makes me sad because I could see that my perceived lack of interest about my children's lives could be hurting my students' feelings. I'm also thinking that one of the things that stops me from asking is that the question itself will call attention to the "differences" [making finger quotes sign in the air] of my students' lives from mine. I think they kind of know what I expect and what I think is *normal* and by not bringing it out into the open I am keeping them from having to show this abnormality. *WOW!* That really stinks. I'm still not sure how to go about it, but I know I'm making it much harder than it has to be. This is definitely an area where the media or something has had a great effect on me. The ironic thing is that my family is very *different* and not normal in a lot of ways. Is that White privilege?

Andrea knew this lack of openness affected her relationships with students, but she was confused about how to be "different" without revealing that she was somehow better. Her discourse revealed an understanding that the "difference" between her students' lives and her own was marked by their "abnormality." She feared that an open discussion of difference would create shame for her students because they would have to face their "abnormality" in light of her "normality."

    Andrea's comment that her analysis "stinks" represents the guilt associated with being White and its associated privilege. Her comment about the media influencing her because her family is really quite "different" from what is socially perceived as "normal" indicates that she was beginning to problematize her "normal/abnormal" binary and recognize her own white privilege. These burgeoning realizations aside, Andrea's positive classroom practices may be limited and tainted

by a deep belief that her students' culture is "abnormal" or less valuable than her own. Andrea's notion about what is "normal" cultural behavior limited her ability to develop relationships with her students' families.

Developing relationships with families. Andrea's struggle to make connections with families across racial lines was significant in her struggle to enact culturally relevant pedagogy. Andrea expressed her confusion about how to develop relationships with her students this way:

> I mean I know I don't have complete relationships with families. I am simply more comfortable relating to White families. That may be normal, right? I mean we gravitate toward people we are most like. But I try to think about how much of that is White privilege. I mean I know I can walk away from this school any time, but my kids can't. Maybe even my White kids can easier than my Black liks. So, it is hard to figure out how to be part of that struggle and how to build those relationships.

Andrea was aware of the social and political differences between herself and her Black students and families. She articulated how her White privilege operated in that system, but she could not easily see how she could build relationships across that difference. In general Andrea made few personal connections with her students' parents or with members of the community. Andrea was a member of the PTA executive board and she was willing to work with parents, but she struggled with creating the kind of connections and relationships necessary to build alliances described among culturally relevant teachers. When I discussed these analyses with Andrea, her frustrations as a new teacher overwhelmed her response:

> How much is really expected of me? On top of everything I do for school and the fact that I already ignore my husband and my house too much, am I really expected to form friendships with my students' parents? I think what has been necessary, I have done. I do not hesitate to call parents, for good or bad, on a semi-regular basis. I have even attended a Black child's going away party, which was very uncomfortable for me. It was a new place and I went by myself, but I made the effort. I have made some actual friendships with parents, the ones who are most like me, and yes, they are White. But their lives are like mine and race is not an issue. They don't have to wonder if I am friends with them solely because of the color of their skin, and if they were Black, that would probably be the reason because there aren't many Black parents that I have a whole lot in common with on a personal level, as far as I can tell. And it's not that I haven't extended myself in a friendly way to Black parents. We just didn't have things in common other than their child.

My questions about building relationships with families inspired a defensive reaction in which Andrea reminded me of the multiple things that she does for the school and the many ways she has reached out to Black families. Her sense was that I expected too much from her and that she already did too much. The busy work-lives of teachers is well documented and creating additional relationships may in-fact be a challenge to teachers who are already over-extended. Yet, the discourse of difference evident in Andrea's response indicates that her busy work-life is only part of the reason that she hasn't developed relationships with the parents of her Black students.

CONCLUSION

Andrea Quinn had just completed her fourth year of teaching at the completion of the data collection for this paper. She was admittedly struggling in her quest to become a culturally relevant teacher for her primarily Black student population. Her struggles were situated in the ways that she understood the local Black community and her relationships to her Black students and their families, more than within her day-to-day classroom practice. Examining the ways that Andrea enacted the tenets of culturally relevant teaching in her day-to-day classroom practice indicates that she was able to become comfortable in the classroom domain, enabling students to achieve and learn in ways that were uncommon at the Lincoln School. Andrea found that developing the belief that all children are capable of academic excellence, combined with a high sense of self-efficacy and responsibility for student outcomes, constructivist teaching practices combined with a conviction that knowledge is constructed and should be viewed critically were quite practical for her. These beliefs and practices made her job as a teacher easier and allowed her to feel success as a teacher in a context where failure was the norm. She also found that there were many resources available to her as she worked to enact these practices in a school context that offered little support. Andrea was even able to enact these constructivist and critical practices in connection with the local community because there were outside groups available to help plan and organize the connections necessary with the local community.

Andrea's primary struggle and contradictions were in the community-based aspects of culturally relevant teaching. She struggled to make direct connections with the students' local community and to develop relationships with community members. Her discourse about students and families often reflected the dominant deficit discourse that contradicted many of her practices and other stated beliefs. The difference in worldviews between Andrea and her Black students made it difficult for Andrea to fully develop a sense of social connectedness to the students and their community and to establish the identity as someone who respects and is allied with the political struggle of the community.

The classroom is the teacher's domain. It is a comfortable place for most teachers and a place where they have been encouraged to experiment in their experience as preservice teachers. Therefore, Andrea's capacity to create affirming and empowering classroom experiences for her students was a logical first step in developing culturally relevant pedagogy. Building relationships with a historically marginalized community and deconstructing the political and cultural dynamics of identity is not something with which many Whites have had experience. The personal tasks involved in the relational aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy is more of a challenge to teachers, especially new teachers, who are already struggling with the work life challenges of teaching and working to teach in ways that go against the grain in many school contexts.

As teacher educators, we work to train teachers in the spirit of culturally relevant teaching and expect them to make the necessary changes to enact a culturally relevant pedagogy without much understanding of what that change entails for them in the context of real schools as new teachers. We also fail to recognize the many ways that our White students' identities will be challenged as they attempt to enact culturally relevant pedagogy. New teachers are likely to have few role models of culturally relevant teaching and have few guides to help them build the pedagogical and relational tools necessary. This type of pedagogy is rare in schools due, at least in part, to the ways that all teachers are recruited into (re)producing the White supremacy of schooling. Andrea Quinn is a teacher who was highly motivated to become a culturally relevant teacher, took numerous courses on multicultural education, and had external support mechanisms in place to develop classroom-based practices and beliefs that support a culturally relevant framework in spite of her racist school context. Yet, Andrea still struggled to fully develop the relationships and ideology that are described as culturally relevant.

Andrea's case is illustrative for a number of reasons. First, it points to the fact that novice White teachers are able to make change and work to become better teachers for their students of color; perhaps the most likely or first arena of change is in classroom practice. Second, it implies that changes are most likely to occur when there are some mechanisms of support available for White teachers as they work through the pedagogical aspects of culturally relevant teaching. Third, Andrea's case suggests that there must be particular attention paid to developing the relational aspects of culturally relevant teaching among White teachers. It was easy for Andrea to become comfortable with her progress within the confines of her classroom and not focus on her own racist discourse and her lack of understanding of her Black students' families or her discomfort in developing relationships across racial lines. Finally, it calls to question what teacher educators and educational researchers committed to social justice can be doing to help teachers like Andrea develop. This case may also raise questions for further research about what may be the costs when teachers fail to make community connections with their students from historically marginalized communities.

Teacher educators have begun to take these lessons into account by adding more community-based practical experience and using cultural immersion experiences to help teachers gain skills in developing relationships with people unlike themselves. This case demonstrates though that teacher training alone is inadequate for developing culturally relevant competencies among teachers. We need to rethink teacher education to include extended experiences and support for novice teachers. Such support should help novice teachers construct meaningful projects through which they can develop community relationships as well as school-based projects connected to local communities of color. Such supports are necessary for preservice and in-service teachers to learn the pedagogical and relational skills and dispositions necessary for teaching historically marginalized students.

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