

# Education Policy as Proto-fascism: The Aesthetics of Racial Neo-liberalism<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* We argue that neo-liberal educational policy has emerged as a proto-fascist governmentality. This contemporary technology relies on State racisms and racial orderings manifested from earlier liberal and neo-liberal practices of biopower. As a proto-fascist technology, education policy, and school choice policies in particular, operate within a racial aesthetics that connects ultra-nationalisms with micro-fascisms of racialized bodies. We discuss historical examples of liberal school segregation and residential schools in relation to contemporary examples of chartered ethnic-identity schools to illustrate the complexities of proto-fascist education policy.

*Key words:* fascism, neoliberalism, governmentality, liberal educational policy

Pondering the nature of fascism and its recurrent appeal is not just a matter of clarifying what those of us who oppose racism are against.... It obliges us to scrutinize our own political philosophies, practices, and cultural predilections where they stay close to the dangers involved in becoming enamored of power.

[Gilroy 2000: 146]

Neo-liberalism and Foucault's [1991] concept of governmentality have produced important analyses in education policy research. In this paper, we work in similar vein to extend Henry Giroux's [2004] coupling of neo-liberalism to proto-fascism, in order to argue that proto-fascist education policy relates to practices of government withdrawal and the promotion of ultra-national practices of the self. We argue that these contradictory and paradoxical forms of neo-liberal governmentality generate racial performances that are best understood aesthetically.

Specifically, we argue that educational policy has emerged as a proto-fascist technology of neo-liberal governmentalities. This contemporary form of

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education policy derived from earlier incarnations of liberalism that relied on race wars, racial orderings, and biopower [Foucault 2003]. As a proto-fascist technology, neo-liberal education policy now operates within prolepses of racial aesthetics that connect ultra-nationalisms with the micro-fascisms of racialized bodies. For instance, Ransom [2003] noted that neo-liberal education policy has developed numerous technologies that marketizes public schooling. Examples of these neo-liberal technologies include charter schools, vouchers, and school choice policy more generally [Lubienski 2001]. The purpose of linking neo-liberal economics to education policy were to reduce governments' economic inputs into the costly and 'risky' education sector and enact a re-scaling of so-called bloated government. Relatedly, the micropolitics of a racialized aesthetics are intimately related to a *politics of self-choice* when racialised subjects take up opportunities to develop ethnic-specific schools in marketised systems. In a sociological sense, a politics of self-choice may be one of belonging, and certainly produces a politics of "self-separation" [Dei 1995] that pivots on determining who has the authority, perhaps copyright [Gilroy 2000: 179], to develop and place themselves within particular schools. This has led some scholars to argue that education and economic policies that promote ethnic identity schools are a new force in conservative politics that simultaneously promote school choice and school competition [Pedroni 2006].

Our argument takes the form of a modified syllogism, whereas our conclusion that educational policy is a proto-fascist technology of neo-liberal governmentalities, is inferred from three premises. The first premise argues that liberalism has always depended on biopower to maintain control of populations. Indeed, liberalism used race wars and State racisms to dismantle sovereignty [Foucault 2003]. The second premise argues that the recent history of neo-liberal education policy also depended on biopower and racial ordering but in ways that distinguished itself from its liberal lineage. Now, education policy is the outcome and the constitution of a re-articulated neo-liberal State; including a 'withdrawn' government that download the risks of racism and biopower onto and through subjects.

The third and final premise argues that neo-liberalism creates conditions for proto-fascist education policy to become manifest, especially in governments where school choice is normalized as the policy default position. As Henry Giroux [2004] indicated, even though neo-liberalism and proto-fascism are not synonymous, there is a tremendous overlap and synergy between the two ideas. In this paper we support this connection through Gilroy's [2000] ideas about racial aesthetics and proto-fascism to better understand ideas about government withdrawal and downloaded racisms. As such, we argue that proto-fascist education policy down-

loads governmental racisms in performative ways for ultra-nationalistic purposes.

Our organization of the paper is not meant to suggest that fascism is the next iteration of liberalism. We have organized the paper chronologically, rather, to assist our explanations of liberalism and neo-liberalism, and the alterations to biopower and racilogies during these admittedly broad epochs. Fascism was present when liberalism invoked biopower to ensure ultra-nationalisms – whether in 1893 at Aigues-Mortes [Passmore 2002] or in neo-liberal times [Giroux 2004]. This paper's chronology illustrates that fascism is a persistent phenomenon and one that skillfully adapts itself to liberal and neo-liberal political environments, *and* a phenomenon which is exercised in contemporary education policy. Our chronology also does not address the links between communism and fascism. We recognize that fascism is related to totalitarian regimes and believe that fruitful analyses can be conducted of proto-fascism and education policy within communist countries and post-communist countries that articulate emergent conceptions of neo-liberal governmentalities [Fimyar 2008; Tikly 2003]. We imagine similar analyses could examine education policy within “illiberal democracies” as well [Zakaria 1997]. However, such notable projects exceed our present goal. Our use of the “State” designates a set of government relations germane to liberal and neo-liberal school choice policies of ‘liberal democracies’.

### *A comment on method*

At the outset, we note that we approach the topic of fascism and the connections to race with substantial care and with some trepidation. Fascism is a complicated idea and one that is historical and geographical. The deliberate attention we give the idea is an attempt to discuss the violence and trauma that have been produced by practices associated with it, and that continue to be associated with it. Like LaCapra [2009], we think that ideas of violence and trauma must be dealt with carefully and meticulously otherwise the ideas born out of fascism risk being repeated, replicated, and evolved into contemporary neo-liberal practices that legislate “who has a right to live and who does not” [George 1999: np].

As such, we are keenly aware that any discussion of fascism is intimately linked to materialities of the past and the present. We understand if readers encounter the topic of race and fascism as “forbidding and gnawingly uncomfortable” [Gilroy 2000: 145]. We in no way wish to dishonor such histories with what has crossed our ears as glib references to “fascism” and “fascists” that are bandied about in the media in attempts to claim a moral high

ground in various political arguments. This is not our goal. We believe that to work seriously with the idea of fascism is an attempt to redeem the term from its “trivialization and restoring it to a proper place in discussion of the moral and political limits of what is acceptable” [Gilroy 2000: 145]. In addition, we are similarly concerned with outlining “an ethical economy for the multicultural present in which both fascism and the racilogies that have been intertwined with it are accorded serious if belated attention” [Gilroy 2000:145].

In order to engage with a meaningful discussion of neo-liberalism, fascism, and race, we have borrowed the term “proto-fascism” from recent scholarship [e.g., Giroux 2004; Passmore 2002] to distinguish our discussion from historical practices of fascism evidenced in Nazism and Stalinism. In this sense, the term “proto-fascism” delineates a set of persistent conditions that reside within neo-liberal States *and* a set of persistent affects, desires, and practices constituting neo-liberal subjectivities. Finally, our use of “proto-fascism” is an immediate signal to readers about our own positioning within histories of fascism. As scholars who are racialized as white, we acknowledge that fascism and education policy have been used within a genealogical lineage of white supremacy from which we continue to benefit [Gillborn 2005].

## Liberalism, raciology, and biopower

What in fact is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.

[Foucault 2003: 254]

In a critique of liberalism – in which liberalism was posited as the primary discourse that usurped sovereignty – Foucault [2003] developed the concept of *biopower*. Foucault [2003] illustrated that war and violence were the preferred technologies of liberalism that literally and figuratively, “cuts off the king’s head” [Foucault 1980: 121]. Foucault’s discussion of liberalism and biopower provides the basis for our critique of governmental racisms within the paradigmatic turns of neo-liberal and proto-fascist education policy.

Foucault [2003] noted that liberal, democratic governments cultivated the practices and technologies of war and violence to maintain power. Specifically, Foucault [2003] argued that the liberal state developed “race wars” [60] and eventually “State racism” [62] as technologies that assisted liberal governments develop cultural geographies of the state. These cultural geographies circumscribed the liberal State as raced in preferred ways that si-

multaneously circumscribed external, racial others as dangers. The cultivated practices of race wars and State racism merged into a broad category of “biopower” [Foucault 2003]. In concert with governmentality, biopower emerged as major technology of the liberal State. Foucault [2003: 61] noted how and why liberal States utilize biopower.

[Biopower] will become the discourse of a centered, centralized, and centralizing power. It will become the discourse of a battle that has to be waged not between races, but by a race that is portrayed as the one true race, the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage. At this point, we have all those biological-racist discourses of degeneracy, but also all those institutions [e.g., schools, residential schools] within the social body which make the discourse of race struggle function as a principle of exclusion and segregation and, ultimately, as a way of normalizing society.

Foucault [2003] argued that biopower masked a series of structural inequalities, for instance, the privileging of whiteness, masculinity, and heterosexuality – to name but a few dominant identities within liberal, democratic traditions. More importantly, Foucault [2003] noted that biopower was designed to manage and normalize populations by maintaining them in life and by maintaining the sovereign right to kill. Life and death were literal practices of biopower (e.g., medicine, prisons, lynchings) [Pinar 2001] and practices of living parceled out through institutional organization (e.g., segregated schooling in the United States, residential schools in Canada). Biopolitics, then, were a series of technologies designed by liberal architects that constituted and reified particular cultural geographies that arose out of the ashes of sovereignty. Race was a predominant and very successful technology used in emerging liberal democracies as a way to delineate cultural and ethnic borders at the end of the Middle Ages, for instance Saxon vis-à-vis Norman.

The success of biopolitics ultimately led liberal governments to utilize racial technologies to legitimate the status quo – a covert sovereignty within emergent liberal politics. No longer were race wars simply a technology to reassert liberal demarcations *across* different, and at times arbitrary, cultural geographies; but in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the liberal State used biopolitics *within* the State in order to control its populations. Biopolitics were manifest within the liberal State as technologies of State racisms and racial orderings that inscribed the liberal nation as raced in preferred and unequal ways “for which internal and external racial others are dangers” [Kelly 2004: 59].

Thus, structural inequalities and specifically liberal State racisms are not

unfortunate effects of democratic politics, but designed technologies and constitutive practices of liberalism. Segregated schools in the United States, for instance, were legal and “just” technologies of the modern liberal State. In this example, segregated schools were a form of biopower that maintained the race wars for those in power in a *civilized* fashion – a “silent war” within the State that continued the liberal tradition of normalizing racial violence and authoring racial others [Foucault 2003: 16]. Foucault [2003: 15-16] noted how the “silent war” sublimated the race wars into silent, liberal, political practices, the role of political power [in liberal traditions] is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions [e.g., schools], economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals [e.g., racialized other]. ...politics, is the continuation of war by other means. Politics, in other words, sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war.

Fontana and Bertani [2003: 276] noted that, “there is also ‘continuity’ between fascism and Stalinism at the level of the biopolitics of the exclusion and extermination of the politically dangerous and the ethnically impure”. Fontana and Bertani [2003: 277] concluded that a central purpose of Foucault’s [2003] thesis was “to analyze the way fascism in particular (but also Stalinism) could make use of racial biopolitics in the ‘government of the living’ by stressing the importance of racial purity and ideological orthodoxy”. In this sense, fascism is not the exclusive practice of totalitarian governments, but also the practices of liberal governments. This is best evidenced, or depending worst evidenced, for our purposes by the above examples of segregated schools and residential schools in the ‘West’ [Miller 2003]. Indeed, Foucault [1994: 535-536] noted in very clear terms the liberal genealogy of fascism, of course fascism and Stalinism were both responses to a precise and very specific situation. Of course fascism and Stalinism expanded their effects to hitherto unknown dimensions, and it is, if not to be rationally expected, at least to be hoped, that we will never see their like again. They are therefore unique phenomena, but it cannot be denied that, in many respects, fascism and Stalinism simply extended a whole series of mechanisms that already existed in the social and political systems of the West. After all, the organization of great parties, the development of political apparatuses, and the existence of techniques of repression such as labor camps, all that is quite clearly the heritage of liberal Western societies, and all Stalinism and fascism had to do was to stoop down and pick it up [as quoted in Olssen 2003].

The process of normalization has received a fair amount of attention from educational scholars in recent years, particularly with the use of Foucault’s [1977] ideas regarding disciplinary power and governmentality. However,

Foucault's [2003] ideas on biopolitics, State racism, and fascism have received few references within analyses of neo-liberal education policy and governmentality studies. We imagine that this could be due to the taboo nature of the topic and/or to what Gilroy [2000: 145] affectively attributed the constellation of topics such as race and fascism as "forbidding and gnawingly uncomfortable". Nevertheless, we believe that Foucault [2003] provides a set of important analytics – particularly his idea that bodies are (re)inscribed in biopower – that compliment education policy studies in governmentality and neo-liberalism. In this sense, education policy can be understood as products of biopower, race wars, and proto-fascisms, in addition to other forms of disciplinary technologies. Next, we examine how neo-liberalism has appropriated the liberal lineage of biopower and then discuss its explicit connections to proto-fascism.

## Contemporary racial neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism has changed the fundamental nature of politics. Politics used to be primarily about who ruled whom and who got what share of the pie. Aspects of both these central question remain, of course; but the great new central question of politics is "Who has a right to live and who does not?" Radical exclusion is now the order of the day.

[George, 1999: np]

As we noted above, race and racial ordering were key to the constitution of the modern, liberal State. As a modern construction, the liberal State developed biopower technologies that included racial ordering and cartographies of cultural geographies for the inclusion of those deemed 'worthy' – salient to predetermined government identities – and the exclusion of those deemed 'unworthy'; relegated as necessary but in relation to slaves, cheap labour, and/or as cultural amusements. Biopower and biopolitical practices, then, were central to European expansion and the processes and practices of colonization. As Deleuze and Guattari [1987] noted, biopower and colonization developed a whole system of territorialization processes intimately connected to tribalisms.

World War II and the Shoah brought these explicit racial exclusions and deprivations to a head. Especially with the creation of the United Nation's Convention on Genocide in 1949, no longer could governments, at least formally, be legitimately based on explicit types of racial classifications, stratifications, and deprivations. Subsequently, the move to the post-World War II liberal democratic or Keynesian welfare state produced bureaucratic structures aimed at ameliorating historical and geographical exclusions as part of multiple and often overlapping groups [women, people of colour, etc.].



The welfare State thus provided a sense of institutionalized hope for excluded populations [Goldberg 2009], a management of the population achieved through what Foucault [2003] identified as ‘statistics.’ This hope was actualised as either explicit policies at an institutional level through affirmative action, or through more generalised policies such as anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies such as desegregating schools, buses, or places such as shop counters. One result of the welfare State was that up until the 1970s there was the emergence of state bureaucracies as major employers especially in later years of historically excluded groups. And all this, in turn, offered optimism among a growing proportion of the populace for access to middle-class amenities, including those racially excluded within the state and new immigrants from the global south [Goldberg 2009: 331].

This generation of employment through racially explicit policies of distribution produced a paradoxical relationship with ideas of colourblindness or racelessness. As a civil rights era invocation, equality was premised on a rejection of biological determinism of worth as represented by skin colour and racialised identity. With a commitment to affirmative action in welfare states, the adherence to individual merit and ability was perversely converted to be an argument against “special treatment” by liberal governments [Goldberg 2009]. This position was and continues to be argued most vehemently by white neo-conservatives, and having continued resonance in various political arenas such as rejection of multiculturalism as integration and associated calls for assimilation [Hage 1998]. Here, neo-conservatives could also support neo-liberalised political and policy regimes – the continuation of political “strange bedfellows” or bi-partisanship [Apple 2001].

The shift in the 1970s to what has become constituted as both phenomenon and concept as neo-liberalism, both as policies and practices of governmentalities [Brown 2003; Lerner 2000], transformed the relationships between government and individuals, and changed the register of race and practices of biopower. That is, the withdrawal and deregulation of the neo-liberal State from the social, at least in rhetoric, allowed for the insertion of the market as the organising principle of Western government [Burchell 1996]. This provided a strange perversion of the civil rights invocation that equality was the achievement of ending racism. Rather the move to the neo-liberal focus on individual merit and achievement – a move to reify equality – shifted the technologies of race and biopower as registers of government and amelioration into registers of non-State action, individuation and cultural deficiency for people of colour.

Neo-liberalism can then be seen to be a response to concerns about “the impending impotence of whiteness” [Goldberg 2009: 337] connected to Western fears of a black planet. As Bonnet [2008] noted, this can also be



connected to a transformation of whiteness in the West, and its connected paternalisms and pathologisms that reconstitute and rearticulate the fallacy of the *white man's burden*. It is no longer the burden of the neo-liberal State, however, to be responsible for amelioration of racisms, but rather in the above noted perversion of the civil rights calls for equality, it is the individual who is responsible for race and amelioration, and if some (especially Western White) people choose not to be among those who are different, among those who are not 'like them', then this is merely adhering to the basic tenets of late capitalism and/or what we will discuss as one indicator of proto-fascism.

Furthermore, the withdrawal and deregulation of the neo-liberal State reorders and downloads raciologies onto individuals and institutions. However, the State as withdrawn and deregulated does not eradicate racism. Cleverly, the neo-liberal State claims that if there are no racialised policies, then there cannot by definition be institutional racism – there is only individualized responsibility and deficit. Here, the neo-liberal State explicitly downloads the liberal legacy of biopower on- and in-to individuals through the skillful use of education policy, and particularly through school choice policies. Biopower, and particularly race, continue to be key technologies in the management of populations, in the sorting of those that are threats and those that need to be defended; both within and outside the neo-liberalised State [Foucault 2003].

### *The private and public registers of neo-liberal racism*

Goldberg [2010] suggested that government's withdrawal is indicative of a different register of raciology; registers through which race has been invisibilized and erased, to be denied in the realm of the neo-liberalised State policy terrains. Nevertheless, this does not mean an absence of race and racism. The reduced, withdrawn, and deregulated State, and the removal of government function in the pursuit of equity has reconfigured race but "it has hardly disappeared. Rather it has been placed behind a wall of private preference expression, of privatized choice" [Goldberg 2009: 334]. That is, when race becomes absent from public discourses and policies, when for example anti-racist education policies are transformed into diversity policies, we see a shift from the emphasis on government as ordering and reordering according to explicit racialised categories to private and privatized orderings and reorderings. That is, race continues to be, in a similar way to the constitution of Western government, a key structuring technology for neo-liberalism, through which by, shifting the force of explicit racial power from the formally public realm to the more racially slippery and evasive private one,

the state can safely deny any racial predication while the legacy of material partitions, divisions and separations persist, now unmarked by formal racial distinction. And the radical individualization neoliberalism is committed to absolutizing extends racially materialized division, now circulated as private preference [Goldberg 2010: 100].

The shift to individuation has resulted not in the eradication of racism, but rather that the removal of race explicitness in and by the neo-liberal State, such as through programmes redressing historical disadvantage, has merely moved racism to other realms – to, for example, education markets and local school management and politics. Education policy thus operates to enable the racialised private preferences of an ostensibly colour-blind State.

Later, we discuss how education policy promotes subtle sublimation processes involved in developing racialised private preferences in relation to school choice policy. However, next, we discuss neo-liberalism and proto-fascism and review the changes to biopower as a result. We would like to note our chronologies of liberalism, neo-liberalism, and proto-fascism are arbitrary and done for analytic purposes. In fact, these three political epochs are intertwined, messy, and, with the contemporary withdrawal and deregulation of the neo-liberal State, nearly invisible. In many ways, we are attempting to develop a set of lenses to identify and recognize the shifting and apparitional features of proto-fascist education policy that currently shapes schools and education markets in the West. In the next section we discuss how racialized private preferences generate a grid of racial performativities that is best described as an aesthetics of racial performances, theatricalization, and visualizations within government registers that simultaneously, and paradoxically, withdraw and intensify biopower.

## Neo-liberalism, proto-fascism, and educational state racism

Fascism is a set of ideologies and practices that seeks to place the nation, defined in exclusive biological, cultural, and/or historical terms, above all other sources of loyalty, and to create a mobilized national community. ... All aspects of fascist policy are suffused with ultranationalism.

[Passmore 2002: 31]

The above definition provides the impetus for our discussion on fascism – located as it is within a broader set of critical literatures on fascism. Gilroy [2000: 146] noted that the “recurrent appeal” in fascist studies is an attempt to better understand how power and race operate. The recurrent ap-

peal in fascist studies is evidenced in current literatures in political science and political theory. This literature attempts to define, historicize, and operationalize such a slippery and recurring idea [Eatwell 1996; Passmore 2002; Paxton 2004] – with specific geographical representations of contemporary fascisms in Japan [Tansman 2009], United Kingdom [Goodwin 2011], and the United States of America [Hedges 2008] to name but a few. The contemporary conceptualizing of fascism is global, and being discussed and mapped in many ways.

Henry Giroux [2004: 23] noted that “fascism is not an ideological apparatus frozen in a particular historical period, but a theoretical and political signpost for understanding how democracy can be subverted, if not destroyed”. Giroux is concerned with identifying fascism as a persistent set of political processes that were not eradicated with the fall of the Nazis. Rather fascism is an enduring echo that indicates how fragile democracy is, and the potential that fascism has to erode and destroy democracy [Giroux 2004]. As such, Nazism is just one example of the violent disruption of democracy throughout history. Similarly, critical scholarship has developed the idea of fascism as an eternal phenomena – “Ur-fascism” – [Eco 1995] and as a committed ethics opposing its perpetual re-occurrences [Arendt 1951]. Deleuze and Guattari [1983, 1987] discussed the relationships between macro- and micro- forms of fascism, noting that fascism is not simply practices of totalitarian government but self-desires of, and for, the body. In response to Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault [1983] noted the necessity of developing a new ethics to respond to the micro-fascisms and identifications of the body, i.e., *subject identities*. Agamben [1998], also in response to Deleuze and Guattari, developed a spatial analysis of fascism through the idea of “states of exception” whereas governments now operate within ambiguous juridical parameters and procedures in order to quarantine specific racial and ethnic groups.

For Giroux [2004: 26-45] fascism contains a return to traditional identity roles (racial, gendered, and sexed), the corporatization of civil society, the use of fear in nationalistic and patriotic efforts, the collapse of the separation of church and state, the control of the mass media, Orwellian new-speak, and the militarization of society, and particularly, the militarization of schools. Critical scholarship on fascism, neo-fascism, proto-fascism, and Ur-fascism have examined the relationships between government practices (macropolitics) and local and/or personal practices (micropolitics). Paxton’s [2004: 219] definition of fascism as “mobilizing passions” is both succinct and resonates well with demarcations of the intersecting spaces of the body within the press for inhabiting national, religious, racial, gendered, classed, and sexed affiliations. Nevertheless, both critical and non-critical literatures

of fascism suggest that fascism is not exclusively linked to totalitarianism (e.g., Nazism and/or Stalinism). Instead, proto-fascism represents conditions that attempt to circumscribe the neo-liberal State with particular ultra-nationalisms that territorialize both government and individual bodies with specific identities – racial, gendered, sexed, classed, and so forth.

Giroux [2004: 26] described, “how neoliberalism provides a unique set of conditions for both producing and legitimating the central tendencies of proto-fascism”. Giroux [2004: 62-72] noted specific conditions that promulgate proto-fascism, like deregulated and privatized publics (e.g., schools), choice and fear, economically co-opted language of liberty and liberalism, economic performance and accountability, and the education of future consumers. Like Giroux, we are *not equating* proto-fascism to neo-liberalism; rather we are noting that neo-liberalism provides a unique set of conditions upon which fascism capitalizes, for instance, the erosion of democracy and the public. The withdrawal of the welfare State has denoted a substantive shift to the Security State, a reflection of the possibilities of neo-liberalism as proto-fascism. Goldberg [2009: 333] noted the same when he stated that: Far from dismantling the state, or drowning it, then, neoliberalism would remake it. The state would become more robust in its controlling than enabling or caretaking conditions, more intrusive, more repressive. Neoliberalism, as Jean Comaroff has succinctly stated it, is not so much a break with capitalist state formation, as “an intensification of some of its core features”.

Like Agamben [1998], but with important nuances, Virillo [1998] likened fascism to states or conditions of suicide, or more simply a “suicide State” where governments were engaged in practices that would eventual dismantle itself. As discussed above, Foucault [2003] dedicated a year-long lecture to the relationship of fascism and race where he developed the concepts of biopower and race wars, and the ways fascism uses these concepts as forms of power, and in relation to disciplinary forms of governmentality. Gilroy [2000] continued looking critically at race and fascism and developed ideas related to racial aesthetics, spectacles of raciology, and identity politics.

We have argued that neo-liberalism and proto-fascism are connected to biopower, and evidenced historically when liberalism usurped sovereignty. Further, we have argued that liberal democracies use biopower to maintain power across national borders through structural inequalities [e.g., legislated school segregation], and that neo-liberalism creates conditions for proto-fascisms to emerge [Giroux 2004]. Next, we argue that neo-liberal racisms are downloaded unto subjects and note how this particular form of state withdrawal impacts education policy. We do this next with the assistance of Gilroy [2000] and his discussion of race and aesthetics, and illustrated through reference to school choice policies.

## Proto-fascist technologies of the self, racial aesthetics, and education policy

The role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals.

[Foucault, 2003: 16, our emphases]

Today skin is no longer privileged as the threshold of either identity or particularity. There are good reasons to suppose that the line between inside and out now falls elsewhere. The boundaries of “race” have moved across the threshold of the skin.

[Gilroy, 2000: 47]

It’s too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective.

[Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 215]

In this final section we discuss how racialized private preferences generate a grid of racial performativities that is best described as an aesthetics of racial performances, theatricalizations, and visualizations within neo-liberal registers that simultaneously, and paradoxically, withdraw and intensify biopower. Once biopower is understood as a liberal and neo-liberal technology of government, then it is possible to discuss how bio-power operates, albeit differently, within proto-fascist education policy. Proto-fascist education policy is a set of discourses that capitalizes on the neo-liberal discourses of performance, deregulation, marketization, standards, accountability, State withdrawal, commodification, and enterprising subjects. However, proto-fascist education policy uses the discourses of racial neo-liberalism for the purposes of local, national, and ultra-national racilogies. Thus, proto-fascist education policy uses bio-power to produce self-fashioning subjects within markets and registers of racial and ethnic identities.

Working from these premises, we discuss several implications that arise from proto-fascist education policy and racialized aesthetics, particularly the ways educational policy has connected school choice with racialized, performing bodies. In this sense, the aesthetics of proto-fascist education policy operates within subjects and between subjects in ethnic-identity schools.

### *Self-fashioning identities: the racialized aesthetics of proto-fascism*

Gilroy’s [2000] explication of racial aesthetics illustrates the visualizations, theatricalizations, and performances of subjects whom self-fashion

themselves racially. Racial aesthetics illustrates the ways proto-fascist education policy downloads the risks of State racism unto citizens and the ways these risks are taken up differently by people. Here, subjects self-fashion themselves and visually display themselves [Gilroy 2000] in accordance to historically unequal racialized government structures [Foucault 2003]. Whereas the neo-liberal subject is indeed entrepreneurial and performative [Rose 1999]; the proto-fascist subject is entrepreneurial, performative, and *raced*.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas neo-liberal education policy downloaded the economic risks of schooling unto “enterprising subjects” [Gulson 2011; Webb 2009], proto-fascist education policy simultaneously downloads the risks of raciology onto enterprising raced subjects (enterprising cultural groups). Proto-fascist education policy, now, generates an aesthetics of racialized performances that are used to determine the criteria for radical exclusion. Within the spectacle of racialized aesthetics, the neo-liberal State positions itself as removed from the immoral race wars and, yet with the capacity to intervene as the fair and just arbiter of any violence produced from irresponsible racial individuation.

Proto-fascist education policy downloads the risks of radical exclusion to, and with, the public re-conceptualised as individuated. It is no longer the sole province of government to determine the criteria of radical exclusion; but the individualized and responsabilized public will decide who is radically excluded and how. Gilroy [2000], with the help of Deleuze and Guattari [1987], explains that this state of affairs is not just a seductive ploy on behalf of the State, but a state of affairs desired by people. Gilroy [2000: 302] argued, fascism’s technologies of the self and solidarity have proved as influential and attractive as the appeal of any of its systematic ideological features. Perhaps this is how fascisms have been able to speak repeatedly in the name of culture and become eloquent about the racial, national, and ethnic hierarchies constructed by the idea of absolute cultural difference along national lines. In a sense, then, fascism can be said to have acquired or even become a culture in its own right. This operation has taken place within the boundaries constituted by what Deleuze and Guattari refer to – in their celebrated warning that the seductions of fascism spare no one – as its “molecular, focal points”.

Proto-fascisms are not just technologies owned and used by neo-liberal governments to promulgate national, patriotic, and ultra-national definitions; but also, and simultaneously, proto-fascism distributes these technologies to subjects to be used by subjects themselves in self-fashioning

<sup>2</sup> And, of course, gendered, classed, sexed, etc. That is, the proto-fascist subject is governed according to numerous identities.



identity performances. As Gilroy [2000: 103] confirmed, identity is “revealed as a critical element in the distinctive vocabulary used to voice the geopolitical dilemmas of the late modern age”, identity also becomes “a thing to be possessed and displayed”. The globalized, mobile subject is a networked subject of global flows, while globalization has also produced segmented and stratified ethnic groups that depend on an ethnic identity as a resource to protect not only interests but also ontology [Castells 2002].

The self-fashioned racialized subject seeks an escape from the State’s racial wars but is thrown immediately into a struggle of the self that seeks to both understand the liberal and neo-liberal historical mappings of preferred citizens and subjugated *other* (non-white) while questioning racialized circumscriptions altogether. Racializations are no longer just handed down by an oppressive racist State. Racialized subjects are generated through self-practices of identity development constructed by the self, for the self. Here, Gilroy [2000: 104] noted that “identity is latent destiny” while lamenting the identity politics born from practices of care cultivated out of ‘identity development’. Gilroy [2000: 104] explained, seen or unseen, on the surface of the body or buried deep in its cells, identity forever sets one group apart from others who lack the particular, chosen traits that become the basis of typology and comparative evaluation. No longer a site for the affirmation of subjectivity and autonomy, identity mutates. Its motion reveals a deep desire for mechanical solidarity, seriality, and hypersimilarity. The scope for individual agency dwindles and then disappears. People become bearers of the differences that the rhetoric of absolute identity invents and then invites them to celebrate. Rather than communicating and making choices, individuals are seen as obedient, silent passengers moving across a flattened moral landscape toward the fixed destinies to which their essential identities, their genes, and the closed cultures they create have consigned them once and for all. And yet, the desire to fix identity in the body is inevitably frustrated by the body’s refusal to disclose the required signs of absolute incompatibility people imagine to be located there.

How does one fashion and care for a racialized self? This question is dangerous because it assumes that racial choices are equally distributed. More importantly, the question is dangerous because it accepts the liberal premise of raciology in the first place (and perhaps must accept it at the risk of being radically excluded in the liberal tradition). Racialized groups have a “choice” in participating in a politics of marketized self-creation, yet this self-fashioning continues to be structured by historically and geographically constituted racial categories. We discuss this problem in the conclusion and in relation to the case of ethnic-identity schools in Canada and the United States.



## Conclusions: racial aesthetics, proto-fascist equity and school choice

In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.

[Fanon 1952/2008: 229]

From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.

[Foucault 1983: 237]

We recognize that our use of the term *proto-fascism* has certain rhetorical effects. In one sense, our choice of terms is designed to polarize the term *neo-liberalism*, which has become a fairly ubiquitous term in education policy analyses. We are not satisfied with neo-liberalism remaining as a closed concept or meta-narrative. Our deliberate linking of proto-fascism to neo-liberalism is a plea to education policy scholars to begin to pay more attention to the development of neo-liberalism as both a historical discourse (i.e., from a genealogy of political and philosophical liberalism) and as an evolving discourse that provides numerous conditions for proto-fascism to flourish [Giroux 2004].

More importantly, we hope that our use of *proto-fascism* possibly propels education policy scholars and researchers to pay significantly more attention to the ways neo-liberalism is inexorably linked to race and biopower. Our use of the term proto-fascism can be connected to the development of a renewed liberal politics – or a new set of relations – that simultaneously combats the proto-fascisms of the neo-liberal State and the proto-fascisms of individuals while pushing back against what we and Gilroy [2000] would describe as neo/liberalized identity politics. We remain unsure whether or not the West has entered into a new variant of liberalism – perhaps *post-liberalism* – whereas neo-liberalism has atrophied democratic practices to such an extent that we have entered a fully-fledged era of proto-fascism that may be impervious to re-politicizing the contemporary and preferred identity politics. Identifying and defining democratic practices seems to us to be a significant challenge for critical policy scholars working in educational policy studies.

Racialized identity development and practices that care for the self are not only micro-practices of the self. They are practices shared within communities that wrestle with the questions above; and particularly within education policy, as schools have been historically apparent in practicing State racism, e.g., segregation and the closing of non-English schools. In addition to self-fashioning racialized citizens, the aesthetics of race downloads the visualizations, theatricalizations, and performances of race in- and un-to schools.

Education policy, and particularly school choice policies, provides the legislative means to create schools as sanctuaries from the historical and liberalized State racisms and from the perpetuations of identity discourses that reinscribe the self and its care in particular ways.

School choice policies provide a sanctuary for curricular interests that have been historically marginalized, threatened, or excluded [Rofes, Stulberg 2004]. School choice policies, then, provide opportunities for racial self-identification. Scholars have argued that school choice policies provide opportunities to develop ethnic-specific curricula for Native Hawai'ians [Buchanan, Fox 2004], Native Americans [Belgarde 2004], and African Americans [Yancey 2004]. In this sense, neo-liberalism, proto-fascism, and school markets may provide better options for racial equality instead of the current political system. However, there are prices to pay for such attempts at equality. For example, the Canadian and international media have discussed the establishment of the Africentric Alternative School [AAS] in Toronto, through reference to ideas of educational choice and social segregation [Flanagan 2008; Wong 2011]. This use of the term 'segregation' points to some of these costs of neo-liberal racial economics.

Gilroy [2000] and others have described the implications of racial self-fashioning to great extent [e.g., Leonardo 2010]. In conclusion, we would like to discuss some of the implications racial self-fashioning within education policy and specifically ethnic identity schools, like AAS. To return to theory, Agamben [1998] helps us understand identity schools as states of exceptions within historic State racisms. Thus, the first point we would like to make about proto-fascist education policy is that it is spatially constituted and operates by co-opting liberal registers of racism and segregation. The co-optation of liberal racism re-invents these registers as part of the process of self-fashioning a racialized self within mobile, fluid, and permeable cartographies. To illustrate this point further, discursive registers have often been co-opted as a way to circumvent governmental racisms. That is, an important part of anti-racism has been to re-appropriate racial slurs, reuse these slurs as forms of solidarity within racial self-formations. Likewise, ethnic identity schools co-opt and re-articulate the liberal registers and practices of segregation. Within the exceptional states of proto-fascist education policy, market conditions alter race registers and forms of race identity and solidarity.

For example, the invocation of segregation in reference to the AAS can be read in different ways. One reading points to an inscription of historical and geographical occurrences of segregation – liberal multicultural opponents to the school can clamour that 'surely you Black people do not want to be segregated again, and this school will segregate our multicultural nation,'

while some Black parents and community members opposed to the school similarly argue that ‘surely *we* do not want to be segregated again.’ A second reading of segregation is provided by George Sefa Dei [1995]. He asserted that what is occurring in the establishment of Afrocentric schooling is a rearticulation of segregation; there is a difference between segregation by force and segregation by choice. Dei [1995: 186] stated that: “For those that argue that having such schools is going back to the days of segregation, it should be noted that there is a qualitative difference between ‘forced segregation’ and ‘segregation by choice’”. In both instances, the liberal registers and practices of liberal racism, for instance, segregation and ghettoization, have been appropriated and re-appropriated through enabling proto-fascist education policy and its use of biopower technologies of race and identity.

The second point, and a delicate one, follows from Deleuze and Guattari [1987] insistence that such “fascist” and “anti-fascist” movements are desired and related. Here, cultural diasporas use racial identity as both capital in anti-fascist movements – lines of escape – and as capital that in preferred servitude of particular racialized identities [Hall 2006]. In other words, it is no longer a choice to continue to wait for school reform that is seriously committed to equality. Waiting for school reform that eradicates State racism *is* suicide. However, the cost of escaping this form of fascism is to inscribe the body – even deeper – with a racial identity. And it is a racial identity that is marked as incommensurable with the body public in schooling, in ways that gay and lesbian schools, social justice schools and other forms of language-based schooling, are not in the Canadian education context [James 2011].

Gilroy [2000] provides a methodology – an aesthetics of raciology – to begin to understand how fascism is both related to government racisms and to the race wars, and to understand how particular identity movements are both liberating – as lines of escape – and suicidal – as lines of entanglement – within desired subjectivity identifications and, perhaps, desired proto-fascist investments in public education. As illustrated as an introduction to this section, Deleuze and Guattari [1987] and Gilroy [2000] warn us of the dangers of using, desiring, and preferring these identity politics – the limits to race. As Youdell [2011: 28] noted in examining performative politics and limits of identity: It is important to retain a sense of the limits of discursive agency. Subjectivated subjects have the capacity for intentional action and their practices inevitably have discursive effects. Yet the constitutive force of these discourses exceeds our intentions and performative misfire can work in ways that restrict us as well as in ways that might unsettle the constraints of identity.

Proto-fascist education policy is a complex technology used in concert

with conflicting articulations of racialized democracies. Proto-fascist education policy utilizes ideas of race and racialization as both opportunity and danger and is strongly connected to Western liberal traditions of educational racism. Moreover, proto-fascist education policy is not simply wielded by power elites but circulates within the democratic body-public and within individual bodies performing ultra-nationalistic forms of neo-liberal identities. These are the “choices” we make, or rather perhaps, the historical dilemmas we traverse.

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