Critical Education

Race, Inequality, and Fear of the "Other" in Common Sense Revolution *Reforms*

Laura Elizabeth Pinto
Niagara University

Abstract

During the 1990s, Ontario experienced significant social policy reform under the Progressive-Conservative government's controversial, but straightforward, platform called the Common Sense Revolution (CSR), promising to solve Ontario's economic problems with lower taxes, smaller government and pro-business policies intended to create jobs. The ideological framing led to policy direction that dismantled existing provincial policies and institutions designed to promote equity. This paper begins by providing evidence to support how the CSR functioned as racist across a broad swath of policy areas, through ideology and coded language, structure and program cuts, and processes. Based on interviews with sixteen policy actors, the paper reveals how the provincial curriculum policy formulation process overtly overlooked and dismantled anti-racism and social justice in curriculum policy in ways that reinforce the architecture of white supremacy through colour-blindness and distribution of property.

Power, knowledge and race are intimately intertwined with curriculum policy. The privileged have a vested interest in the perpetuation of a mainstream, "official" curriculum that maintains dominant structures, inequities, and power arrangements perpetuating the oppression of marginalized groups. This is especially when neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies drive public policy reforms, as has been the case in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom (Apple, 2001, 2004; Hill, 2003; Kozolanka, 2007; Marginson, 2006; Wrigley, 2003; Young & Levin, 1999). Such language and policies tend to focus on "the market," privatization of public goods, and emphasize competition and choice, while reducing citizens to "consumers." Thus, economic "choice" and "consumption" of public goods and services are taken to be components of "citizenship." In jurisdictions that have adopted these politics, political platforms and policy decisions favour markets over individuals and celebrating a romanticized past, leading to socially unjust public policy that contributes to race inequity.

This paper first provides an overview of Ontario, Canada's controversial yet influential *Common Sense Revolution* (*CSR*) of the 1990s and how it contributes to damaging and racist constructions of the "other" while neglecting issues of equity and social justice. An understanding of the forces that shaped educational policy in the 1990s has much more than merely historical interest. Though current political and policy environments are different in several important respects, many of the same tendencies that manifested themselves in the 1990s remain operative today and continue to function as obstacles to truly democratic policy production. To illustrate these issues, I summarize how the *CSR* resulted in outcomes that perpetuate racism across a broad swath of public policy areas. Using curriculum policy as an example, this paper draws on critical race theory (CRT) to reveal how socially unjust policies that failed to address issues of race and race inequity came to be through elitism, politicization and limited autonomy of policy actors resulting from flawed policy production rooted in neo-liberal political will. My analysis focuses on how, within political positioning and policy production, colour-blindness and whiteness as property reinforced the architecture of white supremacy in education.

Ontario's Common Sense Revolution

Large-scale public policy reform in Ontario, Canada was initiated by the Progressive-Conservative Party led by Mike Harris upon their election in 1995. The party's victory came after on a controversial, but straightforward, political platform called the *CSR*, promising to solve Ontario's economic problems with lower taxes, smaller government and pro-business policies purported to create jobs. The *CSR* was presented in plain language, offered concrete (and arguably over-simplified) "solutions" to the provinces woes, and remarkably never mentioned the Progressive-Conservative party in its text. This was a specific response to research and polling undertaken party advisors that suggested that certain (and arguably powerful) constituent groups were fearful about their futures, and angry with government for not providing leadership (Blizzard, 1995; Ibbitson, 1996).

The *CSR* strongly reflected neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies. As was the case in Ontario during the period of reform studied, neo-conservative and neo-liberal ideologies have driven recent education reforms in a variety of jurisdictions. The terms neo-conservative and neo-liberal are often used interchangeably. However, while related, key differences exist. Neo-liberalism grew out of liberalism, and shares some similarities:

> Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that
> the individual was to be taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the

state, neo-liberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. In classical liberalism, the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neo-liberalism the state seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. (Olssen 1996: 340 quoted in Apple 2005: 14)

Thus, neo-liberal language and policies tend to focus on the market. This results in education foci that promote school privatization, career-focused education, and accountability through testing and standardization, often with punitive consequences in place for under-performance (e.g., funding tied to high-stakes test scores) (see, for example, Apple, 2001).

Neo-conservativism, on the other hand, prioritizes the market and individual liberty as secondary to restoring traditions constructed around themes such as nationalism, allegiance, authority and natural order (Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Apple, 2001). To do so, neo-conservatives use rhetorical devices that invoke traditional conservatism and classical liberalism (terms including autonomy, individualism, small government, etc.) for very different ends than traditional conservatives – namely persuasion, consolidation of power and subordination of citizens (Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Shudak & Helfenbein, 2005). Neo-conservatives tend to "celebrate a mythic past" (Reddick, 2004, p. 73) with reference to strong nuclear families, effective schools with a traditional, uncontestable curriculum, and within which crime, drugs and violence were not issues – thus reinforcing a vision of whiteness. Neo-conservativism often co-opts classical liberal-democratic concepts – such as colour-blindness and emphasis on the content of people's character – such that these concepts that once served progressive goals begin to serve the opposite set of purposes (Delgado, 2011). In education, neo-conservative policies advocate for centralized control of curriculum content, standardized curriculum and testing as mechanisms for accountability and "excellence," and emphasis on "back to basics" schooling (Apple, 2004).

When the neo-conservative and neo-liberal frames come together, symbolic language emerges within pubic educational discourse, evident in many contemporary reforms: competition, choice, excellence, standards, accountability, and "common sense" (Apple, 2004; Levin, 1998). Two principles guide resulting reforms: (1) priority of markets, and (2) the substitution of consumers for citizens, where democracy is defined less by common public choice than by private market decisions. Stemming from these principles, "investment" in education through reform is purported to be the solution to economic problems by creating a better workforce. However, the idea that education can solve economic problems is a myth lacking empirical evidence (Taylor & Henry 2002, Welch 1998). Together, these priorities shift attention away from issues of equity and social justice, race and race inequity.

The term "common sense" itself is associated with neo-conservative and neo-liberal rhetoric (Apple, 2004; Fleury, 2005; Gandin, 2002), and some have drawn parallels to Thatcherism and Reaganism (see, for example, Keil, 2002). More importantly, the framework laid out in the *CSR* offers solutions including lowered taxes, smaller government, and policies favouring business. The Harris government's use of "distinct ideological underpinnings" (Lock, 2006, p. 7) caused a great deal of tension (Locke, 2006; White, 1997) in the province. Government framing of social problems cloaked in neo-liberal and neo-conservative frames were well-executed

and especially powerful. This ideological framing was prominent in media coverage.[1] In its first year in the public sphere, the *CSR* was dismissed by mainstream media, elites, and much of the business community as "unjustified, petty, divisive, mean-spirited, and cruel" (Blizzard, 1995, pp. 73-74; White, 1998, p. 261). Some *CSR* claims misrepresented or over-simplified Ontario's actual situation. Despite these criticisms, the *CSR* platform resonated with particular groups of voters leading to the party's electoral victory. Upon taking power, the party acted swiftly to implement numerous controversial policy changes affecting all aspects of public policy under provincial jurisdiction.

Methods of Inquiry

This paper draws on data from a larger project that reconstructed Ontario's secondary school curriculum reform that occurred between 1995 and 2000 in the form of a case study. As an in-depth and multifaceted investigation of particular single social phenomenon, the case study format of the broader research lends itself to forming generalizations by suggesting new interpretations and re-examining existing concepts and interpretations in innovative ways (Yin, 2009).

I purposefully selected data types to reflect the complex systems of action to construct the case study. The first subset of data I collected, "public and archival primary documents and reports," provided information about the political and institutional contexts from a historical perspective, as well as the "official" statements, processes and timelines. Among these documents, I obtained government-produced participant lists from consultations, bidder RFP requirements, various internal reports and memoranda, data about the content of advertisements, the Ministry's consultation guides and reports, transcripts from the House Hansard that offer accounts discussion among elected officials in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Under the *Freedom of Information Ac*t, I also obtained two research reports commissioned by the Ontario government and carried out by private consulting firms. These archival documents allowed me to holistically reconstruct the process of policy production within the social context of the events.

Second, I conducted semi-structured interviews with various actors involved in the policy process.[2] In multi-perspectival research such as this, the researcher must consider the voice and perspectives of relevant groups of actors and the interactions between them. To capture these voices, I interviewed a total of sixteen individuals in Ontario. I contacted subjects through my professional network and snowball sampling by which initial contacts provided the names of others whom I should consider interviewing. Six participated in the curriculum reforms as members of contracted writing teams, five participated in a bureaucratic or central-government role, and five participated by attending consultation or feedback sessions. I use pseudonyms to preserve participant anonymity, and they are only identified by the roles they played in the

---

[1] Some evidence suggests that media complicity stemmed from unpreparedness to critically interrogate the contents of government press releases, instead using them uncritically as new sources (Kozolanka, 2007).

[2] I selected participants purposefully through "snowball" or "chain sampling" (Patton, 1990). This approach "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects" (Patton, 1990; 182). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select a sample that she believes will yield the most comprehensive understanding of the subject of study" (Patton, 1990).

process, avoiding information about their subject area, and, where possible, organizational or departmental affiliations. Writing team members interviewed represent the following subjects: History, Science, Civics, Business Studies, English, and The Arts.

Because of the volume of data I collected, I analyzed the data in several phases, following Yin's (2009) phased strategy for general use, reviewing the subsets of data gathered (public and archival primary documents, and interviews), and analyzing them both deductively and inductively. To analyze the data, I first relied on deductive analysis in which I flagged passages using a thematic coding organized into a codebook (Creswell, 2009). Next, I approached the documents inductively with the aim of identifying patterns, themes, and categories that "emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton 1990, p. 390). These emergent themes may be overlooked if using a deductive approach on its own. Using a duplicate, clean copy of each document, I applied the constant-comparative approach to analysis to refine emergent categories and their properties (Heck 2004). I read and reread the documents to identify potential themes that spanned across multiple transcripts and interview notes, noting passages that characterized that theme. I used coloured markers to differentiate passages related to emerging themes so that the data would remain in context and provide visual indications. I continued to refine my comparisons until a group of strong themes emerged across transcripts and interview notes. Finally, I compared constant-comparative themes to the conceptual framework, and made note of connections. The variety of data collected offered the advantage of triangulation to verify the strength and/or accuracy of data gathered (Heck 2004). Where data were contradictory, I noted differences. Where data were consistent, I noted the strength of claims.

I then analyzed the themes identified using CRT literature in order to uncover how racism operated within the policy production process. CRT is an approach to studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and an analytic tool to explain systematic omissions and distortions (Lasdon-Billings, 2003). By positioning race at the centre of analysis, CRT recognizes that racism is a societal reality, one that "appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 113). CRT operates on three basic premises: that racism is pervasive, that it is permanent, and that it must be challenged (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism is defined as:

> a psychosocial dislike of the unfamiliar, the different. It is linked with the authoritarian personality. It prefers bright lines—we versus they. Good versus evil. It enables the racist to believe himself superior to others, to maintain a class advantage over them, to feel himself the possessor of righteousness, morality, and prestige—all at the expense of those others." (Delgado, 2011, pp. 1282-1283)

Beyond individualizing racism as a personal attitude, this paper emphasizes how racism operates as a system of enduring advantage for one group, and historic disadvantage of another group. For this paper, I share the position of Michael Omi and Howard Winant that race is neither an ideological construct, nor an objective position. While sometimes (and incorrectly) considered a discrete category, race is not separate from other aspects of identity or "modalities of power":

> Race, class, and gender all represent potential antagonisms whose significance is no longer given, if it ever was …[R]ace, class, and gender (as well as sexual orientation) constitute 'regions' of hegemony, areas in which certain political projects can take shape (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 68).

To that end, I recognize that intersectionality calls attention to events and forces operating at the intersection of two or more categories, such as race and gender (Delgado, 2011). It goes beyond binary categories of male/female, black/white to offer a broader picture of how and where inequities operate.

By viewing curriculum policy production through CRT, I hoped to explicate and disrupt the processes that gave enduring forms of oppression their appearance of normalcy as they operated during the *CSR* and its processes of policy production. This analysis raises questions about how policies were formulated, who was asked to participate in their production, and what the outcomes were (Ladson-Billings, 2003). While CRT offers a number of analytic tools, my analysis focuses on three, inter-related concepts: colour-blindness, whiteness as property, and policy as an act of white supremacy. This section lays out the tenants of my analysis, but they are further unpacked in the discussion that follows.

The first, colour-blindness, perpetuates a set of beliefs that positions race and race inequity as nonexistent, making white ways of being, knowing and experiencing as "normal" (Simpson, 2008). The way that various "isms" connected to points of intersectionality look produce more subtle colour-blindness and that makes racism less obvious than its traditional, overt forms (Cross, 2005; Rivella et al., 2004). The colour-blind approach to race leaves many important issues about race unexamined. The danger in this is that:

> when race goes unexamined this way, whiteness becomes the de facto 'norm' and those who are not white or do not 'act white' are seen as not normal – substandard on several levels. In such a situation the goal of racial equality and the dream of a truly colour-blind society are elusive (Revilla et al., 2004, p. 285).

In maintaining whiteness as the only natural position, fear of the "other" as different or dangerous emerges. In this way, colour-blindness is an ally to domination and supremacy (Simpson, 2008), operating paradoxically within the realities of white privilege. At times, colour-blindness insists that difference is not a factor, and at other times, it demonizes the "other" for visible or obvious difference while positioning whiteness as preferable. Colour-blindness also relies on the guise of meritocracy – instead of acknowledging the reality that individuals receive advantages based on social position and race (Leonardo, 2004), colour-blindness perpetuates the misconception that privileges are earned based on merit. When individuals or groups are disadvantaged, the disadvantage is reduced to a lack of qualifications. Meritocratic thinking eliminates any discussion or acknowledgement of privilege, and denies the existence of race inequity. Colour-blindness, therefore, serves to legitimize expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and supremacy in part through beliefs about meritocracy.

Secondly, when viewed as property, whiteness provides material and symbolic privileges to whites (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Examples of whiteness as material property include access to higher education, broader choice of neighbourhoods in which to live, and so on. Property can also be thought of in symbolic terms, ranging from conceptions of beauty or intelligence that not only are tied to whiteness, but also implicitly exclude blackness or brownness. Through property, whites receive exclusive rights to freedom, certain privileges, and to the ability to benefit from these rights (Duncan, 2005). In education, property can operate both materially (for instance, through funding the privileges and marginalizes) and symbolically (for instance, through curriculum policy content, the overt and hidden curriculum of textbooks and other learning materials, whose perspectives are included/excluded in educational outcomes, and so on).

Finally, I draw on the concept of white supremacy to elucidate how structures and systems perpetuated race inequity in the data collected. Leonardo (2004) argues that analysis of white privilege must include rigorous examination of white supremacy. I use the term white supremacy as defined by Gillborn (2005) and Leonardo (2004), rejecting the superficial conception of supremacy that is associated with "extreme racialized politics" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 491). Rather, white supremacy is a descriptor for the structures and practices that legitimize and support white privilege within social systems – in other words, the conditions of supremacy make privilege possible (Leondardo, 2004). Both colour-blindness and whiteness as property support the architecture of white supremacy, each by contributing to white privilege, while masking issues of race. Race inequity and racism legitimize and defend white supremacy in education policy based on who drives education policy production, who wins and loses based on policy priorities, and by the policy outcomes (Gillborn, 2005).

While CRT as a methodology typically emphasizes centering the stories and counter-stories of marginalized individuals (Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009), this analysis focuses on the stories of policy production as conveyed by actors interviewed – which (rather tellingly) do not include people from racialized or minority communities. Despite that limitation, applying CRT to political events, politics and individual experiences allows "to rethink and reconstruct traditional school policy and practices around the insights of the greatest stakeholders—those who experience the brunt of educational injustice" (Duncan, 2005, p. 110). I also acknowledge that this research is limited to the subjective perspectives of sixteen policy actors and the honesty of their responses. To address this, I triangulated interview responses against one another and against the archival documents where possible. Despite these limitations, the findings of this research are nonetheless important and worthy of analysis as a contribution to the understanding of how policy was produced in Ontario during the 1990s, and more importantly, how race and race inequity both operated in production and were reflected in policy outcomes.

Race, Inequity and Construction of the "Other" in *CSR* reforms

This section addresses the large-scale political platform and public policy outcomes laid out in the *CSR* as a backdrop to the curriculum policy production process. As Trickey (1997, p. 113) asserts, "it is not easy to talk about racism in the best of times." However, race is always present in every social configuration (Ladson-Billings, 1998), and is especially salient in the context of public policy. In Ontario, the perceived need to tighten control, to centralize decision-making, and to re-establish a "common culture" and a common curriculum cannot be fully understood unless needs such as these are situated within the treatment of race and the fear of the "other." The neo-liberal frame, and the *CSR*, imply that white, middle and managerial class people are the norm (Trickey, 1997). Not surprisingly, the origin of the *CSR* itself was from a small group of white, middle class Harris insiders, all men with the exception of one woman (Blizzard, 1995; White, 1998). Furthermore, the 1995 Tory caucus of eighty-two members only included eight women. White (1998, p. 257) described the "mood and style" of this government as a "boys' club." This phenomenon of white, middle-class men dominating politics has been documented elsewhere (Gillborn, 2005; López, 2005), and, while it may not have been a conscious plan, the politics of whiteness and white privilege have been enormously effective in the formation of coalitions that unite people across cultural differences, across class and gender relations, and against their best interests (Apple, 2001; Dyer, 1997).

This failure to acknowledge the politics of race is emblematic of the colour-blind mentality operating among political leaders. Indeed, public policy requires serious attention to race and race

inequity in order to reconstitute power relations with the ultimate goal of addressing inequity and oppression. The *CSR* treatment of difference stemmed from its neo-conservative and neo-liberal roots. While neo-conservatism seeks to preserve white advantage through denial of race difference (where race is something to be overcome), neo-liberalism attempts to limit white advantage through the denial of race difference (where attempts are made to narrow differences that divide) (Winant, 2004). In the *CSR*, this came forth as a form of colour-blindness. Both of these ignore the issue of systemic racism, and in doing so, the resulting "refusal to engage in 'race thinking' amounts to a defence of the racial status quo, in which systemic racial inequity, and yes, discrimination as well, are omnipresent" (Winant, 2004, p. 8).

Issues of race inequity and racism were enormous and cut across a broad swath of social issues in Ontario during the 1990s. While it is impossible to address all of the overt and subtle issues adequately here, I will describe some of the most salient problems and support them with selected *CSR* policy examples. Through the *CSR*, the Harris government promoted a resurgence of racism in three ways: (1) ideology that relied on particular images and coded language to both reinforce white privilege while demonizing the "other;" (2) a structure that cut programs and services for immigrants and minorities and eliminating employment equity that overtly contributed to property inequity; and (3) a process that tacitly incited racist sentiments while failing to provide services and recourse for victims of inequity and oppression (Trickey 1997). I elaborate upon each of these in the sections that follow.

Ideology and coded language as tools of domination

Previous Ontario governments, at the federal and provincial levels, acknowledged inequities based on race, gender, and other identity forms through their legislation and program initiatives. Indeed, Ontario had been considered a leader in addressing issues of social justice, equity and anti-racism prior to 1995 (NARCC, 2002; Rezai-Rashti, 2003; Carr, 2006). The *CSR* was laden with conscious and deliberate efforts in both framing and policy formulation to keep such issues under wraps and to openly dismantle existing policies, programs and structures that contributed to property for oppressed groups.

Racism in the *CSR* was perpetuated through both denial of racism and race inequity via colour-blindness (through an institutional goal of neutrality described by Tarca, 2005 and further elaborated upon later in this paper), as well as through representations of other groups as the "problem." The Harris government employed a "politics of polarization" by which the government distracted people from the real issues at hand by focusing attention on directing citizens' anger against the poor, sidetracking the real agenda that offers more benefits for the already privileged (Dua & Robertson, 1999).

Part of the Harris government's ability to appeal to public sensibilities stemmed from effective use of advertising and media to frame and shape issues (Kozolanka, 2007). For instance, "frontal attacks on the poor" (Keil, 2002, p. 589) through constructions of the "other" as a drain on the system, as a self-serving "special interest group" or as illegitimate immigrants were created. In these images, the disadvantaged "deserved" their state because they had not worked hard enough, or failed to assimilate into mainstream, middle-class white culture. This failure boiled down to a perceived lack of character (Apple, 2001). Such rhetoric "paints a picture that excludes some and incites fear and opposition towards the 'other.'" (Trickey, 1997, p. 114). For example, media coverage about the so-called quota bill (*Bill 79, The Employment Equity Act* 1993, discussed in more detail in the next section) actually named "discrimination against white males in hiring needs to be rescinded" (Thornton, 2008, p.7). By using language and characterizations of "others"

threatening white males' privilege, the Harris campaign evoked strong emotions on job quota legislation and other issues that proved crucial to their success (Thornton, 2008). As has been illustrated in other jurisdictions, whiteness becomes much more definable when privilege is lost, such as in the experience of white, working-class men who perceived their jobs being lost to people of colour (Delgado, 2011; Hurtado & Stewart, 2004), as was this tactic used by Harris. This move on the part of the government highlights the paradox of colour-blindness – on the one hand, the quota bill served to reify white privilege through domination by focusing on meritocracy; on the other, it invoked and provoked fear of the other by pointing out threats to their privilege and the purported meritocracy.

A similar technique was used in television advertisements. The narration of one advertisement said, "Mike Harris will require welfare recipients to work for benefits. Lyn McLeod opposes work for welfare" (Thornton, 2008, p.8). This second example positioned the dangerous "other" as a welfare recipient, implying he/she was able to work, but chose not to. This is akin to Lugg's (1998) observation of the use of "political kitsch" to demonize the other using disparaging stereotype. At the same time, and despite these dangerous characterizations of "other," the Conservatives elected to banish the words "racism," "anti-racism," and "equity" from all policies, programs, initiatives, public pronouncements and institutional dealings (Carr, 2006; Corson, 2002). Thus:

> By controlling the political agenda, the Harris government was able to not mention the word racism publicly for eight years, thus ensuring that there would not be a single anti-racism initiative (Carr, 2006).

In doing so, the Harris Tories attempted to absolve the government of facing issues of race. Behind this refusal to acknowledge difference was a fear of the other, in that it implied acknowledgement of diversity or race might have diverted *CSR* ideology from restoring an idealized and romanticized neo-conservative past when people purportedly shared a common culture which, in turn, served as an attempt to erase race and race inequity. As a while, this reliance on romanticized pasts illustrated how structural dominance through coded messages and metaphor contributed to white supremacy in political framing *and* policy content.

Structure and Program Cuts: Maintaining White Property

Racist structures maintain white property in the form of public goods through both policy texts, and through funding (Ladson-Billings, 2009). By shifting funding away from social programs that would benefit marginalized groups, governments reinforce supremacy, while exacerbating race inequity. The *CSR* included numerous structure and program cuts that blatantly eliminated anti-racism initiatives and services to advocate for victims of discrimination, and in doing so perpetuated marginalization of certain groups (especially women, minorities, the poor, Aboriginals). Under the previous government, an Anti-racism Secretariat was created, as well as its counterparts within other Ministries (Carr, 2006; Bedard & Lawton, 2000). These branches were dismantled within weeks of the election. The Anti-racism Secretariat, the Race Relations and Policing Unit at the Ministry of Solicitor General, the Racism and Ethno-cultural Equity Education Branch, and other, similar structures were also eliminated almost immediately. This move sent a strong message about political priorities, and the degree to which the Tories were willing to acknowledge race and race inequity as issues facing Ontarians. This outright denial of such issues by the Harris government was eerily consistent with similar denials made by Margaret Thatcher in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s described by Gillborn (2005).

The *CSR* platform included a commitment to eliminate Ontario's Employment Equity Commission, a newly established agency with a mandate to advance the work force representation of women, visible minorities, Aboriginal Canadians, and those with disabilities. Within a week of taking office, the new Premier fired the head of the Employment Equity Commission (Hucker, 1997). As well, the *CSR* promised to repeal *Bill 79, The Employment Equity Act 1993*, attacking it as the "quota bill." While *Bill 79* was weak[3], it attempted to address systemic processes of discrimination that disadvantaged various groups, including women, racial minorities, Aboriginal people, and people with disabilities (Dua & Robertson, 1999). Its elimination through *Bill 8, The Job Quotas Repeal Act* removed what little support existed to battle such forms of inequity. Through the government's actions in dismantling pay equity, "some 100,000 women stood to lose $81 million in pay equity payments. The government insisted that low wages are determined by the market, and that direct comparison between women's and men's jobs was not possible" (Dua & Robertson, 1999, p. 138).

During the Harris government's tenure, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) reduced its size from sixteen offices in 1990, to eleven in 1997, making it less accessible to the public and thereby reducing access for victims of discrimination. According to the government's report to Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the percentage of race based complaints received by the OHRC from 1994 to 1997 ranged between 23% and 26% annually. The government report omitted that, over the same period, the percentage of race based complaints dismissed by OHRC increased from 31% in 1994/1995 to 49% in 1997/1998 (NARCC, 2002). To dismiss claims, OHRC used a *Section 34* of the *Human Rights Code* that gave them the discretion to dismiss a complaint if "the complaint could or should be more appropriately dealt with under another Act," an action consistent with the government's "core business" mandate.

I offer a final example of program dismantling, this one highlighting the effect of budget cuts in education. Funding in education, as described earlier, is a matter of material property (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009). The number of special education teachers was decreased by the Harris Tories in order to meet funding formula targets (Corson, 2002), further disadvantaging this vulnerable group. Interestingly, special education faced similar downsizing during neo-liberal education reforms in other jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom (Apple, 2001). Research by the National Anti-racism Council of Canada (2002) found that reduced school board budgets had tremendous negative effects on a variety of other services available to diverse student populations, particularly with "dramatic cuts" to programs that "primarily affect racialized and Aboriginal learners." They concluded that during the time of the Harris government: "On every front, Ontario has failed to provide and sustain effective education initiatives, public awareness, policies, and activities that would promote acceptance, inclusion and diversity" (NARCC, 2002).

Taken as a whole, these examples illustrate program and budget cuts that failed to serve the interests of Ontarians, and set the province back with respect to previous progress in the areas of anti-racism, race equity and social justice. Through their framing of the "other" as dangerous, and by reducing access to service for racialized and marginalized groups, they contributed to systemic racism and race inequity in numerous areas of public policy. Most importantly, the structural cuts

---

[3] Under the legislation every public sector employer with more then 10 employees and every private sector employer with more then 50 employees had to design and implement a plan that would eliminate barriers to the hiring and promotion of individuals from the designated groups.

were a blatant removal of property through material inequity. When taken together, the colour-blind mentality, fixation on promoting fear of the "other" as a threat to the meritocracy, and blatant inequities in material property shifts served to reinforce white supremacy in the province across all public policy areas.

Curriculum Policy Production Reinforcing Race Inequity

Like the other forms of policy discussed earlier in this paper, education policy is powerful in that it actively contributes to racial inequity (Gillborn, 2005). Race inequity and racism legitimize white supremacy in education policy in several ways. As Gillborn (2005) argues, understanding who drives education policy is crucial to unmasking privilege and supremacy. This section focuses specifically on how the political environment and dominant neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies operated to support white supremacy in Ontario's education policy production during the 1990s.

Clearly, the rhetorical framing and policy changes described in the previous section resulted in problematic policy when viewed through the lens of CRT. However, the approach to curriculum policy development that I describe in this paper further contributed to reinforcing race inequity, and compounds the negative policy outcomes. This is relevant because the curriculum policy produced at that time remains largely in place today, with only minor tweaking even after the election of a new government in 2003. Whose voices and values remain prominent in curriculum policy is dependent upon the policy production process. Indeed, as Newman aptly pointed out,

> A concern with the dynamics of [the] policy process itself, set in the context of contemporary theories of governance, power and the state, is essential for those seeking to analyze and understand what is going on in social policy (Newman, 2002, p. 353).

This section (solely concerned with secondary school curriculum policy production) reveals how policy actors were selected, and how the process of policy production failed to address issues of race and race inequity. These features highlight how colour-blindness, property and white supremacy operated.

As I argued earlier, the Harris government made a point of blatantly removing material property through structure and program cuts in ways that exacerbated race inequity. The government's decision to eliminate the Anti-racism, Equity and Access Branch within the Ministry of Education was the first indication of the political decision to exclude social justice and race from new curriculum policy. Interestingly, not a single interview participant mentioned this important change to the bureaucratic structure at the Ministry. A neo-liberal shift in framing educational issues also occurred, with the introduction of business metaphors: education was a "business" whose "customers" were parents and students. These actions and re-framing set the tone for curriculum policy production. Curriculum policy was part of a larger initiative under the *CSR* that included a new approach to funding, and major changes to policies governing school board organization, curriculum, student assessment, and teacher working conditions. Curriculum policy formulated between 1996 and 2000 resulted in a significant reduction in the number of secondary school courses (from 1400 to approximately 200), more prescriptive and comprehensive learning expectations for each course and subject area in K-12 education, and a standardized structure for assessment. This centralized direction is critical to understanding the process, since it amounted to "marching orders" for those tasked with policy text production, and standardization

mandated by the *CSR* left little room for diverse perspectives and choices through the perpetuation of white property in education policy.

Meritocratic, Colour-Blind Participation Structures

The Harris government continues to be recognized for achieving ambitious policy completion goals in Ontario during the 1990s – in fact, all secondary school curriculum policy was created in a matter of months, with the bulk of writing taking place during the summer of 1999 and for a total cost of $16 million (Auditor General of Ontario, 2003). This was followed by consultations called "feedback sessions" in the autumn of 1999 that allowed invited members of provincial organizations to respond to draft curriculum documents. But this efficiency was not achieved without trade-offs. The Ministry undertook a formal tendering process (referred to as a Request for Proposal or RFP) in January 1999 seeking contractors to write the curriculum policy documents using MERX[4], an electronic database that provides subscriber access to RFPs from the public and private sector. While the cost of submitting a proposal was arguably high,[5] speculation was that remuneration was upwards of $500,000 for the "larger subjects."

Elitism in policy actor selection emerged from the data analysis as an important theme. Participants were eager to discuss the process by which they became involved, and the ways in which writing teams were formed and public consultation participates came to be invited into the process. As the data presented here will illustrate, privilege, colour-blindness and symbolic property operated to limit the opportunities for inclusion in the process to elites.

The social identity of those individuals afforded the opportunity to participate is critical, since if equity is truly a concern, one would expect efforts to be inclusive of marginalized individuals and groups. No record identifying all policy writers or consultation participants exists, making it impossible to categorize participants by race, ethnicity and gender. However, interview responses and Ministry archive records revealed that elitism was evident in the selection both curriculum policy writers and consultation participants. The composition of interview participants and my own experience as a writer in the process suggest a disproportionate number of middle-class, white participants. This is consistent with the over-representation of "high status" citizens typically found in conventional, institutionalized policy-making environments (Glynos, 2003), reinforcing systemic privilege.

Race inequity operated in two ways during the selection process. The first was the RFP process. By contracting through RFPs, the Ministry ensured that organizations (not individuals) with significant resources to compete for lucrative contracts. Embedded in the RFP process was a certain degree of meritocracy in selection – those deemed "qualified" either through the RFP or by those who won contracts were included, thus reinforcing a false meritocracy. Second was the selection of writers to be part of the contracted teams. Most writing team members were approached by someone they knew to participate, exacerbating elitism while reifying privilege as

---

[4] As a private-sector enterprise, owned by Bank of Montreal at the time of this policy formulation process, MERX contributes to government privatization. Revenues from the cost of viewing Ministry proposals went to MERX.

[5] Because the system is subscriber-based, the cost of viewing the RFPs for all thirteen subject areas was over $300.00. The expense, coupled with only several weeks allotted to prepare and submit a proposal, excluded small players from participation in the tendering process. Moreover, bidders had to show evidence of financial resources, including a letter of credit of at least 10% of the contract, plus at least $1 million in general liability insurance.

"a system of favors, courtesies, exchanges, and tacit agreements that enable whites and their friends to get ahead" (Delgado, 2011, p. 1286). Both writers' and consultation participants' accounts of the process confirmed that selection was arbitrary and largely based on "who you know," giving an advantage to elites and insiders. In this way, colour-blindness operated as part of the selection process. At the same time, the symbolic property of association with groups (and friendships with insiders) maintained very strong white supremacy by gate-keeping participation at various levels in the system.

While undoubtedly technical or subject-matter expertise are required for writing teams, a truly anti-racist ideal would require a strong equity component or criteria for selection in addition to a meritocratic criterion of expertise. While, as Ladson-Billings (2003) points out, inclusion is a necessary but not sufficient component to solve the problems of race inequity, this might temper the system of favours that prevailed. Instead, the prominent policy roles were exclusive to high-status elites with adequate connections to groups or professional roles to allow them to participate.

Similar to the tightly-controlled process of writer selection, the Ministry of Education permitted only invited consultation participants to participate in feedback sessions, and they had to represent a "provincial interest" in the eyes of politicians and/or bureaucrats. Bureaucrats interviewed argued that allowing "just anyone" to participate might not represent the provincial interest – though the limited definition appears to exclude those who do not hold positions of power in provincial organizations. However, one might wonder how marginalized individuals and groups could find themselves part of the process. For example, early in the course my research, I spoke to the Director of a local education organization (representing Toronto, and with a particular concern for racial minorities) who expressed frustration in her attempts to participate in consultations. She and her organization were told that they were excluded because they did not represent a provincial focus. As such, a racialized organization, who might have been able to make a sound contribution to disrupting dominant discourses during stakeholder consultations, was shut out. Through this process, the government maintained the practice of passively handing advantages to the privileged (Leondaro, 2004), practicing colour-blindness under the guise of meritocracy.

By hand-picking writers and consultation participants, and holding them to conform to a particular vision of education while expecting them to produce curriculum in extremely short timelines, the government eliminated the possibility of full consideration of divergent perspectives that would address issues of race and equity in the curriculum when coupled with the troubling political stance described earlier in this paper. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of the resulting policy texts with respect to their social justice orientation.

Politicized Process: "The Books Were Already Cooked" For White Supremacy

Politicization was the most prominent theme emerging from the analysis interviews and archival texts. The process of curriculum policy text production was carefully controlled by the political staff, particularly with respect to the perceived need to conform to the *CSR*. When compounded with government's very troubling stance towards race and the evident fear of "other" described earlier in this paper, politicization means that a very discriminatory *CSR* agenda had taken hold of policy production that maintained and even enhanced white supremacy by insisting on a colour-blind approach to policy content.

Most notably, the government was very clear in stating that it was seeking a "value neutral" curriculum. This concept was central to the politicization and to curriculum policy production. Political staffer Will explained,

> We were trying to create an objective a document as possible…In pulling out the values, we worried about being seen to being trying to put in right-centred, small seat conservative whatever, pro-business, anti-whatever, labour values. In one end we were really comfortable in saying you know what, let's not create a diversion to the content by getting into a debate about whether we're right or wrong in the values we decided to support. (Will, political staffer)

James, a stakeholder participation in consultation sessions confirmed this, stating: "In general, the process was the government trying to structure the process where it was rich in knowledge, content and skills, and downplay the affective." He added: "Before you can think critically, you need something to be critical about." Bureaucrat Janelle further elaborated upon the government's position at the time:

> If you look at who the gurus of the day were, there was E.D. Hirsch,[6] with his one thousand things all Americans should know. Remember, he was a hero…That's what they were interested in – a list of what you should know.

Value-neutrality can certainly be alluring in that it suggests one can avoid making choices, thus standing above controversy. In truth, choices that involve values cannot be avoided when constructing a curriculum. It borders on absurd that a government would suggest that learning expectations that identify what is to be taught and learned can avoid values within curriculum policy texts. And yet, the government appeared firm in the idea their decisions about what was "worth knowing" or "most important" could be value-neutral acts. They failed to recognize that policy text content privilege certain knowledge, skills and attitudes, while marginalizing others. Through value-neutrality, the government promoted a form of colour-blind racism that serves to reinforce white supremacy (Ladson-Billings, 1998) by positioning the values, ideas, and cultural meanings of the dominant class. Labelling curriculum "value neutral" is an attempt to position it as indisputable – a position that, as the quotations above suggest, was accepted by many. Moreover, if we consider that curriculum policy is a form of property, value-neutrality implies the sort of dangerous colour-blindness that supports and strengthens white supremacy. The content of policy texts defines the "official" knowledge – that includes whose perspectives are included or excluded in the overt curriculum. This becomes especially powerful when coupled with the hidden curriculum that articulates social locations and social meanings (Ladson-Billings, 2003). When both of these symbolic properties perpetuate white privilege cloaked in neutral colour-blindness, they strongly reinforce the dominance of white supremacy.

In itself, the government coming to the table with these beliefs may not necessarily have been problematic if a democratic process were in place to challenge their understanding and position. That is, the political stance need not be reflected in policy. But, the autocratic, politicized way in which policy production was carried out only served to ensure that their (mis)beliefs

---

[6] This participant was referring to E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s 1987 book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. A full discussion of this book is beyond the scope of this paper, it has been widely criticized for reinforcing white privilege, and taking an overtly deficit view of the 'other.'

prevailed. By holding writers to account as paid contractors (not citizens), the process ensured that the *CSR's* white supremacy through its firm direction of producing it as white property guided the production of a very specific curriculum. Within the process itself, policy writers expressed that they felt like "hired guns," paid to carry out a directive, as opposed to contributors who might have challenged misconceptions. Consider these two accounts, representative of writers' perceptions:

> [The project manager] would say, "Yes, the bottom line is **they're the ones who wrote the contract, they're the ones that hired you and you're just writers**." And that kept coming back, now that I think of it, more and more that you have been hired to write a curriculum, here are the guidelines, do it. We're not here to argue points. We're here to write curriculum, so do it. And if they choose the structure of it, well, that's part of the contract that you sign. Okay, so you're the boss, I'll do what you tell me to do, I'll throw my two cents worth if I can, but ultimately they were writing the cheques. (Hardy, writer)

> Whenever there were problems they hadn't spotted, they would never have a discussion with us. We were always treated as the servants of the process. The people who understood the details – it was like, parent knew best, and they'll tell the children what they decided. They will never have a discussion. We were never treated like adults. Or even people who had more expertise than they did.

> …They would never talk to you directly about anything like that…Then, they would announce to you what their decision was, with no discussion, and no rationale given. Because the Ministry doesn't have to provide rationales for responses. (Robert, writing team project manager)

Beyond writers' politicization, consultation participants observed a similar degree of politicization in stakeholder input:

> They would argue that they were very consultative in the process, but you had the **feeling that the books were already cooked on this one**. And it was simply going through the motions to a large degree… The government had, I think, announced and signalled where it wanted to go, and it was just a question of getting the ship turned in that direction. (Curtis, consultation participant)

> If they shared the philosophy, then that got in there. if they really didn't like it, it didn't get in there. (Alison, consultation participant)

These interviewees' accounts illustrate how a highly politicized process driven by the elected officials led to a particular sort of curriculum that was simply not subject to democratic deliberation or input from citizens or even stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, deliberation and inclusion are not a panacea for addressing such problems, as argued by Ladson-Billings (2003). Moreover, the potential lack of race awareness of those involved in policy production may not have addressed issues of race inequity had their been any dialogue. However, the possibility of any unmasking of the subtle agenda was fully eliminated given the features of the process.

Thus, when lack of dialogue was coupled with a highly politicized process that demanded colour-blindness disguised as value neutrality, the government's agenda was fulfilled without any sort of questioning or disruption. The result was a process that ignored issues of race and race inequity, thus reinforcing privilege and contributing further to the dominance of white property.

Together, these reinforced supremacy. In the next section, I will examine participants' perceptions of the policy texts that were produced in light of CRT.

Resulting Secondary School Curriculum Policy Texts: Value Neutrality Reinforcing White Property And Supremacy

Within CRT, the "official" curriculum is viewed as "a culturally specific artefact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). Not surprisingly, the policy production process just described led to policy texts that, in the views of interviewees, silenced multiple voices and perspectives, and legitimized the white, middle-class perspective by focusing purely on colour-blind homogenization. Curriculum policy reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society. Thus, a just curriculum production process would address the task of replacing mainstream knowledge with transformative knowledge that addresses issues of race and race inequity. Of course, a shift to transformative knowledge would pose a serious threat to the dominant power structures operating. In this section, I summarize participants' views on curriculum policy texts generated. While a content analysis of the texts is warranted, it is far beyond the scope of this paper. Participants' perceptions offer a glimpse of how those directly involved in policy production viewed the relationship between the process and the outcomes, with attention to issues of inequity. The responses described here are limited to the voices of participants, and the absence of meaningful dialogue on issues of race are especially significant.

When asked about the role of presence of equity and social justice in curriculum policy texts, two bureaucrats described how subsequent revisions to the curriculum (under the Liberal government who took office in 2003) are much different, and address equity and diversity, but they avoided specifically commenting on the policy documents central to this research. Several writers and consultation participants described their perceptions about an absence of equity, diversity and social justice in greater detail than bureaucrats. One particular consultation participant was very aware of and concerned with such issues, and provided some context:

> …if you take a look at where issues around equity and diversity were within programs. Initially, again, we had come through a period with the previous government, with the NDP, where these were considered key policy pieces, and therefore were in all of the documentation. There were content pieces that were completely left out when these policy documents were generated, simply because you know they were considered to be ideological positions, and this government decided, 'No, we're not going to go there.'

> I'm thinking so much about what they did with anti-racist education. Really, it was meant, initially, to be woven into the entire operation of secondary schools. Well, what they did was simply to take that out and put it into the front of the document as a standardized paragraph that would accompany all of the policy documents. It was their way of saying, well, look, we've got it in our policy documents, but the reality is, you didn't teach to that any longer.

> …I felt, and I think others have shared this with you, there was a very concerted effort on the part of the government to not allow the issues around, as I say, equity, issues around peace education, issues that had to do with class and gender to be part of the programming. So what you ended up with in a lot of the policy

documents is, again, knowledge and skills were very clearly defined, but all of those other peoples seem to have been left on the cutting room floor, so to speak. (Curtis, consultation participant)

Several curriculum policy writers echoed this participant's perceptions about the shift from equity to equality, thus excluding race from the curriculum policy. Two additional writers from different teams observed:

Equality and equity is not on treating everybody the same, it's treating everybody the way that they need to be treated to get to the same place. And that was clearly not part of this curriculum. It's like they thought that every child in the schools was like their children. (Scott, writer)

…a curriculum that was really focused primarily on skills that would help them become employable. I don't deny that that's a critical role for schools to play, but it seemed that…there was an imbalance. (Justin, writer)

How much of a diverse picture did we have? I and a couple of my colleagues who were looking at things from a more international perspective – for example, I was involved in Africa during the writing – I was quite happy. We had in mind that we should be looking the Arts not purely in a Euro-centric, white, classical way. We had the idea that we should be incorporating popular culture. (Drew, writer)

As these quotations illustrate, policy writers' perceptions revealed, at times, a perfunctory understanding of how privilege, race and racism operate, and a general consensus about the absence of any sort of social justice oriented policy. Bureaucrat Erica deflected directly answering questions about the degree to which the curriculum policy texts addressed issues of social justice and race. Rather, when asked, she focused on subsequent revisions, "You'll find, when you get to the new revisions [made under the current government], there will be more explicit things about anti-racism."

Clearly, race equity and social justice were not priorities in the politics of public policy during the 1990s, and appear to have been excluded in favour of a standardized, skills-focused curriculum that reflects a neo-liberal vision of the education process designed to reinforce white supremacy. Granted, there is no guarantee that what is stated in policy texts is actually taught (perhaps a blessing in disguise). Though some evidence suggests that Ontario's accountability structure and focus on students meeting stated curriculum outcomes leads to this happening.[7] However, I leave such investigation for another project as it is well beyond the scope of this paper.

---

[7] Some researchers (for example, Berkhout & Weilmans, 1999; Raab, 1994) illustrate how teacher agency, subversion and resistance can lead to different interpretations of "official" policy and texts in classrooms. Education policy texts that do not appear to challenge white supremacist structures or promote race equity could be enacted in a way that would if teachers have the freedom to interpret them. However, features of broader educational policies in Ontario prevent this type of professional autonomy. In particular, under the rationale for greater accountability, teachers are often subject to forms of surveillance designed to ensure compliance. Anecdotal reports from teachers suggest that some school administrators require teachers to present evidence that they meet all curriculum policy expectations in courses they teach, including how each one is assessed and/or evaluated. Concern over student literacy outcomes requires educators to be accountable for literacy strategies in schools at the expense of equity (see, example, Gillborn, 2005). Together, teacher-monitoring processes, accountabilities, prescriptive and standardized curriculum policy and related accountability structures limit educator autonomy (Wrigley, 2003).

The political mandate to eliminate anti-racism and social justice curriculum policy content, while not discussed by interview participants, did not go entirely unnoticed in the public sphere. In fact, the issue was debated in the Legislative Assembly on October 7, 1998 when NDP opposition Member Howard Hampton questioned the Minister of Education on the issue of curriculum deletions, based on a memorandum:

> Mr. Hampton: Minister, can you tell us why, then, you have directed the curriculum project managers to change the grade 9 and 10 curriculum policy documents by deleting "education about discrimination and anti-discrimination," deleting "education about native people," and deleting "education about violence prevention"? Why have you instructed that these things should be deleted from the curriculum?

> Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education): I made no such instruction.

> Mr. Hampton: … This is a Ministry of Education and Training memorandum to project managers of curriculum from Karen Allan regarding program planning. It says: Part 1: Delete cross-curricular considerations - education with respect to anti-racism; education with respect to anti-discrimination - delete violence prevention; delete education about native people. Why would one of your officials be sending out this kind of directive to the people who are working on the curriculum? Minister, don't you think these things are important in our high school curriculum? Don't you think these things ought to be addressed? The last time I checked, this city is one of the most multicultural cities in the world. The last time I checked, some of these issues are very serious. Why are you deleting them?

> …Minister, you can try to spin a good line. This is the reality of your government: You disbanded the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch soon after you became the government, you held back the release of an anti-hate guidebook for teachers and principals that was drafted for you by B'Nai Brith, then you send out this September 14 memo saying that all these other things are going to be deleted from the curriculum. Now you're trying to say it will somehow be added on.

> These are important issues. You don't sort of add them on to the curriculum. They aren't extras that you put in at the end. These are issues that have to be integrated into the classroom on a daily basis by teachers. (House Hansard, 23 April 1997)

This exchange in the Legislative Assembly was consistent with participants' accounts of the process. What is particularly interesting is that, though the RFPs for writers required that team composition included anti-discrimination and Aboriginal perspectives, ultimately the political powers quashed the inclusion of social justice issues that might address racism and disrupt white supremacy through politicized directives. The structure of the policy process, as well as the elitist approach to inclusion reinforced white privilege, particularly through the deletion of contributions tied to "token" inclusion, and therefore systemically diminished the possibility of social justice and anti-racism as priorities in curriculum policy while simultaneously failing to address the fear of the 'other' operating in the province. Instead, the focus became colour-blindness to simply reinforce white supremacy. Policy actors' perceptions confirmed that these issues remain absent in the remnants of the Harris-era curriculum policy that are in place today.

Discussion: The Influence Of Process On Reinforcing White Supremacy In The Curriculum

Overt attention to race and racism must be present in curriculum policy and educational practice, and must include attention to these issues in curriculum policy texts. Critical to understanding struggles over meaning, identity, and the power, especially in government, is an acknowledgement of how privilege and racism operate (Apple, 1999, 2001; Gillborn, 2005). In other words, racism's power lies in its invisibility.

Colour-Blindness

Colour-blindness through value-neutrality was an important political mandate in both curriculum production, as well as in the overall neo-liberal and neo-conservative political ideology that drove the education reforms studied here. The absence of race equity in the curriculum does not come as a surprise, particularly the recurrent research finding that white respondents do not consider their 'whiteness' as an identity marker (Hurtado & Stewart, 2004). This sort of colour-blindness worked in the Ontario government's favour. Because it is not problematic, most white research subjects are unable to define whiteness and the privilege that it brings, and thus, it becomes a non-issue when crafting policy texts. The fact that those who drafted the *CSR* were white may have contributed to the absence of the recognition of racism in overall issue definition, political framing, and policy priorities (see, for example, López, 2003). Of course, this was exacerbated by the overt directives from government to keep race and equity issues out of the curriculum, a directive challenged in the Legislature, and one that participants interviewed perceived was followed. But, by keeping issues of race and race inequity out, the political powers quietly yet very forcefully perpetuated dominance and supremacy by silencing counter-discourses.

Material and Symbolic Property

By emphasizing other educational aims (such as student achievement under a guise of neutrality) at the expense of social justice in policy texts, politicians, policy actors, and teachers excused themselves from confronting issues of race. Generally speaking, pride in beliefs about colour-blindness appear pervasive, with a strong personal investment in seeing "people as people" rather than in relation as the "other" (Rivella et al., 2004, p. 292). This sort of thinking shifts racism to a personal level, and thus ignores broader systemic factors that contribute to a "sociological web of power" (López, 2003, p. 69). Moreover, compelling evidence suggest that Canadians generally know very little about racism (Solomon & Daniel, 2007), underscoring the continued importance of anti-racism education as a necessary (but not sufficient) part of a socially just ideal.

Despite the material and symbolic property gains made in Ontario during the early 1990s in anti-racist education (e.g., the formation of the Anti-racism Secretariat and its ministerial counterparts), perceptions of mounting resistance to anti-racist education were present at the time of the reforms. Parents, teachers, and others complained at the perceived negative connotations of the term "anti-racism," suggesting it ought to be called "anti-bias" education (Carrington & Bonnett, 1997) that alludes to how uncomfortable some Ontarians are with the concept of racism.[8]

---

[8] Carrington & Bonnett (1997, p. 419) also describe how the term "multicultural education" is used in the province, and appears to be more palatable to many, though it is considered "a dirty word in progressive circles."

As Ladson-Billings (1998) observed, for some, CRT has no place in a "nice" field like education that is too majoritarian and conservative to accept the radical challenge (Gillborn, 2005). This was evident in both the direction laid out by the government in their rhetorical positioning of the *CSR* and instructions to writers, as well as in policy writers' perceptions described here. This speaks to how racism continues to function as a powerful force within the broader education system and reinforces white supremacy. To overcome systemic white supremacy, sweeping changes structures, processes and overt curriculum are necessary – the very structures and curriculum policy content that the government so quickly dismantled, and the very sort of policy text content deliberately left out. All of these represent property, as I argued throughout this paper, and each must be critically interrogated and reformed if there is any hope of moving towards race equity.

White Supremacy

Colour-blindness and whiteness as property were prominent in Ontario's political ideology and policy production process during the 1990s. These features came together through a highly politicized and elitist policy production process in ways that reinforced white supremacy in education policy. While this is certainly not the first nor the only instance of white supremacy in education policy (see, for example, Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009), this paper offered unique insight into how the inner-workings of policy production served to reinforce supremacy. Politicization by the government ensured that contracted policy writers carried out their unjust ideological agenda. Elitism in policy actor selection contributed to policy actors who were more likely to be privileged, and therefore possibly more accepting colour-blindness and meritocratic beliefs about policy production and education. The result was purportedly value-neutral curriculum policy documents that bolstered white supremacy.

Conclusion

David Gillborn observed that in the UK, "race equity has to constantly fight for legitimacy as a significant topic for education policy makers" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 493). The same appears to hold true in Ontario. This paper revealed how education policies were built upon the edifices of white domination through colour-blind and meritocratic inclusion in policy production and political bullying to create a so-called value neutral curriculum that maintained white property in education texts. Together, the features of policy production contributed to the architecture of white supremacy.

The tumultuous and volatile period of Ontario's political history described in this paper was characterized by an unprecedented acceptance of neo-liberal and neoconservative reforms. The prevailing government employed a number of tools, including use of the media and advertising to quickly enact a number of their *CSR* campaign promise while promoting colour-blindness, fear of the "other," and white property. These divisive consequences eliminated the possibility for race equity in public policy to flourish. While the government accomplished tremendous changes to public policy, both the aggressive political processes they employed and the content of the policies themselves failed to address social justice and equity. Indeed, as I argued, government ideology, language, program cuts, and procedural changes contributed to material property being (re)placed in the hands of whites, thus strengthening the architecture of white supremacy. The Harris government's withdrawal from anti-racist initiatives resulted in its functioning as a racist government. Indeed,

The dismantling of progressive policies and programs is an abdication of the leadership necessary in a complex, multicultural society. Just as the government's images have moved us toward fear and resistance, anti-racist images could have led us in the opposite direction (Trickey, 1997, p. 119).

This paper shed light on how racism was embedded in the neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies that shaped educational policy in the 1990se. Many of the same tendencies that manifested themselves during the timeframe studied remain operative despite a change in government, obstructing more just policy production and outcomes. By calling attention to these problems, this paper "raises challenges to the culture script we have been asked to accept" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 120) in terms of policy production and curriculum policy. Because so little has changed since the timeframe studied, interrogation of how the policies currently in place came to be and how we might go about radically reforming policy production processes remains timely.

I illustrated how the *CSR* as an ideological basis and its ensuing social policies functioned as racist. While racism cut across many policy areas, it was particularly evident in curriculum policy through deliberate omission. The Progressive-Conservative government in power at the time was well aware of concerns about these issues, as evidenced by the exchange in the House of Commons relayed in this paper, and through the comments from policy writers. Despite this attention to the issue, the government resisted addressing it and remained true to their neo-liberal electoral platform. The defeat of the Progressive-Conservatives by the Liberal Party led in 2003 ended the *CSR*. Under new political leadership, neither the Anti-racism Secretariat, nor its counterpart at the Ministry of Education, have been restored. To date, no evidence of any significant movement towards more socially just education policy has occurred,[9] suggesting that the dismantling of these important initiatives may have marked the end of progressive policy in Ontario. The Progressive-Conservative government managed to simultaneously keep issues of difference both invisible and visible. On one hand, race was visible in the rhetorical framing of issues within the *CSR* that positioned the "other" as a dangerous threat to white privilege and domination; but on the other hand, was deliberately kept invisible in policy texts – and especially curriculum policy – under the auspices of an allegedly "neutral" curriculum.

A politicized process such as this one, relying on contracted and invited elites to create value neutral policy texts, effectively shuts down any possibility for social justice to emerge when it is not part of the government's priorities. As a result, and despite some attempts by writers, the resulting curriculum policy texts for Ontario secondary schools lacked any meaningful attempts to address race and racism, underscoring the enduring impact of this policy process over decade later. This legacy of the *CSR* continues to contribute to systemic racism across all public policy areas, but particularly in schools, where equitable policy is most needed if we hope to overcome structural and symbolic constraints that perpetuate systemic oppression and lead to white supremacy.

---

[9] While I acknowledge in 2009 the Ministry of Education released two documents: *Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools* and *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines For Policy Development and Implementation*. Analysis of these new documents are beyond the scope of this paper, some data suggests that these documents are superficial, and were developed without ample inclusion of those who are most affected by them (Segeren, 2011), perpetuating the problematic policy production process highlighted in this paper.

This investigation also raises additional questions about curriculum policy production that warrant future investigation. Some areas recommended for future research include:

- Comparative study of policy production processes in other jurisdictions and at different points in time in Ontario in order to document structural inequities and identify strategies to overcome them.

- Extensive policy text analysis applying CRT methods to investigate the relationship between the policy production process described here, and the outcomes as they relate to racialized and marginalized groups.

- Investigation about how teachers enact, accept and resist the curriculum policy texts studied, with emphasis on how they address race and race inequity in light of policy text content.

- Investigation about how students experience curriculum policy in classrooms through the application of CRT methods in order to understand their personal narrative accounts.

Only through continued investigation how race operates in public policy production will we be able to disrupt problematic and unjust methods of production that perpetuate white supremacy in policy texts. By applying CRT to understanding policy text production, we create "a radical space of possibility" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 117) to both critique existing structures and processes, and to search for new cultural scripts that can be applied to combat race inequity.

References

Apple, M. W. (1999). The absent presence of race in educational reform. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 2*(1) 9-16.

Apple, M. W. (2001). *Educating the 'right' way: Markets, standards, god and inequality*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Apple, M. W. (2004). Creating difference: Neo-liberalism and neo-conservatives and the politics of educational reform. *Educational Policy, 18*(1), 12-44.

Apple, M. W. (2005). Education, markets, and an audit culture. *Critical Quarterly, 47*(1-2), 11–29.

Auditor General of Ontario. (2003). 2003 annual report of the office of the provincial auditor of Ontario. Retrieved http: //www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_en/en03/305en03.pdf

Bedard, G. J., & Lawton, S. B. (2000). The struggle for power and control: shifting policy-making models and the Harris agenda for education in Ontario. *Canadian Public Administration, 43* (3), 241-269.

Blizzard, C. (1995). *How the Tories took Ontario*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Carr, P. R. (2006). Social Justice and whiteness in education: Color-blind policymaking and racism. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies, 4*(2). Retrieved http://www.jceps.com/?pageID=article&articleID=77

Carr, P. R., & Thésée, G. (2007). Educational institutions negotiating democracy and social justice: The (im)balance of power and accountability. *Canadian and International Education, 36* (3), 32-45.

Carrington, B. & Bonnett, A. (1997). The other Canadian 'mosaic' – 'race' equity education in Ontario and British Columbia. *Comparative Education, 33*(3), 411-431.

Corson, D. (2002). Teaching and learning for market-place utility. *International Journal of Leadership Education, 5* (1), 1-13.

Common Sense Revolution. (1994). Retrieved http://www.ontariopc.com/feature/csr/csr_text.htm

Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cross, B. E. (2005). New racism, reformed teacher education, and the same ole' oppression. *Educational Studies, 38*(3). 263-274

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York: New York University Press.

Delgado, R. (2011).Rodrigo's reconsideration: Intersectionality and the future of critical race theory. *Iowa Law Review, 96*, 1247-1288.

Dua, E., & Robertson, A. (1999). *Scratching the surface*. London: Women's Press.

Duncan, G. A. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: Narrative, inequality and the problem of epistemology. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 93-114.

Dyer, R. (1997). *White*. London: Routledge.

Fleury, S. C. (2005). Social studies for an empire: Thoughts on where did social studies go wrong? *The Social Studies, 96*(4), 163-170.

Gandin, L. A. (2002). Democratizing access, governance, and knowledge: The struggle for educational alternatives in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Doctoral dissertation. The University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Gillborn, D. (2005). Education policy as an act of white supremacy: Whiteness, critical race theory and education reform. *Journal of Education Policy, 20*(4), 485-505.

Glynos, J. (2003). Radical democratic ethos, or what is an authentic political act? *Contemporary Political Theory, 2*, 187-208.

Harney, S. (2002). State work: Public administration and mass intellectuality. Durham: Duke University Press.

Heck, R. H. (2004). Studying educational and social policy: Theoretical concepts and research methods. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hill, D. (2003). Global neo-liberalism, the deformation of education and resistance. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies 1*(1). Retrieved http://www.jceps.com/?pageID=article&articleID=7

House Hansard. (1997, 23 April). Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Retrieved http://hansardindex.ontla.on.ca/hansardeissue/36-1/l179.htm

Hucker, J. (1997). Antidiscrimination laws in Canada: Human rights commissions and the search for equality. *Human Rights Quarterly, 19* (3), 547-571.

Hurtado A., & Stewart, A.J.. (2004). Through the looking glass: Implications of studying whiteness for feminist methods. In L. Weis, L.P. Pruitt & A. Burns (Eds.), *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, 2nd Ed, pp. 313-330. New York: Routledge.

Jackman, M. (2006). Canadian Charter equality at twenty: Reflections of a card-carrying member of the court party. *Policy Options, 27*(1), 72-77.

Keil, R. (2002). 'Common-sense' neoliberalism: Progressive-Conservative urbanism in Toronto, Canada. *Antipode, 34,* 578-601.

Kozolanka, K. (2007). The power of persuasion: The politics of the new right in Ontario. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory, and what's it doing in a 'nice' field like education? *Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). Critical race theory perspectives on the social studies: The profession, policies, and curriculum. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). Race *still* matters: Critical race theory in education. In Apple, M.W., Au, W. & Gandin, L.A. (Eds.). *The Routledge international handbook of critical education* (pp. 110-122). New York: Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47–64.

Leonardo, Z. (2004). The color of supremacy: Beyond the discourse of 'white privilege.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 36*(2), 137-152.

Levin, B. (1999). Class and equity in a new era of education policy. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 47*(3), 313-316.

Locke, J. (2006). Obstruction in the legislature: The struggle for power between the government and the opposition. Paper presented at the Canadian Political Science Association Annual Conference, 2 June 2006.

López, G. R. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(1), 68-94.

Loxley, A. & Thomas, G. (2001). Neo-conservatives, neo-liberals, the new left and inclusion: stirring the pot. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 31*(3), 291 – 301.

Lugg, C.A. (1998). Political kitsch and education policy. Paper presented at AERA, San Diego, 13 April 1998.

Marginson, S. (2006). Engaging democratic education in the neoliberal age. *Educational Theory, 56*(2), 205-219.

National Antiracism Council Of Canada (NARCC). (2002). Racial discrimination in Canada: The Status of Compliance by the Canadian Government with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Retrieved http://www.narcc.ca

Newman, J. (2002). Putting the 'policy' back into social policy. *Social Policy and Society, 1*(4), 347-354.

Olssen, M. (1996). In defense of the welfare state and of publicly provided education. *Journal of Education Policy, 11*(3), 337-362.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1993). On the theoretical concept and the status of race. In McCarthy, C & Apple, M.W. (Eds.) *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, pp. 2-10. New York: Routledge.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s. New York: Routledge.

Patton, M. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Reddick, R.N. (2004). History, myth, and the politics of educational reform. *Educational Theory, 54*(1), 73-87.

Revilla, A. T., Wells, A. S., & Holme, J. J. (2004). 'We didn't see color': The salience of colorblindness in desegregated schools. In L. Weis, L.P. Pruitt & A. Burns (Eds), *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, (2nd Ed, pp. 284-301). New York: Routledge.

Rezai-Rashti, G. M. (2003). Equity education and educational restructuring in Ontario: global and local policy and practice. *World Studies in Education, 4*(1), 29-44.

Segeren, A. (2011). Twenty Years and Counting: An Examination of the Development of Equity and Inclusive Education Policy in Ontario (1990-2010). Master of Education Dissertation. Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

Shudak, N. J., & Helfenbein, R. J. (2005). Contradicting the contrarians: The rhetoric of the neoconservative right in social studies education. *The Social Studies, 96*(4), 149-156.

Simpson, J. L. (2008). The color-blind double bind: Whiteness and the (im)possibility of dialogue. *Communication Theory, 18*, 139-159.

Srivastava, P. (2009). A practical iterative framework for qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 76-84.

Solomon, R. P., & Daniel, B. J. (2007). Discourses on race and 'White privilege' in the next generation of teachers. In Carr, P. & Lund, D. (Eds). *The Great White North? Exploring Whiteness, privilege and identity in education* (pp. 161-172). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Tarca, K. (2005). Colorblind in control: The risks of resisting difference amid demographic change. *Educational Studies, 38*(2), 99-119.

Thornton, M. D. (2008). Please get emotional: Conservative campaign strategy and the power of emotion in the 1995 Ontario election. Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, June 6, 2008, Vancouver, BC. Retrieved http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2008/Thornton.pdf

Trickey, J. (1997). The racist face of 'common sense.' In D. Ralph, A. Regimbald & N. St.-Amand, Eds. *Open for business, closed to people*, (pp. 113-121). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Wacquant, L. (2009) Punishing the poor: The neoliberal government of social insecurity. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Werner, W. (1991). Curriculum and uncertainty. In R. Ghosh, R. & D. Ray (Eds.). *Social change and education in Canada* (2nd Ed., pp. 105-113). Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

White, G. (1997). The legislature: Central symbol of Ontario democracy. In G. White (Ed.) *The government and politics of Ontario* (5th Ed., pp. 71-92). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

White, R. (1998). *Ontario since 1985*. Toronto: East End Books.

Winant, H. (2004). Behind blue eyes: Whiteness and contemporary US racial politics. In L. Weis, L.P. Pruitt & A. Burns (Eds), *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, (2nd Ed, pp. 3-16). New York: Routledge.

Wrigley, T. (2003). Is 'school effectiveness' anti-democratic? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *51* (*2*), 89-112.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Young, J. & Levin, B. (1999). The origins of educational reform: A comparative perspective. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 12*. Retrieved http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles on

Author

LAURA ELIZABETH PINTO is Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, Niagara University and Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Critical Education

criticaleducation.org

ISSN 1920-4175