

# Homonormativity, Charternormativity, and Processes of Legitimation: Exploring the Affective-Spatio-Temporal-Fixed Dimensions of Marriage Equality and Charter Schools

Mark Stern<sup>1</sup>

Department of Educational Studies, Colgate University

## Abstract

*Over the past five years, marriage equality and charter schools have emerged at the forefront of political conversations about equality and rights. Some argue that these policies extend access to certain benefits and opportunities to historically oppressed communities, thus furthering liberalism and egalitarianism. In this article, I engage these arguments by exploring how and why people from dominant cultures come to support marriage equality or charter schools despite not directly benefitting from these policy initiatives. Drawing upon queer theory and critical education policy studies, I utilize two terms—homonormativity and charternormativity—to describe how public arguments supporting marriage equality and charter schools elevate particular identities and normative behaviors for gay people and people of color. I theorize these similarities to reveal a process of policy legitimation that I call the affective-spatio-temporal-fixed—a concept that provides insight into why and how some policies that claim to promote increased equity gain traction in the neoliberal present whereas others do not.*

*Keywords:* charter schools, education policy, marriage equality, queer theory, neoliberalism

Two years before the decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), which made it illegal to deny same-sex couples the right to marry in the United States, the Supreme Court ruled to make access to the federal benefits of marriage a bit fairer. In *United States v. Hodges* (2013), the Court declared that nontraditional couples should be treated like other legally recognized couples in states with laws extending marriage recognition.<sup>2</sup> In particular,

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Mark Stern, Ph.D., Colgate University, 13 Oak Drive, Hamilton, NY 13346. Email: [mstern@colgate.edu](mailto:mstern@colgate.edu). I would very much like to thank the editorial team (especially Laura Hernández) and the blind reviewers for insightful and critical feedback that made this paper much more focused and just plain better. My colleagues, Barbara Regenspan and Anna Rios Rojas, and my students, Kristi Carey, Melissa Meléndez, Natasha Torres, and Sarah Wooton, all read an early draft of this paper and helped me think through points both big and little.

<sup>2</sup> I use “marriage recognition” instead of “marriage equality,” “same-sex marriage,” or “gay marriage” in most places in this paper. Though used frequently in mainstream press and popular nomenclature, I refrain from using the latter terms for particular reasons. I avoid using the phrase “marriage equality” to reserve the term “equality” to mean something beyond formal recognition under the law, which does not ensure that LGBTQ persons will be treated equally under the law or in society at large (e.g., Spade, 2011; Vaid, 2012). I refrain from using the latter two because they are neither inclusive nor descriptive of the variety of gender

historically non-normative (LGB<sup>3</sup>) couples that would make vows to each other could be included in the marital order, obtaining the federal benefits that traditionally normative (i.e., heterosexual, cisgendered) couples had. A liberal narrative about modernity would view these developments as progress: the state's long history of physical, economic, structural, and symbolic violence directed at LGB bodies had been undone. The state had progressed and become more egalitarian in ensuring a citizen's individual liberties, recognizing non-normative couples both *with* and *within* its legal order.

While some celebrated the LGB community's newly established rights, others rallied support for other historically disenfranchised groups who did not fare as well in Court decisions handed down in the summer of 2013. In the days just prior to the decision on marriage recognition, the Court struck down protections established to guarantee the voting rights of all citizens, deeming their place in law no longer necessary as racism was a thing of the past (Menand, 2013). The Court also decreed that colleges must demonstrate "good faith" in admitting a Black or Latino student over a white student in the name of diversity, leaving the criteria by which minorities have their educational rights ensured nebulous and ignoring the continued legacy of structural discrimination (Rothstein, 2013). Thus, while some LGB folks were being introduced into state protection, Blacks, Latinos, and other racial minorities were being displaced and excluded with minimal public outcry. When taken together, the rulings enfranchised *some* and disenfranchised *many*. As one queer theorist put it on social media, "No voting equality, lots of marriage equality...wow, what a surprise! Welcome bourgeois gays and lesbians and screw already disenfranchised communities. You have got to love the law!" (cited in Cohen, 2013, para. 21).

These contrasting decisions resulted in what Reddy (2011) calls freedom with violence—the ability to advance both disenfranchisement and enfranchisement and exclusion and inclusion for citizens depending on the particular issues at hand and the social identities involved. These contrasting decisions and their resulting tensions are what interest me in this paper. Albeit different in kind, each of the cases heard by the Court were about inclusion and rights—to marry, to vote, and to secure higher education. Why did marriage recognition "win" while voting rights and affirmative action "lose"? While legal experts could undoubtedly describe the differences in legal strategy and approach, I am interested in exploring how and why certain policies, which make recourse to equality, prevail or get legitimated in the public sphere, particularly among individuals who would not obviously benefit from the respective policy. With an eye toward the effects of structural racism, classism, and neoliberal dogma, I consider how certain policies tap into cultural, political, and affective ideologies that enable them to gain traction and become legitimized by those indirectly affected.

The two issues and processes of legitimation I consider in this essay are marriage recognition and charter school reform. Specifically, I explore the following questions:

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and sexualities identities (e.g. transgendered persons, those identifying in ways other than gay). In contrast, the term "recognition" most closely signifies that a law has incorporated more people under its legal protection.

<sup>3</sup> I frequently omit the T, Q, and I of LGBTQI because my argument is that marriage recognition is reserved for those who deviate least from traditional gender norms.

- What do charter schools and marriage recognition have in common as policies?
- What similarities do the policies have in terms of the processes through which they have gained support?
- What kinds of violence emerge alongside the particular kinds of freedoms these policies engender?

While the issues may appear disconnected, the two policies have garnered much media attention over the past five years, making an exploration of how they are legitimated in the public sphere relevant. Furthermore, in my experiences, these are among the most prevalent institutional policies that self-identifying liberals from dominant social positions support, despite having little impact on their own lives. I often see this support in the classes I teach at a small liberal arts school in Central New York. In my LGBTQ studies classes, when I talk about access to health care, immigration reform, or transgender discrimination, my students frequently respond with comments concerning marriage equality. In my educational studies classes, my students respond with comments about charter schools when we discuss hidden curriculum, racist zoning practices, and reproductive schooling. Of all the responses that could be a part of students' political imaginaries, marriage and charter schools rise to the liberal apex in contemporary debate about structural violence, inclusion, equality, and justice.

To allow similarities and differences between the two cases to come into focus, I present a theoretical argument in the form of a curated exhibit—curated particularly for those from dominant cultures who do not benefit from the policies directly. Each section of this paper is designed to function as a gallery wall for the reader to observe and consider on its own and in relation to the other sections. On the first wall, I provide historical and theoretical background to suggest why marriage and charter schools should be thought of together as neoliberal policies. On the second and third walls, I present critical readings of the ways that marriage and charter schools have been sold to the dominant culture for policy legitimation. Both of these walls are anchored around themes of normativity—*homonormativity* and *charternormativity*—and how the construction of marginalized groups in the context of marriage recognition and charter schools conforms to dominant habits, desires, and performances. Throughout these analyses, I utilize an analytical framework that I call the *affective-spatio-temporal-fixed* to consider the ways in which the dominant culture might read the performance of normativity and how it facilitates policy legitimation.<sup>4</sup> I synthesize the affective, spatial, temporal, and fixed dimensions of the two movements on the final wall of the exhibit, suggesting how these dimensions facilitate support from those least directly affected by the policies.

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<sup>4</sup> This term is derived from Harvey's (2003) notion of *spatio-temporal-fix*, which refers to the "solutions to capitalist crises through temporal deferment and geographical expansions" (p. 115). As the term was generated in the context of scholarship exploring political economy, it describes how capitalism seeks out new markets, cheaper inputs/labor (i.e., places, resources, and people), and more efficient modes of production to cope with endemic crises (Lipman, 2011; Saltman, 2007). Rather than using the term to refer to processes exclusively pertaining to political economy, I expand the term to explore the political economy of policy legitimation.

This paper uses the insights of queer theory, queer of color theory, and critical race theory to illuminate how charter schools are performed and legitimated in the public imaginary. The comparative analysis with marriage recognition extends the critical policy scholarship on charter schools by examining the movement from a unique theoretical perspective.<sup>5</sup> Critical pedagogues and critical geographers, often advancing neo-Marxist critiques, have generated much of the research interrogating charter schools (Lipman, 2004, 2011; Saltman 2007, 2010). While providing key insights on charters as a kind of neoliberal formation, these critiques must be complemented by scholarship employing different methodological and theoretical perspectives to highlight the complexity surrounding this neoliberal project<sup>6</sup> and to expose the manner in which it has gained social and political currency from diverse communities.

### Wall 1: 3 Frames

The first wall provides a historical and theoretical justification for thinking about marriage and education alongside each other. Using three categories—poverty, the Civil Rights Movement, and the logic of neoliberalism—I show that marriage and education are connected policy issues because they are both constructed as antipoverty strategies and as the continued work of the Civil Rights Movement, while reflecting neoliberal emphases on the private sphere. Through this connective analysis, I also introduce and describe how affective, spatial, temporal, and fixed dimensions of policies may be considered when examining how and why certain policies gain public legitimation.

### Wars on Poverty

On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson's (LBJ) State of the Union where he introduced the War on Poverty, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) gave a speech titled "Income Mobility and the American Dream" (2014). While he initially acknowledged the government's responsibility to address the impact of outsourcing on our economy and the growing economic stratification it created, Rubio quickly shifted gears in framing the economic woes of Americans. He stated, "The truth is that the greatest tool to lift people, to lift children and families from poverty, is one that decreases the probability of child poverty by 82 percent. But it *isn't* [emphasis added] a government program. It's called marriage" (cited in Jacobson, 2014). Rubio went on to recite a litany of questionable statistics about the relationship between poverty and single-parent households, making several tropes with historical and racial resonance audible. His logic was as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> I have written elsewhere about the importance of utilizing different disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives to examine charter schools and contemporary education policy (Stern, 2012; Stern & Hussain, 2015). This approach expands the conversation by finding different ways to respond to our political moment and by creating new spaces for solidarity between various political movements.

<sup>6</sup> Sedgwick's (2003) argument regarding the overuse of certain strands of critical theory provides additional support for the need to utilize various theoretical and methodological tools. She argues that some overused concepts and tools have "impoverished the gene pool" of critical tools and that "the trouble with a shallow gene pool... is its diminished ability to respond to environmental (e.g., political) change" (p. 144).

- 1) Poor people have more children out of wedlock.
- 2) Having children out of wedlock leads to single-parent homes.
- 3) Children who grow up in single-parent homes are more likely to grow up in poverty.
- 4) Therefore, these children are more likely to be adults living in poverty.

Echoing the central tenets of what Moynihan termed “the tangle of pathology” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1965), Rubio’s rhetoric places the subtly racialized family structure at the epicenter of thinking about poverty.

About halfway through the speech, Rubio seamlessly shifted from talking about marriage to talking about education. He stated:

There is an interesting impediment to marriage that is worth keeping in mind...64 percent of adults with a college degree are married, but only 47 percent with a high school education or less are married. Education is contributing to inequality in other ways as well—the jobs that are replacing the jobs of the past pay more, but require a higher level of professional, technical, and management skills...Children from low-income families [i.e., unmarried] are the least likely to get this education. And the result is this vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. (Rubio, 2014)

In these comments, Rubio omits any notions of structural life, failing to locate poverty in a social or historical context marked by slavery, racism, white supremacy, political economy, and mass incarceration, among other things. Instead, the tautology he offered was this:

- 1) People who don’t get married are poor and therefore have poor kids.
- 2) Poor kids get a bad education.
- 3) Kids who get a bad education both don’t get married and end up poor because they don’t get a good education and because they don’t get married.
- 4) They don’t get married because they are uneducated and, among other things, poor.
- 5) They have kids raised in poor single-parent households.

*Ad infinitum.*

What is curious about this narrative in Rubio’s speech is that, besides its questionable logic and lack of empirical research (Williams, 2014), his argument appears to work because of the ways that marriage and education have been positioned in the American imaginary. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, marriage and education in the United States have been presented as two of the most effective ways to fight poverty at the same time as discourses and imagery of poverty in the United States have become nonwhite. From LBJ’s “Educational” War on Poverty (Wells, 2009) to President Clinton’s Personal Responsibility and Work Act of 1996 (Kelley, 1997; Whitehead, 2011) to President Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Stern, 2013), programs that support and fund marriage and education have gained traction by being framed through antipoverty rationalities. Eschewing more structural and historical questions around

racism and classism, discourses around the “American Dream” operate from a position that suggests that people could marry or learn their way out of poverty, especially in regard to communities of color.<sup>7</sup> Marriage and education are framed as bootstraps that people can pull in order to get themselves out of poverty.

### Civil Rights

Beyond their invocations in antipoverty discussions, marriage and charter schools should be read together because of the way that these policy issues have been framed in political debate over the past five years. As scholars have demonstrated, many supporting these reforms have framed marriage recognition and charter school expansion as the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement (Farrow, 2010; Jones, 2010). Because the discursive message requires the audience to position itself either on the side of marriage equality and charter schools or against Dr. King,<sup>8</sup> advocates are able to legitimate their cause and claim moral superiority.

Regardless of whether the filial claims regarding the Civil Rights Movement are justified, they serve an important purpose by tapping into what I call an *affective* legitimating function. Contemporary literature on affect provides insight into the relationship between feelings and politics (Ahmed, 2004; Berlant, 2008; Butler, 2004; Cvetkovich, 2012). For example, in *The Cultural Power of Emotions*, Ahmed (2004) describes emotions as “sticky signs” that do the labor of signification. That is, they represent the flow of signification, or the channels through which the manifestation of histories and politics create and shape interactions and stances. These intimate feelings call attention to ideals, histories, nationalisms, and humanness and are thus affective artifacts that circulate and perform intimate acts on the body, especially around ideas of injustice. For example, Butler’s (2004) argument about how photography and public obituaries that traded on sentimental identification with American identity and the nation-state in the weeks following 9/11 were used to gain consent for military operations post-9/11 provides for one kind of material example of this process. One might argue, then, that the cultural and historical intimacies constructed and translated through marriage and education (e.g., about love and about children) have been conspicuously tethered to Dr. King as a means for public consumption. In more psychoanalytic terms, others become

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<sup>7</sup> As Nielson (cited in Smith, 2007) wrote, “Reminiscent of the ideas of Booker T. Washington, it is commonly believed that the most fruitful way to solve the problems of the blacks is to open educational opportunities to them; by climbing the rungs of the educational and occupational ladder, they will eventually achieve full economic, political, and social equality within the system. Moreover, once educational opportunities have been opened, the primary responsibility for his advancement rests upon the black man—on his own ambition, determination, and effort” (p. 7).

<sup>8</sup> See the first book by Wendy Kopp, the former CEO of Teach For America, entitled *One Day, All Children: The Unlikely Triumph of Teach For America and What I Learned Along the Way* (2003) as an example. The title very literally evokes Dr. King’s legacy and speeches. Though the book is not about charters per se, many align the policies and politics of Teach For America with the charter movement (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014). Moreover, in terms of marriage recognition, the very popular song “Same Love” serves as an example (Haggerty, Lewis, & Lambert, 2012). Macklemore raps, “Gender to skin color, the complexion of your pigment/The same fight that led people to walk outs and sit ins/It’s human rights for everybody, there is no difference.”

deserving of inclusion, marriage, or better schools only when sentimental identification is given moral clearance by, perhaps, the only Black superego figure that can afflict guilt onto or into whiteness.

*Others*, here, needs to be more defined. Not all others are deserving of affective or policy inclusion. Deserving inclusion and equality is predicated on certain normative identities, for only certain performances are constructed as acceptable and translate into affective identification and support. Discourses of tolerance, which suggest that tolerated people deserve some access to political inclusion, must be understood as a channel of governmentality that regulates and disciplines certain bodies and identities (Brown, 2006). It is not only that there exists a power dynamic between the tolerant and the tolerated, but also that a culture of disciplining and tolerance *fixes* what kinds of identities feel the benevolence of acceptance and which are disciplined and regulated. In this sense, claims about what people *should be able to do* have less to do with expanding rights and more about reifying dominance and power. In order for a policy to gain affective support, those who might benefit must be shown to be fixing themselves to the norms that remain palatable to the dominant culture. One can belong so long as one adheres to an identity that seeks to mimic dominant norms. These constructions tap into one's affect and serve a legitimating, albeit narcissistic, function: *the other I see asking for equality isn't me, but they want what I have, they want to be like me, which must mean that I'm desirable, which makes me feel good.*

In the context of this analysis, when I ask how marriage recognition and charter schools have garnered legitimacy, I consider how they are performed culturally and what these performances say to and about their intended audience. Puar (2007) captures this phenomenon: "This benevolence toward [some] sexual others [as recognized and tolerated within the liberal state] is contingent upon ever narrowing parameters of white racial privilege, consumption capabilities, gender and kinship normativity, and bodily integrity" (p. xii). In other words, in the act of benevolence, which I use synonymously with legitimation, we see the dominant culture accepting and reifying itself through the disciplined body of the other.

Through this lens, only those who adhere to the performance of otherness as dictated by the culture of power deserve benevolence. This, I argue, means that affective support through sentimental attachment is contingent on a Fixed identity (i.e., whiteness, heterosexism, middle-class sensibilities). In this process, the *temporal* register, or the dialectical balance between others' broken pasts and their futures predicated on normative identities, is also activated. Whereas the dominant culture imagines others' pasts to be ugly, unruly, and broken, those in power also deem possible a hopeful future for those same individuals so long as bodies and minds fall into acceptable, disciplined, or fixed regimentation. In other words, it is not only that Dr. King would support the policy, but also that the dominant culture sees a future for others that is fashioned in the image of itself in supporting the policy.

### **Marriage and Charters as Neoliberal Spaces**

A final reason that marriage and charter schools should be read together has to do with how tolerance and deservedness get *spatially* mapped on to neoliberal logic (Duggan, 2003; Lipman, 2011). Within neoliberal governance, discourses of liberty,

choice, and freedom function to locate responsibility for dealing with social issues in a *private* space rather than a *public* one. Rather than asserting the state's moral responsibility to provide for its citizens, neoliberal ideology holds that the state's primary responsibility is to ensure that people can make their own private choices in the marketplace. In this logic, individuals have the "freedom" to provide for themselves, or to become an "entrepreneur of himself...being for himself his own producer" (Foucault, 2008, p. 226). The state claims to ensure that there are no legal impediments preventing one from privately accessing the market because it is constructed as a nondiscriminatory space precisely because one has options. Even if some providers are discriminatory or cost-exclusive, someone will provide some semblance of service because there is a demand for it. Within this neoliberal logic, if someone doesn't have a job, health care, or a good education, it is her own fault. The neoliberal state, in turn, veils the way that power and discrimination work today through constructing itself as egalitarian—that everyone is treated equally as they have equal rights and access (Spade, 2011). By passing services and decision-making into the private sphere, the state mitigates fiscal risk and creates an alibi for continuing structural violence.

Spade (2011) argues that this shift in the spatial landscape of decision making and politics, undergirded by the affective registers of freedom and choice, "obscure[s] systemic inequalities and turn[s] social movements toward goals of inclusion and incorporation and away from demands for redistribution and structural transformation" (p. 50). As described below, marriage and education, both laying claim to a reservoir of affective capital in their unique manner, have quickly become sites of appeal where the affective-spatio-temporal-fixed processes played a part in policy legitimation.

### **Wall 2: Marriage Recognition**

On this wall, I present a brief critical history of the contemporary gay rights and marriage movement. Framed through the lens of homonormativity, or the degree to which queer lives have had to adhere to normative values, bodies, and family structures to find public legitimation and acceptance, this wall focuses on the representation of queer assimilation and what the acceptance of marriage recognition tells us about racial and class hegemony in the United States.

#### **The Radical Roots of Queer Movements**

Scholar-activist Yasmin Nair (2010) provides this slightly reductive history to contextualize the emergent popularization of marriage equality:

The history of gay marriage supposedly goes something like this: In the beginning, gay people were horribly oppressed. Then came the 1970s, where gays—all of whom looked like the men of The Village People—were able to live openly and have lots of sex. Then, in the 1980s, many gay people died of AIDS—because they had too much sex in the 1970s. This taught them that gay sex is bad. The gays who were left realized the importance of stable, monogamous relationships and began to agitate for marriage and the 1000+ benefits it would bring. (p. 1)

However tongue-in-cheek Nair's condensed history may be, it provides a foundation from which to explore the history of gay marriage. In order to begin thinking about legitimation of the contemporary gay rights movement,<sup>9</sup> which has fought passionately and persuasively for marriage recognition, we should trace the history from which the movement emerged.

In many narratives, the beginning of the contemporary gay rights movement is traced back to the Stonewall Inn, when, on June 28, 1969, patrons fought back against police raids. What is usually left out of this narrative is that Stonewall was a predominately Black and Latino hangout (Marinucci, 2010). Moreover, the folks who led the Stonewall rebellion and the rebellion at San Francisco's City Hall were not just predominately Black and Latino, but also "drag queens and butches who rejected heterosexual roles and restrictions [and] were inspired by the revolutionary example of the Black Panthers and the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell" (Kate & Deeg, 2010, p. 35). Queen (2008) characterized early activists in a similar way, stating that they were more likely to join "Faggots Against Fascism [rather than the U.S.] Army" (p. 107). The fact that early activists were racialized radicals who resisted gender normative constructions is largely omitted from popular narratives about the gay rights movement. As a result of their intersectional identities, many experienced American oppression and second-class citizenship and had strong critiques of U.S. imperialism at home and abroad. They were not just gay white men or women who would have been able to fit in if people just accepted them for being gay. As Donald Suggs suggests, "The drag queens who started Stonewall are no better off today, but they made the world safe for gay Republicans. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but the people who make change are not the people who benefit from it" (cited in Schulman, 2012, p. 115).

How do we get from radical queers fighting cops and critiquing American geopolitics to the Supreme Court's libertarian-infused opinions advancing marriage equality? It is a complicated story that has many overlapping factors: the AIDS genocide of the 1980s; the precarity of the rights of gay parents; hate crimes and violence engendered by conservative family values campaigns; and the neoliberal state's offering of private, domestic freedoms as a tradeoff for retreating state responsibilities for social welfare (Duggan, 2003; Halberstam 2012; Schulman, 2012; Seidman, 2002; Spade, 2011; Whitehead, 2011; Youmans, 2011). The confluence of these factors was strategically complemented by a public performance of assimilationist representation. There was a push "to [distill] positive image[s] of gay men and lesbians, which [were] then sent forth to change the hearts and minds of both straight people and closeted gay people" (Youmans, 2011, p. 23). Duggan (2003) notes how these more liberal or "acceptable" factions of the gay mainstream advanced their politics:

[They used] a double-voiced address to an imagined gay public, on the one hand, and to the national mainstream constructed by neoliberalism on the other... through a rhetorical remapping of public/private boundaries designed to shrink

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<sup>9</sup> I use "gay rights movement" here instead of LGBTQ rights or queer politics because, as Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore (2012) suggests, "'LGBT' usually means gay, with lesbian in parenthesis, throw out the bisexuals, and put trans on for a little window dressing" (p. 21).

gay public spheres, and redefine gay equality against the “civil rights agenda” and “liberationism,” as access to the institutions of domestic privacy, the “free” market, and patriotism. (p. 50–51)

### **Homonormativity**

This assimilationist, representational process served two purposes: to provide gay citizens with access and control over their private and domestic spaces and to quell the straight population’s worry about having “dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions” contested (Duggan, 2003, p. 50). In doing so, this strategy of assimilationist politics upheld and sustained heteronormative assumptions and institutions. This double movement—rights and access to the private sphere while leaving institutions that created the conditions for slavery, oppression, and heterosexism unchallenged—is what Duggan (2003) describes as homonormativity and Sycamore dubs “the violence of assimilation” (cited in Ruiz, 2008, p. 237). I argue that homonormativity also calls out the fixed identity—the performance of which might be legitimated by the dominant culture if the performed identities are those that the dominant culture can tolerate because they reflect dominant values and behaviors and can be recognized in certain legal spheres.

The move toward tolerance and legitimation required a public relations campaign to offset the historical weight of the many ways in which homosexuality had been discursively construed as abject, wrong, immoral, or bad—or what Seidman (2002) refers to as the “polluted homosexual.” He writes, “[B]y the 1970s, there was a world of television, movies, and news media that had a very clear message: homosexuals are child molesters, predators, and gender and sexual deviants” (p. 123). A pre-AIDS discourse about homosexuality echoed cultural wars rhetoric that viewed “perverts” as “destroying, undermining, and rotting the foundations of society” (Delany, 1999, p. 185). For a generation coming of age after WWII, “homosexuality and prostitution represented...the untrammelled pursuit of pleasure [which] was the opposite of social responsibility” (Delany, 1999, p. 185).

### **Word is Out**

Under this social stigma, it is no surprise that, in 1977, *Word Is Out*, as it were, came out. As a performative and pedagogical push to counter prevailing stereotypes, the final cut of the documentary was comprised of 26 interviews with gay men and lesbians. While some scholars provide more nuanced interpretations of the film,<sup>10</sup> it is difficult to position the final edited version outside of the liberal assimilationist project. Youmans (2011) explains, “The film was designed so that it would not scare off either closeted gay people or phobic straight people, and for this reason it articulates coming out as a largely nondisruptive act for both self and society” (p. 105–106). The film was generally careful

<sup>10</sup> Youmans’ (2011) insightful book on the film provides a nuanced analysis and resists the urge to position the film within liberal assimilation. He wrote, “When the film premiered, most reviewers in the mainstream press praised it. Review in the gay activist press and in leftist film journals tended to be more critical. To generalize, these reviews often involved gay film critics saying that they were deeply moved by the film but disturbed by its soft-pedaling of sex and politics and its assimilationist ideological position. *I like to picture these critics railing against the film’s agenda with tears in their eyes* [emphasis added]” (p. 26).

about who it represented and how, opting to include mostly “positive” images and recognizable individuals or responsible couples who adhered to and deserved the conditions of the social contract and national citizenship. “*Word Is Out*,” Youmans argued, “is at pains to construct a community of individuals, and it does so by presenting an illusion of civic participation and national community...[a] collective portrait of good, rights-worthy subjects” (p. 91–92). Most of the more hetero-threatening interviewees were left in the archive, hidden, in a sense, in a different type of closet.

Examining the documentary within a larger paradigm of tolerance, one could question the title, *Word Is Out*: What, exactly, is *out* in this film? What might it mean to think of the film as a kind of artifact that allows us to understand the kinds of representations of gay life that were palatable for a mostly white, middle-class, straight audience? The performance of homonormativity in the film tells us much more about the politics of the audience than that of the interviewees or filmmakers.

### **Gay Pasts and Futures**

Though representations have evolved, liberal assimilationist depictions, or what Seidman (2002) has termed the “normal gay,” remain. From *Philadelphia* to *The Kids Are Alright*, most positive gay and lesbian media representations portray gay individuals as something between affable and benign comic relief to the up-and-coming petite bourgeoisie. Mostly white and middle to upper-middle class, the normal gay desires a mostly white and mostly middle to upper-middle class life. This marks a shift in the direction of gay temporality. Of the success of “queer incorporation...and social recognition,” Puar (2007) notes, “homosexual bodies have been historically understood as endlessly cathected to death [and] there is a transition underway in how queer subjects are relating to nation-states, particularly in the United States, from being figures of death (i.e., the AIDS epidemic) to becoming tied to ideas of life and productivity (i.e., gay marriage and families)” (p. xii). Now, the futurity of gay life not only seems possible but also looks much like the temporality of white, middle-class, straight futures, with family and reproduction as foundational platitudes. These fixed gay and lesbian identities are being incorporated and recognized as part of a protected national population who will gain the moral and material capital associated with marriage.

And this, of course, is the rub. In order to acquire the benefits of marriage and the freedom of choices promised within the neoliberal state, one needs to marry. Therefore, at the same time that the state disciplines the process of recognition, it also redraws the line as to who remains outside of cultivation, who is or is not tolerated, and who deserves citizenship. In this sense, marriage can be seen as a “coercive state structure that perpetuates racism [e.g., Black families are poor because they can’t stay married, not because of racism] and sexism through forced gender and family norms” (Spade & Willse, 2010, p. 20). It dissipates pressure from a powerful minority group by including those “responsible” and “worthy” enough to become part of the national family rather than engage in radical transformation. This kind of policy provides the means through which the state transfers historical, social, and political issues into the private, domestic sphere.

Spatiality should be noted in the process of legitimation surrounding marriage recognition. The plea for marriage recognition has been represented in public discourse

as a question: Will you let us have access to the same private rights you have if we promise to act like you in public? In this sense, what the dominant culture consents to or tolerates is the provision of “virtual equality,” or the allocation of legal and formal private rights without a transformation of how institutions and society “repress, denigrate, and immobilize...minorities” (Vaid, 2012, p. 3). Legal rights are imperative; however, here they function to suggest that the historical and public issues of discrimination faced by the queer community can be righted through private means. There is no burden or accusation put on the straight, heterosexist community for the ways that heteronormative privilege is contingent on violence and oppression. In addition, no attention is given to the cultural and intersectional means by which queer lives experience radical precarity and vulnerability. Marriage recognition as equality, then, is not about social justice since it deals very little with the social. If it is about social justice for anyone, it may be better understood as reifying social justice for the dominant culture—those who are moved affectively, spatially, and temporally by the fixed identities performed by homonormativity.<sup>11</sup>

This is why it is hard to suggest that “Gay is the New Black” as a 2008 cover story of the *Advocate* did, making direct reference to the Civil Rights Movement (Gross, 2008). Where are race and class in the conversation about marriage? Where are the critiques of racialized capitalism and imperial war that were prevalent in the voices of Dr. King and early gay rights advocates? While there are radical differences in the history of racism and heterosexism in the United States and radically different ways in which these systems have oppressed and violated groups of people (Farrow, 2010; Johnson & Henderson, 2005; Vaid, 2012), oppression still functions along intersectional lines. No matter what happens with marriage recognition in this country, a Black person will still be a Black person in a racist America. Like other white populations before them, “normal gays” may be assimilated as white to reinforce privileges associated with white supremacy (Ferguson, 2005). No amount of homonormativity can deracialize Black and Brown bodies from the racial logics of U.S. imperialism and capitalism. Yet, by using the Black activism of the Civil Rights Movement as symbolic capital without explicitly being on the side of antiracism coalitions, gay rights movements have alienated and exploited communities of color and even displaced them through gentrification (Nero, 2005). Much of the current gay rights movement has shifted toward the preservation and promotion of “class and race privilege of a small number of elite gay and lesbian professionals while marginalizing or overtly excluding the needs and experiences of people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, indigenous people, trans people, and poor people” (Spade, 2011, p. 65). In this sense, the gay rights movement is not a coalition movement, but has become a special interest movement reifying dominant cultural norms. As Ryan Conrad (2010) eloquently states:

Let’s be clear: the national gay marriage campaign is NOT a social justice movement. Gay marriage reinforces the for-profit medical industrial complex by

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<sup>11</sup> I am not suggesting that one should not support marriage equality. If the state is going to recognize and provide benefits contingent on relationships between two people, discriminating based on sex and gender, like race before it, is illegal, violent, and discriminatory.

tying access to health care to employment and relational status. Gay marriage does not challenge patent laws that keep poor/working class poz [HIV positive] folks from accessing life-extending medication...Gay marriage does not challenge economic systems set up to champion people over property and profit. Gay marriage reinforces racist immigration laws by only allowing productive, “good”, soon-to-be-wed, non-citizens in while ignoring the rights of migrant workers. Gay marriage simply has nothing to do with social justice.<sup>12</sup> (p. 45)

### **Wall 3: Charter Schools**

In this section, I first present a critical history of the emergence of charter schools and how corporate-backed reformers have co-opted the once progressive movement to advance neoliberal education policies. Using the concept of charternormativity, I argue that charter schools have been sold to the dominant culture and subsequently legitimated through discourses and images that depict “tolerated” Black and Brown students. In particular, minority students become tolerated as their depictions adhere to racist and classist ideas of what education should provide for poor and racialized communities.

#### **Word is Out, Also**

As marriage recognition has gained traction, education policies that comprise what critics call *corporate school reform* have also risen to prominence. While this corporate educational platform includes a variety of policies such as high-stakes testing, merit pay, vouchers, school turnarounds, and alternative certification programs (e.g., Teach For America), charter schools are among the most visible and lauded reforms to emerge from this market-oriented sector. How might we think of the construction of charter schools in the public sphere in regard to the narratives provided on the other walls?

Unlike the queer Black and Latino communities that rioted against police in the early days of the gay rights movement, the history of charter schools does not begin with radical teachers and activists fighting for a revolutionary restructuring of public education. In contrast, charter schools have a progressive pedigree, not a radical one.<sup>13</sup> Under the guidance of Albert Shanker, then president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), progressive educators started charters schools to create “small, engaging, educational settings within low-income communities where children of color

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<sup>12</sup> In addition, Reddy (2011) has claimed, “From this perspective, gay marriage is little more than the theft of collective history, the usurpation by elite and middle-class homosexuals of the material conditions and expressions of homophobic violence of poor, racialized, immigrant and diasporic communities of color” (p. 212).

<sup>13</sup> Saltman (2012) distinguishes between radicals and progressives, or critical pedagogues and liberals, in two ways. First, there is little, if any, analysis among people like Diane Ravitch (2010) or Linda Darling-Hammond (2010)—who Saltman argues are progressive liberals—about the role of capital and capitalism in the corporate schooling agenda. Though both bemoan the effects of billionaires undemocratically pushing policy initiatives, the means by which billionaires obtained that money (i.e., through capitalist modes of production and exploitation) never come into question. Second, they fail to call into question the cultural or political side of curriculum. Whereas both Ravitch and Darling-Hammond critique the effects that standardized testing has had on curriculum, neither theorizes the politics of knowledge. Conversely, radical or critical pedagogues take economic, material, symbolic, and cultural into consideration in their critiques.

and immigrants could be educated well, cared for, and nurtured academically with intent” (Fabricant & Fine, 2012, p. 2). Early charters, which were few and far between, were generally teacher-run and had community involvement and support. Generally, the public was unaware of these new institutions. Instead, the public was attuned to vouchers and standardized testing, policies that received more media attention in the aftermath of *A Nation At Risk* and the Reagan administration’s attempts to position vouchers as empowerment tools for the poor (Molnar, 1999). Despite the attention on vouchers, the American public was wary of allowing public money to travel into the private sector, and subsequently, most voucher programs failed to gain popular consent (Henig, 2008). What vouchers needed, like the “polluted homosexual,” was a public relations makeover to convince the public that they were “responsible” policies worthy of support.

Enter No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and charter schools. Charter schools are, in a sense, the family-friendly, public-private version of vouchers that emerged as a policy compromise between more ardent voucher supporters from the political Right and various Left-leaning stakeholders (Wells, Grutzik, Carnochan, Slayton, & Vasudeva, 1999). Though some are greatly subsidized by the private sector, charters are publicly financed and privately operated schools that, theoretically, allow parents some choice in where to send their children. Through NCLB, charters were co-opted as a means to facilitate neoliberal transformation of the educational sector (Duménil and Lévy, 2013; McRuer, 2012). The state and big business appropriated the progressive impulses of charter advocates to legitimate their propagation on a grander scale.<sup>14</sup> Under NCLB, many schools educating poor and working-class communities of color were labeled as “failing” because of low standardized test performance. The punitive principles of NCLB allowed for the state to takeover public schools that were failing for five years or in many instances, allowed these schools to be converted into charters. During this time, the number of charters proliferated. Federal grants like Investing in Innovation (i3) and Race to the Top, highly publicized research circulated by think tanks suggesting that charters outperform public schools, and popular media depictions with docu-dramas like *Waiting for ‘Superman’*, *The Lottery*, and *Won’t Back Down* facilitated charter growth and popularization. In turn, charter schools became what vouchers never could in the public imaginary: Institutions that facilitated the privatization and deregulation of public education under the veneer of social justice (e.g., Henig, 2008; Kovacs & Christie, 2008; Lipman, 2011; Lubienski, 2001; Saltman, 2010). Though there is a robust body of research suggesting that charters perform no better than their public school counterparts (Raymond, 2009; Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Saltman, 2012) and engage in selective enrollment processes (Heilig, Williams, McNeil, & Lee, 2011; Stern, Clonan, Jaffee, & Lee, 2014), the discourse of charters as *better* schooling institutions is one that has found cultural relevance.

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<sup>14</sup> Around this time, corporate-like, networked charters began to proliferate. Though I center my critique around these larger charter chains, I recognize that locally-controlled and democratically operated charter schools that engage students in critical thinking and liberatory education and serve students with dis/Abilities maintained a presence in the charter landscape. Therefore, I understand how and why charters receive support from a diverse set of stakeholders including families, students, teachers, and communities (Pedroni, 2006).

### **Charternormativity**

How might we read the current acceptance and legitimacy of charter schools vis-à-vis *Will and Grace*, *Queer Eye For the Straight Guy*, or the “normal gay”? Is there a similar process we might trace to understand the ways that charters have gained legitimacy within the dominant culture? If the argument about marriage is that tolerance from dominant cultural communities is contingent on certain homonormative performances, what kinds of performances by poor, minority families would beget tolerance for “choice” and the “right” to enter into certain educational institutions? Furthermore, if the numbers do not support advocates’ claims of the success of charter schools, how else might we think about what “better” means in the white, dominant cultural imaginary?

One way to examine this phenomenon is through the lens of what I call charternormativity. Thinking alongside Duggan’s (2003) notion of homonormativity, charternormativity engages in a double-voiced address to communities of color and dominant communities. On the one hand, the rhetoric around charter schools promises communities of color private decision-making power and access to better educational institutions for their children. On the other hand, there is an important, embedded message to the dominant community suggesting that its support for charter schools benefits communities of color in a manner that does not contest normative assumptions or the reproductive structures of public schooling. Instead, charternormativity aligns itself with the ethos of neoliberalism and situates equality in allowing for private choice in a society ripe with unaddressed structural violence. Moreover, the degree to which the dominant culture supports this push for equality is predicated on assimilationist values. In a charternormative climate, what is considered “better” for communities of color gets defined through the ways that white America thinks Black and Brown students and families should behave in regard to education and life. The more closely behaviors and goals mirror dominant cultural practices, the more deserving Black and Brown bodies are to better schools and choices.

Media representations of corporate charter schools highlight the concept of charternormativity. Popular depictions of charter schools, such as those in *Waiting for ‘Superman’* or on MSNBC’s *Education Nation*, differ greatly from media representations of urban public schools in films like *Lean On Me* or recent *The American Life* episodes on Harper High School in Chicago. Traditionally, media representations of urban high schools trade in the economy of *Black guilt* or “a form of thought in which Black innocence is deemed a site of impossibility” (Yancy & Jones, 2013, p. 22).<sup>15</sup> For example, writing about the role of Black guilt in the narratives surrounding Trayvon Martin’s murder, Vanessa Wills (2013) argues that Black guilt is the “form of thought that erases the possibility of innocent Black persons, so that any Black person and

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<sup>15</sup> This theme has also been explored and discussed in other spaces outside of academic scholarship. For example, Chris Rock riffed on this notion early in his comedic career. In a 1998 routine, he said: “I was *born* a suspect. Came out my mother’s stomach; anything that happened in a three-block radius, I was a suspect! white America is so scared of Black teenagers. I walk down the streets, women are grabbing hold of their Mace, everybody’s tucking in their chains, people are hitting their car doors, people get into karate stances. I look up in the air, there’s a bunch of old white ladies on the phone—they’ll dial nine-one and just *wait* for me to do something” (cited in Sanneh, 2014).

especially any Black man is read as an imminent threat, and furthermore, ultimately bears the responsibility for whatever harm might befall him at the hands of another” (p. 227). Media representations of racialized students have taken different forms over the years: Black males are portrayed as savage, violent, and thuggish (Ferguson, 2001; Giroux, 1998) while Black females are depicted as hypersexualized jezebels with a future of dependency, single motherhood, and welfare queen-dom (Collins, 2000; Kelley, 1997). In applying Puar’s (2007) argument about queer temporality, we might say that one could understand the traditional representations of students of color in media as depicting minorities as endlessly cathected to death—as having no future outside of prison or poverty. Moreover, this deathly future comes as a kind of deservingness. Because racialized students are always and already guilty, they deserve anything that occurs to them.

In contrast, depictions of students and parents in media supporting the charter cause are a radical departure from traditional characterizations of minority students and the sense of temporality traditional depictions convey. Like representations of the “normal gay” who desires a normal life and inclusion into the normative order, we might say that representations like those in *Waiting for ‘Superman’* play on the racial, unconscious registers of white America through the portrayal of the responsible “normal person of color”—not aggressive, not absentee, not lazy, not a parasite to the public. Think here, for example, of how Bianca’s mother Nakia was represented in *Waiting for ‘Superman.’* Portrayed as if she were an anomaly, we are introduced to this hard-working single mother in Harlem who pays \$500 a month to send her child to a parochial school instead of the local public school. For financial and educational reasons, she wants to send her daughter to a charter school, particularly after the financial hardships she has faced after first being laid off and later having her hours reduced. Without questioning an economic system characterized by job insecurity for the most vulnerable, the film portrays Nakia as unwavering from her commitment to ensuring her daughter gets a good education and goes to college. These are the kinds of parents that deserve charter schools, and this is why charter school students and parents are portrayed as deserving of a certain kind of life and future. In this case, the private spatial sphere—the more privatized and separate school environment—provides that future only upon the condition that white normativity is maintained. Charter schools can educate Black or Brown students, but they must do so in a way that adheres to a regulated and normative life for racial minorities in white supremacist America.

Life, then, in the *chartersphere*, is contingent on the terms set forth or fixed by the dominant culture. Black and Brown students in charter school representations conform and perform the fixed identities that are tolerated, accepted, and reflective of the dominant culture. The corporate charter schools that do the work of legitimation in most media representations are *not* independent Black schools—schools owned, run, and controlled by Black communities in resistance to the missionary education offered by

white aid organizations (Bush, 2004; Watkins, 2001).<sup>16</sup> En masse, they do not represent counterhegemonic institutions or what Rofes (2004) calls *subaltern counterpublics*. Instead, corporate charter schools recapitulate a history of white-owned and controlled educational institutions for students of color who behave well (Buras, 2014; Scott & DiMartino, 2010).

We might then think of charters in a colonial sense as chartered schools—spaces where *some* choice and freedom are granted, contingent on an agreement with the king or state. Charters-as-disciplinary institutions represent chance and opportunity for students and families of color insofar as life is defined by and through a middle-class, white perspective.<sup>17</sup> Students of color are only deserving of the attention and capital they receive through charters when they commit to the “American way”—either a life as part of a perpetual underclass whose bodies and minds generate surplus capital for white America or individuated college success and preparation for the global marketplace.<sup>18</sup> Students and families become deserving of inclusion only when those in power control their trajectories. Opposition to the normative and racist grounds through which their own oppression has been cast is mostly silenced (Scott, 2011).

### **Just Like You**

Depictions of students and families attending charter schools reflect a new type of temporal relationship with life for poor, racialized families and work to shift the contours of equality and rights within the educational sphere. These representations reflect a forward-looking, hopeful temporality for marginalized families, but this future and the right to private choice are legitimated on a redemptive narrative that emanates from the logic of Black guilt. Discourse about charters within mainstream media operates in the public as a kind of confessional space—*we’re not like those Black or Brown kids in the movies and public schools. We work hard and just want the same for our kids as you want for yours*. These redemptive narratives do not challenge the logic of Black guilt but rather bolster its claims. Public narratives about charter schools do not question the

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<sup>16</sup> There are a few exceptions of grassroots charter schools that use their autonomy to engage in critical and liberatory educational practices. However, as a movement backed by Wall Street money, these are exceptions to the rule.

<sup>17</sup> Examples of this can be found quite easily through blog searches on the Internet. KIPP is referred to as the “Kids In Prison Program” for the various forms of both corporeal and corporal punishment it enforces on its students—and they are not the only charter to be accused of this (Schools Matter, 2012). Students report having to always be engaged in what is called SLANT: “Sit straight. Listen. Ask a question. Nod your head. Track. Track is, if the teacher is going that way you have to...follow...If you don’t do that, they’ll yell at you” (Schools Matter, 2012). Failure to engage in these behaviors results in demerits. If students build up demerits, they can be asked to leave.

<sup>18</sup> As Khuram Hussain and I (2015) have argued elsewhere, charter schools fulfill two models of schooling—imperial and colonial. Paperson (2010) differentiates between the two, suggesting that “[i]mperial education is training for inclusion into the metropole, which stands in contrast to colonial schooling, a form of management of populations in the ghetto” (p. 24). Imperial education is a type of education that foregrounds white-standard English and reinforces the normative values of everyday life. Colonial education is a kind of schooling that produces surplus populations and a perpetual underclass or caste. These notions suggest the hidden curriculum of charter schools may function to groom poor students of color to desire normative, white, middle-class life without the tools to think critically and participate in its transformation.

structures of white supremacy, the conditions under which racism flourishes, or the prevalence of negative characterizations of minorities. Instead, the narratives create an exceptional kind of racialized subject, one within the optics of white supremacy. Further, this exceptionality is predicated on a performance of normativity, which, in turn, taps into the dominant culture's affect and makes them feel good and unafraid. Poor Black and Brown students do have a chance so long as they are willing to be fixed.

By highlighting how normative identities must be evoked to gain legitimacy in public discourse, charternormativity calls attention to the ways that charter school representations operate within the white imaginary. The concept also sheds doubt on the ability of charter schools to "finish" the work of the Civil Rights Movement. It is unlikely that Dr. King would have fought for an educational system where rote testing and learning dominates, where discipline and behaviorist mentalities are the norm and where the white-owned, private sector makes money off of the backs of poor Black and Brown communities. Like marriage recognition, charter schools offer a window into thinking about whose pleas for equality are heard, how they are framed, and to whom they are directed in the public arena.

Homonormativity and charternormativity, then, show us how the affective registers of love and education can be used to create a veil of inclusion and freedom while furthering the logics of violence (e.g. Black guilt, queer irresponsibility) that marriage recognition and charters schools are purporting to be undoing. It is not pure exclusion (i.e., "You can't do what we do."), but instead conditional acceptance (i.e. "You can but only if you do as we say."). Instead of focusing on the sedimented and interconnected flows and drives of racism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia, patriarchy, nationalism, and ableism, education and marriage function as an affective veil through which ideological discourses travel. Performed in ways legible and acceptable to the dominant culture, narratives about marriage and education generate a ground swell of support that is necessary to legitimate policy. If considering the lack of outrage or backlash against the decimation of the Voting Rights Act and the continued destruction of affirmative action policies, might it be the case that those recourses to equality were not performed with the affective push and normative scripting that characterized the marriage and charter movements?

### **Mirror in the Bathroom: Affective-spatio-temporal-fixed**

A long trip through the metaphoric gallery needs a final stop in the bathroom before one exits. In this quick reprieve and final section of the essay, I consider what the arguments made above might mean in this slightly more private space, particularly in front of the mirror that hangs on its wall. In conversation with the English Beat ska song "Mirror in the Bathroom" (Cox, Charlery, Morton, Steele, Wakeling, 1980), I briefly recapitulate the arguments made above and then provide a few speculative remarks about policy legitimation.

**Mirror in the bathroom please talk free/  
The door is locked just you and me/  
Can I take you to a restaurant that's got glass tables/  
You can watch yourself while you are eating/**

In this paper, I argue that in order to “win” in the public and perhaps legal sphere, the equality advanced by marriage recognition and charter school advocates required a particular performance of identity by disenfranchised groups—a performance that enabled the dominant culture to deem individuals deserving of equality. In these instances, being deserving or acceptable was discursively constructed through visual, rhetorical, and ideological projections whereby *others* adhered to normative identities reflective of the hegemonic desires of whiteness, of heterosexism, and of a classed value system. These performances—which constitute something like what Giroux (2004) calls a public pedagogy—sediment and become a part of a neoliberal ecology through which recourse to equality are communicated and, in the realm of the political and social, find legitimation. I have suggested that we might think of this process and ecology as having affective, spatial, temporal, and fixed qualities.

This ecology has an affective dimension for the dominant culture. As the kinds of identities being performed are fashioned in their image, the ecology suggests to the dominant culture that their behaviors and goals are desirable, making those in dominant positions feel good about themselves and thus moved to support the respective reform. This ecology has a spatial dimension, as it frames equality as being something that can be gained through the provision of private rights—the right to marry or to have school choice—rather than from a public and structural space. This spatial dimension can make people of the dominant culture feel invulnerable, for the conditions and structures by and through which they retain privilege are not called into question. This ecology also has a temporal dimension. Normative performances point toward a future of tamed and disciplined bodies—queer nuclear families and poor, racialized students wearing uniforms, sitting still, and “learning.” This representation may make those in dominant positions feel safe, as the radical threat of otherness has been reduced and managed. Finally, this ecology has a fixed dimension. Not only does power find its aesthetic fix for the crises of structural violence, it also rigidly defines others’ identities. Identities are acceptable or tolerable to the extent that they desire the normative lives of the dominant culture. This might make those in power feel restored as their identities get reified as desirable and good.

The dimensions of this ecology expose what Matias and Allen (2013) call *sadomasochistic relationships* between dominant and subordinate groups. Introducing this term in thinking through *white emotionality*, Matias and Allen describe a kind of relationship where the sadist (in our case those in the dominant culture) can “create an attachment with a submissive follower whom they can control” (p. 291). This relationship, of course, is what I hope our metaphorical gallery viewer might come to think about while peering into the mirror, perhaps symbolically washing their hands of unwanted dirt and debris. While many liberals want a more just world, their reasons for wanting and supporting equality for disenfranchised groups are influenced by the ways in which the identities of the subordinated have been performed. This suggests what Jameson (1982) refers to as a political unconscious that needs to be addressed. To be for

equality might be a strange way of saying that one is for oneself, for in the process of demanding equality, oppressed and disenfranchised communities are fashioned in the image of the dominant culture, for the dominant culture, and by the dominant culture.

I want to exit the metaphorical spaces explored in this essay with two questions. First, as Reddy (2011) explores with great detail in *Freedom With Violence*, how might contemporary movements for equality be contingent upon and implicated within structures that reify racial, gender, sexual, and, among other things, national violence? How has the dominant culture preyed upon movements for justice to push for the inclusion of *some* deserving others while in the same breath, recreating and perpetuating structural violence? My analysis of marriage recognition and charter schools has suggested that despite these movements' espoused aims, they inherently reinforce structural violence by suturing the historical ideals of social justice within processes that further normative assumptions about race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability.

Second, how might an understanding of the affective-spatio-temporal-fixed help us think more broadly about policy legitimation, particularly with policies that directly affect communities of color but do not necessarily advance equity? Bell's (1980) notion of *interest convergence* has been remarkably helpful in analyzing how certain policies that are said to benefit minoritized communities in relation to the political and legal interests of the ruling class come to pass. He argues that accommodations for the interests of historically minoritized communities will only be tolerated and accepted to the degree to which they converge with the needs and desires of the dominant culture and remain unthreatening to prevailing power structures. Building off of this model, the affective-spatio-temporal-fixed lens provides a rejoinder level of analysis that names specific material conditions and locations that scholars can explore in elucidating how support for policies that make recourse equality or "progress" gain legitimating support from dominant communities.

Considering how policies are crafted and popularized using the affective-spatio-temporal-fixed is a helpful way to analyze how policies are legitimated and ultimately come to capture public and political support. For instance, in the context of educational policy, the perpetuation of high-stakes testing and the popularization of merit-based pay will continue to frame national debates in a manner that effaces the historical and current ways in which schools perpetuate race- and class-based violence. Given the way the problems are framed, charter schools, alternative teacher programs, and standardized curricula will continue to gain traction as idealized fixes to the very real violences experienced by communities of color over the past few centuries. In light of this and as an intervention, we need to consider the kinds of conversations we are having about these issues. This paper aims to provide some pedagogical ideas for starting new dialogue in dominant communities around their support of specific policies: What does supporting this policy make you feel and why?

#### Author Biography

**Mark Stern** is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at Colgate University where he teaches classes on education policy and social theory. His current research focuses on the political and cultural economy of public education in the United States. He holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Foundations of Education from Syracuse

*University and recent publications can be found in Race, Ethnicity and Education and Educational Policy.*

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