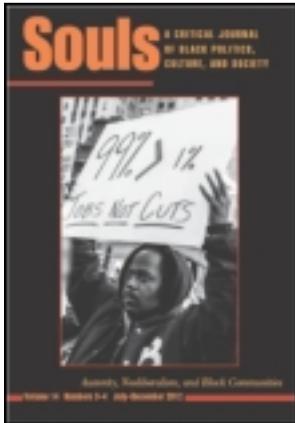


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The Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics

Lester K. Spence

The neoliberal turn arguably has a powerful effect on black political ideas, black political practices, and black life in general; the nature of this effect has gone under-examined. In this work I seek to rectify this gap by examining neoliberal governmentality as it appears in black communities. The result should deepen our understanding of class politics within racially subjugated communities, and should push us to consider a much wider range of phenomenon when examining the way resources are distributed within already resource-poor black communities.

Keywords: black politics, governmentality, neoliberalism

...How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer as the situation may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

—W.E.B. Du Bois et al. (1997)

W.E.B. Du Bois never answered the question others (repeatedly) posed to him, partially because he did not think there was a “Negro problem” as much as there was a “color-line problem.” However, Du Bois spent his entire life problem solving race and racism. One of his first attempts occurred in Philadelphia, where he was tasked to undertake a massive scientific study of Negroes. Du Bois meticulously

surveyed 5,000 Negro households in Philadelphia's Seventh Ward, and depicted the end result of his research in dozens of hand drawn tables and infographics. Du Bois used these results to argue for a variety of inter- and intra-racial solutions. For instance, Du Bois suggested Negroes provide "some rational means of amusement... for young folk" (391) while also suggesting whites broaden "the narrow opportunities afforded Negroes for earning a decent living" (394). He would continue on this path for most of his career, using social science research to improve the lives of Negro men and women. And he was not alone. Through the years dozens of race men and race women have sought to problem solve black life.

And it is this problem-solving project that I want to take up here as it plays a significant contemporary role in the neoliberalization of black politics. While scholars and activists alike increasingly use the concept of neoliberalism to explain rising levels of racial inequality they miss two dynamics. First they miss the way this dynamic is reproduced within, and not simply *on* black communities. And they miss the critical role neoliberal *governmentality*, or the collective logic used to generate knowledge about populations, institutions, and spaces, as well as problems and solutions. Through neoliberal governmentality a range of problems within black communities have been taken outside of the realm of the political by rendering them *technical* and *actionable*. The fact that many predominantly black public schools are failing becomes a matter of incentivizing school competition by means of testing regimes rather than a matter of political organizing. The neoliberalization of black politics proceeds apace largely because of the techniques and programs used to problem-solve black life, perhaps even more than through explicit attempts to pass neoliberal policy or promote neoliberal discourse. Although scholars have long taken class conflict within black communities seriously they have largely ignored the role governmentality plays. This renders a great deal of the politics that occur within black communities invisible. And makes the politics of austerity the common sense solution to systemic black problems.

In this work analyzing neoliberalism (as policy, ideology, and governmentality), I trace the role race plays in the process of neoliberalization; I examine neoliberal governmentality as it appears in black communities using three anecdotal excursions; and finally in conclusion connect this back to Du Bois and to early 20th-century reformers. The neoliberal logic behind the techniques I trace is new, but what I call *secondary governmentalization* (that is, the attempts of African Americans to problem solve their own conduct) has a much longer history. The results should deepen our understanding of class politics within racially subjugated communities, and should push us

to consider a much wider range of phenomenon when examining the way resources are distributed within already resource poor black communities.

Neoliberalism as Policy, Ideology, Governmentality

The earliest usage of the term “neoliberalism” appears in the latter years of the 19th century used pejoratively to describe an Italian economist who desired to return to the liberal principles of Adam Smith and his adherents (Thorsen and Lie 2006). But most situate the beginnings of neoliberalism in the intellectual work of the German *ordoliberals* and the Chicago School economists and use the term to describe a loose set of ideas that market principles should govern how society should work.

With the onset of the economic crises of the seventies conservative foundations, think tanks, aggressively promoted these policies and ideas. And by the late seventies and early eighties politicians in the United States (Ronald Reagan), Great Britain (Margaret Thatcher), and elsewhere urged significant reductions in social services as a path to societal growth, calling for aggressive tax cuts in order to spur innovation. From their perch as leaders of government they argued government was the problem rather than the solution. And they argued that the best way to deal with issues of poverty and unemployment was to force the poor and unemployed to discipline themselves.

Twenty years later ideas formerly viewed as extreme (school vouchers, privatizing social security, dismantling welfare, cutting taxes to raise government revenues) gained significant support in political circles, and they played a particularly important role in shaping cities.¹ By the mid nineties neoliberal ideas and policies were the rule in states ranging from the United States and Great Britain to South Africa and China. The results have not worked as promised and have proved to be disastrous.

Neoliberalization starkly increases inequality. Through reducing regulation, progressive domestic government spending, and perceived barriers to the global movement of capital, the wealthiest Americans have seen their share of the nation’s income explode to pre–Great Depression levels. In contrast worker stability and mobility have decreased, worker wages have stagnated, worker benefits have decreased, even as worker productivity has *increased*. In 1954 approximately 28% of all employed workers were members of a union. By 2002 only 11% of all employed workers were. Families experiencing significant levels of income instability and unemployment are more likely to dissolve and children in such families are more likely

to drop out of school (Pong and Ju 2000; Yeung and Hofferth 1998). And by redefining freedom in market terms rather than in political terms, neoliberalization has dampened citizen support for egalitarian liberalism, replacing progressive government policies with a regime that increasingly regulates and surveils working class and poor populations. Non-whites routinely receive a smaller share of “well-fare” and a greater share of “malware” under neoliberalism, not only within the United States but internationally (Apple 2001; Fisher 2006; Giroux 2003; Laurie and Bonnett 2002; Lipman 2008; Manalansan 2005; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2008; Wacquant 2009).

Given these results and neoliberal ascendancy even in the face of these results, scholars have begun to take the neoliberal turn seriously, examining it in different ways. Some have focused on it as a variety of education, social service, and urban development policies (advocating charter schools, social security privatization, public housing vouchers, etc.) designed to reduce the role of government in providing public goods (David 2007; Davies and Bansel 2007; Fisher 2006; Hankins and Martin 2006; Klees 2008; Lipman 2008). Along similar lines some have examined it as a set of institutional changes (Blyth 2002; Campbell 1998; Campbell and Pedersen 2001; Kus 2006; Prasad 2006). Others focused more on neoliberalism’s ideological aspects (Brown 2009; Goode 2006; Hackworth 2007; Harvey 2005). Here the discourse elites use to make neoliberal solutions the new common sense takes precedence and is perceived to be what drives neoliberal policies.

But I am particularly interested in examining neoliberalism as a specific *governmentality* (Barnett 2008; Burchell 1996; Cruikshank 1996, 1999; Dean 1999; Foucault et al. 1991; Foucault, Senellart, and Collège de France 2008; Gordon 1991; Ong 2006; Rasmussen 2011; Rose 1993; Rose, O’Malley, and Valverde 2006; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2008; Wacquant 2009). The term “governmentality” combines “government” and “mentality,” with government defined broadly as “...any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends...” (Dean 1999, 11) and mentality defined as a collective body of thought. The literature refers to governmentality in two different ways. The first refers to the general set of logics used to shape conduct in liberal societies. The second refers to the more specific form of governmentality that arises under neoliberalism. In both instances of central concern are the regimes of practices used to render conduct something that can be expertly measured, acted on, and modified, in a space of relative freedom.

Under neoliberal governmentality market principles become the primarily vehicle of problem solving (critiquing, creating solutions for, managing) the conduct of populations, of institutions, and of spaces. Various techniques are used to get individuals, populations, institutions, and spaces to act entrepreneurial and in accordance with market principles. A range of institutions and spaces from non-profit foundations to cities to nation-states are also increasingly expected to treat themselves as for-profit corporations and to work more “efficiently”—I focus more on schools below, but increasingly school districts adopt strategies of governance designed for for-profit corporations. Furthermore a range of institutions including but not limited to the state tries to modify conduct.

Expertise plays a central role in the development and deployment of these technologies, because experts are best able to use “reason” and “truth” to determine the proper mode of long-distance governance. Statistics are important here, as are social science theories of behavior, and a variety of practices associated with therapy. These technologies are deployed to manage individuals, populations, institutions, and spaces (in the latter two cases consultants often fulfill the same role as therapists). Public health officials use statistical analysis and mapping ferret out the relationship between various aggregate level health indicators. Bond rating agencies use complex algorithms to assess the risk and potential return of urban investment and through this data govern cities. Officials use rational choice theories of behavior to get people to recognize and act on their (narrow) self-interest. Management experts devise techniques of accountability that can be used to manage non-profit and for-profit institutions alike. Because expertise itself requires a certain type of expertise to critique the general processes of neoliberalization become *technical* rather than *political*—the problems and their solutions are taken out of the realm of politics traditionally considered because they are viewed as being “truthful” and “objective” and “apolitical” hence not subject to political engagement.

I use the term “technology” above to depict government as the consistent application of technical know-how to problems of conduct. And two forms loom large—technologies of subjectivity designed to work on and through those able to govern themselves, and technologies of subjection designed to work on and through those *unable* to govern themselves.

Under neoliberal reform welfare uses much more direction, surveillance, and sanctioning, it increasingly uses market logic to assess individuals as well as service providers, it significantly disciplines the use of lower-level discretion, and finally is wed to carceral systems (Schram et al. 2010). The neoliberalization of unemployment

transforms the unemployed from passive citizens with a right to benefits into active job-seeking agents obligated to engage in a number of practices designed to build his/her human capital to the point where he/she can find a job—this in exchange for a short-term *allowance*. In these instances individuals who consistently reveal themselves as being unable to work on themselves to the point they are no longer dependent face more intensive and bureaucratically brutal modes of surveillance and discipline. After Thatcher-era reforms, British universities were redefined as corporate enterprises, and increasingly evaluated based on their ability to generate income (through research grants) and to “train” (as opposed to “educate”) students by giving them marketable skills (Shore 2008). Political and institutional leaders increasingly think of themselves as entrepreneurs in part because the municipalities and institutions they manage require them to do so. And again expertise plays an important role here as expertise helps diagnose problems, identify tools, and provide (technical) solutions.

What Work Does Race Do Here?

The neoliberal turn itself is made possible because of racial politics. The ideological discourse of neoliberalism naturalizes these effects by “racing” the winners and the losers in a range of policy contexts, including but not limited to disaster management and urban restructuring (Johnson 2011), education (Apple 2001; David 2007; Giroux 2003; Hankins and Martin 2006), welfare (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011) and incarceration (Wacquant 2009), and increasingly national security (Chappell 2006).² Racial geography shapes the how, where, and when neoliberal policies appear (Goldberg 2008; Johnson 2011; Roberts and Mahtani 2010; Samson 2010). The negative effects of neoliberal policy are disproportionately born by populations of color. Finally, because of the particular way it naturalizes racial inequality, racism itself becomes difficult to fight (Melamed 2006; Roberts and Mahtani 2010). Indeed in some ways the election (and re-election) of America’s first self-identified black President makes certain types of anti-racist projects even harder to combat (Cohen 2012; Copeland 2011; Davis 2007; Dawson 2012).

Rather than simply “privatizing” race, under neoliberalism race plays an extremely visible role. The victims of the neoliberal turn are depicted as black, however, increasingly the winners of the neoliberal turn are depicted as being non-white, with multiculturalism itself being used as a vehicle to promote neoliberal policies at home and abroad (Melamed 2006). Attempts to fight racism are not

privatized if by privatized we mean “made invisible.” To the contrary—anti-racism becomes a public principle. However, the key distinction is that under neoliberalism the most effective means of combating racism are developing entrepreneurial capacities in populations, institutions, and spaces deemed as “non-white.”

Studying race here gives us a greater appreciation for the work race does in the 21st century, as this work is decidedly different than the work done in other periods (Holt 2000). However, while studying the racial politics of neoliberalism is important, it is as important we pay attention to the *intra-racial* politics of the neoliberal turn.

Neoliberalization increases inter-racial inequality. However, stark intra-racial differences also accompany these inter-racial differences. In 1975 the black gini coefficient (which measures income distribution within a given society on a scale from 0—no inequality to 1—total inequality) was approximately 0.39, while the white gini coefficient was approximately .35. In 2007 the black gini coefficient was 0.47 while the white gini coefficient was approximately 0.43. As wealth inequality in general increased, both the black and white gini coefficient increased. But the black gini coefficient is consistently higher than the white gini coefficient, signaling that intra-racial wealth inequality is greater for blacks than it is for whites. The internal gap between black “haves” and black “have nots” is increasingly depicted in cultural terms rather than in structural terms by prominent African Americans, and black public opinion polls point to a growing value-driven disconnect between black populations (Cohn 2007). And even when it is depicted in structural terms, black businessmen, political representatives, and thought leaders increasingly tout entrepreneurial solutions.

While research on racial politics and neoliberalism has grown, research on the neoliberalization of black politics has not, though there are exceptions.³ If we solely take a racial politics lens—examining how neoliberalism shapes and is shaped by racial politics—it is all too easy for us to ignore some of the ways the contemporary black political landscape is shaped by neoliberalism. I noted what the move to examine governmentality provides us in general—it moves us away from public policy outputs and away from the types of discourse used to justify or engender support for these outcomes, and moves us to considering the technical means by which individuals, populations, institutions, and spaces are governed (and are self-governed). And going back to Du Bois briefly we can begin to understand how a governmentality approach could benefit us in studying his attempt to problem-solve the Negro Philadelphian condition. When we deploy governmentality to study intra-racial politics, what becomes apparent is the role black expertise plays in managing black populations, as

well as the role technique plays in placing severe limits on black political imaginations. Below I trace the neoliberalization of black politics through three brief anecdotal excursions, chosen to show how the neoliberalization of black politics increasingly creates conditions in which racial inequality is managed through black elite-promoted techniques designed to get black people to act according to market principles, in which intra-racial inequality is increasingly posited as being the function of an inability to properly exercise self-governing capacity.

Education

Our first excursion is to the District of Columbia. One of the biggest challenge cities like Washington, D.C. face is the public education challenge. The District of Columbia has one of the nation's poorest performing school districts. In 2007 DC Mayor Adrian Fenty appointed Michelle Rhee Chancellor of the DC school system. Rhee, a Teach for America alumni and a staunch believer in increasing teacher and school "accountability," implemented a number of policies designed to improve teacher quality and test scores, including closing underperforming schools and subjecting teachers to evaluations tied in part to student performance. In August 2008 Michelle Rhee and Roland Fryer, Harvard economist, CEO ("Chief Equality Officer") of the New York City Department of Education, and founder of the Education Innovation Lab (EdLabs), met with principals of every DCPS school with sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. At the meeting they rolled out the "Capital Gains" program, a program designed to deal with the twofold crisis. The experimental program would pay children in the treatment schools for academic performance. EdLabs developed the "Capital Gains" program based on the philosophy articulated below:

The most important medical invention of the 20th Century was the randomized clinical trial: a method for getting to effective solutions. Education has not yet followed suit. It is time for education to adopt the Scientific Method and, like the medical field, immerse itself in path-breaking research and development. The pharmaceutical industry alone spends over \$40 billion per year on R&D to find new solutions to medical problems. Education spends essentially \$0. We believe that applying an R&D model to education will provide a way to unearth root causes of performance gaps, effectively evaluate options for reform, and achieve effective and transportable solutions. (<http://edlabs.com>)

EdLabs implicitly juxtaposes the power of objective, rational social science against the subjective and irrational hold of politics and implicitly connects the power of social science and the scientific method to the corporate model—note the comparison to the pharmaceutical industry.

EdLabs rolled out programs similar to Capital Gains in other underperforming urban predominantly black school districts. In New York and most recently in Oklahoma City, EdLabs introduced the “Million” program—awarding academically successful students student-centered cellphones that not only awards minutes based on academic success, but also shows students inspirational videos designed to “exemplify in tangible ways the diverse paths to success students can inspire to” (<http://edlabs.com>). While the DC results were conclusive—even where there were statistically significant treatment effects they were minimal—EdLabs touted the intervention as successful largely because slight increases in academic success occurred while simultaneously saving the school system millions of dollars.

Religion

Our second excursion is to a predominantly black church outside of Baltimore. Dr. Kenneth Robinson is a pastor of Restoring Life Temple. The church administers to the spiritual needs of a few hundred churchgoers who attend Sunday services, mid-week Bible studies, and empowerment workshops. A disciple of Kenneth Hagin and Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Robinson preaches a variant of the “prosperity gospel”—a form of biblical teaching that posits a direct relationship between following biblical precepts and material success. During the height of the Second Great Depression, Dr. Robinson delivered a series of Sunday sermons on “How to Win in a Recession,” sermons delivered then packaged and sold in the church’s store. In one of the first sermons of the series, Pastor Robinson begins by acknowledging the powerful toll the depression takes on black families:

...This economic recession is not just about money but it is designed to really destroy families... in fact many families are on the verge of destruction and ruin because of the pressure that is already in the air of this season. The gas prices rising, the foreclosures, downsizing, cutting back jobs that are lost... it’s putting pressure on many marital relationships. Communication is breaking down and many of you are trying to figure out why the pressure in our home? A lot of it has to do with the economic pressure... programs are going to be cut back and cutback programs means job losses, job losses mean youth are going to be idle, idle youth means crime and violence goes up... this is a reality. This is what happened in our own church... (Robinson, 2007)

Pastor Robinson neatly charts how the larger problems of the economy trickle down, affecting the relationships within families, and the relationships between families, generating economic anxiety as well as crime and violence. Furthermore, he charts how his own family has not been immune to the crisis. What is the solution? Saying

“the Bible” is not sufficient here, in as much as one could argue that Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosser (enslaved Africans who used the Bible to argue for and conduct slave rebellions), Martin Luther King, Jr. (who used the Bible to wage war against Jim Crow segregation), Albert Cleage (who used the Bible as a black nationalist source), and others also turned to the Bible for religious inspiration.

... how do I win in a recession? Number one I have to determine to walk by faith and not by sight that's the first thing I've got to establish in my heart is I have to walk by faith 2 Corinthians 5 and 7 and not by sight. ... You can't receive anything from God unless you receive it by what? [Faith] Faith is not sitting on the Word, faith is acting on the Word of God or acting on what I believe. Now acting on what I believe will determine what I receive (Robinson, 2007).

Acting on what one believe in this instance, requires accepting a new biblically oriented mindset, a mindset that will if truly embraced by doing things like tithing 10% of one's earnings to the church will take one out of poverty, because poverty *is a mindset*.

Poverty is not a paycheck it is not a person it is not a community of people it is not a color or a culture poverty is a spirit, it is a spirit that must be identified in this season, or you will never experience prosperity in this season . . . unless the people identify poverty and break that mindset over their minds, you will never change your life. You will come to church and dance over who God is, but until you break the spirit and mindset of poverty, you will never ever experience prosperity, especially in this season (Robinson, 2007).

Here Pastor Robinson neatly connects a set of arguments about how Christians should act in the world, about how Christians should relate to God, with material and spiritual prosperity. Poverty is not a product of politics, but rather it is the product of problematic mental states. He then combines this sermon series with a series of weekly meetings and financial workshops on how to create and maintain a budget, how to start and grow businesses, and how to be productive even in the midst of economic crisis.

Public Health

Our third excursion takes us to Philadelphia, well over one hundred years after Du Bois conducts his social survey. In September 1982 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) used the term Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) to describe a deadly medical condition that primarily afflicted homosexual men. In 1986, scientists found the retrovirus that led to AIDS, calling it Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Scientists have since made significant strides in combating HIV as well as in extending the life of those afflicted with HIV and AIDS. While the rate of increase of AIDS cases has gone down, and the number of people able to live healthy lives with HIV

has increased, racial disparities still exist. Twenty years ago black elites more or less ignored the disease, placing most black victims outside of the “boundaries of blackness.” Civil rights organizations ignored it. Black elected officials ignored it. Churches ignored it.

Now?

Pastor Alyn Walker heads Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, one of the largest black megachurches in Philadelphia, with Sunday attendance routinely approaching 15,000. Through its associated Community Development Corporation the church provides pre-K learning services, summer camps, and workshops to black Philadelphian youth. In September 2012, Pastor Walker along with other faith leaders in the Philadelphia region participated in a faith-based anti-HIV/AIDS campaign, agreeing to appear in dozens of billboards peppered throughout Philadelphia. Each billboard featured an individual faith leader in his place of worship with one phrase “I Am [insert faith leader’s name here] And I Got Tested.” The “o” in the middle of “got” contains a greater than sign (>) indicating that the campaign is part of the larger Greater Than AIDS campaign, a social media health promotions campaign created by the Black AIDS Media Partnership, a black media coalition created to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in black communities. Since the campaign was created, thousands of Greater Than billboards have appeared throughout cities with large black populations, radio ads have appeared in dozens of black radio stations, the 126 YouTube videos have been viewed approximately 600,000 times, and the Greater Than AIDS Facebook page has over 250,000 “likes.” These billboards do not shy away from homosexuality—many of the billboards feature two men and the videos feature gay men speaking frankly about their sexuality.

The *Greater Than AIDS* campaign is part of a much broader effort among black organizations to use health promotions campaigns to generate better health outcomes. Another similar example is *HIV Stops with ME*. *Greater Than AIDS* also enlisted a number of prominent black actors and other celebrities including Steve Harvey, Essence Atkins, Samuel L. Jackson, Nia Long, and Ice Cube (the hook from his record “Check Yo Self” is used in many of the ads). HIV/AIDS activists and experts seek to inculcate two sets of positive behaviors in HIV+ populations, and in populations that *could potentially become HIV+*: condom usage, and persistent testing.

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Now, one way to understand each of these anecdotes is through a traditional black politics approach. We might for example consider

how these anecdotes reflect the dearth of effective black political leadership (Gooding-Williams 2009; Marable 1998; Smith 1996; Tate 2010). Or we could alternatively think through the way specific black political ideologies work within these and other similar activities (Brown & Shaw 2002; Davis & Brown 2002; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Henderson 2004; Robinson 2001; Spence et al. 2005). In as much as each of these instances occurs in a metropolitan region run by black elected officials we can examine the specific way this most recent class of elected black political officials navigates the environment that produces these specific outcomes (Gillespie 2010). “The black church” is implicated in two of the examples above. We can consider the role religion plays in shaping the attitudes of Pastor Robinson’s parishioners (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1994; McDaniel 2008). Those taking a more left-leaning radical approach could fixate on the role/lack of role played by black counterpublics in these and other related instances (Dawson 1995) or, using the framework of “secondary marginalization” could consider the ways black elites dictate the agendas of black organizations in such a way as to ignore the needs of doubly or triply subjugated black populations (Cohen 1999, 2004).

But again, even though we can use some of these approaches to examine how poor black men and women almost always tend to lose compared to their well-off counterparts, what such an approach misses is the role techniques and technology plays in identifying and distinguishing between populations, the way these techniques are adapted by individuals to problem-solve their own condition, and the very specific modes adopted during a neoliberal period under which everyone is expected to be entrepreneurs of themselves. We do not simply live in a period of class dominance. Focusing specifically on black communities, we do not simply live in a period of black elite dominance—a period in which a black President can garner applause by blaming (black) poverty on (black) fathers. We live in a period in which many of the central problems we face, problems that have political roots and political solutions, have been taken out of the realm of the political because blacks increasingly present these problems as technical problems that should be treated with very specific practices rather than as political problems that call for political organization and mobilization.

How do we see this play out in these anecdotes?

First note the role the market plays in each example, and the way market logic is connected to techniques used to solve crises that are structural (and political) in nature. The solution to the racial achievement gap is to create a literal academic success market in schools that makes the children more entrepreneurial about their academic habits, based on economic theories on incentives. And although I

focus on populations here, it's impossible to understand this specific technique without also understanding the way this technique is also deployed on school systems and cities themselves. President Obama's Race to the Top program, much like President Bush's No Child Left Behind, and even President Bill Clinton's Empowerment Zone program, incentivizes school districts (and in Clinton's case, cities) in much the same manner, forcing school districts/cities to practice market-type competition over scarce resources.

In the religious example we do not see market competition per sé. Here the solution to the economic crisis is to better apply the lessons of the Bible to one's daily practice, to get rid of the poverty mindset. Market competition is not created here, but market principles and biblical principles are implicitly connected. And this connection is driven home through Pastor Robinson's "financial empowerment" workshops, that come replete with "financial planning guide/workbooks" participants are expected to work their way through as part of the workshops. On the surface the HIV/AIDS example does not quite seem to fit here. But the health promotions campaign itself is based off of the traditional ad campaign model that seeks to get consumers to make purchases they might not make in other ways. In this way the HIV/AIDS issue is not treated as a structural issue, not for instance a matter of the lack of access to drug treatment, the lack of access to clean needles, the lack of universal health care, but rather is treated as an issue of people simply not making the proper choices about their own bodies. People become consumers, and consumption is tied to "healthy choices."

Race is not in the background in any of these instances. The racial achievement gap is one of the explicit drivers of both the No Child Left Behind and the Race to the Top policies. Furthermore a desire to reduce this and other racial gaps are what purportedly drives Roland Fryer's research agenda as well as his desire to found EdLabs in the first place. The vast majority of Fryer's research deals with race and with the impact of racial discrimination. Similarly, the various HIV/AIDS social media campaigns target African Americans (and increasingly Latinos) because the HIV/AIDS rates among black men and women are so incredibly high compared to other populations. One might argue that this plays less of a role in the church instance. But in other sermons in the series Pastor Robinson is clear about the role race plays in life circumstances. In fact, one could argue that the reason the programs are deployed is in part *because* they exhibit an earnest effort to deal with the exigencies of racism. Race is not invisible here, race is not hidden, nor privatized. Rather it is intensely public. And again this racial knowledge is itself the product of statistical techniques of aggregation and measurement. Iris

Marion Young argued persuasively that care is a powerful political resource. But what her analysis misses is the way “care” can be deployed in instances like the ones I trace to further reduce the ability of populations to organize on their own behalf in the (caring) attempt to render black problems solvable.

I noted the role expertise plays. In each anecdote we see expertise deployed in such a way as to render the problem under consideration technical as opposed to political. This is most apparent in the education case—the solution to the racial achievement gap is not organizing parents and teachers to rail against budget cuts. Rather it’s to properly incentivize students using techniques based on careful peer-reviewed social science research. A related type of expertise played a central role in the HIV/AIDS campaign—experts helped devise the media ads used, experts were used to help generate the most productive testing regiment. Pastor Robinson uses biblical expertise, but he also uses expert-designed financial packets to teach his churchgoers the rudimentary aspects of financial literacy. Expertise works in these cases to render them apolitical *and technical*. And in two of the three cases it works in them to render them *measurable*—Fryer and the HIV/AIDS experts possess an array of metrics they can use to examine whether the techniques themselves worked and who they worked on if they did work. Furthermore they used aggregate-level statistical data to determine the proper spatial context in which to use the techniques. This is particularly apparent in the health case—the ads are not only tailored to specific populations deemed to be “high risk.” They are tailored to very specific neighborhoods—the billboards in Baltimore for instance appear in some of the poorest black neighborhoods as well as almost all of the bus stops black Baltimoreans frequent, and this knowledge comes from combining knowledge of HIV/AIDS rates with knowledge of the race and class demographics of Baltimore neighborhoods. To the extent logical questions can be raised here, these questions concern *technique* and even these questions require a certain level of experience and expertise to muster.

Relatedly, these techniques are incredibly mobile, swiftly travelling across space and across issue area. Fryer was able to take the experiment he devised and apply it, with some modifications, to a range of cities. The HIV/AIDS health promotions campaign was not only easily spread to a number of cities throughout the country, the technique itself can easily be modified to deal with other similar health issues. And the type of financial empowerment workshops connected to Pastor Robinson’s sermon—workshops themselves conducted by financial experts—are not only conducted in churches. The Hip Hop Summit Action Network used similar techniques in their hip-hop summits.

Now one might ask, given my focus on technique, why does this matter? Should we not use expertise of some sort to solve the problems we face? One reason this matters is because neoliberalism relies on two sets of technologies—technologies of subjection and technologies of subjectivity. Here I focus largely on technologies of subjectivity—technologies applied to populations that have expressed or can potentially express the ability to be self-governing according to neoliberal dictates. The techniques above are designed by experts but they are designed in such a way as to get individuals to govern themselves, to “take control” of their own lives through technical modifications in their own behavior instead of through political organization. And it’s very important to note that these techniques work through the desires of the populations they are applied to. In the education instance kids want to do well—the research suggests no substantive differences between black and white desires to do well in school (Carter 2005)—and kids want to make money. In the religious instance, churchgoers want to succeed economically, particularly when they cannot count on a social safety net—and they also want to “be right with God.” Finally in the public health example, people want to be healthy, but more than that they want to be *attractive*.

However, there is a flipside.

The techniques above make clear distinctions between populations. The successful kids are the ones able to properly manifest academic improvement. The healthy men and women are the ones able to maintain testing regimes, are the ones who always practice safe-sex, are the ones who always ask (and truthfully answer) questions about sexual habits. Prayerful men and women are the ones who have successfully wedded their biblical understanding to their lived (fiscal) practice. They are all, in effect, deemed to be *winners*. However, while technologies of subjectivity are used on (and by) the winners, gradually technologies of subjection are used *on* (and never *by*) the losers. And it becomes very difficult to contest the losers’ status politically. Using the HIV/AIDS example, “losers” are not willing to consistently test themselves, are not willing to disclose their status, and are not willing to engage in safe sex practices—who would fight for them? Given how deadly the disease still is, we view those unable or unwilling to continually test themselves, to continually practice safe sex, and to be open about their sexual history (and to expect such openness from their partners) as losers worthy of death, and this is a product of the techniques we use to manage and problem-solve this and other problems within black communities. One reason we should be incredibly skeptical about expertise then is because this specific form of governmentality (and arguably other forms as well) seem to always

involve making decisions about which populations are worthy of life and which populations are worthy of death. And a range of austerity policies designed to reduce the amount of life-sustaining resources poor populations have access to depend on this approach—given the realities of white supremacy usually do not turn out well for black (and other non-white) populations. But another reason is that these techniques and the theories they are based severely simplify the rich ways black populations attempt to live their lives. They simplify the complications black men, women, and children have to overcome as their routine every day struggle, they simplify the various and sundry alternatives we might adopt in order to sustain our lives.

Finally, while I have focused on populations, we can lash these examples up to similar modes used to discipline, manage, and punish institutions and spaces. Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Baltimore—all represented by black mayors by the way—are all disciplined by bond rating agencies and by experts, who make life and death funding decisions based on their ability to govern themselves according to technologies of subjectivity. Finally, we can easily imagine a family governed by all three sets of techniques—an HIV+ father who attends a prosperity gospel church along with his school-aged son not only attempts to use these techniques to make healthy choices (to develop a rigorous HIV testing regiment for example), but attends a local church using the pastor's sermons to get his financial house in order, while his son competes with other kids for cash prizes. Caught in overlapping frameworks of governance, this father and child can potentially understand their lives as being determined by political circumstances they are not responsible for. But it is far more likely they will fault themselves (and each other) for their condition. And as these modes of government play an increasing role in our lives, it is far more likely we will as well.

Conclusion

I began this work by quoting from W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*. How should we read Du Bois, given the neoliberal turn? One way to read Du Bois' life work was as an attempt to "problem-solve" the Negro—to shape and govern the Negro's conduct so s/he might be included as first an American and then a world citizen. Du Bois was by far not the only one to think of the Negro as a problem to be solved. We see Negro organizations take up the call (both the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] loom large) as well as

prominent Negro leaders from Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington to Anna Julia Cooper among others. But while historians have taken up the mantle of studying these attempts in earnest few have examined the work of Du Bois and other Negro reformers as early attempts at what could be conceivably thought of as black governmentality, or modifying the language of Cathy Cohen, as *secondary governmentalization*—as an attempt of already marginalized populations to problem-solve their own condition, and further generating inequality in these populations by doing so. A cursory glance at some of the most important work on Du Bois over the last 25 years alone suggests that scholars have been much more interested in *The Souls of Black Folk* than they have been in the various attempts he's made to “conduct conduct” (Balfour 2011; Carby 1998; Gates and West 1996; Gooding-Williams 2009; Porter 2010).⁴ When he suggests for example that “rational” means be used to help give black youth with time on their hands something to do, he clearly has a set of specific ends in mind, and likely a set of specific technical devices that can be used to generate these ends. Images play a powerful role in the various HIV health promotion campaigns that target black populations. W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the first black elites to understand and fully appreciate the role pictures could play in governing black conduct—in the NAACP's signal magazine (not coincidentally called *The Crisis*), he uses images (of black babies) and a scientific understanding of the role of images play on individual psyche and action, in order to promote healthy black family practices. The same logic was not necessarily at play here—there is no hint that Du Bois or any of the social reformers of that day were driven to make black people more entrepreneurial the way this specific form of governmentality works. However, similar techniques are at work.

The anecdotes above represent examples of the ongoing neoliberalization of black politics, and can in some ways be thought of as forms of black governmentalization. Thinking of these and other examples in this way allows us to extend our conception of what black politics is by considering a wider array of tools used to police and construct the boundaries of blackness, but also a wider array of tools used to govern what occurs within those boundaries. By doing this we can analyze the machinery created to resolve the black power dilemma—how do blacks govern themselves in the wake of the civil rights movement and the absence of a sufficiently powerful contemporary political movement? In a context where support for what we think of as “the public” is waning, what are the techniques blacks use to get black people to be literally “self-determined”? How might these techniques change over time? To what extent do they

increase intra-racial inequality? As levels of black hypersegregation increase, blacks increasingly make decisions about black access to (diminishing) resources, and as such as forced to make tough decisions. We now think of the various individual level choices people make to align and give support to one another along with various expressions of cultural difference as quotidian politics. But the everyday governing decisions made in and on behalf of black institutions, spaces, and populations are the very definition of quotidian politics, and we do not pay enough attention to these dynamics. Politically, this gap leaves us unable to chart effective responses that reduce inequality in black communities, responses that are required if we are to contest inequality broadly considered.

Notes

1. Before neoliberal policies were instituted, American cities were able to garner significant resources from the federal government in order to provide an array of social services. With the rising adoption of neoliberal approaches to government, federal funds were slashed, forcing cities to adopt a variety of policies designed to attract desirable populations with a focus on “the creative class” (Florida 2002, 2005), to make up for reduced revenue via casinos, tourism, and cultural imaginings (Pappas 2000; Kenny and Zimmerman 2004), and to police populations (Herbert 2001; Herbert and Brown 2006).

2. Much of the research examining the racial politics of contemporary welfare reform is in effect an examination of neoliberalism. Punitive and increasingly bureaucratic techniques of government are used to deal with non-white populations deemed incapable of exercising freedom (Gilens 1999; Clawson and Trice 2000; Schram, Soss, and Fording 2003; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2008). When Bill Clinton signed PRWORA in 1996 he gave states and counties the authority to modify their welfare bureaucracy as they saw fit. States with larger and more dispersed black populations were not only more likely to give local authorities responsibility in managing Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), they were more likely to implement punitive policies (stringent time limits, strict family caps, family sanctions) than states with smaller and less dispersed black populations (Soss et al. 2008). Whites are much more likely to support punitive crime measures if they associate crime with young black men (Gilliam Jr. and Iyengar 2000).

3. Michael Dawson’s 2011 study of Obama-era black politics stands out as does Richard Iton’s (2008) and Lester Spence’s (2011) works on black popular culture.

4. The work of Adolph Reed (1997) serves as an exception here.

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