

Is Controlling for Race Inherently Racist?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Thursday, April 09, 2009

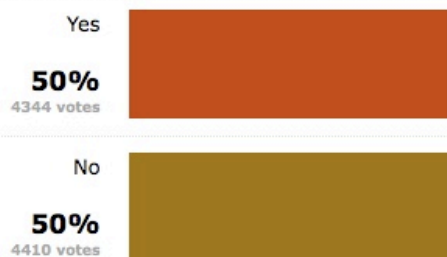
<https://politicsrespun.org/2009/04/is-controlling-for-race-inherently-racist/>

I think so.

Poll Results

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Should demographic information about individual schools – including the immigrant backgrounds of students – **be made available online?**



Here's why.

The advantages to having demographic information out in the open far outweigh the disadvantages, said Prof. Fullan, who is also professor emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

"We said we should use the information to make all schools better, but I understand the fear," he said in an interview yesterday.

Prof. Fullan believes in setting targets for test scores, and in the idea of statistical neighbours, whereby schools with similar demographics can be compared with each other.

via globeandmail.com: [Data on schools website divides parents, educators.](#)

Let's start with this poll. The last time I saw such a close race was the Quebec separation referendum over 10 years ago. This is the vote tally as of 11:30pm tonight. Apparently it was also evenly split earlier this

afternoon.

The poll shows that over 4,000 people agree with Michael Fullan that the demographic make-up of a school in the form of parents' immigration background is a significant enough variable in determining which school's *product* they *purchase*.

The Ontario government removed income and education levels from the presentation of information. That is a rather damning self-indictment. They initially included it because it fit the profile of what they wanted *educational consumers* to consider when making their *purchases*, then they removed it. Perhaps people couldn't stomach the blatant reality that some would choose a school based on the wealth of parents, but clearly, that does go on.

Essentially, what we're dealing with here is the Ontario government's tacit support for a class based public service. Pick some variables that determine the class you want your children to associate with, then publicize the data for *informed choice*. Society should not be condoning or supporting such class-based decision-making. Period.

In BC, we're well aware of the criminally narrow range of high-stakes testing that our students suffer to generate Foundational Skills Assessment scores for the hyper-libertarian, unregulated market-worshipping Fraser Institute to use in ranking schools. The whole process is obscene and celebrates active ignorance of the breadth of what it takes to evaluate our multi-faceted human beings in the K-12 education system and the system as a whole.

And now in Ontario, the government is essentially controlling for race in the statistical analysis that parents unjustifiably wish to make. When we talk about immigration background, we're talking about the polite way of describing parents' race. I have a hard time thinking that if Michael Fullan tried to float this concept as an academic project past OISE's research ethics board, he would have been roundly rebuked--at least I'd hope so.

The government is inciting a firestorm of bigotry by enabling people to be able to move their students from schools with too many of the *wrong* kind of classmates, with people defining wrong in whatever mildly to severely racist tone they wish.

This is the height of social and political irresponsibility. In an era of economic crisis when local communities will increase in importance for enhancing individual and regional socio-economic resilience, inserting this wedge that will split communities is simply reprehensible.

And since I've only taught high school and have never been a professor emeritus at OISE, I'm totally open to hearing all these great arguments in libertarian social engineering that Michael Fullan feels far outweigh the provincial government condoning race-based divisive education policy.