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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that normative conceptions of the child, as a natural quasi-human being in need of guidance, enable current school reforms in the United States to directly link the child to neoliberal aims and objectives. In using Foucault's concept of governmentality and disciplinary power, we first present how the child is constructed as a subject of the adult world, then trace how such understandings invite school policies and practices that worked on the child, rather than with the child. In order to understand how the child comes to be known and recognized as a learner, both at the intersections of normative conceptions of childhood and material expectations of the student, we use Biesta's three domains of education: socialization, qualification, and subjectification as an organizing framework and draw primarily from Common Core Learning Standards and related policy reports with the aim of reorienting educational work away from economic and political universals and toward a subjective response to the child as a human being with concerns, rights, and as a subject worthy of recognition.

In his book *After the Death of Childhood*, David Buckingham (2000) confronts the profound sense of ambiguity that surrounds the meaning of childhood in this new millennium. "The sacred garden of childhood has been increasingly violated," he claims, as universal definitions of the child become replaced instead by discourses of knowledge[1] about the child. While prevailing views may still include a vulnerable mind in need of shelter or Darwinist notions of development recapitulating the development of man, social analyses of the early twentieth century brought forward new patterns of recognition that arose through institutions, such as the school. For many, Phillipe Aries (1962) and others were the first to question the assumption of the natural or universal child by examining the division between public and private spaces that emerged with and within Western bourgeoisie society. As the child became differentiated from the adult, new identities came into existence (from a historical time when the child and adult were not distinguished in such ways) and with it new assumptions, new knowledges, new policies, practices, and

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institutions. According to Bernadette Baker (1998), it was precisely this discursive condition that made the public school possible.

Kenneth Hultqvist and Gunilla Dahlberg (2001) argue that even though more current studies tend to focus less on nature and more on society, the reification of society as the dominant structure that individuates the child has made the child look just as "natural" as it did in developmental psychology. In psychology, childhood was held in a suspended state of an adulthood-yet-to-come, guided through intervention toward rational self-governance, and in the social sciences, childhood, held in a similarly suspended state, represented the effects of societal demand, guided through intervention toward a desirable, productive adulthood. Yet less visible are investigations of childhood that go beyond representation into the ways that the production of knowledge governs the recognizability of the child, not in deterministic ways but rather as discursive practices that mobilize certain inventions about who and what belongs in this domain of childhood (Baker, 1998; Bloch, Popkewitz, Holmlund, & Moqvist, 2004; Popkewitz, 2000). The aim of this paper, then, is to denaturalize childhood as biologically given or institutionally determined and instead, to interrogate how certain understandings of and about the child are operationalized and used in the managing of society, particularly as they are seen through curricular aims and objectives in United States primary school.

In doing so, we find great assistance with Michel Foucault's (1977) concept of governmentality, or the "art of governing," and its disciplinary power. In *Discipline and Punish*: *The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault elaborates on the invisibility and pervasiveness of power in modern society, not only as it functions within and through institutions, but also how it is evident in the mentalities, rationalities, processes, and practices through which subjects of a population are measured, organized, and developed. This view of sovereignty does more than reduce power to a political function of the state, but rather considers how power carries forward and circulates in ways that govern the subject into a mutual constitution with its disciplinary society. Therefore, Foucault's theory of power couples totalization with individualization (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 21), tracing how the governing power of institutions flows into "capillary" forms of existence, points where power reaches into the very grain of individuals and inserts itself into everyday thoughts and actions. Certainly, as will be discussed, the discursive nature of circulation makes none of this deterministic, but rather possible and productive.

In this paper, these concepts help us to understand how the child comes to be known and recognized as a learner, both at the intersections of normative conceptions of childhood and material expectations of the student. We argue that it is precisely our discursive constructions of childhood, as a natural, quasi-human, adult yet-to-come that lays the foundation for neoliberal educational policies and practices to work *on* the child, rather than *with* the child. We use the term quasi-human to acknowledge what Jean-Francois Lyotard (1991) distinguishes as childhood apart from a humanness made of adult consciousness and reason. Here, he questions what we call human, as does the important work of Sylvia Wynter (see McKittrick, 2015), and thus writes, "that it will always remain for the adult to free himself or herself from the savages of childhood by bringing its promise - that is precisely the condition of humankind" (p. 4). While Lyotard takes up the human child as also symbolic of the inhuman qualities often barred from this category, we use the term quasi-human child to signify that which is not yet human, if by human it is meant a reasonable subject, and to this end, we ask: what discursive practices, activities,

interactions confirm that the child is indeed a child? How do these broader conceptions of childhood heighten its precariousness to educational objectives, reforms, and policies? We hope such a relational opening will shift focus from skills, strategies, and methods toward an invitation to the child, not as a child, but as a human being with rights and concerns worthy of recognition.

To understand how curricular and pedagogical issues are related to discursive constructions of childhood in the current era of neoliberal capitalism, we use as an analytical framework Gert Biesta's (2013) three domains of education: socialization, qualification, and subjectification.[2] First, we interrogate the language of learning as it attempts to produce dispositions that mirror what is deemed appropriate, manageable, and secure to the adult world. Here, we are mostly concerned with the socialization of the desirable neoliberal subject, similar to Lynn Fender's (2001) work on "the flexible student," "the whole child," and "the active learner." Second, we consider how qualifications of knowledge in school content and curriculum reflect the kinds of skills and strategies operationalized to eliminate risk, push for effectiveness, and produce the child as a subject of "readiness" to insecure neoliberal futures. Finally, we take up subjectification as one way through which educational practices can recognize the child as a subject emerging from conditions of *possibility*, rather than measured against neoliberal political economic aims that are external to itself.

As current reforms privatize public education, deskill teachers, close down schools, and induce mental anxiety through a barrage of evaluative measures and tests, the response has been to use our cognitive abilities to rationalize large-scale shifts in governance and political economies. This becomes increasingly problematic as the young child is continually flattened of experience and stripped of sovereignty by virtue of being a child rather than a human being. To illustrate this, we draw primarily from Common Core Learning Standards and related policy reports, as they are grounded in our experiences as former teachers and field supervisors in New York City primary schools, and use such to discuss socialization, qualification, and subjectification at the intersection of childhood and public schooling. This is not an argument about parenting, nor do we propose practical solutions to the mess we have allowed. For us, it is not enough to blame from afar the powerful profit-minded elite for entering into our schools. For us, the path for neoliberalization continues to be cleared by our refusal to recognize the child as co-existing in the world, and it is this fundamental misrecognition that contributes to their dehumanization in the classroom.

The Child in Context

It is no surprise that schooling itself is a disciplinary enterprise that "tightens the body" (Corrigan, 1991). Children walk through its doors and become subject to elaborate techniques of surveillance, normalization, testing, and audit (Gore, 1995). They are divided into grade levels and given materials appropriate to their ability. Such categories of exclusion are generally enforced by the teacher and justified through systems of evaluation, but they are also well known by the students who self-regulate themselves according to the rules of neoliberal governmentality. The content and delivery of knowledge is decided upon, broken into discrete manageable chunks, and designed, planned, and taught according to a schedule that is quite literally broken down by the minute. Bells and signals relay when children must sit, pay attention, work with others, go outside, eat food, drink

water, or be alone. While none of this is new, the rules of regulation — what is taught, how and for what purpose — must never become unquestioned normalcy (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). The educational institution, its space, activities, population, modes of communication, and codes of obedience all serve to reinforce assumptions about childhood that make the child particularly and uniquely vulnerable to changes in school policies and practices.

While the child-to-future narrative has always been historically specific, over the past decade it has taken a dramatic turn with the advent of neoliberal policies both in and out of the school system. In the United States, profit-driven networks of state and local politicians, multi-national corporations, philanthropists, and representatives from the technology industry have taken over large sectors of public education, inventing new structures of governance, creating new guidelines for teacher certification, designing and enforcing new forms of curriculum content, educational language, and pedagogical methods and approaches.

At the same time, cuts to the social wage, disinvestment in social reproduction, and intensified dispossession and hyper-exploitation have rendered the child's future precarious, if not outright disposable (Katz, 2011). This does not imply that the subject of the child is simply determined as a result of external pressure, but rather speaks to its constant emergence as subjectivities that respond to an external need, force or desire to construct, conduct, and negotiate the self in particular ways and within particular conditions of possibility (Butler, 1997). New patterns of governing the child as a subject tied to futurity, inextricably linked to adult fears, desires, and fantasies, have indeed shaped the concept of the educated child and the educated child's recognizability of itself (Smith, 2014), but do so as contextualized and historicized lineages of truth and rationality.

For the purpose of this work, we deploy the term child and childhood, not in reference to an individual child, but rather as a shifting relational term whose meaning is defined primarily through its interaction with another shifting term, adulthood (Gittins, 2004; James & Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1996; Kehily, 2008). Therefore, childhood implies more than a biological phase in human development or an idealized state of romanticized innocence and purity. Instead, we consider childhood as the existence of a distinct, separate, and fundamentally unique social group that has been "fabricated" (Bloch et al., 2004; Popkewitz, 2004) and made possible through an amalgam of statements and hierarchies about what is needed from the child. Therefore, notions of childhood are not simply descriptions of individuals or representations of social interests and structural forces, but ways of thinking that produce certain kinds of individuals living in a certain kind of world (Katz, 2008, 2011). Through this approach, we can consider childhood as a site of struggle upon which to better understand how historically situated educational aims and practices produce cultural theses about how a child should live and be.

According to Diana Gittins (2004), since the beginning of the sixteenth century, two primary notions have undergirded conceptions of the modern child: the "romantic," morally innocent child and the "tabula rasa," or cognitively empty child. However, prior to the age of Enlightenment, the child bore little distinction from adults and during this time lived alongside adults rather than under the pretense of adults-in-the-making. There was no attention given to their unique experiences, nor was there a need for specialized education. As Western reason came to disambiguate concerns over the human capacity to emancipate oneself from a state of ignorance, the child came to sit between two disparate visions: one in which they were ascribed a spirituality that placed them closer to God,

nature, and all things good (Rousseau, as cited in Hultqvist & Dahlberg, 2001) and the other in which they occupied the bottom rung on an obligatory and ordered ladder toward progressive rationality and adulthood. Emerging from the Enlightenment, they became the Ideal immanence and the messengers of reason (Jenks, 1996). For centuries since, this very basic understanding of the child, one that Valerie Walkerdine (2009) claims has always been steeped within the values and practices of a rising European middle class, has been a powerful and persuasive influence in shaping a normative understanding of the child as natural and dependent.It is against this Western, class-specific, and gendered domesticity, one distinct from the majority of the world, that the child has been afforded the quasi-human (Lyotard, 1991) status as a non-autonomous agent. Even as scholars in the field stress the importance of moving away from dualisms to understand how people become subjects within specific local practices and "complex circuits of exchange" (Walkerdine, 2009), the child in most circumstances is understood as a human being who must meet the virtues, fears, and desires set forth by their adult counterparts. To borrow from James Kincaid (1992), "the child carries for us things we somehow cannot carry for ourselves, sometimes anxieties we want to be divorced from and sometimes pleasure so great we could not, without the child, know how to contain them" (p. 74). Tied to a distinctive form of innocence, upon which adults amplify and transfer their idealizations of depravity, corruption, and uncertainty, the subject of the child became emptied and hollowed of its own experience, left to interiorize traits of ignorance, and inscribed as dependent on the adult for definition.

In her recent book, Aparna Mishra Tarc (2015) eloquently examines how a child's entry into the adult world is marked by an overdependence on the spoken word such that the adult community denies that the child even harbors intelligible thought prior to language acquisition. In drawing upon Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Spivak, she questions how a reliance on literacy, in its most generic and cognitive form, serves to colonize the child's inner life, forcibly removing the child from its maternal relation and rushing it toward external forms of humanness. Particular kinds of existence, then, are discursively mediated to gain membership into adulthood, or as Lyotard suggests the promises of humanity. Yet undeterred, she argues that "a hospitable pedagogy of literacy might help soften the blow that the symbolic world wages on the child's unique sense of herself," (p. 11) rather than determine the worth or worthiness of the child against some outside analytic or measure.

Even more, the boundary laid between adults and children has brought forth a specific etymology with derivations steeped in condescension (Shapiro, 1999). To act childishly is to act without thought, immaturely, without reason or rationale. The term child has been used to define and denigrate certain social groups perceived as inferior: colonized peoples, slaves, and women. Child, in this way, denotes dependency, powerlessness, and inferiority. The discourse around childhood allows unequal, perhaps even unjust, treatment of the child, in that the child does not have the same say in matters that affect them, their consent does not carry the same authority or moral significance, and their actions are not taken as seriously as those of adults. Perhaps, this provides a hint as to why theories of childhood lack in critical treatment and why childhood studies are mostly devoid of emancipatory narratives. As a result, the most natural of duties, then, is for the adult to use their greater faculties of reason and experience in order to take control of the lives of younger people, to protect, nurture, discipline, and educate them.

Particular narratives about the child are likewise dependent on oppositional constructions that bring into discussion culture-specific intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Franz Fanon's (1952) application of psychoanalysis in understanding the deeply debilitating effects of white society on Black consciousness reveal the unnatural training of children through the association of "blackness" with "wrongness." Here, Fanon gestures toward racist imagery and cultural representations in storybooks that sew Blackness to villainy, thereby inducing a divided self-perception as the Black child comes to know itself and its post-colonial dependency upon Whites as heroes and saviors. The reification of "white," conflated with notions of "innocence" and "hope" is manifest in the differential governing of individual children who are marked as outside the defined borders of "civility and rescuability" (Baker, 1998). This comes into sharp focus as the US state continues its attack on Black children,[3] murdered at the hands of White police officers, subject to hidden practices of surveillance, incarceration, school abandonment, inhabiting what Katherine McKitttrick (2015) terms, "plantation geographies," or lands of comparative freedoms and everyday criminalization. Despite such tragedy, Fanon (1952) does not leave us in despair. Instead, he attends to the difference between the imposition of institutional meaning and the space of endless creation in which the self and the world can be reinvented and given a new futurity. This latter emphasis is what we discuss as subjectification.

Neoliberal Governmentality

At the same time that conceptions of childhood enable the intrusion of neoliberal educational policies and practices, they are also inextricably linked to the discursive creation and re-creation of the child as a product of and participant in political−economic practices and thinking. Neoliberalization has, therefore, involved much more than increased privatization, deregulation, and authoritarian rule by a select corporate elite. Neoliberal discourse establishes links between thought and action such that ethical beliefs, "habits of the heart," and social relations are conflated with economic imperatives, incentives, and fines (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal governance therefore carries with it a certain type of rationality − a style of ordering and managing society through the production of self-regulating subjects performing optimally within historically specific conditions of constraint and possibility. In following Foucault's shift away from an analysis of power as repressive to an understanding of power as productive, the question then becomes: how are social relations under neoliberal regimes rationalized?

According to Stephen J. Ball (2013), educational policies and practices work precisely as strategies created by the nation-state to uphold "sinews of power" (p. 6) and control knowledge about the child. In the aftermath of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, neoliberal reforms in the United States began to overtake the educational terrain by first framing the purported cultural, moral, and intellectual deficits of the child as an impediment to economic mobilization, then heightening gaps in achievement as an urgent threat to national competitiveness, security, and global hegemony (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). Following Cindi Katz (2008), the "becomingness" of the child makes it a "tremendously fertile figuration upon which all manner of things, ideas, affective relations, and fantasies are projected" (p. 7). As neoliberal social and economic policies render the future increasingly precarious and unstable, the child emerges as a risk-laden subject. Anxieties around economic,

geopolitical, and environmental stability are then met with educational policies and practices ensuring "student preparation" and "readiness." This constructed treatment of the child, by way of educational reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB),[4] Race to the Top,[5] and more recently the Common Core Learning Standards resulted in unprecedented federal and corporate oversight of public schools and a renewed emphasis on uniformity, evaluation, and curricular control.

As argued, neoliberalism has capitalized on the public's fear of economic instability, therein tying the aims of futurity onto our conceptions of childhood (Sobe, 2012). The discursive practices of curriculum, the aspect of education upon which this paper is largely focused, produces a condition that legitimizes aligning the educated child (Fendler, 1998) with the concerns of postindustrial society and does so unabashedly. One clear example of this is found in the very self-description that Common Core provides on its website:

> The Common Core is informed by the highest, most effective standards from states across the United States and countries around the world. The standards define the knowledge and skills students should gain throughout their K-12 education in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs (Common Core, n.d.).

Foucault's (2010) concept of governmentality illuminates how the child, through statements such as the one above, comes to be known and known to itself as a particular kind of being that is engaged in education exclusively as a means to entering the workforce. Following Ira Shor (1999), such discourse around workforce preparation "addresses us to produce the different identities we carry forward in life…teaching us what kind of people to become and what kind of society to make" (p. 1). Governmentality puts into interaction how knowledge is operationalized in ways that compel the subject to surveil, evaluate, and manage its own actions with respect to broader political economic aims and how particular subjects become shaped through governing processes that are both direct and diffused.

Therefore, the child, through its subjective production, is invited and coerced into certain kinds of activities, while at the same time neoliberal social and economic policy are embedding themselves within the very discourses that envelop such practices. Here, we find that the child is both an agent obliged to protect the prosperity of the nation, as well as the subject through which such interventions are inscribed (Ball, 2012; Smith, 2014). Discourses that construct the child as one who must be "college and career-ready" do not merely represent characteristics of the projected child, but operate "as a social practice that generates action and participation" (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 5). It excludes and includes according to normative views of "preparation" by producing a disciplinary force of compliance.

Educational objectives and aims work not only on the level of policy, but have shifted the ways in which curriculum and teaching practices must now unfold. While classroom curriculum under the social efficiency model linked content, methods, and ideas to increased productivity (Bobbitt, 1918), more recent mandates mirror such backward design by first beginning with the end goals and assessments. Such outcome-based curricula are rationalized for an effectiveness that promises to produce an educated subject in the most risk-free manner possible (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). The educated subject of modernity, says Fendler (1998), must not only have the capacity for scientific observation,

but is itself identified as that object of scientific observation. These outcomes symbolize imagined expectations of the child, not as a being with tangential thoughts, curiosities, or psychic particulars, but as an empty vessel, first carved out, then refilled by curriculum standards, practices, and policies. It is evident then that educational discourse is never neutral or bounded. Rather, it dwells in grander patterns of governance and links our conception of the child to the material and ideological aims of political and economic life.

The Three Domains of Gert Biesta

While we are indebted to Foucault's concept of governmentality and disciplinary power as an overarching theory to understanding the discursive production of childhood in the neoliberal school, we find Biesta's (2013) three domains of educational work particularly helpful in organizing a discussion on how governmentality functions at the granular level of classroom practice.

Socialization: Dispositions, Futures, and Readiness

According to Biesta (2015), one of the major functions of organized education lies in what he terms *socialization*, the ways in which education serves assimilationist aims by deploying normative discourses, in this case around "flexibility" and "readiness." To meet the demands of such a social order, the socialization function of schooling "inserts individuals into existing ways of doing and being and, through this, plays an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition — both with regard to its desirable and its undesirable aspects" (Biesta, 2009, p. 40). The flexible child optimizes the self by having the wherewithal to draw fluidly from a variety of techniques for self-responsibilization, efficiency-enhancement, and risk-reduction. The "ready" child becomes intelligible within a neoliberal political economic order in which individual skills and productivity equate to "readiness" for twenty-first century competitiveness. In contrast, the child that is not ready for the future is unprepared, precarious, even damaged or dangerous. The unready child is an undesirable and risk-laden subject.

   These socializing effects in education lie primarily within historically specific social, cultural, and political orders. For instance, as the Fordist phase of capitalism transitioned to neoliberalism in the late twentieth century, a relatively stable, albeit unequal, economy rooted in imperialist military spending, widespread industrial production, mass employment, and a welfare state was restructured into a new globalized political economy organized around finance, investment, flexibilization of labor, privatization, and the deregulation of private interests. Under Fordism, governmentality in education had served to order "ground-level social relations according to expertly designed logics of control" (Fraser, 2003, p. 162) such that the socialization function and its role in constructing the child were fine-tuned to the demands of that particular historically specific phase of capitalism. With the shift toward globalization and neoliberal capitalism, everyday life and labor became increasingly contingent, precarious, and in flux. As Cindi Katz (2008, 2011) points out, the social disinvestment, endless war, and environmental degradation that mark contemporary capitalism have summoned up profound social insecurities and anxieties, which in turn are projected into constructions of the child. In a world without safety

nets, where life is marked by dizzying fluidity and myriad displacements, the ready child has to be flexible.

Flexibility, a way of thinking and acting that is sought out in multiple spheres — school-houses, courtrooms, and battlefields, as well as by multi-national corporations and the state's political machinery — is "readiness" par excellence. To this end, the Common Core frames "flexibility" as requiring a kind of freedom, more specifically the kind of freedom derived from becoming a metacognitive, self-monitoring, and self-directed learner. In her work, Fendler (2001) takes up flexibilization as an epistemological, curricular, and peda-gogical intervention for the construction of certain kinds of educated subjects. She elabo-rates *developmentality* as a particular technology for constructing the flexible child within the neoliberal landscape by blending behavioral and developmental psychology with managerial discourses around efficiency and production. Developmentality, then, links choice and autonomy to stages of child development, and emphasizes "developmentally appropriate" styles of self-knowledge and management that socialize children into more flexible classroom workers. As such, developmental psychology demarcates phases of childhood, mapping its segmentation onto a larger narrative around the role of cognition within the social and political economic aims of neoliberal capitalism (Burman, 2008). The flexible child of the Common Core can pull from a repertoire of skills to make informed decisions about problem-solving, language use, social relations, classroom conduct, and bodily regulation, and, as a result, will be prepared "for success in our global economy and society" (Common Core, n.d.)

In such a knowledge economy, the discourse of "readiness" reframes skill as human capital to be accumulated and put in motion through market exchange for higher rates of return. The child is socialized into accumulating critical thinking and literacy skills to improve its market position in the knowledge economy. At the same time, the commodifi-cation of knowledge provides a new metric for an auditing culture in education which, through deploying various examination techniques (Ball, 2013), calculates and reinforces "the responsibility of individuals to manage their own affairs, to secure their own security with a prudential eye on the future" (Rose, 2007, p. 4). According to The World Bank (2013), "ideas and know-how" are "sources of economic growth" (p. xiii). Not only must the ready child be socialized into flexibility, it must also be highly skilled, exhibiting the mastery of each standard, promised to be essential for success in college, career, and life in today's global economy.

However, the socialization function of schooling and its fetishization of career-readi-ness are not just about constructing the child as a self-regulating and flexible worker, but also as a silent if not willing participant in an unequal social order upheld by state and vig-ilante violence, austerity, targeted abandonment, and racialized systems of hyper-exploi-tation (Melamed, 2006). Career-readiness functions as a euphemism, substituting the more desirable meanings connoted by the eventual attainment of a career (e.g., expanded consumption, stability, fulfillment) for the less desirable, dissonant, chaotic, and frighten-ing thoughts and images that accompany (non)participation in neoliberal capitalism. Readiness is not preparedness for participation in the building of a more just and humane society through feminist, anti-racist, and/or anti-capitalist grassroots struggle. Rather, readiness is a mode of socialization that seeks to prepare the child to participate uncriti-cally in the status quo, however detrimental these already existing material and ideologi-cal conditions may be to the child's own well-being, let alone the survival of other people.

Qualification: Curricula, Skills, and Testing

Biesta's (2015) concept of *qualifications* include the more visible and overt content knowledge, skills, and forms of judgment that within the neoliberal imaginary are promised to assist children in becoming subjects who can navigate the demands of modern culture. Drawing on Foucault, qualification can be said to take shape within the discourse of neoliberal reform, linking "truth" with practice in such a way as to etch into everyday life certain understandings about the relationships among school knowledge, literacy, and futurity. This domain is particularly, albeit not exclusively, tied to the world of work in that it directly aligns school curriculum and practices to economic development, global markets, and workforce preparation. For instance, according to the Common Core, by enforcing "clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts," the school will be able to qualify the child to assimilate smoothly into the socialized dispositions described above (Common Core, n.d.). To that end, the Common Core draws on a particular style of backwards mapping that links the long-term objectives of readiness for college, career, and life to immediate objectives whereby, within a certain time span, "students will be able to…" know and do certain measurable things in both math and literacy.

As Jory Brass (2014) writes, the Common Core was explicitly written for assessment purposes, constructing English language arts and math in terms of cognitive skills that can be assessed quantitatively through determined objectives. The qualifications needed to meet such objectives are sketched out in "Implementing the Common Core Standards," a brief published by the insurance corporation Met Life and authored by private sector nonprofits like Achieve (chaired by a Mark B. Grier of Prudential Financial, Inc.) and College Summit (a nonprofit organization with over $9 million in assets and headed by Keith Frome, executive director of King Center Charter School, and Jo Smith, a former telecommunications manager and consultant). Accordingly, instructional shifts in classroom teaching must ensure that a child:

- stay deeply connected to the text on the page,
- develop habits for making evidentiary arguments,
- comprehend "pivotal and commonly found words (such as 'discourse,' 'generation,' 'theory,' and 'principled'),"
- at least 50 percent of what they read should be informational text, rather than narrative,
- have speed and accuracy in simple calculations,
- memorize, through repetition, core functions such as arithmetic operations so that they are more able to understand and manipulate more complex concepts,
- balance practice and understanding of mathematical concepts "with intensity" by participating in "drills." (Achieve, College Summit, NASSP, & NAESP, 2013).

The qualified child must exhibit critical-thinking skills, the ability to closely and attentively read texts, and cogent reasoning linked to evidence collection skills. Similarly, the Common Core Mathematics Standards claim that conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application "with equal intensity" are the "knowledge and skills students need to be prepared for mathematics in college, career, and life" (Common Core,

n.d.). Underscored throughout is the requisite that teachers are able to clearly understand how these expectations differ from previous forms of classroom teaching.

Within this knowledge-based economy, literacy is reframed within the "pragmatics of 'optimization'" such that the literate child is constructed as an "enterprise…a self-maximizing productive unit operating in a market of performances" (Ball, 2013, p. 141). Thus, at the same time that globalization carved out new geographies of capitalist accumulation, Common Core sought to align the literacy curriculum to the shifting demands of the global workforce, claiming that "satisfying the demand for highly skilled workers is the key to maintaining competitiveness and prosperity in the global economy." However, as Biesta (2009) points out, the value of such knowledge and skill "depends on the access such knowledge gives to particular positions in society and this…is exactly how the reproduction of social inequality through education works" (p. 37). That is, backwards mapping constructs the child as a "prepared" learner by discursively linking short-term objectives and qualifications to long-term economic ones, but by doing so, obscures the historically accumulated material and ideological obstacles that produce differential access to structures of mobility and security (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This conflation of socialization and qualification in the construction of the child produces schooling conditions that govern a child within a knowledge regime shaped by marginality, deprivation, and the dispossessions of entire communities of people.

These qualifications are part and parcel of neoliberal education policy's "ideological project to reconstruct values, social relations, and social identities – to produce a new social imaginary" (Lipman, 2011, p. 10) around what the child already is and what it needs to become. The backwards mapping of Common Core insists that the child's qualifications in math and literacy will eventually take shape as an advantageous market position. In spite of the global economy's "gritty materialities" (Apple, 2006) and the increasingly limited resources available to low-income people of color, the skills mandated by the Common Core math and literacy set out to meet the demands of an allegedly race- and class-neutral market. For this to happen, the child itself, constructed now as a financial instrument laden (or deficient) with human capital, has to be rendered legible and calculable. How then to read and measure the value of math and literacy? In order to construct the child as a measurable subject, "school administration is geared toward management techniques designed to meet production targets (e.g., test scores)" and "teaching and learning are driven by performance indicators such as benchmark scores" resulting in a "new regulatory culture" of testing and punitive accountability (Lipman, 2011, p. 15). Through these techniques, the child becomes knowable by others, knowable to itself, and thereby governable according to the power embedded in that knowledge (Jenks, 2002). The Common Core extends corporate logic and interests by erecting epistemological boundaries that appear natural and fixed.

What exists, according to this logic, is a certain kind of child-in-the-world: human capital in a deracialized and dematerialized (Melamed, 2006) meritocratic social order in which the race- and class-blind guidelines laid out by the Common Core can somehow qualify the child for participation in a highly raced and classed market economy. Structuring such policy discourse is a rhetoric of equal opportunity available to the child through its calculable investments in particular forms of human capital. Such epistemic maneuvers not only legitimize further neoliberal social and economic restructuring, but also locate the child within its proper place in the neoliberal imaginary, discursively linked to new forms

of flexibilized precarious labor, individualism, competition, discipline, consumption, and cultural politics.

Subjectification: Learning, Shame, and the Child

None of this is to suggest that the child is passively regulated by an external relation of power. It is precisely the ability to reconfigure the condition and emerge as a recognizable agent that leads to Biesta's (2013) third domain of education: subjectification. According to Biesta, subjectification involves the way in which an individual becomes a subject, the educational processes and practices that contribute to this emergence, as well as concerns about action, responsibility, freedom, and independence. Here, he draws from Emmanuel Levinas in challenging the Western tradition that humans become human through consciousness, a relationship of knowledge that is imbued with disclaimers of moral qualities, capacities, and a defined human essence. This ethical reformulation, therefore, moves the subject of humanness out from the domain of being, and instead places emphasis on how subjectivities exist and how subjecthoods are made possible.

In *Foucault's Challenge*, Thomas Popkewitz (1998) claims, "there is no child in school until we have theories that enable us to talk of childhood. Childhood normalizes the way in which children are to be seen, talked about, and acted upon as 'learners' or as having a 'developmental process'" (p. 12). In contrast to theories that see power as an outside force that dominates and determines the individual, Foucault (1977) makes a radical departure by conceiving of power as not only acting on the individual, but also activating and forming the subject itself. Subjectification, then, is literally the making of a subject, or how the subject emerges from the paradoxical process of mastering a normalizing ideal while simultaneously bringing into discourse the possibility for subversion and resistance.

The schooling enclosure, as a separate disciplinary space, distributes individuals in ways that makes them more visible and manageable as teachers and learners. The prototypical form of distribution in school is done through linking age with rank and minimizing the outliers, which are oftentimes relegated into specialized rooms for either Special Education, English Language Learners, or gifted and talented. In "regular" classrooms, teachers are required to keep detailed record of student performance and to restructure part of the day for small-group instruction during which students are again categorized and grouped by ability, in this case, into low, middle and high abilities. The language of "differentiation" differentiates the master teacher as one who can modify curriculum to meet the needs of all ability levels at once (e.g., low students draw while high students write, or low students write less as high students write more). Within such groups is another level of leveling that deploys readability formulas, first invented in 1923 (Fry, 2002), and limits a child's exposure to literature outside of their measured competency (e.g., Level A students are only allowed to read Level A books until they are tested as ready to move onto Level B). In elementary schools, such rankings are always public in an attempt to foster self-reflexivity, and children are required to know thyself as learners and recite their appropriate status to any adult who requests it.

However, the institution, according to governmentality, does not seek an individual upon which to unilaterally impose this subjecthood; it produces a disciplinary force such that the individual discursively constitutes itself as a learner, which in turn produces the condition for its resistance. Given what Bronwyn Davies (2006) calls a "radically

conditioned agency," the agentic subject, never passive in their dealings, may critically examine its condition with the capacity to disavow and subvert the powers that act. Despite the consequences, we often observe children sneaking into classroom libraries and retrieving books out of level, placing them surreptitiously into plastic baggies and hiding them in backpacks and inside desks. Some import unleveled books from home, read them at recess, and share them with friends. During independent reading time, they open their books as instructed, then feign attention. A closer look shows them quite busy with distractions that temporarily disengage them from the external forces that work upon their subjecthood as appropriate learners. At times, but not always, when children are caught with books that do not match their testing level, they are reprimanded by the teacher and ordered back to their sections. Reaching the next level is justified as a motivational device.

While socialization and qualification speak to the kinds of learners, skills, and strategies needed by the neoliberal order, subjectification attends to the meaning of the learner itself. Here, we see a devaluation of narrative, an imagination that has been flattened, categorized, then ranked. Unprecedented, we have now embarked on a manic system that according to a grade-by-grade analysis of two school districts by the American Federation of Teachers has resulted in up to 34 different test administrations per year, not including the curricular self-assessments required multiple times per day (Nelson, 2013). It is almost unfathomable to think that prior to the 1960s the issue of assessment was not even mentioned in official school discourses.

These reforms work precisely in line with discursive constructions of the child as quasi-human and non-autonomous and are inscribed in part through the calculated administration of shame. The stakes are severe and merciless. A report on the 2014 New York City Test Results first introduces itself as "aligned with college and workplace expectations" and "in line with other high-performing countries," then shows only 33.1% of NYC third graders (7−8 year olds) proficient in math and 28.1% proficient in English (Department of Education, 2014). Children are often times well aware that scores are not only indicative of middle school acceptance rates, but simultaneously fixed to the employability of their beloved teachers, to the closure of their school, and as indicated in the report above, causal to the fate of the nation. This shame, tied to the appearances of oneself in the presence of others, induces a subjecthood that is disassociated by the panopticism of schooling, one that is shaped both by how the subject perceives itself and also by the way in which others will judge, evaluate, and find the child either desirable or insufficient. Shame, writes Peter Taubman (2009), is the failure to live up to our ideal or the ideal image we hold of ourselves. In this case, the image is one far removed and unrecognizable to the child, an artificial categorization and abstracted sense of self that further confounds the already tumultuous new world in which they are thrown.

In this neoliberal time, the defining characteristic of the learning subject is in its ability to inscribe oneself and self-govern through the language of levels and assessments. As Lisa Farley (2006) reminds us "[leveling] invokes the image of a ladder with rungs that one must pass through in a normative and linear way" (p. 1034). These rungs symbolize benchmarked goals toward which the student aims, and assessments, along with fidelity to prescribed curricula, are proffered as antidotes in "closing the gap," a rhetorical maneuver that attempts to imply equity as well as progress. As self-assessments claim to involve students in their own work, to establish autonomy, and enable self-monitoring —

euphemistic proclamations for independence, freedom, and responsibility — students are required to complete sentences that begin, "to hit my fluency target I need to get" or complete rubrics entitled, "I can rate my retelling skills." At every measure, there is a defined step toward which they must aim; with every inscription, subjectification brings the learning subject closer to an identification with this language. However, this "hyperin-strumental rationalism" (Mishra Tarc, 2006, p. 302) should not be assuaged by the shaming of teachers. Foucault's governmentality enables us to see that what has become an absurd and entangled web of internal and external evaluation is a confluence of various systems of thought: the child as a site of struggle and futurity, education as a function of neoliberal ideology and practice, and the subjectification of the learner as tied to a social order through the administering of shame.

Conclusions

Here, we have argued that certain conceptions of the child leave them vulnerable to neo-liberal educational policies and practices and highlighted examples within three areas: "readiness" into the workforce; rational evidence-based skills and knowledge; and leveling, assessments, and shame. In using Foucault's notion of governmentality and disciplinary power, we focus attention on the circulation of knowledge that bounds construction of the child in question, while at the same time accounts for its capillary forms and everyday manifestations in schools and classrooms. We, by no means, claim to have made a thor-ough investigation of this. Inherent to Foucault's methodology is perpetual movement within and among complex webs of reasoning, an incompleteness that refuses stasis and ruptures economic, social, and political boundaries. Instead, we draw from our own empir-ical work as former teachers, teacher educators, educational researchers, and field supervi-sors to then employ Biesta's (2015) framework and organize key examples that reflect the ways in which current policy and curricular materials expropriate and incorporate the child into its totalizing system.

In moving toward a pragmatic closure, we are wary of alternative conceptions of the child that claim to be emancipatory or redemptive, humanizing or reparative, careful not to exchange one category for another, but rather to take up the work of continually prob-lematizing the system of categorization itself. We are in thought with Jacques Derrida (1978) as he troubles the continual impulse of Western philosophical tradition to funda-mentally ground meaning within a fixed center, defined by origin, consciousness, and a sense of being present. As shown, the political underpinning of educational policies and practices work from vastly different viewpoints than what is called for in the ethical. In ethics, the uncertainty or rather "undecidability" (Derrida, 1978) of how to live with others opens up the possibility for ethics itself. Yet as Mishra Tarc (2006) begins, "education resolves the problem of the ethics by replacing the teacher's questions, emerging from social conflict, with politically driven teacher training on how to be ethical" (p. 288), attempting to establish normative ethical and political codes that foreclose the possibility of what counts as ethical or political and reduce complex matters into a single pre-given version of politics.

While neoliberal policies and practices use the rhetoric of readiness and risk to seduce subjecthood into markethood, it subsequently refuses the plural and complicated nature that is inherent in educational sites and situations where people are required to be with

unlike others. Uniformity, particularly upon the child subject, comes into direct conflict with the ethical imperative that exists only as we make visible and defend singularity. Although it has been claimed that uniformity, either by data points, standardization, leveling, benchmarks, and assessment measures, is a technique used to secure equitable guidelines and instructions for the universalized child, current neoliberal reforms is anything but equitable. First, such universalizing concretizes the child as a subject drawn into opposition with the adult, set forth by ideals crafted from the desires of the adult world, and perpetually reinscribed as in a state of quasi-humanhood. It binds who is constituted as a child within anthropological and developmental discourses of man that we must not forget excludes all but those protected by the roots of white, middle class homogeneity. Furthermore, if neoliberal reform insists upon the effectiveness of uniformity, it also denies that the work of learning requires an ongoing engagement with the infinite uniqueness of the other and that it is precisely this difference that opens the possibility for learning itself. The very force of universalization produces a condition of sociality that not only limits the child from attending to the other, but is also one in which they are denied an affirmation of their own singularity.

How does one respond to the subjectification of the child as it is mandated through particular neoliberal knowledges and dispositions? How does one speak, listen, and move when jammed at the crux of multiple competing imperatives? Is it even possible for a public stirred into compliance by the language of security, fear, and risk to attend to the child? For us, the quality of educational encounters and experiences does not lie in adherence to rules about what constitutes good education. Yet the forces that co-opt media circuits, provide free technology, and promise to overturn a crisis they attribute to the failures of teachers and their unions have made powerful moves in convincing the nation that the most effective form of progress is linear, data-driven, and prescribed.

As well, to think of education as a space that holds possibilities requires a kind of trust that the attentiveness necessary for learning comes via a relationship with the student, as opposed to an intention that is made before or on behalf of the child (Todd, 2003). Such acts of listening do not elicit sanctuary; those "who welcome the unwelcomed, does not limit himself or herself to the task of learning, but is open to the possibility of 'being taught'" (Biesta, 2015, p. 58). In this, there is the possibility of being moved, perhaps even profoundly disturbed and unsettled. To end, we insist that resistance to neoliberal school reform must include the unknowable and undecidable and that one way in which to understand this is to refuse the temptation of historical constants, to lay focus on the events that breach the accustomed interpretation of evidence, to elicit the reversals of obviousness, and to attend to the practices that fail only to reveal the fragility of unitary explanation. To do this, we believe, we must listen to the child as a human being worthy of recognition and invite their narratives as a gesture of responsibility into the conversation on educational reform, policy, and practice.

Notes

1. Here we recognize plural definitions of knowledge including Foucault's (1972) term "knowledge" to imply meaning beyond representation, and to include the historical (subjugated) knowledge that is "buried and disguised" (p. 81) under formal, official, and universalizing

systems, as well as (naïve) knowledges that infer to knowledge that is discounted, singular, and capable of opposition and struggle against a historical unitary.

2. Since Biesta is used here as an organizational framework, we see no contradiction between the Foucauldian concept that subjects as constituted through discourse and the discussion of socialization or qualification in and through schooling. The notion of transmitting particular societal norms presents the condition of possibility in which Biesta's third domain of subjectification arises. Biesta's framework does not assume passivity, but rather accounts for the child as a social actor always in the making.

3. Since Michael Brown's death on 9 August 2014, at least 14 other teenagers − at least six of them African-American − have been killed by law enforcement. These include Tamir Rice, Cameron Tilman, VonDerrit Myers, Jr., Laquan McDonald, Carey Smith Viramontes, Jeffrey Holden, Qusean Whitten, Miguel Benton, Dillon McGee, Levi Wever, Karen Cifuentes, Sergio Ramos, Roshad McIntosh, and Diana Showman (Schrochlic, 2014).

4. The No Child Left Behind Act was proposed by former President George W. Bush (2001) and provides federal funding "to states for schools that establish annual assessments, demand progress, improve poorly performing schools, create consequences for failure, and protect home and private schools."

5. Race to the Top (2010) is a competitive grant program to encourage and reward States that are implementing significant reforms in the four education areas described in the ARRA: enhancing standards and assessments, improving the collection and use of data, increasing teacher effectiveness and achieving equity in teacher distribution, and turning around struggling schools.

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