Securing Dangerous Children as Literate Subjects

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This paper examines how the education of children as literate subjects in schools and community settings is implicated in the politics of securing civil society. Foucault's concept of biopolitics is used to consider how young people are produced as securitised subjects. The emergence of the concept of human security as a technology for measuring human development is problematised using Bacchi's methodology. The analysis uses the Northern Territory intervention to question representations of young people as subjects of danger and as potentially dangerous subjects. This paper argues that the use of literacy by the apparatus of state and non-state governmentalities functions as a technology of risk mitigation and biopolitical government: a way of contingently positioning the freedoms of children as subjects to forms of rule. The paper concludes by suggesting that literacy has been deployed as a techne of an authoritarian form of liberalism in which the power to delimit entangles children in biopolitical strategies and sovereign intervention.

■ **Keywords:** literacy, children, security, biopolitics, civil society

Introduction

In this paper, I explore ways in which the child has been conceptualised as a subject of development for civil society. Drawing on Foucault's genealogical approach, I am concerned by how the concept of human security can be connected to ways in which children have been conceived as both risk and danger to the security of the state. Here, I take on Bacchi's (2012b, 2014) use of Foucault's (2000) notion of problematisation to trouble the politics of human security as it relates to governing the development of children. This brings into view the relationship between development and colonisation. To explore these themes, I use the case of the Australian Government's 2007 intervention in Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory. The intervention was partly motivated by the *Little Children are Sacred Report* (Wild & Anderson, 2007), which investigated reported incidents of child abuse in remote Aboriginal communities. My analysis leads me to considering the effects of children produced as the subjects of politics, rather than political subjects in their own right. This case study demonstrates how the logics of government constructs the literacy of children as a civilising agent deployed to delimit human subjectivity and manage the risk of dangerous subjects.

At the time of writing this paper, it is some 14 years since the disaster of 9/11 and 7 years since the global financial crisis. Nevertheless, the effects of the subsequent 'War on Terror' and the experience of economic uncertainty live on. In Australia, members of the community have been asked by government to participate in the surveillance of potential terrorists. A case in point is the recent production and dissemination of the *Radicalisation Awareness Kit* (Australian Government, 2015) for Australian school teachers announced by Federal Counter Terrorism Minister Michael Keenan and Education Minister Christopher Pyne (Holm, 2015). The apparent need to engage teachers in this kind of work has been represented through the dual problems of the effects of insurgency abroad and the risks that youth vulnerable to incitement by terrorists pose to Australian civil society. The development of awareness kits for teachers in Australia and in other jurisdictions brings two spaces of policy problematisation (Bacchi, 2012a) into view.

First, the use of education as an element of foreign policy and tool for governing the national interest are twin mechanisms by which the securing of civil society has entered into

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the economy of educational practice. This involves engaging teachers in the labour of governing the political literacy of children beyond and within the national border. Second, the spectre of an (un) educated, illiterate body of children has been represented as posing risks to the economic security of the nation state. It comes at a time when Australian citizens have been asked to shoulder the effects of economic uncertainty whilst limiting their expectations of the social benefits of a globalised market economy (Banks, 2010). In both of the senses outlined above, the subjectification of children as political and economic agents make them dangerous subjects (Foucault, 1982). As such, education of children can simultaneously be understood as a tool that engages both the governing of human life (biopolitics) within and beyond the nation state and of foreign policy (geopolitics).

By implying that children are prone to corruptible influences, Ministers Keenan and Pyne's announcement positions children as subjects of development. The policy sits alongside a long standing view that the conduct of children is a public responsibility necessary to ensure the flourishing of a stable society (Baker, 2003). The announcement by Ministers Keenan and Pyne illustrates the way children, here defined as human subjects under the age of 18 years (Australian Government, 1986), can be objectified within political discourse and made subject to regulatory practices (Rose, 1999). The problems of educating children and securing civil society are implicated here in a 'whole of government' apparatus (Shergold, 2004). One striking feature of the work that Keenan and Pyne have proposed is to ask teachers to monitor the subjectivities produced through the various modes of communication demonstrated by children, especially those children understood to be most at risk or dangerous. This paper does not propose to examine the policy enactments connected to the launch of the *Radicalisation Awareness Kit* (Australian Government, 2015). Rather, I highlight this example to indicate why there is a need to examine how the literacy of dislocated children has historically been connected to the securitising of economic and political subjectivities. My question then is to ask how it is made possible to think that children warrant the surveillance and intervention by government.

Methodology

Identifying the Objects of Study using Foucault and Bacchi

The scope of this essay is historical in nature. It takes into account forms of government reasoning in different historical periods and how these ways of thinking have been used to bring programmes of governance into being (Foucault, 2008). It is particularly concerned with how the concept of human security has been understood by government and non-government agencies and how mechanisms of security have been deployed in strategic attempts to guarantee liberal constructs of freedom and society (Opitz, 2011). Hence, the paper looks at how the literate child has been

incorporated within ever developing frameworks of government for security.

As a critical history of thought, this study engages that type of historical–philosophical critique that Foucault (2010) called genealogy. Genealogical critique can be considered a form of interpretation, a way of imaginatively entering into a problem space to construct a counter narrative to common sense understandings of history and the political present (Owen, 2002). In this genealogy, I am suggesting that such common sense understandings of education and literacy need to be re-evaluated in the light of a history of policy inscriptions (Ball, 1997) and transformations in national and global society.

Consistent with the genealogical approach, I have chosen to investigate particular historical moments where the relationship between the state's formation of civil society and literate citizens is in view. These slices of historical events allow a critical analysis of the literate child as a lever of government in educational and other social contexts. As such, I am not constructing a progressive and sequential history. The discussion and analysis in this paper stems from a large research project where my selection of historical data responded to ways in which conceptions of government and educational practice have a tendency to flow across national borders (Kelly, 2015). Whilst Australia was the locus of this study, my historical map took into account ways that events in international contexts related to and influenced this local context. Importantly, this necessitated an examination of how nation-states, like Australia, reflect upon their own purposes and style of government and how policy actors imagine and project particular identities of nationhood and emblems of citizenship onto constructions of the developing child.

In framing this analysis as a critical history of thought (genealogy), this research can also be understood as a critical discourse analysis. I have drawn upon Bacchi's (2014) notions of policy as discourse and her conceptualisation of policy problematisation to support the analysis of data and help shape the design of this research. Bacchi conceptualises problematisation in two ways. First, she defines problematisation as the representation of a policy problem by policy actors, and second as the analyst's critical examination of the problem as it has been represented. Genealogy requires adopting a critical disposition. Bacchi's methodology enables the questioning of policy problematisation by policy makers and provides a tool for tracing the connection between the government of security and the deployment of children as literate subjects.

She suggests that there are three propositions that are central to her 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach:

1. We are governed through problematisations.
2. We need to study problematisations (through analysing the problem representations they contain), rather than 'problems'.

3. We need to problematise (interrogate) the problematisations on offer through scrutinising the premises and effects of the problem representations they contain (Bacchi, 2014, p. 47).

Bacchi suggests that these propositions signal an interest in the critical examination of: (a) forms of rule and their rationalities; (b) how forms of rule produce problems; and (c) the effects of forms of rule. She argues that it is possible to use public policies and policy proposals as starting points to access the problematisations through which we are governed. In outlining the possible uses of policy texts, Bacchi suggests that policy, or policy proposals, function as prescriptive texts that rely on a particular problematisation or problematisations (Bacchi, 2012b, 2014). Part of the task for this analysis is to see how the representation of the developing child as a literate subject has been constituted in policy statements. This involves examining the conditions that bring policy 'problems' into view. I begin the analysis by exploring ways in which the child has been conceptualised as a subject of development for civil society.

Problematisations
Securing the Development of the Literate Child
Since the time of Periclean democracy, the child has been considered as an object of government. Plato (1892a) thought that 'the young of all creatures cannot be quiet in their bodies or in their voices' (p. 31) and having not yet acquired 'his own proper sense' that they rage and roar 'without rhyme or reason' (p. 52). Plato (1892b) sees the child's seeming inability to 'attain the use of reason' until later in their life, 'if at all' (p. 133), as both a problem of development and a concern for the stability of the state. For Plato, the conduct of children is a matter of legal intervention where the teacher has a role in administering appropriate narratives that will shape children's souls. The stories children are first taught should be 'models of virtuous thought' (Plato, 1892b, p. 61). Whilst children are considered to be a risk, the makers and teachers of stories are also held responsible so that 'the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction' (Plato, 1892b, p. 59). For Plato, the child is an impressionable tender thing whose character is still being formed. To carelessly allow children to hear inappropriate tales might damage the formation of values 'we would wish them to have when they are grown up' (Plato, 1892b, p. 59).

For Plato, children are a natural resource to be shaped for the good of the state. This is a task to be taken seriously, regulated and not left in the hands of un-administered teachers and poets. In this sense, the legislated curriculum makes students subject before the law. It is through a curriculum administered by magistrates that children learn their responsibility to the sovereignty of the state. For the good of the state, the child 'must be bound with many bridles' by the legislator and 'guardian of law, who is the director of

education' (Plato, 1892a, p. 190). This legislator must guard against children disrupting tradition and making innovations in their games. The child who does so may come to desire a 'different sort of life' and 'other institutions and laws' (Plato, 1892a, p. 179). These desires, suggests Plato (1892a), are the 'greatest of evils to [the] state' (p. 179). Such a threat to the state demands that controls be placed on poets and teachers and that the state intervene in the life of families whereby 'pupils shall be regarded as belonging to the state' (Plato, 1892a, p. 186). Here, we can see that children's literacy practices are bound to the education of values, obligations of citizenship, and duty to the powers of sovereign government. Baker (2003) suggests that the fabrication of an 'ideal polis can not be disarticulated from ideal rearing practices' where the 'figure of the child' is deployed as 'tool, problem and possibility' (p. 464). The intersection between education, the literacies permitted to be taught, and learning the practice of being lawful are considered as a model for governing the child's chaotic nature for an ordered and civilised body politic. This Platonic view spells out the dangers of unbridled nature, but defers the responsibilities of political life until adulthood.

Similarly, since the Enlightenment, classical liberalism's key protagonists have represented the child as not yet ready to engage fully in political life (Baker, 2001). Despite their political differences, the production of the literate and literary mind as civil citizen was a concept common to Hobbes, Locke, Ferguson, and Smith. Ferguson (1767), for example, suggests that a literary education is useful for protecting against indolence by extending the capability and conduct of young men to perform skills and vigorously pursue 'the objects of policy, and in finding the expedients of war and national defence' (p. 25). For Ferguson, the foundations of a civil society are based on an educable body that secure the 'increase and industry' of society (1767, p. 105). Similarly for Smith (1763/1982), the protection against 'barbarians and savages' could be secured through the utility of possessing the liberal arts of writing and arithmetic necessary for the production of life and good government:

> They give the inhabitants of the country liberty and security . . . They maintain the rich in the possession of their wea[l]th against the violence and rapacity of the poor, and by that means preserve that usefull inequality in the fortunes of mankind which naturally and necessarily arises from the various degrees of capacity, industry, and diligence in the different individuals . . . (p. 338)

Ferguson and Smith premised the constitution of such a subject in a liberal political economy on a division in the access to forms of knowledge and the production of labour. The constitution of a secure, civil society was conceived, in part, to be dependent on a differentiated distribution of education and literacy. The formation of literate subjects was also seen by Ferguson to constitute a soldier-like citizen deployed in the interests of the state. Similarly, Smith thought that if each class was to be educated to a level as required by

the needs of the state, it was: (a) to enable government to reason with those most likely to mobilise against the state, and (b) to recruit citizens in the interests of the state. For Smith, the desirability of a flourishing political economy was dependent on a secure state that was dependent on the production of a 'martial body' of educated citizens. For Smith, the hierarchical education of each social class was necessary for the juridical, political, and economic processes of governing civil society (Kelly, 2015).

In the 20th century, the view of the child as a being vulnerable to the brute reality of political life, can be found in Arendt's (2006) conception of the risks of education. Arendt cautions the dangers of an educational ideal that conceives of education as 'an instrument of politics' and that 'political activity itself was conceived of as a form of education' (Arendt, 2006, p. 157). She also warns against the dangers of Platonic utopianism where the child, understood by Arendt as (2006) being new to the world, is subjected to 'intervention, based upon the absolute superiority of the adult, and the attempt to produce the new as a *fait accompli*' (p. 157). Arendt sees that the natality of the child, a fact of being born into a world that is already old, 'requires special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world' (p. 161). This protection constitutes a form of apprenticeship through the agency of adults who bear the responsibility to lead children into the adult world. The adult's role is to protect the child against the tyranny of the world of children. For Arendt, the child's undeveloped capacity for reasoning renders them defenceless against the totalising effects of the pressure to conform. The role of the adult is to protect against the pressure to enter into public life too early, as children by 'nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed' (p. 169).

Ranciere (2007) takes the view that children are born equal and are already political by the fact of their capability to acquire language untutored. This contrasts with Arendt's view that the child needs to be tutored into the discourses of the world, in preparation for their responsibility to remake the world. For Ranciere, the speaking child is already a political subject (Biesta, 2013, p. 92). As Bingham and Biesta (2010) note, when the child addresses an adult interlocutor as a speaker, she deploys a linguistic force that demands recognition, not in a relation of inequality, but as a sentient being demanding to be heard:

> For Ranciere ... the child is already assumed to be an equal being, a being who is already political, a being whose only method is the ... arbitrary method of language ... [that} does not need, in fact cannot possibly use the master method in order to become emancipated. The child already speaks. (p. 72)

Ranciere's perception of the child as already political inverts the Platonic view that the child is the subject of politics. Here, the task of being taught the right discourse turns literacy of the child into a question of politics. For Ranciere, the child's use of literacy makes the child a political subject.

Whilst working from differing political persuasions, Plato, Ferguson, Smith, and Arendt objectify the child's literacy needs as something to be secured. For Ranciere, the child's literacy secures its own interest. It is against this background that I now discuss how the development of the literate child might be considered as a form of human security.

The Human Security-Development Nexus

The emergence of the security-development nexus in the latter part of the 20th century can perhaps be traced to the influence of Enlightenment philosophers who thought about good government in terms of security and the formation of educated subjects (Kelly, 2015). By 1994, and with the collapse of the Cold War, the United Nations had begun to shift its understanding of security through the development of a human security framework. The 1994, Human Development Report (UNDP) emphasised urgent shifts from orthodox concerns with the defence of borders and military capability to an expanded focus on the protection of individuals through sustainable human development:

> The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people. (UNDP, 1994, p. 22)

Human security is conceptualised here as a reduction in the feeling of insecurity in people's everyday lives. Rather than be concerned with weapons, human security seeks to enhance 'human life and dignity' (UNDP, 1994, p. 22).

The link between human security and human development can be re-problematised as a technology of biopolitics – the government of life (Dillon, 2008). Duffield (2005b) argues that human security can be seen as a 'principal of formation ... That is, as producing the humans requiring securing, and, at the same time, calling forth the state/non state networks of aid, subjectivity and political practice necessary for that undertaking' (2005b, p. 13). Whilst the development of a capability like literacy may be aimed at enhancing the ability of individuals and communities to take responsibility for their own care, following Duffield's argument, it might also be understood as directed at the management of threats and crises to the political economy. The integration of literacy into the security apparatus is a matter for government concern about the way young people develop and live their lives as citizens of the state. The use of literacy in the security apparatus functions as a technology of risk mitigation and biopolitical government. It can be understood as a way of contingently positioning the capabilities of human subjects and populations in relation to forms of rule (Dean, 2008). Within a development model, the literacy of the child might be represented as both a necessary capability and a cure to human frustration and social dislocation. However, as Duffield (2010) suggests, left un-problematised the dissemination of such values could be regarded as a form of

colonialism. In the following, I draw closely on Duffield to further prepare the reader for my case analysis.

Human Security and Fighting the Barbarians

Duffield (2005a) describes the post 9/11 evolution of the human security approach as a 'biopolitical security mechanism'. Duffield also notes an increasing linkage between non-government involvement in human security approaches and state use of 'hard' security measures. He draws attention to 'Native Administration' in colonial countries as an early example of development where the aim was to 'reconcile the disruptive effects of progress on indigenous peoples . . . with the need for societal order' (Duffield, 2005a, p. 148). Duffield argues that human security is in part driven by a logic that recruits 'savages' to fight 'barbarians'. The argument is reminiscent of the liberal Enlightenment philosophers such as Smith (1763/1982, 1776/2005), who in concern for the stability of civil society, contrasted the productive sociability of 'savage' races to 'barbarians'. In Duffield's conceit, the task of development is to recruit the savage races up to the point that they could be used to ensure the hegemony of colonial power. Similarly, Duffield analyses contemporary approaches to sustainable development for their effects in substituting aspirational goals of developing peoples for a regime of containment in which 'populations are now expected to live within the limits of their own powers of self reliance' (Duffield, 2005a, p. 152). According to Duffield, biopolitical security strategies mobilise the political loyalty of the marginalised and alienated through the 'satisfaction of basic needs', the 'expansion of market choice', and the 'betterment of self reliance' (Duffield, 2005a, p. 154). Mechanisms of biopolitical security can be illustrated through education which 'reflects the paramount importance of creating the right subjectivity or outlook among subject peoples if they are to be mobilized against external threats' (Duffield, 2005a, p. 154). The deployment of a 'cultural literacy' (Donald, 1992) for such purposes is a case in point. Duffield argues that 'Native Administration' and 'sustainable development' can be considered as a 'recurrent development design of power . . . vectoring the colonial past to the colonial present' (2005a, p. 155). Elsewhere, Duffield and Waddell (2006) argue that contemporary forms of human security are being reinscribed within the 'juridico-political architecture of the nation-state' (p. 8), whereby security considerations increasingly 'direct developmental resources toward measures, regions and subpopulations deemed critical in relation to the dangers and uncertainties of global interdependence' (Duffield, 2005a, pp. 10–11). Australia is the kind of colonial country that Duffield describes and offers an important case for considering the inscription of security within the architecture of the state. In my discussion below, I draw on the Howard Coalition Government's 2007 decision to intervene in communities of Indigenous peoples of the Northern Territory. This was the last year of Howard's conservative government.

The 'intervention', as it has come to be known, heralded the election of the Rudd Labor Government.

Governing Human Security

So far I have suggested that since Plato the development of the literate child has been a matter of political activity. In order to secure the polis, the polis needs to secure the child. Plato went so far as to say that the role of the state is to assume (loco-parentis) responsibility for developing the child as a virtuous subject. As a counterpoint to the Platonic legacy of developmentalism, Ranciere offers the possibility that the child is born politically agentful. I have also suggested that the concept of human security is of growing significance to contemporary governments and that the literacy of children might be seen as one tool to measure the relationship between human development and the security of the state. My brief discussion of the security-development nexus situated the problematisation of human security within forms of colonial governance to assure sovereign interests. Since the concept of human security was first proposed, interventions have been carried out by the United Nations, NGOs and foreign governments out of geopolitical concern for the stability of 'fragile states' and the freedoms of individuals living within these states. In this section, I consider how conceptualising the child as the object of security by the Australian government has taken place within a particular territory.

In Australian national security terms, arguments and strategies to do with failed states and the supposed 'arc of instability' (Ayson, 2007), normally reserved for regional neighbours, have been extended to zones within the national border. In January of 2007, writing for the Austral Peace and Security Network Policy Forum, Dillon (2007), a senior public servant with experience in both the Northern Territory and Federal Governments, suggested that 'the implications for national security which flow from policy outcomes in the Indigenous domain in Australia, particularly in remote Australia are more significant than generally recognised' (Dillon, 2007, p. 1). He argued that:

> The major negative impact on national security of Indigenous policy settings, and particularly policy outcomes, arises from the ongoing failure to address economic and social disadvantage in remote Indigenous communities . . . In this context then, it is not unreasonable to explore the link between Australia's Indigenous affairs policy outcomes and national security, particularly if one is adopting a medium to long term perspective with an increasing focus on human security issues. (Dillon, 2007, p. 4)

Dillon's problematisation of the failure to address economic and social disadvantage presupposes a role for government in managing Indigenous peoples. Dillon argues that the effects of social disadvantage for Indigenous people, human security, and national security are connected, implying the need for better implementation of whole-of-government strategies in governing Indigenous policy.

The problem of not addressing the social and economic aspirations of Aboriginal communities is nested within the concern for national security, illustrating Bacchi's (2014) argument that policy problematisations can be nested within the other. It also demonstrates that the security apparatus of states (Foucault, 2007) is constituted by a whole of government approach that produces connected and embedded policy discourses. Dillon (2007, p. 6) argues that the risks and potential dangers of weak governance are reflected by cases of 'ad hoc and opportunistic violence within Indigenous communities in remote Australia'. He imagines the possibility of increased communal violence and Indigenous 'incursions' resulting in 'longer term opportunistic subversion and violence directed against government institutions' (p. 6). He then draws on the UN Human Development Index (HDI) to argue that 'life expectancy, adult literacy and school enrolment, and per capita GDP' act as a 'proxy for government performance in meeting basic human needs' (p. 6). Here, the problem of literacy is nested within the already nested problematisations of governance and national security. The Human Development reports use literacy to help frame questions of human security. They have a 'globalizing' influence, as demonstrated by Dillon's use of the report to bear on the local 'problem' of Indigenous literacy.

When switching to statistics on adult literacy levels in remote Australia provided by the Productivity Commission for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Services, Dillon also claims that:

> [T]he available data on the outcomes of Indigenous education and in particular on literacy and numeracy benchmarks in remote schools "reveals levels far below commensurate age levels in the mainstream" (Kral & Schwab 2003:2) . . .
>
> The proportion of Indigenous people in 2002 who had completed year 12 schooling in remote Australia was only 13.7 percent, compared to 43.5 percent in the non-Indigenous community nationally (SCRGSP 2005:3.15). (Dillon, 2007, p. 8)

Dillon's essay rescales within the national border, geopolitical concerns about human security and violence, whilst problematising literacy levels in seeking to address questions of governance and human development. There is no doubt that the figures, as they are represented, are alarming. As presented by Dillon, the rates of attendance and participation in the youth demographic are a major cause for concern. The 'problem as represented to be' (Bacchi, 2014) is how to intervene, as Duffield suggests, in 'sub-populations', where the use of normalising statistics suggest risks of social dislocation. In Foucauldian terms, Dillon's representation of the problem defines a spatial field endangered by an uncertain population in need of normalisation (Foucault, 2007).

In June of 2007, in response to the *Little Children are Sacred Report* (Wild & Anderson, 2007) and media coverage on the current affairs programme *Lateline* (Brough, 2007), the Howard government announced the Northern Territory Emergency Intervention, with the stated intent of addressing child abuse claims in remote Indigenous communities. Despite Wild and Anderson producing a complex analysis, citing white influences on young women of Indigenous communities, the problem of child abuse was popularly blamed on concerns about violent Aboriginal males influenced by alcohol, pornography, and the general dissolution of acceptable community standards within these communities (Macoun, 2011). As Duffield (2005a) has suggested, part of the problem for colonial governments in administering 'native' populations has been the securing of order and management of Indigenous peoples' aspirations.

The Australian military and federal police were used to initiate the intervention. Since then, Australian and international commentators have hotly disputed the intentions and effects of the Australian Government's actions. (Anaya, 2010; Langton, 2008). Much of this debate has focussed on the relationship between government responsibilities in meeting the human security needs of its population and the balancing of rights and entitlements of its population. The nature of the intervention also signalled shifts in the relationship between states and territories and the arguments required to legitimise and justify such action. The debate has been characterised by questions in relation to territorial occupation, executive denigration of rights, governmental misuse of information, the mediatisation of the disciplining of Aboriginal peoples, and the effect of the government's representation of its pastoral concern on the subjectivities of members of these communities. When viewed in Platonic terms, the government intervention asserts the sovereignty of the state to assume jurisdictional and pastoral responsibility for the government of the child.

The representation of a national emergency resulting from the failure of territorial governance in Dillon's essay and the Howard government's decision to take executive action are similar. Dillon's essay discursively produces a security emergency, whilst Howard's policy sets in motion a range of non-discursive regulations on Aboriginal communities in order to produce subjectivities consistent with colonist values. To use Duffield's provocative use of the metaphors of Enlightenment philosophers of liberalism, arguments proposing the destructive influence of 'barbaric' forces on the nobility of 'savage' society were used to legitimise a heroic gesture on the part of the colonial administration. Given the reaction the intervention provoked at the time, there is no doubt that the policy can be understood as a dividing practice, which troubled people both within these communities and outside.

Hereon, my intention is to focus on a discourse subjugated, or hidden from view, in the government's argument for imposing martial conditions on people living in these communities. In 1999, the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party Government withdrew support for bilingual programmes in Indigenous communities. At the same time, the labour opposition (Snowden, 1999) in the House of Representatives of the federal government questioned the effects of such a move and raised concern for the Australian

Government's tacit support through programmes for teaching of English and the testing of English literacy within remote Indigenous communities.

Prior to the 2007 intervention and in a number of recommendations made by the *Little Children are Sacred Report* (Wild & Anderson, 2007), the authors noted that:

> [C]hildren and young people who chronically non-attend or are excluded from school are severely disadvantaged and that there is a correlation between school non-attendance and criminal activity, poverty unemployment, homelessness, violence and sexual abuse. (2007, p. 27)

As with Dillon, Wild and Anderson make a clear connection between issues of human development, human security and education. It is interesting to note, however, that the report recommended pedagogical approaches that acknowledge the rights and entitlements of Indigenous speakers to learn in their first language:

> Non-Aboriginal teachers are unable to explain concepts in a way that Aboriginal students can understand. The Inquiry has been told that concepts need to be explained in the local Aboriginal language. This goes well beyond simply understanding the English words. Forcing Aboriginal children to merely learn English words without learning the actual concepts is intellectually limiting those children. Teachers themselves need to be bilingual so they can then teach concepts in the students' first language. English is then taught as a separate subject.

The report recommends:

> There be an increase in the exposure of all Indigenous children to early literacy and numeracy learning in vernacular where appropriate and Standard Australian English oracy. (Wild & Anderson, 2007, pp. 147–149)

Using Arendt's argument, both the natality of the child and the role of the adult to usher the child into a world already old has been disrespected. Wild and Anderson's report clearly challenged decisions made by the Northern Territory and Federal Governments to dismantle bilingual programmes in remote community schools. It implied a lack of appropriate resourcing in supporting the needs of Indigenous peoples to fulfil their cultural aspirations, whilst also making way for participating in mainstream society. According to Wild and Anderson, one of the effects of government education policy was to contribute to the frustration experienced by Indigenous people.

Similarly, Kral and Schwab (2003), quoted in Dillon's essay, contested received arguments for pedagogies that sought to mainstream Indigenous people into using Standard English. According to Kral and Schwab (2003, p. 14), literacy becomes 'relevant only if it is linked to roles and responsibilities in the community'. They argue that literacy becomes meaningful when linked to a schema that acknowledges 'core values of Indigenous Law, culture and language, that are integral to achieving and maintaining a state of well being' (p. 14). For Kral and Schwab 'Education must be

part of the cultural and social framework of the community, that is, linked to community goals and aspirations' (p. 14). These findings are similar to the research of sociolinguists in other parts of the world such as Heath (1983), and Street (1984). In contrast, the measures of attainment, as evidenced in Dillon's use of the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (Banks, 2005), are founded on performance indicators (2005, p. 3.36) based on Literacy and Numeracy tests in the English language. In Rancierian terms, the child as speaker of her own language, and therefore as a political subject, has been delimited by being produced by policy as the subject of politics.

Public statements for the Australian Government intervention in the Northern Territory, did not use education as a justification for intervening; instead they claimed to be motivated by the reported incidence of child abuse and violence endemic within these communities. But neither did the Australian Government problematise the effects of its own policies on local community practices. Although Dillon's frustration with the impact of government policy was perhaps born out of sympathy for Indigenous people, his arguments masked aporetic tensions between Indigenous cultural experience and colonisation by Western ways of producing literate subjects, as identified by Wild and Anderson. The descriptions of breakdowns in human security and human development, in both Dillon's essay and the *Little Children are Sacred Report,* were partly founded on a conflicted mode of education delivery in attempting to meet the moral needs and wellbeing of identified Indigenous communities. However, the strategies suggested by Wild and Anderson, and those used by the Australian Government, were opposed. Instead, the incursion of the military, police, and commissioners represented the very strategies cited as failures of government policy in the *Little Children are Sacred Report.* The Government action privileged one particular axis of knowledge over another, denying more complex proposals and reasoning for the non-discursive effects of martial intervention.

For some, the Australian Government's strategy was an example of governmental exceptionalism (Agamben & Attell, 2010) that suspended responsibilities of the Northern Territory Government, aspects of the racial discrimination act and Indigenous control of lands. These strategies reflect Duffield and Waddell's (2006) point that human security is underpinned by an intelligibility that is reinscribed in the juridico-political architecture of the nation-state. As Plato might suggest, this action exemplified the role of the state to legislate and magistrate the life and virtue of the child. Using the case of literacy development, however, we can see that interventionist strategies have effects, some of which are unintended and some of which are subjugated. Luke (2004) makes this point when he warns about the sociological and material consequences of literacy programmes in local sites. He questions the degree to which literacy education 'as an official modus operandi of the state is simply a cover for cultural and linguistic homogenization and,

indeed, political hegemony over Indigenous peoples' (2004, p. 332).

In the case of Australian Government intervention strategies, it could be suggested that Federal policy has been complicit in producing problems that are subsequently blamed on the State government and importantly on the subjects of the intervention. Interventionist strategies, such as programmes focussing on English literacy (Gray, 2007), have been in part supported by Productivity Commission deployment of benchmarks utilising skills-based and cultural literacies of Standard English. Bearing in mind the use of data to secure human capital, national security concerns can be framed in economic terms and name sub-populations as not meeting national standards. However, recourse to such data also simplifies strategic struggles for what counts as literacy and civil society. It also obfuscates the frustrated struggles of subjugated peoples, including Aboriginal children, to act as political subjects when speaking to secure their aspirations.

Conclusions

In the preceding analysis, I have described the nesting of education and literacy within the logics of a security discourse. This government rationality represents a movement, a shift in time, in which the logics of governing security intensify and transform political practice in Australia. The use of the military and the police in the Northern Territory Emergency Response is a key indicator of this transformation. Drawing on Foucault (2007), I have used the government of human security to explore how political statements produce the spaces and milieu in which children as governable subjects can circulate. I have also aimed to identify how technologies of government, such as literacy standards, are conceptualised and used to govern 'sub-populations'. Similarly, I have used Bacchi's (2014) approach to problematisation to question the representation of policy 'problems' by examining the assumptions, presuppositions, and discursive effects of government policy.

The effects of the Howard Government's strategies delimit the conditions of possibility on children as speakers of their language and therefore as political subjects. Instead, civil society is represented and constituted through the regulatory authority of an intervening body. The combinatory force of the languages policy and the intervention exemplifies the mobility of modalities of power. Both the languages policy and the intervention make clams of caring by exerting a pastoral power over its human subjects. These regulatory actions also exert a disciplinary power that is interested in the production of forms of knowledge and behaviours in its subjects. Each action is also enacted on the part of a sovereign power that seeks to secure a governable form of life in the national interest. These powers are mobile as they can be found in each action, but transform in their modality through the character of their enactment. So the enactment of these regularity authorities demonstrate ways in which

the government of life as a form of vital politics (Rose, 2001) intersects and combines biopolitics with pastoral, disciplinary, and sovereign power. Foucault (2007) makes this point when he suggests that mentalities of (neo)liberal government deploy modes of power in transformable ways. The intersection of these modes of power, enacted through political discourse, constitute a set of heterogeneous practices that signal the emergence of an intelligible mode of governing. According to Foucault (2007), these heterogeneous practices might also be understood as a security (dispositif) apparatus. In part, this political discourse contributes to the production of literate children in order to secure civil society and the nation-state. It is a narrative that describes how education and/or literacy have been conceptualised as cultural and civilising virtues.

Perhaps, the key thread that connects constructions of the child as the subject of politics and a subject that warrants intervention by the state is the problem of insecurity. In policy terms, the problem of insecurity might be understood as a concern with how a 'force' has entered into the complex relationship between government and society, and posed a threat to population and territory. Whether it be in Platonic Athens, Enlightenment Britain or via the agency of international development agencies, what these discourses show is the way that the literacy of children is deployed as a *techne* to measure the effectiveness of different domains of government. In this sense, knowledge of the literate child functions as a form of policy lever that is used to tie together or to justify the rationalities and strategies of (neo-liberal) government. As such, these fields of policy action constitute an apparatus of government in which the literate child is constructed as security.

I argue that these dispersed practices show the relationship between literacy and economic, cultural and human security, and the connectedness of different domains of government. I also argue that the relationships between these discursive and non-discursive practices constitute literate children as morally worthy, economic subjects. For Bacchi (2014), these 'discourses make particular forms of rule and of being possible' (p. 277). Bacchi (2012b) suggests that 'regulations and decrees' function as 'prescriptive texts', and that these practices can be understood as places where government reason and regulatory rules interconnect to govern conduct (p. 3). The arguments made by the Howard government in this paper are predicated on performative measures, which focus on paradigmatic improvements in curriculum and teaching and learning, yet are blind to the possibility that the concept of literacy as a measureable and culturally normative activity has the capacity to exclude, as in the case of remote Indigenous communities.

Two observations can be made that connect the subjectivity of the child as literate subject, to development and human security. First, concerns for human development are tied to practices of assessment through testing and related literacy pedagogies. These practices have been connected to a deficit evaluation of cultural norms by a colonising

power. In the examples given above, Indigenous children are at risk of breaking these norms. Second, researchers have cautioned against the effects of such colonising practices. However, government policy has imposed the very same strategies that these researchers and investigators critique through applying assimilationist and exceptionalist interventions. This is an example of the politics of interpretation where particular discursive truths compete in the policy arena (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). It could be argued then that literacy has been deployed as a *techne* of an authoritarian form of liberalism in which the power to delimit is enacted by sovereign intervention. This rationality makes it possible to justify the surveillance of dangerous youth by their teachers.

Acknowledgements

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