

The Reproduction of Compliant Labour Power Through (Re)Constitution of the Child and Adult Subject: Critical Knowledge-Work

David Fryer¹ | Charles Marley² | Rose Stambe³

¹Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland 4072, Australia

²School of Health in Social Science, The University of Edinburgh, Old Medical Building, Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9AG, Scotland

³Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland 4068, Australia

Correspondence

Email: d.fryer@uq.edu.au

In this paper we discuss the reproduction of the compliant worker, required by the neoliberal labour market, through subjective re-constitution. We follow Foucault in positioning neoliberalism as a political rationality which can usefully be excavated with Foucauldian ‘tools’: analytics of governmentality, problematisation and power-knowledge. We adopt a Foucauldian-inspired ‘critical attitude’ to illuminate through critical knowledge-work how the ADHD child and the unemployed adult are (re)constituted into compliant labour via practices, institutions, policies, assessment and disciplinary procedures. We aim to demonstrate an alternative way to engage critically with the reproduction of the human means of production without: reinscribing the psy-complex; without essentialising and naturalising human beings as stable, unitary, rational entities; and without making or legitimising causal claims.

KEYWORDS

compliance, critical knowledge work; neoliberal labour market; problematisation, reconstitution of the subject

1 | INTRODUCTION

According to Althusser: “the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order” (Althusser, 1971, pp. 127-128). In this paper, we explicate critical knowledge-work intended to illuminate governmentality accomplished through (re)constitution of the subject. We point to societal interconnections responsible for the (re)constitution of the compliant productive neoliberal subject in the context of the labour needs of neoliberal capitalist employers and the State. In particular, we focus on reproduction of labour power in the form of the subjective reconstitution of children and the unemployed to be neoliberal labour market compliant. For children, we discuss how the ‘rules’ of ‘good behaviour’ discipline ‘educational’ settings and prepare children to comply with the ‘needs’ of the labour market. For adults, we discuss how the unemployed are rendered compliant labour for the neoliberal market through ‘labour market activation’, the preoccupation of neoliberal governments around the world.

Current scholarship on its implications for our ‘neoliberal times’ tends to situate neoliberalism as an ideology (e.g. Harvey, 2007) and commentators tend to lament the overuse of neoliberalism as an explanatory concept, suggesting the term has become akin to a grand-narrative (e.g. Walkerdine & Bansel, 2010). We draw on Michel Foucault’s analysis of neoliberalism as a political rationality. In the *Birth of Biopolitics* he stated that both classic liberalism and neoliberalism are supposed to leave everything to market forces, to make way for the ‘invisible hand’. In actuality, however, “neo liberal governmental intervention is no less dense, frequent, active, and continuous than in any other system”. The issue is where that intervention should take place: “Government . . . has to intervene on society as such, in its fabric and depth.” (Foucault, 2008, p. 145). In our research, we position this ‘intervention’ as accomplished through apparatuses, heterogeneous ensembles of devices, discourses, practices and processes which undo and remake subjectivities.

In studying how interventions reform child and adult subjectivities in line with the objectives of a neoliberal market we deliberately eschew engagement with both epistemology and philosophy, in the sense of the academic discipline of philosophy. Neither do we engage in critique as ‘critical psychologists’ - a figure of speech we regard as an oxymoron - but rather as scholars attempting to deploy critical theory to engage with individual subjectivity and socially structured power without reinscribing the psy-complex. By this we mean we do not align our thinking with the discipline of psychology which originated in Europe and was rendered hegemonic by the United States through processes of intellectual and cultural colonisation. Our work has been influenced by Foucault and post-Foucauldian scholars such as: Bacchi (2012); Biehl (2005); Biehl, Good and Kleinman (2007); Dean (2015); and Fassin (2018). In the following section we will explore some key concepts from this body of literature before we put these ‘tools’ to work, first in unpacking the disciplining of ‘well-behaved children’ and then in unpacking the ‘activation’ of the ‘passive’ unemployed.

2 | FRAMING OUR KNOWLEDGE-WORK AS ‘CRITICAL’

We start our examinations into ADHD and unemployment by rejecting assumptions that knowledge corresponds to ‘what is the case’ in the ‘real world’ arrived at through objective research based on traditional realist assumptions. Rather, we assume that there are indefinitely many potential ‘real-ed’ versions’, each of which would promote the interests of some as opposed to other interest groups. Within this frame of reference, the dominant versions of what is ‘truthed’, ‘knowledged-that’, ‘knowledged-how’, ‘evidentialised’ and ‘real-ed’ tend to be the versions that serve the interests of the most powerful group(s) since the most powerful groups have the most power to discredit, marginalise

and subjugate versions which are not in their interests and to position versions which are in their interests as inevitable, necessary and without alternatives. Note that engaging with 'what is known' and 'what is real', in the critical frame of reference deployed in this paper, is quite different from engaging through epistemological and ontological lenses characteristic of Western philosophy. Rather it is engaging with them through tactical, strategic, rhetorical, political lenses.

Moreover, within the critical frame of reference of this paper, it is not assumed that there is an actual reality independent of all interest groups from which powerful interest groups deflect attention instead fabricating an illusory 'reality' which better serves their interests e.g. deceiving other groups by nurturing false consciousness as opposed to 'genuine' consciousness. Within the critical frame of reference of this paper, consciousness is only 'genuine' to the extent that it has been 'genuine-ised'. Within the critical frame of reference of this paper, to ask whether or not a consciousness is authentic (as opposed to inauthentic) makes no sense - just as to ask what is 'actually true' (as opposed to false), 'actually known' (as opposed to unknown), 'actually effective' (as opposed to ineffective) and / or 'actually real' (as opposed to unreal) is, literally, non-sensical. What is actually real or actually true is what is actually being 'realed' or 'truthed'. What matters within the critical frame of reference of this paper, is which version has been 'realed', 'truthed', 'knowledgeed', 'evidentialised'; how the 'truth', 'knowledge', 'evidence' and 'reality' has been constituted and rhetorically legitimised; and what the implications of all that are for the interests of different groups.

As we questioned how something is knowledgeed, truthed, realed and evidenced, we also needed to rethink how we approached the ADHD child or the unemployed adult. We developed our approach on subjectivity from contemporary transdisciplinary research in which subjects are positioned as "made up", constituted in and by technologies of knowledge and power (Hacking, 1990, p. 3). We consider the subject to be multiple, mobile and externally constituted rather than singular, fixed, with an 'internal' 'natural' 'essence' turning the analytical lens on the external 'concrete constellations' in which it is continually shaped and reshaped (Biehl, Good, Kleinman, 2007). Our projects have been influenced, in varying degrees, by the work of Biehl (2005) who focused on: "the synthetic frameworks that mediate social control and recast concepts of a common humanity" (p. 16). In our knowledge work, 'subjectivity' was positioned as a 'material of politics' - the site upon which governance was enacted - with 'subjective re-assembly' continually occurring against a changing background of rational-technical politics and regional and local institutional responses. Biehl's investigation, like ours, sought to make visible the apparatus of interconnections, and the broader social terrain from which they emerged, through which governmentality was enacted.

We drew extensively upon Foucauldian and post-Foucauldian scholarship, particularly writings concerned with governmentality, which we understood as the complex of calculations, programmes, policies, strategies and tactics that shape the conduct of individuals: that which conducts conduct in order to achieve certain ends (Foucault, 1991). However, we considered governmentality as more than about controlling actions but as also about constituting ways of thinking and acting and the facilitation of these through a wide range of political technologies and government-supported practices and institutions.

By following this approach, our aim was to 'think problematically' (Bacchi, 2012) about contemporary social activities, such as the procedures that form the social practice of ADHD or unemployment, and to call them into question by connecting their emergence to a pluralisation of interconnected 'events'. To do this, we followed guidance from Bacchi (2012) to locate 'problematising moments', the times and places where shifts in social reality took place. By locating these moments, we are locating 'crisis moments' (Foucault, 1985), moments in which 'givens' become 'questions', where something that was "previously silent" (Foucault, 2001, p. 74) becomes a problem, thus providing a point of access in the process of emergence of the 'things' that now appear self-evident. However, as both Bacchi (2012) and Deacon (2000) highlight, these self-evident givens do not become problems due to shifting historical circumstances or because of new objects that did not previously exist being created by discourse, but because of the

'totality of discursive and non-discursive elements introducing something *into the play of true and false*' (our italics), thus constituting it as a particular object of thought (Deacon, 2000, p. 131). By locating these problematising moments, we are able to see that what is considered self-evident is the result of the interaction of multiplicity of events at various historical junctures, none of which were necessary (Mort and Peters, 2005, p. 19). They are the result of 'politics', the multiplicity of strategic connections involved in the construction of crisis moments at historical junctures (Bacchi, 2012).

The bricolage we have outlined above, provides the critical framework for our projects. Our investigations aimed to make visible the conditions under which different ways of thinking about 'young people' or the 'unemployed' were formed, the means of governmentality these ways of thinking legitimated, the effects these ways of thinking about and governing young people and the unemployed created, and the ways these effects have contributed to the shifting background upon which new ways of thinking and acting emerged (Dean, 2015).

In the following section we will demonstrate how these tools of critique helped to illuminate the governing of young people diagnosed with ADHD.

3 | 'WELL-BEHAVED' CHILDREN

Marley (2019) and Marley and Fryer (2014) describe work intended to illuminate and facilitate resistance to how Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is: 'real-ed' (socially constituted as ontologically actual rather than imaginary); how particular claims about ADHD are 'truthed' (socially constituted as veridical rather than false); how sets of interlocking truthed claims are 'knowledged' (socially constituted as scientifically established rather than hypothesised); and how inter-linked practices underpinned by knowledges-that and knowledges-how, through which social violence is visited upon children who are discursively positioned through diagnosis as suffering from ADHD, is evidentialised (socially constituted as effective 'evidence based treatment' rather than nostrums promoted by biomedical snake-oil salespersons).

3.1 | The Battle of Truth Over ADHD

In 2005, ADHD was the most truthed, knowledged, evidentialised, realed psychiatric disorder ascribed to children worldwide (Timimi, 2005). This has continued since 2005, with reviews highlighting continued deployment of ADHD as diagnosis (Moreira-Maia et al., 2018) and positioning it as the most prevalent childhood psychiatric conditions worldwide (Sayal et al., 2018). Regarding the mainstream 'truthing', 'knowledging' and 'realing' of ADHD, there is now a huge research literature which collectively positions ADHD as a 'biologically driven, brain-based neuro-developmental disorder' (e.g., Ward et al., 2019), the 'most heritable psychiatric disorder' (e.g., Konrad, Di Martino, & Aoki, 2018), 'associated with both structural and functional brain deficits' (e.g., Silverstein et al., 2018). ADHD is 'knowledged' in terms of 'evidence from' neuroimaging studies (e.g., O'Neill et al., 2019); twin studies (e.g., Børglum, Neale & Franke, 2019); adoption studies (e.g., Sonuga-Barke & Harold, 2018); and genetics (e.g., Langley, 2018). See Marley (2019) for more details.

Regarding mainstream 'evidentialising', stimulant medication has been repeatedly constituted as an effective treatment for 'ADHD' through discourses and practices of 'evidence-based' approaches to treatment discursively positioned as dedicated to 'improved patient care'. For example, the UK National Clinical Practice Guidelines; specifically, Number 72: 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis and Management of ADHD in Children, Young People and Adults' (National Institute for Clinical Excellence [NICE], 2008), which was 'developed to advise on the

treatment and management of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder' (p. 10), is positioned (self-referentially) as a set of "systematically developed statements that assist clinicians and patients in making decisions about appropriate treatment for specific conditions, derived from the best available research evidence, using predetermined and systematic methods to identify and evaluate the evidence relating to the specific condition in question".

It might be assumed that there is a consensus about what ADHD 'is' and how it is 'treated' most effectively resulting from the best quality, most objective, methodologically rigorous, flawless research published in the best peer reviewed journals, systematically reviewed, having been identified in the best data bases. And indeed, those associated with the truthing, knowledging, evidentialising and realing of mainstream biomedical ADHD knowledge play into this game of truth by emphasising the importance of 'objectivity', 'methodological rigour' and calling for the rejection of studies discursively positioned as 'methodologically flawed'.

However, even restricting attention to positivist, experimental, biomedical, psychiatric and psychological research, there are as many publications asserting that the body of mainstream research into ADHD is methodologically flawed as there are publications in the body of mainstream research into ADHD. For every mainstream knowledge claim about ADHD there is a critical counter-claim by another mainstream scholar. The International Consensus Statement on ADHD (Barkley et al., 2002) and the Critique of the International Consensus Statement on ADHD (Timimi, 2004) illustrate this, as do stakeholder responses in Appendix 4 of the consultation draft of ADHD NICE guideline (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health [NCCMH], 2009) which is also characterised by knowledge claims and mirror-image counter-claims. A battle over truth, knowledge and reality is thus being waged even within the mainstream biomedical positivist science community, which dominates the ADHD debate. A 'reasonable' and 'balanced' 'rational' 'evidence-based' reading of this battle would be that each 'side' neutralises the credibility of the other. However, although mainstream biomedical investigations have failed to produce conclusive evidence of genetic, biological or neurological indicators of ADHD or of the effectiveness of stimulant medication whilst following the rules and procedures that its own proponents position as essential underpinning of scientific credentials, what has been truthed, knowledged, realied and evidentialised within the pathologising bio-medical-pharmaceutical discourse continues to be dominant.

An effect of this is that a diverse range of possible 'causes' (with implications for diverse interventions) of the purported 'symptoms' of ADHD and a variety of alternative explanatory frameworks allowing ADHD to be 'known' in a variety of different ways have been pushed to the margins by the 'realness' fabricated by the dominant reality-version. A more insidious effect of the dominant reality version, however, is the increasing rate in which ADHD is inscribed upon the bodies of children and resulting 'treatment' with stimulant medication that this legitimates. A hidden 'real' effect of this level of production and prescription are the serious adverse effects associated with the medication, including heart and/or blood problems such as fast or abnormal heart beat, increased blood pressure and chest pains as well as slowing of growth, both height and weight (see: Concerta, 2019 Consumer Medicine Information), and the requirement for their continued monitoring by a system of medical surveillance.

Moreover, despite intra-dominant-literature criticisms of flawed research and conceptualisation, the dominant understanding has become increasingly hegemonic and there has been less and less diverse thinking about ADHD, its causes and explanations. The rhetorical scientificity of ADHD, the continued exponential rise in application of knowledging-how, and the 'global' reach of the knowledging-that has combined to provide ADHD with a 'realness' with which it is difficult to argue. Even in the relatively recent past, a diverse range of possible 'causes' (with implications for diverse interventions) of the purported 'symptoms' of ADHD were proposed including: too much television (Christakis et al., 2004); food additives (Toorman et al, 2009); aberrant maternal-child interactions (DuPaul et al., 2001); temperamental disposition (Powell & Inglis-Powell, 1999); problematic family functioning (Deault, 2010); parental complicity in medical labelling (Atkinson & Shute, 1999).

A variety of alternative explanatory frameworks allowing ADHD to be 'known' in a variety of different ways were at one time available, including: the creeping medicalisation of deviant behaviour (Conrad & Schneider, 1980); sensory addiction as the result of an increasing pace of being a 'hurried society' (DeGrandpre, 1999); a 'total, 100 per cent fraud' (Baughman, 2011); a list of the behaviours that annoy teachers (Breggin, 2002); a social and cultural construct (Baldwin, 2000); and an undermining of moral responsibility (Tait, 2006).

It is clear that the power of the dominant discourse of ADHD, its nature, extent, causes and treatments, lies outside mainstream biomedical knowledge and is to a large extent despite it. Since the objects, concepts and procedural requirements of 'objective science' that legitimise ADHD cut no ice at all when deployed as critique, challenging the orthodoxy within the truthing frame of reference espoused by that orthodoxy is ineffective. Yet, challenging the orthodoxy outside the truthing frame of reference espoused by the orthodoxy is also deemed by the orthodoxy to be invalid.

Instead, we chose to bypass sterile battles of truth and instead adopted a different approach: attempting to understand how it is possible to say and do ADHD, for it to be enacted. The boundaries of what it is possible to think, say, and do about certain 'things' in the world continually change, determining the life chances of the various human subjects that are caught in the network of relations. That meant engaging at the micro-level, the 'extremities of power', where ADHD "invests itself in institutions, becomes embodied in techniques, and equips itself with instruments" (Foucault, 1980, p. 96). Within our frame of reference, the 'extremities of power' are found at the level of the everyday, where the application of 'actual' ADHD practice meets with the young person.

We adopted as our theoretical guide the Foucauldian analytical concept of the apparatus (Foucault, 1980), "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions [...], the apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements" (1980, p. 194). Our intention was to understand what made it possible for the social practice that constructed young people as having ADHD to have emerged within the multiplicity of connecting elements of the apparatus.

Through highlighting the interconnectedness of a multiplicity of events, we highlight the 'practices' that gave rise to them, the "places where what is said and done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and taken for granted meet and interconnect" (Foucault, 1991, p. 75). We thus refer to the specifics of 'what was said', 'what was done', 'who was able to say and do those things' and 'what was the wider background in which this occurred'. More specifically, 'practices' refers to the external relations of intelligibility upon which events rely for legitimacy, the connections that make it possible for specific subjects to say and do specific things and for those things to be in the true at that point in time. In this sense, the enactment of the procedures that constitute a specific social activity are contingent upon the wider practices from which they have emerged.

We found the concept of 'problematization' important because it captures a two-stage process, which seeks to question how and why certain 'things', such as behaviours, groups, phenomena, become 'problems' but also how these 'things' are shaped as objects of thought (Bacchi, 2012). In applying this concept, we were interested in how young people were constructed as problems and the sites where this occurred (i.e., the school setting, the health setting, policies, guidelines and the social practices). Our aim was to understand the ways in which young people were constructed, but also the discourse and forms of knowledge that were deployed in the construction of the particular version of young people that was made visible.

3.2 | Governing the Young Person via the Education Apparatus

Through our knowledge-work, we challenged the realed-ness of official institutional knowledges that construct the increasing visibility of ADHD as due to 'improvements in training', 'improved screening tools', 'better treatment regimens' or the 'accumulation of knowledge of aetiology' (Atladdottir et al., 2015; Safer, 2018). Instead, we situated ADHD within a plurality of interconnected events, which included wider 'elements', such as the shifting requirements of the young citizen and the emergence of technologies for achieving them, changing discourses of social exclusion and wellbeing, widening parameters of the category of disability within educational discourse, and neoliberal reforms of health and education. More 'local' elements included the invention of technologies to 'support learning', widening health professional remits, and institutional responses to new requirements within the wider apparatuses of health and education. We did not view these as a singular ontological domain of practice, however, but as a multiplicity of elements, all with their own history, that provided the intelligible background upon which the local social practice of ADHD relied to be acceptable as a solution at the point in time that it was proposed.

Our knowledge-work revealed the local approach to ADHD as contingent upon two main interconnected apparatuses: health and education. Within health, 'problems', such as increasing referrals, a requirement to promote 'wellbeing', and a requirement for integrated working with education (and other institutions) created the conditions in which the local approach to ADHD would function as a solution. Within education, social exclusion and the increased parameters of what could be constituted as a learning problem created a 'space' within schools in which 'support' from external agencies could function. This 'space', in which ADHD knowledge was able to function, was conditioned not by the 'needs' of young people but by the need of education to solve 'learning problems' within a context of increased 'demand' created by the requirement of 'inclusive' education to meet the needs of every pupil.

Rather than embodying its stated aims of 'equality for all', inclusive education was revealed as a means and mode of governmentality of the young person. Education was revealed as a way of educating and shaping young people according to the requirements of a 'globalised' free market. The young person was positioned as the future adult and worker and, as such, as requiring the necessary skills and abilities for the role as future adult. The school, supported by mental health and social services, was the means by which this was enacted, with the technologies of its enactment constructed as 'inclusive', as promoting 'wellbeing', and as reducing the likelihood of social exclusion and disadvantage through providing the skills to gain employment. Within these interconnected apparatuses, anything considered a 'risk' to future educational outcomes became a 'problem of learning' and, thus, targetable, first through education and then through mental health services for children and adolescents. The 'problems of learning' constructed as ADHD were multiple, but every single one of them could be placed outside the young person within the structures in which they existed: poorly resourced schools, communities affected by poverty, lingering discourses that construct education as pointless, experience of abuse and trauma – these were all visible during the clinical appointments we observed. In each appointment, however, these were individualised as 'symptoms' of ADHD. The outcome, contrary to official knowledges and policy, was not reduced symptoms, improved educational outcomes and increased wellbeing, but the annulling of the voice of the young person through the continued fixing of their experiences as symptoms of ADHD. The continued use of medication and the responsibilisation of the young person to improve their problem were the priority, rather than considering and tackling the context in which they were constructed as a problem.

By engaging with the everyday social practice of ADHD, our aim was to reveal the interconnected nexus of elements in which ADHD functioned, the 'problems' it solved, and the effects conditioned by these solutions. From here, our aim was to 'work backwards', to provide a genealogical account of the pluralisation of events implicated in the eventual emergence of ADHD as the solution to the problems it solved. Procedurally, we aimed to question

how, why and where 'young people' became a problem, how they were shaped as the problem they became, what possibilities were conditioned by constructing them as these types of problems and how this changing background was implicated in the emergence of the local approach to ADHD.

Our project engaged with the 'concrete constellations' that informed health and education practices in order to illuminate what made it possible for a young person to be made into the ADHD subject; to be 'made up' as a young person 'with' ADHD (Foucault, 1982; Hacking, 1999) and, thus, 'treatable' by psychiatric knowledge and medication. We sought to understand this in the present – i.e. against what was ADHD being deployed as a solution? – but also historically – i.e. what made it possible for ADHD to emerge as a deployable solution? Our aim was to provide an account of the pluralisation of events that made this way of governing thinkable and actionable in the present (Dean, 2015). Our focus was the ways in which 'young people' were divided, problematised and targeted across different periods and domains of life, the effects conditioned by these divisions and problematisations, and how these effects were implicated in the production of the realed-versions that sustained their visibility

4 | THE (RE) CONSTITUTION OF THE COMPLIANT NEOLIBERAL UNEMPLOYED SUBJECT

At least 8 decades of international research and scholarship has positioned unemployed people as characterised by disproportionate phenomenological misery, increased morbidity and excess mortality. In this paper rather than endorsing simplistic and ideologically problematic claims about causal consequences of 'unemployment' on health and mental health, we discursively positioned the unemployed neoliberal subject as subjectively reconstituted to be immiserated, unhappy and unhealthy.

We drew on the work of Foucault in theorising and problematising unemployment. We discursively position unemployment as socially constituted. Such social constitution also involves a complex set of dynamic interconnections between dominant discourses, government policies, bureaucratic processes and procedures, administrative technologies, psychological knowledges, forms of subjectification and so forth (see also Boland & Griffith, 2015; Baxandall, 2002; McDonald & Marston, 2005; Walters, 2000). As with ADHD, it is essential not to naturalise the dominant constituted version of 'unemployment' nor take it for granted as 'actually real' but rather to emphasise that it is socially manufactured, historically and culturally contingent, has a genealogy that can be traced and functions which serve some interests rather than others.

Our view (e.g., Fryer & Stambe, 2015) is that a network of interconnected constructed and maintained social elements, including discourses of unemployment and mental health (and implicated psy-complex constructions like psychological well-being and misery) whose primary function is to control inflation, reduce wage costs, and discipline the workforce, simultaneously, constitutes and 'makes real' a category of 'the unemployed' necessary to make the neoliberal labour market work in the interests of employers and shareholders, i.e. capital. The subjectivity of 'the unemployed' is constituted in such ways as to (re)produce the compliant human means of production required by employers, shareholders, and government within the contemporary version of the neoliberal labour market. The subjectivity of unemployed people is reconstituted as phenomenologically aversive, socially stigmatised and psychopathological.

4.1 | Jobactive and Compliance Through Obligations

Our focus was upon 'jobactive', the latest iteration of the preoccupation of Employment Services in Australia (and most neoliberal countries) with labour market activation. Employment Services Australia is an arm of welfare provision that

consists of a conglomerate of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. These organisations, known as 'Providers', are contracted by the Australian Government to administer services to 'jobseekers' (people receiving unemployment payments). The services provided are officially positioned as to help jobseekers to "find and keep a job" (Abbott, 2015, para. 1). The Providers also monitor jobseekers' compliance with 'mutual obligations'. 'Mutual obligations' refers to the jobseekers' requirement to provide evidence that they are actively looking for work and engaging in other activities that are positioned as improving their 'job readiness' (Department of Employment, 2015). The term 'mutual obligations' was introduced into welfare discourse when Employment Services was privatised in the late 1990s (Kinnear, 2000), are part of an increasing welfare conditionality (Marston, 2014) that require the unemployed to work on themselves in order to improve their chance of becoming employed.

To study the (re)production of labour and the (re)subjectification of the unemployed, we focused on tracing how multiple elements of a wider web of relations are assembled to subjectify the unemployed for a neoliberal labour market. Here, we will focus on the set of practices known as 'mutual obligations' that are positioned as 'encouraging' the unemployed to become 'activated'. In our research we looked at how the changes to employment services (via the introduction of jobactive) justified increasing welfare conditionality by positioning passive unemployed subjects as a 'problem'. One of the objectives of jobactive was to "[i]ncrease jobseeker engagement by introducing stronger mutual obligation requirements" and these 'stronger' mutual obligations included increasing the scope for financial penalties or, at least, delaying payments, reducing (re)training opportunities and increasing the frequency of work experience programs (known as work-for-the-dole, WfD) (Department of Employment 2015, p. 11). The 'solutions' to the problem was unemployment was a series of activities that could be prescribed, observed and measured. The 'strengthening' of mutual obligations made the unemployed governable by reducing unemployment to a technical problem of individual behaviour. Underlying these practices is a regime of truth that connects citizenship to employment.

'Mutual obligations' was based on the idea that the unemployed have responsibilities to fulfil in return for the receipt of social security. This included actively looking for work, and improving their job competitiveness as well as "give[ing] something back to the community that supports them" (Yeend, 2004, para. 3). The implicit idea here is that citizens enter into a 'social contract' that stipulates a reciprocal relationship between the citizen and the state. To be considered a 'good' citizen, the subject must embody the principles of activeness, responsibility and individual autonomy. Thus 'mutual obligations' tie 'activation' to citizenship by making the receipt of unemployment benefits conditional on demonstration of becoming the ideal unemployed subject. In effect, by monitoring mutual obligations employment services providers are then contracted to ensure the unemployed are 'participating' as 'good citizens'.

'Mutual obligation' as a term was introduced into the policy sphere via the *Participation Support for a more equitable Australia: Final Report* (McClure, 2000) and was materialised under Job Network. However, the idea that welfare recipients have 'obligations' in order to receive income support was not novel. Both the Cass Review (Cass, Gibson & Tito, 1988) and the 1994 Working Nation white paper on unemployment discussed a similar concept, 'reciprocal obligations'. Harris (2001) maintained that there are similarities and differences between 'mutual' and 'reciprocal' obligations. She suggested that *Working Nation* and the *Cass Review* did not challenge the view that, as citizens, the unemployed were 'entitled' to support from the State. Harris suggests that with the privatisation of Employment Services in 1998, the assumption that the State has a responsibility to support the unemployed started to diminish. Indeed, critics of the privatisation of Employment Services have noted that the structure of contractual arrangements lacks transparency with clauses such as 'commercial-in-confidence', undermining the possibility to hold the State and provider organisations accountable (see Farrow, Hurley, & Sturrock, 2015).

Mutual obligations tied conditionality to accepting 'suitable' job offers that has always been a part of a commonwealth unemployment benefit scheme (as mentioned above). However, with the changing assumptions about the role of the State and the individual, accepting a job offer placed a moral burden on the unemployed. Moreover, the

introduction of mutual obligations assumed that it was only “fair that clients take up reasonable offers of employment” (DEET, 1992, p. 21, as cited in Harris, 2001). Mutual obligations seem to only apply to job seekers, and not to the State to improve demand or to employers.

Failure to comply with mutual obligations and ‘participate’ in the society-economic nexus can result in a financial penalty for job seekers. Neoliberalism is based on the assumption that “those who refuse to become responsible and govern themselves ethically have also refused the offer to become members of our moral community” (Rose, 2018, p. 1407). The danger then is that unemployed who do fail, for many complex reasons, to fulfil their obligations are punished. The consequences of strengthening ‘mutual obligations’ include increasing poverty and social disadvantage and increasing mental distress and not increasing employment (Bennett, 2016; McGann et al., 2019; Peterie et al., 2019; Senate, 1999). These mutual obligations to ‘activate’ the unemployed thus discursively position the cause of unemployment as the refusal or lack of success of unemployed people to make themselves employable rather than for example the unavailability of jobs or the practices of employers to relocate hiring where costs of labour are cheap and collectively organised protection of working people is weak.

Our work on jobactive was done in the context of work by Australian researchers who have used Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ to rethink practices within Employment Services Australia (see for example Brady, 2011; ; Dean, 1995; Dean, 2010; Marston McDonald, 2008; McDonald & Marston, 2005; McDonald et al., 2003). Authorities seek to shape people’s behaviours, thoughts, aspirations, and capacities through various strategies driven towards satisfaction of particular goals. Employment Services govern the unemployed subject through processes of ‘activation’ to produce the ideal unemployed subject, the ‘job seeker’. The ideal unemployed subject maintains motivation to look for work regardless of any setbacks (McDonald & Marston, 2005). Extrapolating the Foucauldian idea of the ‘conduct of conduct’, contemporary unemployed subjects are positioned as ‘encouraged’ to self-problematise and self-regulate to change their selves into the unemployed subject required in the neoliberal labour market.

4.2 | Power-Knowledge and the Production of Unemployment

Following Foucault, we regard it as impossible in theory as well as in practice to disentangle knowledged systems of statements from power relations. As Foucault put it, both “directly imply one another” (Foucault, 1991, p. 27). For us, as for Foucault (2003), power-knowledge is an analytical grid that can be deployed to rethink the constitution of a system, how it is made acceptable, and what impact it has on people’s lives. Using the grid of power/knowledge enables thinking of power relations as integrally productive as much as constraining.

In relation to work(lessness / (un)employment and the individual, we see knowledge systems ‘about’ ‘unemployment’ and ‘the unemployed person’ as directly implying and being implied by power relations which produce unemployment and unemployed people in ways which both enable and simultaneously constrain what they are and can be. The constitution and reconstitution of the unemployed subject can thus be examined using the analytical grid of power-knowledge.

Unemployed subjects do not, from our standpoint, exist prior to power-knowledge but rather are constituted by being ‘power-knowledged’ via authorities (like unemployment researchers and other social scientists whose work constructs and warrants: theories of unemployment; measurement of unemployed people’s ‘self-esteem’ and ‘mental health’; the accumulation of statistics about the scale of unemployment; and ‘documentation’ of unemployed people’s ‘lived experience’), and by unemployed people coming to know themselves – i.e. power-knowledging themselves discursively through the discourses available to them – including those whose constitution is accomplished at least partly through the work of unemployment researchers and other social scientists. Foucault’s claim that “critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on

its discourses of truth” (Foucault, 2007: 47) means to us that, at a minimum, when engaging in critique we interrogate systems of knowledge statements which have been truthed and uncover how this is related to the constitution of power relations. At the same time this entails interrogating power-relations-as-constituted with regard to the sets of statements that construct objects and subject positions which they imply. In relation to unemployment, we interrogate statements, power-knowledges and regimes of truth through which work(lessness) / ‘unemployment and unemployed subjects’ are constituted by being ‘power-knowledged’ through the work of unemployment researchers, psychologists, economists, bureaucrats, policy makers, politicians and so on.

We argue that, rather than describing the effect of unemployment, psy power-knowledge has contributed to the production of neoliberal subjectivity, including neoliberal unemployed subjectivity. More particularly we argue that ‘unemployment’ and ‘mental ill-health’ are not independent phenomena in a cause-effect relationship but are, rather, two facets of socially constituted violence which functions to maximise the working of the neoliberal labour market in the interests of employers and shareholders

5 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we attempted to explicate the reproduction of the compliant worker ideal for the neoliberal labour market through Foucauldian-inspired research into subjective re-constitution. We discursively positioned neoliberalism as a political rationality which legitimates intervention in society with implications for subjectivation and adopted Foucauldian ‘tools’: analytics of governmentality, problematisation and power-knowledge to illuminate such intervention.

We described work intended to critically illuminate the pathologisation and pharmaceuticalisation of children’s noncompliance with adult authority being achieved internationally through deployment of truthing, knowledging and realing practices and associated knowledges in relation to ADHD and evidentialising practices and associated knowledges which position violence against children through prescription of amphetamines as effective treatment. Then we described work intended to critically illuminate the reconstitution of the compliant unemployed neoliberal subject achieved internationally through deployment of truthing, knowledging and realing practices and associated knowledges in relation to ‘psychological consequences of unemployment’ and evidentialising practices and associated knowledges which legitimate violence against unemployed people through positioning jobactive as effective intervention.

We have tried to illuminate what it is to engage with individual subjectivity and socially structured power whilst not only rejecting the psy-complex but also rejecting: positivism; the reduction of the complexity of the social world to causal explanations; and the essentialising and naturalising of human beings as stable, unitary, rational entities (Henriques et al., 1985; see also Rimke, 2016, p. 7) or making and attempting to legitimate claims of causal relations between ‘independent’ problematically ‘realed’ social phenomena and problematically ‘realed’ psychological states.

references

- Abbott, T. (2015) *New jobactive service to help more jobseekers into work*. (Press release). URL: <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/new-jobactive-services-help-more-job-seekers-work>.
- Althusser, L. (1971) *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. London: NLB.
- Atkinson, I. and Shute, R. (1999) Managing ADHD: Issues in developing multidisciplinary guidelines. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 9, 119–127.
- Atladottir, H. O., Gyllenberg, D., Langridge, A., Sandin, S., Hansen, S. N., Leonard, H. and Hultman, C. M. (2015) The increasing

- prevalence of reported diagnoses of childhood psychiatric disorders: a descriptive multinational comparison. *European Child Adolescent Psychiatry*, **24**, 173–183.
- Bacchi, C. (2012) Why study problematizations? making politics visible. *Open Journal of Political Science*, **2**, 1–8. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2012.21001>.
- Baldwin, S. (2000) Living in Britain: Why are so many amphetamines prescribed to infants, children and teenagers in the UK? *Critical Public Health*, **10**, 453–462.
- Barkley, R., Cook, E. H., Diamond, A., Zimetkin, A., Thapar, A. and Teeter, A. (2002) International consensus statement on ADHD. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, **5**, 89–111. URL: <http://www.russellbarkley.org/factsheets/Consensus2002.pdf>.
- Baughman, F. A. (2011) *The ADHD Fraud—How Psychiatry Makes “Patients” of Normal Children*. URL: <http://www.adhdfraud.net/the-adhd-fraud-how-psychiatry-makes-patients-of-normal-children/>.
- Baxandall, P. (2002) Explaining differences in the political meaning of unemployment across time and space. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, **31**, 469–502.
- Bennett, O. (2016) 19 jobseekers for every job: The unemployed elephant in the room. *New Matilda*. URL: <https://newmatilda.com/2016/10/10/19-jobseekers-for-every-job-the-unemployed-elephant-in-the-room/>.
- Biehl, J. (2005) *Vita: Life in a zone of social abandonment*. Berkeley, CA: University of Californian Press.
- Biehl, J., Good, B. and Kleinman, A. (2007) *Subjectivity: Ethnographic investigations*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Boland, T. and Griffin, R. (2015) Introduction and general remarks. In *The sociology of unemployment* (eds. T. Boland and R. Griffin). Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Brady, M. (2011) Researching governmentalities through ethnography: The case of Australian welfare reforms and programs for single parents. *Critical Policy Studies*, **5**, 264–282.
- Breggin, P. R. (2002) *The Ritalin fact book: What your doctor won't tell you*. Cambridge: Perseus Books.
- Børglum, A., Neale, B. and Franke, B. (2019) Unfolding the genetic basis of ADHD. *European Neuropsychopharmacology*, **29**, S722.
- Cass, B., Gibson, F. and Tito, F. (1988) *Towards enabling policies: Income support for people with disabilities*. Canberra: Australian Government Pub. Service.
- Christakis, D. A., Zimmerman, F. J., DiGiuseppe, D. L. and McCarty, C. A. (2004) Early television exposure and subsequent attentional problems in children. *Paediatrics*, **113**, 708–713.
- Concerta (2019) Concerta consumer medicine information leaflet. URL: <https://www.ebs.tga.gov.au/ebs/picmi/picmirepository.nsf/pdf?OpenAgent&id=CP-2009-CMI-00921-3&d=201907031016933>.
- Conrad, P. and Schneider, J. W. (1980) *Medicalization of deviance: From badness to sickness*. St. Louis, MO: Mosby.
- Deacon, R. (2000) Theory as practice: Foucault's concept of problematization. *Telos*, **118**, 127–142.
- Dean, M. (1995) Governing the unemployed self in an active society. *Economy and Society*, **24**, 559–583.
- (2010) *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. London: SAGE, 2nd edn.
- (2015) Neoliberalism, governmentality, ethnography: A response to Michelle Brady. *Foucault Studies*, **20**, 356–366.

- Deault, L. C. (2010) A systematic review of parenting in relation to the development of comorbidities and functional impairments in children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). *Child Psychiatry Human Development*, **41**, 168–192.
- DeGrandpre, R. (1999) *Ritalin nation: Rapid-fire culture and the transformation of human consciousness*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Department of Employment (2015) Jobactive deed 2015-2020. URL: <https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/final-jobactive-deed-2015-2020>.
- DuPaul, G. J., McGoey, K. E., Eckert, T. L. and VanBrakle, J. (2001) Preschool children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder: Impairments in behavioural, social and school functioning. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, **40**, 508–515.
- Farrow, K., Hurley, S. and Sturrock, R. (2015) Grand alibis: How declining public sector capability affects services for the disadvantaged. URL: <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Grand-Alibis-Final.pdf>.
- Fassin, D. (2018) *Life: A Critical User's Manual*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Foucault, M. (1980) The confession of the flesh. In *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and other writings 1972-1977* (ed. C. Gordon), 194–228. Brighton: Harvester.
- (1982) Afterword: The subject and power. In *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (eds. H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow), 208–228. London: Harvester.
- (1985) *Discourse and truth: The problematization of parrhesia*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.
- (1991) Politics and the study of discourse. In *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller), 53–72. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (2001) *Fearless Speech*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- (2003) Governmentality. In *The essential Foucault: Selections from the essential works of Foucault, 1954–1984* (eds. P. Rabinow and N. Rose), 229–245. New York, NY: New Press.
- (2007) *The Politics of Truth*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- (2008) *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fryer, D. and Stambe, R. (2015) Unemployment and mental health. In *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences (2nd ed.)* (ed. J. Wright), 733–737. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Hacking, I. (1990) *The taming of chance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1999) *The social construction of what?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harris, P. (2001) From relief to mutual obligation: welfare rationalities and unemployment in 20th-century Australia. *Journal of Sociology*, **37**, 5–26.
- Harvey, D. (2007) *A brief history of neoliberalism*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Henriques, J., Holloway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walkerdine, V. (1985) Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity. *Sociological Review*, **33**, 807–809.
- Kinnear, P. (2000) Mutual obligations: Ethical and social implications. URL: http://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/DP32_8.pdf.

- Konrad, K., Martino, D. and Aoki, Y. (2018) Brain volumes and intrinsic brain connectivity in ADHD. In *Oxford Textbook of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (eds. T. Banaschewski, A. Coghill and A. Zuddas), 57–63. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Langley, K. (2018) ADHD genetics. In *Oxford Textbook of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (eds. T. Banaschewski, D. Coghill and A. Zuddas), 19–24. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Marley, C. (2019) *Problematising young people: A critical ethnographic investigation of ADHD*. West Yorkshire, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Marley, C. and Fryer, D. (2014) Social change through critical knowledge work: The case of ADHD. *The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*, **14**, 11–19.
- Marston, G. and McDonald, C. (2008) Feeling motivated yet? long-term unemployed people's perspectives on the implementation of workfare in australia. *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, **43**, 255–269.
- (2014) Welfare for some, illfare for others: The social policy agenda of the abbot government. *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, **43**. URL: <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2014/10/marston.html>.
- McClure, P. (2000) *Participation support for a more equitable society: Final report of the reference group on welfare reform*. Canberra: Department of Family and Community Services. URL: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/33494383?q&versionId=41165639>.
- McDonald, C. and Marston, G. (2005) Workfare as welfare: governing unemployment in the advanced liberal state. *Critical Social Policy*, **25**, 374–401.
- McDonald, C., Marston, G. and Buckley, A. (2003) Risk technology in australia: The role of the job seeker classification instrument in employment services. *Critical Social Policy*, **23**, 498–525.
- McGann, M., Nguyen, P. and Considine, M. (2019) Welfare conditionality and blaming the unemployed. *Administration Society*, **52**, 466–494.
- Moreira-Maia, C. R., Massuti, R., Tessari, L., Campani, F., Akutagava-Martins, G. C., Cortese, S. and Rohde, L. A. (2018) Are ADHD medications under or over prescribed worldwide? protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Medicine*, **97**, e10923. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/MD.000000000010923>.
- Mort, F. and Peters, R. (2005) Foucault recalled: Interview with Michel Foucault. *New Formations*, **10**, 9–22.
- National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) (2008) Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): Diagnosis and management of ADHD in children, young people and adults.
- National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (NCCMH) (2009) Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Diagnosis and management of ADHD in children, young people and adults, NICE clinical guidelines. URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53652/pdf/T0C.pdf>.
- O'Neill, J., O'Connor, M. J., Yee, V., Ly, R., Narr, K., Alger, J. R. and Levitt, J. G. (2019) Differential neuroimaging indices in prefrontal white matter in prenatal alcohol-associated ADHD versus idiopathic ADHD. *Birth Defects Research*, **11**, 797–811.
- Peterie, M., Ramia, G., Marston, G. and Patulny, R. (2019) Emotional compliance and emotion as resistance: Shame and anger among the long-term unemployed. *Work, Employment and Society*, **33**, 794–811.
- Powell, P. and Inglis-Powell, B. (1999) *Raising difficult children: Realistic behaviour management for difficult children including those with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder*. North Parramatta: Gouldian, 3rd edn.
- Rinke, H. (2016) Introduction - mental and emotional distress as a social justice issue: Beyond psychocentrism. *Studies in Social Justice*, **10**, 4–7.

- Rose, N. (2018) Community, citizenship, and the third way. *American Behavioural Scientist*, **43**, 1395–1411.
- Safer, D. J. (2018) Is ADHD really increasing in youth? *Journal of Attention Disorders*, **22**, 107–115.
- Sayal, K., Prasad, V., Daley, D., Ford, T. and Coghill, D. (2018) ADHD in children and young people: prevalence, care pathways and service provision. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, **5**, 175–186.
- Senate (1999) *Jobactive: Failing Those It Was Intended to Serve*. Canberra: Education and Employment Reference Committee. URL: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/JobActive2018/Report.
- Silverstein, M. J., Alperin, S., Hochstein, Y. and Adler, L. A. (2018) Moody adults with ADHD. In *Moodiness in ADHD: A Clinician's Guide* (ed. W. Davis), 161–185. ?: Springer.
- Sonuga-Barke, E. and Harold, G. (2018) Conceptualizing and investigating the role of the environment in ADHD. In *Oxford Textbook of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (eds. T. Banaschewski, D. Coghill and A. Zuddas), 25–34. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Tait, G. (2006) A brief philosophical examination of ADHD. In *Critical New Perspectives on ADHD* (eds. G. Lloyd, J. Stead and D. Cohen), 95–107. Routledge, Taylor Francis Group: London and New York.
- Timimi, S. (2004) A critique of the international consensus statement on ADHD. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, **7**, 59–63.
- (2005) *Naughty boys: Antisocial behaviour, ADHD and the role of culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Toorman, J., Pereira, R. R. and Buitelaar, J. K. (2009) A randomised controlled trial into the effects of food on ADHD. *European Child Adolescent Psychiatry*, **18**, 12–19.
- Walkerdine, V. and Bansel, P. (2010) Neoliberalism, work and subjectivity: towards a more complex account. In *The Sage Handbook of Identities* (eds. M. Wetherall and C. T. Mohanty), 492–507. London: Sage.
- Walters, W. (2000) *Unemployment and government: Genealogies of the social*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ward, A., Bush, H. and Braaten, E. B. (2019) Reading disorders/dyslexia. In *The Massachusetts General Hospital Guide to Learning Disabilities* (eds. H. K. Wilson and E. B. Braaten), 21–37. Totowa, New Jersey: Humana Press.
- Yeend, P. (2004) *Mutual obligations/work for the dole: E brief*. Australian Government: Social Policy Unit. URL: https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/archive/dole?print=1.