Politicizing Canadian Childhood Using a Governmentality Framework

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OVER THE LAST 20 years, historical research has increasingly employed concepts and ideas popularized by the writings of Michel Foucault. For example, many contemporary historians demonstrate familiarity with Foucauldian approaches to concepts like power, knowledge, and government and may eclectically incorporate into their work the analytical techniques of discourse analysis, genealogy, or moral regulation. Consistent with a more postmodern view of social relations, the adaptation of Foucauldian thought within contemporary historical studies reflects a broader concern within the humanities for radically rethinking the relationship between power, knowledge, and the human body. The selective employment of Foucault's governmentality approach to an examination of Canadian youth groups such as the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts at the turn of the twentieth century demonstrates how the application of Foucault's work deepens our understanding of the politics of childhood and enriches our historical view of Canadian children.

For the most part, the value of using a governmentality approach in the study of Canadian youth groups lies in its enhanced potential to politicize childhood. Broadly stated, liberal schools of thought examine how changing cultural views of childhood and contemporary knowledges have supported the belief that childhood is a time to nurture children's potential for citizenship, while Marxist approaches usually examine the underlying power relations of state mechanisms of social control over children. Neither of these views thoroughly combines an interest in issues of social knowledge and power relations with a critique of the development of self-regulatory practices in children. That is, neither fully explores the development of children's capacities to regulate their own bodies, or to govern themselves, especially as these capacities developed in non-state locations such as philanthropically based youth groups. Furthermore, these views are rarely critical of the underlying epistemology that constructs childhood as a social location for the "natural" development of children's capacity for self-government.

**The Burgeoning of Children's Organizations,
Theoretical Approaches, and the Politicization of Childhood**

The early twentieth century was a time of great social change for Canadians, and young people were no exception. The advent of compulsory schooling and labour laws, among other things, had a profound effect on the shared experiences of children, who found themselves and the government of their newly acquired "leisure" time to be the focus of much attention. While the Canadian state implemented protective legislation and funded programmes aimed at improving the welfare of children, philanthropists, teachers, moral reformers, and parents encouraged Canadian children to join the growing number of clubs and organizations that were emerging. Organizations like the Boy Scouts of Canada and the Canadian Girl Guides flourished as the ranks of their membership swelled.

On one hand, the rapid emergence of children's groups such as these can be attributed to meaningful shifts in social and cultural attitudes towards children throughout the West. In the past, historians of childhood have explored the roots of these shifts. For example, Phillippe Aries locates the "liberalization" of childhood in a distinctly modern, uniquely Western desire to love and protect our children.[1] In his view, the burgeoning of state initiatives concerning children is a structural manifestation of the collective desire to nurture and protect them. Although the care and rearing of children is relegated to the "natural" private realm of the family, state intervention is justified on the grounds that some families cannot fulfil this mandate. Within Aries's framework, the rise of children's clubs reflects society's increasing tendency to sentimentalize childhood and to designate it as a time for innocent play. With their organized games and nurturing leaders, children's groups might be considered an offshoot of natural familial relations, almost like a modern form of the extended family.

Despite acknowledging the links between cultural shifts in attitudes towards children, Aries never fully explores the rise of childhood as a social category or the politics of this constructed identity. Rather, Aries sees the emergence of childhood only in relation to increased sentimentalization, which is accelerated at the turn of the century by developments in the sciences of psychology and criminology. Since science identified childhood as a natural stage of evolution through which a child becomes an adult, liberal discussions of childhood and children often focus on facilitating their natural development. While these discussions frequently provide rich descriptions of existing social structures like the family and the state, which attempt to govern children in their own best interests, they rarely politicize childhood or regard children as political beings who, when constructed as naturally in need of protection, contribute to state formation and nationalism.[2]

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1 Phillippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

2 See, for example, John O'Neill, *The Missing Child in Liberal Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

Similarly, various well-known psychogenic approaches overlook the politics of childhood and related issues of the government of children. For example, Lloyd DeMause argues that successive generations of parents adopt more successful parenting models so that childhood simply becomes better. Like Aries, Edward Shorter views the emergence of childhood as a manifestation of widespread cultural shifts. He identifies both the rampant sentimentalization of the mother-child dyad and the increasingly privatized family as key factors in fuelling this shift from the "traditional" to the "modern" family. Like Shorter, Lawrence Stone considers the impact of greater emotional connections between children and adults. However, he expands Shorter's concern for the mother-child dyad to include the father and points to the modern tendency towards a stronger parent-child bond. Increasingly intense emotional bonding between parents and children contributes to a greater concern for the control and discipline of children within nuclear families.[3] Stone also touches on issues of government when he links puritanism to the discipline of children within families.

As does Aries's approach, these three well-known analyses ultimately identify emotional changes towards children and accompanying transformations in family structure as the impetus for increasingly sentimental views of childhood. While shedding light on the links between society's emotional liberalization and the realities of family life, these analyses fail to consider the direct political significance of childhood as an emerging social category that developed alongside the modern state and nation. These frameworks offer limited theoretical devices for examining the political significance of burgeoning children's groups in the early twentieth century and their relation to government.

However, a more promising framework for assessing the political significance of childhood vis-à-vis the state can be found in Jacques Donzelot's influential work entitled *Policing the Family*, published in 1979. Donzelot adopts a Marxist approach that links the emergence of the modern family structure, and its mandate to nurture children, to state development. He politicizes the modern family when he suggests that increased state regulation of families over the last century contributes to state formation. In his view, the family is understood to have been harnessed in service of the state since it acts as a site for the social reproduction of labourers and secures capitalist interests and modes of production in its reproduction of the labour force.[4]

Children occupy a special place within Donzelot's analysis since, collectively, they constitute the future labour force and determine the continued strength of the state. Childhood is political. It is a time when children learn their productive roles through the instilling of ideologies and the training of

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3 Lloyd DeMause, ed., *The History of Childhood* (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfled and Nicolson, 1977).

4 Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1979).

behaviours. However, Donzelot's acknowledgement of the political nature of childhood does not extend beyond linking the protective arms of the family to the watchful gaze of the state. Since he does not explore the nature of childhood independent of the state's concern for the family, his analysis does not account for important non-familial aspects of children's culture. For example, within Donzelot's analysis there is no place for considering the rise of children's organizations, since for the most part this aspect of children's culture arose outside family or state structures. In limiting his discussion to linkages between the modern family and emerging state apparatuses, Donzelot's framework ignores other arenas where the government of children occurs. Donzelot can only provide a limited history of the politicization of childhood, one primarily concerned with the family-state regulation of children as future labourers, as he fails to take into account the governmental aspects of the many non-state children's philanthropic groups in the early twentieth century.

More recent accounts of the regulation of women and children by the Canadian state, such as Jane Ursel's *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family*, build on Donzelot's work. Ursel takes a more refined look at state regulation of the modern family, which she defines as consisting primarily of the mother-child dyad. She suggests that, through the family, the state regulates the mother-child dyad in such a way as to facilitate patriarchal relations.[5] While Ursel's feminist critique contributes significantly to our historical understanding of the regulation of the Canadian family, like Donzelot, she limits her analysis when she does not explore the political significance of non-state cultural phenomena like social clubs. Ursel rightfully politicizes the mother-child dyad in relation to the emerging welfare state, but she does not consider the political nature of children separate from that of the family. In concerning herself with the relationship of the family to the state, Ursel does not treat childhood as a political identity in and of itself.

While the approaches of Aries, DeMause, Shorter, and Stone describe how ideological views about children shape social actions and Donzelot's and Ursel's accounts illustrate how the family acts as a regulatory mechanism in our lives, none successfully addresses the interplay between ideology and regulatory mechanisms. In *Nations Are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario's Mothers and Children 1900–1940*, Cynthia Comacchio utilizes the Foucauldian technique of discourse analysis to reveal the interplay between ideology and regulatory mechanisms.[6] Like Ursel, Comacchio analyses the relationship between the emerging welfare state and the mother-child unit in the first half of the twentieth century. However, Comacchio's assessment is

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5 Jane Ursel, *Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1992).

6 Cynthia R. Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario's Mothers and Children, 1900–1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).

enhanced by her understanding of children as beings separate from their mothers and by her treatment of childhood as a constructed social category that emerged in relation to an expanding ideology of Canadian nationalism. She broadens our understanding of the cultural significance of various mechanisms of regulation when she relates them to our collective national agenda. In situating children and childhood within this broader national framework, Comacchio's work moves beyond a concern for the regulation of children to issues of their government. In so doing, she presents another perspective of Canadian childhood, a view in which children are highly politicized. Further, she demonstrates how discourse analysis enhances the study of children and childhood by including an examination of non-state sites of government.

Discourse analysis is particularly well suited to the study of children's history since it assumes the social construction of childhood while considering children's cultural climates and lived realities. For instance, discourse analysis deepens our understanding of the burgeoning of children's organizations in the early twentieth century by exposing cultural themes imbricated within them, such as national ideals and popular views of childhood. Through discourse analysis the widespread support for children's organizations can be linked to Canadian nationalism and a growing concern for the moral development of children.

For example, G. Stanley Hall is attributed with popularizing a developmental view of childhood that identified it, and especially adolescence, as the most appropriate time for moral development.[7] This view was adopted by theologians, doctors, moral reformers, teachers, and parents, among others, who maintained that moral development was best encouraged through moral education. Combining moral education with companionship and play, organizations such as schools, churches, and philanthropic social clubs flourished as the preferred venues for the moral education of children.

Concern for the moral development of children was buttressed by concerns for the Canadian nation. The surveillance of children was justified on the grounds that children were the key to Canada's national future and that continued national prosperity hinged on the development of each child's "potential" as a future citizen. Within these organizations, childhood was increasingly imagined in relation to the responsibilities and obligations of children towards civil society, the state, and the nation, and youngsters were impelled to enhance their potential as citizens by undertaking self-improvement. In this way, childhood provided a social location for fears about national degradation, the social and material failings of industrialism, and racial degeneration, and children's organizations became a key site for surveillance and reform.

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7 G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education — Volumes One and Two* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1924).

Whereas discourse analysis reveals and describes the linkage of various cultural phenomena like a society's views of childhood, their nationalism and morality, a governmentality framework is more directly concerned with exposing modern techniques of government. Where discourse analysis might ask how childhood, nationalism, and morality are linked to the rise of children's organizations, researchers who employ a governmentality framework might ask: "In what ways do children's organizations govern children?" or "What is the mentality through which children are governed?" By zoning in on such themes, a governmentality framework can deepen our historical understanding of the political and cultural significance of the emergence of children's organizations and their impact on the lived realities of Canadian children.

The Foundations of Governmentality:
Power and Knowledge
The term governmentality describes a particular technique of government unique to the modern liberal state, in which power, knowledge, and state processes work together to shape the behaviour of individuals. Foucault identifies each individual's capacity for self-discipline as the key to modern liberal government. Individuals governing themselves in compliance with state edicts help to create an orderly society. Analysis using a governmentality framework is unique in its examination of the role of moral discourses in exploring the individual basis of collective social orderliness. Aimed at exposing this relationship between morality and government, the theoretical concept of governmentality emerges from Foucault's understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge.

According to Foucault, either negative or positive relations of power are present in all aspects of human interaction. Power relations operate negatively when they restrict human interactions and curtail individual behaviour. Metaphorically, these negative power relations operate much like an intricately woven social net that limits human interactions within certain behavioural boundaries.[8] These boundaries are asserted through multiple sites located both beyond and within the individual. For example, a multitude of political and ideological alliances among agencies, institutions, and cultural practices reinforce behavioural boundaries and affect an individual's capacity for compliance. It is a distinct condition of modern society that individuals unavoidably, and often unwittingly, become ensnared in this net of power relations which pervades the social world.

The net is kept in place by regulatory processes that normalize certain behaviours. For example, by enforcing certain standards of behaviour in all children, the educational system asserts one particular view of normality.

8 For a more detailed discussion of the metaphor of the net of power relations, refer to Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 3–11.

Since one must be "trained" to act accordingly, regulatory processes of normalization necessarily involve coercion and are considered a manifestation of negative power relations. Although training can take many forms such as physical punishment, discipline, reward, social exclusion, education, and self-discipline, all are united by the common goal to instil in children the desire and capacity to behave normally. When individuals adopt these normalized behaviours, they exercise power over themselves — often in the form of self-discipline. Within regulatory processes there is often a conflation of normal behaviour with moral constitution, where normality indicates moral propriety and marginality indicates immorality. When regulatory processes are strengthened by their conflation with morality, they reinforce the capacity of the social net of power relations to curtail behaviour and pre-empt resistance. Foucault identifies this network of power as the vehicle for the modern liberal regime.[9]

However, Foucault also suggests that power relations are not merely coercive, but also productive. In an ongoing process of change, power relations help to produce and reproduce the relations among agencies, institutions, and cultural practices that define our social context. In this way, power relations are not wholly and unconditionally deleterious to social and individual growth. Power relations, while ubiquitous, are neither uniform nor monolithic. Rather, they are as various as the human interactions of which they are an integral and often unacknowledged part.[10]

Foucault's identification of both negative and positive forms of power as pervasive and elemental to modern liberal society is linked to his ideas about the construction of knowledge. For Foucault, power relations produce "domains of objects and rituals of truth"[11] that constitute and impel individual and collective knowledge and interpretation. Power relations work to create and privilege particular types of knowledge. In turn, this knowledge is equated with truth. Foucault is most concerned with the productive aspect of power since it is the key element that forms knowledge, shapes individual interpretation, and constructs particular categorical identities.

Categorical identities or subjectivities are constituted by the normalizing technology of expert knowledges, such as those generated by educational or medical discourses.[12] Expert knowledges simultaneously totalize and individualize society: members are treated in terms of their membership in a set

9 Michel Foucault, "Governmentality", in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87–104.

10 Michel Foucault, in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

11 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 194.

12 John Caputo and Mark Yount, "Institutions, Normalization, and Power", in John Caputo and Mark Yount, eds., *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), pp. 3–23.

of social populations, such as the family, the poor, and the young.[13] Since discourses of knowledge tend to naturalize conduct, they often render invisible the underlying power relations through which these constructed human taxonomies arise.

Foucault maintains that the tendency to locate power relations within expert discourses is a unique feature of modern society, in that the development of data-gathering and analysis techniques has enabled surveillance of the population. For example, the medical profession was instrumental in naming, defining, and proposing strategies for the government of children in schools, orphanages, and foster families. The medical community's perceived need to identify and treat "problem" children provided the rationale for intervention, while medical knowledge provided the means for identification and legitimized surveillance and intervention. In this case, the government of children was enabled by an expert discourse on childhood that was constructed by medical "experts". These experts defined and prescribed treatments for individual children that were to be effected by parents, social workers, and educators. The utilization of expert knowledge by "laymen" reinforced the experts' claims to truth.[14] In turn, these "laymen" developed their own claims to expertise since they actually applied the reform strategies in children's organizations across Canada.

Contemporary techniques of knowledge construction have significant ramifications for the constitution of political subjectivities. For example, legal and medical discourses naturalize some subjectivities and pathologize or exclude others.[15] Those who are excluded are subject to different techniques of government. For example, children are thought incapable of rational and informed participation in democratic government. This has led to the perception that it is legitimate to deny them voting rights. Here, legal and medical discourses work together to define and curtail the political subjectivities of children. The same liberal rationale that privileges expert knowledge legitimizes the exclusion of those who are presumably incapable of casting a responsible vote.[16]

Governance and Morality in the Modern Liberal State
Foucault's concern for the "microphysics" of power leads him to assert that there are multiple sites through which the individual is governed. These sites

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13 Ian Hacking, "How Should We do the History of Statistics?", in Burchell *et al.*, eds., *The Foucault Effect*, pp. 181–196, and *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

14 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 178–195, and "Governmentality", pp. 87–104.

15 See, for example, Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty: A Genealogy of Liberal Governance* (London: Routlege, 1991); Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); James W. Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

16 Nikolas Rose, "The Death of the Social? Refiguring the Territory of Government", *Economy and Society*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1996), pp. 327–356.

pervade all aspects of society. Thus, his investigation of power leads away from the more typical examination of state processes and practices to the study of discipline, especially self-discipline, which he identifies as the distinctive form of modern power and the primary technology of modern liberal governance.[17]

For Foucault, morality links processes of political and governmental formation to self-formation. To be a citizen is to govern oneself individually, through practices of the self, in a way that simultaneously enhances one's own life and fosters the strength of the modern liberal state. Morality is the individual capacity to govern the self in accordance with the liberal regime. These two domains — the domain of political and governmental formation and the domain of self-formation — diverge in the constitution of the quintessential liberal subjectification "that treat[s] individuals as sovereign subjects or citizens within a self-governing political community".[18] The liberal subject is constituted by a complex system of "governance". Foucault identifies governance as the linkages within a system of government by the state, government of others, and government of the self. For Foucault, this linkage is the modern art of government.[19]

Governance operates through a variety of techniques and discourses that simultaneously enhance life and secure the state.[20] A prime example is the formal education of children. Morality and "good" character provide the basis for governance. Liberal education develops children's capacity to govern themselves and to be governed. This dual focus springs from the singular presumed need to develop self-discipline in children, which is the stated tautological aim of late- nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century pedagogy.[21] For example, late-nineteenth-century pedagogical tenets maintained that obedience to parental and state authority and God's moral laws was the key to effective leadership, since obedience requires self-discipline and the ability to subordinate individual desires. Subordination through self-discipline enables the individual to act in the best interests of the state, the nation, or the family, and forms the basis of collegial spirit. Without self-discipline,

17 It should be noted that Foucault never consistently uses one term to describe what I am calling "self-discipline". Rather, he uses, often interchangeably, the following terms: conduct of the self, practices of the self, self-control, techniques of the self, technologies of the self, and techniques of self-mastery, among others. This point is made by Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham, *Foucault and the Law: Towards a Sociology of Law as Governance* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), p. 23.

18 Mitchell Dean, " 'A Social Structure of Many Souls': Moral Regulation, Government, and Self-Formation", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1994), p. 155.

19 Michel Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of 'Political Reason' ", in Sterling M. McMurrin, ed., *The Tanner Lectures* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), pp. 246–254.

20 Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* (Cambridge: Blackwell Press, 1996), pp. 96–136.

21 See, for example, Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836–1871* (London: Falmer Press, 1988); Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976); Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

individuals cannot govern themselves or others in a moral way or wholly submit to government by the state or others. Self-discipline is vital to becoming a self-regulating citizen. Thus, the key to the "successful" development of political subjectivity within the liberal rationality of government lies in moral self-government — that is, the moral exercise of power over oneself. Through morality, self-government is linked to the government of nations, populations, and societies.[22]

Interpretations that favour Foucault's claim that individual self-regulation is a fundamental technique of liberal government elucidate a significant paradox: the rationale of liberal government requires individuals relentlessly to exercise illiberal self-regulation. The essence of liberal governance lies in the despotic rule of the self over the self. The liberal mode of governance presumes and facilitates a parallel system of self-rule that shapes the conduct of liberal subjects. Despite its ubiquity, this system is rarely recognized as a political mechanism.[23] Since the security of the modern liberal state depends on the self-regulation of its subjects, the state governs through programmes that develop the routine and taken-for-granted capacity for self-regulation in individuals, especially when these programmes enhance national wealth and security. Government through "habituation", however, is both at odds with the liberal avowal to secure and protect individual freedoms and liberties, and entirely dependent on those premises. Enhancing our understanding of the various social relations that constitute this paradox is perhaps one of Foucault's most salient contributions to contemporary social theory.

Governance and the Canadian State

Foucault's analysis of power, knowledge, and governance has been highly influential. Most significantly, Foucault has encouraged scholars to rethink the relationship between morality and governance in light of the social construction of subjectivity and normalization. A body of literature on "moral regulation" now exists. Contemporary accounts of moral regulation illustrate how our lived realities are encoded in various practices so that certain behaviours are sanctioned, naturalized or marginalized, and embodied in moral discourses. These practices developed in accordance with the intricately interwoven economic and cultural spheres. Today, theoretical debates are largely concerned with the privileging of economics or culture in the formation of moral discourses.[24]

Currently, two approaches to moral regulation have emerged among contemporary scholars. On one hand, the state-oriented approach of theorists such as Philip Corrigan, Derek Sayer, and Bruce Curtis emphasize capitalist economic and state formation in shaping morality. They centre their analysis

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22 Dean, " 'A Social Structure of Many Souls' ", pp. 154–164.

23 Foucault, "Governmentality", p. 100.

24 Mariana Valverde, "Editor's Introduction", *Canadian Journal of Sociology: Studies in Moral Regulation*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1994), pp. v–xi.

on state formation, searching for links between state processes, emerging institutional realms, the economy, and a class-based moral order. On the other hand, Mitchell Dean, Nikolas Rose, and Mariana Valverde focus more directly on the role of moral discourses in interpreting experience.[25] In their view, the ground-breaking, state-oriented approach of Corrigan and Sayer is limited by the premise that political and material conditions are central in shaping experience. For Dean, Rose, and Valverde, experience does not result from the relation between the state and the subject. Furthermore, determining the "true" meaning of experience is problematic since meaning does not exist outside the cultural and social phenomena that shaped it. In overemphasizing the unity of the state, Dean claims, Corrigan and Sayer imagine a binary relationship between the state and the private realm, in which state agencies impose meaning on the social order, determine individual perceptions of experience, and reify theoretical presumptions of the distinctly active public sphere and the reactive private sphere.[26] Dean, Rose, and Valverde see moral regulation as a cultural artefact affected by, but not limited to, material relations.

Furthermore, these scholars suggest that a more radical view of state formation is in order since, as Foucault notes, state formation is itself a form of power relation. In their view, expanding the conception of the economic sphere to include a parallel cultural economy would provide a more thorough understanding of the rise of moral discourses and state formation. This governmentality approach explores the regulatory capacities of non-state agencies that are typically regarded as peripheral to state formation, such as the family, the church, and philanthropy. The inclusion of non-state agencies in this process is particularly germane to any study that examines the political relevance of a social population and the significance of non-state cultural phenomena such as children's organizations.

Governing Canadian Children
The late nineteenth century marks a crucial period in the evolution of the modern Canadian state. Its rapid formation and centralization helped transform governmental technologies so that some Canadians became increasingly the targets of moral revision. Moral reformers sought to ameliorate

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25 See Philip Corrigan, "On Moral Regulation: Some Preliminary Remarks", *Sociological Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1981), pp. 313–337, and *Social Reforms/ Human Capacities* (London: Routledge, 1990); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1985); Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty*; Nikolas Rose, "Beyond the Public/ Private Division: Law, Power and the Family", *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1987), pp. 61–73, and *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Routledge, 1990); Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, "Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government", *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 43, no. 2 (1992), pp. 173–205; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada 1880s–1920s* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), and "Moral Capital", *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1994), pp. 1–19.

26 Dean, " 'A Structure of Many Souls' ", pp. 148–154.

"undesirable" social conditions such as poverty, prostitution, and alcohol-ism. Their efforts were fuelled by a desire to "improve" the health and wealth of the Canadian nation by improving her citizens. This meant incul-cating in individuals desirable characteristics that were thought to be condu-cive to nation-building, such as thrift, punctuality, respect for authority, and the keen desire to labour. Children were particularly vulnerable to moral reform efforts, since emergent scientific and pedagogical discourses quickly popularized notions of childhood as a crucial time of moral, social, and physical development and identified children as a segment of the population most in need of constant and intense moral guidance. At this time, the social value of children, especially middle-class children, inflated. Children came to be regarded as a national resource, and their management ensured Can-ada's future as a strong and stable nation.[27]

In this century, the state has become increasingly involved in the "appro-priate" government of children, despite prevalent views that the government of children is the responsibility of the private family. State agencies have arisen to teach appropriate parenting techniques to parents and inundate chil-dren with self-esteem-raising activities.[28] In more extreme cases, these agen-cies remove children from their "dysfunctional" families and place them in alternative families or state institutions. Through these interventions or potential interventions, the state regulates the treatment of children. State regulation is buttressed by a moral discourse on "appropriate" parenting. Study of the state regulation of children thus provides an excellent site for further examination of the paradox in which stringent self-regulation main-tains liberal government.

The governmentality approach lends itself well to the historical study of children and children's culture since it provides a means to explore the social construction of their moral subjectivities by the cultural codes of everyday life. In this case, emerging practices and processes of children's culture, such as the rapid growth in children's organizations, aligned the moral subjectivi-ties of children with state-building ideals. Children's organizations were a transformative means of governance since they altered both the subjectivi-ties and the lived realities of their members. Understanding the governance of children clearly requires broadening our knowledge to include their moral regulation and an examination of coexistent discourses.

However, the governmentality approach also offers a unique perspective on the social construction of childhood and the regulation of children — an

27 Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman Press, 1995), pp. 129–133; Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", *History Workshop*, no. 5 (1978), pp. 9–11; Michael Katz and Paul Mattingly, " 'To Create a Strong and Healthy Race': School Chil-dren in the Public Health Movement, 1880–1914", in Neil Sutherland, ed., *Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 136–138.

28 Rima D. Apple, *Mothers and Medicine: A Social History of Infant Feeding, 1890–1950* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Deborah Dwork, *War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement* (London: Tavistock, 1987).

approach that directly links the government of children to state formation but includes an examination of non-state agencies like children's organizations. This is particularly thought-provoking since the relegation of children to the familial sphere has rendered them invisible in venues not directly related to the family. A governmentality framework can reveal that, when children are the target of philanthropic nation-building programmes, they are directly involved in state formation. Thus, the utilization of governmentality marks the potential for a radical shift in scholarship on childhood which will reveal the many ways in which children as a group have been directly involved in state formation.

Furthermore, rethinking childhood from this perspective reveals the genealogical links between expert discourses, state intervention, and moral regulation. Children and adolescents occupied a special place in the expert discourses that arose in the mid-nineteenth century. Childhood and adolescence were regarded as the most appropriate times for moral development. Where families failed in their task of moral education, state intervention was legitimated. Thus, the governance of children is exposed.

While children are, of course, real sentient beings who experience childhood as individuals, as a group "children" are constructed through various expert discourses. As children came to be understood as united by their unique experiences and set apart from the adult experience, they came to share a common group identity. This identity was characterized by a special need for discrete government: the perceived need to govern children differently than adults fuelled expert discourses concerning their surveillance and government. The simultaneous recognition of children as both individuals and a group coincides with the modern tendency towards aggregation and differentiation and explains, in part, the categorical exclusion of children from certain analyses of social relations.[29]

A General Caution

As an analytic tool for the investigation of nationalism, state formation, and Canadian children's groups in the early twentieth century, the governmentality framework is not unproblematic. First, researchers must respect a more general caution not to invoke a monolithic view of their object of study, be it the family, children, or the social sphere. Similarly, they must not treat technologies of government as if they were monolithic. Rather, researchers must take care to demonstrate the complex nature of technologies which often coexist with competing technologies. Clearly, this is a complex task since scholars must often invoke a multitude of conceptions and ideologies when elucidating another.

Researchers must also take care to "think through" the governmentality approach and avoid mere application, since unsophisticated analysis may lead to at least one of three errors. First, one might reify the public/ private

29 Rose and Miller, "Political Power Beyond the State", pp. 178–187.

division in spite of the investigation of the discursive divisions between the public and private sphere, as Valverde claims Corrigan and Sayer do. Careful analysis of the intricate imbrications of the public and private spheres will overcome this abstraction. Secondly, one must not fetishize state formation to the extent that all aspects of human society and culture are rendered equally relevant to it. Thirdly, one must not fetishize moral regulation to imply that all aspects of human society and culture are related to the moral economy.[30]

Why Governmentality?
Some Concluding Remarks

By relating Canadian national ideals to nation-building agendas of the Canadian state and philanthropic organizations for children, the governmentality approach politicizes the growing importance of Canadian children. Most significantly, this approach allows researchers to explore fundamental issues — issues of unity, social cohesion, and community, as well as of power, social control, and exclusion. Least significantly, the governmentality framework provides an unconventional account of the history of Canadian childhood — a history that focuses on the heightened regulation of children in reform-oriented youth groups within a nation increasingly concerned with its religious foundations and imperial legacy.

The governmentality approach thus enables a radical rethinking of nationalism and childhood in which the child emerges as a political agent. To do this, we must extend our study of children to their lives beyond the familial sphere and the direct processes of the state. By examining the emergence of national identity and the rise of nation-building children's organizations, we can reveal how children are politicized within the voluntary sphere as agents of national rebirth and symbols of national potential. Since each child is potentially vulnerable to moral, physical, and intellectual degradation, children must be managed as if they were a national resource. This management is effected through multiple sites of power that operate within the individual as self-regulatory conduct, within cultures as ideologies and epistemologies, and within state structures as policies and procedures.

Furthermore, the governmentality approach allows for an exploration of the complex nature of children's identities that are encoded in childhood culture. Play, ritual, and language become sites for investigating the politics of childhood and its relations to government of the self, government of others, and government by the state. Indeed, the study of Canadian children's groups necessitates this perspective, since many fine examples of children's culture are contained even within those organizations that aimed to impose the state and philanthropic nation-building agenda. In embracing the allegedly non-state sites for the exercise of power, this approach legitimizes the study of Canadian children's organizations as forums for techniques of governance aimed directly at children.

30 Valverde, "Editor's Introduction", p. x.