Unveiling Technologies of Power in Classroom Organization Practice

By Maureen Ford

"It seems to me," Foucault expounds, "that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them."[1]

Karin Ærø sometimes leaned over, behind those who sang, on her rounds of the singers. And then she would say, quite softly, so that only the one to whom it was addressed should hear it, "*Excellent*."[2]

Introduction

I should say at the outset that classroom organization practices are both central and peripheral to this paper. Like a play within a play, the unveiling of technologies of power in classroom organization practices occurs, here, on two levels: locally, in a study of open-concept, learner-centered classrooms, and discursively, in a commentary on the value of a

Maureen Ford is an assistant professor with the Theory and Policy Studies, Philosophy Group at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Foucauldian analysis of power for educators. The two stories work concurrently. Foucault's analysis of what I will call productive power, provides the theoretical grounding for a study of power operating in classroom organizational practices. In turn, the study of power in classroom organizational practices serves to illustrate gaps in the predominant ways teachers "read" and, consequently, address, power.[3]

The work accomplished in this paper is meant to be generative. Rather than offer a full-scale genealogy of classroom organization practices, I contribute a genealogical snapshot of one particular transition in teaching practice, namely the shift from so-called "traditional" classroom organization to "open-concept" classroom organization. The classroom practices example is chosen on the basis of its pedagogical and heuristic utility.

While similar questions might be raised about the effects of power generated within the organization of curricular practices or ideals of education, the structural elements of these discussions, familiar to theorists, are often less compelling for teachers. Structural features of classroom organization, however, are readily observed and the comparison made possible by a focus on traditional and open concept classroom organization is especially poignant. The most insidious dangers of systems of practice are those that hide significant effects in innocuous activity and unacknowledged decision-making. Open concept classrooms in some respects epitomize progressive educational themes yet, studied with an eye toward productive power, several surprising observations come to the fore.

Methodologically, my analysis of classroom practices is akin to what Dreyfuss and Rabinow call "interpretive analytics.[4]" Interpretive analytics is an examination of a set of practices — a discourse — that, in their words, "performs an interpretive act which focuses and articulates, from among the many distresses and dangers which abound in our society, those which can be seen as paradigmatic.[5]" In the current case, the term paradigmatic is too strong a word. I am looking for a form of inquiry that teachers can employ to notice elements of power that get buried in systems, tools, and unstated processes of normalization. In such a context the analysis is speculative rather than definitive yet, as I shall show in the third part of the paper, it is useful to the extent that it enables teachers to adopt previously unconsidered modes of address. In particular, I argue that paying attention to productive power can help teachers perceive resistance differently — our own and students'. It can also help us to notice when educational practices narrow the range of subjectivity[6] accessible within school settings.

The descriptions of traditional and open-concept classroom practices are drawn from my own teaching experience through 1980-1990 in secondary and middle school classrooms in public schools in Ontario, Canada. In particular instances I also draw upon discussions with pre-service students as well as classroom management teaching manuals. My aim is to sketch two relatively distinct approaches to classroom organization, the comparison of which can help teachers to see decisions, evaluations, and outcomes that they might not otherwise notice.

I do not claim that these descriptions are sufficient to characterize either "traditional" or "open concept" classroom organization as "pure" categories. Nor do I attempt to generate empirically defensible, causal, claims about the actual outcomes of particular teaching practices. Rather, the descriptions I offer are strategic, at once empirical and interpretive. Empirically, they need to be described with sufficient clarity as to be recognizable by educational practitioners. Heuristically, they will be successful to the extent that the patterns drawn are demonstrably useful in identifying potential dangers and framing new possibilities for teaching practice.[7]

The paper proceeds in three parts. I begin Part One by reviewing "sovereign power," the dominant approach in contemporary educational theory and practice. Productive power is then introduced through an exegetical account of Foucault's analysis of panopticism (discipline), docility, and normalization (power/knowledge).

Foucault often uses historical ruptures as fault lines, places where the sedimentation of a discourse can be noticed more readily because it does not continue as expected. In Part Two, I follow a similar path. The selected rupture emerges from a pre-service discussion of technologies of power in classroom organization in which it became clear that the technologies of power operating within traditional and open concept classroom settings appear markedly different. The bulk of this section is devoted to a genealogical analysis of open concept classroom organization. Again, panopticism, docility, and normalization are key themes.

Finally, in Part Three, I argue that a shift in the ways teachers address questions of power must be accompanied by a shift in teachers' conceptions of practice. Illustrating the practices involved with an example based on the construction of resistant student subjectivities, I advocate a re-orientation of teachers' reflections that decenters the question "what must be done" in favour of Foucault's provocative "what is the current danger?"

Sovereign power represents struggle between educational stakeholders as a tug of war. Productive power casts struggle in terms of discursive production and contestation, like in a game of charades. To succeed in a tug of war, one utilizes practices that optimize the force that can be applied, often to a single focal point. To succeed in a game of charades, one must consider the language of gestures most appropriate to the subject, the audience, and to the commitments and capacities of the participants. Recognizing the dangers of discipline and docility, teachers are alerted to the value of proliferating discourses, and to the possibility of reconstituting schools and classrooms as locations of performances that are not restricted to success or failure.

Part One: Power in Educational Discourse[8]

1.1 Power as Legitimate Control

When teachers talk about power in the classroom we are usually concerned

either with our perceived lack of power, or with a perceived misuse of power. We talk of avoiding "power plays" with students, and we wonder what has happened to the respect that used to be afforded people in our positions. Generally, we talk about power in terms that establish the means of controlling the behaviour of others, the "right" to exert such control, and the nature and limits of that "right." Questions of students' power and their "right to exert control," over themselves and others, have also been given increasing weight in contemporary educational discourse.

In scholarly discourse, these same concerns appear albeit couched in slightly different terminology. Philosophers talk of the legitimacy of authority, its justification and its limits. We also talk of the justification and limits of the obligation to obey authority. In both these cases, power is subsumed under the larger question of authority. In "Education, Power and the Authority of Knowledge,"[9] for example, Al Neiman argues that a large part of the grounding for the legitimate power that teachers have —to command some forms of obedience from their students — must lie in their epistemological authority. Power, in this account is defined as the force that teachers have to compel student compliance and it is declared legitimate to the extent that it is based on epistemological authority.

In a related discourse, curriculum implementation scholars study ways and means of urging greater student compliance in classrooms. Thus, Patricia Kearney et al[10] set out to inquire into "teachers' use of power in managing students' classroom behaviour." They identify different bases of power such as reward, coercion, reference, and expertise.[11] In this literature, power is again invoked as a measure of the force or influence teachers can bring to bear on students' behaviour.[12]

In contrast to these models of power, Foucault offers the story of a productive model of power that comes into effect with the organization of modern societies. Modern power is neither possessed nor sovereign; it does not originate in an act of social or economic contract. Rather, modern power emerges as an effect of social institutions and practices — discourse. It is not held by certain individuals to be deployed against others, but circulates, which is to say, *it is put into effect* by particular folks situated in local contexts in response to local demands and strategies.

In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault provides an account of discipline according to which power is produced through actions on, and by, individuals and groups of individuals. Debra Shogan's paraphrase of this analysis is useful:

> Control over both the body of the individual and the social body [is] developed around two complementary poles: the disciplining of the individual body and the disciplining of the species body. Together these [produce] a supply of docile human bodies that can be "subjected, transformed, and improved."[13]

Modern power is present insofar as it is enacted. Rather than repress or limit individuals' actions, through the operations of discourse, modern power circulates in the organization of discourses and practices that produce subjects as "individuals" and as members of "populations."

Foucault's account of modern, what I shall call, "productive," power is significant for educators because of its potential for unveiling forms of domination that more commonly used accounts of power obscure. In this paper, I am concerned mostly with the effects of productive power through which classroom organization practices discipline individuals as "docile bodies." Docility is a peculiarly Foucauldian construct. To examine it and modern power power more closely, I discuss Foucault's analyses, first, of a prison technology of modern productive power called the Panopticon and, second, technologies of the self (normalization) that contribute to the production of docile bodies.

1.2 Discipline, Normalization

One of the central and most fascinating moments in Foucault's account of the shift from sovereign power to productive power focuses on Jeremy Bentham's prison technology, the Panopticon.[14] Panopticism is far more than a prison architecture. It is a system of "isolating visibility" that deploys power subtly in the organization of space, time, signal and activity, rather than crudely in the spectacle of public execution or the costly administration of brute force. Panopticism reverses what Foucault has called the authority of the sovereign, invoking power through the practices and resistance of local officials, and generating compliance through the mobilization of the prisoners' own agency.

The principle of the panopticon, Foucault (1980) writes, is this:

> A perimeter building in the form of a ring. At the centre of this, a tower pierced by large windows opening on to the inner face of the ring. The outer building is divided into cells each of which traverses the whole thickness of the building. These cells have two windows, one opening on to the inside, facing the windows of the central tower, the other, outer one allowing daylight to pass through the whole cell. All that is needed is to put an overseer in the tower and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict, a worker or a schoolboy. The back lighting enables one to pick out from the central tower the little captive silhouettes in the ring of cells. In short, the principle of the dungeon is reversed; daylight and the overseer's gaze capture the inmate more effectively than darkness, which afforded after all a sort of protection.[15]

Three strategies are essential to panopticism: isolation, the gaze, and self-surveillance. The gaze refers to non-reciprocal visibility, the perspective of the guard in the tower; facilitated by technologies of space and light, the gaze fixes the prisoner in a field of prescribed and proscribed actions that he has no part in dictating.[16] On the observed side of the light, prisoners have no way to discern when they are being watched.

Isolation enhances this effect. For prisoners grouped together in cells but prevented from communicating with one another by close monitoring, the presence of others merely adds witnesses. People are individuated even as the presence of the others confirms their membership in a population of prisoners. Isolated from the

community at large and, for the most part, from one another, yet the object of a hyper-vigilant, invisible overseer, prisoners are pushed to "lose the power and even almost the idea of wrong-doing."[17]

The effects of these two technologies, isolation and the gaze, conjoin to produce the third technology, self-surveillance. Because the prisoner does not know when the overseer is actually watching, he must constrain his own behaviour in accordance with the rules put into effect by the gaze. A simple attempt to get some fresh air might be "seen" by the overseer as an attempt to scout the perimeter for a way of escape. The penalty for non-compliance is too costly and the prisoner constrains himself to forsake the fresh air. Perhaps in the desire to be seen as compliant, a "good" prisoner, he moves further into the light. Here, then, is a pedagogical moment that is integral to the panopticon's function.[18]

Organized by the gaze and by self-surveillance, prisons do not merely incarcerate people, they *punish* them, part of which involves an acknowledgement by the prisoners themselves that they are being punished, and that their behaviour is named in accordance with their identity and station.[19] When the prisoner acts on himself, in accordance with the representations of his behaviour that are induced by the gaze, he is brought to order. Foucault calls this process normalization. If, in that process, he makes himself over with notions of a productive self, a useful self, or what's more, a skilled self, he fully enacts the power of discipline and, in Foucault's terms, reconstitutes himself as a *docile body*. In this way disciplinary power induces the prisoner's complicity in his own punishment, his own subjectification.[20]

Panopticism is not only a technology that governs prisoners. It also governs the guards. It may even be said to govern the judges who sentence people to terms in the prison. The guards surveill the prisoners, a chief inspector surveills the guards, a minister surveills the chief inspector, and so on. Foucault (1980) summarizes:

> You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust because there is no absolute point. The perfected form of surveillance consists in a summation of malveillance.[21]

The panopticon generates guard-like behaviour, and self-surveillance from the people in the tower. Indeed, whole industries are generated by the productive power that supports the penality of the panopticon. It is crucial to notice that the guards are not being watched only for what they do wrong; more importantly, they are being watched for what they do right. Thus, again, the guard enacts disciplinary power, normalization, and in Foucault's view, reconstitutes himself as a docile body.

Docility, plainly, is not a passive condition. On the contrary, it involves the production of positive effects: both prisoners and guards might, by disciplinary processes, produce useful and skilled actions. Nonetheless, Foucault presents an analysis of the technologies of power in the panopticon in order to show its strategic value, which is to say its cost effectiveness both in terms of economic value and labour, and, also, the violence that is obscured as it operates. Both the guards' and the prisoners' actions are circumscribed and produced within an order, *the very*

normalcy of which belies its constraint. For Foucault, disciplinary technologies that produce docile bodies are forms of domination.

1.3 Power/Knowledge

Panopticism is part of a generalized movement toward productive power relations that takes place during the modern period in the military, the schools, the hospitals, the asylums, as well as the scholarly discourses that appear in the eighteenth century. Each of these institutions functions with some version of exclusion or removal. Prisoners are removed to the prison, soldiers are removed to the barracks, mad people are removed to asylum. In their absence is constituted a social space of order, of normalcy. Historical alternatives to these separate spheres are lost as people remaining in the dominant social sphere mark those who are absent, in language and reference, as different or abnormal (or in the case of schools, as "developing"). The orderly society is self-sustaining. Members surveill themselves in line with principles that maintain the boundaries.[22]

That such exclusion is seen as ordinary, civilized, is supported by the production of disciplinary (scholarly) knowledge.[23] In an interview that took place shortly after he wrote *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1980b) describes the connection of power and disciplinary knowledge as integral to discipline:

> ... in a society such as ours... there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.... We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.[24]

In The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, Foucault (1980c) extends his analysis of power/knowledge by presenting an account of technologies of the self. These emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to give power access, via proliferating discourses on sexuality, to not only the behaviours and spaces of normality, but to the subjectivities of normality. As Dreyfuss and Rabinow explain, "sexuality became an object of scientific investigation, administrative control and social concern."[25] As medical, psychoanalytic, and public health discourses infused sexuality with significance, "dramatic forms of individual self-examination and collective control were imperative . . . ."[26] Foucault called the composite effects of these proliferating discourses, bio-power.

Where discipline (exemplified by panopticism) had been the central technology of normalization, confession is seen to be the central technology in biopower, that is, the production of individual subjects (and populations). Confession is the process by which individuals, aided by the interpretive interventions of experts, come to tell the (deep) truth about ourselves. Foucault writes:

> We have since become a singularly confessing society … one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell.[27]

Discourses ranging from statistical studies of populations (birth rate, marriages, legitimate and illegitimate births) to psychoanalytic studies of the individual psyche generated profiles of every configuration and manipulation.

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconciles; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated . . . .[28]

Technologies of the self depend upon self-surveillance in the form of confessions of the "deep truths" about ourselves. They are dangerous, Foucault claims, because they obscure the organizing work of power/knowledge locating it within the deep recesses of individual identity as interpreted to us by experts through specialized language and reading practices.[29]

As shall be demonstrated in the discussion of classroom contexts below, schools are a location extraordinaire of power/knowledge in all three of its manifestations: discipline, normalization, and subjectification. In the next section, I turn to an examination of the organizing practices of school classrooms in order to illustrate the ways these technologies produce students and teachers alike as docile bodies.

Part Two: Technologies of Power in School Classrooms

### 2.1 Teacher-Directed and Open Concept Classrooms

Teachers might not readily make the connection between panopticism, ostensibly a prison technology, and our own work. The development of skills can seem an unlikely manifestation of docility. Yet, with a simple sketch of a conventional school classroom, the central technologies of a system of "isolating visibility" can be demonstrated.

Sketch "A" depicts what I would call a teacher-directed classroom. It readily displays the direct parallels between the Panopticon and the teacher-directed classroom. From the unidirectional gaze of the teacher observing from her desk area at the back, to the isolation of students in their individual desks, to the self-surveillance engendered ("I must not turn and ask Jack for an eraser"), the push toward normalization in classroom organization seems to be self-evident.
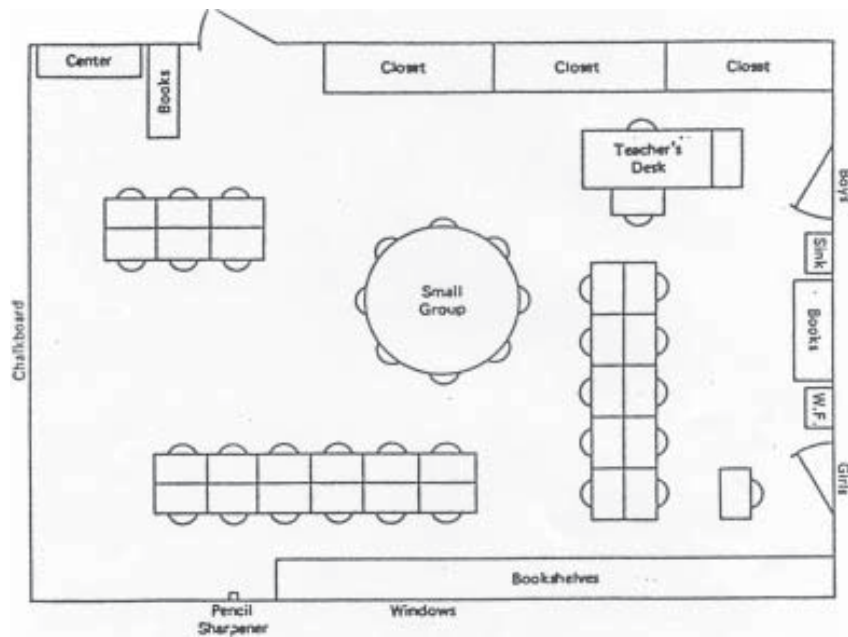
The effects of power engendered through classroom organization practices
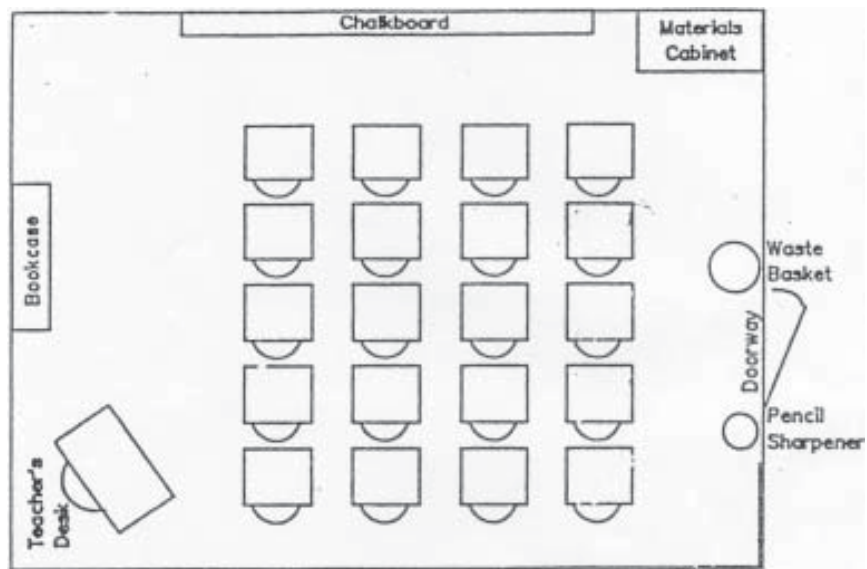
Sketch A. A grade two classroom.

Sketch B. An Open Concept (Elementary) Classroom.

become even more obvious, however, when viewed at a fault line, or a time of transition. Consider a second sketch, Sketch B, which I refer to as an open concept classroom. Rudimentary changes are immediately obvious. No single-file, straight rows, no isolation, no teacher's desk at the back of the room and, apparently, no panopticism.

The question, "How is this possible?" is a direct opening to Foucault's genealogical method. How is it possible that open concept classrooms could have been introduced to schools? Something has to have been doing the work of those straight rows, the teacher's gaze, and the work of inducing self-surveillance.

2.2 Disciplinary Power and Technologies of the Self

In the commentary that follows, I describe four features of open concept classroom organization. These are not exhaustive features, nor do I mean to imply an essential type exists. Following the "fault line" analogy, I have focused my attention on features of open concept classrooms that most tellingly display disjuncture. My analysis shows, first, that normalization is present in these class-rooms though it is accomplished by more subtle, covert, means than in a teacher-directed room. Second, it becomes clear that open concept classrooms invoke technologies of the self (power/knowledge) as well as discipline.

My writing voice incorporates narration of classroom observations drawn from my own teaching experiences in Ontario public, middle and secondary schools. The narratives have a local object: open concept classrooms as they were situated in Ontario schools circa 1980-90. They will be similar and dissimilar to open concept classrooms depicted in theoretical texts, or other local communities. In each of the categories I describe features of open concept classrooms and progressive teaching practices associated with them and then offer a reading of the effects of power they engender.

(i) space/time/signal. Prisoners in the panopticon are separated one from another; they are assigned a space and, through the measure of their sentences (be they 30 days or "life"), a time. As Sketch A illustrates, teacher-directed classrooms utilize parallel practices; they align the desks in rows and position them to face the board or the teacher. School schedules are segmented on a daily basis as well as in terms of a yearly calendar. Bells signal the transition from one time to the next, one purpose to the next.

Open concept classrooms, by contrast, mute the signs of such organization. Bells are replaced with tones or announcements over the "public" address system. Temporal organization fades into the background, yet it is still present: day books sit in every student's backpack or locker, attendance records situate students as having been in their proper place at the proper time and, most important, reporting schedules mark students' passage from one grade to the next.

The spatial regimen of the earlier era is also softened; grouped desks suggest that

students are not alone, that they are part of a larger community. Nonetheless, spatial organization is again apparent, particularly once function is recognized as an organizing principle. Rugs that give the impression (and effect) of casual contact are, in practice, the spaces where certain kinds of activities take place: stories are read and listened to. Talking with neighbours is regulated. Rules governing the correct conduct in these segmented spaces are the subject of drill and/or reward schedules.[30]

With respect to time and space, then, open concept classrooms can be seen to exchange an obvious disciplinary gaze for more subtle strategies of purpose. Function replaces authority as the overt marker of power in this space. As a result resistance is apt to be interpreted by participants as evidence of incompetence or pathology.

(ii) *documentation:* Students are individuated by almost endless schemes of documentation: portfolios, dossiers, report cards. To attendance rosters we add homework books, writing folders, and check-off lists that record individual children's progress against norms expressed according to both explicit and implicit standards.

Students' individual records are important in all school settings. They are the basis for inclusion in educational settings, from day classes to special education classes. They are also the basis for exclusion.

When the subtle organizational strategies in open concept classrooms do not control students' behaviour, documentation protocols figure prominently in the school's response. Teacher's surveillance of children is intensified and is geared toward diagnosis of the problem. Teachers do not collect data on systemic factors such as the effects of class size or racism.[31] They collect data organized to determine the source and type of the child's dysfunction. Inquiries are launched into the effects of home environments and children's learning strategies.

The assumption (construction) is clear: 'normal' children are capable of working effectively in these function-oriented spaces. A child who resists, either by failure or non-compliance is separated, "marked" as different. If problems persist, the subtle strategies of classroom organization give way. Children are moved to study carrels on their own; they are moved closer to the teacher's area; they are required to document their attention with on task reporting forms, homework forms signed by their parents. Individuated through the processes of assessment, then marked as different, such children are entered into a population of the "abnormal": special students, at risk students, hyper-active students, and frequently, "school leavers."[32]

(iii) *hierarchical observation.* One of the obvious ruptures in this transition affects the technology of the gaze. In the teacher-directed classroom, the lines and architecture are very similar to the panopticon. There is a central point from which the authoritative gaze issues. As with the guard in the tower, that gaze is itself the object of surveillance but it is readily identified with the authority of the institution. Assistants in this system are recognized as the teacher's proxy. Resistance is readily seen as a contestation of the authority of the teacher and the school. Such resistance might not be welcome, but it is not viewed necessarily as evidence of pathology.

In the case of open-concept classrooms, however, it is the in-directness of the teacher's gaze that is facilitated. This can be seen in two operations, first, by the possibility of surveillance from open spaces on the periphery of the teaching area and, second, the investment of surveillance in acts of registration and self-reporting.

The reduced number of walls in open concept schools invites observation from all directions: teachers in the adjacent classroom space or 'pod,' students passing through en route to the library, the principal making her rounds. With no capacity to "close the door," teachers, no less than students, are open to constant and unscheduled observation. Open concept classrooms, obscure the gaze insofar as they decenter the teacher's observational perspective and invoke in its place the eyes of multiple witnesses. Normalization is as present in the snickering teasing of students who discover a child isolated from her proper group as it is present in the teacher's praise of a well-sung phrase. Rather than getting rid of the gaze, open classrooms proliferate its points of application.

Complementary to this proliferation of surveillance are two parallel processes I will call "registration" and "self-reporting." Both refer to activities through which students take an active part in the documentary (individuation) and surveillance (normalization) work of the classroom. By "volunteering " themselves into groups, be they by interest (learning centres), skill level (such as in reading circles) or by actually volunteering for assigned "stations" like "board monitor," students "register" themselves not as the teacher's proxy but in accordance with the functions of the classroom /school.

Journalling, self-evaluation, self-reporting in exercise books, are all means by which students self-report within child-centered learning contexts. I include these practices within the rubric of open concept classrooms because they extend the operation of function and surveillance. Consequently students gradually take on more and more responsibility for their own supervision. At the same time it becomes virtually unthinkable to perceive resistance (students' or teachers') as a genuine expression of autonomous disagreement.

The individuating documentation of students' performances, and the separation of groups of students into categories or ranks, exemplify what Foucault calls "dividing practices." The strategic value of their subtlety — an effect of their association with function rather than authority — is profound. In the traditional classroom, the teacher is clearly the responsible agent of ranking, assessment, order and "discipline". In the open concept classroom, the dividing practices are much more difficult to recognize, the categories appear to be "natural," and the governing work that gets done as children take on more of the burden of surveillance[33] goes largely unnoticed.[34]

(iv) *Subjectification*. Schools are one of the everyday institutions through which knowledge about people, their behaviour, attitudes, and self-knowledge is developed and propagated. Foucault (1979) writes:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.[35]

A silent partner to the 'discipline' of surveillance in modern forms of power, subjectification is essential to the processes of 'normalization' that Foucault calls power/knowledge. The discourses of social science invoke a *will to truth* (confession) about the subject: the speaking subject, the criminal subject, the desiring subject, and of course, the learning subject.

In open concept classrooms, teachers observe students in accordance with the categories made available by sociological and psychological discourse. The transition from teacher-directed classrooms in this instance is more a matter of degree than kind. Teachers' work has been shaped by psychological discourse virtually from the beginning of public schooling in Canada. The difference, however, lies in the proliferation of discourses and the extent to which students themselves are engaged in everyday practices that invoke those discourses. In progressive classrooms, teachers invite students to identify with the subject matter of the knowledges they learn. Learning is to be relevant, to be responsive, and discourse identifying students' needs and interests proliferates. Students are everywhere encouraged to see themselves in the subjects they are learning. That within open concept classrooms teachers can do away with overt disciplinary techniques, is predicated on the success of students' self-surveillance and self-construction (confession; subjectification). The more people identify with their student selves, the clearer are the functional mandates of classroom organization. Children, qua "students," are constrained to know and to be known, and the possibility that they would do otherwise grows increasingly remote or pathological.

Reviewing classroom organization practices in open concept classrooms thus unveils the presence of dividing practices, normalization, and subjectification. Where the elements of the panopticon are insufficient to explain productive power in such settings, it is possible to refer to the production of subjectivities. I suggest that the organizing practices of open classrooms generate disciplinary technologies of power as well as technologies of the self that make even the covert display of power present in the teacher-directed classroom obsolete, or at least unnecessarily costly. In its place practices of subjectification situate (and rank) students as learners, "good students," "on task students," "learning disabled students," and myriad versions of "bad students." I believe these subjectivities ever more fully typify the 'docile' (useful and constrained) bodies of which Foucault speaks as the outcome of modern disciplinary power.

Part Three: Docility and Resistance

3.1. Docile Bodies and Normalization

Based on the study of classroom organization practices, two general patterns of effects (productive power) can be usefully contested: the tendency to obscure evaluative decisions within organizational mandates, and the confession-like shifting of responsibility for compliance onto children generally, and onto their character qua "learner," in particular. In the process of helping children to become skilled, disciplined, educated people, we can actually reduce their capacity to recognize the systems of thought through which we make the world intelligible and ourselves governable. That is the essence of Foucault's concern with docile bodies. Dominant discourses become normalized to the extent that we do not see the full extent of the work (the exclusions, the divisions, the production of subjects) that they accomplish.

In urging teachers to be wary of discipline, however, I do not mean to suggest that we should reject discipline, normalisation and subjectification across the board. John Fiske (1993) explains this caveat in his article, "Bodies of Knowledge." Fiske (1993) writes:

> ... no one would want to live in a totally undisciplined society, if such an oxymoron could actually exist. The conflicts, when they occur, are over the points of control where discipline is applied, not over the disciplinary system itself.[36]

What is at stake are the issues of where and how discipline is applied. What we must observe *is the extent to which effects of power narrow the possibilities of discourse and/or obscure its boundaries.*

I opened this paper with an excerpt that I repeat here for the purposes of illustration:

> Karin Ærø sometimes leaned over, behind those who sang, on her rounds of the singers. And then she would say, quite softly, so that only the one to whom it was addressed should hear it, "*Excellent.*"

Many times, teachers can read this passage and not recognize the systemic danger it foreshadows. The novel from which it is taken, *Borderliners*, addresses that systemic danger in as much as its central characters, three young children, students in an experimental school program in Denmark, investigate, as a mystery, the relationship between time, schedules, assessment, and deviance (theirs!) remediated. The students recognize, as most of us who teach do not, that present in the exercise of teacherly praise is an occasion of assessment (surveillance) and a normalization of both the one assessed and the one assessing. The most frightening message in the novel, however, is that the cost of the system in terms of its effects on the children and teachers involved, is made visible only as the

system fails. My greater worry, following Foucault, is that the costs of discipline, rendered innocuous by organizational coup, will remain invisible when and as the system succeeds.

With one final example, I want to face the matter of what is to be done with the understanding generated by analyses of productive power. It is necessary to recognize that we can neither return to an earlier system of teaching practice nor select a definitive system of classroom organization that will liberate us from the previous effects of power. Power is not contained by intentionality. Any particular discourse will generate resistance as it encounters competing discourses. Consequently, it is not the "right" use of power or a definitive technique that will effectively resist the closure and obfuscation of discipline and normalization. Rather, as I illustrate with an example of resistance to normalization, teachers can notice dominant discourses and actively highlight competing discourses. We can deconstruct categorization schemes, particularly those that purport to tell "the truth" about us, ourselves, and our students. We can remind ourselves that we are situated institutionally in ways that will systematically cloak competing discourses from us and work to be alert to signs of resistance, the presence of counter cultures, and unintended effects of organization.

3.2 Resistance

Richard Hebdige opens his essay "Hiding in the Light"[37] with the proposition that "youth is present only when its presence is a problem."[38] Hebdige (1988) explains:

> [T]he category "youth" gets mobilized in official documentary discourse, in concerned or outraged editorials and features, or in the supposedly disinterested tracts emanating from the social sciences at those time when young people make their presence felt by going "out of bounds," by resisting through rituals, dressing strangely, striking bizarre attitudes, breaking rules, breaking bottles, windows, heads, issuing rhetorical challenges to the law.[39]

Where Hebdige discusses the category "youth" teachers may substitute categories associated with students' performance. 'Delinquents,' 'at-risk students,' 'school leavers,' and "honour roll members" are categories of student subjectivity "mobilized in [the] official documentary discourse" of everyday public schooling. Hebdige (1988) argues that the political non-neutrality of surveillance is a factor in the generation of "youth" behaviour. He writes:

> The politics of youth culture is a politics of metaphor: it deals in the currency of signs and is, thus, always ambiguous. For the subcultural *milieu* has been constructed underneath the authorized discourses, in the face of the multiple disciplines of the family, the school and the workplace. Subculture forms up in the space between surveillance and the evasion of surveillance, it translates the fact of being under scrutiny into the pleasure of being watched. It is a hiding in the light.[40]

19

These girls turn being looked at

into an aggressive act.
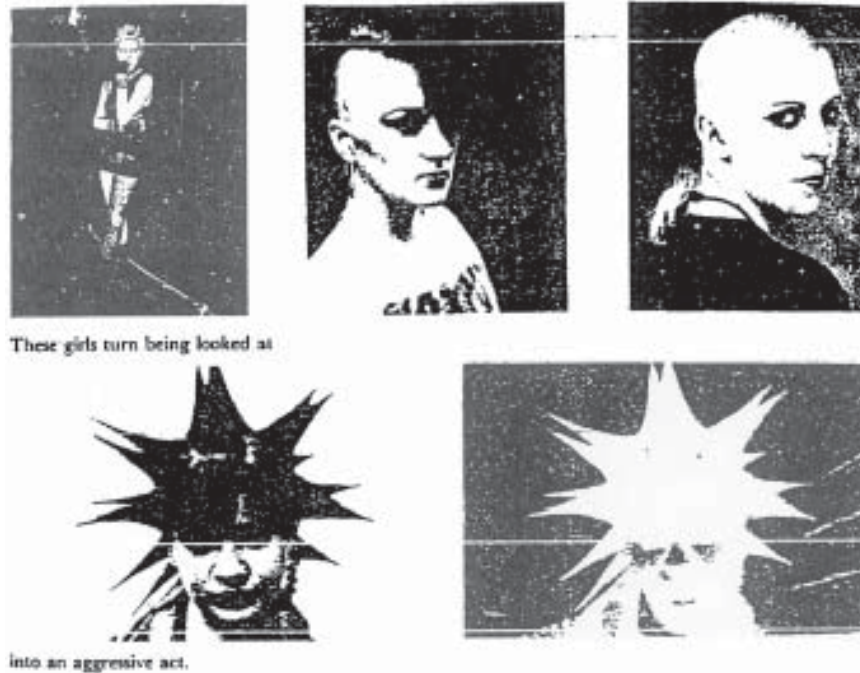
**Figure 1. Example of the production of girls'
subjectivities from Hebdige, "Hiding in the Light."**

Teachers would do well, I argue, to pay attention to what Hebdige (1988) locates as "the space between surveillance and the evasion of surveillance." That students respond to practices of normalization by constructing counter-discourses is, I think, undeniable.[41] One of the photographic moments in Hebdige's paper illustrates this point most poignantly (See Fig. 1). The caption on this photo reads: "These girls turn being looked at into an aggressive act." Hebdige (1988) argues that the production of discourse positioning youth as troublemakers generates subject positions guaranteed to draw the attention of authorities or the media. At the same time, such discourse positions young people as minors, (marginally employable, and politically unsophisticated), and generates subject positions guaranteed to draw little or no attention from authorities and the media. "Students' resistance to dominant discourses is often mis-read by teachers, parents, and community leaders insofar as we unproblematically locate the apparent trouble in these various categories of "student identity" and neglect our own complicity in the circulation of power.

Thinking about students' resistance in terms of productive power relations can focus teachers' attention on the performativity of own organization practices. We

can not prevent our systems and discourses from generating productive power. Whatever our approach, the rules of the discourse by which we act and the organizational systems we deploy will constrain us in productive ways. We can, however, actively cultivate an awareness of the dangers. Cognizant of the capacity for a system of categories to create spaces between and outside of our definitions, we can be alert to exclusions. We can investigate the discourses operating on and through students' lives beyond the school. We can ask, for instance, how narrow are our readings of students qua "the good student"? How dependent are our assessments on established notions of educational success? Who, besides corporate sponsors, take young people seriously as contributors to our communities? Tracing the effects of power too readily made invisible by our organizational practices and assumptions can help remind teachers to bring multiple discourses to bear on classroom activities.[42] It can remind us to ask: "what is the current danger?" in order to identify the work we accomplish as we engage a particular discourse to name and resolve a problem.

3.3 Changing the Metaphor

Critical to the re-consideration of questions of power in the classroom is a change in metaphorical reference. It is not enough merely to consider what must a teacher do differently to more appropriately use or limit power. One must ask a more open-ended question with a more complex understanding of the ways our actions are at least in part the effects of discourse.

The dominant representation of power in classrooms, named "sovereign" power by Foucault, construes power as a force that is held externally to the individuals subject to it. Metaphorically, sovereign power amounts to the force that is applied in a tug of war: teachers vs. students or the educational system vs. students.

A Foucauldian alternative decenters the "tug of war" metaphor. Productive power is seen in patterns of effects which do not have a single coherent point of application or origin. Power is not held but "circulates," which means it is not only applied to individuals from without but is also enacted by, and through, individuals' own agency.

It is because this alternative notion of power can seem counter-intuitive to many of that I have used the classroom organization example. Having seen the effects of architecture and hierarchical observation, it is easier to understand that power is diffuse: it *organizes*, *composes*, it is *read*, and *performed*. Readings of productive power implicate the actions of participants (be they students or teachers) as well as the practices of external subjects or authorities (surveillance) and their analysis depends upon an articulation of their local contexts and usages. Readings of power and effects of organization implicate analyses of discourse as well as analyses of participants' actions.

If the struggle for sovereign power is like a tug of war then the struggle in

productive power relations is like a game of charades. In charades, teams struggle for a kind of discursive (gestured) effectiveness. The winner is she who most successfully pulls on her ear, hops up and down and otherwise conveys to her teammates her desire that they say a target phrase. Indeed, a "good" charades player can, in a very few number of repetitions, induce her audience to produce specific readings of particular gestures, creating a local language that can be carried on to other games of charades. A "good" charades player is indebted to a "good" audience, they who receive her reading and reproduce it.[43]

The productive power in charades is enacted not only as she who gestures, composes and performs a translation of familiar gestures that are "read" and "spoken" by her audience, but also as her audience successfully complies and adopts as meaningful, the organization that she has introduced. Teachers as well as students, I want to suggest, are engaged in games of charades, which is to say we are playing with discourse.

To see the effects of power in teaching practice according to the charades metaphor requires that teachers notice the extent to which our work involves us in the production, performance, policing, and play of discourses (vocabularies as well as frames of reference, practice and order). The discourses that are most typically dangerous, because they are most typically normalized, include those of function, identity, assessment, and organization. The practices by which we divide groups of participants, the practices by which we identify behaviours or people as normal and others as special or deviant, the practices by which we identify success are all as risky as they are pedagogically useful. We must visualize the schemes that organize and shape our responsibility to invite, cajole, sometimes coerce and otherwise induce students, our audience, to internalize and become skilled practitioners of educational discourses.

I use the charades metaphor to introduce the effective force of productive power as being associated with organization and discourse. Nonetheless, in at least one important respect the metaphor is inadequate.[44] It does not convey the kind of intentionality that is appropriate for productive power. The translation of gesture to spoken sign is too direct. The intentionality of productive power includes such conscious decision-making but includes also the broader, unintended consequences of action.

Writing of the rationality of (productive) power relations Foucault writes: "the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them."[45] The implication of this altered sense of intentionality is important, as Dreyfuss and Rabinow illustrate, to connect, or rather disconnect, the kinds of intentionality that are critical to analyzing productive power from the presence of a subject:

> How to talk about intentionality without a subject, a strategy without a strategist? The answer must lie in the practices themselves. For it is in the practices, focused in

technologies and innumerable separate localizations, which literally embody what the analyst is seeking to understand.[46]

Such a representation of power expands the problematics of power and resistance beyond questions of efficiency, excess or arbitrariness and redirects the analyses from the telos of power to the practices of power.

When teachers recognize our participation in competing discourses, we can reconsider classroom norms. We can ask about what happens between the time a student responds to a series of test items and the time she is ranked against the others in her class, or against classification schemes that locate her in fields of competency, intelligence, motivation, and compliance[47]? We can be alert to the effects of practices enacted by outside agencies — employers, judiciary, or medical officers — that draw upon students' ranking for purposes other than those anticipated by the original testing. We can identify the normative organizational work implicit in the definition of "norms."

Classroom norms, and the power relations they enact, are clearly effects of discourse as much as they are effects of teachers' capacity to induce students' compliance. Yet, part of the practice of norms is their capacity to function, once established, as unquestioned givens. Teachers seldom ask what it means to rank students or even why they rank students. We are more apt to ask how to rank students effectively and/or when it is legitimate to rank students. From the perspective of productive power, however, it is their capacity to render part of their functioning invisible that renders classroom norms dangerous.

Conclusion

Deploying an analysis of productive power, focussing on the actual organizing, ranking, and truth-generating practices of schooling illuminates the dangers of docility in a way that educators have generally missed. Teachers subjected to (and by) the discipline of modern child-centered classrooms, rarely recognize the irony in our misreading of students' resistance. We can be blithe in our ascriptions of "multiple intelligences," and "at risk" status. Too seldom do we contest the urgency of such ascriptions, or even accompany them with skepticism about the system and its objectives.

Informed by a Foucauldian analysis, however, educators can approach student resistance differently. We can ask ourselves to notice where our organizational practices draw lines in the sand. We can imagine and actualize aims of education other than social utility. We can contest assessment and reporting practices that reduce complex phenomena to simple hierarchies. We can trouble evaluations of student behaviour that isolate schools from the events and constraints of the community at large. And we can resist (if not escape), simply by noticing, the normalizing force of educational decisions hidden in the structure of report cards, standardized testing, and school accountability measures.

Notes

[1]Paul Rabinow. 1984. "Introduction." In Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 6.

[2] Peter Höeg. 1993. *Borderliners*. New York: Dell Publishing, p. 50.

[3] Usually, Foucauldian genealogical analyses refer to the study of language and practices together as the study of "discourse"; however, I have chosen to stick with the term "practice" because I believe it is a more accessible metaphor for teachers. For a discussion of the development of Foucault's thoughts on language, practice and discourse see Herbert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. xx-xxi.

[4] Herbert L., Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow. 1983. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. See esp. "Foucault's Interpretive Analytic of Ethics." Pp. 253- 264.

[5] Ibid., 253.

[6] By subjectivity I mean, the ways in which students and teachers can be subjects, can act and be recognized as certain kinds of agents as they act.

[7] For instance, the periodization of "traditional" and "open-concept" classroom organization has its basis in nominally distinct discourses that, when juxtaposed, enable patterns of organization and effect to be identified.

[8] I have excluded both Foucauldian analyses of power and critical pedagogical discourse from this review in order to more starkly contrast the "power as legitimate control" model from the "modern power" model.

[9] Alven Michael Neiman. 1986. "Education, Power, and the Authority of Knowledge." *Teacher's College Record*, 88,1 (Fall): 64-80.

[10] Patricia Kearney, Timothy G. Plax, Virginia P. Richmond, & James C. McCroskey. 1985. "Power in the Classroom III: Teacher Communication Techniques and Messages." *Communication Education*, 34 (January): 19-28; Richmond, V.P., & McCroskey, J.C. (1984). "Power in the Classroom II: Power and learning." C*ommunication Education*, 33: 125-136; McCroskey, J.C. & Richmond, V.P. (1983). "Power in the Classroom I: Teacher and student Perceptions." *Communication Education*, 32: 175-184.

[11] Ibid., 19.

[12] There are exceptions including radical critical feminist transformative pedagogies, and other Foucauldian discussions of power in education. CF. Valerie Walkerdine. 1990. *School Girl Fictions*. London: Verso.; Carmen Luke, Ed. 1996. *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogies of Everyday Life*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

[13] Debra Shogan. 1999. *The Making of High-Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity and Ethics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p. 8. Shogan cites Michel Foucault, 1980, *The History of Sex Vol. 1*. Trans. R. Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, p. 139.

[14] Michel Foucault. 1980. "The Eye of Power," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New York: Pantheon Books. Prisons were not the only institutions to exploit this notion of an individuating visibility. Foucault reports their appearance in a military school, a factory, and a hospital. See p.149.

[15] Ibid., p. 147

[16] As this piece is introductory and still extensive, I can not address fully the notion of "resistance" which is implicit to this account of a prescribed field and its attendant ascription

of identities. If one considers some of the well-known writings of prisoners, however, Gramsci or Nelson Mandela for instance, the capacity for prisoners to resist self-surveillance, is readily apparent. It is interesting to notice how the effects of normalization are more hidden than prison walls and, to some extent, more difficult to "resist."

[17] Ibid., p. 154.

[18] Note that the analysis of panopticism is not separated from the description of the physical structure. Foucault's analysis of productive power prevents one from separating form and function. This feature will be evident in my discussion of open concept classroom organization.

[19] James Marshall. 1996. *Michel Foucault: Personal Autonomy and Education*. Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers. p. 126. Taken out of context, a reader could not be blamed for wondering what was at all problematic about a prisoner understanding himself to be *punished* by virtue of being in prison. From a contemporary viewpoint this can not help but make sense. An effort is required to move with Foucault as he contests this apparent normality. Foucault is asking a contemporary reader to notice that alternative viewpoints of the position of a prisoner have been more available in historical eras not so dominated by notions of prisoners qua "criminals." Prisoners had been those who were in conflict with the sovereign, for instance.

[20] Though the processes of discipline and the production of subjectivities to which Foucault draws attention with his discussion of panopticism apply to men and women in many different discursive contexts, I have, here, retained use of the masculine pronoun to reflect the historical specificity of the prison populations in Foucault's account .

[21] Michel Foucault. 1980. "The Eye of Power," p. 158.

[22] In an attempt to focus this paper on the shift to analyses of "practices" of power rather than analyses of the interests of power, I have limited my interest in discipline and normalization to the production of subjects, in particular educational subjects. In so doing, I have omitted a very important element of Foucault's genealogical studies that links the development of subjects who are self-surveillant with questions of "governmentality". See Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in James D. Faubion, ed., *Michel Foucault: Power. Essential Works of Foucault Series,* ed by Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1994.

Foucault considered the social institutions I have named here, including education, elements of "policing," a term he traces to a sixteenth century discourse that addressed "the art of government." Policing, Foucault wrote, was the name given to practices aimed at ensuring the transmission "to individual behavior and the running of the family the same principles as the good government of the state." "Governmentality," 207. In a later interview, Foucault explained:

> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "police" signified a program of governmental rationality. This can be characterized as a project to create a system of regulation of the general conduct of individuals whereby everything would be controlled to the point of self-sustenance, without the need for intervention. "Space, Knowledge, and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Power*, op cit., 351.

[23] As difficult as it is to follow Foucault's terminology here, it is important to note the connection he makes through his discussion of power/knowledge between the "discipline" of panopticism and the "discipline" of scholarly discourses (themselves known as scholarly "disciplines").

[24] Michel Foucault. 1980b. "Two Lectures," in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 93.

[25] Dreyfus & Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, op.cit. 68.

[26] Ibid., 169.

[27] Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*, 59.

[28] Ibid. 61-62.

[29] Michel Foucault. 1980c. *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1.* Trans. R. Hurley. New York: Vintage Books.

[30] Socialization to school-appropriate patterns of behaviour is one of the key objectives of early elementary school instruction. Virtually any pattern of institutional learning links liberty and access to technical and/or physical activity to the successful demonstration of behavioural norms. Failure to abide by them results in exclusion: from the space, from the class or, eventually, from the school.

[31] While teaching in a preservice program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, I received from a copy of a letter sent to the local board of education from a parent who requested that the Board investigate racism directed at First Nations peoples' at the school attended by her son. His frequent conflicts with other students had led him to be identified as a student with behavioural problem. The woman argued that these conflicts occurred when he fought against racial slurs, taunting, and on several occasions, attacks. The question pertinent to this paper is not whether the parent's claims were valid but whether, in the absence of any ongoing gathering of data pertaining to racism, the school and Board had any means of determining the plausibility of the charge.

[32] Though it is not possible to go into detail here, it is important to notice that children who excel in school settings often experience the same kinds of exclusion from "the normal" that under-achievers experience. "Special" attention can be problematic. Further, I would argue that the effects of normalization encourage all students to a stultifying level of both compliance and conformity.

[33] I use the noun "children" here strategically, to indicate the distance between children and "students" and the work that is accomplished as the former move toward self-identifying as the latter.

[34] Foucault concludes the following in his discussion of hierarchical observation:

The power in the hierarchized surveillance of the disciplines is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery.... It is the apparatus as a whole the produces "power" and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely "indiscrete," since it is everywhere and always alert . . . and absolutely "discrete," for it functions permanently and largely in silence. *Discipline and Punish,* p. 177.

[35] Ibid., p. 202.

[36] John Fiske. 1993. "Bodies of Knowledge," in *Power Plays Power Works*, London, New York: Verso, p.64, as cited by Debra Shogan, 1999, op. cit., p. 14.

[37] Richard Hebdige, 1988. "Hiding in the Light," in *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*. London and New York: Routledge.

[38] Ibid., p. 17.

[39] Ibid., p.17-18.

[40] Ibid., p. 35.

[41] Teachers are also constrained by discourse; media representations, labour practices, accreditation legislation, as well as local board and administrative policies normalize their

resistance. Teachers who do not address their work toward standardized testing outcomes, for instance, can have their resistance recast as incompetence.

[42] Other problems that could be discussed in this matter of the docility of learners, include: increased demand for homogeneity in the skills, purposes, and values performed in schools; tensions between proclaimed respect for diversity and the performativity of assessment, inclusion, and ranking practices; and the singular focus on utility as an organizing principle of self-assessment practices.

[43] Of course productive power relations are not game-like, any more than sovereign power relations are like games of tug and war. The stakes are generally much higher.

[44] The competition in charades also fails to convey adequately what is at stake in the "discursive" contest. Once the organizational practices in question extend beyond a very local mix of gesture and signified to encompass practices of knowledge (discipline) and once the audiences internalize the new readings (subjectification) the stakes of domination become much higher.

[45] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. New York: Random House (Vintage Books), 1978, 1990, 95.

[46] Herbert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow. 1982. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 187.

[47] Foucault links the processes by which people are individuated, that is to say given individual identities within populations of individuals similarly identified, to governance. Consequently, where the term "individuals" appears in this text, it is meant to convey not an innocent generalized subjectivity, but a thoroughly implicated discursive subject.