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## **If This Is Resistance I Would Hate to See Domination: Retrieving Foucault's Notion of Resistance Within Educational Research**

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Educational researchers have begun to fruitfully use the work of Michel Foucault to analyze and problematize many practices and structures of schooling. Supposedly empowering pedagogical and administrative strategies have been revealed to be, for example, disciplining, normalizing, controlling, and punishing. Nevertheless, in this article I claim that Foucault's work has been misappropriated within much of educational research by its unidimensional preoccupation on the constraining and "disciplinary" nature of relations of power. Such a perspective, I suggest through an analysis of several educational texts, falls victim to three "Foucauldian fallacies": (1) the negation of agency, (2) the exclusion of the potential for resistance to domination, and (3) the capitulation to radical relativism. In this article I attempt to retrieve Foucault's notion of resistance within relations of power to make clear that Foucault can be interpreted, and used productively, within a liberatory and activist stance.

Three centuries ago certain fools were astonished because Spinoza wished to see the liberation of man, even though he did not believe in his liberty or even in his particular existence. Today, new fools, or the same ones reincarnated, are astonished because the Foucault who had spoken of the death of man took part in political struggle.

—Gilles Deleuze

There is a new truth at play within educational research committed to using Foucauldian principles of analysis. Foucault has been appropriated to make clear that progressive “enlightened” educational practices may ultimately lead to their own “dystopias.” The practices and structures of schooling have been exposed as disciplining, normalizing, controlling, and punishing. Supposedly empowering pedagogical and administrative strategies have been turned on their heads.

There is reason, though, to be wary. Foucault warned that every truth brings its own problems, its own “regime of truth.” For educational scholarship committed to “Foucauldian” principles, the stumbling block lies in what exactly is considered a “Foucauldian” truth.

Foucault stressed the primacy of resistance and freedom in his later writings and interviews. He engaged in political activism throughout his life. He saw his work as analyzing how individuals are made, and make themselves, into subjects. For Foucault, resistance was inherent within relations of power, and resistance was itself predicated on the existence of a free subject. Resistance was not an isolated, quixotic event; rather, Foucault saw it as a means of self-transformation through the minimization of states of domination.

Charges of normative confusion and epistemological incoherence have often been leveled at this “liberatory” aspect of Foucault’s work. It is also a part of Foucault’s work that is starkly absent within educational scholarship. In this article I show that both the critique and the reticence of appropriation are unwarranted. By explicating the role of resistance within relations of power, I show that Foucault is at times misread by his critics and misrepresented by his supporters.

Educational scholarship’s predilection for adopting only Foucault’s “doom and gloom” analyses may say more about the researchers’ theoretical dispositions than of Foucault’s own stance. The unidimensional appropriation of Foucault, I show, quickly leads to untenable theoretical positions. Specifically, much of so-called Foucauldian scholarship falls into one or more (what I term) “Foucauldian fallacies”: (1) the negation of agency, (2) the exclusion of the potential for resistance to domination, and (3) the capitulation to radical relativism.

These are not Foucauldian positions. I argue that Foucault’s insistence of the primacy of freedom and resistance within relations of power avoids the theoretical

constraints and methodological pitfalls inherent within critical and liberal strands of education scholarship. Moreover, it provides a coherent and powerful perspective for interpreting and guiding the analysis and enactment of practices of individual transformation.

Foucault does not claim to have the answer when he privileges particular power relations and modes of resistance. He does, though, claim to have an answer. Foucault, it must be realized, is making a tactical decision to support a particular claim and perspective. In so doing, he is attempting to undermine certain truth-claims while strengthening others. To demand from him normative criteria for judging, as many critics and supporters do, is therefore not a neutral request of validity-checking but rather a counterthrust in attempting to determine which truth-claims are to take precedence.

I therefore offer a corrective move. By explicating Foucault's notion of resistance within relations of power, I hope to accomplish two goals. My first goal is to make clear that Foucault's own work is not simply a more glamorous analysis of oppression and domination. To focus simply on such points is to misread Foucault and become mired in a theoretical dead end. Rather, it is important to show that Foucault offers a coherent and forceful perspective on the potential of individual resistance and transformation. My second goal is to offer several suggestions for how Foucault's understanding of resistance and transformation can be incorporated into educational research.

I begin with a brief analysis of how several educational texts fall into "Foucauldian fallacies." I then present Foucault's position and propose how his stance avoids such theoretical confusions while developing a grounding for a "hyper- and pessimistic activism." Finally, I suggest several methodological tactics by which educational scholarship devoted to "Foucauldian" perspectives may become more Foucauldian.

### **Three "Foucauldian Fallacies"**

In 1991, in a review of *Foucault and Education* (Ball 1990), Jeffrey Roth noted that one could find only "scattered references" to the work of Michel Foucault within educational research (Roth 1992). Roth found that the collected essays portrayed a highly pessimistic picture of the practice of schooling, and used Foucault in a "two-dimensional representation" that neglected to take into account "Foucault's Nietzschean call to overcome our prefabricated self and fashion a new one" (Roth 1992, 692).

Today, analyses employing a Foucauldian perspective can be found throughout the educational research establishment. Foucauldian buzzwords such as "power/knowledge," "panoptic gaze," and "archeology (and/or) genealogy" proliferate in conferences, debates, and journal articles. I suggest, though, that Roth's analysis is as precinct and valid today as it was a decade ago. In a recent review of four books de-

voted to the interface of education and Foucault's work, for example, Mayo argues that "most of the authors ... avoid the issue of resistance" (Mayo 2000, 113).

My goal is to take the discussion a step further by pointing out how several educational texts have misinterpreted and/or misrepresented some of the fundamental aspects of Foucault's work. My point here is not to disparage; rather, my concern is that Foucault is read in such a one-sided way by both scholars and readers, a misreading, I should add, that is unsubstantiated by Foucault's later texts and interviews.

### *Fallacy 1: Negating Agency*

Foucault's detailed analysis of the disciplinary mechanisms of our society has generated a reactionary criticism that claims Foucault negates all means for agency. The pervasiveness of power within all relations is taken to mean that subjects are formed solely and simply by the impersonal fields and forces within which they are ensconced. Thus Peter Dews sees Foucault's subjects as passive agents simply constituted by the power structures surrounding them (Dews 1987, 161), and Thomas McCarthy takes Foucault's "ontology of power" as "too reductive and one-dimensional," to allow for critical inquiry and agency (McCarthy 1994, 272).

This critique rests on two unwarranted presumptions: first, that some things act (such as institutions), while others react (such as students); second, that the disciplinary mechanisms Foucault describes are all-pervasive and thus all-encompassing. Unfortunately, both of these presumptions are found with educational scholarship devoted to explicating the disciplinary nature of educational institutions. I give two examples.

David Brotherton (1996) presents a portrait of three high schools' responses to gang problems. The schools have reacted by fashioning themselves, Brotherton argues, into agents of social control and suppression, enacting practices such as the "use of metal detectors and video cameras, the construction of perimeter fences, and the collection of data from student informers ... the mass introduction of security personnel; ongoing linkups between the police, administrators, and teachers; and the establishment of school surveillance networks" (Brotherton 1996, 100).

Brotherton employs Foucault to make visible that these seemingly "common-sense" responses to gangs are not only ineffective but actually detrimental to solving the problem of gangs in the schools. Furthermore, the responses have dire "unintentional consequences" for the overarching educational mission of providing a site for fostering—in Brotherton's words—"the achievement of a democratic public pedagogy" (113). Brotherton moreover makes the Foucauldian point that schools cannot be seen as innocent and neutral bystanders simply responding to the problem of gangs in their midst; rather, schools "play a distinct role not only in efforts to control and possibly reform 'delinquent' students but, more important, in creating them" (97).

The problem is that in appropriating Foucault's disciplinary terminology, Brotherton sidesteps (and thus trivializes) questions of agency. Brotherton's gang members are neither heard from nor seen. They are "disciplined," "controlled," and "created." The schools have become the active and aggressive agents; the gang members are simply passive or re-active individuals. The "carceral" society has overwhelmed all action, "there is little escape from state control—either for their [students from the barrio] souls or for their bodies" (108).

Brotherton's goal is a noble one. He wants to deconstruct the academic consensus of "'insiders' who conform and the 'outsiders' who disrupt" (96). He wants to demonize the demonizers such that the labeling of "deviants" desists. He wants to demonstrate that it is the school, and not the gang member, who is to be feared. In so doing, though, he denies agency (and thus identity) to the subjects he believes deserve it most. In one-sidedly appropriating Foucault, Brotherton is forced into a totalizing discourse whereby individual agency is absent.

Where Brotherton falls into the problematic of denying any sense of individual agency by one-sidedly employing Foucault, Francis Schrag (1999) argues that this was an explicit aspect of Foucault's own work. Schrag attempts to answer the question of why Michel Foucault's work has become so popular among educational researchers. The answer, to Schrag, cannot be that Foucault has anything new to offer. In fact, Schrag argues that Foucault is no different from the structuralist theorists who came before him. Schrag compares Foucault and Robert Dreeben in their understanding of the examination, and finds them both highly similar and highly lacking.

The examination, Schrag argues, "is for [Foucault] the very model of disciplinary power ... now each of us becomes visible as an individual, but only along dimensions that apply to all. Thanks to the exam, each of us can be put in his or her place on a finely graded hierarchy—one that is organized around the norm" (377). Schrag sees Foucault and Dreeben privileging "the logic of structure and function" to the extent that any resistance becomes "beside the point" (378). Schrag does not mince words as he suggests that both Dreeben and Foucault succumb to the problematics of a structural-functional image of society: "first, that society is viewed as static rather than dynamic; second, that individual human actors and human choices can play little or no role" (379).

There is an almost willful misreading as Schrag dismisses Foucault's use of terms such as *resistance* and *struggle* as rhetoric (378). Schrag impugns Foucault with creating totalizing structures that dominate and normalize passive agents who are put in their place; of painting broad brush strokes of a society that is generic, sterile, and machinelike; of formulating a system where change in neither permitted nor given an explicit normative grounding.

The point, Schrag concludes, is that one must look beyond Foucault's theorizing to understand his popularity. Schrag argues that an answer exists within the historical context of the rise and subsequent decline of Marxist and critical

thought: “By embracing Foucault, scholars can announce their resignation to the status quo while appearing to protest it” (381). Furthermore, Schrag derisively suggests that Foucault’s own view concerning the interrelations between scholarship and politics allows scholars, “especially those with a flair for theorizing, to believe that, no matter how esoteric or precious their formulations, and no matter how limited their audiences, they are, even as they theorize, social activists engaged in laying the ground for social transformation” (382).

Both Brotherton and Schrag’s work suggests that Foucault’s work denies individual agency. The former does so unwittingly through his portrayal of the ineffective and silenced voices of gang members; the latter does so wittingly in an attempt to show that Foucault’s work bears much resemblance to past structuralist theorizing. The problem with these portrayals is that Foucault dismissed such characterizations of his work. Without an agent capable of acting, Foucault’s notion of power relations would collapse. “These power relations are thus mobile, reversible, and unstable. It should also be noted that power relations are possible insofar as the subjects are free” (Foucault 1997, 292).

Foucault certainly did not articulate or emphasize notions of resistance within *Discipline and Punish*, which Brotherton and Schrag use almost exclusively. Yet the lack of resistance does not connote lack of agency.

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault 1977, 194)

If one is to read “power” as an imposing force, and if one is to accept acquiescence to such a force as lack of ability to resist, then one may draw the conclusion that individuals are simply passive bodies upon which power constructs self-identity. As will be shown, though, power can be understood only as a relation. The lack of resistance cannot be taken to mean the lack of an ability to resist. We are involved in accepting or resisting the normative constraints placed upon us. For every high school student who accepts the playing field of competition (Varenne and McDermott 1999), there are those who resist it (Fine 1991). Whether accepting or rejecting it, though, they are all actively engaged in the process.

Schrag and Brotherton, it appears to me, have unwittingly done a much better job of explicating the stance of the early Frankfurt School theorists than they have of interpreting Foucault. Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), for example, comes quickly to mind. To appropriate Foucault without acknowledging the centrality of a free subject undermines Foucault’s own project in explicating how the disciplinary society of which we are a part fashions subjects.

*Fallacy 2: Excluding the Potential of Resistance to Domination*

The motif of the impossibility of freeing oneself of power relations permeates much of Foucault's work. Foucault's insight that the enlightenment practices that gave us liberties also gave us the disciplines has been much appropriated within the social sciences. Foucault argued that every new truth has the potential to create its own new "regime of truth," and that every form of "emancipatory" power relies on the counterpower to which it is opposed.

Thus Charles Taylor finds Foucault's notion of power "incoherent" without "at least the idea of liberation" (Taylor 1986, 92). Power, in this perspective, is seen to correspond to domination, and thus the all-encompassing nature of power is understood to mean the all-pervasiveness of domination. The antithesis to such a totalizing system, Taylor argues, must be the potential for freedom; and since Foucault rejects any notion of freedom from power, Taylor finds the position incomprehensible.

Educational researchers intent on employing a Foucauldian perspective often-times find themselves painting a totalizing picture very similar to the one Taylor critiques. The "disciplinary" nature of "panoptic" means of surveillance can very easily become totalizing structures that permit no resistance. It is interesting that in an exchange with Paul Patton (1989), Taylor reverses himself and acknowledges that Foucault's notion of power relations allows for the "applicability of 'freedom'" (Taylor 1989, 281). Yet I will provide just one example of educational analysis that does not.

Lee-Anne Broadhead and Sean Howard (1998) use the notion of an "integrated disciplinary system" to offer a critical examination of the United Kingdom's recently developed assessment system for higher education. In 1992, the Conservative government created the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) as a means to, in the words of a government publication, establish "selectivity in the allocation of research resources based on assessments of the quality of research" (quoted in Broadhead and Howard 1998, 3).

Every academic department in the UK (termed a "unit of assessment" [UOA]) is given a ranking between 1 and 5, with 5 being the highest score and a 3 "understood to be the minimum accepted standard necessary to warrant continued institutional support" (3). A 5\* (for star performers) and the distinction of 3A and 3B (with 3B considered on the "wrong side of the divide") have been added since 1996. Ranking is based primarily, though not exclusively, on the number and types of publications of the faculty members within each UOA.

The implications of such a vast assessment practice, Broadhead and Howard show, have been profound. First, the utilitarian nature of the RAE's definition of research excludes, and thus penalizes, teaching. Second, the quantity of scholarship is emphasized over quality. Third, it normalizes the notion of what "good" ac-

ademic research should be, thus denying a space for critical scholarship and emphasizing traditional forms of scholarship that are sure to be a “safe bet” (10).

The impact of the RAEs has been further exacerbated by the consciously ambiguous nature of the assessment process. “The individual researcher is told, for example, that publishing in ‘prestigious journals’ or chairing ‘key conferences’ will enhance their UOA’s standing, though no definitive list is provided ... the point being is that this vagueness is ... an essential mechanism in the accommodation and consolidation of the ultimately arbitrary power and remit of the assessors to assess” (6). The power of the assessment lies in its imprecision, which allows “freedom of manoeuvre” for the assessor but not the assessed.

The RAEs, Broadhead and Howard point out, work through the coercion and consent of academics. Cooperation is gained, they argue, in part because each individual “knows s/he is under surveillance” and that “good” behavior is rewarded while “bad” behavior penalized. Even more troubling, Broadhead and Howard maintain, is that researchers participate not reluctantly, but “imaginatively, aggressively, and competitively” (8). Employing Gramsci’s notion of “spontaneous consent,” Broadhead and Howard argue that academics have already been systemically molded in their professional careers such that there is a “positive internalisation” of being examined and examining others that “leads to the unquestioned—‘spontaneous’—acceptance of disciplinary power, the ritualisation of which is the examination; a glorification of which is the RAE” (9).

Truly “radical” resistance therefore cannot occur in a system that is “integrative, irresistible, seemingly inevitable” (11). It is telling that Broadhead and Howard look to Freire (1990), Illich (1971), and Gramsci (1971) for a truly radical critique of the RAEs; and not to Foucault. Broadhead and Howard have, using a “Foucauldian” analysis, painted themselves into a corner of an integrated, disciplinary, and dominating system. Yet they look to Critical Theory to get them out again. To look for an external vantage point as a means to overcome the system one has explicated seems not only highly dubious theoretically but also against Foucault’s own dictum that one cannot move outside of relations of power.

To declare that a system is “inevitable” is not exactly Foucauldian in spirit. British academics are made to look like sheep with split personalities—willing and willful at the same time. Willing to be coerced. Willful enough to cooperate in the coercion. Yet unable to resist. Are Broadhead and Howard resisting the disciplinary nature of the RAEs? Or are they just getting one of their necessary publications? If the former, how are they able to step outside of the totalizing, integrated system they have just described? If the latter, then any notion of critique vanishes in its being appropriated by the system it was meant to critique.

Consent to the RAEs, it seems to me, does not mean an acceptance of them, nor does it imply some type of “spontaneous” cooperation that ultimately denies resis-

tance. Rather, it is an action that some academics consent to (and here we do not need to delve into how willingly or consciously) as a means to become certain types of subjects. Foucault makes exactly this point when he argues that resistance must be inherent within power relations:

Even when the power relation is completely out of balance, when it can truly be claimed that one side has “total power” over the other, a power can be exercised over the other only insofar as the other still has the option of killing himself, of leaping out the window, or of killing the other person. This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all. (Foucault 1997, 292)

For Foucault, as I show later, the antithesis of domination is not “liberation” but simply the ability to resist. Domination is understood to be the lack of power relations in that actions become static and predictable. The lack of resistance to the RAEs, at least as articulated by Broadhead and Howard, is not because there is complete domination. To suggest that academics somehow “spontaneously” consent is to denigrate the actions and motivations of individuals, not least their own actions of publishing a paper on such “spontaneity.”

### *Fallacy 3: Succumbing to Radical Relativism*

Liberatory practices, Foucault was wont to say, often impose their own “regime of truth.” One could never hope that the next solution, the next reform, the next revolt, would finally bring about the desired liberation, freedom, or happiness. New alternatives brought about new problems and new disciplinary practices against which to struggle.

In this perspective, Foucault’s critics argue that his call for resistance is thus not only theoretically confused but also politically ineffectual. Nancy Fraser articulates a common complaint when she argues: “Foucault calls in no uncertain terms for resistance to domination. But why? Why is struggle preferable to submission? Why ought domination to be resisted?” (Fraser 1989, 29). Foucault’s critics charge that without a valid criteria for judging between different alternatives, one is left solely in a position of radical relativism. States of complete domination become just as valid as states of liberation, since both ultimately will lead to subjugation. This is a highly dispiriting perspective, and I offer just one example within the educational literature.

Educational administration, Gary Anderson and Jaime Grinberg (1998) argue, is “best viewed as predominantly a set of disciplinary practices” (330). By “disciplinary practices” they mean a “set of discourses, norms, and routines that shape

the ways in which a field of study ... constitute themselves" (330). For example, Anderson and Grinberg cite the emergent educational focus on productivity and efficiency at the start of the twentieth century as a type of "discourse" that shaped subsequent discourses and legitimated particular norms. Likewise, the fragmentation and departmentalization of subject matter and the normalizing "discourse" of what constitutes a good student can be seen as two additional methods of disciplinary practice (335).

The pervasiveness of such disciplinary practices affects our ways of being not only by what we do and think, but also by what we don't do or think. Furthermore, attempts to overcome such disciplinary practices may be inherently ineffective, for "the implications of Foucault's view is that educational practices that may appear more democratic, participatory, or progressive may in fact be more effective forms of disciplinary power" (335). Decentralized power through site-based management may increase the control imposed upon and by self-managing teams; seats arranged in a circle instead of in rows may intensify the gaze of the teacher and the self-supervision of students (336–337).

"Regardless of which techniques of administration we use," Anderson and Grinberg continue, "we cannot escape the effects of disciplinary power. No educational practices are inherently more empowering than others" (338). This should not be seen, Anderson and Grinberg argue, as strictly pessimistic. Instead, educational administration can benefit by viewing itself as a "disciplinary practice" where no grand narrative will ultimately overcome educational inequities. Rather, Foucault's work offers "a new role for scholars in educational administration, one that is less prescriptive and more problem posing" (346). On this note, Anderson and Grinberg conclude with an example of developing "public spaces" that are "authentic, participatory, and polyvocal" (347). Such spaces, they hope, may allow "problematization, rather than normalization" (347).

Anderson and Grinberg do not—like the texts I have cited—create a totalizing system where agency is negated and resistance is futile. They acknowledge, moreover, that "any alternative discourse runs the risk of emerging as a new 'regime of truth' with its own set of disciplinary practices and its own unique forms of oppression" (330–331). They have nevertheless fallen into the third Foucauldian fallacy of radical relativism.

Anderson and Grinberg cite Carlson (1997) to show how authentic assessments such as portfolios may be "a more totalizing form of evaluation" than traditional assessment practices (Anderson and Grinberg 1998, 343). Their point is that a similar argument "can be said of new moves toward collaborative action research, teacher study groups, peer evaluation, and so forth. The point here is not that one or the other disciplinary practice is better or worse but that neither is inherently good or bad" (343). The Foucauldian point is exactly the opposite; it is not that any disciplinary practice is inherently good or bad but that some are worse than others:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. (Foucault 1997, 256)

Foucault rejects any attempt to rank states of being or say that some are “good” while others are “bad.” To do so would necessitate an appeal to some exterior norm. Instead, Foucault situates his distinctions within the ability of relations of power to allow resistance and freedom for transformation. This is not a capitulation to a belief that everything is as good as every other thing. As Richard Rorty has remarked on more than one occasion, “Nobody, not even the most far-out post-modernist, believes that there is no difference between the statements we call true and those we call false. Like everybody else, post-modernists recognize that some beliefs are more reliable tools than others, and that agreement on which tools to use is essential for social cooperation” (Rorty 1997, 23). Although Foucault would strenuously argue with the Habermasian nature of Rorty’s latter point, he would surely agree with the former.

To argue, as do Anderson and Grinberg, that no forms of educational practices are “inherently more empowering than others” is to beg the question of, Why bother? There is more than a shade of defeatism in their article, and the only glimmer of hope seems to lie in their (footnoted) support of Habermas’s questioning of whether postmodernism allows the possibility of social critique (348, n. 3). As I show, Foucault offers a means for social critique and refuses to succumb to a radical relativism.

### **Foucault’s Notion of Resistance Within Power Relations**

On the other hand a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that “the other” (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions open up. (Foucault 1982a, 220)

“Power,” Foucault declared famously, “is everywhere” (1978, 93). If we are to understand Foucault’s notion of resistance, we must first understand Foucault’s notion of power. To this end, it should be pointed out that Foucault disavowed the use of the term *power* as such. “I scarcely use the word power,” Foucault said in an interview, “and if I use it on occasion it is simply as shorthand for the expression I generally use: relations of power” (Foucault 1997, 291).

“Relations of power” implies that “power” is not some reified and ubiquitous concept. It is not something “out there,” or some force that resides only within spe-

cific individuals or institutions. Power is not something that some individuals have—such as the sovereign or the police officer—while others do not. Rather, power is embedded in the relations among individuals and groups. Relations of power do not exist in some abstract sense but become intelligible and analyzable through individuals (and groups) engaging with each other. Power, Foucault argued, is “a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions” (Foucault 1982a, 220).

The structuring of the “possible field of actions of others” (Foucault 1982a, 221) does not depend on conscious acts, willing participants, or understood motivations. But neither does it imply a one-way imposition of force. A “good” student, for example, is not simply made. Nor is a teacher simply the “authority” in control. For the actions that are “brought to bear” are done so upon other actions. Relations of power are thus neither static nor unidirectional. An extensive amount of ethnographic research has been undertaken to show how the educational discourse of a “good” student is made manifest (Spindler 1997; Varenne and McDermott 1999). But such a process of subjectification is not simply inscribed upon the individual. The individual does this to herself, one might say under duress, one might argue unwittingly, one might confess with scant choice, but it is not something done to her; it is something done with her. Otherwise, one cannot account for individuals who self-reflectively accept who they have become (Rodriguez 1982) or attempt to resist the normalizing discourse of assimilation (Ogbu 1987; hooks 1994).

The point that power relations are unstable is crucial. It avoids arguing that some individuals are active and control power while others are passive and controlled by power. Relations of power are shown not to be immobile but instead are prone to change and reversal. This does not mean that violence or coercive relations of power do not exist; violence is one, albeit extreme, aspect of power relations whereby resistance is minimized to the point of practical nonexistence. Similarly, coercive relations of power consist of what Foucault termed “determining factors,” constraints upon actions that thwart resistance to domination. Societal acceptance of dropouts, the bureaucratic mechanisms enabling dropouts, and students’ own beliefs that their “inadequacy” is inevitable and/or acceptable, for example, may profoundly constrain resistive action (Fine 1991; Spindler and Spindler 1989; Varenne and McDermott 1999).

Even within highly asymmetrical power relations, though, Foucault insisted that individuals continue to be understood as acting agents. Resistance may take the form of running away or standing still, of saying no or not saying anything at all. Likewise, even the acceptance of the imposition, the lack of resistance, is an act. It may neither be helpful nor life-sustaining, but it is nevertheless an action within relations of power. Thus students’ own inadvertent complicity in the

(re)production of class inequities must be understood as resistance rather than passive acceptance (MacLeod 1995; Willis 1981).

The ability to resist, Foucault maintained, is inherent within the dynamic quality of the relation of acting agents. Resistance, for Foucault, therefore is not the goal of action. Rather, action can be understood only through the potential for resistance. Resistance is thus both a precondition for power relations and a manifest response to ongoing relations of power.

In the same regard, the ability to resist does not lie in some humanist notion of the "free individual." Resistance, for Foucault, allows the individual to become manifested. The individual is not passively made by power, but makes herself by being able to resist within power relations. In his "Two Lectures," given shortly after the original publication of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault is forcefully clear on this point:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals... The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. (Foucault 1980, 98)

By being able to resist, we create ourselves. There are, of course, institutional, societal, and personal constraints to this fashioning; Foucault never suggested that fashioning oneself occurs out of whole cloth. Nevertheless, the ability to resist is both a precondition of being an acting agent and what makes the acting agent the individual she is.

Foucault's fundamental point that relations of power are organized around how much resistance is possible can be further explicated by seeing that the asymmetries of power relations can be thought to lie on a spectrum. At one end lies complete domination, whereby the play of opportunities for resistance is minimized out of existence. The panopticon can be seen to lie here. The other end of the spectrum allows for multiple and varied reversals of power relations that can be initiated by the individual.

The antithesis of domination, it should thus be made clear, is not the lack of power. Rather, it is the ability to struggle within relations of power. It is here that Foucault must be seen as radically divergent from humanist and critical thought. Power relations are not barriers to self-actualization, but the web within which the individual constructs and is constructed as a self. In his later writings and interviews, Foucault repeatedly stressed the need for self-creation and an ethics of the self (Foucault 1985, 1997). And it was only in the struggle within power relations that change was possible.

## Why Resist?

Even if one will grant Foucault the notion of a relation of power, and that such power relations are premised on a free subject who is able to resist, a further question becomes apparent. Why resist in the first place? Habermas sees Foucault trapped in a hopeless relativism exactly on this point: “Why should we muster any resistance at all against this all-pervasive power ... instead of just adapting ourselves to it ... but why fight at all” (Habermas 1996, 283–284). Even the sympathetic reading by Dreyfus and Rabinow concludes, “What is wrong with carceral society?... What are the resources which enable us to sustain a critical stance?” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, 206).

Foucault’s interlocutors are searching for a justification to resist, some normative framework from which to base their actions of resistance. And Foucault refuses to give any. It is here that Foucault’s work has been labeled defeatist and pessimistic, lacking any normative framework from which to resist domination, and (in the case of Habermas) as ultimately harboring a cryptonormative stance. If, as his critics argue, Foucault cannot offer a better tomorrow, then Foucault only taunts us by saying we can or should resist. For to claim that resistance is inherent within relations of power and then withhold any criteria upon which to resist, is seen by Foucault’s critics as intellectual hocus-pocus and a political sham.

Foucault does not respond to the question of “why should domination be resisted?” Nor can he. The very explication of a reason for resistance would undermine Foucault’s attempt to avoid appealing to external vantage points from which to judge. To want to offer a liberal notion of the human being based on “essential” qualities such as autonomy, or a critical notion of the human being as liberated based on teleological principles, is to take recourse to metaphysical constructs that cannot be substantiated. Foucault’s refusal to engage the question is criticized, yet his answer would surely be savaged for its appeal to a norm.

Foucault’s move is not to substantiate resistance, but to acknowledge empirical examples of resistance and struggle. Foucault is interested in the immediate struggle of individuals, the local nature of contests being waged.

I would like to suggest another way to go further towards a new economy of power relations, a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point ... in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations. (Foucault 1982b, 210–211)

Foucault does not need a normative stance to substantiate why individuals resist. Struggles, he suggests, are all around us; prisoners, the mentally institutional-

ized, homosexuals, school children, are all engaged in resisting particular regimes of truth.

He is not particularly interested in the minutia of why they struggle (if such a thing is even knowable), but what this empirical struggle says about their understanding of being human. Foucault's "neutrality" stems from the fact that he does not side with those resisting. In speaking of the delinquent's struggle, the madman's resistance, and the (Iranian) people's revolution, Foucault maintains that "One does not have to be in solidarity with them. One does not have to maintain that these confused voices sound better than the others and express the ultimate truth. For there to be a sense in listening to them and in searching for what they want to say, it is sufficient that they exist and that they have against them so much which is set up to silence them" (quoted in Schmidt and Wartenberg 1994, 298).

Foucault's argument is that resistance occurs not because of some innate desire for liberation. Rather, what is being contested is what he terms the "government of individualization" (Foucault 1982b, 212). Foucault is interested not so much by how individuals fashion themselves, but how individuals may be forced into not fashioning themselves. Highly asymmetrical relations of power inhibit resistance. Relations of power that are dynamic and allow for reversal promote the opportunity for resistance. It is important to note that he does not argue that less constraining relations of power are better; the resistance may impose its own regime of truth that may in turn be that much more oppressive. This is why one cannot simply rank distinct relations of power.

Instead, Foucault's point is that some relations of power are less dangerous than others in allowing for the potential of transformation. Foucault's project is not meant to promote resistance, as such; rather, it is to allow the opportunity for resistance to be present. Particular practices therefore become more or less dangerous in respect to their ability to allow uncertainty into the system of power relations. Power relations with a great degree of uncertainty are not better, in that the resultant resistance may impose a more authoritarian "regime of truth." Power relations with a great degree of uncertainty, instead, are less dangerous in normalizing and subjugating individuals. In the latter relationship, a greater opportunity exists for transformation.

There is one final step that must be undertaken. To argue that resistance is an empirical event that demonstrates individuals' struggle against subjectification begs the question of interpretation. What Foucault sees as resistance, it may be argued, may be seen by another as complicity. One politician's freedom fighter is another politician's terrorist. The argument is that even if Foucault argues these events are so, he must be able to justify his interpretation.

The force of Foucault's argumentation is that he is not offering the interpretation, but an interpretation of resistance. To say that he must be able to justify his position is to demand an external criteria by which justification occurs. Rather,

Foucault is making a tactical move to support one particular perspective rather than another. Rouse makes this point when he states that “to make truth-claims is to strengthen some epistemic alignments, and to challenge, undermine, or evade others” (Rouse 1994, 112).

Foucault has reasons, as explicated above, for making the strategic moves that he does and for privileging transformative rather than determining relations of power; to question his criteria for judgment must therefore be seen not as a neutral question of validity-checking, but as a counterthrust in attempting to determine which truth-claims take precedence. To ask why Foucault privileges particular truth-claims is to attempt to maintain that some truth claims are better than others—there is an implicit assumption that Foucault must be able to justify why his perspective is quantitatively better than a different alternative.

Foucault’s privileging of transformative possibilities is a tactical move meant to problematize practices of normalization and subjectification. To ask “why” is to continue to believe that an answer is possible for resisting disciplinary practices. To ask “how” disciplinary practices function is instead to provide means by which to expose such practices and allow for experimentation with different modes of being.

Thus, one escapes from a domination of truth not by playing a game that was totally different from the game of truth but by playing the same game differently, or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards. I believe that the same holds true in the order of politics; here one can criticize on the basis, for example, of the consequences of the state of domination caused by an unjustified political situation, but one can do so only by playing a certain game of truth, by showing its consequences, by pointing out that there are other reasonable options, by teaching people what they don’t know about their own situation, their working conditions, and their exploitation. (Foucault 1997, 295–296)

Rather than respond to questions on the basis for his interpretation, Foucault would retort that he was not looking for answers but for means to allow other “options.” Foucault is not interested in alternative “justifications” but rather different “trump cards” by which to expose disciplinary practices.

### **A Corrective—Foucault’s Problématiques**

No! I am not looking for an alternative; you can’t find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by another people. You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions—and that’s the reason why I don’t accept the word alternative. I would like to do the genealogy of problems, of problématiques. My point is not that everything is bad, but that

everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. (Foucault 1997, 256)

Foucault, I argue, offers a means by which one can fully engage in resistance and struggle. It is not a self-delusory and egotistical struggle, as Schrag (1999) maintains. Nor is it a valiant though solitary gesture, as Anderson and Grinberg (1998) suggest. Nor is it a fundamentally impossible position, as Brotherton (1996) and Broadhead and Howard (1998) imply. Rather, it is a deliberate stance by which one can challenge and transform the disciplinary conditions within which individuals struggle.

Foucault, I suggest, offers a more intellectually coherent and forceful means of praxis than that offered by liberal and critical theory. In one of his late interviews, Foucault noted the discrepancy between the actions and the belief systems of many modern philosophers, Heidegger and Sartre among them:

There is a very tenuous “analytic” link between a philosophical conception and the concrete political attitude of someone who is appealing to it; the “best” theories do not constitute a very effective protection against disastrous political choices; certain great themes such as “humanism” can be used to any end whatever...I do not conclude from this that one may say just anything within the order of theory, but, on the contrary, that a demanding, prudent, “experimental” attitude is necessary. (Foucault 1984, 374)

Foucault believed in the power of struggle, and engaged in activism throughout his life both as a public intellectual and a private individual (Macey 1993; Felski 1998). Foucault’s insistence of operating in the margins, of transgressing limits, of experimenting outside of established norms, does not constitute a solitary and futile resistance. Rather, it is only through struggling against calcified institutional and individual relations of power that resistance becomes useful.

These social movements [outside the normal and established political parties] have really changed our lives, our mentality, our attitudes, and the attitudes and mentality of other people —people who do not belong to these movements...I repeat, it is not the normal and old traditional political organizations that have led to this examination. (Foucault 1997, 173)

Foucault believed that resistance could make a positive and concrete difference in people’s lives. It may, of course, make the situation worse. But to not have the opportunity to attempt to change is the most dangerous of all positions. It is against this that Foucault railed. His “hyper- and pessimistic activism” was thus both an enactment of his belief in how relations of power can be struggled against, and an ex-

periment in gauging the potential for transformation. In this light I would therefore like to offer three methodological correctives for the “Foucauldian fallacies” I outlined previously.

First, it must be acknowledged that individuals are neither simply passive nor radically autonomous agents. Foucault forcefully argued that resistance is an inherent aspect of relations of power and thus predicated on the ability to act. Without such a theoretical acknowledgment, Foucault’s insights concerning power and domination collapse within a totalizing and static perspective. In a sense, this is a simple acknowledgment based on over one hundred years of pragmatist research grounded in William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead. And in fact, some have argued for a more sympathetic relationship between Foucault and pragmatism (Maslan 1988).

Second, and predicated on the first point, “subjugated knowledges” should be heard. “Subjugated knowledges” are, for Foucault, “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated” and include the voices “of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the nurse” (Foucault 1980, 82). For all of the theoretical sophistication of the four articles analyzed previously, none cites the individuals affected by the practices described. Gang members, British academics who “spontaneously” consent, and administrators caught within disciplinary practices are left unheard. Their voices are assumed and spoken for. I am not suggesting that their voices are the final truth. Neither does Foucault. Rather, they must simply be acknowledged.

Michael Apple makes a similar point when he urges analyses of how subjects make meaning of the technologies of differentiation: “we should not assume that teachers or students are totally unaware of what is happening. How do they understand these things? How do they possibly find the holes in these discourses and mechanisms in creative ways so as to allow for spaces of resistance?” (Apple 1998, 424). Qualitative and ethnographic research, or the citation of it, is not a strong point of poststructuralist researchers. It might behoove a closer look at Foucault’s constant and consistent political engagement (Felski 1998).

Third, educational researchers must be willing to experiment with new truths. One must always bear in mind and grapple with the fact that new “regimes of truth” may replace old authoritarian principles; yet it should be realized that some forms of domination are more dangerous than others. To capitulate to a radical relativism denies any potential to resist and thus precludes any means by which to modify or reverse relations of power. Moreover, the questioning of the criteria of the experimental truth must be seen for what it is: a tactical struggle to maintain a particular truth-claim. This is not to say such a truth-claim is invalid or unhelpful or nonliberating. Rather, it is simply to realize that the truth-claims of the status quo attempt to ward off resistance in the same manner that new experimental truths attempt to overturn them: by struggling to delegitimize their grounding to truth.

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