Observing and Normalizing: Foucault, Discipline, and Inequality in Schooling

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BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU

George Orwell

My purpose in this article is to show how Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinary technology can be employed to illuminate the production of inequalities in school. Toward this end, I review Foucault's notion of discipline, describe what he means by panopticism, and illustrate how the rudiments of the organization of schooling, many aspects of which people simply take for granted, play a part in the production of inequalities.

Le but de cet article est de montrer comment la notion de technologie disciplinaire dénoncée par Michel Foucault peut mettre en lumière l'idée de production d'inégalités dans les écoles. Foucault voit la notion de discipline scolaire comme moyen de surveillance omniprésente et de normalisation. Ainsi, les éléments de base de l'organisation scolaire, éléments généralement perçus comme inhérents à cette organisation, loin de promouvoir l'égalité sociale, en arrivent à produire et à reproduire l'inégalité.

Orwell's (1965) *Nineteen Eighty-Four* provides us with a sobering glimpse of what the future might hold — a totalitarian state which controls virtually every facet of community and private life. In this futuristic model, The Party, under the symbolic leadership of Big Brother, uses every possible means to secure obedient and loyal behavior from the citizens of Oceania, or at least from those individuals it feels pose even the smallest threat to the status quo. As one among a number of regulatory tactics employed, the state subjects Party members to continuous and total surveillance. Television screens which transmit and receive simultaneously are everywhere — in homes, in the workplace, in public thoroughfares. These devices not only make possible constant observation of all who are within the viewing area, but are also capable of detecting the slightest sound. Party members never know when the dreaded Thought Police are plugged into their screens: Conceivably they watch and listen to everyone all the time. Television monitors are supplemented by other surveillance techniques:

Police squadrons constantly monitor the streets and outlying areas; helicopter patrols snoop into people's windows; and hidden microphones are poised to pick up the slightest noises that might reveal deviant activity. But for those who would contemplate betrayal in thought, word, or deed, the greatest danger of detection lies not with the Thought Police or by means of television screens or hidden microphones, but with fellow citizens. Colleagues, friends, and even family members also act as the eyes and ears of Big Brother. Everyone has a duty to report everyone and anyone, regardless of their identity or relationships, if and when they show signs of betrayal. Private life does not exist. To many citizens of Oceania it appears that the eyes of Big Brother and The Party relentlessly and incessantly pursue them from everywhere — not only from television screens, but from posters, and even from faces on coins.

> Even from the coin the eyes pursued you. On coins, on stamps, on the covers of books, on banners, on posters and on the wrapping of a cigarette packet — everywhere. Always the eyes watching you and the voice enveloping you. Asleep or awake, working or eating, indoors or out of doors, in the bath or in bed — no escape. Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimeters inside your skull. (Orwell, 1965, p. 30)

The year 1984 has come and gone, but it seems Orwell's prophecy has simply not materialized. Democracy continues to prevail and freedom reigns supreme, at least, many would agree, in most sectors of the western world. But despite the prevalence of the inherent privileges of democracy, surveillance continues to be a central feature of modern life, even though today's practices may not be quite as intense or as thorough as those utilized by The Party in Oceania. These methods of observation constitute the foundation for the operation of a modern form of power that takes shape in the organization of institutional life. Not to be identified exclusively with the state or with class interests, disciplinary technology as it is referred to by Foucault (1979, 1980a), and its methods of making things visible, nevertheless remain fundamental to the organization, administration, and governance of men and women. The act of looking over and being looked over, the mere fact of things being known and people being seen, allows for the penetration, control, and regulation of human behavior.

In addition to the practice of perpetual observation, disciplinary technology relies on the creation, supervision, and maintenance of norms (and abnormalities). In contrast to Orwell's Oceania where The Party determined standards of behavior, the accumulation of knowledge through constant observation, examination, and documentation produces norms to which individuals subjects are compared and encouraged to conform. Such procedures create abnormalities and deviants, which they in turn attempt to treat, a phenomenon Foucault refers to as *normalization*. The prevailing norms, which are organized around the values of productivity and docility, operate, as Foucault (1979, p. 222) maintains, as an "infra-law" or "counter-law" to those laws founded on formal egalitarian principles in western democracies. In other

words, normalizing processes undercut those philosophies which guarantee individual rights and universal equality and treatment before the law. Foucault contends that the methods associated with discipline continually and systematically produce inequalities in the pursuit of docility and productivity.

As one of a multitude of institutions that employ disciplinary technology, schools adopt a pervasive regime of observation and supervision in its efforts to normalize students. But like so many other institutions in the modern world, schools systematically produce inequalities despite official policy statements to the contrary. In this paper, I attempt to understand this phenomenon through the ideas of Foucault whose work Giddens (1982, p. 221) refers to as "the most most important contribution to the theory of administrative power since Max Weber's classic texts on bureaucracy." More specifically I use Foucault's notion of disciplinary technology to illustrate how the school produces inequalities. Toward this end, I show how the rudiments of the organization of schooling itself, many aspects of which people simply take for granted, systematically produce inequalities.

First, I elaborate on Foucault's notion of discipline and depict what Foucault refers to as *panopticism* — a so-called blueprint for the use and regulation of bodies of men and women. Next, I describe the Panopticon — an architectural prototype for a prison, elaborate on its inherent principles, and illustrate how it operates as a form of disciplinary technology. Finally, I explain how schools conform to this basic model and establish how they play a part in the production of inequalities in today's society.

Disciplinary Technology

Disciplinary technology capitalizes on a unique relation between knowledge and the body. Foucault maintains the body has always been a target of power. The ruling powers of 17th and 18th century Europe, for example, made use of the vulnerable physical nature of the body to safeguard their privileged positions. In pursuit of this end, they employed measures that included public torture and execution to set an example that was geared to dissuade potential criminals from committing what were then considered to be illegal acts. These methods of control began to change, however, with the newly evolving social order that was rapidly taking shape in the 18th century. Local needs and diverse interests gradually gave rise to procedures designed to cope with problems associated with such social phenomena as the plague, the invention of the rifle, the rise of large scale industry, and the consolidation of nation states. These new methods sought not to crush and dismember the body, but to train and exercise it, to make it productive and cooperative. A continuous and even control now superceded the sensational and erratic spectacles of earlier times. Politicians, health officials, and business magnates adopted systems of organization and management aimed at the chronic manipulation of the body's gestures,

movements, and attitudes. They sought "to forge disciplined bod[ies] that could be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 154).

Perpetual observation and other accompanying techniques of exposition furnished the knowledge that could be used to ensure an infinitesimal control over these bodies. The organization of men and women in institutional forms would achieve "power through transparency," "subjection by illumination" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 154). The paradigmatic example of disciplinary technology, according to Foucault (1979, 1980a), is epitomized in Jeremy Bentham's architectural plans for a prison which he referred to as the Panopticon. In these plans we see a model that makes use of this unique relation between bodies, knowledge, and power.

The Panopticon

In the 18th century Jeremy Bentham revealed plans for a prison that departed in many ways from conventional penal institutions of this time (Foucault, 1979, 1980a). Inevitably the principles embodied in this design were to set the standards for prison construction for many years to come. Foucault looks upon these architectural plans (the Panopticon itself was never actually built) not as a plan for prisons, or for that matter for society in general, but as an example of how society was organizing itself at this time. This design reflects the basic principles of the new organizational practices that were taking shape throughout the western world for the administration and control of men and women.

The Panopticon consists of a central tower surrounded completely by a perimeter building. From an aerial perspective an observer would see a single centre point located within a ring. Prison guards occupy a tower pierced with large shaded windows which allow an unobstructed view of the entire perimeter building. The outer building contains prison cells that traverse the entire thickness of this structure. These units have two windows: the one located on the inner side of the building permits guards to look into the cell, while the outer window admits the daylight. This back lighting illuminates the cells to enhance visibility. Guards have an unobstructed view of prisoners, while prisoners are unable to determine when and if guards are watching them.

Most prisons prior to this era "buried" prisoners, that is, they placed criminals together in "depths, stone and darkness" (Merquoir, 1985, p. 90). Prisons that were to follow the Panopticon model differed from the traditional penal philosophy in two important ways. First, the new institutions sought to rescue inmates from the darkness, to shed light on their every move. Secondly, prisoners were segregated within the segmented space of these architectural formations, a phenomenon which complemented this first motive. Prison officials could now observe, inspect, and supervise the most minute detail of

each inmate's behavior. Furthermore, knowledge garnered by way of these methods could be used to furnish norms to which individual prisoners could be compared and forced to conform. The principles personified in the Panopticon increasingly became part of such evolving institutions as hospitals, the military, industry, and schools. Organizations adopted such rationales because these methods proved to be effective in regulating the behavior of men and women in the pursuit not only of docility — as was perhaps the case in the prison — but of productivity as well.

Disciplinary Principles of Panopticism

Panopticism as a form of disciplinary technology imposes a compulsory visibility on even the most elementary particles of life. Foucault (1979) contends that the perfect disciplinary apparatus allows for a single gaze to see everything constantly. "A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape" (p. 173). Observation of this magnitude becomes possible with the analytic arrangement of space that accompanies unique architectural configurations tailored for this particular need. According to Foucault, during the 18th and 19th centuries architecture was no longer built to be seen, but to make visible those inside to permit an internal, articulated, and detailed control. Administrators locate and distribute bodies into spaces that are partitioned, enclosed, made functional, and ranked. An inspecting gaze oversees the coordination of these spaces with prescribed behavior and appropriately placed individuals in order to ensure suitable classifications, fine analytic divisions, and precise distributions. "Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual" (Foucault, 1979, p. 143).

The establishment of physical and social partitions between and among groups and individuals increases the visibility of interns. Inspectors of various sorts are better able to supervise a group of people when they are separated into divisions. As these divisions become finer and finer, the places to escape notice or scrutiny become fewer and fewer. Whether or not organizations employ physical partitions, as for example do prisons, the establishment of analytic spaces and the matching of individuals to these spaces allows for the observation of the smallest detail of individual behavior. Aside from the fact that the mere chance of being seen is enough to induce certain forms of behavior, perpetual scrutiny permits supervisors to accumulate stores of knowledge on the day-to-day activities of each individual in their charge. This knowledge base furnishes the means to know subjects, and if the need should arise, to alter them. But merely watching people does not constitute the only source of knowledge. Information of truly intimate detail is also obtained through examinations.

The common practice of examination further enhances the visibility of subjects. Inspectors and supervisors can procure particulars about individuals

that cannot be obtained merely by observing them, through the employment of a range of examination procedures — tests for school children, interrogations for criminals, and analyses for psychiatric patients. But testing is not an end in itself. Instead, the results are systematically and comprehensively recorded and supplemented by the documentation of countless other observed phenomena. In this way individuals come to be characterized as "cases" to be known. Files containing information on the most insignificant (and significant) performances and behaviors are available for use. Furthermore, these recording practices allow for the accumulation of individual data into cumulative systems. Knowledge obtained through these methods permits not only the description of groups and the characterization of collective facts, but the construction of norms.

Foucault maintains that this philosophy has provided the impetus for formation and advancement of human sciences which supply knowledge that is used in the establishment of norms. Binet, for example, was one of the first to use population statistics to produce a curve of human characteristics from which to derive norms for educational purposes. In 1905, he employed his intelligence tests to discriminate so-called backward Parisien children from normal ones (Ryan, 1988a). Around the same time Frederick Taylor introduced scientific management to the business world. Taylor's method required that managers (and social scientists) assemble facts from studies of time and motion to produce norms that were defined in terms of the most efficient ways of performing job related skills (Callahan, 1962). Such norms were given credibility by the very fact of their so-called scientific basis.

Norms invariably centre on the imperatives of docility and productivity, and individuals are ranked on the basis of where they stand in relation to such norms. "The disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate" (Foucault, 1979, p. 223). Administrators evaluate, differentiate, and hierarchize workers, prisoners, patients, and others on the basis of their nature, potential, value, and worth. They then distribute them to appropriately ranked spaces and match them with tasks commensurate with their level. Subjects are considered good, bad, or somewhere in between and are located and assigned roles on the basis of their ability and/or capacity to be productive and cooperative. The correction of those who depart from these valued standards requires the systematic allotment of sanctions; rewards and punishments are applied to those who do not measure up to the rule to exert a pressure to conform. Foucault contends that the concept of norm is inseparable from the concepts of normativity and normalization: Abnormalities come to be understood as natural as the norm itself especially when they are associated with science. In turn, the existence of these abnormalities and the concomitant need to keep them in check provides a further rationale for surveillance of the general population.

The Panopticon is presented as the ideal model that brings together power and knowledge to induce a detailed and comprehensive control over the bodies of men and women. Even though prisons may have different programs or functions than other institutions, the philosophy embedded in the Panopticon is easily transferred to such establishments as hospitals, workshops, and schools. Its physical structure allows for perpetual observation of each subject, and the knowledge obtained by way of this surveillance and through the employment of examinations and the compilation of documents makes possible the construction of norms and the supervision of accompanying abnormalities. The creation of inequalities, however, remains an integral component of a system of administration bent on attaining maximum levels of productivity and docility. Every citizen, patient, worker, prisoner, or student who departs from minimal standards of productive or cooperative behavior is tarred with a negative evaluation. Inequality remains both an effect and a condition for the operation of disciplinary power: The processes of normalization produce differences and at the same time require inequalities for their functioning. While the deployment of disciplinary technologies facilitates the management of men and women in the pursuit of productivity and docility, it also generates inequalities.

Power then, for Foucault, consists in the deployment of these disciplinary technologies. In order to understand how these technologies and their use facilitate the administration and control of men and women and produce the effects they do at a cultural (or social) level we must explore further Foucault's notion of power. What is power? How are men and women implicated in this process? How are its effects organized on a grand scale?

Disciplinary Technology and Power

Foucault does not grant power ontological status. Rather, he contends that power has no essential essence or form; it is not something to be possessed or a thing with which people are endowed; and it is not an institution or structure. Foucault (1980a, p. 198) contends that "power in the substantive sense doesn't exist" and centers his analyses on the question "How is power exercised?" rather than "What is power?" He maintains that power only exists in action, in its exercise. The exercise of power puts into play a strategic relationship that establishes inegalitarian and asymmetrical relations between individuals and groups. Ensembles of actions that are brought to bear on the actions (both present and future) of others guide the possibility of conduct and put in order the possible outcomes. Power not only operates on people, but also "it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them" (Foucault, 1979, p. 27). It "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 37). Power is exercised from within the social body, rather than from above it. But despite the fact that power functions through individuals

and groups, Foucault insists that power must not be attributed to a subject or subjects.

Cousins and Hussain (1984) note that Foucault's analyses oppose theories that locate a human subject endowed with specific attributes and capacities as the source of social relations. Foucault (1980a, p. 117) looks to "dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself," for he believes that power cannot be attributed to psychological motivations nor can it be built out of individual wills. He does not mean to imply that agents/subjects are not implicated in this power process, but that individuals and groups do not or cannot control the process in any simple way. Foucault (1980b, p. 95) contends that "power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective." Will and calculation are involved, but the overall effects escape actors' intentions. Individuals and groups operate within their own localized spheres, responding to specific needs and interests, but they necessarily have only a tenuous relationship with the overall effects of their own and other's actions. "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does" (Foucault in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 187). Foucault asserts that the clashing of individual wills, the meshing of various interests, and the fusion of desires are shaped and take on a certain coherence within these political technologies of power. The technologies of power embodied in Panopticon-like institutions produce effects with which no one individual or group can be credited.

Let me illustrate this point with reference to the Panopticon. No one individual is responsible for exercising power over prisoners. To be sure, guards do have certain advantages over prisoners, but they themselves are enmeshed in the administrative apparatus and subject to controls. Guards have their own function, but this function is only part of the context that induces prisoners to follow a given regimen. Indeed, prisoners never actually know when guards are actually watching, so situations that might arise in which no guards were present would do little to alter the coercive nature of the Panopticon, provided of course that prisoners still believed that somebody was watching them. Power in this instance rests with the entire technology — the architectural formations, the distribution of bodies in space, the practices of surveillance, the accumulation of knowledge — and not with an individual. Power "becomes a machinery that nobody owns" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 156). The technologies of power are related to discourses (i.e., programs) and integrated into general strategies.

Technologies of power that may be localized in particular institutional sites operate within the confines of and are subject to what Foucault refers to as strategies. Strategies have no one in particular directing them: A control room metaphor is not appropriate in this instance. Rather, they refer to the general diagram, matrix, or macro configuration that informs specific practices at particular sites — ensembles of power relations that are organized into more or

less coherent patterns of effects and which provide a potential for advantage. Both technologies and discourses, by furnishing the resources for the production of these effects, are integrated into these strategies. Power is exercised within the general conditions of possibility presented not only by discourses and technologies, but also by the strategies themselves. Thus strategies, discourses, and technologies constitute both the material and the terrain for the operation of power. Despite this relationship, both technologies and discourses maintain a certain degree of autonomy. Ironically, a technological apparatus may continue to operate in a strategic role diametrically opposed to the dominant discourse or program associated with an institution or group of institutions (Gordon, 1980). Take the case of the prison. Foucault maintains that the prison, instead of eliminating crime and correcting deviants (a function that would coincide with the dominant discourse), actually produces delinquency. This failure in turn generates new projects of reform which nevertheless remain within the confines of the disciplinary technology responsible for the production of delinquency. These inevitable failures continue to extend the life of the prison as we know it and to produce effects antithetical to its obvious purpose.

What then, can we learn by looking at the organization of schooling through the eyes of Foucault? In what ways do schools employ disciplinary technology? And how is this system of management related to the production of inequalities within these settings?

Schools as Technologies of Discipline

Schools are but one of a number of sites that employ disciplinary technology in the pursuit of productivity (and docility). Like so many other institutions in the modern world that are organized around a Panopticon-like scheme, the power embedded in this model to structure the potential activities of students is used by schools. Pervasive observational practices, meticulous partitioning of space and time, examination, and documentation allow for the accumulation of knowledge on the activities, capacities, and performances of each student and provide the conditions (ideally) to correct those who deviate from acceptable norms. But even though this relationship of knowledge, power, and bodies may generate what many would believe to be ideal organizational patterns for productivity (in this case the production of student skills and knowledge), it also produces inequalities among students.

The ideals of both productivity and docility continue to be an integral component of formal schooling. The generation of student knowledge and skills that may find expression in a student's ability to read proficiently, to write clearly, to solve mathematical equations, to play a musical instrument or to demonstrate a physical skill in the gymnasium remains a central concern of government officials, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the general public. The failure of schools to attain acceptable levels of productivity in any

number of areas inevitably engenders cries of protest. In the United States, for example, a Congressional Joint Ecomonic Committee has recently expressed serious concern over the fact that the United States is falling behind the rest of the world in promoting literacy and job skills (*Chronicle-Journal*, 1989, p. 11). As such, perceptions that schooling has not produced an acceptable level of outcomes have given rise to various crusades. Over the past few years, movements that support a back to the basics philosophy have gathered strength on the premise that changes to schooling which reflect this attitude would necessary enhance, for example, students' ability to read and write, areas that many believe are not being adequately addressed by schools.

Promotion of the values of cooperation or docility also takes priority in most schools systems. In Ontario, for example, the *Education Act* (Government of Ontario, 1980a, Section 236a requires principals to "maintain proper order and discipline in the school" (p. 250). Order of this sort complements the pursuit of productivity. But aside from the fact that the unilateral transmission of knowledge from a select few (i.e., teachers) to comparatively large numbers (i.e., students) requires certain levels of docility, school officials may also encourage certain forms of cooperative behavior simply because they value them for their own sake. The generation of so-called correct social behavior still retains a high priority in most school settings (see, for example, Government of Ontario, 1980b, p. 6). But the promotion of correct social behavior is not restricted to vague and official statements of ideals. Many teachers also give a high priority to the inculcation of correct social behavior. A few would even place this value above that of the learning of so-called skills. One such teacher in a study in which I was recently involved (Ryan, 1989, p. 392), commenting on what he hoped to achieve in his teaching, believed that "the first thing [is] socially acceptable kids. Mannerisms, discipline come first even before skills."

Surveillance practices pervade all school settings. Government statutes (e.g., Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1970, Section 12) school district regulations and school rules (e.g., Peter MacDonald School in Labrador), 1985-86), and indeed precedents set in court (e.g., Thornton v. Board of Trustees of School District No. 57, 1978) provide the framework within which administrators organize teaching staffs to oversee students' every movements. School officials generally supervise the activities of students from the time they arrive on school grounds until the time they leave. Students are invigilated in hallways, classrooms, offices, gymnasiums, coat rooms, on playgrounds, and on occasion, even in washrooms. Very little student activity escapes the notice of vigilant teachers.

The design of school buildings, most of which adhere to a Panopticon-like philosophy, facilitates these observational practices. The inevitable partitioning of internal space into series of hallways and rooms allows for the division of the student body to make supervision of each student easier than would be the case

without such structures. School administrators design plans (e.g., timetables) to distribute students within these areas: Each student has a place to go, a time to adhere to, and an activity to engage in. The construction of these analytical spaces allows teachers to know students intimately on an individual basis, and if the need should arise, to correct any shortcomings that they may display. As in any institution that employs disciplinary technology, the knowledge obtained through these observational practices is supplemented by examination and testing procedures and the subsequent documentation of any information obtained both through observation and examinations.

Schools routinely examine and test students from the time they enter at age four or five up until the time they leave many years later. Tests may take on either a formal or an informal quality. The results of these assessments, whether they are based on formal examinations or on casual observations, are systematically documented, etched in teacher records and on report cards, and preserved in any number of cumulative registers (see, for example, Government of Ontario, 1980a, Section 26 (d)). The accumulation of individual cases and their consideration, whether it takes the form of science or practical sense, generates norms around which students are distributed. Schools match students with hierarchically arranged bodies of subject matter and place them with respect to their capacity to master the curriculum associated with a given level. Students inevitably find themselves located in a certain grade, a specialized stream, or a unique subject area. Schools commonly employ so-called scientific instruments to assist them with this process (e.g., Brigance, 1982). Administrators or guidance counsellors administer such tests to diagnose students' positions with respect to scientific norms devised from empirically determined numerical distributions of student skills. Results from tests of this nature will indicate where a student stands with respect to what is regarded as normal for a particular grade level or subject area. Armed with such information, administrators can then place students at their appropriate level in the academic hierarchy. Schools also demand a certain degree of cooperation from students. The degree to which students depart from behavioral norms, which may vary from class to class and from school to school, may dictate student placements. The more consistent and extreme violators of school behavioral norms, for example, may find themselves placed in a special education class (Dworet & Rathgeber, 1989).

Organization of this nature creates not only differences, but inequalities. Constant observation and other means of exposition allow teachers to rank students with respect to each other and to a whole range of academic and behavioral categories. A student's worth may be reflected in marking schemes in which A's or high percentage grades are assigned to those who excel academically and behaviorally and F's or low percentage grades are assigned to those who have trouble mastering the curriculum or fail to cooperate with

teachers. Confronted with such assessments, school officials apply inducements to students to encourage their conformance to minimal standards. Teachers may confront, scold, prod, embarrass, strike, or praise students; they may also distribute, deprive, or award symbolic or other types of rewards to students in their efforts to promote their adherence to minimal standards of productivity and docility (Ryan, 1988b, pp. 233-241). Characterization of students accompanies the identification of deviants and the distribution of sanctions. As one classroom teacher noted, "You got your good kids and your bad kids" (Ryan, 1988b, p. 232). Administrators, teachers, students themselves and the general public distinguish students as good, bad, normal, average, bright, or slow on the basis of their relation to school norms.

Like so many other institutions that employ disciplinary technology, schools undertake to bend the behavior of constituent personnel to a point that would yield maximum productivity. In order to do this, methods of exposition are employed that allow school officials to know just how each individual student is performing. Those who depart from minimal standards of productivity (or those conditions that would promote productivity) are identified and sanctioned in order to improve their contribution. Within these arrangements, individuals who score high on tests and/or those who are most cooperative are valued higher than their comrades who happen to be less successful at these same tasks. Thus, this overwhelming concern with productivity, not only in schools but within most institutions in the modern world, creates inequalities. Inequalities constitute an integral component of a system of organization universally believed to be the most efficient way to mange men, women, and children to achieve a given end.

Schooling and Inequality

Schools operate within the framework of discourses and institutional practices and their effects. Men and women utilize the resources inherent in a multitude of discourses, institutional practices, and strategic relations to realize their projects. But in the realm of formal education, like other institutions that employ disciplinary technology, no one individual or group controls the process of schooling in any simple way. Rather, both the structure of schooling and its outcomes are the product of a whole range of individual and group initiatives, aspirations, ambitions, and enterprises that may or may not clash. Even so, according to Foucault, the actions of individuals and groups — teachers, parents, administrators, students, government officials, special interest groups — take shape and are given direction within these technologies of power, which in turn operate subject to the strategic relationships produced not only by schools but by society in general. However, like prisons, schools may produce effects that contradict officially stated aims. This is particularly true in the case of the production of inequalities.

Most school systems in the western world value the ideals of equality. The Ontario Ministry of Education (Government of Ontario 1980b, p. 4), for example, "strives to provide in the schools of the province equal educational opportunity for all." Even though a wide range of interpretations may exist for the expression "equal educational opportunity," there can be little doubt that many view the school as a means to rescue the less fortunate from their undesirable circumstances and put them on an equal footing with the rest of society. But despite such rhetoric, schools do not generate products that contribute to a more equal society. Rather, they tend to produce a wide range of differences that more or less reflect those differences within society in general.

The state of current conditions and the apparent inability of schools to fulfill various mandates, which may include the realization of greater opportunities for all students when they leave these institutions, have prompted many to insist that the answer to these problems lies with the tightening up of that very disciplinary technology that generates these inequalities. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), for example, believes that education ought to "satisfy the diverse needs" of learners, including those of "educationally disadvantaged students" (p. 24). It proposes to attain this end (and others) by increasing the rigor of formal schooling with various measures, some of which coincide with those promoted by the so-called effective schools movement, such as a "context of orderly, disciplined behavior based on the development of good character; systematic reward systems; universal standards for behavior; and the regular monitoring of student behavior" (Holmes, 1986, p. 86). Indeed, a system of management virtually universally employed throughout the modern world and shown to be particulary effective in the production of goods and services would seem to be the natural choice to increase the productivity of student skills and knowledge regardless of the nature or background of the student. Such a system would certainly seem to fit the bill for a philosophy of education that demands the unilateral transmission of privileged knowledge from a few experts to many apprentices. Ironically, the employment, and indeed intensification, of disciplinary technology in schools will ensure the continuity of those very inequalities that many look to eliminate, for as we have seen inequality is an integral component of this system. It would seem that productivity — at least productivity attained through a system of management that employs normalizing disciplinary technology — would be at odds with the ideals of equality.

However, schooling need not be seen as an instrument of class domination, even though it may contribute to the maintenance of inequalities in the modern world. Accepting what Foucault says, we can see that there is no such thing as an all-encompassing division between the rulers and the ruled. Nor is there a conspiracy which more or less plans the domination of subordinate groups or a hidden hand which guides those forces that ensure the preservation of the privileges of one class at the expense of another. Instead, domination and the

subsequent production and maintenance of inequalities are the overall effect of a strategic relationship that is inextricably intertwined with institutional practices (e.g., disciplinary technology) and a multitude of discourses (e.g., productivity). This strategy has no strategist(s) — no one indivdual or group controls this process in any simple way. Rather, individual and group interests and desires that are acted out within limited spheres take on a coherence that systematically produces generally consistent patterns across various sites. This system of managing men and women, controlled by no one individual or group and geared for the generation of maximum output, produces inequalities day in and day out not only in school settings, but in institutional life throughout the modern world.

Schools then, rather than *reproducing* inequalities, merely *produce* them. Schools do not necessarily constitute part of a mechanism that ensures the continuity of inequalities across generations. Rather, the disciplinary technology employed in educational institutions merely sifts, sorts, and marks students with values. To be sure, some students have a distinct advantage over others. Schools tend to favor the cultural capital of the so-called middle class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), and indeed operate within those same value systems that endorse productivity and certain forms of cooperative behavior. Consequently, those students whose parents are either professionals, well educated, or wealthy tend to come to school better equipped than those students whose parents may be unemployed, uneducated, or poor (Kapferer, 1986). But this does not hold true for all cases. Some students in the latter category may do well, while others of the former group may stack up poorly against school norms. For some, schooling may act as a genuine means of opportunity; for others, it may function as a mechanism for so-called downward mobility. Thus, despite regularities in the correspondence between family background and success at school, the number of exceptions to this rule and the recognized complexities of individual cases necessarily render reproductive theses of various sorts somewhat questionable. What we can be sure about, however, is that the system for organizing men, women, and children in the school (like other institutions in the modern world) is in itself responsible for generating inequalities not only along so-called class lines, but also with respect to race, gender, age, and a whole host of other categories. Any extension of this latter statement to propositions that would posit schools as reproducers of inequalities over generations would necessarily demand complex elaborations of such theories to accommodate the multitude of exceptions. To date, despite valiant efforts by various genres of cultural, critical, and Marxist scholars, we are still waiting for such a theory to materialize.

Foucault and Understanding Schooling

Foucault's work is not without its faults. Indeed many scholars have criticized what they believe to be shortcomings in many areas of his studies (Merquoir,

1985; Cousins and Husain, 1984; Megill, 1985; Wickham, 1986; Minson, 1986; Giddens, 1984; Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdime, 1984). Megill (1985) maintains, however, that those who criticize Foucault for not being totally accurate or consistent in documenting, for example, the history of the prison miss the point of his work. The true value in Foucault's writings is their capacity for "suggestions, pregnant hints for further work and investigation, perspectives, that pursued and tested, may allow us to see more clearly the world in which we live — and may perhaps help us in any attempts to change that world. Foucault is best treated as an animator — not as an authority" (p. 246). The utility of his work is to help us see the world against a new and different horizon and in ways we might not have thought of otherwise. In pursuing a history of the present he is perhaps justified in telling "lies" about the past to deliver many of the taken-for-granted practices from the shadows in order to open people's eyes to the present. Scholars and practitioners in education would do well to use Foucault in their attempts to understand the nature and effects of formal schooling.

As one of many potential contributions, Foucault provides us with insight into the nature and effects of the organization of schooling. He gives us a glimpse of a system of managing men, women, and children that relies, not altogether unlike Orwell's Oceania, on perpetual observation. These observational practices, supplemented by other means of making subjects visible, supply knowledge that allows for the construction and supervision of valued norms. However, the inevitable comparison of individuals both with each other and with these norms generates inequalities. Thus, it becomes apparent that schools, along with many other institutions in the modern world that adopt what Foucault refers to as disciplinary technology, cannot but help produce these inequalities, for the production of these unequal differences is but an integral component of such a system. Well meaning efforts to reduce inequalities through the process of schooling can only fail if schools continue to employ an organizational format geared to normalize students.

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