**Unmasking Power**

As a beginning adult educator one of my earliest hopes was to organize classrooms that would be as open and democratic as possible. Adult education appealed to me as a field where the power of the teacher was emphasized far less than in the technical institutes where I had been working. With adults it seemed that classrooms could really be power-free zones, or at least ones in which power was shared equally by teachers and learners. In my first classes I set up discussion circles and was glad to find that I did not have to coerce people to speak. What a relief! Finally I had found a situation in which I could escape the responsibility of exercising power. Little did I know the extent of my naivete.

The illusion that I had somehow escaped power stayed with me for many years. It was fortuitous that my instinctive preference for discussion circles fit so well with the ethos of the field. After all, democratically-inclined discussion holds a central place in the pantheon of practices comprising the progressive-humanist approach beloved of so many in adult education. This approach is usually lauded for a mix of pedagogic and political reasons. Pedagogically, discussion is held to engage learners in participatory learning, which helps them come to a deeper understanding of the topics considered. Politically, discussion is supposed to provide an analog of democratic process, a space where all voices are heard and respected in equal measure. Mezirow (1991) and Collins (1991), among others, invoke Habermas' ideal speech situation - which to many is exemplified in the rational discourse of respectful, democratic, open discussion - as the organizing concept for good adult educational practice.

My error was to confuse this ideal with reality. Just because my classrooms looked democratic did *not* mean learners felt themselves to be in a power free zone. Had I reflected on my own autobiographical experiences of learning through discussion I would perhaps have questioned my assumptions a little more. My own student memories of discussion groups are about as far removed from this tranquil, uncomplicated ideal as they could be. As a learner I rarely found participating in discussion to be a liberatory, democratizing experience; rather, I experienced discussion as a competitive ordeal, the occasion for a Darwinian style survival of the loquaciouslly fittest. Much of my energy was consumed by performance anxiety. I knew I was supposed to perform brilliantly but unsure what this brilliance was supposed to look like. Participating in discussion thus became translated into a form of competitive intellectual besting in which triumph was claimed by those who spoke most frequently or made the most brilliantly articulate and insightful comments. I knew I was engaged in the same kind of name-dropping that grips guests at an academic cocktail party as they struggle for recognition and status. My participation was framed by the need to speak as often and intelligently as I could, thereby impressing the teacher with how smart I was. The idea that I might be involved in a group creation of knowledge never occurred to me. I remember thinking that the conversation was in no sense open, but that my tutor was using it as a means of checking the level of my understanding and familiarity with the course's content.

Had the work of Michel Foucault – the French social theorist - been available to me as an undergraduate I would have understood better my feeling that in discussions I was under

the surveillance of my peers and teachers and expected to perform according to some dimly sensed norm of what good participation looked like.  I would also have realized that the discussion groups of which I was a member ran according to a regime of truth.  Regimes of truth are "the types of discourse which it (society) accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131) and they operate to support teachers in settings that appear to be power free.  At the time I put my unhappy experience of discussion participation down to my own lack of intelligence and confidence, and dismissed any doubts I had that discussion might not be as democratically liberating as I'd supposed.  When I subsequently began working as a teacher my experiences as a participant in discussion meant nothing to me.  I was going to teach through discussion because holding discussions was inherently democratic, a clear example of teacher power being used in an animating, liberating way to bring students into voice and provide them with a classroom analog of democracy.

In believing that power could be exercised unequivocally for either good or evil, and that one could recognize emancipatory uses of power in practices such as discussion circles and learning journals in which adults' voices and experiences were affirmed, I was similar to many of my adult educational colleagues.  Like them I viewed power as a Janus-like phenomenon, presenting two contradictory faces – repressive and liberatory.  Repressive power is seen as constraining and coercing, bending its subjects to its will.  Liberatory power animates and activates, helping people take control of their lives.  Consequently, in adult education the release of liberatory power is prized as a core process.  In the critical theory tradition, however, it is the repressive face of power that is most strikingly presented.  Here the emphasis is on the ways state power is organized to lull people into submission to the dominant order, primarily through its organs of ideological manipulation (including adult education).  This is the function of Althusser's ideological state apparatuses (ISA's).  When ISA's fail to reproduce the dominant culture and secure consent to its continued hegemony, then repressive state apparatuses (the military, police, National Guard) are called into play to confront and quell revolution.  Liberatory power is present in critical theory too, particularly in the analysis of workers' solidarity, revolutionary social movements, and the possibility of counter hegemony.  But on the whole this face is less observable.  Critical theory generates a Wagnerian wall of sound around the evils of repressive state power that sometimes drowns out the plaintive flute notes of power as a force for liberation.

In adult education, however, the converse is true.  Here the liberatory face of power turns its gaze full force on the field.  Adult educators talk emphatically of empowerment as a process through which adult learners find their voices and develop the self-confidence to take control of their lives.  The possibility of converting 'power over' learners into 'power with' them (a formulation devised by Mary Parker Follett and popularized within adult educational circles by Lindeman) continues to this day to exercise a hold on educators' imaginations (Kreisberg, 1992).  This determination to empower adults signifies to many adult educators what's distinctive and admirable about the field.  Show up at a professional gathering of adult educators such as the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (in the United Kingdom) or the Australian Association for Adult Education and sooner or

later conference participants will point with pride to the empowering aspects of their practice.

A critique of this bipolar approach to understanding power lies at the heart of the work of Michel Foucault, the French social theorist. Foucault is one of the most provocative voices of critique and dissonance internal to the critical tradition, and for progressively-inclined adult educators his analysis of how apparently emancipatory adult educational practices often contain oppressive dimensions is particularly (but usefully) disturbing. In his view repression and liberation co-exist to different degrees wherever power is present. Hence, "it would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of subordination which, by definition, are means of escape" (1982, p. 225). Furthermore, the simple classification of power as either good or evil is, for Foucault, hopelessly wrong. Power is far more complex, capable of being experienced as repressive and liberatory in the same situation. As we shall see in this chapter, Foucault shakes up the confident belief that power can be bent to our will so that it can be experienced by recipients the way we intend.

Foucault has written historical analyses of madness, sexuality, and punishment, and the way discourses emerge that construct dominant understandings of these. A unifying concern running through all his writings is the understanding of power. Foucault maintains that in modern society sovereign power (power exercised from above by a clearly discernible authority such as the monarch or the President) has been replaced by disciplinary power; that is, power that is exercised by people on themselves in the specific day to day practices of their lives. It is easy for adult educators to focus on sovereign power – the arrogant teacher, unresponsive administrator, co-opting of literacy training or workplace learning by the needs of capitalism voiced by corporations and governments, and so on. We often think of sovereign power as the enemy and there is some comfort in feeling we have identified our enemy and can work to subvert or confront it. It is much harder for adult educators to focus on their collusion in, and exercise of, disciplinary power and surveillance. Reading Foucault should disturb and unsettle any adult educator who feels she or he is clearly on the side of emancipatory goodness and truth. Foucault's work problematizes critical adult education in a productively disturbing way and in so doing helps adult educators guard against the arrogant certainty that they are free of any authoritarian or manipulative dimensions to their practice.

Let's return to the example of an adult education discussion group. Foucault can help us understand such a group as a complex mix of power-laden practices. His analysis prompts us to consider the way disciplinary power is exercised, or the way participants feel subject to a certain form of surveillance, while superficially inhabiting a liberatory space. In practices such as the raising of hands to signify one wants to speak, the way eye contact is made between students, or between students and teacher, to confer the message that now a chosen participant can speak, the nods of participant and leader approval to register that a particularly insightful comment has been made, the preferred seating arrangement (usually a circle), and the form of speech and terminology that is approved, a norm is subtly, implicitly communicated regarding the 'correct' or 'appropriate' form

of participation.  The discussion group format has not removed teacher power, it has merely reconfigured it in a less overt manner and hidden it behind surface forms and processes that appear free.  In fact, supposedly democratic, free discussion groups can function very effectively to bolster people's willingness to submit to authority.  In Foucault's view this is only to be expected.   He observes that modern society is so complex that a permanent army of police and informers would be necessary to make sure people accepted prevailing power relations.  Since this is logistically impossible, he argues that overt surveillance has been replaced by self-surveillance - that we monitor and censor our own thoughts and behaviors in discussion groups and elsewhere.

Anyone who claims that adult education is about empowering adult learners (in my experience a majority of those who identify themselves as working within the field) must engage with Foucault's work.   The fact that his writing is sometimes hard to follow means it is easy to give up on him.  But the struggle to understand and apply him is worth it.  Without an appreciation of Foucault's ideas, adult educators often end up with an incomplete and naïve understanding of how power manifests itself in adult educational processes.  His work is crucial in helping us learn to recognize the presence of power in our daily practices, particularly the false face of apparently beneficent power exercised to help adult learners realize their full potential.


**Foucault as a Critical Theorist ?**

The sub-heading above is posed as a question because Foucault is often placed outside critical theory and described as a post-structuralist or postmodernist. However, in a discussion of his intellectual formation he recalls how "critical theory was hardly known in France and the Frankfurt School was practically unheard of" (1988a, p. 26) at the same time as it was producing some of its most important work.  In that same interview he shares how his line of analysis is very similar to that of critical theory and admits that "if I had been familiar with the Frankfurt School …. I would not have said a number of stupid things that I did say and I would have avoided many of the detours which I made while trying to pursue my own humble path – when, meanwhile, avenues had been opened up by the Frankfurt School" (ibid.).  In my view Foucault does meet the two conditions identified in chapter (1) as integral to critical theory.  First, he focuses on how existing power relations (such as dominant discourses and regimes of truth) reproduce themselves, and in doing so he draws on Marx.  Although he does not consistently put Marx in the foreground, much of his work is in the form of a talking back to Marxist conceptions of sovereign power.  Second, he adopts a self-critical attitude to his own theoretical formulations of power.  Let me address each of these points in turn.

Given that citations of Marxist thought are rare in Foucault's work, it is easy to conclude that Foucault viewed Marx as an irrelevance.  He certainly condemned those who uncritically viewed Marxist doctrine as representing a sort of Biblical, revealed truth of political economy that justified coercion and repression in the Soviet Union and elsewhere around the world.  In an interview on intellectual history he stated that he

desired "the unburdening and liberation of Marx in relation to party dogma, which has constrained it, touted it, and brandished it for so long" (Foucault, 1988a, p. 45). Furthermore, precisely because the left expected him to cite Marx in his footnotes he gleefully declared that "I was careful to steer clear of that" (ibid. p. 46). In another interview in *Power/Knowledge* (1980) he admitted that he liked to play a game with his readers of using Marxist forms of analysis without revealing that this was his intent. In his own words "I quote Marx without saying so" (p. 52). In this interview Foucault is quite explicit in acknowledging the ways in which Marx's work formed the background to his (Foucault's) own analysis of power. He declares "it is impossible at the present time to write history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked to Marx's thought and situating oneself within a horizon of thought which has been defined and described by Marx" (p. 53).

An example of Foucault's debt to Marx is his contention that the move from sovereign to disciplinary power is a function of the rise of capitalism. In his view "the growth of a capitalist economy gave rise to the specific modality of disciplinary power" (1977a, p. 221) which "is exercised the way it is in order to maintain capitalist exploitation" (1977b, p. 216). To Foucault "once capitalism had physically entrusted wealth, in the form of raw materials and means of production, to popular hands, it became absolutely essential to protect this wealth" (1980, p. 41). This protective effort gave rise to a "formidable layer of moralization deposited on the nineteenth century population" involving "immense campaigns to christianize the workers" (ibid.). In particular, it became "absolutely necessary to constitute the populace as a moral subject and to break its commerce with criminality" (ibid.). In other words, delinquency as a category describing anti-social, disruptive behavior was invented to keep behaviors such as stealing and malingering out of factories and thereby prevent production being threatened. This led to the segregation of delinquents - "vice-ridden instigators of grave social perils" (ibid). – from the law abiding majority of poor people.

Clearly, then, Foucault positions this part of his analysis in relation to Marx. However, he is critical of totalizing Marxist notions of economic determinism, and of an over-simplistic reliance on the division between the material base of society and the ideological superstructure. He questions the model of ideological manipulation and economic functionality in which "power is conceived primarily in terms of the role it plays in the maintenance simultaneously of the relations of production and of a class domination" (1980, p. 88) arguing that we need "a non-economic analysis of power" (p. 89). To Foucault power is not always in a subordinate position to the economy. Those with less income or consumer goods are not always powerless. Neither is power a commodity to be possessed. A starting point of his analysis is "that power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action" (ibid.). In Habermas' view this analysis "radicalizes Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason to make it a theory of the Eternal Return of power" (1989a, p. 52). Cornel West too reminds us of Foucault's intellectual history: "Foucault cannot be understood without understanding his early years in the Communist Party, his polemic against the French Left, the degree to which a Marxist culture was so deeply

influential on the Left Bank, and Foucault's own attempts to create new left space in relation to those various tendencies and elements" (West, 1993a, p. 95).

In this critical revisiting of Marx, Foucault displays the self-critical posture that I argued in chapter (1) needs to be present if a theory is to be called critical. He challenged any uncritical veneration of ideas arguing instead that "the only valid tribute to thought … is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest" (p. 54). His own writings and interviews are peppered with references to the hypothetical, tentative nature of his work and to the way it is offered to the world to provoke responses, initiate debate and trigger refutation. Foucault believes that his writing "does not have the function of a proof. It exists as a sort of prelude, to explore the keyboard, sketch out the themes and see how people react, what will be criticized, what will be misunderstood, and what will cause resentment" (p. 193). He is also quite ready to disavow his earlier work. At the end of an interview with two geographers he admits the merits of their criticism that he has used spatial metaphors and geographical constructs without acknowledging their source, declaring "I have enjoyed this discussion with you because I've changed my mind since we started" (p. 77). Though Habermas (1987b) has criticized Foucault for ignoring the normative basis of his own position, and for making false generalities, he pays tribute to Foucault's relentless pursuit of contradictions within his own position, as well as in his analysis of how power invades the lifeworld. Referring to Foucault, Habermas writes that he appreciates "the earnestness with which he perseveres in productive contradictions" (1989a, p. 178) acknowledging that "only complex thought produces instructive contradictions" (ibid.).

**The Centrality of Power to Human Relations**

A central point in Foucault's analysis is that power is omnipresent, etched into the minutiae of our daily lives and exercised continually by those that critical theory usually describes as 'the masses'. This is in marked contrast to a view that sees power as possessed chiefly by a dominant elite, exercised from above and emanating from a central location that is clearly identifiable. To Foucault, "power 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" (1980, p. 39). Consequently, his study of power has concentrated on understanding its manifestation in everyday rituals and interactions. He studies power "at the extreme points of its exercise … where it installs itself and produces real effects" (ibid. p. 197). In adult education the extreme points of exercise are the configurations of specific practices – dialogic circles, learning journals, self-directed learning contracts and so on – claimed to be distinctive to the field.

From a Foucaultian perspective we learn far more about power in adult education by studying the micro-dynamics of particular learning groups in particular classrooms (the gestures, body posture, seating arrangements, facial tics and phrases that learners and teachers commonly utter) than by investigating how adult education is funded. The growth of corporate training and human capital development may be important trends in the field, and the passing of adult educational legislation may seem an important political

event, but Foucault maintains that this is not where power is primarily exercised.   For him the only way to understand power is to investigate "how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors" (1980, p. 97).

So Foucault starts at the bottom, with the everyday thoughts and actions of 'ordinary' people.  He describes his method of focusing on everyday practices and behaviors as an ascending analysis of power.  An ascending analysis begins by studying "infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics" (ibid. p. 99) and then describes how these are co-opted "by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination" (ibid.).  This approach stands in marked contrast to a top-down analysis of power where a central supervisory agency is identified (for example one with responsibility for accrediting adult education programs) and the focus is on studying how this agency extends its control ever more widely by forcing people to behave in a certain way.  Foucault believed that a top-down analysis was too deterministic and gave far too much weight to a dominant group's ability to make the world conform to its image.

In Foucault's view power relations are infinitely diverse and contextual.  They originate in unpredictable ways at particular times and places.  A dominant group does not set out to create a set of mechanisms of control designed to bolster its authority.  What really happens is that members of this group begin to realize that specific practices have arisen that could "become economically advantageous and politically useful" (ibid. p. 101) in maintaining the dominant group's position.  Whenever a dominant group perceives that certain practices might prove useful to them then "as a natural consequence, all of a sudden, they came to be colonized and maintained by global mechanisms and the entire state system" (ibid.).  So, in Foucault's view, the establishment of societal mechanisms of control is haphazard and accidental rather than deliberately organized.  Those who desire to maintain the system as it is wait till a specific configuration of power relations and practices emerges that can be co-opted to support the functioning of that system.  This serendipitous configuration is then seized upon and incorporated to serve ends that are often contradictory to the configuration's intent.

An adult educational example of this, discussed in Usher and Edwards' (1994) analysis of postmodern education, is the accreditation of adults' prior experiential learning.  Acknowledging the validity of adults' prior learning experiences emerged originally as a counter-cultural, experimental practice.  It was an innovative way of challenging the sterility and rigidity of formal conceptions of learning embedded in higher educational curricula.  Proponents of recognizing prior learning for adults accused colleges and universities of denigrating and excluding the knowledge and experience adults brought to their studies.  To them it was insulting to make adults take introductory courses in subjects where adult learners sometimes had more experience than the instructor.  To challenge this position some adult educators argued that people's everyday knowledge should be taken as seriously as the knowledge that was codified and transmitted within the academy.  To this end they advocated the establishment of systems of portfolio

assessment whereby adult learners could have their prior learning acknowledged and granted college credit.

Initially the accreditation of adults' prior learning was regarded by many within academe as an irrelevant soft option favored by a few wooly-minded liberals working in fringe institutions. To use a term of Foucault's, adults' experiential learning represented a subjugated knowledge, one of "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (1980, p. 82). Over time, however, those in authority have realized that the practices associated with experiential learning present a happy set of circumstances ripe for co-opting in support of the dominant system.

In Foucault's analysis this is a predictable development. Subjugated knowledges "are no sooner accredited and put into circulation, than they run the risk of re-codification, recolonization" (p. 86). This has arguably been the fate of some experiential learning initiatives placed within formal educational institutions. Initially systems for accrediting prior learning flourish as oppositional practices. After a period of time, however, colleges start "to annex them, to take them back within the fold of their own discourse" (ibid.). Usher and Edwards (1994) suggest that "experiential learning is fast becoming a central object in a powerful and oppressive discourse" (p. 206) as governments bypass professional teachers to establish assessment and accreditation mechanisms that value certain forms of experience and learning (particularly those that are vocationally related to information technology) over others. In their view "the turn to experience is a means of by-passing experienced practitioners and negating the power of their professional judgment … thereby transforming experience into a commodity to be exchanged for credit towards qualifications" (p. 204).

## A Synaptic Economy of Power

Let us turn now to a fuller consideration of the way power is present in the smallest, apparently most inconsequential, human interaction. As we have seen, Foucault views power as something embedded in the everyday lives of citizens and in the everyday activities of adult learners and educators. He posits "a synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise *within* the social body, rather than *from above* it" (1980, p. 39). Power flows around the body politic, and around the adult education classroom, rather than being located at one clearly discernible point. Hence, "power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain" (p. 98). It is continually in use, always being renewed, altered and challenged by all those individuals who exercise it. Foucault writes that "power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power … individuals are the vehicles of power" (ibid.).

This view of power as all-pervasive and exercised by individuals at all levels challenges the discourse common in critical theory whereby power is used in a repressive way to enforce ideological manipulation. In the critical tradition view those who possess power (the dominant group, power elite, or ruling class) use this possession to keep subjugated groups in place. But once we admit that "power is exercised rather than possessed" (1977a, p. 26) then the question of how one group maintains its hegemony over another becomes much harder to answer. Instead of identifying those social mechanisms that bend the masses to the will of an elite group we have to shift our attention to studying how individuals' idiosyncratic and specific everyday actions keep a system going in the absence of force clearly exercised from above. Rejecting the notion that power is a commodity that is possessed only by those clearly identified as powerful also challenges the idea that social life, or adult educational practices, can be divided into opposing spheres of repression and freedom.

Foucault criticizes the belief that society at large, and adult educational practices in particular, contain zones of freedom uncontaminated by the presence of power. In his words, "it seems to me that power *is* already there, that one is never 'outside' it, that there are no 'margins' for those who break with the system to gambol in" (1980, p. 14). The omnipresence of power means we have to accept that all of us, at all times, are implicated in its workings. We must accept that "power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network" (p. 142). The pride that I took in creating a power-free zone in my early days as an adult educator is, in Foucault's eyes, naïve and misplaced.

This is an analysis that many adult educators may reject entirely, arguing that in comparison with other fields of educational practice theirs is much freer. It is not uncommon to hear it argued that in adult educational settings learners have the chance to experience an open, democratic process liberated from the distortions and constraints imposed on them by the requirements of K-12 education. Those adult educators with humanistic, progressive or radical sympathies take pride in their commitment to letting adult educators take control of their learning. They encourage adults to define their own curriculum, run their own classes and evaluate their own progress. A belief in the possibility that adults can be responsible for their personal and political self-actualization seems inherently liberatory.

Foucault would have us think otherwise. To him power relations are manifest in all adult educational interactions, even those that seem the freest and most unconstrained. As an example think of an adult educational practice that appears to equalize power relations, if not escape from them entirely - the circle. Some three decades ago a colleague of mine jokingly asked me the question 'how do you recognize an adult educator at a party?' The response – 'she's the one moving the chairs into a circle' – hit home, since almost my first action as an adult educator was to get to my first ever class early and move the chairs into a circle. In so doing I felt I had demonstrated admirably my commitment to honoring learners' voices and experiences, and to removing my own coercive power from the educational setting.

The circle is so sacred and reified in adult education as to be an unchallengeable sign of practitioners' democratic purity and learner centeredness. However, following Foucault, it is quite possible that the discussion circle may be experienced by participants as a situation in which the possibility of surveillance is dramatically heightened. Usher and Edwards (1994) write that while putting chairs in a circle "may create different discursive possibilities, it nonetheless simply reconfigures the regulation of students. They may not be so directly subject to the teacher/lecturer but they remain under the immediate scrutiny and surveillance of their peers .... changing practices do not, then, do away with power but displace it and reconfigure it in different ways" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 91). In a circle students know that their lack of participation, or their poorly articulated contribution, will be all the more evident to their peers.

Gore (1993) builds on Foucault's work to argue that beneath the circle's democratic veneer there may exist a much more troubling and ambivalent reality. For learners who are confident, loquacious and used to academic culture, the circle holds relatively few terrors. It is an experience that is congenial, authentic and liberating. But for students who are shy, aware of their different skin color, physical appearance or form of dress, unused to intellectual discourse, intimidated by disciplinary jargon and the culture of academe, or conscious of their accent or lack of vocabulary, the circle can be a painful and humiliating experience. These learners have been stripped of their right to privacy. They are denied the chance to check teachers out from a distance by watching them closely before deciding whether or not they can be trusted. This trust only develops over time as teachers are seen to act consistently, honestly and fairly. Yet the circle, with its implicit pressure to participate and perform, may preclude the time and opportunity for this trust to develop. As such, it is a prime example of how apparently democratic practices can be experienced by their recipients as oppressive and dictatorial.

**Disciplinary Power**

Foucault subsumed many of his most important ideas within a single concept, that of disciplinary power. In seeking to illuminate the way power operates in complex, diverse, technologically advanced societies, he argued that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the rise of a new economy of power - disciplinary power. This new economy ensured "the circulation of effects of power through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions" (1980, p. 152). Disciplinary power was in many ways more insidious, more sinister, than the workings of sovereign power, being based on "knowing the inside of people's minds" (1982, p. 214).

Although most people in the twentieth century still think of power in sovereign terms (that is, as located in a clearly identifiable individual or political unit) Foucault believed that the economy of disciplinary power emerged two to three hundred years ago. This economy established "procedures which allowed the effects of power to circulate in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adopted and 'individualized' throughout the entire social body" (1980, p. 119). Disciplinary power exhibits an "attentive

malevolence" (1977a, p. 139) and is "a type of power which is constantly exercised by means of surveillance" (1980, p. 104). It is seen most explicitly in the functioning of prisons, but its mechanisms are also at play in schools, factories, social service agencies and adult education. This form of power turns lifelong learning into a lifelong nightmare of "hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification" (1977a, p. 220).

Consistent with his belief that power relations are not deliberately and skillfully engineered by a secretive, dominant elite, Foucault emphasized the element of arbitrary chance that lay behind the emergence of disciplinary power. As he sees it, "a multitude of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, (which) overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method" (p. 138). The rationale informing the emergence of disciplinary power was the need to break up groups and collectivities into separate units that could be subjected to individual surveillance. These single units could then be inveigled into eventually surveying themselves. Surveillance would be more likely accepted if citizens could be persuaded that society itself was under constant internal threat and needed to be defended from all kinds of destabilizing forces (Foucault, 2003).

Disciplinary power exhibits spatial and temporal dimensions. It divides space "into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed … to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits" (p. 143). Adult learners are separated into individual cubicles and study carrels, or behind individual computer terminals, working on individual projects. Examinations are taken, essays written, and graduate theses submitted, as individual acts of intellectual labor. The collective learning represented by three or four adult graduate students collaboratively writing a dissertation, or two or three adult education professors co-authoring scholarly articles, is discouraged as a plagiaristic diversion of the intellectually weak. Disciplinary power also breaks down time "into separate and adjusted threads" (p. 158) by arranging learning in a sequence of discrete stages. Training and practice are detached from each other, the curriculum is divided into elements for which predetermined amounts of time are allocated, and the timetable becomes the pivotal reference point for the organization of learners' and teachers' activities. Although he does not cite Foucault in his, Myles Horton sounds distinctly Foucaultian overtones in his critique of contemporary education: "you have things cut down to small units so you can analyze them, so you can control them, so you can have tests" (Horton, 2003, p. 225). To Horton "the traditional way of dividing up classes – arithmetic, reading, grammar, language, geography, thirty minutes, thirty minutes, thirty minutes, etc. – that serves technological ends much better than it serves educational ends" (p. 225).

A central mechanism of disciplinary power is the examination. The examination has "the triple function of showing whether the subject has reached the level required, of guaranteeing that each subject undergoes the same apprenticeship and of differentiating the abilities of each individual" (Foucault 1977a, p. 158). Those who go through a series

of examinations have their lives fixed and recorded in documents that make up "a whole meticulous archive constituted in terms of bodies and days" (p. 189). People are sorted, classified and differentiated by the examination which functions as "a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish" (p.184). When people's achievements and aptitudes are judged by the examination, then we enter "the age of examinatory justice" (p. 305) in which "the judges of normality are present everywhere" (p. 304). In other words, one's degree of normality depends on one's scores on a series of standardized tests.


**Surveillance and the Panopticon**

Why do drivers stay close to the speed limit when no highway patrol cars are to be seen? Perhaps because they assume that observing the limit ensures a safe trip. But probably the main concern is to avoid being caught speeding by unseen radar, hidden speed cameras, or unmarked police cars. We know these mechanisms of surveillance exist, and that at any time they might be trained on us. As Foucault observes, "surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action" (1977a, p. 201). We dare not risk accelerating beyond the prescribed speed because at the back of our minds there is always the risk that some hidden force will register our breach of the law. When we monitor our own conduct out of fear of being observed by an unseen, powerful gaze then the perfect mechanism of control – self-surveillance – is operating.

Self-surveillance is the most important component of disciplinary power. In a society subject to disciplinary power we discipline ourselves. There is no need for the coercive state apparatus to spend enormous amounts of time and money making sure we behave correctly since we are watching ourselves to make sure we don't step out of line. What makes us watch ourselves so assiduously is not an internal resolve to follow normal ways of thinking and acting, thereby avoiding a fall into disgrace. Instead, we watch ourselves because we sense that our attempt to stay close to the norm is itself being watched by another, all-seeing, presence. We carry within us the sense that 'out there', in some hidden, undiscoverable location, 'they' are constantly observing us. It is hard to deviate from the norm if you feel your thoughts and actions are being recorded (figuratively and sometimes literally) by cameras hidden in every corner of your life.

For Foucault "the perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly" (ibid. p. 173) and for those being surveyed to be aware that at any time they may be subject to invisible scrutiny. Think of how when we ride alone in car park or hotel elevators we make sure we look 'normal' and non-threatening to the camera lens positioned in the top corner. This form of surveillance is based on the "principle of compulsory visibility" (ibid. p. 187) which "assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them" (ibid.). In Foucault's words "it is the fact of constantly being seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in all his subjection" (ibid.). As well as being very effective in keeping people in line, self-surveillance is also cheap. Foucault is almost rhapsodic in his appreciation of the utilitarian elegance of self-surveillance:

"There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost" (1980, p. 155).

The principle of compulsory visibility is most perfectly realized in the panopticon. Designed by Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon is a prison system in which hundreds of prison cells are organized in a circle around a single tower inhabited by two or three guards. Because the cells are backlit but the tower is not, the guards can see into all the cells but the prisoners cannot see into the tower. Consequently, any single prisoner can never be sure at any particular moment that he or she is not the object of surveillance. This is "an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust" (Foucault, 1980, p. 158) in which inmates themselves are the bearers of power. The system works on the facts of the visibility of the backlit inmate and the unverifiability of the disciplinary gaze from the darkened tower; "the inmate must never know whether he is being looked on at any moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so" (Foucault, 1977a, p. 201).

In Foucault's view, the panopticon is the organizing principle of disciplinary power in contemporary society, "a technological invention in the order of power comparable with the steam engine in the order of production" (1980, p. 151). Organizations and institutions throughout society induce in people "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1977a, p. 201). In car parks, high streets, workplaces, shops, hotels, airports, malls, banks, even schools and colleges, we can see cameras trained on us. We know that somewhere in a place we can't see a security guard has an image of us on one of a bank of screens. Of course, we can never be sure this guard has chosen to look at the particularly screen containing our image, or even that the guard has not temporarily gone to the bathroom. But we can never be absolutely sure he or she is not there. Better to be safe than sorry, then, and behave as if we were being watched.

Foucault is explicit in his belief that the panopticon pervades education just as much as any other human activity. In his words "a relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency" (1977a, p. 176). Examinations, timetables, student of the month awards, gold stars, end of term reports, student workbooks and learning portfolios all combine to make learners aware that their presence within the system is being monitored constantly. An awareness of this fact by the 'lads' featured in Willis' study of English secondary education (described in chapter (3)) was so strong that they spent a good part of their lives scheming to avoid it. By finding places where they were confident of being unobserved, and by creating their own timetables of activity which had little to do with the school's functioning, they were able to reduce the effects of disciplinary time and space.

In a fascinating application of Foucault's ideas to the practice of adult education, Boshier and Wilson (1998) argue that web based courses (often thought to be learner centered, decentralized and flexible) can function in a panoptic fashion. Participation in chat room discussion is mandated and observed by the web master who creates an archival paper trail documenting the learner's activities. Boshier and Wilson quote one site where irony is used to let students know they are being observed; "our club wielding Pinkerton agents, who keep us informed about the daily activities of suspicious History 102 students, inform us that quite a few rebels decided to postpone viewing Lecture 21 for a few days" (p. 46). Students know that a meticulous and comprehensive record of the web sites they access (including even e-mail messages they send then delete) can be recreated at any time in the future. So an educational process often touted as freeing adult learners from the need to attend courses at particular physical locations and pre-set times, and praised as allowing them to set their own pace for learning, can easily replicate some of the surveillance mechanisms of the panopticon.

**Power, Knowledge and Truth**

One of the reasons Foucault's work is so interesting to educators is that it constantly illuminates the relationship between power and knowledge. Whoever is in a position of power is able to create knowledge supporting that power relationship. Whatever a society accepts as knowledge or truth inevitably ends up strengthening the power of some and limiting the power of others. Foucault repeatedly states that "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and conversely knowledge constantly induces effects of power … it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (1980, p. 52). If this is so, then one of the social institutions identified as having the prime function of creating knowledge and truth – education (including adult education) - inevitably comes under scrutiny. After all it is in educational institutions that people learn standards for determining truth and are taught whatever comprises the official knowledge (Apple, 2000) of that society.

According to Foucault knowledge is socially produced by a number of connected mechanisms. He writes that there is "an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge" (1980, p. 69) all of which combine to label some knowledge as legitimate, some as unreliable. These mechanisms determine how knowledge is accumulated by prescribing correct procedures for observing, researching and recording data, and for disseminating the results of investigations. Such mechanisms of knowledge production are really control devices and those with the greatest command of them are able to create dominant discourses and regimes of truth (two terms very much associated with Foucault).

A dominant discourse comprises a particular language and a distinctive worldview in which some things are regarded as inherently more important or true than others. A discourse is partly a set of concepts that are held in common by those participating in that discourse community. It includes rules for judging what are good or bad, acceptable or inappropriate contributions, and procedures that are applied to determine who may be

allowed to join the discourse community.  Dominant discourses inevitably reflect and support existing power structures and are vital to them.  According to Foucault, "relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.  There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourse" (p. 93).

It is rare, however, for there to be only one, all-powerful discourse in a community.  Dominant and peripheral discourses are sometimes at odds with each other and subjugated or minority discourses can occasionally hold sway in particular social enclaves.  For example, in the field of contemporary adult education there are a number of dominant discourses.  Those of human capital development, self-direction, experiential learning and liberal humanism are perhaps the most prominent.  Perusing the program brochure for the annual American Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) convention is instructive in the way the association gives prominence to these.  However, attend the annual Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) and the dominant discourses are those of critical theory and postmodernism.  In fact those participating in the discourses honored at AAACE sometimes say they feel regarded as pariahs or unsophisticates when participating in AERC discourses.

When particular discourses coincide and overlap they comprise what Foucault calls a regime of truth.  In a frequently quoted passage Foucault maintains that:

"Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true"

(1980, p. 133)

Of course, when Foucault uses the term 'truth' it is not to describe ideas or knowledge that exhibit some inherent universal accuracy or undeniable empirical correctness.  Truth is a term that describes the system that decides that certain forms of discourse should be allowed.  Hence, truth is "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (ibid.).

Foucault's writings on the connections between truth, discourse and power move us right away from thinking of knowledge as something that is pursued and produced for its own sake by energetic individuals enthusiastically dedicated to the wider edification of humankind.  Instead, knowledge becomes seen as a social product.  We start to wonder how it happens that particular writings, particular ideas and particular people emerge as important in a particular field (such as adult education).  Foucault prompts us to ask why certain adult educational books get published, why certain questions seem to come naturally to the forefront in professional conversations, how contributors to handbooks of adult education are chosen, why certain adult educational journals become more venerated than others, and how it is that certain concepts and theories come to frame the research activities of others in a field.  He encourages us to link the emergence of new

research agendas or theoretical frameworks in the field to the way these support, or at least do not challenge, the politics of truth that exist within the social or academic community of adult education.


**Power, Resistance and the Role of Adult Educators**

Up to now the regulatory dimensions of power in Foucault's work have been stressed. One danger in doing this is to slip into thinking of power as wholly repressive or constraining. Foucault is constantly on the alert for this misconception since, in his view, power does not just prevent things happening, it also "produces effects at the level of desire" (1980, p. 59). He states his argument as follows; "if power were anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that … it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (ibid. p. 119). Power must therefore be considered "as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (ibid.).

If exercising power is pleasurable, then this must apply to the exercise of disciplinary as well as sovereign power. When people take pleasure in disciplining themselves (for example when a learner completes a learning contract early and celebrates this speedy adherence to the specific requirements of the contract) we are very close to witnessing hegemony. Gramsci's idea of hegemony as the learner's willing embrace of ideas, values and practices that actually work against her freedom, is very close to Foucault's idea of the pleasurable exercise of disciplinary power. In both hegemony and disciplinary power the consent of people to these processes is paramount. They take pride in the efficiency with which they learn appropriate boundaries, avoid 'inappropriate' critique, and keep themselves in line. Both constructs emphasize learners' collusion in their own control and their feelings of satisfaction and pleasure at successfully ensuring their complete incarceration.

Another desire that power produces is a desire to resist manipulation and fight oppression. One of the most common reactions to reading Foucault on the way possibilities for surveillance are woven into all aspects of life, is to feel defeated by the omnipresence of power. It is easy to despair of ever unraveling the interwoven and shifting configurations of power and knowledge. This unrelieved pessimism is unwarranted in the light of two aspects of Foucault's work. First, there are elements in his analysis that stress the empirical inevitability of resistance. Indeed, it is his position that resistance is a necessary correlate of power so that power can only exist if the possibility of resistance exists contemporaneously. He writes "in the relations of power, there is of necessity the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance – of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation – there would be no relations of power" (Foucault, 1987, p. 12). Although dominant discourses and regimes of truth insert themselves into the most detailed elements of our daily thoughts and behaviors, he also believes these can be countered at these points of

insertion. Second, Foucault's own life illustrated how citizens could intervene as activists to effect change with regard to specific causes. Let me examine these two aspects, dealing first with the possibility of resistance.

According to Foucault, resistance is so central to power relations that it constitutes a plausible starting point for the analysis of power; "in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissasociate these relations" (Foucault 1982, p. 211). Power always implies the possibility of resistance. Hence, "at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom" (ibid. p. 225). Foucault argued it was mistaken to think that the omnipresence of power meant that people were pawns in some larger game of chess devised by the dominant group. In his view "to say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what" (1980, p. 142). Power and resistance are contemporaneous, one always exists as the flip side of the other; "there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations are exercised" (ibid.). In one of his interviews he contends that "all my analyses …. Show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made" (Foucault, 1988, p. 11).

So even as he illustrates dramatically the all-pervasive nature of power and dominant discourses, Foucault holds out the promise of resistance. If power relations are ubiquitous so is freedom: "if there are relations of power throughout every social field it is because there is freedom everywhere" (Foucault, 1987, p. 12). Clearly, then, in Foucault's view resistance to the exercise of power is a predictable certainty. In his words, "there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight (because) every power relationship implies … a strategy of struggle" (1982, p. 225). Moreover, the switch from monolithic sovereign power to splintered disciplinary power sometimes makes resistance seem more feasible to activists who can work at the local level on specific projects. Resistance "exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies" (ibid.). The fact that overthrowing the state, reversing the history of patrirachy, or ending racism are not the only options for those resisting power opens up the possibility of smaller scale acts of opposition. A good example of this is Angela Davis' analysis, based mostly on her own experience of incarceration, of the ways in which prisons (set up as instruments of social control) produce their own points of resistance. Because many prison guards come from the same social group as prisoners they assist in smuggling in messages and contraband articles from outside, and allow prohibited conversation between prisoners. If convicts realize the arbitrary nature of their incarceration they are sometimes transformed into militant adult educators engaged in "patient educational efforts in the realm of exposing the specific oppressive structures of the penal system in their relation to the larger oppression of the social system" (Davis, 1971a, p. 26).

It is also the case that the effects of power relations are often unpredictable and contradictory, unintentionally generating possibilities for resistance. Foucault maintained that wherever dominant discourses and regimes of truth exist "there are always also movements in the opposite direction, whereby strategies which coordinate relations of power produce new effects and advance into hitherto unaffected domains" (1980, p. 200). As an example of this consider how the world wide web has allowed oppositional groups to organize effectively, or how hackers have been able to wreak havoc in the world of international business by their interventions.

So the advent of disciplinary power does not snuff out opposition or smooth over conflict. On the contrary, its workings allow for "innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles and of an at least temporary inversion of power relations" (Foucault, 1977a, p. 26). Just as disciplinary power exerts pressure on people, so "they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them" (ibid.). This form of control does not produce a society hermetically sealed against incursions. There are always hairline cracks in the foundation stones of social order. It is to the widening of these cracks (particularly where penal reform was concerned) that Foucault devoted much of his energy.

As biographies such as Macey's (1993), Miller's (1993) and Eribon's (1991) demonstrate, Foucault was constantly involved in campaigns directed towards exposing the mechanisms of control that lay behind a range of human service operations, particularly those contained within the penal system. His life exemplified his belief that intellectuals are not passive, detached observers and recorders of culture and society. What observation they do conduct should be undertaken, in Foucault's view, to illuminate for others the specific mechanisms and strategies that those in power use to maintain existing systems. Specifically, intellectuals are to provide instruments of analysis that would help others locate lines of strength and weakness in power configurations. The role of theory is "to analyze the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, p. 145). Building on his contention that politics is war conducted by other means (a deliberate inversion of Clauzewitz's dictum that war is politics conducted by other means) Foucault hoped that intellectuals would produce "a topographical and geographical survey of the battlefield" (ibid. p. 62) comprising power relations. In this way Foucault echoes Gramsci on the practical uses of theory in the struggle against power: "in this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice" (Foucault, 1996, p. 75).

In describing this activity Foucault comes close to invoking Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals as educators, persuaders and activists working within specific social movements of which they are members. Foucault declared that "a new mode of the 'connection between theory and practice' has been established. Intellectuals have got used to working … within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them" (1980, p. 126). He re-conceptualizes theorizing as a local and regional "struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is invisible and insidious" (1977b, p. 208). Any analysis of

power that theorists undertake should be understood as an act of solidarity with those who struggle against it, a contribution to a some kind of specific social, cultural or political intervention. Drawing a topographical map of power's operation is "an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance" (ibid.). The purpose of illuminating exactly how power works in obscure and hidden ways to uphold the status quo is "to sap power, to take power" (ibid.).

So, instead of working on behalf of massive constructs such as humanity, the working class, women, the oppressed, or a broad social movement, educators could fruitfully direct their energies towards specific projects. Educational reforms, teaching practices, housing policies, psychiatric protocols, prison organization all offered opportunities for intellectuals to intervene in ways that contravened dominant power. In Foucault's case this involved him working for penal reform through the Prison Information Group, joining the Jaubert commission to investigate the arrest and beating of the science journalist, Alain Jaubert, and being arrested himself at many demonstrations supporting prison hunger strikers, North African immigrants and Klaus Croissant (a German lawyer who defended the Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang). He helped establish the socialist newspaper *Liberation* and refused to meet then President of France Valery Giscard d'Estaing if he (Foucault) was not allowed to raise the case of Christian Ranucci who had been guillotined for murder. He also worked on causes outside France by publicizing the struggles of Soviet dissidents, supporting the 'Boat for Vietnam' committee to provide relief for Vietnamese boat people, and joining a convoy to take supplies to Warsaw during the struggle of the Solidarity movement to challenge the legitimacy of the Soviet installed Polish regime. Foucault lived his belief that "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice" (1982, p. 208).

## Foucault and Adult Learning Practices

What can we draw from Foucault's work where building a critical theory of adult learning is concerned? Perhaps the overriding insight is the need to study how adults learn to recognize that they are themselves agents of power, perpetually channeling disciplinary power, but also possessing the capacity to subvert dominant power relations. Many adults (including many adult educators) either maintain that they have no power over others, or that they can choose when, and when not, to exercise it. Foucault views such confidence with amusement. He sketches out a theory of power as a circular flow that draws all into its currents. Choosing whether or not to exercise power is, in his eyes, an illusion. In reality we are fated to exercise power. If we accept the view that exercising power is unavoidable, then a critical theory of adult learning would study how it is that adults become aware of that fact, and what happens to them when they do. More specifically, such a theory would have as a prime purpose the critical analysis of adult educational practices that purport either to be power-free, or that attempt to democratize power.

Using Foucault's technique of ascending analysis, it is revealing to examine common adult educational practices that are celebrated for their intent to involve all participants

equally. We do not need Foucault to help us recognize the exercise of sovereign power in adult education. This is seen in the lecturer who treats a group of adults as if they were 10 year olds, allowing few questions and no unauthorized interruptions; the instructor who tells adults students they will drop a whole letter grade each time they are late for class; the teacher who tells an adult student (herself a mother) that because she missed a class she must bring a note from her aging father excusing her absence. This kind of sovereign power is easily detected and usually discredited by those within the field who see themselves as 'true' adult educators, dedicated to empowering learners in a respectful way. What Foucault helps us recognize is that another more subtle form of power - disciplinary power - is often present in practices that are usually thought of as democratic and participatory.

The circle and the accreditation of prior learning are two examples of student-centered adult education that have already been mentioned as sometimes embodying disciplinary power. Other prime candidates for the label of power-free practices might be the use of learning journals (introduced to honor adults' experiences and help them develop their own voices), the use of learning contracts (designed to cede to adults the power to choose, design and evaluate their learning) and teaching through discussion (intended to avoid the tendency of adult educators to move to center stage as didactic transmitters of content in the classroom). Each of these practices appears to avoid the reproduction of dominant power and to constitute the "temporary inversion of power relations" (1977a, p. 26) Foucault predicts. Yet, even as these practices are celebrated for their emancipatory intent and spirit of self-actualization, we can apply Foucault's ideas to generate a very different perspective on them.

Individualizing instruction via learning journals and learning contracts can be interpreted as an instance of disciplinary power that helps the system "be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess to, to judge it, to calculate its qualities and merits" (Foycault, 1977a, p. 143). Through learning contracts adult learners become their own overseers. They set criteria for judging the worth of any work they produce, and they also set a timetable for the achievement of their contract's specified objectives. Good adult students devote themselves to producing proper examples of the specified work on time, and hold themselves accountable to meet the conditions of the contract to the best of their abilities. To use a term introduced earlier in the book, the contract becomes reified and assumes an identity and presence separate from the intents that framed it. As a controlling influence hovering over learners, it directs many of their actions.

Learning journals also lend themselves to becoming instruments of surveillance. After all, they could arguably be said to be based on "knowing the inside of people's minds" (Foucault, 1982, p. 214) since their explicit intent is to externalize people's innermost reflections. A norm of 'transformativity' often hovers in the background to direct the way such journals are written. Learners who sense that their teacher is a strong advocate of experiential methods may pick up the implicit message that good journals reveal dramatic, private episodes that lead to transformative insights. Adults who don't have anything painful, traumatic or exciting to confess can easily feel that their journal is not

quite what the teacher ordered, that it strays too far from this transformative norm. Not being able to produce revelations of sufficient intensity they may decide to invent some. Or, they may start to paint a quite ordinary experience with a sheen of transformative significance. A lack of dramatic experiences or insights to relate may be perceived by students as a sign of failure - an indication that their lives are somehow incomplete and lived at a level that is insufficiently self-aware or exciting. The idea of transformativity thus constitutes a hidden, but powerful, norm for journal writing that is enforced by the 'judges of normality' (Foucault, 1977a, p. 304); that is, by the teachers who read and grade these journals.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, discussion as a way of learning is often experienced by learners as a sort of performance theater, a situation in which their acting is also watched by the judges of normality. These judges (the discussion leaders) monitor the extent to which adults are participating in the conversation in a suitable manner. Foucault argues that "the universal reign of the normative" (ibid.) means that each person "subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements" (ibid.). Many adult discussion groups are certainly influenced by an unexpressed but influential norm of what constitutes good discussion. This norm holds that in the best discussions everyone speaks intelligently and articulately for roughly equal amounts of time and all conversation is focused on the topic at hand. Silence is rare. Conversation focuses only on relevant issues with a suitably sophisticated level of discourse. Talk flows scintillatingly and seamlessly from topic to topic. Everyone listens attentively and respectfully to everyone else's contributions. People make their comments in a way that is informed, thoughtful, insightful and unfailingly courteous. The Algonquin round table or a Bloomsbury dinner party are the exemplars the norm implies, and the one towards which learners and leaders direct their discussion performances.

Discussion leaders as judges of normality overtly reinforce the power of this norm by establishing criteria for participation that operationalize the norm's rules of conduct. Assigning part of a grade for 'participation', without defining what participation means, activates the norm's influence over participants. Learners immediately interpret participation as doing their best to exemplify this norm. They carefully rehearse stunningly insightful contributions that will make them sound like Cornel West or Gertrude Stein. The norm is covertly reinforced by discussion teachers deploying a range of subtle, non-verbal behaviors that signify approval or disapproval of participants' efforts to exemplify the norm. Through nods, frowns, eye contact (or the lack of it), sighs of frustration or pity, grunts of agreement, disbelieving intakes of breath at the obvious stupidity of a particular comment, and a wide range of other gestures, discussion leaders communicate to the group when they are close to, or moving away from, the norm. Unless discussion leaders redefine criteria for discussion participation to challenge this norm, adult learners will work assiduously to gear their behavior towards its realization.

This chapter has argued that Foucault's analysis of power is squarely in the critical tradition despite the belief of some that Foucault is really a postmodernist who challenges the enlightenment foundations of criticality. Reading Foucault helps us understand how apparently liberatory practices can actually work subtly to perpetuate existing power

relations. He cautions adult educators who pride themselves on their participatory approaches that they can inadvertently reinforce the discriminatory practices they seek to challenge. Foucault undermines adult educators' confidence that the world can be divided into good guys (democratic adult educators who subvert dominant power through experiential, dialogic practices) and bad guys (behaviorally inclined trainers who reproduce dominant ideology and practices by forcing corporate agendas on adult learners). If the Gramscian approach to adult education explored in the previous chapter helps us name the enemy, a Foucaultian approach makes us aware that the enemy is sometimes ourselves.