
Editorial Introduction

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Reading Michel Foucault is not a simple act of digestion. It requires immense labor, reflection, questioning and thought. One can literally feel the bedrock of their ideas shift beneath them or be stuck at an impassable juncture, confused and doubtful. We have heard stories of people who, out of frustration, throw Foucault's books against the wall, and remember an academic conference where his name was brought up in jest and the audience booed in response. Eyes rolling, heads shaking in disgust. It is uncanny, but there is something peculiar about Foucault that elicits such strong and contradictory emotions -- irritation at his directness, adoration for his depth, and searing critique at his gaps and avoidances. What is it about Foucault that makes us so emotional?

For one, Foucault's theoretical and genealogical oeuvre has led to transformative and controversial ways of thinking about power, truth, and the governing of society. For many of us, our initial conceptions of power solidified a model in which power is contained, owned and held by the ruling classes who because of their power exercised domination over others -- the exploited, the racialized, the working class, the colonized. In tow, resistance then required an elevation of consciousness that led to organized revolt with the aim of toppling

those at the upper rungs of society. Foucault, however, challenged this conception: he saw power as not only fluid, but constantly produced through the making of knowledge, a kind of subjectless understanding of how power circulated with the force of beliefs, values, and the micro and macro effects of policy and law. Such power is not an entity to be owned or wielded by a person, but instead carries the productive capacity to govern a person and the way they recognize and relate to themselves and others. This, in and of itself, upends the traditional ways we have come to see power as something that oppresses and must be overcome. There is no escape from the productive force of power, he tells us, and for many, this is a nihilistic and tragic approach to life.

For others, his theory of power pushes us to deeply investigate how we are conditioned to accept particular truths in society, and this is precisely the place in which power and resistance come alive. Certainly, his ideas took significant turns across his lifetime of writing and lecturing, so any use of his work should be explicit about their theoretical anchoring. From surveillance and panopticism, to biopolitics and governmentality, to care of self and practices of freedom, Foucault's trajectory leads us through unique ways of linking the particulars of our subjectivity to the grand realms of discourse and meaning-making, all with concerted effort to see resistance as both an analysis into how strategies of power work and the possibility of refusing domination in ways that are affirming to self and thus others.

Each of the authors featured in this special issue took up the challenge of using Foucault to examine a range of aspects in education. Grappling with the concepts, ideas, and methodologies offered by this provocative thinker, they each sought to examine concerns over curriculum, pedagogy, and resistance to the intolerable injustices of modern society. Foucault argued that deep theoretical thinking should always be in the service of understanding how we live in the present world, including what we take for granted and the circulation of knowledge that makes what we know, think, and feel seem self-evidently true. This, however, should not be a task one pursues alone.

As a unique process behind this special issue, we paired each graduate student author with an esteemed scholar in the field, asking them to not only exchange reviews of their manuscripts, but to meet once to talk through their ideas and uses of Foucault. We are deeply indebted to the extreme generosity of our reviewers, and authors shared their gratitude for the reviewers who provided extensive and supportive feedback. We would like to give a big thanks to our reviewers:

Dr. Jennifer Bondy, Virginia Tech
Dr. David Kupferman, Minnesota State University,
Moorhead
Dr. Alyssa Niccolini, Independent Scholar
Dr. Chloe Taylor, University of Alberta
Dr. Lanny Thompson, University of Puerto Rico
Dr. Sarah E. Truman, University of Melbourne

Our first set of articles draw on Foucault's understanding of power and knowledge as co-constituted: power works through the circulation of discourses that produce what is possible for us to know, think, do, or be within and beyond educational contexts.

In her article, "**Liberal Humanism, Social Science, and the Discursive Legacy of the 'Human' in English Education,**" Karen Zaino historicizes debates around English education in the United States in order to better understand the historical contingencies that have shaped English education. Interested in the systems of power/knowledge that have structured English education across time, she suggests that the debate between so-called traditionalists and reformers in English education is one between those invested in two different systems of power/knowledge: *liberal humanism* and *social science*, both of which emerged from the same conditions of possibility, the violence of colonialism and enslavement.

Meanwhile, Jane Quinn explores the biopolitical regulation of sexuality in schools by examining the fascinating history of sex education in the United States. Her article, "**Using Foucault to Examine Current U.S. Sex Education Policy,**" focuses on the current national sex education policy of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage (AOUM), a policy that requires federal grantees to provide a very limited perspective on the topic of human sexuality. She draws on Foucault to surface the historical discourses that have shaped the genesis and endurance of this policy for the last 25 years.

Jennifer Dauphinais examines the disciplinary power of the social-emotional learning movement in forming mindful subjects in her article "**Mindful Subjects: The Disciplinary Power of Mindfulness in Schools.**" Mindfulness has played a specific role in the social and emotional intervention of youth who are labeled "at-risk." Using a theoretical framework of Foucault's theories of power and biopolitics, this essay article offers a discussion of public desires for social correction and the role of the teacher-student power relationship in this process.

Our second set of articles continues the thread of knowledge and subject-making, but couples Foucault

with other theories on racialization to focus on surveillance, counter-conduct, and practices of freedom

In "**The Physics of Power: Stories of Panopticism at Two Levels of the School System,**" Noah Jefferson and Margaret Smith-Peterson work with the concept of panopticism to explore experiences at both the classroom and district levels. While Noah relates panopticism to specific behavior management practices, Margaret relates hierarchical networks and panopticism to surveillance at the district level. Given Foucault's underdeveloped focus on race, they couple Foucault with Simone Browne's concept of *racializing surveillance*, engaging a more racially conscious analysis of school systems and at its end, demonstrate how acts of surveillance have been co-opted by students and parents who unsettle the traditional ways that surveillance has functioned as a mechanism of control.

In "**Stitching Together More Expansive Latinx Teacher Self/ves: Movidas of Rasquache and Spaces of Counter-Conduct in El Sur Latinx,**" Timothy Monreal analyzes the narratives of three Latinx K-12 educators in the state of South Carolina through Foucault's concept of (counter)conduct and the Chicana concept of *rasquache*, bringing a Foucauldian understanding of subjectivity and space into conversation with Chicana thought. *Movidas* of *rasquache* are intentional and gendered acts of resourcefulness, scrappiness, and inventiveness, spaces that expand subjectivities and resist the limiting discourses of racialization and professionalism.

In her article, "**[Re]imagining Puerto Rican Liberation,**" Daicy Diaz examines the complexities of Puerto Rico's unique history by examining colonial domination in the areas of education and healthcare and the possibilities of a collective liberation built on deliberate practices of freedom. By interrogating power/knowledge and governmentality as they relate to the Puerto Rican colonial experience, she traces the historical development of major institutions in order to surface some of the complex networks of systems that shape the colonial subject. Yet, she points out that one is never absolutely determined by the discourses that shape them and that the possibilities for a collective liberation can unfold in a variety of ways, and indeed are unfolding in Puerto Rico every day.

To close out the issue, we have included a wonderful book review by doctoral students Rafaan Daliri-Ngametua and Madeline Good. They take us through the chapters of *Data Feminism* by Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein (MIT Press).

Together, the articles in this special issue showcase the enduring relevance of Foucault in educational theory, research, and practice. While encounters with Foucault can be frustrating, as he reveals the constructedness and contingencies of even our most foundational assumptions, there is, ultimately, a freedom in recognizing that the ground beneath us is never solid. It is not an easy freedom--it is, indeed, deeply unsettling--but with it comes the continual reminder that there are always ways of doing, thinking, and being beyond what feels possible.