Michel Foucault Goes Outside: Discipline and Control in the Practice of Outdoor Education

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This paper is concerned with if, and how, measures of discipline and control are involved in outdoor and experiential education. Using the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, author of Discipline and Punish (1975), we shall explore how educational practice may be used to control people and to render them into "docile bodies." We follow this with an examination of what Foucault calls the three means of correct training used for the creation and maintenance of docile bodies: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and examination. Through the use of examples we will proceed to argue that outdoor and experiential education programs do exercise mechanisms of control that may at times operate contrary to purported goals. Thus, using Foucault as our guide, we examine the question of discipline and control, together with the concomitant issue of the relations of power within our society. While recognizing that discipline and control are, at times, necessary and desirable, we will argue that outdoor and experiential educators should understand how negative relations of power operate so that they may avoid unwittingly incorporating them into their practices and programs.

Keywords: Outdoor and Experiential Education, Foucault, Power, Discipline, Control

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In this paper we claim that outdoor and experiential education (OEE), in its many facets, involves measures of discipline and control as elaborated by Michel Foucault. We shall explore Foucault's concept of discipline in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975), while focusing on how it may be used to control people and to render them "docile bodies," which are more productively educatable. This is not a project that seeks to universalize the pedagogy of OEE or the experiences of students, nor are we claiming that Foucault's discussion is necessarily correct. Our hope is to have OEE educators engage with Foucault, better understand the educational repercussions of his theory-building, and use the tools he offers as a means of considering and possibly changing their teaching practice. If, as Zink and Burrows (2006) suggest, Foucault understands power as being both productive and repressive, while also being inescapable within the human context, what might this mean for a practice ostensibly committed to justice and student emancipation?

We shall begin by clarifying what Foucault means by power and docile bodies, and then explore his three means of correct training: hierarchical observations, normalizing judgments, and examinations, which are used in the creation and maintenance of these docile bodies. To support these discussions we will explore examples from both OEE and public school systems. Finally, we will discuss how OEE programs might indeed exercise mechanisms of control, while allowing individual educators to consider their own particular practice.

Power and the Docile Body

For Foucault power does not represent something an institution or an individual has or wields. It is a fundamental and unavoidable part of social interaction.

I hardly ever use the word "power," and if I do sometimes, it is always a short cut to the expression I always use: the relationships of power. But there are ready made patterns: when one speaks of "power," people think immediately of a political structure, a government, a dominant social class, the master facing the slave, and so on. That is not at all what I think when I speak of "relationships of power." I mean that in human relations, what-

¹ Public school examples are used to highlight Foucault's discussion, one aimed more at institutions than at OEE.

ever they are—whether it be a question of communicating verbally, as we are doing right now, or a question of a love relationship, an institutional or economic relationship—power is always present. (Foucault, 1988, p. 11)

As shown in this quote, Foucault believes that power enters all human relationships—particularly those, like education, in which one individual attempts to direct the behavior of another. Yet he breaks with traditional power discussions because, for Foucault, power is not situated in a particular person but is manifest in the particularities of any given relationship. For example, it is often assumed that power is present in any educational relationship, and yet Foucault would hesitate to situate that power solely with the educator, or to assume that power is present in the same way in every context. It would certainly be the case in OEE that the educator with years of wilderness expertise or extensive therapeutic training might be in a position to exert power and influence. But factors such as age, gender, ethnic background, social status, emotional needs, and even the particulars of any given moment also affect the relationship between student and educator. According to Foucault, power is neither static nor located within the individual; it is a dynamic mechanism in search of its own survival.

For Foucault, there are no strategists to be identified behind the strategies—no one occupies the place of the Other. Nevertheless, it is in the name of the Other that identities are formed; by questioning the provenance of the forces that control an individual's life, Foucault calls into question the accepted patterns of individualization. (Racevskis, 1988, p. 31)

Ultimately, regardless of the context or the individuals involved, Foucault believed that power is always present.

Foucault expands discussions of power relations through the concept of the docile body. In any relationship where one individual is attempting to influence or modify another's behavior, Foucault believes that success, as defined by the influencer, depends upon the docility of the subject. Thus, the productive, educational relationship—one in which the student learns successfully—requires the activity of some measures of power and discipline. The effect of discipline is to increase the usefulness of bodies (i.e., increase the ability of individuals to learn while decreasing their ability resist). Power, Foucault claims, wants this process to work with minimal challenge.

Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and

diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude," a "capacity," which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (Foucault, 1975, p. 138)

This quotation shows the connection Foucault is making between utility, return on investment (e.g., learning), and the presence of a docile body. For example, the need for higher education and the creation of a dependence on that system requires the docile acceptance by people: first, to imbue the notion itself with value, and second, to allow for the creation of elaborate structures and impressive institutions, which in turn operate to sustain the need.

It is important to note that Foucault did not assume that the exercise of discipline to produce docility and increase utility was always negative. Relationships of power have the potential to be abused and oppressive when serving to maintain docility while not increasing utility, but when docility leads to increased utility (e.g., enhanced learning), it is difficult to argue that the result is necessarily bad. Indeed, Foucault proposes that, concurrent with the use of power to increase utility and docility, there can be an accompanying sense that this will benefit the individuals involved.

Let us take the simple example of the "Leap of Life" challenge course element and the use of a group belay. It evidently furthers the educational aim if the students on the belay quietly follow instructions and stay alert throughout the activity: The climber stays safe, the activity progresses, and there is the potential for a rich experience that would likely be diminished if the belay team were in need of constant management. Questioning the activity, disagreeing with the systems, or exhibiting an active unwillingness to follow instructions or to participate would lower the quality of everyone's experience and reduce the possibility of arriving at the desired learning outcomes. Foucault's argument that docility leads to greater utility makes eminent sense in this case.

There is no doubt that Foucault's notion of utility may appear highly questionable when considered in the context of oppression. It is pertinent to ask who defines utility or success in any given situation; however, dilemmas such as this are exactly what Foucault's theory addresses. If power begets docility in every social relationship, then educators need to be aware of how it manifests itself and operates from moment to moment in the educational setting. Foucault describes the challenge thus:

Let us also take something that has been the object of criticism, often justified: the pedagogical institution. I don't see where evil is in the practice of someone who, in a given game of truth, knowing more than another, tells him what he must do, teaches him, transmits knowledge to him, communicates skills to him. The problem is rather to know how you are to avoid in these practices—where power cannot not play and where it is not evil in itself—the effects of domination which will make a child subject to the arbitrary and useless authority of a teacher, or put a student under the power of an abusive authoritarian professor, and so forth. (Foucault, 1988, p. 18)

It is not enough to simply assume that power structures do not exist in the realm of outdoor education. Foucault's ideas highlight the importance of understanding how power and discipline are at work in OEE contexts so that they are not inadvertently misused, or more to Foucault's point, so that the educator does not inadvertently become a vehicle of hegemonic power relations.

The Means of Correct Training: A Framework for Constructing Docile Bodies

Foucault separated the means of correct training into three components: (a) hierarchical observation, (b) normalizing judgments, and (c) examination. Each contributes to his notion of disciplinary control, and each may be illustrated by examples from our public schools. We shall argue that each component functions in the theory and practice of outdoor education, though they may manifest differently in OEE than in mainstream public education.

Hierarchical Observation

In Foucault's words, hierarchical observation "coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power" (Foucault, 1975, p. 170). In order to maintain discipline that leads to both docility and utility, there must be constant observation. Ideally, the goal is to have a situation whereby one individual is able to observe many others. Foucault uses the example of the arrangement of a military camp, where tents are pitched in rows in front of the commanding officer's tent, so that she or he can oversee all activities in the camp. This is like the traditional classroom, where the teacher's desk is faced by rows of student desks. Although not every classroom resembles this traditional form, it is still common, and other designs, circles or learning hubs, do not necessarily affect the potential for continual surveillance. Indeed, it is essential that those observed believe that they are being watched at all times and, preferably, by an unseen observer. The purpose of this arrangement, rather like Santa

Claus, is to persuade the observed to self-monitor, to police their own docility, because they do not know when they are being watched.

An interesting and contemporary example of hierarchical observation is that of a school built during the last wave of innovation in school design.² The school is built in pods around a central hub such as the library, and separated only by walls of glass. If one stands at the door to the principal's office, one can see into every nook and cranny of the building; supervision, or constant observation, is built into the very structure of the school. Thus, even within a progressive, open concept of education, hierarchical observation is implanted. Students are observed by teachers, who are observed by principals, who are watched in turn by school boards, which fall under the jurisdiction of provincial or state departments of education. From this framework, a hierarchy of observation is created to maintain power and ensure docile bodies and increased utility at all levels.

We believe the same can be said for OEE. First, many programs have multiple levels of supervision and built-in ongoing feedback loops whereby the more senior members observe the less experienced. Second, certification systems, from individual skills through program evaluations and on to degree-granting institutions, act as gatekeepers and gain credibility as individuals with those certificates confirm their necessity. Third, all programs have their structures: explicit and implicit rules (Emo, 2008),³ regularized routines, or a conscious setting of boundaries within which participants may move both physically and emotionally. Fourth, there is often a much reduced student-teacher ratio and a closer, more intensive interaction between teacher and student to ensure the safety of the students.

Like the open school design, the circle, the ongoing feedback, or the focus on safety are examples of how Foucault understands power operating within social relations, and why he concludes that it is not necessarily negative. Indeed, power, as hierarchical observation, allows students to have successful and safe experiences. Nevertheless, outdoor educators need to recognize that they are functioning within relationships of power that are dynamic, potentially harmful, and certainly involve surveillance. This awareness may allow several things to occur for outdoor educators. For example, they might suspend surveillance during some portion of the program, such as the student-led portion of a long expedition, thereby withdrawing deliberately from their supervisory role. Or the educator might engage the students in a discussion of surveillance—what it is,

² This school, in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada, was built during the mid-1990s when there was money for public schools and an interest in more open-design-style classrooms.

³ Emo (2008) offers a compelling discussion with regard to how rules shape the learnings, the priorities, the actions, and potentially even the culture of students engaged in 4-H clubs.

how it works, and why it is both useful and dangerous. This awareness provides the students with the opportunity to reflect upon the kinds of surveillance that they feel are important to their own learning, as well as to consider when surveillance might be unnecessary or even oppressive.

Normalizing Judgments

Foucault claims that, in order to maintain disciplinary control, institutions must create a system that not only individualizes and makes docile bodies, but also prescribes what is understood as acceptable. Deviation from the acceptable is problematic, even disruptive, and "the whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable" (Foucault, 1975, p. 178). Foucault is describing here the process whereby norms are established and then learned and adopted by individuals, and these norms become the standard against which the individual is judged. In the context of mainstream schooling, one way of normalizing judgment is to organize and document observed deficiencies in students; those who fall behind their classmates in terms of academic performance are judged according to a particular set of norms. The result is a system quickly able to sort individuals into categories and to determine each individual's potential.

Another example that Foucault sees as an essential part of discipline is a system of reward and punishment that "marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes" (Foucault, 1975, p. 181). For Foucault the art of punishing is "the perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant . . . compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes" (p. 183). Here it should be noted that language of standards and expectations is part and parcel of this process. When outdoor educators gather to standardize the field or create curricula that meet expectations, these discussions and decisions are creating norms against which all students, instructors, or programs will be judged. This is part of the process of constructing what might be understood to be the "field" of OEE. But as many researchers have pointed out (e.g., Barrett, 2006; Brookes, 2002; Rea, 2008), all construction involves the gathering of materials which themselves were shaped in other sociocultural contexts, and which bear with them the imprint of those influences.4

This concept of norming is often built into the fabric of OEE. Basic presuppositions of therapeutic OEE related to the importance of the change of environment, context, and even people encountered suggest that individuals are interactively related to their environments and might become different people should the expectations, pressures, norms, and external judgment change. Discussions regarding how

⁴ Rea (2008) explores how neo-Hahnian theory and concepts such as effectiveness and character building drawn from mainstream education have played a role in shaping OEE in particular directions.

groups come together, or the creation of full-value contracts, or even a particular focus on participation and safety are mechanisms used in OEE to help construct groups, and they involve judgments made by OEE educators as to what kinds of behavior and ideas are sanctioned and not sanctioned within this newly forming culture. Questions of how success or failure are understood, of what might be done differently next time, and of whether all members feel empowered or engaged, involved or heard might all be part of this group-normalizing process. Even the idea of group, a concept so central to OEE, becomes a mechanism in the actual creation of the group by defining the parameters of how we construct and understand this relation. Thus, a set of assumptions about how a group is formed and functions is part of a normalizing process that can effectively control the individuals brought together in each different OEE experience.

Another example of normalization is found in the debriefing process. When instructors provide students time to reflect on their experience, there are a thousand subtle clues indicating underlying normalizing judgments: the kinds of questions asked, the notion that debriefing is important, a nod of the head, or the ubiquitous "Awesome!" and "Nice!" when a student describes an acceptable action or insight, while quickly sliding over a suggestion deemed tangential or troublesome. Acceptable behavior in an outdoor program may be different from that in the public school classroom, but the mechanisms of control may not vary that much. The success of the high-functioning group may be attributed to each member's acceptance of norms established by the group (and, perhaps, the program), and also to fear of the consequences of nonconformity, which in an outdoor setting might be seen by the participant to be quite dire. By focusing on the group rather than the individual, outdoor education may be able to shift the emphasis of normalizing judgment but not abandon it. If normalizing judgments are indeed an integral part of outdoor education, then instructors be should be aware of what norms are at play and how they are being applied, and they should ask themselves whether those judgments are being used to promote learning goals, or whether they may unwittingly reflect norms extraneous to program aims and detrimental to students' experiences.

The Examination

The final element of Foucault's means of correct training is the examination. The examination both confirms students are under scrutiny and establishes a normalizing judgment on their actions or abilities. Foucault (1975) noted how power is exercised through the examination, which creates a field of documentation that could be used for comparison and further employed to determine one's rank within a group: "The ex-

amination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment" (p. 184).

Standardized tests in mainstream education provide an easy example. Not only do standardized tests let all students, teachers, and schools know that they are under observation, but they also provide a system-wide ranking. Because students generally never see the corrected test, the function of these tests is to position students within the system and to remind them that they are being observed. This creates the docile body through pressures to measure up to peers and through apprehensions created as to the potential ramifications of any results, particularly poor ones.

OEE as "a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill and value from direct experience" (Association for Experiential Education, 1994, p. 1) or as "learning by doing with reflection" (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. 16) might appear to have avoided the examination altogether. Students engage in activities in order to gain experience prior to the critical reflection stage of their learning, where the greatest contribution to their understanding occurs. For example, in a typical wilderness first-aid course, students practice providing care to a patient. Afterward the instructor gathers the students together for the debriefing session where their experience is discussed critically, thus reinforcing content knowledge. It is at this stage that students internalize the new information; but, in fact, this is an examination. The procedure of question and answer and the affirmative or negative responses of the instructor, however disguised, perform the same function as the school test.

Other examples of tests used in OEE programs are those associated with skills, such as successfully completing a "solo" experience, performing white-water paddling, demonstrating appropriate river-crossing techniques, or teaching a newly designed lesson. Yet another example, as discussed previously and explored more thoroughly by Brown (2004), is the ubiquitous use of the circle.⁵ Again, Foucault's point is not that the examination is bad or good but, because the examination is going to be present in all educational relationships, we should know how it manifests itself in OEE. Are OEE educators deceiving themselves as to its presence or using procedures that might impair their own or their students' learning?

Discussion of Foucault's (1975) three principal means of correct training—hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and examination—has demonstrated how each occurs in OEE, and how this might

⁵ Brown (2004) has an intriguing discussion of the role the circle plays as a form of direct instruction that gives priority to the seemingly benevolent guide's interpretation of the students' experiences. This forms a means of observation while simultaneously normalizing particular ways of being, acting, and experiencing for the group.

pose a problem for those who see themselves as proponents of freedom and self-determination and who are averse to the use of discipline or the creation of docile bodies. Foucault's argument is that the effect of discipline is to increase the utility of bodies while decreasing the ability of these bodies to resist. Thus, if an institution exerts less disciplinary control, there will be a corresponding decrease in utility; in the case of teaching, this would mean diminished student learning. If the goal of learning is student emancipation, why not maximize docility in order to succeed? We can certainly imagine situations in which students are given free reign to pursue whatever activities or ideas they wish (i.e., a situation with little discipline or docility, and in which no learning occurs). Without the direction and structure provided by an instructor, there is the potential for students to engage in activities that are already familiar and are of no educational value, that are quite simply unsafe, or where no reflection occurs. But OEE educators believe that they are effectively promoting learning, which indicates, if Foucault is to be believed, that mechanisms of disciplinary control do underlie their practice.

Imprisonment: Upon Closer Examination

The single experience which was always at the source of [Foucault's] thought was the reality of imprisonment, the incarceration of human beings within modern systems of thought and practice which had become so intimately a part of them that they no longer experienced these systems as a series of confinements but embraced them as the very structure of being human. (Bernauer, 1988, p. 45)

Although Foucault recognized that, historically, discipline was used to subjugate, he argues that now our society has progressed from the control mechanism of physical imprisonment to that of imprisoning the mind. Indeed, not only are we imprisoned by "systems of thoughts and practice," but we have adopted them and become so blind to our own role in the creation of those systems that we have become our own jailers.

He [sic] who is subjected to a field of visibility, and knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he [sic] makes them play spontaneously upon himself [sic]; he [sic] inscribes in himself [sic] the power relation in which he [sic] simultaneously plays both roles; he [sic] becomes the principle of his [sic] own subjection. (Foucault, 1975, p. 202)

Following Foucault, research by Zink and Burrows (2006), Brookes (2002), and Barrett (2006) pose the question as to whether outdoor educators have, consciously or unconsciously, created and consolidated power structures throughout their programs, structures into which students are acculturated. These are questions that deserve continuous attention as OEE educators make decisions with regard to the learning they are planning and directing.

Typically, building on their own valued experience, outdoor instructors develop programs that are modeled on learning experiences that they themselves have found to be transformative. The excitement they experienced from the sense of change within themselves is what prompts them to share it with others; yet in attempting to reproduce that earlier experience, instructors inevitably transform it because they are no longer themselves students in the wilderness for the first time. Hence, they bring to the situation a history, an anticipated outcome, an emotional weight, and a personal attachment that can predetermine norms and color judgments, thereby altering the experience and their students' learning. For example, an instructor may have been so affected by a particular place that he or she develops a program to reproduce that experience. Although the end result can be effective, it must be understood that any planned program adds elements of control and sociocultural baggage that shift it away from the original experience toward an experience that is more structured and less spontaneous.6

The program, the individual, the group, even the field of OEE start to create norms, rules, and values to which students commit themselves and, with docility, internalize and act accordingly. In Foucault's terms, the wilderness setting and the unfamiliar, frightening challenges provide a form of discipline with rules and consequences, or punishments, which further the docility of the students. Foucault suggests that discipline restricts activity:

Discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space. . . . Discipline sometimes requires *enclosure*. . . . It does this first of all in the principle of elementary location or partitioning. Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual. (Foucault, 1975, p. 141)

The natural environment can be seen by the student to be a danger, and in so doing this establishes the boundaries within the environment in which he or she can operate without suffering punishment. In addition to the natural limits, educators often impose further boundaries or rules. This might be done for reasons of safety, but the instructor may

⁶ A similar discussion was undertaken by Priest, Gass, and Gillis (2000) in Chapter 6 of their work.

deliberately build risks into the program in order to heighten the learning experience. This follows very closely Foucault's claim that utility (learning) increases when the ability to resist decreases. In the case of OEE, this occurs when the risk, perceived or actual, of penalty rises. Maximal utility occurs, according to Foucault (1975), when prisoners (students) are not, at first, aware of natural or personal limits but, finally, reach a point where they are able to take responsibility for themselves, becoming, as it were, their own jailer. In OEE, students may not feel that the outdoor educator is trying to punish or control them, but is, rather, the means to a safe adventure; it is therefore advisable to follow the rules. This self-disciplining is not inherently bad, but the potential for inappropriate control is there, and educators need to be vigilant and conscious of that danger.

The effect of discipline is to increase the usefulness of bodies while decreasing the ability of these bodies to resist. Though the mechanisms of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination may be different in outdoor education, they nevertheless still pertain. The OEE educator can allot to students roles, responsibilities, and functions far more easily than can the traditional classroom teacher. Handing out packs and paddles does not meet the same resistance as passing out textbooks. The willingness (docility) increases to such a degree that team roles, such as taking up the rear of a hiking group, maintaining canoe counts on the water, or being a spotter in rock climbing, are easily assigned. Students have the sense that they are gaining power and becoming emancipated, but they are simultaneously assimilating disciplinary structures and participating in the process of observation and control. Foucault (1975) states that whenever an instructor assigns duties or tasks to particular members of a group, there is an automatic—implicit or explicit—structuring of the unit.

The unit is, therefore, neither the territory (unit of domination), nor the place (unit of residence), but the *rank*: the place one occupies in a classification. . . . Discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations. (Foucault, 1975, p. 145)

Later Foucault describes this ranking process as "tactics," regarding it as an integral part of discipline. Although the OEE educator might believe that he or she has given responsibility and freedom to the students under his or her care—a belief that may rightly be shared by students—this act reflects the disciplinary measures that underlie the program. If, for example, a learning environment has been designed to maximize

perceived risk and thus requires safety management, the assignment of roles and responsibilities becomes a tactic necessary to the disciplinary process: "Tactics, the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of various forces is increased by their calculated combination are no doubt the highest form of disciplinary practice" (Foucault, 1975, p. 167).

Conclusion

We have asserted in this paper that the prevailing relationships of power in public education are also very much a part of outdoor and experiential education programs. Though they may manifest differently in public school systems, power relationships form an integral part of OEE pedagogies. There is close supervision of students by their instructor, risk exists (both natural and programmed), discipline is imposed, and there is even the threat of punishment. Though there is often no formal examination, evaluation by instructors and by peers makes itself felt.

In view of this, we suggest that outdoor and experiential educators interrogate justifications for making use of these means of control, especially if they have the potential to undermine the goals of our particular programs. The challenge becomes one of finding ways to promote transformation, self-reliance, and critical thinking in our students while making use of structures of power. Can outdoor and experiential educators, as creatures of that power structure, develop an OEE pedagogy that confronts its most disturbing elements? Can OEE be a force for emancipation while employing the very same methods and tactics that serve the social hierarchy? Can ends justify means?

A tentative answer to this challenge lies in how those means of control and discipline are used. As we have noted, Foucault (1975) did not think that the use of discipline to create docile bodies for the purpose of utility was necessarily bad. Indeed, how else can we perceive the process of teaching and learning if not as an unequal relationship between teacher and student or parent and child? The key to our problem is to be found in the awareness of the instructor; he or she must be conscious of the nature of the relationship that exists with the students, and that this relationship is necessarily unequal and temporary.

To elaborate this important point let us take the example of a master craftsman and apprentice. This relationship of power can be so rigorous that the apprentice does not deviate at all from the master's techniques and procedures. Yet this relationship is transitory; eventually the apprentice will become a master craftsman. If the master were to use the apprentice simply as an extra pair of hands, this would be an abuse of power, but if the master's goal is to foster the next generation of craftsmen, he is more likely to be seen as using power well. As OEE educators, we must

recognize that our programs are not free of discipline, examinations, or even punishment; but we must, nevertheless, provide students with the conditions necessary for self-realization and emancipation. According to Foucault (1975), the educator cannot help but engage in, and even model, relationships of power. Yet clear-sighted and thoughtful pedagogy, making use of the docile body, can lead toward emancipation.

There is a further requirement of instructors in outdoor education programs. They need also to be aware of the relationship of power that prevails in the society at large. There are in all societies political, economic, and social forces, as well as institutions that use power to create docility within the population without any corresponding utility, whether that is in terms of freedom, the common good, or even learning. It is incumbent, therefore, on outdoor educators to be fully conscious of the negative workings of power within their society in order to ensure that these do not infiltrate their programs and to establish a relationship of power with their students that enhances growth toward the program's stated ends. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it appears that the emancipation of students depends in large measure upon that of their teachers. This is a lesson worth continually learning and relearning.

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