LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

# PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE AT HOGWARTS: A FOUCAULDIAN READING OF HIERARCHICAL SYSTEMS IN *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*

**Mahmood Ul Hassan**[*1], **Syed Mushahid Hussain Shah**[2]

[*1]*Department of English, International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI)*
[2]*Department of English Language and Literature, Shah Abdul Latif University, Ghotki Campus*

[*1]mahmood.hassan@iiu.edu.pk, [2]**s.mushahid.syed@salu.edu.pk**

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23117685

**Keywords**
*Hogwarts, Foucault, disciplinary power, hierarchical systems, Bookchin, surveillance, normalization*

**Article History**
Received: 01 June 2026
Accepted: 23 August 2026
Published: 30 September 2026

**Copyright** @Author
**Corresponding Author: ***
**Mahmood Ul Hassan**

## ABSTRACT

*Beginning with a review of how punishment and discipline function at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the first book Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J. K. Rowling; this paper examines Hogwarts using an analytical framework provided by two social theorist thinkers: Michel Foucault on the functioning of disciplinary power (surveillance and normalizing), and Murray Bookchin on the nature of hierarchical systems. Specifically, Foucault's concepts of surveillance, normalization, and producing docile bodies can be seen at work in Hogwarts through its use of spatial division (partitioning space), constant observation, and a graduated scale for imposing sanctions (i.e., detention). Additionally, Foucault also sees Hogwarts ranking students based upon their assigned houses (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff) and/or by academic achievement. Likewise, within the houses, students are ranked by behavior. Bookchin provides additional insight into the nature of hierarchies as a cultural and psychological system of obedience and command; he also explores what he calls the internalization of hierarchical mentality—or the tendency to rank differences into better/worse (superior/inferior). The paper reviews the sorting ceremony, house points, detentions, teacher/pupil authority, and the surveillance architecture of Hogwarts through both Foucault's concept of disciplinary power and Bookchin's ideas about hierarchical mentality. As such, it is demonstrated that hierarchical mentality and disciplinary power are mutually supportive and thus produce a habituated awareness among students that obeying orders, being ranked, etc. should be viewed as commonplace and not extraordinary.*

## INTRODUCTION

This study analyses how the social space at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in J.K. Rowling's first book *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is not just a place for observation, classification, and correction, but also a place for disciplining subjects within the hierarchical system that the school maintains and instils. Foucault's "Discipline and Punish" provides an interpretative framework for the ways in which modern institutions contain populations within defined spaces and maintain a form of perpetual

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

surveillance over the subjects that reside within such spaces. The result of this process is the creation of disciplined bodies that are simultaneously productive and obedient. However, as outlined in Murray Bookchin's critique of hierarchy, this type of ordering does not simply exist in terms of organization; it also exists as a way of thinking. It establishes the belief that some individuals or things can be ranked in terms of superiority/inferiority and that commands should be obeyed because they reflect a legitimate hierarchical order (Bookchin, 1982; Foucault, 1977). By considering the readings provided by both authors, one can see that the disciplinary methods used in the novel to create "docile" bodies (as described in Foucault) establish the same kind of hierarchical thinking (as described by Bookchin) that he has established as the corresponding mental orientation to hierarchical social structure. Thus, the purpose of this paper will be to apply the dually articulated readings to provide an integrated interpretation of the ways in which the disciplinary practices (used to punish and correct) illustrated in the novel contribute to the hierarchical mentalities of the students.

Previous studies have identified applications of Foucault's theoretical ideas to the Harry Potter series. For example, previous scholars have examined the ways in which the Harry Potter novels illustrate mechanisms of control/monitoring that produce "docile" bodies and compare/contrast different types of disciplinary approaches to education (e.g., Wolosky, 2014; Firth, 2021). Likewise, scholars working in social ecology continue to expand upon Bookchin's distinction between systems of command and obedience based on hierarchical relationships versus hierarchies as states of consciousness that rank phenomena according to relative degrees of superiority and/or inferiority (White, 2003; Bookchin, 1982). What is absent is a detailed examination of the first novel that applies these two sets of analytical tools together. Specifically, there is no study that has traced how the various disciplinary powers (house-based ranking, points, detentions, etc.) function to encourage hierarchical thinking from the beginning of the series. Therefore, this paper attempts to fill that void by exploring how disciplinary power and hierarchical mentality are reinforced in relation to one another in the primary structural components (i.e., institutional practices) of Hogwarts within Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.

After reviewing relevant literature, I outline my research questions and objectives. Then, I perform a systematic textual analysis examining Hogwarts' major institutional practices. Finally, I synthesize my findings regarding the extent to which the institution produces hierarchical consciousness from the onset of the series. Through-out this process, I use textual references from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone to support my interpretations through Foucault's and Bookchin's conceptual lenses. Where applicable, I use prior scholarly works to mark areas where this reading contributes additional insights beyond previously conducted analyses. As this paper demonstrates, combining the two frameworks appears to provide greater insight than using either individually into educational institutions as sites for creating hierarchical subjects.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The work on education and subjectivity has built upon Foucault's concept of discipline power for many years. Discipline power provides an alternative lens for viewing how power operates, moving from the spectacle of sovereign violence, to the subtle web of surveillance, inspection, and normalization found in schools, prisons, barracks, and hospitals. Foucault states that the architectural layout of schools today create a laboratory for developing individuals capable of contributing their capabilities for the greater good (Foucault, 1977). Contemporary schooling in sociology of education continues to build off this idea by documenting the ways in which continuous assessments, behavior management systems, and tracking create

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

students who will develop internalized norms regarding productivity and self-regulation (Hope, 2015; Ball, 2013). Beyond sociology of education, critical theory views the disciplinary regimes as being filled with relationships of ranking and command that existed before any institutional structure was created and continued after it was eliminated—at which point we can see the utility of another conceptual framework, one that focuses on the psyche and culture of ranking.

Bookchin's contribution is to show that hierarchy is not only an organizational system but also a type of mentality that influences perception. In his Ecology of Freedom, Bookchin defines hierarchy as the cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command that remain even when class or state-based structures cease to exist. He then illustrates how hierarchical mentality transforms a biological sense of unity-in-diversity into a pyramid-like organization of superior to inferior. As soon as this mentality forms, it creates the justification for toil, guilt, and sacrifice among those ranked lower and privilege and command among those ranked higher—the objective historical record of a social structure becomes a subjective mental structure. Therefore, Bookchin serves as a complementary perspective to Foucault: whereas Foucault explores how disciplinary methods produce "docile," "useful" bodies, Bookchin demonstrates how disciplinary methods generate a consciousness that perceives ranking as natural and valid (White, 2003), expands upon this notion by demonstrating that hierarchical domination in Bookchin's theory encompasses and expands earlier Marxist notions of class and exploitation while providing greater emphasis to the cultural and psychological aspects of ranked differences.

In relation to Harry Potter scholarship, most Foucauldian interpretations have focused primarily on the last novels due to the increased visibility of the Ministry of Magic's authority, Dolores Umbridge's totalitarianism, and the prison-like environment of Azkaban provide particularly vivid illustrations of panopticonic surveillance and sovereign punishment (Bullwinkel, 2013; Barratt, 2012; Wolosky, 2014). Additionally, Wolosky (2014) demonstrated that Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry embodies multiple forms of disciplines including coercive pedagogical approaches exemplified by Umbridge and Snape and more productive processes embodied by Dumbledore and other student-lead initiatives such as Dumbledore's Army. Furthermore, Firth (2021) argued that Hogwarts' formal organizations (house points, quidditch games, public censure) socializes students to become like the "docile bodies" described by Foucault in a traditional school. While there is substantial evidence supporting the application of Foucauldian concepts throughout the entire series (Bullwinkel, 2013), the disciplinary mechanisms employed in the initial novel in establishing the institutional structure of Hogwarts for the protagonist and reader have received less attention. While Bullwinkel (2013) examines the panopticonic gaze across various novels in the series, how hierarchical consciousness begins to develop through the day-to-day practices of the first novel remains unanswered.

As far as scholarship utilizing Bookchin's social ecology to interpret literature is concerned, there is very limited research relative to interpreting children's and young adult fantasy. Most of what does exist either interprets themes related to hierarchy broadly or interprets ecological motifs rather than how hierarchical mentality is produced through institutional and psychological means (White, 2003). There is no known systematic study combining Foucauldian disciplined analysis with Bookchin's definition of hierarchy to analyze Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. Therefore, this paper seeks to address this void by arguing that the practical techniques used for observation, ranking, and correction in the first novel serve to instill

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

the hierarchical mentality that Bookchin sees as the cognitive representation of hierarchical social organization - i.e., this paper will examine how ranked subjectivity begins to be formed within the series during the first book. By using both frameworks simultaneously, it will allow for a more detailed interpretation of how educational institutions create subjects that view hierarchical ranking as natural and legitimate.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two questions guide this reading, shaping both the choice of textual evidence and the theoretical framing. First: how do Hogwarts's disciplinary practices — spatial partitioning, continuous surveillance, examination, graduated sanction — instantiate Foucauldian mechanisms of power while also reinforcing the hierarchical systems of command and obedience Bookchin describes? Second: how does hierarchical mentality, understood as the internalized ranking of difference into superior and inferior, show up in Hogwarts's student body and institutional structures through the everyday workings of house affiliation, point systems, detention, and pedagogical authority? Together these questions keep the analysis focused on both the concrete techniques of disciplinary power and their psychic effects.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research project has two connected aims. The first one is to identify ways in which Foucault's disciplinary power and Bookchin's hierarchy are working together in Harry Potter's Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, based on the novels. The emphasis will be on how enclosure, observation (visibility), social position (ranking) and penalizing (correction) form subjects for whom hierarchies are perceived as an acceptable state of affairs. The second objective is to show how the institutional practice of discipline and punishment results in a hierarchical mentality among the students, so that it can be shown that from its first instalment, this series shows that the students internalize the idea that ranked differences are fundamental to becoming subjects at Hogwarts.

## ANALYSIS

### Spatial Enclosure and the Architecture of Hierarchical Visibility

Beginning with enclosure, Foucault's study of disciplinary institutions begins with confining populations within a contained area in which they can be constantly observed and classified into a hierarchical structure. Harry Potter has the potential to be one example of such confinement. The castle is essentially completely enclosed; the walls, grounds, and magical boundaries surrounding the student body separate the students from the outside world. Inside of the castle, towers, common areas, and stairways continue to separate students into subgroups based upon house and year. In addition to the separation of the students into groups based upon year, the four houses are also used to classify students in terms of a primary hierarchical structure. Each house is associated with certain values or social standings and these distinctions quickly become markers of identity and social standing for the students. With the Sorting Ceremony, students are assigned to a house and from that point forward, the standing of that house will increase or decrease depending on the number of points earned by that house. Therefore, all students sit in a ranked group as a result of the sorting ceremony, and the entire school can observe and evaluate each house's performance. Similarly, the Great Hall serves as a physical representation of this classification process. The long rows of house seating and elevated staff table serve to visually represent the ranked order of the four houses as well as the distinction between the staff and the students.

In addition to institutional hierarchies, Bookchin also identified the way hierarchical structures function culturally and psychologically. Bookchin argued that hierarchy exists through socialization and psychology as well as institutions and ranks differences into superior and inferior. The house system in Harry Potter

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

functions similarly. The four houses (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff) are ranked according to some general standards and therefore represent ranked communities. The relative standing of each house is continually evaluated and displayed in the Great Hall, either celebrating or mourning its success. The large hour glasses located in the Great Hall measure and display the total number of points collected by each house. These hour-glasses provide an ongoing visual display of each house's relative standing creating an ongoing spectacle of superior and inferior. Thusly, the architectural design of Hogwarts provides two distinct services: First, it confines the student population for disciplinary purposes. Second, it presents a constant display of ranking which creates the hierarchical mentality described by Bookchin. As a result of viewing the Great Hall at the beginning of each day, students receive a graphic representation of social standing which influences how they interpret their day.

The Sorting Ceremony represents perhaps the greatest intersection of Foucauldian examination and Bookchinian ranking. The Hat examines each student individually in turn, identifies their affiliation with one of the four houses and makes that affiliation publicly known (for that particular academic year) and thereby irrevocably assigns an individualizing gaze to each student combined with an association with one of four ranked communities. For students, it appears to have significant implications—something fundamental about who they are is being disclosed and assigned to one of four hierarchically-ranked communities whose relative prestige is already understood by students prior to attending Hogwarts. The Sorting Ceremony portrays both aspects of the ceremony—the Hat's individualized assessment of each student and the reactions of the audience—which applauds or remains silent based upon which the house was named. Essentially, this is the initiation ceremony for all first-year/ new students where they are sorted into a hierarchy that they will subsequently accept throughout their time at Hogwarts.

**The House-Point System as Continuous Ranking and Normalization**

The emphasis on continual evaluation and recording of performance as a part of discipline, both by Foucault (1977) and in the house-point system, serves to create a continuum where all individuals are compared to each other.

In academic environments like Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, a "house-point" system, like those found in British public schools, is used as a means to rank houses based upon the accumulation of points earned through such things as academic achievements, athletic prowess and general behavior. Each day, each action contributes to either raising or lowering a particular house's standing. This creates a culture that continually assesses the contributions of every member of the school community. Every time a student acts, he/she adds to his/her house's total number of points. These points are then displayed for all to see in the Great Hall. Celebrations and mourning take place in front of these rankings. For example, Gryffindor's dramatic come from behind victory and subsequent celebration demonstrate the emotional attachment many have to their standing in this ranking (Rowling, 1997).

According to Bookchin (1982), hierarchical thinking leads to a mental disposition toward ranking differences—no matter how slight—into superior and inferior. Individuals who adopt hierarchical thinking use these rankings to justify different treatment of people. The point system employed by Hogwarts promotes an environment that fosters a similar mentality among its students. A student receives points for providing a correct response in class. Conversely, when a student fails to follow rules, he/she loses points. In effect, the point system reinforces the idea that participation in social events contributes to a person's

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

overall worth. Through repetition, students begin to perceive ranking as the normative nature of social interaction. Furthermore, the hourglass display located at the entrance of Hogwarts provides constant visual reminders of students' relative positions with regard to ranking. Even when students are outside of class, they will tend to conceptualize their educational environment according to this framework.

Finally, teachers provide reinforcement for this hierarchical structure through their authority. McGonagall and Snape are able to assign points to students immediately after an event has occurred. As such, they serve as direct representations of the hierarchical chain of command described by Bookchin (1982) as being associated with obedience. In addition to normalizing behaviour through assigning points, McGonagall also supports the hierarchical structure of the houses while simultaneously supporting the power base of her role as teacher. Her actions reinforce the hierarchical nature of the houses. In contrast to McGonagall, Snape docks points from Gryffindor House and awards them to Slytherin House. While Snape is performing similar duties as McGonagall, he is reinforcing his support for the hierarchy between houses and not merely within them. Students observe the activities of their teachers and develop an understanding of how the houses relate hierarchically to each other. In this manner, hierarchical ranking remains a relevant and emotionally charged aspect of students' daily lives rather than remaining abstract concepts.

**Detention, Graduated Sanction, and the Production of Docile Bodies**

The institutional use of detention as described by Rowling illustrates how a modern approach to punishment functions according to Foucault's model. Detention at Hogwarts exemplifies the transition away from "spectacular inflictions of pain" onto the body of an individual convicted of a crime, and instead focuses upon the development of methods for correcting the offender through graded interventions designed to reform the body and spirit of the individual. In contrast to punishments that were once performed publicly, such as the stocks or pillories in other societies, detention provides no opportunity for public display—but instead utilizes assigned labor, seclusion or supervised activity to provide a means to correct offending behavior and place the offender back within the social fabric of the school; specifically, within the defined ranks of society.

In terms of example, during their detention of laboring with Filch, and while under the supervision of Hagrid, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Malfoy all receive examples of graded sanctions that include both physical labor, exposure to risk, and moral education. Thus, these three elements function together as mechanisms to create compliant members of the social group (the student population) who will produce value for the social institution (Hogwarts School), and who will also conform to the social hierarchy of command and compliance established at the school. Because those individuals handing out detentions (McGonagall and Snape) are established authorities with whom students have previously accepted the legitimacy of their commands (because they have been socialized to accept the hierarchal structure of teachers over students), each detention serves to reinforce a specific lesson—violating the rules will cause a temporary loss in hierarchical status, and the only way to regain that lost position is through voluntary subjection to labor intended to be corrective in nature. At the end of each detention, when Harry et al. leave detention and resume their normal lives at school, they do so returning to a socially stratified environment that has been reinforced by their having violated one of its rules. Even a seemingly minor aspect of detention (such as receiving a detention slip while eating breakfast) plays a significant role in reinforcing a public display of the temporary loss in hierarchical status experienced due to a violation of rules.

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

Filch's consistent presence throughout the corridors of Hogwarts enhances the effect. In addition to knowing every passageway in the castle, he consistently reports any violations of school rules to faculty. As such, students can never feel certain if they are being watched—thus creating an atmosphere where students may always expect to be observed. This is a form of Foucault's "panopticon". In this case, there is no need for the actual observation to occur—simply the possibility of being observed causes a sense of permanent awareness of oneself that accomplishes the function of observation automatically (Foucault, 1977). Combining the presence of humans with the magical properties inherent in Hogwarts' castle results in an elaborate system capable of observing students continually. Students begin regulating themselves based upon this expectation of possible observation. Similarly, Bookchin's understanding of hierarchical thinking is apparent in students' quiet assumption that people above them in rank possess a legitimate claim to observe and correct those below them—and by accepting observation students thereby accept the rankings that authorize such observation.

**Pedagogical Authority, Hierarchical Mentality, and the Internalization of Ranking**

Teachers at Hogwarts, in addition to exercising formal authority, use the exercise of their authority routinely, and therefore provide evidence that the normal function of hierarchy is to maintain order among teachers and students alike. Students are expected to follow directions and to support the structure of authority through obedience. Obedience is further reinforced by both the established traditions of the institution and through continued rankings of academic performance, which creates hierarchies among students and between students and their professors.

The Potions class is clearly the most direct illustration of this type of functioning. In the Potions class, students are evaluated based upon how well they perform. Depending on how well students perform, either praise or humiliation will be awarded to the student in front of their peers. This process provides a clear connection between academic achievement and hierarchical status (Rowling, 1997). Transfiguration, taught by Professor McGonagall, functions similarly albeit in a less harsh manner. Through rigorous instruction provided along with regular assessments, students are again able to evaluate their academic abilities relative to those of their peers. Regardless of whether students are being instructed in Potions or Transfiguration, the academic classroom is the primary location where pedagogically-based ranking accomplishes its daily work.

Bookchin's hierarchical perspective – that differences should be viewed as superior or inferior—can explain the emotional costs associated with this experience. Students learn to view academic success; house identification; and behavioral characteristics as having varying degrees of value within a hierarchical system. Examples of this include Hermione's initial concern with regard to her academic success; Ron's apprehension regarding his family's position relative to others; and Harry's eventual rise to a leadership position in Gryffindor House. These examples illustrate that hierarchical ranking is increasingly internalized by students as a means of understanding themselves as individuals, rather than merely as an evaluative tool used by the school (Rowling, 1997).

As a result of the increased emphasis placed on hierarchical ranking throughout the school year, hierarchical thinking becomes increasingly accepted as a legitimate method of evaluating oneself and others. It is precisely this acceptance that allows hierarchical thought processes to remain a consistent aspect of student life at Hogwarts throughout the year.

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

However, while Dumbledore represents a significant exception to the hierarchical model as Headmaster, there are aspects to his approach to discipline that may serve to soften the more coercive elements present in many of his colleagues. While his guidance encourages students to utilize their own reasoning skills as opposed to solely accepting direction from him, it is still fundamentally grounded in a hierarchical framework. That is to say, regardless of whether Dumbledore uses a gentle form of authority when providing guidance to his students, his status as Headmaster places him above his students. Therefore, from a Bookchinian standpoint, even the more benevolent forms of authority are capable of reinforcing hierarchical systems.

**Surveillance, Self-Regulation, and the Consolidation of Hierarchical Consciousness**

Surveillance at Hogwarts is intense and multi-layered; there are many potential sources of surveillance including the instructors, the caretaker, talking portraits, the castle's ghosts, and even the castle itself. All of these sources create a surveillance environment in which students need to assume they will be surveilled. Foucault suggests that disciplinary power can achieve its most effective form if the observed individual internalizes the gaze of the observer; therefore the individual regulates their own behavior as though they were being watched by someone else (Foucault, 1977). In fact, by the end of the first year at Hogwarts, this internalization process has already begun. As students move about the corridors of the castle, they make decisions regarding how much risk they wish to take by breaking rules based upon their perception of the likelihood of detection. They also adjust their behavior to meet the expectations of their house and their instructors. When Harry and his friends sneak quietly through the castle at night calculating the probability of encountering either Filch or one of the instructors, this internalized surveillance is illustrated.

Bookchin's hierarchical perspective adds another component. Internalized surveillance and internalized hierarchy go hand-in-hand. In addition to regulating your behavior due to fear of being seen, learning to do so teaches you to view yourself and those around you from the standpoint of hierarchical differences. This attitude is reinforced throughout the novel via public displays of house points, public statements of rewards and punishments for transgressions, and disparate treatment afforded to different houses. At the conclusion of the novel, Harry et al., have adopted both components - discipline as self-regulation and hierarchy as an organizing principle of viewing others - and carried them forward into the remainder of the series after completion of the academic year.

Additionally, there is a student-peer aspect of this surveillance and ranking. Students are monitoring each other, particularly their fellow members of their respective houses, while competing in terms of house point totals. Student involvement in monitoring and reporting house-related infractions creates an additional level of peer-surveillance. Furthermore, by holding each other accountable to house-based standards, students validate the legitimacy of the entire hierarchical structure represented by the houses. Thus, Hogwarts' disciplinary apparatus generates not merely compliant students but students who assist in maintaining the disciplinary apparatus and thereby maintain hierarchical mentality with each successive generation.

**Quidditch, Competitive Ranking, and the Embodiment of Hierarchical Mentality**

Quidditch brings about an active form of what I mentioned earlier regarding ranking and hierarchical thinking. Disciplinary institutions such as prisons use exercises, sport and other forms of physical activity, to train people to have "docile", useful bodies (Foucault, 1977). Quidditch is a highly-refined example of

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

exactly that. While students are learning to coordinate their bodies with an extensive number of rules, they are also competing against each other at every level on a hierarchy of houses. When the students win or lose together as a group it reinforces the competitive ranking that affects the entire house's standing not merely the individual student. In the case of Harry's first Quidditch game and when the whole school becomes so involved in the results of the game, it illustrates how competitive ranking has become an integral part of both the physical aspect of Quidditch and how students perceive each other socially (Rowling, 1997).

Hierarchical mentality from Bookchin can be seen in students' attitudes toward competitive rankings as normal and good. For example cheering for your house during games and wanting to see opposing houses lose is ultimately supporting a hierarchical system by allowing them to rank themselves based on social hierarchies. Giving point values to houses for winning Quidditch matches clearly connects athletic success to social status/hierarchical standing. As students continue to participate and observe Quidditch, competitive ranking will increasingly feel natural and emotionally charged. Therefore, Quidditch represents one of the most obvious ways in which hierarchical mentality is incorporated into both the body and the mind in the novel.

## RESULTS

The results from the analysis clearly answer the two research questions, and provide evidence toward achieving the two research objectives. In addition to finding that all of the school's disciplinary methods (spatial confinement, constant supervision, examinations in the form of points awarded per student; graduated sanctions based on infractions), fit well within the Foucauldian descriptions of institutions' use of disciplinary power in order to create institutional utility and also conformity to institutional hierarchy. These same disciplines reinforce Bookchin's notion of hierarchical structures of command and obedience, with students continually categorized as having a superior or inferior position to others in terms of their house designation, academic achievement, and behavioral conduct. Hierarchical thinking—i.e., individuals categorizing themselves according to a belief in the superiority of some and the inferiority of others—has been found among the student population as a result of many aspects of the daily operations of house ranking, point systems, authority of educators, and self-regulatory actions taken due to the possibility of being observed. Finally, the connection between Foucauldian disciplinary power and Bookchinian hierarchical thinking is developed and fully operational in this first book in the series. Therefore, the creation of a ranked subjectivity is one of the main concerns for the series from its inception.

Therefore, these results have filled the identified void: A combined Foucauldian and Bookchinian approach to understanding Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone provides a better explanation of how hierarchical consciousness is created within institutions than would be provided by either thinker separately. Foucault's works offer a clearer description of the specific disciplinary techniques used by institutions (e.g., observation, ranking, correction) while Bookchin offers a better explanation of the psychological effects such techniques can have. Together they demonstrate that Hogwarts School is an advanced mechanism for creating subjects that accept hierarchical ranking as normal and acceptable. This adds to both the body of literature concerning Harry Potter scholarship, as well as to our understanding of how educationally-based disciplinary mechanisms can lead to an increase in hierarchical thinking and consciousness.

## CITED WORKS

LIBERAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW
An International Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-3175 | ISSN (Print): 3006-3167
Volume 5, Issue 7 September, 2026

Ball, S. J. (2013). *Foucault, power, and education*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203078662

Barratt, B. (2012). *The politics of Harry Potter*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137016546

Bookchin, M. (1982). *The ecology of freedom: The emergence and dissolution of hierarchy*. Cheshire Books.

Bullwinkel, S. M. (2013). *"Visibility is a trap": Analyzing the levels of the Foucauldian panoptic gaze in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series* [Master's thesis, Wright State University]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=wright1367575512

Firth, K. (2021). 5 ways Hogwarts helps us understand Foucault's "docile bodies." In N. Barnes & A. Bedford (Eds.), *Unlocking social theory with popular culture: Remixing theoretical influencers* (pp. 113–124). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77011-2_10

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Pantheon Books. (Original work published 1975)

Hope, A. (2015). Foucault's toolbox: Critical insights for education and technology researchers. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 40(4), 536–549. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2014.953546

Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone*. Bloomsbury.

White, D. F. (2003). Hierarchy, domination, nature: Considering Bookchin's critical social theory. *Organization & Environment*, 16(1), 34–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026602250217

Wolosky, S. (2014). Foucault at school: Discipline, education and agency in Harry Potter. *Children's Literature in Education*, 45(4), 285–297. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-013-9215-6