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Culture, Power, and Control: A Discussion of Autonomy and Responsibility

Loren A. Alonso
University of Central Florida



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Culture, Power, and Control: A Discussion of Autonomy and Responsibility

Loren Alonso

University of Central Florida

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how power, control, autonomy, and responsibility are active participants in culture and daily human life. First, I discuss two understandings of power, structured and diffused. I examine some different techniques of power that help support and reproduce the current power systems in place and how historically, these systems have been predominantly unjust. I then discuss an alternative view of power that incorporates both structured and diffused forms of power. I explain why this new understanding of power could be more useful in actively shifting the current unjust power structures present in the world today towards power structures that are more just. I build this argument using some of Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky's explorations of power. From there, I explore how understanding power can affect how people understand and practice human autonomy and develop or agentic skills. Finally, I use a collective conception of autonomy and the disparate effects of privilege to investigate how responsibility can apply to people individually and collectively.

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INTRODUCTION:

This thesis explores forms of power in human experience and understanding, and how different conceptions of autonomy result in different applications of responsibility. My objective is first, to illustrate some influential mechanisms of existing unjust systems of power today that work to uphold current dynamics of power and to keep them from changing. Then, I will point out how people are a part of those systems, and how their participation, whether conscious or tacit, can work to maintain or change the unjust systems they are a part of. By involving autonomy in this discussion, I explore the ways in which socially based systems of power, like culture, affect individuals and collectives, and the ways in which individuals and collectives can in turn affect those systems of power. It is important to recognize autonomy as contextual and interrelated to other people and larger social structures like culture because a single person, in the face of pervasive and overwhelming systems of unjust power, would not be able to effect as great a change as a coordinated group of people. Finally, I argue the importance of acknowledging collective dimensions of responsibility for systems of power currently in place. Because humans are embedded within systems of unjust power, and their actions individually and collectively can work to propagate or reshape structures of unjust power systems, the next step would be for people to recognize the existing system as their own. By seeing the current system of power as *ours*, rather than as a disconnected external force outside of *us*, people can personally take responsibility for their role in upholding or re-shaping an unjust system towards a more just system. Discussing solidarity within this context empowers a person not only to take responsibility for their actions that maintain an unjust system, but also to

empathize with others who are more oppressed, or have less privilege. Identifying with other people who are also part of an unjust system and recognizing the disparity between one's own position within this system and someone else's will bring to light disproportionate shares of privilege between people. It is my argument that those with more privilege within an unjust system have even greater responsibility to use the power that comes with their privilege to resist and re-shape this system. Before I continue, I'd like to clarify what I mean by just and unjust. Just, for the purposes of this thesis, will refer to phenomena that reduces overall negative effects, like oppression, and works for the common good¹. Conversely, an unjust phenomenon works to keep some humans in subservience and hardship, undermines autonomy, and prevents people from developing agentic skills necessary to think for themselves and decide what is in their best interest.

Humans are born within particular systems of thought, and as they grow up within those systems, they soak up the values, norms, and common behavior of those systems. It is important to realize that human beings are a part of these systems, sometimes tacitly and sometimes more consciously. Power, in post-structuralist theory², is something that is socially distributed and associated with the construction of knowledge (Harcourt, 2007, p.21). Harcourt describes the 'power/knowledge' critique by questioning: "How, exactly, do we come to believe what we hold as true? What institutions and practices shape us into believing a certain idea? How have our own disciplinary practices contributed to shaping our beliefs, and at what cost?" (Harcourt, 2007, p.21).

¹ The common good here refers to the good of all, where everyone benefits, as opposed to the greater good, where the good of some are sacrificed for the benefit of others.

² For an interesting discussion on structuralism and poststructuralism, see "An Answer to the Question: What Is Poststructuralism?" by Bernard Harcourt.

If the possibility of finding meaning is abstracted enough, the result is that there is no 'true', 'real', or 'objective' meaning. To ground these ideas into relevance for human daily life, I think it's important to outline this cycle of infinitely deferred meaning as a sort of distractor. It can be impractical to the average human being who often seeks out meaning for their own existence, and who lives in world imbued with forces, many of which are unjust and harmful, that attempt to impart meaning on them. Social structures like language, norms, and culture, which shape and are shaped by human understanding and the limits of human knowledge, are themselves a reflection of human intention. Intention can be imposed on a person or group by sources or purveyors of unjust power trying to maintain itself, often through oppressive methods, which can be tacitly accepted by people and consciously rejected. Intention can also be purposeful by individuals and groups working to reshape power structures. Structuralist perspectives might say that our conception of power is influenced by the systems of thought we are a part of, which is itself a structured system. Poststructuralist perspectives might take it further, and volley the idea that these systems that shape our understanding are themselves shaped by intention, era, and other meta-influence.

The point is that influence and intention, whether it comes from an individual, an unjust and oppressive institution, meta-influence, a collective of people, or a social structure like media or culture etc. are inescapably a part of any human pursuit, including the pursuit of knowledge and of power. I cannot claim to know if there is any ultimate or purely objective truth or meaning, and yet this hardly seems to matter. What matters, I think, is the truth of human experience, in particular the very real unjust forces, which

shape and situate human knowledge, experience, and behavior for the purpose of maintaining the statue quo and preventing change. Power, for this thesis, is one of the main elements that influence human life. Human life, experience, and constructions of knowledge and understanding in turn, are also factors that influence and deal with power.

Understanding power helps people recognize three important points: 1) that all humans within an unjust system of power are a part of these systems of injustice, not separate from them 2) The many ways in which people maintain unjust systems, implicitly and explicitly 3) How people can use the same strategies of power used by unjust systems to implement change and to reshape their systems towards a more just structure, or one that is less oppressive and more for the common good (the good of all rather than some). It is important to recognize the collective aspects of autonomy because we are situated in a system amongst other people and social structures. Also, the power of a single individual within a massive system of pervasive unjust power is likely insufficient to change it. Collective, concerted autonomy, or the capability that people have to form a collective and concerted effort to influence their environment, empowers individuals by highlighting the influential force held by groups of coordinated people. Because humans are living within, and a part of, a pervasive system of unjust power, they also have the ability to reshape it, especially when working together. This means that people hold some responsibility for the system they are a part of and the actions they take to ignore, maintain, or reshape it. Our being a part of these systems of power makes it personal so that we should not passively wait for others to do the work in creating change. Moreover, because the dynamics of power are often disparate and unevenly distributed, those who have more of it, or

privilege, should be more responsible for taking an active role in recognizing and reshaping unjust system.

CHAPTER 1: AN EXPLORATION OF POWER

In chapter 1, I investigate some conceptions of how power exists in human experience and different ways in which people interact with power. I want to briefly bring up the earlier discussion about structuralism and post-structuralism first, because they are both different theories to analyze patterns, or systems of thought, the different changes they undergo, how they come to develop, and what can influence them. The important points to keep in mind throughout this discussion are first, how systems of thought change and can be changed over time and second, how the direction of change can be influenced by various factors. For this discussion, a primary player that can influence human systems of thought is power. For my argument, power can interact with humans in two main ways

The first form of power at work in human life is diffused. Diffused power works to influence a person internally on their attitudes, values, how they behave, their habits, and their overall understanding of the world and how to deal with it. A person often adheres to the guide or direction of this power without overt coercion, but rather almost automatically. The source of influential power, which can control different aspects of a person that I mentioned above, doesn't have a quantifiable, clear, explicit, external source or direction. Rather, it's difficult to pinpoint exactly where this power comes from, only that it can be seen at work shaping human identity and society and in the ways that people police and enforce this power on each other. The second form of power is structured. This form of power is often hierarchical, in a top down fashion, exists external to a person and

explicitly, often coercively controlling a person or population. Where structured power can be exemplified by a person standing over you, holding a bat over your head and telling you explicitly what to do and how, diffused power is closer to a form of training, so that the person standing over you with a bat isn't necessary, you automatically direct and control yourself, and the other people around you are also similarly trained. Together, everyone works to keep themselves and each other correctly in line.

Power as structured and as diffused can both be creative forces. They are both productive via their capacity to create anything from categories and institutions of knowledge, codes of popularly agreed upon standards of behavior, values, norms, and common knowledge, and even manufacture of social structures like culture. They produce influence and from them, different system of thought develop. The differences between structured and diffused techniques of power often blur into their shared effect of control or influence over people and systems of thought. Power as control can come from someone or something else that is actively and influencing someone into thinking or behaving a certain way (structured). Control can also be more subtly dispensed; it can act under the guise of natural law, instinct, and 'common sense'. Under diffused type of control it *feels* as if you are acting freely and without coercion. While the appearance and mechanisms action of power as diffused and as structured could be considered distinct, the outcomes of these two forms of influential control tie them together. They both work to define and shape faces of acceptable authority, regulation, and standards of thought and behavior and other social factors I mentioned earlier in such a way that self- maintains. The controls they

manifest work to preserve and protect their existing structure and maintain their mechanisms in place, making it difficult to change them.

In this discussion I will explore how power as diffused and as structured control has affected people non-neutral ways, often primarily for unjust outcomes. Recognizing the existence of such techniques of power at play in human life opens the discussion to examine forms of interactions between humans and these techniques of power and the ways they manifest, both in an individual's personal daily life and in over all population based systems of thought. Understanding how structured and diffused power play a role in the formation and propagation of culture, cultural norms and human social structures highlights how much in common these faces of power have. Discussing how power affects human life, particularly how unjust power works to manipulate, subjugate, and oppress a population and often restrict the development of agentic skills, leads into a discussion on the importance of autonomy and the development of agentic skills. Agentic skill are important because they equip and empower people with the necessary means to resist and re-shape unjust power systems. The development and exercise of agentic skills could also be seen as diffuse rather than as centralized in an individual. Responsibility plays into this discussion because of the disparate nature of current power structures and privilege, where some people or groups have more power than others. Those with more privilege, I argue, have a greater responsibility to use their advantages to re-shape unjust systems towards the common good, and to become less unjust.

Following an exploration of power, it is my next objective in chapter 2, to discuss human autonomy and some of the roles different forms of power can play in

inhibiting and enabling autonomy. Our understanding of autonomy can also influence the way in which we deal with power and how we view responsibility. By interpreting human autonomy as something collective and diffuse, as well as centered on individuals, it is easier to recognize the aspects of human daily life that allow for the use of power strategies towards preserving or resisting unjust structures of control. This understanding of autonomy also enables people to recognize the instances of power that are subtly and overtly as well as the ways in which we embody this power and propagate it.

Simply discussing power and human autonomy can be too easily abstracted and dissociated from the human condition. Responsibility is important because it helps to ground this discussion in real-life practical context. Responsibility anchors the two topics into relevance applicable to every day human life. By discussing these three phenomena, I will point out unjust disparities in power, or the existence of privilege, and why, since all humans today exist within a network of interrelated shared power, the injustices and disparities of current systems of power ought to be a common, popular concern.

Section 1: Diffused Power

In "Discipline and Punish", Foucault uses the history and distinct evolution of the penal system to illustrate a shift in dominant techniques of power: from being obviously structured and overtly centralized to more diffuse, systemic and expansive. He begins by describing a public execution in the year 1757 and ties this to a meticulous account of a prisoner's timetable 80 years later in 1837 (Foucault, 1977, p.3-7). The reason for this historical introduction is to highlight an essential change that took place in the face of

authority and in techniques of power as control, in this case held by penal system. For some, he points out this change in tactics marked a distinct modernization, a 'progress' towards more humane treatment and left behind a cruel and less enlightened method (Foucault, 1977, p. 14-16). Where once the object of the penal system was punishment aimed at control over life and death (who lived or died, and how), the focus of this more modern system was centered on controlling something else, something not so overt (Foucault, 1977, p. 11). This non-corporeal penalty, as Foucault refers to it, is a type of power strategy aimed at controlling the 'soul', which Foucault describes as the heart, the thoughts, the will and inclination (Foucault, 1977, p. 16). This could also be referred to as person's sense of identity, and the different aspects of it like their habits, values, and their character. How a person identifies themselves stems, in part, from their personal thoughts, desires, and practices. These resources for self-identification and self-understanding can be influenced by and shaped by a person's environment.

Efficiently exerting power over a person's identity or soul required the employment of knowledge. Knowledge can act as a doorway to power as control or influence over people. First, the building and organizing of it was necessary, and then detail-oriented methods of application, to be able to competently influence and control a subject or person. As humans increase a field of study, they discover the ways in which they can interact with and manipulate the object of their study and apply this knowledge to real life. Understanding how something works allows one to manipulate it. Knowledge was pursued, built, and organized through the establishment of institutions of science, with humans as subjects of study, and as creators and users of these institutions (Foucault, 1977, p. 18).

From those knowledge based human-institution relationships resulted conventions, practices, and other institutions that worked to pursue and utilize more knowledge. The detail oriented method of applying knowledge focused training a person on details like timetables, gestures or actions, or on individuals. These phenomena, the development of knowledge and the method of its application over individuals and a population began to characterize 'progress', in the penal system³ (Foucault, 1977, p. 23). In the penal system, ever increasing gathering and establishing of knowledge of the criminal, works to create organized sciences, like criminology, psychiatry, and other related studies. Foucault describes how, a whole army of technicians took over from the executioner for example warders, doctors, chaplains, and psychiatrists; these new experts, or types of authority, emerged with this technique of diffused power (Foucault, 1977, p.11).

In "The History of Sexuality Vol. I" Foucault describes two techniques to exert diffused control over people, or influence over how a person ought to live, how they identified themselves, or as described earlier, their 'soul'. He notes their emergence in the eighteenth century. These two techniques of what he calls "power over life" are: anatomo-politics of the human body and bio-politics of a population (Foucault, 1988, p.139). The two modern techniques of power exert their control over a person's "soul" or identity and influence people as individuals and as collectives, and their systems of thought and social structures. The first approach, anatomo-politics, has to do with power as control over the human body and its various interactions with the world and with others. The second

³ He also includes the education system and the medical institution as some other examples of constructs that embody this new technique of power.

strategy bio-politics of a population, applied to collective groups of people, social structures and institutions and systems of thought.

Before I discuss these types of diffused control, it's important to understand the previous type of control over life and death that they replaced. For Foucault, these methods of control are chronologically distinct from, and yet related to, a previously dominant form of power. Before the eighteenth century, power of the sovereign, which he describes as power over the right of death, or power to decide who lives or dies and how, was the primary way to exercise control over people (Foucault, 1988 p.139). This kind of control he exemplified with the public execution. The punishment of the sovereign was a technology of power exerted over people that mainly affected whether a person lived or died and how, like the execution describe earlier. The new, more progressive techniques of 'power over life', Foucault says, were in contrast, directed over a person's 'soul' or identity (Foucault, 1988, p.139). To demonstrate these techniques, Foucault described the prisoner's timetable.

Throughout history, control over bodies and productivity is prevalent: the sovereign: kings, parliament, Caesar, the pope, and other such powerful and authoritative figures had authority to dictate what people did and how. The sovereign used an authority that was centralized and concrete. The source of power perceived as stemming from a distinct, easily recognizable source. People were expected to recognize and obey a well-structured, top-down system of power; in this case whatever the sovereign power decrees. This centrally sourced and clearly demarcated authority often had nearly absolute control over subjects. The new technique of 'power over life' had an authority that was more

diffused, it's supporting structures more spread out, more difficult to identify and define. Its decentralized mechanisms of action were meticulous attention to detail and widely distributed. 'Power over life' techniques use consistently insidious mechanisms to exert influence over people.

The progress of the penal system, from 'torturous sovereign' to 'humane institutions', from administering life or death, to reforming the soul and body, is ultimately for the creation of a new a system of common knowledge. Power in the pursuit of, creation of, and employment of knowledge can be productive of norms, attitudes, values, behavior, social structures, and institutions of knowledge (Foucault, 1977, p.19). It can permeate into a person or a group's identity and become 'common knowledge'. The purpose of these institutions, comprehensions, and techniques, Foucault hints at, uphold and justify each other and to form a related networked structure of truth, values, and understanding in which to ground justifications, judgments, assertions, and techniques of power (Foucault, 1977, p. 18-19).

Within a framework of common knowledge people are supposed to be able to establish two distinct and contrasting truths: what is normal and abnormal, or in the context of the penal system, who is guilty or not guilty. The shift in techniques of enforcing a population with laws to norms indicates a shift in the face of authority. At first, authority was centralized to the ruler or sovereign, and then it began to come from a diffused network of institutions, experts, and cultural norms. To be considered guilty requires the affirmation and the approval of various systems. The act of assessing, diagnosing, prognosing, and constructing what it means to be a criminal is embedded within a

framework of systems of knowledge and methods of applying and justifying that knowledge (Foucault, 1977, p. 19). The assertion of guilt is made by what Foucault refers to as a scientifico-juridical complex. This complex assimilates, produces, and enforces an acceptable definition or standard and a technical prescription for “common knowledge” (Foucault, 1977, p. 21). It creates norms and culture. This growing body of common knowledge and related institutions is applied to justify standards and to support judgments. The formation of organizations, institutions, and authority figures, like doctors, teachers, or wardens, spring from and propagate these bodies of knowledge and institutions, and work to re-enforce their authority, constructed standards, judgments and other institutions that all interconnect and mutually support one another (Foucault, 1977, p.23).

According to Foucault, the episteme, or a system of thought during the eighteenth century saw the body as an object and target of power, something that could be influenced by, and be a producer of power. It was this attitude of the human body, something explored and expanded upon by men of influence which he quotes throughout “Discipline and Punish”, that began to understand humans for the purpose of employing techniques of shaping how a person should live, think etc. or ‘power over life’ (Foucault, 1988, p.136). The body was something knowable, and thus manipulatable, trainable, something that could respond, and learn to obey, become skilled and increase in productivity and efficiency. Systemic application of power techniques that result in increased docility make people more malleable and moldable, and this allows techniques of anatomo-politics and

eventually bio-politics that I mentioned before, to impress upon and train people's bodies and minds towards some higher functionality and efficiency.

What set apart techniques of control in the eighteenth century was a change in the strategy of using control, and in the scale of these techniques (Foucault, 1988, p.141). Anatomo-politics of the human body specifically in the form of discipline, shows how some technologies of power work to control an individual's behavior and on a larger scale, ultimately produce certain types of individuals, and produce populations, that consistently adhere to a certain code of behavior and way of thinking. Anatomo-politics of the human body, saw the human body as more of a machine or an object, than as a 'person'. Anatomo-politics is a strategy focused on the individual parts of the body: its movements, gestures, and attitudes and so on (Foucault, 1988, p.137). These new methods of power as control, assured the constant subjection of the body's forces and imposed upon it a relation of docility-utility when he be called discipline (Foucault, 1988, p.137). The point of disciplines then, according to Foucault, is to make the body more obedient and more useful, to increase the efficiency with which it does a job. Optimization, the increasing of the efficient use of the human body, was ensured by the development of discipline.

The numerous methods by which the body is subjected, made docile and used for production, or profit, is what Foucault calls, political technology of the body (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). He describes this technology as distinctly diffuse, and rarely formulated in continuous, systematic discourse, how it is often in bits and pieces and how despite the coherence of its results, docile and productive or profitable bodies, it is no more than 'a multiform instrumentation', meaning that it is difficult to narrow down, pinpoint, or cohere

into one source (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). Yet in this description, he points to the way in which it is a systematic pattern that can be seen. The outcome of all these diffused, seemingly disconnected methods and institutions is the production and maintenance of docile bodies.

Foucault's concept of discipline is critical to understanding anatomo-politics of the human body and as an application of power techniques of diffused methods of control (Foucault, 1988, p.139). The modality of control had shifted into an uninterrupted influence that kept close watch over activity, keeping in mind the time, space, and movements necessary, rather than focusing on results alone. Today, a manager or boss expects their employees to do their job and also adhere to a code of conduct and follow procedural directions. For most employees, it's common sense to follow the rules, and to implicitly accept the existence of social structures like rules and a boss. The mass discipline of bodies that produce this attitude is enacted through the often subtle, meticulous, and minute techniques, what Foucault refers to as 'the micro-physics of power'. "These are small acts of cunning endowed with a great power diffusion, subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious" (Foucault, 1988, p.139). Additionally these details are subtle, difficult to recognize and even deceptively benevolent. For example, being employed and productive is a social norm. It might be common to hear someone say "Having a job is of course what everyone ought to do. If you don't, you're weird or abnormal or you can't provide for your family." A person automatically thinking this way proves the effectiveness of discipline in shaping what people consider and do.

Four specific techniques of anatomo-politics, or discipline, that Foucault explains include: 1. The art of distribution (management and control over individuals in space), 2. The control of activity, 3. The organization of geneses (how the process of training is organized or curriculum), and finally 4. The composition of forces (organizing collaborative movement). I will briefly explain each of these techniques. Their definition is important, in order to make it easier to recognize how these technologies exist in our lives today.

The art of distribution (Foucault, 1977, p.141) refers to knowing where you are supposed to be at a given time and what you're supposed to be doing there. Determining when and where a person should be is an element of spatial and temporal control over the human body. A student must be in class, seated at their desk, from 8 am until 9 and they must understand that the purpose of their being there for that hour is to learn history. Confinement (1977, p.141), partitioning (1977, p.143), functionality of site (1977, p.143-144) are methods by which the art of distribution exerts spatial and temporal control over bodies in detail. They directly determine the limits of where a person can go and when, and the standards they must adhere to when in a certain place at a certain time.

The second technique, control of activity (Foucault, 1977, p.149) is all about time and timing. Foucault uses a timetable as an example. Three methods: establishing rhythms, imposing occupations, and regulating cycles of repetition, helped to assure the quantity and quality of time that was used. This was the development of the 'programme' (Foucault, 1977, p. 152). Through this technique of controlling bodies in time and in space, Foucault says "we have passed from a form of injunction that measured or punctuated gestures, to a web that constrains or sustains them throughout their entire succession; a sort of anatomo-

chronological schema of behavior” (Foucault, 1977, p.152). The ‘programme’, basically an intensive form of scheduling, allows for time to be used as a pervasive and lasting method of control over a body. This is because it determines when and how the body ought to interact with an object, with others’ bodies, and where it ought to be at a certain place and when. “Thus disciplinary power appears to have the function not so much of deduction as of synthesis, not so much as exploitation of the product, as of a coercive link with the apparatus of production” (Foucault, 1977, p.153). Disciplinary power is primarily a method of training people in the necessary behavior and attitudes of good productive citizens.

In some ways, enforcing a schedule on a person is a form of control that might seem at first repressive, meaning that it’s taking away or limiting something, perhaps an element of choice or autonomy. In a way that’s correct. However, discipline isn’t just what not to do, or about imposing a limitation or restriction. Discipline is also about creating something, a regime of expectation, a standard, and a code for ‘appropriate’ behaviors.

We expect kids to attend their classes and adults to work a 9-5 job. This is one of many instances where power as control and power as productive blur together and reinforce each other. The average school day comes to mind, where students are taught handwriting or mathematics, when and how to use calculators, how to hold a pencil or when and how to make a snowflake out of cutting paper and how to do all of these within a certain location and often with a strictly enforced time constraint or schedule that isn’t just hourly or daily, but also expands over months and years. Tightly controlling how a student spends their day also plays into teaching that student how to expect to conduct herself in the future and how to know what is acceptable behavior. Getting kids used to following a

schedule is a great way to optimize the time they are supposed to spend at school and hopefully the efficiency of their learning experience. This is also a way to prepare them for when they join the workforce and become productive members of society. Ironically, teaching kids how to organize themselves and how to optimize their time so they can get a job and join society is not, in most people's opinion, a negative thing. In fact, many would agree it's helpful for a person to know how to deal with their time so that they can be happy and successful. I'm sure many people would say this is 'common knowledge' or common sense.

The organization of geneses, the third technique of anatamo-politics as discipline, has to do with efficient use of time (Foucault, 1977, p. 157) for the purpose of building upon and maintaining learned knowledge. Dividing time into successive segments (one hour for math, one hour for history and so on), organizing threads of learning into plans involving successive steps in increasing complexity (first algebra, then calculus), and concluding these with a final exam to determine what was taught was sufficiently understood. Those are all types of micro-physics of power that ensure greater control and higher levels of regimentation and efficiency as part of the organization of geneses. The organization of geneses is different from control over schedule because its focus is more curriculum based, meaning it works to ensure a person knows what they were supposed to be taught, and can then build on the knowledge. One must first learn addition before tackling long division.

Finally, the composition of forces (Foucault, 1977, p.162) refers to a technique of discipline that controls the assembly and unison of actions of multiple people. Basically

involves coordinating the gestures, or actions and movements of a collective of people. The composition of forces is ensured through the detailed organization of bodies, movements, and time. The individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, and articulated on others (1977, p. 164). Foucault uses a platoon of soldiers to illustrate how this disciplinary power technique caused a shift in how we understand the value of a person and what qualities have more value, he says “its bravery or its strength are no longer principle variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements” (1977, p. 164). The more important, or valuable qualities in a soldier were not her courage or valor, but rather how coordinated and efficient her movements were, her physical training.

The primary value of a human’s body is not in the personal qualities or characteristics it possesses, but rather the position, movement, timing, and space of the anatomy, and the efficiency with which the body executes actions for the purpose of more efficient productivity. Something to consider throughout this discussion is what, or perhaps who, benefits from such increase in efficiency and productivity? Is this benefit limited to some people or is it dispersed more evenly throughout a population? While I don’t pretend to have direct answers to these considerations, I still think it is valuable to reflect on them and attempt to discern a pattern on which to base a claim: that perhaps are some who benefit much more from these technologies of power at the same time that others suffer from them. In this way, I think, existing systems of power are unjust to the extent that they exploit some people with less power, to the benefit of others with more power, reinforcing the exploitation and power through imbalance.

According to Foucault, discipline creates out of the bodies it controls an individuality that is endowed with four characteristics: it is cellular (by the play of special distribution), it is organic (by the coding or determining of activities), it is genetic, meaning that it is productive (by the accumulation and use of time), and it is combinatory (by the composition and arrangement of forces) (Foucault, 1977, p.167). These results and the tactics that induced them are forms of power as control or techniques of discipline. Such strategies of power as control dictate particular behavioral procedures for the individual and collective coercion of bodies. Through discipline, power as an anatomo-politics of body, ensures humans are docile, malleable, well-trained, efficient, and productive. This training which results in a ever-present characteristic of docility is carried with us into every aspect of our lives, even after our training is complete.

Power that controls and trains a human body in such ways works to produce individuals, populations, and cultures, including their codes of behavior and thought, that can be further controlled towards a tangible outcome. The classroom, even the school itself acts as a confinement for students that disciplines students into embodying these productive characteristics. Young people are enclosed in the building, on school grounds, and further enclosed and divided into classrooms, even more into particular desks and often with assigned seating. Students in class are aware that the function of their school, their classroom, and their individual desk is for learning. They are aware of lesson plans, successive modules and examinations necessary for them to prove their retention and to move to the next grade. Teachers directing such a class can use the layout and organization of the classroom to know which students are present by taking attendance and the layout

also provides a division of rank or status. Students sit in their significantly smaller desks and the teacher sits at a much larger desk, usually in the front of the room. This division and organization of space also allows for supervision and a better economy of time and gesture. Students must raise their hands, often move to different classrooms at the ring of a bell, and follow explicit procedures for proper conduct and to optimize learning. This type of training carries into college, where the experience is not quite so regimented. Yet the basic layout of time and behavior remains, and students often adhere to their previous understanding of how one ought to behave in a learning environment, where to place themselves and what to expect. The main difference is, that instead of having a teacher to direct them and enforce the rules, they order themselves with no need for overt direction. It is simply an unspoken understanding. This is the magic of discipline as a method of power as diffuse control: training that can last a lifetime and maintains itself through the population enforcing it on themselves and each other, rather than requiring a structured and hierarchal system of power, centralized around a ruler, sovereign, or overseer.

Training the body into docility in order to exploit its greater productivity and economic use is to the benefit of a particular economic method favoring private ownership. Drawing on research by Rusche and Kirchheimer, Foucault relates the different systems of punishment with the systems of production within which they operate, “thus, in a slave economy, punitive mechanisms serve to provide an additional labour force and to constitute a body of ‘civil’ slaves.” His explanation is tied within a historic background. The development and rise of industry, which he notes, requires free market labour (Foucault, 1977, p.25). He asserts the existence of a political economy over the body, which stems

from methods of punishment. This 'corrective' political economy always has the body as its central issue, "the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission" (Foucault, 1977 p. 25). The history of the body, he says, the building of scientific truth and the power relations that stem from such developments and the political investments in the body, is bound to its economic use. However, he makes it clear that this labor power, as he calls it, is only possible if it is caught up in a distributed system of subjection and control, in which need is also a political instrument, "meticulously prepared, calculated, and used, that is in another interpretation, manufactured" (Foucault, 1977, p.26).

The second aspect of Foucault's concept of power over life is what he calls bio-politics of a population (Foucault, 1988, p. 139). While anatomo-politics is a procedure of power that characterizes the disciplines and focuses on control of the individual, bio-politics in contrast, developed from a view of the body as imbued with the mechanics of life, something with biology and a physiology. Not only was it a machine, the body also served as the basis of biological processes (Foucault, 1988, p. 139). Bio-politics of a population focuses on a view of the body as a subject of study and a foundation on which to build institutions of knowledge (like psychiatry, biology, physiology, and criminology). To know something allows for more efficient application of knowledge, manipulation, and control over it. These institutions of knowledge focused on the human body and mind as their object of study, eventually developed into self-affirming sources of judgment and authority.

Bio-politics is form of power concerned with human life functions such as reproduction, birth and mortality, level of health and life expectancy and conditions that

cause these to vary (Foucault, 1988, p.139). This form of power is also directly connected to the pursuit, use, and accumulation of knowledge. Before the eighteenth century, not much was known about physiology, biology, psychiatry, sociology, and other such anthropocentric sciences because such disciplines did not exist. It wasn't very long ago that physicians weren't required to wash their hands in between patients; something that most people today would consider common sense. This is now a collectively agreed upon code of behavior that stemmed from the development of knowledge on topics like microbiology and bacteriology- schools of knowledge that were built on scientific discovery and technological development. Power and knowledge then, are linked through a relationship they share that is mutually propagating.

Bio-politics of a population also connects institutional knowledge to political techniques. According to Foucault, bio-politics refers to numerous and diverse techniques for achieving subjugation of bodies and the control of populations (Foucault, 1988, p. 140). Bio-politics is a way to bring life and its mechanisms into the accessible reality of explicit calculations or institutions of knowledge. This study, documentation, and data manipulation, can be used to apply knowledge as a way to refine or increase control. One way that knowledge supports power as control is through the creation, justification of, and propagation of norms. Norms are agreed upon codes or standards of behavior and thought. They are often unspoken social norms that everyone is expected to know and follow. The development of certain norms into patterns of interest, what Foucault calls 'social composition of interests' (Foucault, 1988, p.140), through certain institutions of knowledge and power are strategies for controlling or influencing a population. Social composition of

interest, Foucault says, is not only something we learn from others such as our parents, teachers, and friends, it is also a sort of contract to which everyone in a shared social body agrees (1988, p.140).

This technique of power is distinctly diffused and expansive, permeating into various aspects of a person's daily life, over the soul or will, influencing and guiding what they do and even how they think. Sometimes it's hard for a person to pinpoint exactly where they learned about how to behave appropriately; sometimes there is a clear authority that is teaching a person. There are many participating parties that imbue values and ideologies in an individual. In the end, regardless of source, the knowledge is there and most people automatically follow the established, common code. Bio-politics of a population as a method of power over life, along with anatomo-politics of the human body and in conjunction with the pursuit, cultivation, and establishment of knowledge, distributes once overtly and centrally structured authority into something systemic, nebulous, pervasive, and infiltrative on a massive scale. The difference in power over life and power to decide if someone lived or died and how, or for Foucault, or diffused and structured power, was a change in tactics of control and production. "Power would no longer be dealing simply with a legal subject over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body" (Foucault, 1977, p.143).

Foucault mentions that this increase in efficiency notably serves a purpose: to increase productivity. He also clearly states that these developments in techniques of

power act as indispensable elements in capitalism. Specifically, he says that capitalism would not be possible if it weren't for the "controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes". Here he's referring to discipline of human bodies and of bio-politics over a population (Foucault, 1977, p.141). People need stuff to live, ranging from basic necessities like food to modern day amenities like a car or a credit card. As an economic philosophy, capitalism is basically about free-market trade. 'The market' is another way of saying the capitalist means of production and everything related to those means. The means of production, in capitalistic economic theory is privately owned and not publicly shared. This is important to point out because Foucault is claiming that discipline as a technology of power directly helps capitalism, which is an economic philosophy that's all about private ownership of the means of production and in very real way private ownership of the means of making modern daily life possible.

Both techniques of 'power over life', anatomo-politics and bio-politics, play a role in exerting some influence over humans. The two strategies are tied together by a "whole intermediary cluster of relations" Foucault says, (Foucault, 1988, p.139) and also work together and coincide to propagate and uphold each other. These relations are not clearly delineated and pervade through countless human aspects of life, from large institutions to individual perspectives (Foucault, 1988, p.139). Due to their comparative outcome and because both diffused and structured forms of power play into and propagate one another, differences between these two techniques can get blurry.

Foucault's concept of power would at first glance seem to be so nebulous, expansive, and relative that it would be seemingly impossible to pinpoint a single source, common goal, or shared explanation behind these 'progressive' changes, however, in a single quote, he counters this supposition and alludes to something different: "This book is intended as a correlative history of the modern soul and of a new power to judge; a genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effect and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity" (Foucault, 1977, p. 23). This singularity is the origin of the 'soul', and new styles of power to judge that results from this network of power. Mechanisms of diffused and nebulous power would superficially seem loosely connected, their origins and purposes behind their specific techniques more difficult to pinpoint. However, I interpret this quote as indicating, that there are underlying similarities and shared relationships between seemingly complex and unconnected parts of diffuse power, and that these connections, through their apparently disconnected relations, mask a more structured underlying form.

While I maintain that both of these strategies of power, the sovereign style (power to kill) and 'power over life' can be found at play in human daily life today, recognizing ways in which techniques of 'power over life' shift perceptions and identities will help people detect these instances as they happen in their own personal experiences. Techniques of power are related through their results, like control, and through their ties with institutions of knowledge. Knowledge of a thing helps develop ways of dealing with or using a thing, person, and technique etc.

Again, the points to keep in mind during this discussion are the different structures of power and their mechanisms of influence over people. This is important to understand in order for people to be able to recognize those mechanisms at work in their lives. Once people see how power can work to control or influence them, whether through the sovereign model where power directly controls us, or through the discipline model, where people are trained to control themselves and each other, they can hopefully begin to question their own roles within these systems and structure and how their actions can maintain or reshape these systems.

Section 2: Structured Power and Oppression

As I mention in the previous section, Foucault's ideas on power involve a reformation, or shift in structure, organization, and method of employment. Authority changed from power of the sovereign over who lives or dies and how, a more concretely hierarchical structure, to a diffused network of self-supporting techniques which were less overtly coercive and involved training or teaching individuals and populations, like discipline. Yet structured power can take other shapes besides the sovereign's right over life and death. One of the important features of structured power is its consistently organized, often hierarchical distribution; this organization necessitates an uneven dispersion of power, where some have more than others. This is privilege and I'll bring it up later in the next few chapters. For now, it's significant to keep in mind how power is not only nebulous and diffused, but also concretely structured, often in a top-down fashion.

Oppression, as a technique implemented by an unjust system using a hierarchically structured power, is the systematic mistreatment of one group over another (keep in mind the greater good and the common good I mentioned earlier). Institutions can be oppressive in the conditions they allow or create, which can foster, or in oppressive cases, suppress the development of agentic capacities. This distinctly organized technique is employed to help maintain and propagate current, distinctly unjust, systems of power in place. Oppressive techniques are characteristic of unjust power systems and reducing their oppressive effects are some ways to make an unjust system of power less unjust. Oppressive power can also inhibit a person's ability to develop and exercise their capacities, such as gathering and processing information, reasoning free from coercion, and autonomous choice, and from expressing their needs, thoughts, and feelings (Young, 1988, p.496). This is another way to ensure dominating power structures maintain their position by undermining a population's ability to resist or re-shape those structures. Iris Marion Young names five ways in which specifically oppressive, unjust power works to influence and control individual people and social groups. The five faces described by Iris Marion Young lay down a foundation for understanding oppressive power techniques that adversely affect individuals and populations, and which, for the purposes of my thesis, will serve to help characterize some aspect of an unjust system of power and its techniques.

It's important to discuss some strategies and techniques of structured, specifically oppressive or coercive power in order to better recognize the ways in which these forms of power influence people and systems of thought. Additionally, this form of power, contrasted with the diffused form, is not only more distinctly hierarchically organized but

often more overtly coercive. “Five Faces of Oppression” helps to shed light on some broad mechanisms of unjust hierarchically organized power at play in the lives of individuals, populations, and social structures or institutions. However, this is not to say that oppression is only exhibited through overtly structured techniques of power. Rather, oppression is propagated and maintained by ordinary people making judgments about what is appropriate or not, what is normal or ‘abnormal’ etc. In this way, oppression and the continuation of oppressive techniques of power over people is both obviously structured and nebulous and diffused.

Media as a technology of unjust, structured power is employed against a population and helps to uphold and enforce its structure and maintain its distribution through the control and manipulation of culture. Specifically, I consider how media is commissioned by agents of an unjust power system (like wealthy, business-oriented corporations) to propagate itself and further its interests by manipulating social opinion and public support. Exploring the historical scope of political and commercial propaganda reveals an insidious technology of unjust, often oppressive power that works via a process of indoctrination to influence dominant societal norms, such as consumer culture.

Young’s five faces of oppression identify pervasive techniques of oppression that many people can recognize and interact with on a daily basis and which help constitute an unjust system of power. The first of the faces is Exploitation. Exploitation involves the use of something or someone for one’s own benefit. A political and economic application of exploitation is the steady transfer of the results of the labor of some people to the benefit of others (Young, 1988, p.496). Young describes a common and every-day example of

exploitation- that of women (Young, 1988, p. 497). In her example, she outlines the major role that women have played, often through their unaccounted for labor, in empowering and supporting their male counterparts and their families at the cost of their own time and energy⁴. Without there being a woman, in many households, to do necessary but tedious housework, there would be less opportunity for the rest of the family to develop other 'higher' skills and pursue other goals, like a good paying career or an advanced education. Women are an example of the unjust oppressive power technique of exploitation, since it is most often everyone else in the family who benefits from a woman's labor. There is something to be said about the gain of watching one's family succeed and flourish. Yet as many women report, there is only so much possible fulfillment from watching everyone else succeed, and it can be draining to always have to support and empower everyone else. At one point, it was considered normal and expected for a woman to find complete satisfaction in this type of self-sacrificial altruism, and if she did not, she was branded abnormal or hysterical.

The second face of oppression is the unjust power technique of marginalization. Marginalization literally means to place something or someone outside of the main body. According to Young, socio-economically, marginals are people the systems of labor markets don't employ. People who are economically marginalized find themselves disconnected from the job market and a means to earn a living is out of reach. Without livable wages, it is difficult to sustain one's self and one's family, much less work on developing personal skills, qualities, and studying one's environment. Marginalization is oppressive and unjust

⁴ See Marilyn Waring's "If Women Counted: a new feminist economics"

because as a technique exerted over people, it prevents or undermines them from developing agentic skills necessary to resist it and other oppressive techniques.

Severe material deprivation makes someone more susceptible to other forms of injustices and negative effects. For the economically marginalized person, attaining the basic necessities of life consumes most of their time, focus, and effort (Young, 1988, p. 498). Marginalization is exemplified by the struggle of many black Americans to find employment. The United States Department of Labor lists the African American unemployment rate for March 2019 as 5.6% compared to the 3.4% of their fellow white citizens. Other factors that come into play into the socio-economic marginalization of a person are their level of education, resources, and support systems like friends and family.

Iris Marion Young uses unjust oppressive marginalization as an explanation for some people's dependence on the welfare system, and how this dependence can make them vulnerable to "patronizing, punitive, demeaning, and arbitrary treatment by the policies and people associated with welfare bureaucracies" (Young, 1988, p.499). Those who are marginalized economically, like minorities, migrant workers and single parents, can find themselves dependent on institutional support, such as state welfare programs. This dependence makes them vulnerable to oppressive exploitation, especially if the system on which they rely for basic needs is unjust.

An unjust system that leaves out the livable employment of large populations of people also allows for their exploitation and oppression. Systems of unjust oppressive power coerce people who are in a financially difficult situation to consider trading a basic right for a necessity. In another, less explicitly coercive example, the choice is between a

basic right such as privacy, for a luxury, commodity, or convenience. Deciding between privacy and food is not much of a choice. It is all too easy to forgo something like privacy, for security in food and housing. It's important to note, however, that not only the marginalized engage in this trade off. For example, many people who are in the economic middle and upper class own smart phones. The majority of smart phone owners use an app for music or for geographical and navigational aid. Clicking 'agree' to the terms and conditions is necessary to access the app and only takes a second if one ignores the lengthy and often difficult to read terms of agreement. Yet within this agreement, often times a person is giving up rights to their own data. Large organizations can take advantage of a person's desperation or ignorance or laziness, and exploit them for their labor value or for their data.

Powerlessness is the third of Young's faces of unjust oppression. A person who is powerless experiences power exercised over them without being able to exercise it himself or herself. Powerlessness, in a socio-economic sense could mean a person has little or no say in his or her work, no technical expertise or authority (Young, 1988, p.500). Having socio-economic power means, in many ways, being considered respectable and professional or influential (Young, 1988, p. 501). To be considered influential often means dressing, talking, and acting in a ways that adhere to what is considered socially acceptable and ideal. Keep in mind these notions are socially embedded human constructions that can result from the 'training' or discipline techniques of diffused power. Systematic suppression of a person's perceived level of socio-economic personal power can undermine the level self-perceived ability and actual ability. People who are confident in

themselves, specifically their personal power or capabilities, perceive themselves as capable of successfully navigating the world and pursuing their own interests. A person with underdeveloped self-esteem or sense of personal power will be susceptible to other oppressively coercive and unjust techniques of power such as exploitation and marginalization. If a person is, or sees him or herself as powerless, they will be less likely to recognize and resist other ways in which they are unjustly oppressed or controlled.

Cultural Imperialism is the fourth of Young's five faces of oppression. Young describes this technique of centralized coercive power as a dominant group establishing their own experiences, norms, and values as universal (Young, 1988, p.502). Those who fall victim to the unjust power technique of cultural imperialism experience a negation of their own culture's validity, and are labeled as other or apart from the main group. Their perspectives, values, customs etc. are depicted as inferior, less common or normal.

For example, many popular sitcoms involve a traditional nuclear family. The dominant culture, hetero-conservative America, is featured often and as a result of consistent exposure, becomes highly popularized. Media representations of other types of families, like single parents or same-sex couples, are less commonly depicted, and sometimes how they are presented can work to support and reinforce negative stereotypes. This type of unjust power technique stems from the entertainment industry and affiliated parties, and uses media to influence and shape popular culture and the resulting systems of thought like norms. People who are not a part of the dominant group may feel excluded, marginalized, isolated, and powerless.

In cultural imperialism, it's important to consider power status and the correlating levels of agentic skills that people can have in relation to others. By agentic skills, I am referring to the capability that someone has to exert their own will and resist coercion. Those with more developed agentic skills have more power to exert their will and resist manipulation or coercion, and therefore have a higher power status. A person or a group has it in various proportions. Levels of agentic skills and power status, or personal power, are often unevenly distributed between individuals, groups, and institutions. This is how some people or groups end up having more privilege than others, or more capacity to exercise their personal power. In unjust oppressive techniques, the relationship of power can be in terms of a whole society, between one part, the dominant group, and another, the non-dominant. In cultural imperialism the dominant group has the power, ability, or access to universalize their group's experience and fabricate culture and norms (Young, 1988, p. 501-502). Manipulating culture and society, or being able to create and influence norms, is a form of unjust, oppressive power as control because it can work to manipulate human systems of thought and the resulting values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Finally, violence is the last face of oppressive structured power that Iris Marion Young lists, particularly, systematic and legitimized or commonly justified violence. Systematic because it is employed by large institutions or groups and directed at members of another group, often simply because they are a member of that group. Causes of systemic and normalized violence can be traced to unconscious influences of identity formation, for example, growing up in a white supremacist community might normalize violence against people of other races or sexual orientation so that to those living within that community,

this form of violence is considered acceptable (Young, 1988, p.503). Young lists systemic and legitimized violence as the final face because this type of unjust coercive power technique is often targeted at members of a group who differ from the dominant group's norms and culture. The only connecting factor is that the victims are members of an out-group. Oppressive violence is justified via a network of cultural structures like norms, 'common' sense, values, habits like I illustrated in my previous example.

The "Five Faces of Oppression" described by Iris Marion Young cover some distinctly hierarchically structured facets of a highly detailed and multidimensional system of unjust, oppressive techniques, strategies, and social power structures that work to support, maintain and propagate themselves. Currently there is a rise in the prevalence of technology that participates in human daily life. People use mobile phones, the internet, they watch TV, the news, use social media and other techno-cultural tools to learn about and participate within their culture. Exposure to social cultural technology helps teach a person what to consider normal and how to best go about being in the world in order to fit in with those norms. The Internet, especially the rise of social media, keeps people globally connected and can be a tool that establishes and perpetuates cultural norms while at the same time being able to shape or dismantle them. Unjust oppressive power techniques like cultural imperialism can work to influence, manipulate, and control people and society by interfering with or influencing culture. Conversely, technology can also enable people to exert their own influence within a culture from the bottom up. For example, black twitter as a web-based social media movement has created a space for people of color to share their opinions, discuss issues and culture in a venue where freedom of speech is protected

by more anonymity and diffused control⁵. Media and media-technology act as conduits for influence to directly interact with a population and in this way technology help to mold culture and therefore, human consciousness or systems of thought. Since culture is part of what a person draws on to understand their environment and their personal place in the world, controlling or shaping culture can be a potent way to shape systems of thought and a population. In the following discussion I will explore some different ways in which media and socially based technology interact with human experience as a purveyor of an unjust, oppressive system of power and as a tool that people can use to re-shape that system.

I will use some arguments from Third Wave Feminist thinkers that discuss the particularly negative role of technology in shaping culture and reinforcing structures of an unjust system of power. In her paper, "Contests for the Meaning of Third Wave Feminism" Ednie Kaeh Garrison claims that today, media is a central site of modern day consciousness formation and the production of common knowledge (Garrison, 2004, p. 52). She's saying that the media can directly influence human systems of thought like culture, accepted norms, common attitudes etc. Culturally related technology like media are tools that help people understand their environment and their place in it. Human beings often depend on their environment, including other people, to learn about what is normal, acceptable, and expected⁶. Unjust manipulative power systems can employ technology to enforce coercive and oppressive norms and social standards. Political and economic institutions, which exist

⁵ See Donovan X. Ramsey's article in The Atlantic, "The Truth About Black Twitter"

⁶ This makes control messy, since one's environment can help to develop one's agentic skills while at the same time undermine that development.

outside of the main population, often acting with their own self-interested agendas in mind, use socially influential technology to support and pursue those interests.

Media is becoming increasingly responsible for supplying the information through which humans understand their lives and reality. People use the knowledge they acquire from surroundings like friends, family, and the environment to form an understanding of who they are and their place in the world around us (Garrison, 2004, p.52) How people understand their environment and their place within that environment helps to define a society, how people think they ought to behave and what they should think. Garrison highlights the insidious nature through which the media can create social norms that actively influence the daily life of every day people. This influence can affect an entire society and the political, economic, and cultural ideologies that interplay and help to reinforce and perpetuate each other and the status quo.

One way to recognize the hegemonic power of the cultural-ideological apparatus in operation is to examine the culturally constructed tropes that today are considered normal by the majority of people like the depiction of a 'normal' family I described earlier when discussing cultural imperialism with Young (Garrison, 2004, p. 57). In the past, many TV advertisement for cleaning products or tools usually featured a white woman using the product, often joyfully cleaning up after her family. Continual repetition of this trope and continual exposure via other forms of media technology and social enforcement or training can influence the expectations and standards of behavior for people who are exposed to it. This is one way in which overtly structured institutions of power, like big businesses,

employ techniques of diffused power like discipline, which aims to influence a person's identity, rather than explicitly controlling, subduing, or threatening them.

Today, many advertisements for cleaning products are expanding the diversity of their main characters to women of color, and less often, feature men. This shift is important because it reflects a shift in the collective cultural perspectives and accepted norms and a market that tried to reflect and profit from those changes. It also indicates the possibility to re-shape norms. Garrison wrote her article more than 10 years ago. Today, people using social media to push back on oppressive norms, like the example I gave earlier on black twitter, have reshaped the workings of media. This is evidence for the capability that humans have to exert their own force over large institutions and begin to tangibly re-shape their culture and social structures. Social media is a tool that enables people to mobilize, form grassroots movements and restructure the status quo. In this way, a population can employ similar techniques of diffused power to re-shape and influence their culture, and other people within that culture.

Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake's paper "It's all about the Benjamin's" adds to the discussion of social technology and how it can work influence culture, systems of thought, and people. In their article, they specifically point out how the wealth of transnational corporations directly support a rise of networked communication, or socially interactive technology, such as the internet, satellite broadcasting, and the global production and dissemination of motion pictures (2004, p.305). Further, that these cultural, communication-based technologies are used to propagate and sustain specifically consumerist entertainment culture. The wealthy influential institutions (like social media

giants, e-commerce online retail companies, or web-based media streaming companies etc.) that support, profit from, and sustain consumer-oriented cultural norms and modes of behavior, Heywood and Drake argue, are not always positive, and often have distinctly negative effects on the population. More specifically, the authors claim that wealthy sponsors of institutions purveying consumer culture are responsible for the corresponding production of sites of impoverishment, violence, starvation, and death⁷ (Heywood & Drake 2004, p. 305). The motivation that drives most business is financial gain and the further accumulation of profits and capital, not always, or solely the benevolent improvement of social or political issues. In the same way, structures within an unjust and oppressive system of power are often in place to preserve and maintain that system just as the techniques of discipline I mentioned in chapter 1 preserve and maintain the production of docile bodies that support the institutions that produce them. The authors argue that unjust institutions of power, such as these wealthy sponsors of communication and entertainment technology use socially based influential techniques like the ones I mentioned earlier to implement techniques of power and control in order to influence popular attitudes for reasons that mainly benefit these patron institutions.

Noam Chomsky offers a discussion on some other mechanisms that hierarchically structured power techniques employ to explicitly manipulate people in a society by shaping culture and systems of thought. In his book, "Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda" he discusses the history of some coercive power strategies

⁷ For example, many businesses take advantage of a less economically developed country to manufacture textiles or products. The exploitation of a less developed, often impoverished population for production of profitable goods is frequently employed by large businesses. For more on this subject see "The Contraindications of Export-Oriented Development in the Third World" by Berberoglu Berch.

used on the American population. Chomsky first provides two definitions for a Democratic society (Chomsky, 1997, p.9). The first definition, I will refer to as direct system of democracy where he describes the public as having the means or capacity to participate in the direct management of their affairs, and access to information is open and free from coercion. In the second definition, a representative system of democracy, the public must be barred from management of their affairs. This is because the majority population is considered incompetent. Also the flow of information must be narrowly and rigidly controlled to avoid bewildering them because in their bewilderment, they can cause trouble and make it harder for the more competent leader to direct or guide the population. Chomsky says this dominant definition of democracy is the prevailing view not just today but historically (Chomsky, 1997, p. 10). A similar logic supports the rule of the sovereign, which I discussed in chapter 1, and other social contract based theories of rule, where a population give up rights, capital via labor, time, or currency, in order to receive some benefit from their sovereign, like protection or the enforcement of social order⁸. Chomsky's historical overview mainly focuses on propaganda as a form of population control, specifically as a way to indoctrinate people. Propaganda, as a method of indoctrination, is a means to shape a person's attitudes, opinions, or values about a subject, often using impressive imagery and wording and resembles the way discipline is meant to affect the soul. Propaganda as a technology used by unjust systems of overtly hierarchically structured power has been explicitly used to propagate and sustain its own mechanisms, institution, and its interests. The systems supported by propaganda are hierarchical

⁸ See Thomas Hobbes "The Leviathan" for more on this type of social contract theory.

because, as Chomsky pointed out, they entail a small group of leaders who are in charge of (have power over) a larger group or population.

Chomsky begins his history of propaganda, in the middle of World War I (Chomsky, 1997, p. 11). He describes the first officially recognized propaganda campaign in the United States, the Creel Commission in 1916, and how this committee was able to manipulate a pacifistic American population, change their core values, to demand war against the Germans by inciting social hysteria, panic, and outrage through strongly suggestive images, phrases, and messages (Chomsky, 1997, p. 11-12). The state, as an institution of power, intended to join the war. Actively influencing the population towards that end via indoctrination and impressive propaganda was a means of successfully attaining that directive. According to Chomsky, this is one of the first recorded successes of major cultural manipulation. Through oppressive techniques similar to cultural imperialism⁹, the popular system of thought changed. America joining World War I speaks to propaganda's success in influencing a society and manipulating the cultural climate towards the will of the elite class that made up the Creel Commission. In this example, the dominant group (the elite, well-educated class with economic and political backing) had massive access to and control over media outlets and subjected the non-dominant group, every-day American citizens, to aggressive exposure to propaganda. This technique of unjust power systems allowed one small group of people to coerce a large population, including members of the dominant and non-dominant group, into shifting their opinions and values.

⁹ Cultural Imperialism as Young describes it (Young, 1988 p. 502) has to do with a dominant group exerting or enforcing their idea of what's 'normal' over another group. In this example, the dominant group has massive access to and control over media. This gives them power to assert and enforce what is normal or acceptable. The non-dominant group is subjected to exposure to aggressive propaganda.

The influence of propaganda campaigns on collective discourse, for some, could be justified by the representative definition of democracy, which describes the populace as ill equipped to handle their own affairs. Rather than using threats or violence or intimidation to influence people towards what the dominant group, in this case the US government, wished, propaganda proved able to effectively manipulate the general population to change their collective minds, their values, towards what the educated elite class deemed appropriate. Chomsky says it also taught a valuable lesson to the members of that elite class at the time: that propaganda, when supported by the right institutions, like government and people, and when no deviation is permitted from it, can have a big effect on people and how they behave, what they want, and what they consider normal (Chomsky, 1997, p. 13). The success of the Creel Commission's propaganda campaign in manipulating American citizens to support a war they didn't originally agree with seemed to confirm the representative version of democracy and the malleability of the populace.

Power to successfully influence a community¹⁰ to preserve norms and prevent change is some main objectives of techniques of unjust power systems such as propaganda. Those who make and help circulate propaganda have the potential to successfully manipulate a collective through media influence, and control over the duration of a person's exposure to that influential agent. Again, these techniques primarily benefit those who employ them and help in maintaining unjust structures of power within an unjust system.

¹⁰ This is messy because manipulating a population through these techniques isn't necessarily unjust, take for example of black twitter I mentioned earlier, and other grassroots movements that use images and slogans to spread a message that tries to influence a population to resist injustice.

Those who employ influential power techniques should be held responsible for the social products of their tampering. An individual's level of vulnerability to methods of social coercion like media control and culture manipulation is also important to consider. Someone using propaganda to target and influence a certain person or a collective, must first assume a certain level of impressionability on the part of the target, which can range from individuals to groups of varying size. A person's agentic skills can make them more impressionable and easy to influence, or less suggestible and more capable of resisting coercive influence.

Chomsky describes how American journalist and social critic Walter Lippmann's account of the American community attempted to justify the moral responsibility that he believed the elite educated class had, to steer the collective towards the right direction (Chomsky, 1997, p. 14). Lippmann was also an involved member of the Creel Commission I mentioned earlier. Lippmann took the information he learned from the successes of the Creel Commission's propaganda campaign and asserted that its success pointed to a revolution in the 'art' of democracy. It was now possible to manufacture consent. That is, to bring about agreement on the part of the public to things that they didn't originally approve of, by the influential techniques of propaganda instead of using force or threats (Chomsky, 1997, p. 14). I want to stress the implications of this: in America, since around World War I, a small percentage of our population- usually with higher levels of education, wealth, and political influence- have been using techniques they created and that were proven to work, to manipulate and coerce a large collective of American citizens over time towards self-interested goals. This group justified using this kind of coercive power

technique namely because the American community, they presumed, was incapable of governing itself. The intent of media control or propaganda as a mechanism of an unjust power strategy at work, is to self perpetuate and evidently to control or 'tame the bewildered mass'.

If given the opportunity, Chomsky says, the masses will tend to organize and participate in the affairs of the state (Chomsky, 1997, p. 38-39). For the elite class of educated state leaders, this must be avoided at all costs. It would be disastrous if the non-dominant group gained enough power to be able to play a role in the running of the state and the creation of policy. Distraction is another effective technique of unjust centralized power that helps to influence and maintain control over a population. Successful distraction of a population can be achieved through various forms of media popularized in today's modern culture. Movies, music trends, or national sports games like the super bowl are a few possible mediums for collective manipulation via distraction. These techniques help to keep the attention of a community constrained to a limited number of topics (Chomsky, 1997, p. 20-21).

At times, when state affairs are deteriorating and the public is starting to become aware of what is going on, more aggressive means of distraction are needed. Chomsky introduces the use of fear as one of the most effective techniques of popular distraction. He goes over a list of well-known scare-tactics weaponized against the American public, like the narco-drug scare in the 80's, the crack cocaine epidemic, and the red scare which

proved to be viable sources of fear for many decades¹¹ (Chomsky, 1997, p. 30-31).

Chomsky concludes by discussing tactics of media control particularly by controlling access to information. He illustrates how media, which he notes is a corporate owned entity, selectively excludes mention of certain information (Chomsky, 1997, p. 42). Manipulation of the access or types of information people can have influences the means they have available to form their opinions. All of these methods work to keep structured institutions of power in place and effective. Fear in particular, is a highly potent method to influence attitudes, intentions and behavior¹². Although Chomsky's examples may seem outdated, these methods are still employed currently. A good example can be found in political campaign ads¹³.

Iris Marion Young, Noam Chomsky, and Third Wave Feminist authors' help to delineate some of the ways in which techniques of unjust organized power use culturally based technology to influence people's systems of thought. Media, propaganda, social control, and culturally relevant technology can act as coercive tools and techniques of power that work to maintain an ultimately unjust and often oppressive system. Since many modern human beings often have access to media sources, the control and use of media has growing importance in shaping prevalent power structures and institutions by reinforcing or disseminating norms/stereotypes, influencing culture, and affecting a population en masse. The result of this use of structured power is in part supported and reinforced by

¹¹ Some examples of fear tactics used more recently include the threat of economic collapse, gun violence, and terrorism.

¹² See "Appealing to fear: A Meta-Analysis of Fear Appeal Effectiveness and Theories" By Melanie B. Tannenbaum et al.

¹³ See "The Monstrous Election: Horror Framing in Televised Campaign Advertisements During the 2016 Presidential Election" by Fielding Montgomery.

diffused techniques of power. Forms of unjust systems of power exist in our lives today and implement strategies of unjust power, like the five faces of oppression, and the diffused techniques like discipline described by Foucault I discussed earlier, together with advances in technology help to manipulate a system of thought, culture, and population.

In “Five Faces of Oppression”, Young opens her article by claiming that politics is “partly a struggle over the language people use to describe social and political experience”. She explains how many people wouldn’t necessarily use the word ‘oppression’ to describe something they feel is unjust in society (Young, 1988, p.495). Young brings to light how, to be able to speak the necessary political language about oppression; it’s necessary that a person change their frame of mind from individualism to focus on evaluating broader collective social structures and practices. The direction of shift in frames of mind can change and be changed.

Understanding autonomy through a lens of cultural connectedness or detached individuality can affect how one understands the political discourse and the play of power structures, which historically have supported an unjust system. This is where discussions about human autonomy and social context work together. Unjust oppressive techniques of power such as cultural imperialism are deeply woven in to our history as Americans. Media is a potent tool that can be used to propagate and further current unjust institutions through manipulation and control of culture. In a similar way, media can also be used to propagate justice, equality, kindness, and benevolence.

Analyzing how systems of thought and socially based structures like culture develop under the influence of power both as diffused and structured is important because it

highlights the malleability of these systems of thought and structures. The fact that they can be influenced and shaped, as this chapter describes particularly by different techniques of power diffused and structured, means that we can shape them too. It's important to keep in mind how we as individuals and as a group make up, and are a part of these systems of thought and social structures. Understanding how they are embedded in systems of power will hopefully empower people to exert their own personal power over these techniques to re-shape the current dynamics of power and make them less unjust.

CHAPTER 2: AUTONOMY, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND SOLIDARITY

Different conceptions of autonomy can lead to different conclusions about the kinds of interactions that people can have with institutions, structures, and techniques of power, including systems of unjust power. How someone defines autonomy can affect his or her understanding and expectations of responsibility. This section begins to set the stage for explaining why we ought to care, and why we should expect each other to care, about unjust systems of power currently participating in human daily life via the control and manipulation of culture. Recognizing that our autonomy is interrelated with others and embedded within a society rather than as solely individual and independent of other agents and one's society, provides a more useful understanding of the effects of power disparities, collective manipulation, and responsibility. It's important to understand this with chapter 1 in mind. In chapter 1 I discussed some different forms of unjust power structures and how they interact with human lives. Power structures exist within a human social network and individual people necessarily exist within this network as well. By recognizing how both unjust structures of power and human individuals exist within an interrelational and socially situated context, people can begin to realize the ways in which their personal lives, choices, attitudes play into this network and affect it. An interrelated and contextually situated conception of autonomy could also encourage the application of personal power, or ability to influence, towards shifting current unjust power structures into a more egalitarian, just, and benevolent system. This section will discuss the role of individual autonomy as embedded within a community, and stress the ability that we as individuals

and as a socially connected collective have in exerting influence over each other, our communities, and systems of power.

Humans are born inextricably entwined within social constructs. Human life involves being born into a group of other people and therefore into a socially constructed system of values, norms, and behavior, or culture. Culture is in part, a set of shared norms and common perspectives that involves a collectively agreed upon type of social contract. Norms act as a code or set of standards and rules for how one ought to behave, and the beliefs and values that characterize a community and most individuals existing within that community. Almost everyone who lives within a shared culture has a common understanding of the social rules, and, at least implicitly, agrees to adhere to them and participate in the social structure collectively deemed as 'normal'. In this way all humans are subject to cultural influence. Who they identify as, what they think, conceive as possible or appropriate, for them to do, how they behave are influenced by and are reflections of the culture they grew up in.

In "Five Faces of Selfhood", Diana Meyers describes different interrelating parts of the self and explains how these deal with other people and one's external environment and historical background, or context. The self is the personal voice, consciousness, and personality that make up the identity that each person has internally and unique to them. Divided into five different aspects, each part contributes to a situated definition of autonomy (Meyers, 2005, p. 27). The five faces are: the social self, the relational self, the divided self, the embodied self, and the unitary self. True to their names, each of the five faces of self correlates with different aspects of being a human. Humans are necessarily

social, they have interpersonal relationships, they are often conflicted with different ideas within themselves, they are physically bound to their bodies, and they have an internal and (sometimes) rational mind. For the purposes of my argument, I will focus on the social and relational self. However, I'll briefly explain the other three faces.

The divided self is the part of a person that accounts for his or her conscious self-awareness and their unconscious affect and desires. Meyers describes this as the depth of a person, what makes her complex. The divided self contributes to a person's autonomy in the form of a highly individual and unique personality, which is the driver of many autonomous choices, values, and desires (Meyers, 2005, p.30). However, the divided self can threaten autonomy if the conscious and unconscious aspects within a person are unbalanced. This would mean they are driven primarily by unconscious desires that lack proper self-knowledge (2005, p.30). Tacit acceptance is another way that people are driven by means that aren't fully conscious. People can implicitly accept norms, biases, authority figures etc. that they might not otherwise agree with if they were fully aware of their roles and overall effects. In the first section of chapter 1 I explained how different forms of power can play a role in shaping someone's unconscious and conscious thoughts and behaviors through techniques like discipline. In the second section of chapter 1, I outlined some ways in which people could recognize distinctly structured, often hierarchical unjust and oppressive forms of power and the active roles they can play in shaping culture and people's individual and collective systems of thought, such as the efforts made by institutions like the Creel Commission as described by Chomsky (Chomsky 1991, p.22). These are some players that are responsible for altering and influencing the divided self.

Obscure forces like the unconscious aspects of one's personal desires shape an individual's choices and actions, and a person can lack control over their own lives to the extent that these aspects dominate their conscious behaviors (Meyers, 2005, p.30). The effects of advertisements on children is an important example of how large, powerful institutions like corporations can influence a person's unconscious desires towards the profit of that business, even at the expense or health of the person¹⁴. Note how a person's identity and actions are in part, shaped by unconscious motives and desires, as Meyers describes in her definition of the divided self. Using techniques and tools that target aspects of person's 'soul' (refer back to Foucault in Chapter 1), is a way of manipulating the divided self¹⁵.

The embodied self is the physical part of who a person is. This is the self as a body, as having physiological functions and as a material agent that interacts directly with the outside material world. The embodied self takes direct action, feels pain or pleasure, and has both qualitative and quantitative properties, like a face, sense of smell, race, gender, age, health, etc. Meyers notes how the physical aspect of the self is often overlooked in discussions of autonomy (Meyers, 2005, p.31). Disregarding this can be problematic and lead to an inaccurate understanding of autonomy because people's physical bodies are important to who they are and their sense of self. People are deeply invested in their body image, physical capabilities and needs, and in these ways the embodied self ties into a

¹⁴ See "Advertising as a Cue to Consume: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Acute Exposure to Unhealthy Food and Nonalcoholic Beverage Advertising on Intake in Children and Adults" by Emma J Boyland and Sarah Nolan.

¹⁵ I'd like to briefly mention processed food and the food industry as a particularly potent method of adversely affecting a population's overall physical and mental health. For more on this, see "Carbohydrate intake and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease: fructose as a weapon of mass destruction" by Metin Basaranoglu et al.

person's values, choices, and behavior. Physical and physiological properties of the embodied self contribute to a person's autonomy or lack thereof, health, physical proficiencies, and vitality expand the scope of autonomy, whereas illness, hunger, frailty, and disability put autonomy in jeopardy (Meyers, 2005, p.31). The physical needs of the body also influence a person's perceived level of choice. A single mother, for example, must worry about keeping her child's and her own physical needs met, before she can make time for much else.

The unitary self is the part of human identity that is mostly rational, and the closest to traditional definitions of autonomy. Meyers critiques overly Kantian¹⁶ mentalistic and hyper-individualistic conceptions of autonomy where individual agency is anchored solely in rational power and presumed independent of external factors like other people and the environment. She discredits the assumption that autonomous agency stems solely from the reasoning skills of the self as unitary (Meyers, 2005, p.31). In the traditional view, a person is deemed autonomous only if their choices can somehow be assimilated to reason (Meyers, 2005, p. 27). This atomistic understanding of autonomy poses a person as detached and separated from their history and their context or, in the case of existentialist libertarianism I briefly mentioned in the introduction, a completely free agent is responsible for defining themselves and their environment. From this understanding of autonomy, human responsibility is similarly individual and independent from other's influence.

¹⁶ See Kant's "A Critique of Pure Reason" for more on his ideas about autonomy.

Viewing autonomy and responsibility as independent from others, solely based on one's self, particularly one's sense of reason (excluding emotion, instincts etc.) can lead to a perceived dissociation from other people, and one's environment including culture. There are numerous ways in which a person can exhibit autonomy separate from exercising pure reason and logic and completely independent choice. All humans are inescapably a part of culture and other social systems and structures. These social structures have a great deal of influence over the people who are a part of them, not always in a positive way. In chapter 1 I discussed, anatomo-politics and bio-politics, and the heavy-handed role that institutions of knowledge and other social structures like the penal system and education system have in helping to shape systems of thought and the behavior of population (Foucault, 1988). In section 2, I also examined the role that business entities like media based corporations and political institutions play in influencing a population. Due to our socially embedded lives and the necessary interactions we are immersed in with other people, and institutions of power (like the education system and business corporations) and their techniques (like discipline, propaganda, and advertising), it can be impractical to base our understanding of autonomy solely on the unitary self, or to see human experience and choice as anchored only within a completely independent and purely isolated rational agent. An alternative to this individualistic understanding of human autonomy that might lend itself to a more accurate and useful understanding of autonomy is to establish different facets of the self, capable of autonomous actions, and deviating from traditional accounts of a purely rational, individually autonomous being.

The social self, according to Meyers, is the part of a person's identity that is encultured and embedded in society. It deals with assimilation of norms, mastery of social interaction and the adoption of culturally transmitted values, attitudes, and perspectives (Meyers, 2005, p. 30). Meyers discusses how the influences of culture and society, what she deems "cultural heritage", contribute to the formation and development of an individual's identity. Collective intelligence is knowledge accumulated from a social group. This form of acquired knowledge acts as a scaffold for an individual's understanding of the world and for personal development. Humans relying on collective intelligence to understand their environment and their personal place within that environment is something that techniques like discipline, propaganda, and other strategies of unjust power systems, take advantage of. These techniques often shape people, who they are, how they behave and understand their world. For example, people carry the discipline, or training they underwent in school, and use it to model their behaviors and attitudes about the world and how they should interact with their environment. The potent effect of anatomo-politics and bio-politics can be seen at work in the training people carry with them and in the ways they reinforce that training on themselves and for each other. Advertisements are so common now that most people don't look twice at the mass of billboards, posters, and commercials they are exposed to every day and yet they are often affected by that exposure.¹⁷ Who people identify as, what they think is right or normal, what they want, and who they aspire

¹⁷ For an interesting study on the amount of exposure to ads and their effects on school children see "Alcohol Advertising on Boston's Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Transit System: An Assessment of Youth's and Adults Exposure" by Justin A. Nyborn et al.

to be, is born from a matrix of interconnected ideas, thoughts, values, and examples, which were often not made nor chosen by them.

An individual born into a community soaks up collective values, norms for behavior, and know-how. These are used to develop skills necessary for navigating society. A cultural environment integrates the self-as-social in practices of self-revelation and self-justification that afford opportunities to test one's values and aspirations and that solidify one's resolve (Meyers, 2005, p.37). Resources for knowing the world and developing one's self are shaped, scaffolded, and constrained by collective intelligence, which stems from community and heritage. Recognizing the importance of self as social and relational is relevant to applying a collectivist conception of autonomy that can work to shift the ways in which people understand and deal with current power structures and assign responsibility.

Having a context from which to draw knowledge helps a person learn how to navigate the environment physically and socially through the development and refinement of social skills. Cultures also prescribe ways to meet needs; they disseminate models of lives we should strive for, and help to furnish a worldview that enables people to experience life as meaningful (Meyers, 2005, p. 37). A human being is inextricably embedded in modes of living fashioned by other people and developed over time, usually longer than any single person's lifespan. This ideal for how a person ought to live their life isn't always beneficial or positive, keep in mind the role of bio-politics and anatomo-politics, as well as propaganda and media that I discussed in chapter 1. Those institutions, systems, and strategies of unjust, often oppressive power that work to influence these

ideals have proven to successfully shape these ideals and use them to subtly and explicitly influence a population towards patterns of action that may not be in those individual's best interest. For example, the American Dream is such an ideal of a way of living that many Americans adopt as a goal for their lives. The trope of 'happy housewife' is a traditionally pursued lifestyle that helps foster social oppression through exploitation of women's labor and through the spread of consumerist culture. Culture is responsible for imbuing in many young girls the idea that they ought to idealize and exemplify this specific lifestyle of being primarily a wife and mother. The heavy handed influence of consistent exposure to dramatized advertisements and media, encouragement and punishment from family, friends, teachers, and other authoritative figures, along with other influential factors like propaganda, work together to teach people what is normal or should be obvious common sense, what one should strive for, and what one should avoid. These coercive, sometimes unjust norms pervade through multiple dimensions of life and interdependently work to reinforce and justify each other. A person's understanding of 'who they are' (their personal identity) comes in part from their cultural heritage because people necessarily use their environment to draw from and develop an understanding of their place in that environment. This collective intelligence contributes to people's social self and the autonomous behaviors they exhibit and can work as a source of resistance to hegemony or as a factor that propagates adherence to it.¹⁸

¹⁸ I'd like to note here that effects like coercion, manipulation, indoctrination, persuasion, influence etc. are not necessary unjust or oppressive, rather, people can be persuaded or even coerced into behavior, perspectives, attitudes that are less unjust. These words simply indicate some ways in which people and systems of thought can be shaped and re-shaped.

Understanding autonomy from the contextually realistic perspective of human experience reveals how an oppressive power technique like cultural imperialism, which I described back in chapter 1, can be a highly potent influential strategy in an unjust system that works by manipulating a population or an individual. If who we are, and how we think, and what we choose, is in many ways directly derived from the cultural climate we grow up in, it could follow that control of that cultural climate through various techniques of power would affect how an individual embedded in that culture sees themselves, what they identify with, what they value, what they consider normal, and how they behave.

The social self as sourced from collective intelligence, social structures, and culture, can act as a double-edged sword. Collective intelligence provides a framework from which an individual can develop the skills necessary to develop and practice autonomy skills. For Meyers, these skills enable people to seek and obtain social approval or tolerance. One's cultural environment integrates the self-as-social in practices of self-revelation and self-justification that afford opportunities to test one's values and aspirations, solidify one's resolve and the social endorsement of others (Meyers, 2005, p.37). On the other hand, collective intelligence can constrain or undermine a person's ability to gain the necessary skills with which to become successfully autonomous.

According to Meyers, a static culture is dead, and for culture to thrive it must undergo periods of change (2005, p.37). For this to happen, people who are initiated into a culture can use mechanisms of change and resist uncongenial cultural norms and defective cultural values. Normalizing processes can pose a danger to autonomy, specifically by a society that rigorously enforces unjust societal values and attitudes. A girl born in a culture

where her academic education is not valued or even a priority may have a much more difficult time developing skills that would aid her in the growth and development of her autonomy and self-awareness, skills such as thinking freely, questioning her surroundings, and analytical skills¹⁹. Someone who is uneducated and has poor social skills and limited autonomy is easier to manipulate. A person who is docile, who lacks fully developed agentic skills is less likely to question and resist unjust power, moreover they can be more easily influenced and manipulated, controlled and shaped. Additionally, a stagnant culture that propagates unjust and oppressive norms can also stifle autonomy in an individual and collectively. There are systems and structures in place today, like I mentioned in chapter one, that work to influence people in a population to act in ways that support and maintain their systems of values, norms, practices and institutions.

With the oppressive effects of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence that Young discusses (Young, 1988), a person, and a collective of people are constrained from developing the agentic skills they need to be more autonomous. Pervasive, often oppressive enforcement of unjust, negative social norms can be seen as a form of indoctrination, which undermines critical reflection on the values and desires that shape a person's choices and stunts the development of a person's agentic skills (Meyers, 2005, p.30). The ability to go with or against the influence of culture rests on a person's identity and perceived level of personal capacity. This capacity to question and push back against learned norms necessitates that a person is able to analyze one's self and

¹⁹ Agentic skills also require a form of discipline or training to develop. Learning how to analyze one's self and one's environment, for example, can be taught to an individual from other people like mentors, even media or art.

one's surroundings, able to compare one's current context to a desired or undesired context and to plan and shift thoughts, behaviors, values etc. towards a set goal. Thus, cultures endow the self as social with resistance skills as well as resolve skills, both of which are integral to autonomy (Meyers, 2005, p.37).

Another important facet of Meyer's five faces is the interrelational self (Meyers, 2005, p.30). This part deals with the emotionally bonded part of a person's identity that is attached to others through human phenomena empathy. Direct interpersonal connections encourage one to be personally invested in their community and in the other people who share that community. These integral bonds tie people together and influence how humans identify and define themselves; they are another resource from which one can draw to develop agentic skills. Emotional bonds can help an individual develop agentic skills via the support they can provide, like the support of friends and family, the empowerment of shared experience, and inclusivity of belonging to a group (vs. feeling isolated and alone).

Human emotional connections are more direct than nebulous cultural intelligence or social historical context. This scope of human emotional connection can be between two people, a family, or a group of people. People can be tied emotionally through different types of care in the form of family and friends, or shared interests (caring about the same topics, things, etc.). Individuals within a group can be connected emotionally as well. It is not just emotion that ties together a large group, but a shared perception or experience as well. Holocaust survivors share a deep connection to one another through that shared experience, and even if two individuals have never met, they can still be emotionally bonded via that life experience.

In the same way individuals who group together due to a shared experience of unjust power: women, people of color, migrants etc. are bonded through their experiences, trauma, suffering, and through powerful emotions that rise from shared experience, like solidarity. Feminist consciousness-raising is an example for how people's interpersonal relationships are also implicated in a person's capacity for autonomy. Meyers says, "through the synergy of pooled memories, dreams sparking off each other, and energizing solidarity, the relational selves participating in these groups become preternaturally smart, visionary, and willful" (Meyers, 2005, p.37). On a smaller scale, an interpersonal relationship like friendship can both jump start autonomy and prevent autonomy from waning. Collective autonomy is possible through a collective union and in the relationship of two individuals.

The interrelational self can also be a double-edged sword. Human ties can be empowering relationships that shape a person's self-development, understanding, and sense of connection to others and their environment. They can also be limiting and constraining. Some bonds can threaten autonomy, especially when a person is so consumed by their relationship to others that they forget or forgo their own desires and the opportunities to pursue their personal goals and objectives (Meyers, 2005, p. 30). Norms play a role in how these personal relationships manifest in a person's life. Traditional 'woman's work' and the normalization of her finding complete satisfaction in a life constrained to housework and child rearing, illustrates how culture through media propagates social tropes that can be unjust, coercive, and controlling and how they reshape

and redeliver these ideologies according to a changing population²⁰. The cultural expectation of a woman's traditional role as wife or mother, as a supporter, often as exhibited through aggressive media exposure like ads, can influence a woman to situate her personal identity primarily within these relationships, which can stunt her self-development and autonomy as an individual. These external influences and interpersonal relationships, as norms, guide a population to a certain standard of behavior. In the case of traditional 'women's work', the combination of pervasive social indoctrination provided by media, together with expected social roles appointed to women through their interpersonal ties and relationships like being a wife and mother, have influenced how generations of women behave and think.

Interpersonal relationships can also be liberating and helpful. Through the feminist movements, to return to my previous example, women have come together and shared their experiences and perspectives, forming emotional connections of solidarity to others who have had similar experiences. Through these bonds, women in the feminist movement converged and began to analyze the unjust overarching patterns and structures, such as oppressive norms. Their shared experiences and recognition of unjust power structures caused them to organize and act towards shifting these power structures. Today, although

²⁰ See "The Ever Entangling Web: A Study of Ideologies and Discourses in Advertising to Women" by Steven M. Kates and Glenda Shaw-Garlock for a discussion on how the meaning behind advertisements shift and be negotiated, and how tactics of ads can change from communication models to interpretation models to reach women according to personalized meanings and subjective viewpoints within the constraints of their historical and ideological context.

the 'happy housewife' still exists in media, she is accompanied by examples of women in the workplace and in other settings besides the home²¹.

The interplay of different norms and social rules in a culture act to reinforce one another and keep each other in place, they also usually support whatever system of power is in place. However, culture, norms, and the dynamics of power they work to preserve, aren't rigid or frozen in place, they can change and evolve. The strong potential influence that social norms and verbal communication exert on an individual and a population is flexible and reversible. By recognizing and analyzing these relationships, this flexibility, and one's own capacity to interact with these structures, a person or a community can influence and push back on norms, and culture can be further evolved. Mobility in social discourse is found in the evolution of social understanding. The way that society view's women's work has changed dramatically from the 1940's to today. Humans are a product of the culture they are born into and grow up in. At the same time, culture is also a product of people and institutions external to a population. This interface necessitates a type of collective autonomous action as individuals and as a community, to recognize and to change the unjust, often oppressive, social forces that pervade in human daily lives. Because human context is situated in a culture and society, and connected through human bonds, individuals are able to collectively alter the norms they accept and reject. In other words, the structures and relations of power one chooses to uphold, help propagate, or work to change, make humans living within that structure responsible for their

²¹ This is not to say that the work of feminism is done, many women still face unjust and oppressive norms in their lives.

continuation or otherwise and the effects of these on others and on the community as a whole. The many socially constructed institutions that help make up human lives, traditions, and cultural habits like norms, reveal trends commonly centered on a particular theme: different manifestations of power and effects of that power within a population in the past and currently.

Cultural structure could be seen as organized in a way that can control or manipulate how norms or societal rules for behavior develop and progress, as well as how an individual ought to follow these rules according to their own personal context or societal position. Norms are something that every member of the belonging group has to be able to recognize, decipher, propagate, and follow. They dictate how we communicate and interact with one another, why we uphold certain power structures and relations: how we *do* discourse. I described these methods in chapter one using Foucault's description of certain strategies of power like anatomo-politics and bio-politics. Discipline, as I also mentioned earlier, is a dominating technique of power that works to manipulate norms and social behavior in such a way that people unconsciously continue to propagate those norms and behaviors. Understanding norms and the roles they play in cultural evolution helps reveal techniques of power at play in human daily life- in coercing behavior and manipulating value systems, as well as the way that these social rules can be controlled by external structures and internal individual intent. Discourse in this context is not simply defined as a certain way of speaking or expressing language; rather it necessarily includes often implicit and sometimes explicit knowledge of a set of rules or norms that guide society and individual behavior. Many of the social rules in a community help to contain a

population within a certain pattern of behavior and are often meant to keep a certain set of behaviors in place in accordance with an existing order. Such norms are often not overtly decided by the individual. Rather they are traditions passed down from generations, often with little to no direct source, like Diana Meyer's cultural heritage. Pre-ordained, as seen in chapter one, can also mean pre-determined by external unjust systems of power using potent and highly influential techniques like propaganda. Modern humans are born into and conditioned into following this pre-ordained set of acceptable behaviors, and the mechanisms of human society and culture often ensure this continues to be the case.

Changing one's mind can lead to a drastic change in long term patterns of behavior that can span for the rest of one's life. In some cases, this can shift a person's life into a different direction and transform the way a person understands themselves and their environment- including how they deal with others and with their environment, including culture. To change one's mind and behavior can affect the surrounding environment, extending into the dynamic human community that one is embedded in, this can happen in many ways. Having a simple conversation with another person could result in a change of opinion. This is a fairly common occurrence in human experience. Opinions on gay marriage have changed drastically over the last few years. This in part, could be as a result from normalizing of these couples in media and in daily life. As more members of the community share their stories and reveal how 'normal' their lives are- people's ideas of what is considered to be 'normal' also changes. In this way, shifting the community discourse, or people's alignment of what is considered appropriate makes progress.

Disparate dynamics of power are evident in the interaction that takes place between individuals, groups, power systems, and institutions. Importantly, what we choose to talk about, how we behave, and what we value can affect the direction of shift in culture, norms, and in power systems. Propaganda, consumer culture, education and penal systems are some examples of how the institutionalizing and reinforcing of labels, norms, and culture work to uphold current power dynamics and sustain existing power structures. Individuals, groups, and communities can participate in power plays via social and agentic skills, and influence cultivated through their interrelational selves and the bonds formed through interpersonal interactions and relationships. Collective autonomy, cooperative action can change unjust structures that are currently in place. Once people are able to recognize the systems and strategies of injustice at work in their lives, they can gather together and begin to share their perspectives, draw from each other's knowledge and experiences, empathize and identify with each other, and eventually form a concerted effort to begin changing their environment. Starting from something as simple as personal conversations with each other, these efforts can grow into massive organized efforts.

None of this would be possible if humans weren't born socialized within and deeply embedded into a social context that necessarily involves other people and thus a need for cooperation. There are other techniques of power at play that work to thwart the development of human autonomy, uphold unjust structures and institutions, and keep the currently disparate power dynamics in place. This is done, often, through aggressive tactics of coercive exposure and centralized as well as distributed methods of control. The different techniques of these two types of power I detailed in the previous chapter. What's

important to notice is how both structured and diffused power techniques of control can work to set up and reinforce norms, expectations, and systems of knowledge that operate in distributed ways. This mechanism of action makes them pervasive and hard to change. Changing the existence of sexism or homophobia isn't simply a matter of removing sexist or homophobic propaganda. People can all be trying not to adhere to these norms, but still be implicitly affected by norms and practices that have problematic effects. Autonomy and agentic skills are important to continue to develop and refine the skills necessary for autonomous action. Human autonomy, as something that is irrevocably embedded in culture and in people necessitates a greater awareness of that culture and of others who share and participate in it. Understanding these points will lead to analysis of one's self and one's context and the external factors, other people and external institutions, that influence and interact with one's self. Further, people can begin to understand how they each participate in maintaining structures of unjust power and upholding those systems. They are our systems; our structures and we are a part of them. Combining these aspects into one interconnected picture reveals not only the potent influence of existing unjust systems and techniques of power, but also the significance of the role individuals and collectives in upholding these injustices or in resisting and re-shaping them.

CHAPTER 3: RESPONSIBILITY

Unjust power systems can be made less oppressive and unjust and re-shaped to benefit the good of all, rather than of some over others. Norms and other social structures are pliable and even breakable²². Systems of thought shift, and people's attitudes and behavior shift accordingly. Systems of power work and self-propagate by maintaining the status quo, through implicit and overtly applied strategies that uphold and reinforce norms, values, practices, stereotypes, and institutions. They apply techniques of power on a population, like discipline, which I described in chapter 1 with Foucault, and social technology like media and propaganda. If people can change the cultural climate, through autonomous individual and collective effort, like I discussed in chapter 2, eventually the current unjust power structures that work to uphold and reinforce themselves could be changed for the better. What are some ways that people can unify, cooperate, and use their collective power to begin reshaping their environment? Genevieve Lloyd discusses solidarity and collective responsibility in "Individuals, Responsibility, and the Philosophical Imagination". Like, Diana Meyers in chapter 2, Lloyd discusses how emotion-based human bonds, such as solidarity can connect disjointed individuals into an interrelated and unified community. By viewing our interconnection and autonomy in light of solidarity and human

²² While many or most people didn't necessarily choose the norms and biases they grew up with, individuals can personally choose to accept or reject those norms. Autonomy and the development of agentic skills are important so people are able to choose what they accept and reject without unjust, heavy-handed oppression, coercion, or manipulation. When unjust power techniques impede autonomy and the development of agentic skills, people are less able to actively participate in shaping their environment and even their identities. This can allow for others (people, businesses, institutions etc.) to step in and exert their influence, often for their own benefit, and sometimes at the expense of the individual.

social identification, a more in-tune sense of responsibility for the norms that are currently in place and the people it affects can develop. With the help of Cornel West and Peg O'Connor, I will discuss collective responsibility, daily-life practices, and human emotional bonds necessary to possibilities for collective action and for creating a cultural climate that is more just.

SECTION I: Collective Responsibility

Taking responsibility for events that lie outside the scope of one's individual agency are dimensions of responsibility that intersect with the faces of the self that relate to being a part of a group or community (Lloyd, 2002, p.113). The social and interrelational selves, which I described with Meyers in chapter 2, facilitate the formation of strong human bonds like solidarity, social identification, and shared experiences. These bonds instill a deep sense of connection between people, which can develop into feelings of empathy and eventually responsibility towards the other person. Each human being equipped with the capacity to form these bonds has the potential to emotionally connect with almost any other human similarly capable. The role of inclusive social identity can play an important role in mobilizing collective social action in solidarity with the disadvantaged²³. Research shows that solidarity through empathy, or inclusive social identity, grows with someone's ability to empathize or identify with the other person (Subašić, 2015).

When people assemble as a connected, socially aware group, and act together towards a shared end, it is possible to understand these actions and the group, not as

²³ See "Are we all in this together? Co-victimization, inclusive social identity and collective action in solidarity with the disadvantaged" by Emina Subašić, Michael T. Schmitt, and Katherine J. Reynolds.

fragments or individuals, but as a whole unit. Collective dimensions of responsibility reflect the human capacity for responsibility that applies to a collective or group of people. Like autonomy, collective dimensions of responsibility are embedded in a social context. Corporations can be understood as a collective of individuals that band together to form an individual entity that acts towards its own self-interest. Similarly, united groups of people in variously organized formations cooperate and act towards unified goals to further their own interest and continued propagation. Actions like these are often constrained by the range of groups and the strength of the bonds that connect individuals within that group. These entities form their own social structure and interact with one another as individuals. Take for example, a group of unified protesters marching on Capitol Hill. The protesters, as a unified collective and individual entity, act in concert towards a shared goal: to send a message to another unified collective, the United States Government, which is also an individual entity.

By involving sympathetic identification that stems from human bonds, people can begin to construct a model of 'collective selfhood' and collective autonomy that encourages collective action for which the collective would then be responsible. Sympathetic identification allows people to better appreciate their connections to each other (Lloyd 2000, p. 119). Recognizing how people are interconnected, especially through emotional bonds like empathy and social identification, can tie people together and encourage them to unify and mobilize. If the interrelational self gains sympathetic identification, solidarity grows. The trans community in San Francisco who acted together in outrage during the

Cafeteria Riots in 1966²⁴ was a collective of people who shared a common goal, experience, and attitude. They were connected through these shared parts of their common reality, and these bonds brought them together in action. Including the collective dimensions of autonomy helps to develop a model of selfhood that is compatible with a political, social, and economic form of collective responsibility that encourages individuals and groups to take actions towards shifting that current status quo. This political aspect is important because unjust systems of power currently in place are aggressively self-propagating through political, social, and economic methods, as I described in chapter one on propaganda and social technology.

The bonded relational self encourages people to form collectives that act and work together. In a deep sense of solidarity, the lines between one's self and the self of the other can blur (Lloyd, 2000, p.116). Solidarity, social identification, empathy, and benevolence are some vehicles for the type of powerful emotional connections that rally people to join others in shared ideals and unite in action. The shared responsibility of the social and relational self that often stems from feelings of solidarity is not compatible with a sharply bordered, hyper-individualistic self. This was something I established in chapter 2. If our sense of self is expanded to include others, these relationships help to form our values and become an aspect of how we identify and define ourselves. That's why social identification is so important to developing feelings of empathy and solidarity²⁵. Social identification can help a person see their fellow human beings, not as 'other people', strangers, foreigners, or

²⁴ See "Don't Let History Forget About Compton's Cafeteria Riot" by Neal Broverman for more information

²⁵ See Special Issue of *Tapoi*, "Empathy, Shared Emotions, and Social Identity" edited by Thomas Szanto and Joel Kruger

outsiders, but instead as peers, compatriots, allies, or potential friends. People's identities are always evolving and transforming through relations of sympathetic identification (Lloyd, 2000, p. 117). How we view ourselves --as sharply demarcated, detached and atomistic, or as expanded and connected to others-- is also, in part, based on our empathetic imagination, or the ability to imagine one's self in another's context. When these borders and separations are blurred and intertwined with another's, one's sense of autonomy and responsibility for that group can shift from what was once concretely individual to a deeply interwoven and connected group. There are many such collectively unified entities today, some of which I described earlier, like the feminist movement, white supremacists, political parties, black twitter, or corporations, which are working to maintain or change culture and social practice; some towards unjust and oppressive ends, and others towards reducing and resisting oppression.

SECTION II: Habits and Personal Investment

A person's daily practice, their habits, together with the collective daily practices of a group allows for larger coordinated unjust power systems and other oppressive phenomena to exist. Daily practice is also a means for humans to employ resistive power techniques that can work to push back against negative systems of power. Daily life actions and consistent practices, serves as a platform for building culture. Habits and attitudes contribute to the formation of a culture. A coordinated collective can use concerted effort via techniques of power accessible to almost everyone to create a new cultural climate and to try to shift overlying structures of unjust power that, through inaction, would otherwise

be maintained. Peg O'Connor describes the context of daily life as a background for facilitating instances of oppression and resistance; these could be understood as techniques of power that individuals and groups within a population can access and exercise (O'Connor, 2002, p.49). She uses the idea of language games as a mechanism that upholds or resists unjust power techniques. Existing larger structures of unjust power at work can be perpetuated, sometimes unknowingly. Daily life instances of power techniques at play can be as simple as how or if one chooses to acknowledge a comment. These micro instances of power, in an unjust system, can imply a more insidious and pervasive dimension of superseding structures of unjust systems. Being born into cultures, norms, values can help determine how much a person will uphold or resist those social structures in place.

It is easy to feel falsely secure in one's moral innocence and distance from instances of injustice, especially if a person feels they have had no direct participation (2002, p. 47). Yet there are some important considerations that people, particularly those with privilege²⁶, ought to take into account. Specifically the ways in which some benefit from living in an unjust disproportionate system of power and how each person (knowingly or unknowingly) indirectly contributes to the persistence of such a system and cultural climate (2002, p. 47). By viewing responsibility as only connected to overt and intentional action, it is easy to miss the smaller and meaningful ways that we as individuals can be responsible for those systems of power (indirectly and unintentionally). Details of personal

²⁶ Privilege in this case, can mean less exposure to and subjugation by the five faces of oppression I mentioned in chapter 1, and with more developed agentic skills, increased support from others, increased access to monetary resources and education etc.

participation like rejection or affirmation of privileges gained from an unjust system, are ways in which we take part in creating and maintaining a culture climate and societal norms. Someone's perceptions of blame, power, and more deeply, of responsibility and personal ability play into the way one assigns blame for crimes or injustices. Requiring an explicit individual person or group to blame for injustice can overlook the importance of the personal role someone has in the way they deal with their current cultural climate and in how they understand personal responsibility, which can contribute to upholding or rejecting injustices.

Being unable to recognize an unjust form of power can perpetuate an environment in which the self-propagating techniques of power can exist in various guises, like the distributed, self-propagating systems of power I described in chapter 1, and continue a national habit of injustice (2002, p. 44). Ability to step back and analyze the context of historical background, current cultural climate, and societal norms and standards increases a person's capacity to recognize injustice and to hold themselves responsible. By understanding the role that context can play in one's sense of identity and capability, a person can zero in on the influences that work in their life and target their actions towards resisting or upholding those influences, also the ways they might be indirectly helping to propagate injustice rather than helping correct it. This type of analysis can empower an individual to recognize his or her own abilities and the role they could personally play in changing or maintaining these structures. Further, when solidarity among a community unifies a collective of individuals, this group could also notice and push back on these influences.

O'Connor attempts to debunk the popular idea of what a conspiracy is. For most, she says, the image of shadowy and powerful figures comes to mind, often plotting for the sake of power, influence, or capital. She likens this type of idea to Foucault's 'Sovereign Power', or hierarchically structured power, which I described in chapter 1, where one dominant group possesses power over another, such as in an oligarchical political system (p. 44). While perhaps in some cases, this may be true, for example in Noam Chomsky's explanation (Chomsky, 1997) of the small elite leading class and their successful feat of manufacturing consent. However, the reality is that the prevalence of such gatherings and master plans is probably small compared to the number of unjust daily life instances humans are faced with (p.44). Instead, it may be more pertinent to shift the understanding of who has the most power and responsibility from viewing it in the hands of an obvious dominant group to a web of shared, distributed, and interrelational power that every individual participates in- to the collective *us*. In altering this idea, a more relatable and possibly more accessible conception of power and responsibility, both personal and collective, can be formed and from this understanding, more active participation could begin. Those of us, who have relatively more power and privilege, have a higher degree of autonomy or ability to act without repercussion, also have a higher responsibility to act. Those who are oppressed, in great poverty or need, while to a degree still able to resist, might not have as much autonomy to do so, and could also have a lot more to risk. Different people experience different levels of sanction when publicly going against norms. A woman interjecting in her primarily male co-workers sexist conversation in the workplace would have different

effects on and repercussions for, than if one of the men within that group intervened and tried to shift the conversation elsewhere.

O'Connor describes backgrounds as being composed of sets of practices that involve attitudes/beliefs and actions, these can practices, attitudes, actions etc. are often shared amongst a community or group of people. Echoing Young's discussion of cultural imperialism in chapter 1, she goes on to say that our attitudes are often shaped by these practices (O'Connor, 2002, p. 48). In essence attitudes, behavior, and practice or habit form a cycle that can be self-perpetuating. Culture and the manipulation of norms is important in understanding how people are shaped by practices and how practices can be shaped by powers like media or personal influence. People's habits, attitudes, and practices are maintained by those people who practice them, they can also be reshaped by them. If culture can be influenced and changed then the people who are a part of and participators of that culture would similarly change. Cultural manipulation, like propaganda that can work to influence systems of thought and individual attitudes then, is a fairly direct way of explicitly controlling a population.

What O'Connor calls the "microphysics of power" refers to the tiny details of power present in human daily practice (2002, p. 46), or rather, the small, almost unintelligible ways that and individual person can interact with forms of power so subtle that it is almost imperceptible as power. O'Connor points to a systemic pattern on which we can lay out individual instances of injustice (2002, p. 49). Recognizing this over-arching pattern can help individuals, particularly those with more privilege, to intentionally try to resist and reform systems keeping those patterns in place. Again, this reformation can be

implemented through the small, almost imperceptible ways that we interact with forms of power, such as not tolerating a racist or sexist joke, standing up for people who are being excluded or marginalized etc. Actors are individuals as well as collectives, as I explained in chapter 2. The different faces of the self each contribute to aspects of individual autonomous action. Even more influential, a unified group of people with a shared goal can act in concert to make great changes in norms, culture, and other social institutions.

Humans, as I previously discussed, have many different, interrelating aspects of their identity, or self, which develop from their being integrated into a culture and born into a particular group of individuals, from family to society. The social self is imbued with the ideals, values, and behaviors of the culture they were born into. Earlier, I established how these dimensions help form a person's identity. A child that is born into a particular environment or context grows and develops local sources of culture, society, and influence that are immediately available to them. This pool of resources has expanded massively with the Internet and other cultural and social technologies. What can the contextual and socially embedded genesis of behaviors and attitudes say about personal responsibility?

O'Connor, refers to competency (O'Connor, 2002, p. 58) when she describes how an individual develops their social and agentic skills. Keep in mind the agentic skills developed by the social and interrelational selves I mentioned with Meyers in chapter 2 and chapter 1 where I explained how Young's five faces of oppression can work to undermine a person's competency and stunt the growth of their agentic skills. Most people are capable of reaching a level of cognitive ability, or competency, that allows them to discern and analyze themselves, their own attitudes and behaviors, the surrounding environment (including

culture and norms), and the history and context behind these. It is at this point of cognitive competency, or observational and analytical ability that the individual and not just the society or culture they were born into, becomes responsible for their attitudes, behaviors and habits. Each individual is likely to reach this level of competency at a different time in his or her life, but what remains true is that competency is a skill that can increase or decrease with time, use, and exposure to unjust, coercive techniques of control. Expression without self-analysis²⁷ can become embedded into a habitual behavior that causes insidious harm or allows it to continue.

Responsibility then, goes beyond overt action, and attaches to judgments, beliefs, and attitudes as well. Anything that reproduces injustice, including unconscious behaviors or habits, should be analyzed and held under the critical eye of responsibility. Those with more privilege and awareness of their privilege have greater opportunity to analyze and influence oppressive and unjust power structures and should take greater accountability for how they deal with instances and structures of unjust power. Recall the example I gave earlier about the sexist conversation in the workplace. The woman outside of the conversation and group of friends, who could interject, would face a different response than the man within the group. He has more privilege within this group and more influence behind his words. If he were aware of this advantage, he could use that privilege to begin shaping the conversations he participates in at work, and eventually, his fellow co-workers.

²⁷ Self-analysis and other features of competency can develop from discipline that fosters the cultivation and refining of agentic skills necessary for competence.

In the same way a white woman has and should be aware of, her higher level of privilege as opposed to other women of color²⁸.

Moving from an intellectual understanding of norms and injustice through autonomy and power structures to an emotional understanding requires another element: personal investment. This helps foster a sense of responsibility for *our* practices and intuitions. What Cornel West identifies as the Jewish tradition of prophetic witness is meant to encourage citizens to muster the courage to care. “To be human is to be kind to the stranger and the widow... to attempt to be compassionate...to be in solidarity with the agony and anguish of oppressed people” (West p. 8). This emotional connection also brings forth human phenomena of kindness and benevolence. At one point, it was ok, even encouraged to have racial segregation in a community. The social discourse has evolved so dramatically since then that today, most people would abhor the idea. Personally feeling moral outrage at instances of injustice in one’s daily life can make a difference in how, or if, one reacts.

Cornel West mentions the philosophical method of Socratic questioning, or asking very difficult questions, as a way for people to begin to wrestle with an “anti-intellectual, market-driven civilization preoccupied with comforts, convenience, and contentment” (West p. 3). With Socratic questioning in mind, people can analyze the many factors of their personal lives, other people, and their environment and begin to analyze the current climate and normative dogmas in place and finally think for themselves and begin to form

²⁸ For more on racially based privilege, see Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.”

their own opinions. For West, this is not enough. We also need the courage to care and the tragic-comic blues, or hope, to keep trying to rectify injustices, even when the vast networks of systems of power arrayed against us, make it look unlikely to succeed. Try once, fail, try again, and fail better.

West's idea of the Blues Mentality, a stubborn sense of perseverance, a hope in the face of hopelessness (West, 2004, p. 6) adds to the force behind a person's conviction in striving for change and resisting negative coercive power. Foucault's expansive and diffused explanation of power can be overwhelming to think about and understand (Foucault, 1977, 1988). Many forces behind popular media, as Chomsky points out (Chomsky, 1997), are corporate monopolies with ulterior motives that can successfully work to influence a population. Their much greater resources give them a clear advantage. What their efforts to distract and manipulate a population imply is a presently existing system of unequal dynamics of power and negative intent. The dominant discourse in place is kept there by a set of supporting rules and norms that are meant to keep the dynamics of power from shifting. Manipulating culture and manufacturing consent are ways in which those who benefit from the current system of power work to maintain it. To change the dominant discourse that is currently in place requires the employment of other techniques of power that work to reject and resist unjust coercion and establish and reinforce a new, more egalitarian dynamic of power. Not just this, but courage is also needed. Courage to hope for possible change in the face of overwhelming, and seemingly impossible odds-- this is Cornel West's tragic-comic blues (West, 2004). With unrelenting hope, people can have courage to act, as individuals throughout their daily life and as a collective, and try to

change and re-shape unjust power structures. If a person has a deep emotional investment and hope, they can keep choosing to resist injustice despite the powerful norms in place meant to maintain the current system²⁹.

CONCLUSION

Power works in many different ways. For this thesis, I described how techniques of power and their influence over a population can be diffused and structured. Specifically, unjust systems of power use these two techniques to influence systems of thought towards their own propagation and to undermine autonomy. Agentic skills and collective autonomy equip and empower people to resist and re-shape unjust power systems and their structures. A person's level of agentic skill, competency, and sanctions of power result in their experiencing different levels of privilege within a system of unjust power. Due to the socially embedded nature of human life, almost everyone is necessarily a part of a system of power, but some individuals and groups (those with more privilege) have a greater ability to resist coercive techniques of unjust power and re-shape the system towards a more just ideal. Those who have the advantage in today's current system of unjust power, I argue, have a greater responsibility to use their privilege to resist injustice and to actively participate in changing the status quo.

In the introduction, I explained my purpose for this thesis: to explore power, and its relationships to human autonomy, culture, and responsibility. By keeping in mind the

²⁹ For more sources on Cornel West's take on social justice and political issues refer to his works "Race Matters" and "Democracy Matters".

relevance of history and context behind different terms and meaning- definitions of power, autonomy and responsibility can be seen as flexible and fluctuating. If meaning and definition is flexible, their sources varied and influential, then understanding this can lead a person to recognize the role they could play in influencing their environment and shaping commonly known definitions and perspectives. This understanding can also lead a person to better recognize the influential role that external institutions, like media and culture, play in shaping commonly known definitions, social understanding, and culture and in undermining or empowering autonomy and the development of agentic skills and competence.

Exploring 'power', the possibilities that are implied with power as a philosophical concept and as an existing force in human life, has lead me to believe in forms of power, diffused and structured, that can tangibly work to change people and culture. Power, as it applies to autonomy, can mean the ability that people have to navigate, cooperate with, and shape their surroundings and other people. Power, in this sense, is something that a person *has* and *does*. It is also a relational network that all human beings are situated in. It is diffused and interspersed amongst people. In this way, the dynamics of power are constantly shifting between individuals, collectives, and larger institutions. Power as it applies to human social structures like culture, and social or media based technology, can be understood as a method, strategy, and technique to implement influence and control over humans and human social structures like culture, language, and norms. As I described in chapter 1, power as a systemic structure supports and maintains its own existence through various strategies and techniques like discipline, anatomo-politics, and bio-politics.

Techniques of unjust power systems as described by Foucault, have been used on human populations for the purpose of establishing docility, or making human beings easier to influence and control. In the second section of chapter 1, I described some ways in which techniques of structured, often hierarchically organized power through technology, media, and control of information are being used to unjustly influence and control a population towards ends that may not be in their best interest. They can be seen working towards a common goal: influence and control over a population and for the gain of a dominant group over a less dominant group. However, as I mentioned earlier, power is a force that people can have and do, or exert over others and their environment. In the same way that unjust systems use techniques of power to influence people and maintain themselves, individuals and collectives can use techniques of diffused power (like disciplining themselves) to push back on, resist, and re-shape the unjust system. The ‘#metoo’ movement that began in 2006 was founded to help survivors of sexual abuse, particularly women who are minorities, find healing and resources. Social media provided a platform for this movement to spread and become viral and expand to reach a global community. Individuals used tools like social media and impressive images and slogans to grow a small group of people into a powerful collective of activists. Thanks to this movement, conversations about sexual violence and harassment have been thrust into the national dialogue. In this way, #metoo is an example of how a group of people can use techniques of power to re-shape systems of thought, norms, and behavior towards a less oppressive and unjust end³⁰.

³⁰ For more information on #metoo, visit metoomvmt.org/about/

In chapter 2 I discussed autonomy. Autonomy, agentic skills, and competency are human capabilities that an unjust system of power can work to undermine with techniques like disciplining a population for the production of docile bodies, which I explained in chapter 1. Developing one's competency, autonomy, and using one's agentic skills can help a person resist and re-shape the institutions responsible for trying to undermine these features. I also discussed why it's important to understand autonomy as something contextual and socially embedded. With this view of autonomy, individuals can appreciate their own lives and abilities as similarly situated within a social context. A more forceful application of personal power, or possible action, could be realized by shifting perspectives of personal autonomy from solely individual and independent from others, to highly related to and intertwined with other people and the environment. Personal power via collectively embedded autonomy, could also pertain to groups of people bonded together through various means, often through powerful, shared emotions and experiences, which bring forth bonds of empathy, inclusive social identity, and solidarity. When humans come together under a shared goal and coordinate their actions, or exert their collective personal power towards a common purpose, great changes can be made. In a culture where many unjust structures and techniques of power exist, the ability of an individual and of a group to initiate and maintain change is vital to constructing lasting change and to shift power mechanisms of injustice towards equality, benevolence and the common good of all.

In chapter 3 I expanded my discussion on solidarity, power, and autonomy to include responsibility. I emphasize the importance of human connections, like solidarity, not only as a reason for action, but also to help explain why, like autonomy, it is important

to recognize and understand the collective dimensions of responsibility. I examine the importance of daily life practices, the little, seemingly insignificant choices we make in our daily lives, and the possibility for change that could be found in these 'micro-physics of power. Since habits and attitudes contribute to the formation of culture, taking responsibility for and changing the practices that we participate in can work to start reshaping the cultural climate. An individual's daily practices or habits, in concert with those of other people, can work to maintain oppressive and unjust structures of power just as they can work to dismantle them. If people as individuals and as a collective actively recognize and take responsibility for their role in upholding or resisting unjust systems of power, then their concerted efforts could work to drastically alter disparate dynamics of power towards a more just system.

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