

Understanding Students of Color and Power Relations Through Social and Community Inquiry

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Abstract

This paper examines the systems of power in schools and communities and the impact it has on student of color. I explore how the misuse and abuse of power act to shape the consciousness and identity of poor, urban, students of color, and the ways the technology, as an expression of a panopticon technique, acts to shape the phenomenological experience of place for students. Michel Foucault's (1977, 1983) work on power relations along with my personal experiences with the system of power are used to understand students of color's experience in spaces where there is the potential for an imbalance of power. The paper addresses the moral obligations of educators to be aware of their power in relation to working with marginalized groups.

Keywords: Power Relations, Ideology, Systems of Power as Surveillance Technology, Youth Participatory Action Research, Moral Obligation

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Introduction

I would like to start this paper by asking: What is Power? Who possesses power? And what is the moral responsibility or obligation of those in power? One could argue that all students (yellow/brown/white/black; male/female/trans; wealthy and poor, etc.) have some experience with the system of power in the school and community. What is unique to students of color's experience regarding this phenomenon? What does it mean for a student of color to experience power relations? What is the nature of this experience?

One of the aims of this paper is to explore ways in which power manifests in the schools and communities that serve students of color. A second aim is to discuss the importance of future educators to understand the concept of power to better serve marginalized youth in education. When it comes to exploring youth and power relations it makes sense to examine it in the spaces that youth spend most of their time. For vast majority of youth those spaces are the school and the community. I argue that understanding the type of power (surveillance, standardized testing, discipline, etc.) that we impose upon youth of color can assist the professionals who work directly with this population. Furthermore, I share my experience with the system of power in both the social and educational settings. I explore Foucault's (1983) hermeneutic approach of conformity analysis to understand black experience with surveillance technology, and systems of power in urban schools and the community. Throughout the paper, I hope to provide a voice to young black males such as myself to articulate their experience living with system of power in schools and the community.

Experiencing Power

Many Scholars such as Michel Foucault (1977), Lewis Mumford (1989), Stephen Haynes (2003) would say that the purpose of the urban space is to control and survey the poor, to create shame, and also to create systems of power. Shame is a particularly important factor in producing systems of power. Shaming someone involves a loss of face and diminished self-esteem and induces a sense of rage. More importantly, it is unpredictable and irreversible. For some people, rage, anger, and shame are turned inward and may result in self-destructive behavior. Many believe that this explains the increasing number of young black males incarcerated in jail today (US Justice Department, 2001). According to this same report, "today, more African-American men are in jail than in college." For others, anger precipitates explosive action towards others. More often than not those with power are supposed to provide us with security but what about emotional and psychological safety? Even in prisons it is the degree to which inmates feel respected and treated fairly, to which they believe the authorities are in charge and care, that they are psychologically and physically safe. The same applies to schools and communities. People want to feel respected, treated fairly, psychologically and physically safe. Until those needs are met it is a challenge to address other areas of concern. To respond to concerns about safety by making schools and communities more like conventional prisons does little for our emotional safety.

As we discuss the topic of shame, I would like to briefly share with you incidents that I have experienced in which those with power, I felt, abused their power in acts of profiling and shaming. The first incident occurred when I was in high school. I had recently arrived in the United States from Haiti and was not familiar with the rules regarding the use of bus and train passes in the city for public school students. I had used my pass to take the train in the evening to participate in a program that was taking place at my school. I was stopped by a police officer because I was using the pass after school hours. Rather than simply issuing me a verbal reprimand I was questioned extensively and incurred a ticket and a fine by two officers on the train platform. This public shaming of a student who was obviously new to the country was one of my first negative encounters with individuals in positions of power.

The second incident occurred as a college student when I was employed as a tech support specialist. I was sent to a local high school affiliated with the college to fix some technology issues in the early morning hours before the start of the school day. A maintenance worker encountered me in

the building. Rather than asking who I was or what I was doing instead decided to call the police. The police arrived and asked to see my university identification and ask what I was doing in the building. After it was established that I was supposed to be in the building an apology was never issued.

The third incident actually happened on a State University of New York campus late one evening/early morning completing some work in my office. Around 1am, after a long evening of work, I decided it was time to head home for the night. After I had been driving for about a minute, I made a legal turn and the next thing I know an officer pulled up behind my car with lights flashing and sirens blaring. I pulled over and the officer approached the car and asked for my driver's license and registration. Apparently, when he looked up my information it appeared that my license was suspended. Now at this point I understood his need to investigate further, however, things took a turn for the worse when he decided to call the campus police officers for backup. This was all for a driver with a supposed suspended license. I provided the officer with proof from the county court that it was a mistake from the State Department of Motor Vehicles over an auto insurance scam. The court, knowing that it would take a few days for the erroneous suspension to be removed from my record, provided me with a document that I would need to show in the event I was ever pulled over by Police Patrol Officers. The officer disregarded the court document and subsequently handcuffed me and searched the vehicle. When I reflect on these incidents I wonder would this have occurred if I were a white male? Would this have occurred if the media did not portray young black males as dangerous? Would this have occurred if those in power realized their moral obligation to not abuse their power and to consider the ways in which power relations impact the people they are serving.

We have a moral obligation to understand how people deal with the concept of power and the impact it has on their everyday lives. When we examine Abraham Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs we can see that in order to achieve self-actualization or to realize one's potential there are several other needs that must be fulfilled. If students are in a space in which they do not feel safe (emotionally and intellectually), that they do not feel a sense of belonging, and that they do not feel good about themselves because they are being shamed. If we as educators are not aware of these needs not being met or worse if we are contributing to these needs not being met then the students of color that we serve will never achieve self-actualization. One way in which we can understand students of color is through listening to their stories dealing with system power. Whether the narratives are spoken, written, or expressed artistically, we need to understand students' experiences and also understand how we, those with the real and perceived power, contribute to those experiences.

Foucault and Power Relations

I became interested in this topic of power while I was reflecting on the idea of freedom in the United States. I was born and raised in the Island of Haiti in 1974 during the Duvalier dictatorship period. It was a period when personal freedom and privacy were severely limited, censorship was generally enforced, education was tightly controlled, and legal restraints on governmental authority were abolished. A dictatorship limits privacy and visibility because only the dictator's interests are recognized. The government uses military force to control its citizens. Haiti functions as a total monarchy where all power resides in the dictator, with other political representatives abolished or existing as a mere formality.

As a young teenager growing up in Haiti after the departure of Baby Doc (Jean-Claude Duvalier) in 1986, I found that for me and many other youths there was a rejection of Haitian culture. Many of us adopted the American culture because that was what we believed made one modern and free. The end to the Duvalier regime meant the return of many Haitian expatriates. They reinforced the view that Haitian people had envisioned about modernity and democracy. When I was preparing to come to the United States, I already had formed through television a certain vision of what my new life as a Haitian-American would be. I soon discovered that the United States was not at all what I had dreamt of or witnessed on TV.

In Port-au-Prince, unlike New York City, people communicated with each other and there were no iron bars on the doors and windows where people lived. Upon moving to the city of New York at age 15, I was scared of two things: First, being in an unfamiliar environment that I only knew through the media; second, I heard stories that crime and systems of power were a common practice in New York City.

The schools in Haiti were very strict and terrifying. Perfection and rote memorization were the key to everything that we learned in school. The better you knew or recited your lesson, the less your punishment would be. Attending schools in the United States I believed I would not have to worry about any form of punishment. While I was pleased to escape the strictness that characterized the schools in Haiti, I now had a new concern to contend with, which was violence and disciplinary power in and out of the school area. While many believe the lack of discipline from teachers is the cause of school violence, others disagree. They believe that the contemporary society we live in is to blame for school violence. When you walk around most urban schools, it may appear that many think the solution to the problem is to implement security technology. Teachers have been made to feel that they must also take an active stance in keeping the schools secure. Meanwhile, teachers' unions have discouraged teachers from enforcing discipline in the school. John Devine (1996) points to "the gradual withdrawal of teachers, over the past several decades, from the responsibility for school wide discipline, when the union contract removed this function from their job descriptions or reduced it" (p. 91). According to Devine (1996), teachers are now given the impression that "dealing with violence and aggressive students is a subspecialty that they had better not get involved with because they are neither trained in this area nor given that specific responsibility" (p. 94). This naturally leads administrators and legislators to assume that technology as a system of power is a suitable surrogate disciplinarian.

According to Foucault's (1995) account of power relations, "converting a Soul is a form of punishment" (Discipline and Punish, p. 17). In the context of the education system, the role of the teacher is to accomplish this conversion, to produce the soul's acceptance of the relation between dominant and resistant rules and knowledge (Dreyfus, p. 4-7). This relation is what Foucault identified as disciplinary power. Foucault (1995) notes that:

'Discipline' may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology (*Discipline* 215).

In his 1983 essay in *Critical Inquiry*, Foucault notes that "the exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 219). Power in general and specifically disciplinary power are strategic game. Foucault uses the pedagogical institution to express the strategic game of power as the game of truth (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Foucault explains that "power is not a function of consent. In itself it is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few" (p.220). In other words, power does not need resistance to be manifest. According to Foucault, "It is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon [others'] actions: an action upon an action" (p. 220). Therefore, "a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up" (p. 220). One consequence of what Foucault says here is that power does not require an operator to exert it. An internalized sense of power, rather than outside forces, can be the way in which our actions are modified.

As Foucault (1984) explains:

Change belongs to the domain of the spirits and the subconscious... it was an effort to adjust the mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals; an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behavior, their identity, their activity, their apparently unimportant gestures... following circular process the threshold of the passage of violent crimes rises, intolerance to economic offenses increases, control become more numerous (p. 77-78).

Surveillance singles out individuals and regulates behavior, identity, and activities. Foucault notes that individuals or students should “reconstruct and reflect upon the imaginary identity” and create an “illusion of conscious control” of the self through their history and the history of others (1984, p. 21). As for how teachers can avoid dominant asymmetrical power², Foucault (1984) suggests “the problem should be posed in term of rules of law, of relational techniques of government and of ethos, of practice of self and of freedom” (p. 18-19). In other words, teachers can free the self in either creating an identity through the care of the self³.

The Discourse of the Panopticon

The Panopticon, designed by Jeremy Bentham (1791), an English utilitarian philosopher, jurist, and social reformer, is the specific technology of power to which Foucault is referring. Schools have been forced in a sense to create a panoptic space in which students are monitored by security technologies. Foucault (1977) declared: "A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency" (p.176).

Bentham’s utilitarian philosophy was solely based on the premise of the “greatest happiness of the greatest number”. He believed that this philosophy should be the object of individual and government action (Oxford Reference Online, 2002). It is important to note that utilitarianism can no longer hold because of fetishizing of commodities. Foucault (1995) put his philosophy into practice in his book, *Discipline and Punishment*, where he illustrates how these practices are still relevant in the hands of the capitalist and political elites. Foucault called this process a “disciplinary power”. According to William Staples (1997), “The Panopticon remains both an important symbol of modern

² Asymmetrical power- Although power is fluid in symbolic interactions, patterns of domination do exist in society. This is prevalent in Nietzsche’s metaphor “Beasts of Prey” used in *The Genealogy of Morals*. It is clear that the lambs were born physically as a master, but instinctively as a slave. On the other hand, the birds of prey were born physically as a slave, but instinctively as a master. Like the birds of prey, human as subject observe and collect data on the object not for basic needs but rather to fulfill the need for will to power, recognition, greed, control, and domination. The paradox is that the object does the same to the subject. And that power is asymmetrical because both the subject and object are believed to have more power than another. In such situations, the less powerful subject may feel fear and respond aggressively to try to equalize the power, which is the case of black students in the school.

³ Care, narratives, technology of the self, according to Foucault, “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Modern science such as psychology gave rise to the new technology of the self where modern subjects are constantly engaged in the process of self-making and others. The process of this new identity can be done through the expression art such as grooming and dressing the self, private diary writing, video taping of the self, music making, etc. According to Foucault, we engage through these self-making process because we are constantly observing and collecting data about the self and others. In the classroom, although disciplinary power constantly manifests itself, but asymmetrical power is always in effect as well, where the teacher is the subject that collects data and gazes the students. However, the student cannot collect data neither on themselves or the teachers. To Foucault, this process of the care of the self is important for the self identification.

disciplinary technology and a basic principle on which many forms of contemporary surveillance operate, for example video cameras on school buses” (p. 29).

Bentham’s panopticon worked by replacing the 24-hour guards of public institutions (prisons, schools, and workhouses) with a more efficient surveillance arrangement that created docile individuals who would have to police themselves. Bentham’s panopticon had a central observation tower looking out on a circular ring of cells. Masking the guard, who might occupy the centralized tower, the prison’s design multiplied opportunities for surveillance even as it also freed guards from having to actually observe inmates all the time. As Staples puts it, the device indirectly forced the inmate to be “awe[d] to silence by an invisible eye” (p. 28); in *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault called this process subjection to ‘Le Regard’ (the gaze). This type of disciplinary power would make an individual docile without force or violence. These implications of this kind of surveillance technology are spelled out by Orwell’s novel:

The *telescreen* received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision, which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the ‘thought police’ plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate, they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and except in darkness, every movement scrutinized (pg. 1).

Therefore, whoever owned such technology became an all-seeing, all-knowing “god” who could control time and space. According to Bentham (1979), the technology would replace the use of a dungeon and dark cell to control the prisoner; in the United States, for instance, the Eastern State Penitentiary in Pennsylvania was built on the principle of the panopticon. Indeed, according to (William Staples, 1997), “The panopticon remains both an important symbol of modern disciplinary technology and a basic principle on which many forms of contemporary surveillance operate, for example video cameras on school buses” (p. 29).

In the schools, one of the means (process or technology) of control are the security devices and computer technologies that school administrators are placing inside and outside the school space to monitor students. In addition to simply monitoring, the role of this technology is:

to make the spread of power efficient; to make possible the exercise of power with limited manpower at the least cost; to discipline individuals with the least exertion of overt force by operating on their souls; to increase to a maximum the visibility of those subjected; to involve in its functioning all those who come in contact with the apparatus—the final connection component in Panopticism is the connection between bodies, space, power, and knowledge (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p. 192).

Surveillance has always been a part of human life. The word surveillance derives from the French word *surveille*, meaning “to watch from above”. Foucault notes in his essay *Resume des Cours* (1979) that governmentality developed when feudalism failed and absolute monarchies lost their power. Government to Foucault means “the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick...To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others” (as cited in Hubert Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow, 1983, p.221). In a modern democratic society, people do not have time to check on whether everyone is adhering to a moral contract or rules. The people give this power to the government in the form of individuals who act as “police”. These individuals provide surveillance and reinforce conformity to rules. Foucault refers to this power as disciplinary power, and the basic goal of which is to make people docile (Dreyfus and Rabinow, p.134-135).

According to Staples (1997), surveillance video is an “exercise of disciplinary power that is often continuous, automatic, and anonymous” (p. 25). By definition, Video Surveillance is a process of capturing video through the use of cameras for surveillance. The pictures are usually viewed or recorded, but not broadcast. In the midst of the popularity of surveillance cameras, much of the literature I have found on them focuses on their mechanics (e.g., how to set them up), or on their ethical and moral issues in regard to privacy. However, it is misguided for us to argue over the ethics of a technology whose ideological narratives, representations, and development is unclear. To understand the history of surveillance technology, we need to attend to these elements.

Surveillance is the process of closely monitoring behavior (Oxford Reference Online, 2002). In 1791, the English utilitarian philosopher, jurist, and social reformer Jeremy Bentham (1832) first used the term “Panopticon” to describe his idea of an “inspection house,” to be used for surveillance purposes in public institutions such as prisons, schools, and workhouses. Later, George Orwell’s (1984) famous science fiction novel *1984* introduced “totalitarian telescreen technologies,” which became known in popular culture as “Big Brother.” Orwell’s Big Brother was a form of governmental disciplinary power whose purpose was to restrict individual freedom and expression, not only when people ventured outside, but also inside their own homes. In the public-school system, Big Brother can be evoked by administrators, teachers, police officers, or anyone who watches over students. However, the intent and purpose of Big Brother in schools is said to be security.

Nietzsche and Guilt

American urban public schools such as the Boston Latin School in 1635 and the New York Free School Society in 1795 trained children to become members of a community (Diane Ravich, 1974). The children were forced to internalize discipline and to censor themselves via conscience or guilt. In his Second Essay in *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (1989) discusses the idea of the conscience in order to better understand the essence of morality. According to Nietzsche (1989), there is nothing that persecutes our morality more than our memory. It is our ability to forget or remember promises that creates guilt and bad conscience. This provides more power to the honorable man, the supermoral autonomous individual, the moral creator, the master, and elite. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (1989) notes:

If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: “only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory”—this is a main clause of the oldest (unhappily also the most enduring) psychology on earth. (Nietzsche 1989, p. 61)

According to Nietzsche (1989), the notion of guilt (German for debt) arises from a social contract with others. The will to power provides the need to be first. Being first creates guilt or debt on others, therefore converting masters into slaves and slaves into masters. Like Nietzsche, Foucault’s belief was that the most critical role that persons have or should aspire to is the realization of themselves. According to Thiele (1990, P. 915) Nietzsche (1989) believed that “humanity has no stable identity, no intrinsic nature waiting to be realized; Foucault rejected moralistic discourse focusing on norms and standards”. Foucault notes that “the individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces” (*Power/Knowledge*, p. 74). Therefore, there is no “true” identity but a mere reflection of the self through others (Lacan, “The Mirror Stage”). And our will to power at every level is the driving force that shapes our identities.

How is power manifested in education?

Control and power relations permeate social institutions. One scholar in the field of education, Nicholas Burbules (1986), states that power falls under three arenas “ideology, authority, and organization” (1986, p. 105). He further explains that these three arenas can overlap in places or organizations, such as in schools and the judicial system. Due to rapid technological growth and

change, organizational reform has become a hot topic, and schools are one of the organizations that are being reformed.

Organizational reform influences everyone involved in education. As Burbules (1986) mentions, organizations are “characterized by hierarchy, specialization, and delegated responsibility” (p. 107). The school is a bureaucratic organization whose job it is to limit teachers’ time and work in the classroom (Hargraeves, 1994, 101), and in which “the administrators are very much the guardians of ‘objective’ time” (p. 101). The ideological framework is based on “meritocracy” (Burbules, 1986, p. 110), which promotes competition rather than cooperation. Research reveals that competition can help create inequity in the classroom and further contribute to feelings of guilt and shame. Moreover, for educators “the higher administrative levels require them to place a higher value on control and efficacy” (Burbules, p. 111). Hargraeves (1994) reminds us that “teachers feel pressure and anxiety because of excessive time demands, along with guilt and frustration because they are implementing new programs less quickly and efficiently than the administrative timelines require” (p. 101). While the intentions of reforms may be in the “best interest” of teachers and students, teachers are forced to make sacrifices in order to maintain the standards that have been put in place by federal legislators.

As for the students, to prepare them for this rapid technological growth and change, new curricula, methodologies, and learning standards have been designed (it is said) to help them succeed in the information age. Foucault (1980) has a great deal to say about the ways people in various settings are dominated and controlled by standard modes of thinking and doing. As Carter Woodson (2000) reminds us that:

No systematic effort toward change has been possible, for, taught the same economics, history, philosophy, literature and religion which have established the present code of morals, the Negro's mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor. The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved. When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. (p. xix)

This is relevant to various aspects of organizational management, including management information and process improvement to control men’s thinking, which sometimes carry hidden political intentions that may subvert the official agenda of "efficiency" and "effectiveness." Resistance to change is often generated by assumptions (which may not always be true) about hidden political agendas (Giroux, 2001).

Critical theorists and educators believe that the “emphasis on standards and accountability reflect the worst aspects of competitive capitalism which have so much inspired current reform policy” (Ferneding 2003, p. 3). This emphasis creates a “political drive” to privatize the public schools, where both teachers and students become customers or “target audiences” for companies. Other critical theorists -- such as Chomsky (2002) -- believe that reform is not about learning or the betterment of education; rather, it is about discipline and obedience:

If you happen to be a little innovative or forget to come to school for one day because you were reading a book or something, that’s a tragedy, that’s a crime – because you are not supposed to think. You are supposed to obey, and just proceed through the material in whatever way they require. If you got a ‘C’ in a course, nobody cared, but if you come to school three minutes late, you were sent to the principal’s office. (p. 236)

As a result of this pressure to conform, working-class youth resist any type of reform (Hargraeves, 1994). At the same time, teachers resist the standards that states apply to them, which limit their creativity and time to teach in the classroom (Foucault, 1977).

In school, power is manifested implicitly by the way in which knowledge is shared and kept secret. This relates to Freire's (1968) idea of "banking," in which, "education becomes the act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat" (p. 72). Knowledge and reason are supposedly the paths to truth (Foucault, 1980). If you try to resist the teacher's truth, you will be disciplined, punished, or even denied of your own truth (Foucault, 1977). One of the primary tools teachers have to control knowledge is language. Eve Bearne (1999) reminds us that "language does not provide a means of referring to the constituent parts of practices but is the driving force which shapes and controls practices" (p. 20); it is thus the natural tool human beings use to control one another. According to Foucault (1980), in order for an ethical discourse of power to exist, there needs to be an equal balance in place according to which an action may modify another action. Language is a technique of power, and Foucault suggests that ethical discourses of power create equal opportunities for actions to influence each other, and therefore language is the site at which power that must be distributed in educational settings where those with limited access of the language knowledge can feel free to communicate and experience without precaution of violence

Friedrich Nietzsche (1900, 1989) offers an analysis of what happens when power is unevenly distributed. In Nietzsche's analysis of master and slave morality, people (students) who live under a slave morality do not live their lives instinctively, and they lack productivity and success. They live life on the defensive. To make up for their lack of power, they bear some *ressentiment* towards those with the master (teacher) morality (Nietzsche, 1989). And that *ressentiment* can lead to violence. More specifically in terms of education, rapid growth of violence in various educational spheres such as buses, hallways, cafeterias, and gymnasiums during the 1990's has led to the use of video surveillance to impose discipline in the school space and reduce violence. According to Foucault (1977), the function and purpose of surveillance is the power to watch and gaze. As such, security technologies aim to do more than just reduce violence in the educational setting. It functions as another means of facilitating power.

What is the connection between power and violence?

Future educators need to understand the concept of power to better serve marginalized youth in education. Taking courses that explore the theoretical framework of power and ideology in education through the lens of the work by Giroux and McLaren (1992), Darder and Shor (1991-1997), and Burbules and Peters (2004) and through the experience of marginalized group can be one step forward to understand teachers and students of color in the classroom. Teachers and students who are victims of disciplinary power and violence deserve the right to work and attend schools that are safe. The realization of a safe space may lay in the hands of those who understand their moral obligations to marginalized groups. According to Bennett-Johnson (2003), school violence is an issue in high schools, middle schools, and has even entered elementary schools. A quarter (23%) of public-school students have been a victim of a violent act at school (2003). Alain J. Richard (1999) describes violence as:

Situations and actions originating with humans or human structures coupled with foreseeable physical, moral or economic hardship, degradation, death or destruction...[It is] every action or inaction of persons or structures insensitive to and oppressive of the dignity, the values and rights of human persons or other creatures. It negates the fundamental humanness or sacredness of the person or the creature. Violence can be the result of psychological, moral, cultural, or even spiritual forces (p. 13-14).

Relying on this definition and on Foucault's discussion of power, I want to propose a broader definition of violence than a catalogue of physical attacks by students would imply. Foucault sees power as endless 'actions on others'; whereas violence is to act with force on others. Based on this distinction, I want to suggest that if actions do not have equilibrium, then they are by definition violent. If this is so, then I would argue that since teachers usually impose or force disciplinary power

on students and since there is no equilibrium in that imposition, then it would make sense to call the imposition “violence.” For example, when a teacher verbally abuses a student, the law usually implies that this abuse is a violent act. It is also important to note, according to Richard, that aggressiveness has to do with “strength, which has a power to initiate, is also a power to resist a force or attack aggressiveness is related to the need for self-affirmation and is a manifestation of vitality and strength” (p. 14). Therefore, it would be fair to say that violence is a forceful expression or act of aggressiveness.

According to Bennett-Johnson (1997), acts of violence such as assault, rape, and murder occur in schools. Such violence tends to occur in urban school areas with high rates of poverty. Concentrated poverty is correlated with increases in crime, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and violent crimes (Jargowsky, 1994). Poverty also leads to such social ills as unemployment, which creates a generational pattern of financial hardship. A study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that most students who were victims of violent crimes came from homes where the household income was \$7500 or less per year (2002). While it may appear that in the United States there has been a recent decline in violent crimes, there has not been a decline in overall crime. Violence among juveniles has become a more common occurrence (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001, 1997; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1996).

According to the School Violence Resource Center (2001), there are certain “risk factor domains” that are unique to youth violence: (1) Individual risk factors that include delinquent friends, individual aggressiveness, substance abuse, lower intelligence, and birth complications; (2) Family risk factors that include any history of family crime and violence, lower or lack of expectations by parents, lack of monitoring by parents, parental involvement in drugs, and child abuse and neglect; (3) Community risk factors that include the availability of weapons and/or drugs, the prevalence of violence, large numbers of broken homes/families, high transient populations, and economic deprivation within the immediate area; (4) School risk factors that include such things as early delinquent behavior(s), academic failure, lack of commitment to school, and gang involvement (School Violence Resource Center, 2001).

Power and School Space

This section of the paper explores the influence power has in the school space. Furthermore, it explores the appropriateness of using schools as a place where children learn both to control their desires and to follow the rules of the communities in which they reside. I look at American cities through the lens of Lewis Mumford’s typology of *Necropolis*, *Megalopolis*, and *Container space*, while drawing also on Stephen Nathan Hayes’s (2003) view of the urban space as a “container space” separated from white communities. I also refer to Henry Giroux (2001) to address the media reproduction on the youth. Also, using a Marxist framework, I explore how the media embed their ideology on the daily life of the students of color within the school space.

To make sense of my knowledge and experience of alienation in urban spaces, I want to turn here to Mumford’s (1989) description of the modern city as *Necropolis*, *Megalopolis*, or *Container Space*. Before the city, which Mumford describes as *Megalopolis*, became a place of residence, it was a place where people gathered together to discuss and share social, cultural, political, religious, and economic ideas and news. The smaller version of such space is a container. A Container is gathering places were sacred groves and civic institutions such as the stadium, theater, convention center, and university. Mumford (1989) refers to urban sites that served this function metaphorically as “the magnet [that] comes before the container” (p. 9). The early city, like a magnet, has “this ability to attract non-residents to it for intercourse and spiritual stimulus no less than trade [, which] remains one of the essential criteria of the city, a witness to its inherent dynamism, as opposed to the more fixed and indrawn form of the village, hostile to the outsider” (p. 9-10).

Unlike early urban gathering spaces, the modern city is much more like what Mumford called a *Necropolis* space. Mumford (1989) describes a *Necropolis* as “the city of the dead,” or as urban

cemeteries (p. 7). The city of the dead is Mumford metaphorical way of explaining the relationship between *Necropolis*, *Megalopolis*, and *Container*. The Necropolis or cemetery like the surrounding area or the outer part of the Megalopolis's container has always had a powerful influence in the city development: from the Greeks to the Romans, graves and tombstones lined the entrance roads to cities. Playing on this point, Mumford (1989) suggests that:

The city of the dead antedates the city of the living... [it] is the forerunner, almost the core, of every living city. Urban lifestyle spans the historic space between the earliest burial ground for dawn man and the final cemetery, the Necropolis, in which one civilization after another has met its end (p. 7).

Mumford (1989) views the legacy of the Roman urban experience as an analogue to the negative conditions of today's urban spaces, like the Bronx, which are crowded, poorly maintained, and exploited. Mumford (1989) argues that:

Wherever crowds gather in suffocating numbers, wherever rents rise steeply, and housing conditions deteriorate, wherever a one-sided exploitation of distant territories removes the pressure to achieve balance and harmony nearer at hand, there the precedents of Roman building almost automatically revive...From the standpoint of both politics and urbanism, Rome remains a significant lesson of what to avoid (p.242).

The container is a fitting symbol for the city. They are usually the tallest and largest building in the city. It provides its citizens with protection from outside intrusion. To Mumford (1989), "the city was primarily a storehouse, a conservator and accumulator" and "by its command of these functions the city served its ultimate function, that of transformer" (p. 97).

Toward a Pedagogy of Place

Is it the goal of schools to exist/function as a site where children learn about themselves and their community? If the answer to this question is yes, then educators have a very difficult task providing education to city children (Tyack, 1974, p. 14).

Unlike Mumford (1989), Stephen Nathan Haynes (2003) is optimistic about the ghetto. Haynes argues that from the beginnings of the rural flight of blacks from the south to northern cities, the black community has lived in difficult and poor urban sections. Most of the resulting ghettos and slums have been produced not only historically but also systematically. Their purpose has been to contain black communities away from white society. Haynes argues that this demonstrates the need for "pedagogy of place".

However, Haynes (2003) also argues that such pedagogy of place is lost in mainstream white and middle-class black responses to ghettoization. Mainstream white society has responded to the tough and poor conditions of ghettos by taking up the concepts of redevelopment and restoration. Such tactics have been used in other countries, such as South Africa, Brazil, and Guatemala, in an effort to manipulate space and to relocate the "undesirables."

Haynes (2003) also points out that urban space has become synonymous with being Black space or Other. White supremacy is at work here also defining and categorizing space and geographical regions. In the case of American cities, urban planners target slums in order to make neighborhoods more pleasant and attractive places, while politicians seek to develop policies geared toward helping inhabitants of such areas get proper housing. However, Haynes asserts that these efforts collide with the fact that even though ghettos are in bad shape, they have their own subcultures. These subcultures function well for many of the people living in them, working to remind them of the struggles and achievements of the group they belong to. Redevelopment or gentrification of urban communities is often an effort to make barrios and ghettos more pleasing and economically valuable to whites, and this process detracts from the sense of common struggle that communities have

survived and overcome even as it destroys a black public sphere. Haynes (2003) describes this process as the re-contextualization of the black struggles around a particular territory and space. As such steps take place in the ghettos, middle-class blacks see efforts at restoration as welcome efforts to clean up space that has been neglected because it has been thought of as Black or Other. Thus, mainstream white and middle-class black interests collude to drown out pedagogy of place in the name of middle-class consumerism. The middle-class consumerism that comes with the regeneration of a slum does not acknowledge the blackness or the struggles of the community that has inhabited it. The racial identity and history of slum inhabitants are disrupted, and the self-determination of blacks is foreclosed

As an alternative to this narrative, Haynes (2003) argues that ghettos can instead serve their inhabitants as a space of self-actualization as well as radical black subjectivity. Such pedagogy of space serves as a critical narrative, telling the story of what blacks in a community have encountered. The problem with gentrification is that it reduces the struggles of these communities to myths, and rewrites or waters down the struggles and historic movements that have come out of these conditions. It makes the ghettos into a romanticized space with no value.

Space/Class Reproduction

In this section of the paper, I want to explore how surveillance technology shapes the social space of the school. Karl Marx's (1986) concept of production is helpful here. Production is the form of ideology embedded in the daily life of a school. Because the educational system reproduces the "logic" and the "values" of the dominant class, race, gender, language and knowledge, it is an inadequate place to create a fair or critical cultural site. According to Giroux, theories of reproduction "reject the assumption that schools are democratic institutions that promote cultural excellence, value-free knowledge. Instead, reproduction theories focus on how power is used to mediate between schools and the interests of capital" (p. 76). When you ask students why they attend school, their responses are likely to center around becoming a professional in a prestigious field so as to make a lot of money. The idea is that students are taught to believe that the only way to get ahead in life is to obtain an education for the purpose of profit. They are not taught to be critical of the system that embedded those ideas into their heads. Education might be not about making money, but about learning to think rationally and critically—and I would argue that that's what it should be about.

According to Maxine Greene's (1988) book, *The Dialectic of Freedom*, the media has a tremendous effect on the way children and adolescents think about the world. Greene argues that students have become unfulfilled and empty as they have increasingly sought value and meaning in material objects. According to Green (1988), this trend is encouraged by media that market sex and violence to adolescents, demonstrating that advertisers are more concerned with profitability than with social good. Green (1988) states that, "Little is done to counter media manipulation of the young into credulous and ardent consumers of sensation, violence, criminality, things. They are instructed that human worth depends on the possession of commodities" (p.12). In a context in which both media representations and security markets are motivated by profit, it has become difficult to assess the effectiveness of security technology in dealing with violence in the public-school system. From a research perspective, there can be no controlled experiments, but only anecdotal evidence. Most school administrators and educational bureaucrats are reactive to violence rather than proactive (Toby Jackson, 1985), and their knee-jerk reactions prefer quick and immediately profitable fixes. Such reactions are facilitated by the marketing of security technology, so that school security guards and metal detectors are put in place as soon as an incident has occurred. As the report of the Safe School Study put it: "Security personnel do not cause crime, but crime causes schools to hire security personnel, [to purchase security equipment], and our multivariate analysis cannot distinguish between these two explanations" (Toby, 128).

Giroux (2001) believes that the concept of social reproduction originates from a Marxist discourse of economics that downplays politics, ideology, and the culture of modern conditions. Giroux notes that "schooling represents a major social site for the construction of subjectivities and

dispositions, a place where students from different social classes learn the necessary skills to occupy their class-specific locations” (p. 78). Giroux uses Louis Althusser (1971) and Samuel Bowles/Herbert Gintis (1976) to construct a framework of analysis that critiques the theoretical conceptualization of social reproduction of schooling. Althusser argues that Marx’s base-superstructure or cause-and-effect determination of economic theory is not sufficient to explain the social reproduction of schooling. Instead, Althusser (1971) suggests that we should look at *repressive state apparatus* such as police/teachers, and *ideological state apparatus* such as schools, both of which operate with a more stringent authoritarian form of discipline and control. For example, at several of the inner-city schools in the Bronx, three to five police cars are stationed by the school’s entrance, which makes the space appear dangerous. At each corner of the school building, video surveillance cameras are installed to gaze on anyone onsite. Instead of Althusser’s *ideological state apparatus*, Bowles and Gintis (1976) use the notion of the *correspondence principle* which states that students learn to be obedient, compliant, dependable, and motivated by external rewards in the workforce (wage) and in school (grades). Overall, “the educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system” (p. 84).

Giroux (2001) believes that theories of cultural reproduction agree with theories of social reproduction in their sense of power. Theories of cultural reproduction deal with the process by which different cultures reproduce both themselves (socialization) and relationships of dominance / subordination within them. Giroux uses work from Bourdieu to explain this phenomenon, particularly Bourdieu’s notion of the *habitus*. It is usually thought that the choices that we make are based on free will, but the notion of *habitus* says otherwise. Bourdieu argues that choices for action are in theory limitless, but in practice are influenced and limited by the dominant culture. Therefore, creativity, innovation, and concept development do not belong to individuals, but rather to a structure of power in the culture.

Giroux goes on to use Basil Bernstein (1977) to analyze cultural reproduction as a major force that structures student experiences in schools. Bernstein uses *collection code* and *integrated code* to make his argument. Collection code and integrated code are dominant codes that educational systems use to shape the subject’s identity and experience. Collection codes “underlie the division of labor at the heart of the educational experience” (p. 96). In schools, the students are, according to Freire (1968), “depositories” while the teachers are the “depositors”. The integrated code is present in the curriculum, in which subjects and categories become more integrated. However, it leaves more space for negotiation between students and teachers.

Since the traditional Marxist discourse is not sufficient to explain the relations between schooling and the dominant culture, a modified Marxist or neo-Marxist approach has to be employed to better understand and analyze the cultural condition and curricula of schools. The neo-Marxist approach provides us with a more practical instrument for conducting research in the school setting, using a *semiotic apparatus* and its approach to analyze participatory ethnographic data. Giroux notes that the new notion of interpreting the data can be found in the work of David Hargreaves (1982), Willis Paul (1977), Michael Apple (1982), and Michelle Fine (2008).

Conclusion

Since each school has its own culture, I suggest that a longitudinal, humanitarian or libertarian approach be used to explore the power relations that exists in the schools and communities that serve students of color. Moreover, I suggest that schools create a critical pedagogical curriculum in which power can be more democratically shared (Antonia Darder, 2003; Paulo Freire, 1968; Henry Giroux, 2001; Ira Shor, 1996) and that students are provided the space to share their experiences and narratives of their encounters with systems of power. These suggestions propose an alternative approach to understanding the issue of power relations school, how power shapes identity, and how we as educators may (knowingly or unknowingly) contribute to feelings of shame, guilt, and powerlessness and how this manifest itself in many forms for students of color. This approach requires that we ask teachers whether they are contributing to or re-enforcing the power discipline curriculum that is commonplace in most schools..

The technology of the oppressed is a system of power and control. It is not instrumental rather a substantive process that we created to extend our desire to control. We have learned from the western world that the self can be recognized or manifested through the process of controlling others. Like any other technology, security surveillance technology in urban schools oppresses and alienates students from themselves.

In the past decade, we have learned from historians and philosophers the impact technology has on us. So, why are we still using it? Based on what we have learned about the essence of man from Bentham (1832, 1995) and Nietzsche (1900, 1989), it makes perfect sense why man cannot detach himself from technology. Producing technology is like producing children. Man knows how much work is required in order to support his children and the woman knows how much pain she will have to go through in order to have their children. But, as selfish as man can be, they still decide to have children no matter how painful it is or will be in the years to come. Therefore, this tells you that pain does not matter as long their creation brings forth the basic need of completeness, self-identification, and happiness to their lives.

Technology brings all basic needs that man wants and that is why we cannot detach from it. Asking a human being to surrender their need for control of others is as painful as being shot with a gun. However, the least we can do is to ask those who fulfill these technologies in our society to share part of themselves, open their heart, bring and understand the pain.

We are living at a time when they have to deal with a technology that dehumanizes, monitors and scrutinizes their body and soul in the school. Jacques Ellul (1964) stated that "Education no longer has a humanist end or any value in itself; it has only one goal, to create technicians" (p. 248). The aim is to sell or force "good" knowledge on students that will benefit an elite power structure. From my own experience to the narrative in the invisible man, we are all victims of the oppression system. In the invisible man, the modern institutional and social system has gone far from its master to the point that it has become a challenge to accommodate it to their and others lifestyle. The technology has alienated black people for so long that it has made them feel that the alienation experienced by Shakespeare's Caliban is normal. Black people did not choose or were born as a Caliban. However, the new modern science and technological mode of production, which Marx refers to as capitalist mode of production, has transformed both its master and its master's oppressees. Marx notes that "production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the human commodity, man in the role of commodity; it produces him in keeping with this role as a mentally and physically dehumanized being" (Marx, 1964, p. 121). If young black man is to help himself, he needs to realize the alienation that has been placed upon him. He needs to realize that this alienation is the root of his anger towards himself and society. Martin Heidegger (1977) believes through fine art or poetic revealing that the true self can be found. He notes that "the poetical brings the true into the splendor of what Plato in the Phaedrus calls to ekphanestaton, that which shines forth most purely. The poetical thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of coming to presence into the beautiful" (p. 34). That is exactly what Foucault refers to as the "techniques of the self". You do not make the self happy or safe by treating it like a system by observing, collecting data, and giving treatment based on feedback per se rather you respect and love the body the same way you would love and respect the mind. You do not attempt to change or control the body rather you give the body the fundamentals to make it happy. You let the body and mind communicate with the oppressor (security surveillance technology aka technology of control). As Foucault notes, this form of communication can be diary writing, video-taping, oral expression, etc. As Freire (1968) notes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism is the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must

generate other acts of freedom; otherwise it is not love. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue (p. 89-90).

Therefore, there is a need for those with power, whether the power is real or perceived, to understand the impact the power relation has on their understanding of student of color.

Surveillance has always been a part of human life. The word surveillance derives from the French word *surveille*, meaning, “to watch from above”. As a child, I was taught that God was always above me. If I did something “bad” or sinned, I knew that God would know and punish me. As an adult, one would not think that the same philosophy or belief would be imposed upon us a form of governmentality.

In a modern democratic society, people do not have the time to monitor whether everyone is adhering to a moral contract or rules. The people give this power to the government in the form of individuals who act as “police.” These individuals provide surveillance and reinforce conformity to rules. Foucault refers to this power as disciplinary power, and the basic goal of which is to make people docile or obedient.

Surveillance technology is traditionally defined as close observation, especially of a suspected spy or criminal. Others define surveillance as “any collection and processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data have been garnered...scrutiny through the use of technical means to extract or create personal or group data, whether from individuals or contexts” (p. 2). Examples include video surveillance cameras; computer matching, profiling, and data mining; computer and electronic location monitoring; weapons detection devices. Various self-administered tests and thermal and other forms of imaging to reveal what is behind walls and enclosures. In the case of schools, any surveillance activities involving the collection, retention, use, disclosure, and disposal of personal information in the form of security surveillance must comply with the guidelines of the National Institute of Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice.

When we can no longer cover up the pain and violence that abuses of power is causing to our society, especially our youth, we (those with power) extend ourselves to various technical apparatus, such as surveillance technology (technology of control), to do the job for us. And when that technology fails or causes more pain, we invent an extended version of technology not only to protect us, but also to protect the technology from itself. The question remains: when do realize enough is enough? We need to think through, have a space to express, and have access to educational technologies, knowledge, and ideas to confess and testify and further create mutual promise and forgiveness and it is only then that we will be liberated and put a closure to violence in the self and the community. It is my hope that the readers of this paper, many of whom may be school leaders, future educators, or professors of pre-service educators who are entrusted with the protection and safety of students take some time to ask, “what is my moral obligation as an educator” but more importantly, “What is my moral obligation as a human being interacting with another human being” particularly those who are different from me?

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