

A critical analysis of the power theories of Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas in the context of higher education research

Victor J. Pitsoe, Department of Leadership and Management College of Education, University of South Africa, Pitsovj@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

The article adopts three theoretical frameworks to explore the intricacies of "power." His discourse ethics contradict Habermas's belief in oppressive power. Free speech and ethical debates disregard power, contrary to Foucault's claim that the two are intrinsically related. Contrary to Foucault's insistence that power and history were inseparably linked, Habermas argued that one might seek truth apart from the other. There are two perspectives on power in Bourdieu's dialectical materialism: the subjective and the objective. Work is controversial, relevant, and dynamic, in his view. Habitus symbolism may shed light on the ways in which players unwittingly adhere to social norms. On one point, Bourdieu differs with Habermas: power is something that happens in society and in people's lives. Bourdieu uses Marx's theory of power to promote equality and comprehend social stratification. Ideologies of dominating power impact academics' problem-solving and report-writing. In contrast to Habermas's power-seeking consciousness, Bourdieu's practice-based, sophisticated perspective goes beyond structures and individuals. The disciplinary power of Foucault exposes patterns of covert speech, in opposition to Habermas's aim for free speech principles. The term "power" covers a wide range of events with various features; therefore, picking the correct theory to examine is vital.

Keywords: *Power, Discourse, Social Stratification, Ethics, Habitus, Symbolic Power, Liberty, Self-Determination*

1 Introduction and Background

Everyday power is exercised by certain people or groups to impact other people (Travaglino & Abrams, 2019). The philosophy of consciousness forms the basis of the mainstream Western paradigm, which in turn shapes this view. There is a distinct schism between the privileged and the oppressed, as well as between the rational and independent person, according to this perspective, which is central to individual-centred psychology. Yet, research in disciplines like anthropology, archaeology, and sociology challenges this prevailing view, pointing instead to the intricate nature of power as something that defies simplicity. The assumption that power is held by an elite few has been challenged by recent research, such as Thurston and Fernández-Götz (2021) (Izhaki & Safriel, 1989). Archaeological objects like temple ruins, the existence of dead kings, and the evacuation of key towns provide evidence of internal forces that undermined established control. Finding assembly venues, voting tokens, and removing insignia associated with the elite establishes commoners' authority and allows them to negotiate power-sharing agreements. When trying to make sense of complex human behaviour, theories of power can be useful frameworks (Zhang, 2023; Izhaki & Safriel, 1989).

In this article, I take a philosophical and analytical look at the works of Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel Foucault to see how they each understand power. The objective is to extrapolate these theories' implications to the social context of the present day. According to Habermas, who finds his ideas in Kant, the human subject is characterised by reason and autonomy in decision-making, and they are always interacting with their surroundings. The concept of habitus, proposed by Bourdieu and grounded in dialectical materialism, contributes to the formation of a unique human identity. Foucault challenges objective truth and traditional wisdom by bringing together power and knowledge. A philosophical discourse ensues, dissecting the intricate features of both perspectives, which are intricately linked to their divergent understandings of power. Careful analysis of analytical potentials is performed through abstraction. Philosophical discussions permeate the entire study endeavour, influencing both the findings and our understanding of the universe.

Social scientists need to carefully consider the theoretical frameworks they employ due to the interconnected nature of different theories. Studying power is crucial since these theories are

interconnected. Habermas, Bourdieu, and Foucault all offer fresh perspectives on the subject by drawing on different theoretical frameworks. The analysis looks at the interplay between different beliefs to acquire a fuller view of society. The intricate web of intellectual discourse is enhanced by the examinations of the tensions between Bourdieu and Foucault by Cronin (1996), the philosophical disputes between Habermas and Foucault by Kelly (1994), and Ashenden and Owen (1999). Butler (1999) argues that by incorporating Foucauldian and poststructuralist viewpoints, this article expands Bourdieu's theory. The article explores the extensive works of Habermas, Bourdieu, and Foucault while adhering to the given parameters. Given the complexity of these concepts, further study outside of this theoretical framework is necessary to close knowledge gaps in areas such as philosophy, power, and human nature.

2 Exploring the Relationship Between Habermas's Works on Power and Ethics

In the Western understanding of power, variables such as dualism, conflict, and individual possession are considered (Wikstrøm Svěrák, 2023; Cronin, 1996). Because he has used this conventional Western understanding of authority to colour his theoretical writings, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas is at the heart of our investigation. According to Maus (2017), Habermas, a leading figure in the development of communicative action theory and discourse ethics, incorporates aspects of deontology proposed by Immanuel Kant and draws influence from Marx and dialectical materialism. Habermas lays out his ethical goals within the framework of Kant's categorical imperative, which encourages individuals to act in a way that could become the standard for how we all ought to treat one another (Lopez Frias, 2019). Contrary to Kant's categorical imperative, Habermas' discourse ethics emerges from a universal standard grounded in rational speech. Your position, no matter how strong, will be amplified here, with "the better argument" serving as the dominant force.

A reasonable person's communication skills include, among other things, the ability to state their opinions and back them up with evidence (Burke et al., 2023). Elements of this concept include accepting responsibility for one's actions, even in the face of criticism, and continuously achieving one's stated goals (Habermas, 1984, p. 15). A rational, free-willed human being capable of freely forming moral beliefs is the subject of the Enlightenment, according to Habermas and Kant. To "neutralise the imbalance of power" and promote equality, Habermas (1984) argues that the fundamental right to freedom of expression is the foundation of ethical speech. Whether it's individuals, governments, or organisations, Habermas contends that everyone in a position of power is vulnerable to corruption. This kind of thinking rejects Enlightenment principles because it pits authority against reason. Marxist writings by Habermas further complicate the issue of power by highlighting the interconnectedness of social institutions, the economy, and upbringing, all of which seek to discredit authority (Habermas, 1973).

There is a compelling argument in Habermas's complex web of ideas for reducing power dynamics and opportunity disparities by making people feel helpless. He disagrees with Michel Foucault on this issue because, in his view, such goals are utopian (Ashenden & Owen, 1999). Habermas claims that by focusing solely on Foucault's power-centric theory, the philosopher reduces the complexities of social modernity in his critique (Habermas 1994, p. 102). The enormous conflict between opposing viewpoints becomes crystal clear when seen through this lens. The appropriateness and usefulness of making people feel helpless do not conflict with Habermas's ethical ideals. While repression is one form of power, Foucault differentiates between others. Discourse is one way in which power shapes human people, argues Foucault (Hull, 2021). In this article, we will explore this hypothesis further.

Contrasting to Foucault's intellectual terrain, Habermas's landscape does not emerge in tones but rather the reverse. Their divergent views on power and the complex nature of their own mental landscapes are encapsulated in their argument. We learn about power and its effects on individuals as we delve into the complex web of their perspectives as the narrative progresses. New details added to this continuing discourse weave concepts into the tapestry of understanding and prompt contemplation of the role of power in shaping our worldview.

3 How Bourdieu Views Habitus and Symbolic Power

Habitus and symbolic power are critical concepts in Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework, which is significantly related to social life (Alpay, 2022). Symbolic power includes the ability to generate meaning

and perceptions, whether through direct control or the more covert effect of cultural capital and symbols. As an alternative, habitus refers to ingrained patterns of behaviour and embodied dispositions that impact one's social interactions (Bukovska et al., 2021). The interplay between these concepts elucidates Bourdieu's profound comprehension of the dynamics that uphold and threaten social systems. Both Verharen (1995) and Cronin (1996) lay out the dualistic, conflictual, and possessive conception of power that is prevalent in Western philosophy. This inquiry focuses on the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas because of the influence of the traditional Western view of power on his writings. Among Habermas's many influences are Marx's dialectical materialism and Kant's deontology; he was a major player in the evolution of communicative action theory and discourse ethics (Maus, 2017, p. 75).

Habermas uses Kant's categorical imperative—which urges people to engage in activities that potentially acquire worldwide acceptance—to attain his moral goals. Habermas' discourse ethics stem from a universal principle that upholds rational communication, in contrast to Kant's categorical imperative, which is grounded in an absolute principle. All viewpoints are equally valid, and "the better argument" holds sway in this case (Andrade Coelho Moreira, 2023). Part of being a communicative rationalist is being able to state the reasoning and provide evidence to back it up. Part of this idea is reacting in a way that supports one's stated objectives and taking ownership of one's actions, criticism or no criticism (Habermas, 1984, 16). To paraphrase Hannan (2015), Habermas follows in Kant's footsteps by acknowledging that the Enlightenment's rational, free-willed human subjects can form independent moral judgements. If we want to "neutralise the imbalance of power" and level the playing field, according to Habermas, we must be free from power in order to speak ethically. All forms of power structures—national, organisational, and personal—inherently include corruption, according to Habermas (Popelo, 2022). Such a way of thinking opposes Enlightenment ideas since it pits authority against reason. According to Habermas (1973), his Marxist worldview further undermines power by blaming differences in origin, social class, and education.

In his intricate network of ideas, Habermas makes a compelling case for fighting power dynamics and opportunity inequality by making individuals less powerful (Ashenden & Owen, 1999). However, Foucault argues that such aims are unattainable. Habermas suggests that Foucault simplified social modernity in order to prove his power-centric thesis and that power is a repressive force (1994, p. 102). The glaring disagreement between the two opposing viewpoints is highlighted when seen from this perspective. Constructing helpless situations in a positive and moral way is in line with Habermas' ethical goals (Habermas, 2021). However, Foucault sees power in a multi-faceted manner, going beyond mere repression. Below, we will examine Foucault's idea of power and its impact on individuals through various types of discourse.

Habermas' philosophical landscape, in contrast to Foucault's, develops in nuances of conflicting tones. Their contrasting views on power are evident in the ferocity of their argument. We dive into their thoughts as the narrative goes, investigating how power affects people and what power is. With each new development in this ongoing struggle, we stop to consider the role of power and its impact on our perspective on the world. Habitus and symbolic power are essential concepts in Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework, which is strongly related to social life (Alpay, 2022). Symbolic power includes the ability to generate meaning and perceptions, whether through direct control or the more covert effect of cultural capital and symbols. Habitus, in contrast, includes ingrained habits and embodied dispositions that impact social behaviour and reaction (Molotokas & Didenko, 2022). The interplay between these concepts elucidates Bourdieu's profound comprehension of the dynamics that uphold and threaten social systems.

According to Cronin (1996) and Perrett (1985), Western philosophy is characterised by a dualistic, conflictual, and possessive view of power. This inquiry focuses on the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas because of the influence of the traditional Western view of power on his writings. Among Habermas's many influences are Marx's dialectical materialism and Kant's deontology; he was a major player in the evolution of communicative action theory and discourse ethics (Maus, 2017, p. 75). Habermas uses Kant's categorical imperative—which urges people to engage in activities that potentially acquire worldwide acceptance—to attain his moral goals. Habermas' discourse ethics stem from a universal principle that upholds rational communication, in contrast to Kant's categorical imperative, which is grounded in an absolute principle. Each person's viewpoint is equally valid, but "the better argument" has the upper hand here (Allen, 2012).

Part of being a communicative rationalist is being able to state your case and provide evidence to back it up. Part of this idea is reacting in a way that supports one's stated objectives and taking ownership of one's actions, criticism or no criticism (Habermas, 1984, 16). A rational, free-willed human subject can generate autonomous moral assessments, according to Habermas, who follows in Kant's footsteps (Feldhaus, 2020). If we want to "neutralise the imbalance of power" and level the playing field, according to Habermas, we must be free from power in order to speak ethically. Whether at the national, organisational, or individual level, corruption is inherent in all power arrangements, argues Habermas. The Enlightenment ideals are opposed to this kind of thinking because it pits authority against reason. According to Habermas (1973), his Marxist worldview further undermines authority by blaming differences in origin, social class, and education.

In his intricate network of ideas, Habermas makes a compelling case for fighting power dynamics and opportunity inequality by making individuals less powerful. (Ashenden & Owen, 1999) However, Foucault argues that such aims are unattainable. Habermas argues that Foucault simplified social modernity in order to prove his power-centric thesis and that power is a repressive force (1994, p. 102). The glaring disagreement between the two opposing viewpoints is highlighted when seen from this perspective. Creating helpless situations in a positive and moral way is in line with Habermas' ethical goals (Habermas, 2021). However, Foucault sees power in a multi-faceted manner, going beyond mere repression. Below, we will examine Foucault's idea of power and its impact on individuals through various types of discourse. In conclusion, Habermas' philosophical terrain unfolds in gradations of conflicting tones when contrasted with Foucault. Their contrasting views on authority are evident in the ferocity of their argument. We dive into their thoughts as the narrative goes, investigating how power affects people and what power is. With each new development in this ongoing struggle, we stop to consider the role of power and its impact on our perspective on the world.

4 Disciplinary Power and Discourse in Michel Foucault's Work

Foucault, a prominent French philosopher and social theorist, revolutionised our understanding of power dynamics by exploring the connection between disciplinary power and speech (Ahen, 2019). Foucault (1994a) examines the intricate ways in which institutions like schools, hospitals, prisons, and the military exert power over individuals. By shifting the focus from traditional ideas of power as ownership to its more nuanced role as an ingrained productive force in everyday practices, he provides a more nuanced perspective on disciplinary authority. In a similar vein, Foucault (1994a) coined the term "power/knowledge" to emphasise the inescapable bond between power and knowledge, demonstrating how they are mutually dependent. In this introductory section, we survey Foucault's writings on the microphysics of power and its impact on specific subjectivities; future sections may explore his work in deeper detail.

When looking at the ontological and epistemic foundations of power, it is clear that Foucault and Bourdieu share similar perspectives. Unlike Bourdieu's essentialist framework and ontology, Foucault's (1994b) anti-essentialist ontology places an emphasis on language, discourse, and history rather than thesis. By comparing Foucault's (1994a) analysis of power with that of the prison, we can see how their theoretical underpinnings are different. Foucault argued that traditional conceptions of power were inadequate in explaining the origins, evolution, and various functions of prisons. The difference between judicial and disciplinary power dawned on him (Kelly, 1994). Centralization, hierarchical transmission, and the punitive application of laws and penalties are important to the juridical model, as they are to conventional Western philosophical and dialectical materialist perspectives.

But the disciplinary model offers an alternative view of authority. In this perspective, power is not held but rather transferred through a series of events (King, 1981). Discourse, not a ruler, is said to be the driving force behind its ability to climb from the ground up. According to Kelly (1994), the main objective of discipline is not to oppress but to produce subjects who are willing to subjugate their own subjectivity. Kelly (1994) asserts that Foucault shifted his focus to the disciplinary model to better understand the complex web of power relations at the community level. Different ideologies coexist in many contemporary organisations, creating the illusion that good and negative forces are interchangeable. This is especially true in prisons, schools, hospitals, and the military. Because it encourages people to take charge of their own lives, this disciplinary paradigm piqued Foucault's (1991b) curiosity.

The disciplinary framework shifts the focus from power as a mere possession to the multi-perspective examination of its manifestations and consequences. According to this theory, power is essentially discursive and productive, with the human subject being the principal end result of this process. To Foucault, "The individual is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects" (1980, p. 98). Competence and authority are intertwined in this crucial form. The phrase "power/knowledge" structures the discourse of a field of knowledge and incorporates this relationship; it shapes differences, definitions, and classifications. It is not enough, according to Foucault, that "knowledge is power." Power is present in every realm of knowledge. Knowledge and power are always classifying, evaluating, quantifying, differentiating, and homogenising in order to make new possibilities possible (Foucault, 1991).

Foucault used Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon Prison System to demonstrate the effectiveness of punishment. One officer can discreetly keep an eye on multiple inmates at once with this approach. Slavery of the soul to the body occurs when this power is internalised (Dawson, 2007). When people are disciplined, they learn to manage their impulses. For Foucault, institutions are only a small piece of what he terms "the microphysics of power." This means that institutional practices should incorporate subjectivation-based control mechanisms to bridge the gap between human bodies and institutional frames.

Foucault asserts in his work (1994a) that the understanding of "power" by other thinkers differs greatly from his own. Among them are Habermas and Bourdieu. In addition to excluding or demeaning others, power can also bring about new ideas and better understanding. Ultimately, it is the knowledge and agency of the individual that drives this production, which in turn gives rise to reality, object domains, and truth rituals (Foucault, 1991). From authoritatively enforced force to ubiquitous, formative impact on human understanding, Foucault's theory of power challenges conventional thinking and demands a re-evaluation of power in all its manifestations. The complexity of power dynamics is made more complicated by the fact that Foucault, Habermas, and Bourdieu all have different ideas about what power is. In the analysis that will be conducted soon, we will investigate these differences and the major consequences they have.

5 Differences and Their Effects

In view of the theories put forth by Bourdieu, Habermas, and Foucault, as well as an analysis of the various forms that power takes in Western philosophical thought, we can see how concepts like dualism, freedom, determinism, truth, and power interact with one another. The various viewpoints of different thinkers on these aspects characterise their approaches to the complex dynamics of power. Both Foucault's juridical paradigm and the dualist perspective on power and awareness are prevalent in Western philosophy (Duan, 2021). According to this view, power is a possessive entity that can be used for authoritarian rule. A subjective binary relationship between the individual and the system is necessary for grasping this concept. The fact that Habermas differentiates between the "lifeworld" and the "system world" is an illustration of the dualism inherent in his dialectical materialism (Spangenberg, 2016). Bourdieu seeks to transcend the dichotomous framework by stressing the significance of practice. The murky connection between the subjective and objective aspects of practice is the most glaring example of the dualism that Judith Butler identifies in Bourdieu's theoretical framework. By emphasising language's function as a link between the actor and the structure, Foucault aims to transcend dualism in his writings. The author highlights the role of rules in facilitating knowledge creation and the potential for humans to become subjects by centering on power, knowledge, and subjectivation.

Using Bourdieu's materialism and Foucault's anti-essentialism as theoretical frameworks, this article examines the concepts of materiality and practice. One could argue that Bourdieu's emphasis on practice, as seen by the idea of field, is compatible with materialist perspectives. However, Foucault's rejection of essentialism reveals his position against materialism. Discourses, according to Foucault (1994a), are more than just words; they have substance and reality. In her examination of materiality, the author pays special attention to the ways in which objects acquire meaning via language. A distinct approach is used by Bourdieu, who analyses materialism in the context of practice and sees it as components within a world characterised by symbolic and material forms of power. When it comes to Foucault's discourse theory, the range of cultural artefacts that concretize discourse is much broader than just language. By acknowledging the interdependence of materiality, language, and practice, both theories demonstrate that they are not reductivist.

Free will and determinism are recurring themes among these notions. Habermas presents a situationally responsive perspective through the theoretical framework of dialectical materialism. However, the duality in his differentiation between the lifeworld and the system world raises concerns about the extent to which structural factors are at play. In Bourdieu's theory, the focus on habitus and practice suggests that there is some determinism involved in the formation of individual dispositions. As Foucault's (1994b) subjectivation analysis explains, power does double duty: it identifies and oppresses individuals at the same time. There is a complicated link between control and self-knowledge, which complicates conceptions of freedom and determinism.

There is a lot of debate regarding the relationship between truth and power. The construction of truth and its imposed regulatory framework on individuals are both ascribed to power, according to Foucault (1994a). An organising principle for discourse is the idea of power and knowledge, which represents the relationship between the two. By placing a heavy emphasis on the discursive component of power, Foucault's theoretical framework challenges the traditional duality of power and discourse. Bourdieu acknowledges the intricate connection between power and practice, even though the origins of the agent-structure interaction remain unclear. Collective theories demand a reassessment of the idea, highlighting the need to recognise power's role in truth's formation.

There is no disputing that relativism and normativity are diametrically opposed. The normative component, in which certain postures are more favoured than others, is hinted at by the heavy emphasis on habitus and positions in Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Norms provide frameworks for the production of knowledge, which contributes to subject creation, based on Foucault's (1994b) analysis of power, knowledge, and discourse. The intricate interplay of content, language, and practice poses a significant challenge to oversimplified classifications of relativism and normativity. A thorough comprehension of how power dynamics impact standards and values is required by the theories.

We acquire a greater understanding of the complex dynamics occurring in social institutions through the analysis of power by Foucault, Habermas, and Bourdieu. Insights into the interplay between truth, power, normativity, relativism, dualism, materiality, practice, freedom, and determinism are provided by this work, which encourages ongoing investigation into the sources of human agency, societal frameworks, and the motivating factors underlying our views and deeds.

6 A Discourse on Liberty and Self-Determination

The multi-faceted discourse around the interplay between free will and predetermined outcomes is the subject of *A Conversation on Freedom and Determinism* (Roy, 2012). The two most basic philosophical concepts, freedom and determinism, have fascinated thinkers for ages. The arguments have set off discussions over the bounds of human agency and the role of chance or other forces. The article explores the existential questions that influence how we view free will, destiny, and the interplay between the two. It will definitely provoke contemplation. The debate explores many perspectives and intellectual exchanges to shed light on the complexities of pursuing freedom within deterministic systems, which is a challenging aspect of human existence. Join us as we unravel the mysteries of free will and unavoidable fate in this captivating discussion.

There is a tangled web of conflicting views when one examines the various theories proposed by philosophers like Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas about power in Western philosophy (Christensen, 2023). Some examples of these concepts are determinism, freedom, power, truth, dualism, materialism, and the relative merits of normativity and relativism. Theorists' distinct perspectives on the complex dynamics of power are defined by the original ideas they apply to these elements. Many Western philosophical positions, including dualism, have the same conceptual basis as Foucault's paradigm of power and consciousness in law (Walker, 2019). Power, it believes, is something that can be managed by amassing more of it. The context in which this idea is comprehended is dependent on the unique relationship that each individual has with the system.

As Habermas's separation of the lifeworld and the system world demonstrates, dualism persists even after dialectical materialism has made great strides. Bourdieu argues that practice is crucial to breaking out of the binary system. Butler (1999) identifies Bourdieu's theoretical framework as dually structured, with the most glaring example being the precarious relationship between practice's subjective and objective components. While Foucault (1994b) does deal with dualism, he seeks to go beyond it by focusing on the mediating function of language between structures and actors. Principles enable knowledge formation and

the ability for humans to become subjects; the author emphasises these points by concentrating on power, knowledge, and subjectivation.

We present nuanced perspectives on materiality and praxis by looking at them through the prisms of Bourdieu's materialism and Foucault's anti-essentialism. Consistent with materialist viewpoints is the concept of field, which shows Bourdieu's focus on praxis. However, Foucault's anti-essentialist stance is shown by his rejection of essentialism. Discourses, argues Foucault (1994b), deserve serious consideration since they are both actual and transcendental in language. The discursive act of ascribing meaning to material objects is central to the author's analysis of materiality. On the other hand, according to Bourdieu, materialism is just one facet of praxis, the domain of visible and symbolic manifestations of power. In this setting, his method revolves around substance. A wide variety of cultural objects, not limited to language, are included in Foucault's (1994b) theory of discourse as concrete manifestations of discourse. Neither theory is reductivist since it acknowledges the interdependence of substance, language, and practice.

The fundamentally different concepts of free will and predestination form the basis of all these points of view. According to Habermas, whose proposal is founded on dialectical materialism, the viewpoint is contextual. Given its dualistic nature, his lifeworld/system world split makes one wonder how important structures actually are. The importance of habitus and practice in Bourdieu's theory suggests that there may be some determinism in the development of character traits. Power enslaves and ties people to their own identities, according to Foucault's (1994b) subjectivation analysis. Free will and determinism are oversimplified due to the complex web of relationships between control and self-awareness.

The intricate network of connections between power and truth is a recurrent theme. Both the creation of truth and its imposition on individuals as a regulatory framework are the domain of authority, claims Foucault (1994a). The concept of power or knowledge serves as the framework for our arguments and ideas. In his theoretical framework, Foucault (1994a) questions the traditional dichotomy of power and knowledge by placing a strong emphasis on the discursive dimension of power. Many questions about where the agent-structure interaction came from remain, even if Bourdieu recognises the complex relationship between theory and praxis. With these consensuses in mind, we need to re-evaluate our conceptions of "truth" and the power structures that shape our opinions.

Evidently, normativity and relativism do not get along (Kudriashova, 2022). Position and habitus, two key ideas in Bourdieu's theory, suggest a normative dimension in which some circumstances are given more weight than others. According to Foucault's power, knowledge, and discourse analysis (1994a and 1994b), norms play a part in subject creation since they establish limits for the development of new information. The complex interaction of substance, language, and action presents formidable obstacles to any attempt at oversimplified moral categorization. For the theories to work, one must have a solid grasp of how power dynamics impact values and norms.

Thinkers such as Bourdieu, Habermas, and Foucault shed light on the intricate workings of our social institutions by exploring different facets of power. The interconnectedness of dualism, materialism, practice, freedom, determinism, truth, power, normativity, and relativism makes studying authority more complicated; as a result, we need to delve further into the nature of social structures, the forces that influence our perceptions and behaviours, and the nature of free will. Truth, power, normativity, and relativism are all examined. Fundamental concepts in the study of human societies include truth, power, normativity, and relativism (LaFollette, 1991). The intricate web of relationships between truth and power affects the dissemination of information and the establishment of authority. While societal and cultural norms dictate how people should act, relativism calls into question absolute truths by stressing the significance of context.

This method unravels the intricate network of human cognition and social structures by exploring the nuanced relationships between different concepts. Both Habermas and Bourdieu find themselves theoretically bewildered by the complex link between power and truth, which leads to a narrative that significantly diverges from Foucault's framework. Habermas (1968) argues that positivism's focus on objectivity in research undermines its claimed impartiality and unbiased pursuit of knowledge. However, Bourdieu distinguished himself by contending that all representations of reality are influenced by economic and symbolic power. Thus, a subtle difference between power and truth arises within these theoretical frameworks, raising the intriguing possibility that truth—albeit in a completely hypothetical sense—may exist in a domain that can be reached by meticulous academic investigation.

However, things take an abrupt turn when Foucault starts talking about ideas. In Foucault's view, power and knowledge are inseparable; outside the boundaries of language, the impact of legal and regulatory authority renders the concept of "reality" illusory. Rather than being immutable stores of truth, Foucault (1994a) contends that power and knowledge dynamics influence the scientific and philosophical communities. Every possible reading of events depends on the particular historical setting in which they happened; hence, there can be no such thing as assured or absolute truth (Olsson, 2006). This paradigm was fraught with uncertainty in Habermas's mind due to his grave concerns. In other words, scientific discourses, which form the basis of knowledge creation and transmission, are perceived as having a diminishing significance, according to Habermas (1994, pp. 81–82). Meanwhile, these things transform into complexes of power, which in turn merge to create a measurable realm that controls and affects things in a unique manner. According to Kelly (1994, p. 378), Habermas and Foucault hold different views on how human reason relates to the interaction of truth, justice, and authority. Habermas defends the primacy of human reason, in contrast to Foucault (1994b), who argues against it.

In order to build a democratic society based on justice and the rule of law, as well as to construct moral standards, Habermas (1994) fervently maintains that distinct domains are required. Truth, power, and right all play significant roles in society's complex web of norms; his thesis centres on an analysis of these variations. But the power processes that Foucault research studies are inseparable analytically and related in discursive practice (Foucault, 1994a). Aside from fundamental differences in ontological and epistemological stances, the two groups' diverging study foci and different perspectives on "power" also contribute significantly to their conflicts. These lines demarcate the domains of normativity and ethics. Along with Habermas's attempts to draw a line, there should be democratic legal frameworks and normative ethical standards. However, a different ontological and epistemological stance may be better suited to comprehending the intricacies and mysteries of social life, as suggested by Foucault's (1994b) unwillingness to disentangle truth, right, and power.

The dispute between Foucault and Habermas is more than just a difference of opinion; it is a complex clash of worldviews, as this discussion shows. As Child (2015) points out, their divergent perspectives on truth, ethics, and the normative foundations of social institutions extend far beyond power relations. This discussion has lasting effects on the philosophical community and serves as a reminder that the complicated link between power and truth is an eternally vexing problem. As noted by Habermas, in reaction to critics who say Foucault's theoretical framework isn't normative, the philosopher really constructs an "ontology of power" (Habermas, 1994, p. 102). In the opinion of Habermas, Foucault's theoretical framework does more than just overemphasise power as an all-encompassing explanatory mechanism; it also exhibits a striking absence of normativity, bordering on relativism. Among the many varieties of relativism identified by Habermas (1994), the two most prevalent are ontological and epistemological. Ontological relativists hold that the universe is relative to language, but epistemological relativists hold that reality is relative to human knowledge. Also, there are no hard and fast rules that can tell us what is good or bad; this is according to the moral relativist philosophical school. Both of these relativist schools can have their roots in an anti-essentialist ontology, which is why they are related, according to Foucault's philosophical position. According to Habermas, one of the main problems with Foucault's approach is moral relativism (1994).

However, Habermas might overlook the subtlety in Foucault's (1994a, 1994b) writings. To be sure, Foucault aspires to normativity, but that doesn't make him a relativist. Kelly (1994) notes that when Foucault talks about ethics, his perspective shifts. Before these rules are stated, Foucault moves his emphasis from moral-juridical standards to the process of questioning our actions as ethical. After these rules are laid out, he moves on to examine how individuals behave in accordance with them (Kelly, 1994, p. 375). It is also wrong to classify Foucault as a postmodern relativist, according to Olsson (2006). Olsson argues that in the domains of ethics, politics, and science, Foucault's stance does not promote a mindless adoption of any viewpoint (p. 208).

Consequently, it is important to note that Foucault's work does not always lend credence to relativism. When it comes to politics, history, and rhetoric, the author takes a more theoretical tack by looking into where moral ideals come from. Instead of trying to build universally applicable ethical standards, as Habermas has done, Foucault wants to explore the nuances of how problematic ethical behaviour manifests in different situations (Kelly, 1994). Furthermore, Foucault's subsequent ethical investigations imply that he might have been affected by or responded to the ongoing scholarly discussion, possibly as a

consequence of his discussions with Habermas (Foucault, 1994b). The oversimplified assertion that Foucault endorses relativism is, in essence, incorrect. Conversely, the author's vast corpus of work delves into the complex interplay between authority and ethics, illuminating how historical and discursive elements influence moral behaviour. One possible reason for Foucault's increased involvement in ethics is his disagreement with Habermas (Foucault, 1994b), which demonstrates how philosophical viewpoints change and influence one another over time.

7 Some Reflections on the Three Principles of Power in the Field of Education

This section delves into the nuanced realms of three distinct power paradigms in order to navigate the complicated terrain of educational research. As educational systems evolve, the significance of comprehending power dynamics is on the rise. Power in educational contexts is examined from several perspectives in this study by examining the writings of three prominent thinkers: Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel Foucault. These paradigms provide a useful lens through which to view academic authority, control, and influence. We hope you'll come along as we investigate power from a variety of angles within the field of educational research.

The section goes beyond philosophical conjecture in its analysis of power notions. When thinking about power as possessive or non-possessed, there are big implications for social scientific studies, particularly those pertaining to education. Consequently, this impacts our perception of our surroundings. While one theoretical framework's perspective on power as an asset shapes these analyses in one manner, another framework's perspective on power as an asset shapes the approach to analyses in another. Therefore, the methods by which conclusions might be drawn are equally as important as the potential subjects of inquiry. Power, when perceived as an inherent possession, necessitates the imposition of responsibility on individuals, groups, or entities such as "society." Education studies that draw inspiration from Habermas's writings illustrate this phenomenon. Education scholars Young (1992), Murphy and Fleming (2009), and Englund (2009) all make significant contributions to the field. Englund (2009) goes even farther into the function of teachers. Teachers are crucial, says Englund, since they are both formally and substantively authorised to handle a topic and to establish the discursive circumstances for doing so based on their knowledge and perspectives.

To establish and sustain an environment conducive to discourse in the classroom, a teacher's evaluative skills are essential. According to Englund (2009), the data may be found on pages 24–25. This remark stresses the need to use Habermas' idea of power as a potentially corruptible asset. We also put an emphasis on developing educational environments that minimise power dynamics and comprehend communication activities. But a study grounded in Bourdieu's theoretical framework goes in a different direction. Bourdieu draws attention to the function of education in sustaining social hierarchies, which has impacted various perspectives on the topic of global education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Applying the theoretical concept of "field" can help us gain a better understanding of the dynamics and interplay between HE and FE in an English setting. One can effectively zero in on the power dynamics in and between the two domains of education by applying the field notion. It is important to consider the pros and cons of attempting to establish a unified field of tertiary education, and it is also important to bring attention to the problematic positioning of HE within FE in relation to the broader field of higher education.

Applying Bourdieu's analytical approaches to the study of competitive strategies will help us understand this area of educational practice (Bathmaker 2015, p. 73). An alternative viewpoint on power dynamics analysis is provided by Søndergaard and Hansen (2018) through the use of Foucault's theory of power. To achieve this goal, they intend to examine the dynamic nature of social-class situations. This method questions the victim/offender dichotomy that is common in individualistic viewpoints by illuminating the potential evolution of students' power interactions. Power, according to Foucault, does not lie with any one pupil but rather arises from the collective dynamics of the classroom. It is necessary to acknowledge bullying and extreme exclusion as complex social phenomena experienced subjectively by the impacted persons in order to comprehend these processes, as stated by Søndergaard and Hansen (2018, p. 333). In this case, we are trying to minimise the significance of individual responsibility by dismantling the potential for subjectification within the contexts of language, tradition, and culture. Finally, research pertaining to education is hindered in its analytical capacity, and its results are impacted by the power concepts present in all three theories.

8 Conclusion

This article delved into the multi-faceted definition of "power" by examining it from three theoretical perspectives. The repressive nature of power, in Habermas's view, is a political and ethical problem that conflicts with the discourse ethics. By claiming that discussions of power have no place in discussions of freedom and ethics, it casts doubt on Foucault's claim that knowledge and power are inseparable. Habermas disagreed with Foucault that historical events and power relations were inextricably linked to the search for truth. With his dialectical materialism, Bourdieu offers an alternative perspective on power, one that differs from the subjective-objective duality. In his view, his line of work is very contextual, highly controversial, and always evolving. The symbolic power of habits demonstrates how actors gradually incorporate societal structures into their performances. Contrary to Habermas's view, Bourdieu considers power to be an imbalanced interaction between people and society. A product of his Marxist background, Bourdieu's power notion seeks to explain and do away with social inequality.

The article focused on how academics' use of power theories influences both their study questions and their findings. In his theory of consciousness, Habermas characterised power as having it; nevertheless, Bourdieu's practice-based, complex approach transcends both the individual and structural levels. The dynamics of disguised discourse are illuminated by Habermas' pursuit of normative ideals of an atmosphere free of repression, in contrast to Foucault's disciplinary power. Each theory offers a variety of analytical possibilities; selecting the correct one is dependent on accomplishing certain analytical goals, as "power" represents a spectrum of fundamentally different phenomena.

References

- Ahen, F. (2019). Making Resource Democracy Radically Meaningful for Stakeholders: Our World, Our Rules? *Sustainability*, 11 (19), 5150. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195150>
- Allen, A. (2012). The Unforced Force of the Better Argument: Reason and Power in Habermas' Political Theory. *Constellations*, 19(3), 353–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cons.12005>
- Alpay, A. H. (2022). PIERRE BOURDIEU: HABITUS IN THE STRUCTURAL REASON. *Abant Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 22(3), 982–992. <https://doi.org/10.11616/asbi.1095345>
- Andrade Coelho Moreira, G. (2023). The role of language in the foundation of the moral principle in Habermas' discourse ethics. *Revista Inquietude*, 14(1), 31–47. <https://doi.org/10.59780/qInd5496>
- Ashenden S., Owen D. (1999). *Foucault contra habermas: recasting the dialogue between genealogy and critical theory*. California, USA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ball, S.J. (2013). *Foucault, power, and education*. New York, USA: Routledge.
- Bathmaker, AM (2015). Thinking with Bourdieu: thinking after Bourdieu. Using 'field' to consider inequalities in the changing field of English higher education, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 45(1): 61–80.
- Book Review: *Connected: The surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives*. (2013, May). *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 10(1), 166–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131301000114>
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline a theory of practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2010) *Distinction*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Bourdieu P, Passeron JC (1990). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Bukovska, O., Mazur, T., & Anyshchenko, L. (2021). THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL INTERNET NETWORKS ON THE SOCIALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE. *Habitus*, 29, 48–52. <https://doi.org/10.32843/2663-5208.2021.29.7>
- Burke, S., Purvis, M., Sandiford, C., & Klettke, B. (2023). "It's Not a One-Time Conversation": Australian Parental Views on Supporting Young People in Relation to Pornography Exposure. *Psych*, 5(2), 508–525. <https://doi.org/10.3390/psych5020034>
- Butler, J. (1999). Performativity's social magic. In: Shusterman R. (ed.) *Bourdieu. A Critical Reader*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

- Child, C. (2015). Tip of the Iceberg. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 45(2), 217–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764015572901>
- Christensen G., Hamre B. (2018). *Tænke med Foucault [Thinking about Foucault]*. Unge Pædagoger: København.
- Christensen, G. (2023). There are three concepts of power: Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas. *Power and education* <https://doi.org/10.1177/17577438231187129>
- Cronin, C. (1996). Bourdieu and Foucault on power and modernity. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 22(6): 55–85.
- Dawson, C. (2007). Ecstasy and Intimacy: When the Holy Spirit Meets the Human Spirit. *Pneuma*, 29(2), 313–314. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007407x237999>
- Duan, Y. (2021). The World View of Dialectical Dualists: The Dialectical Relationship View of the Subjective World and the Objective World. *International Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), 78. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijp.20210902.11>
- Englund T. (2009). educational implications of the idea of deliberative democracy. Murphy M., Fleming T. (eds.) (2009) *Habermas, critical theory, and education*. New York, USA: Routledge, pp. 19–32.
- Feldhaus, C. (2020, September 21). Cosmopolitismo em Habermas: com Kant para além de Kant. *Ethic@, an International Journal for Moral Philosophy*, 19(2), 280–299. <https://doi.org/10.5007/1677-2954.2020v19n2p280>
- Foucault, M. (1980). Two lectures. In: Gordon C. (ed) *Power and Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* New York, USA: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and Punishment. the birth of the prison*. New York, USA: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1994a). The subject and power. In: Faubion JD (ed), *Power. Essential works of Foucault, 1954–1984*. London, UK: Penguin Books, Vol. 3
- Foucault, M. (1994b). The ethics of concern for the self as a practice of freedom. In: Rabinow P. (ed.) *Ethics*. London, UK: Penguin, Vol. 1
- Gledhill, J. (2009) Power in Political Anthropology. *Journal of Power* 2(1): 9–34.
- Habermas, J. (1968). *Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'*. Berlin, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Habermas, J. (1973). *Legitimationsprobleme im Spätkonzeptualismus*. Berlin, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action*. Boston: Beacon Press, Vol. 1.
- Habermas, J. (1987) *The philosophical discourse of modernity*. Oxford, UK: Polity.
- Habermas, J. (1990). *moral consciousness and communicative action*. Oxford, UK: Polity Press.
- Habermas J. (1994). 'Questions concerning the Theory of Power'. In Kelly M. (ed.) (1994), *Critique and power: recasting the Foucault/Habermas debate*. Cambridge, UK: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Habermas, J. (2021). Once again, on the relationship between morality and ethical life. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 29(3), 543–551. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12716>
- Habermas, J. (2021). Once again, on the relationship between morality and ethical life. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 29(3), 543–551. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12716>
- Hannan, J. (2015). Moral Discourse Without Foundations: Habermas and MacIntyre on Rational Choice. *Communication Theory*, 26(1), 21–40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12061>
- Hull, G. (2021). Infrastructure, Modulation, and Portal: Thinking with Foucault about How Internet Architecture Shapes Subjects. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3771595>
- Izhaki, I., & Safriel, U. N. (19y). Why Are There So Few Exclusively Frugivorous Birds? Experiments on Fruit Digestibility. *Oikos*, 54(1), 23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3565893>
- Kelly M (ed), (1994) *Critique and power: recasting the Foucault/Habermas debate*. Cambridge, UK: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- King, C. J. (1981). Sequence of Event Recording Systems. *IEEE Power Engineering Review*, PER-1(9), 35–36. <https://doi.org/10.1109/mpwr.1981.5511836>
- Kudriashova, V. K. (2022). M.C. Nussbaum's Capability Approach: Between Normativity and Relativism. *Voprosy Filosofii*, 92–101. <https://doi.org/10.21146/0042-8744-2022-5-92-101>
- LaFollette, H. (1991). THE TRUTH IN ETHICAL RELATIVISM. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 22(1), 146–154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.1991.tb00027.x>

Lopez Frias, F. J. (2019). Beyond Habermas, with Habermas: Adjudicating Ethical Issues in Sport through a Discourse Ethics-based Normative Theory of Sport. *Sport, Ethics, and Philosophy*, 15(1), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2019.1637367>

Maus I (2017). Kant, in Brunkhorst H., Kreide R., and Lafont C. (eds.) *The Habermas Handbook*. New York, USA: Columbia University Press.

Molotokas, A., & Didenko, S. (2022). INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOTRAUMATIC SITUATIONS ON THE OCCURRENCE OF DEPRESSIVE STATES. *Habitus*, 44, 214–218. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5208.2022.44.36>

Murphy M., Fleming T. (eds.) (2009). *Habermas, critical theory, and education*. New York, USA: Routledge.

Olsson M. (2006) *Michel Foucault, materialism and education*. New York, USA: Routledge.

Perrett, R. W. (1985). Dualistic and nondualistic problems of immortality *Philosophy East and West*, 35(4), 333. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1398534>

POPELO, O. (2022). ORGANISATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISM FOR PREVENTING CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ENSURING EFFECTIVE REGULATION OF THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM. *Herald of Khmelnytskyi National University, Economic Sciences*, 312(6(2)), 318–322. [https://doi.org/10.31891/2307-5740-2022-312-6\(2\)-53](https://doi.org/10.31891/2307-5740-2022-312-6(2)-53)

Portal, M. (1806). IV. Upon the restoration of sight, which takes place in mankind and some animals without the assistance of art, *The Philosophical Magazine*, 25(97), 26–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14786440608563403>

Roy, C. (2012). Determinism and Freedom. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1990545>

Søndergaard DM, Hansen HR (2018): bullying, social exclusion anxiety, and longing for belonging. *Nordic Studies in Education*, Vol. 38(4), pp. 319–336.

Spangenberg, J. H. (2016). The world we see shapes the world we create: how the underlying worldviews lead to different recommendations from environmental and ecological economics—the green economy example. *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 19(2), 127. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijsd.2016.077208>

Thurstone TL, Fernández-Götz M (2021). Power from below is recorded in the archaeological record. *Trends and trajectories In: Thurstone TL, Fernández-Götz M (eds.) (2021). Power from below in premodern societies: the dynamics of political complexity in the archaeological record*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–39.

Travaglino, G. A., & Abrams, D. (2019). How criminal organisations exert secret power over communities: An intracultural appropriation theory of cultural values and norms. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 30(1), 74–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2019.1621128>

Verharen, C. C. (1995). Understanding Non-Western Philosophy. *Teaching Philosophy*, 18(1), 90–93. <https://doi.org/10.5840/teachphil199518115>

Walker, L. (2019). Double Consciousness in Today's Black America. *Stance: An International Undergraduate Philosophy Journal*, 12(1), 116–125. <https://doi.org/10.33043/s.12.1.116-125>

Wikstrøm Svěrák, I. (2023). Vratislav Effenberger's conception of the role of imagination in ideological thought. *Studies in East European Thought*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-023-09594-2>.

Young RE (1992). *Critical theory and classroom talk* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Zhang, Q. (2023). Online health communities provide important support in China. *Nature: Human Behaviour*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01766-8>