

## Sample Process

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This is a sample of an essay outline, an early draft and a final successful paper which includes the:

Description of Assignment .....	1
Working Thesis Statement.....	2
Outline.....	3
Draft .....	4
Final Paper .....	14

### Description of Assignment:

This assignment will be an analytical paper on one of the following two topics:

1. "It is men, who in developing their material intercourse, change, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*).
2. "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*).

The paper should be 8-10 pages double-spaced, plus a Works Cited page. More details will be given in class.

- **Final Essay, due March 27**

This assignment will test your ability to apply your sociological knowledge to an analysis of a topic of your choice within the context of the sociology of knowledge. Utilizing 'Critical Discourse Analysis' as your theory and method, you may focus on a wide variety of issues and ideas emerging from fields such as globalization, religion, terrorism, war, poverty, healthcare, AIDS, Gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, etc. The length of this final essay will be 10-12 pages double-spaced, plus a Works Cited page. More details will be given in class.

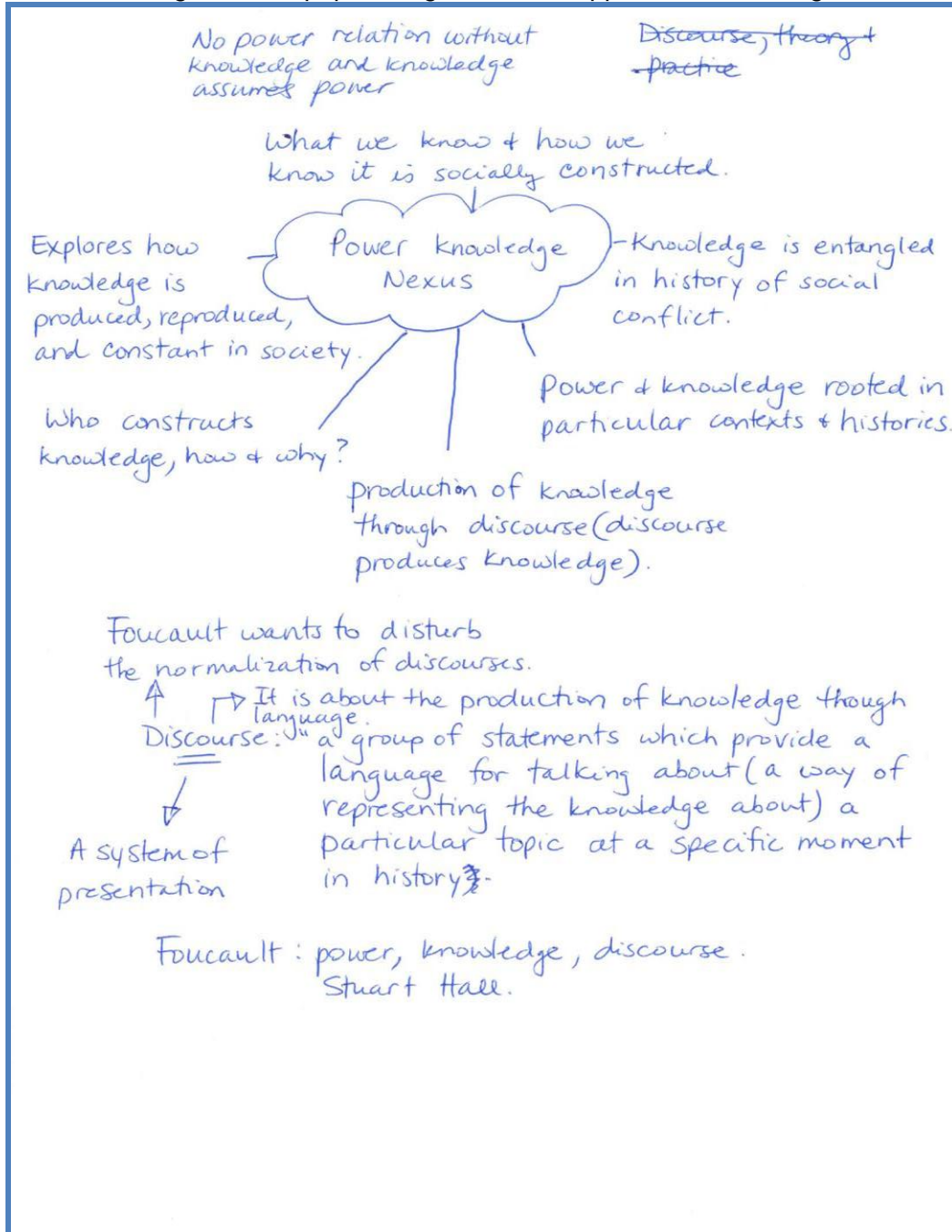
## Working Thesis Statement:

### Thesis

I ~~will~~ argue within this essay that knowledge is constructed by dominant ~~ideologies~~ groups in society. I ~~will explore~~ <sup>suggest that</sup> the existing power relations present which allow ~~how~~ dominant groups <sup>to</sup> achieve social control by creating docile bodies through social regulation. I ~~will~~ also analyze how ~~knowledge~~ the knowledge of those who are <sup>not</sup> part of the dominant group is marginalized and subjugated.

### Outline:

This is the outline used to organize the paper's arguments in support of the working thesis statement.



**Draft:**

This is one of Jessica's early drafts with her edits as well as with the comments and suggestions she received from her instructor in York's Writing Department.

→ production of knowledge from dominant groups

1

Michel Foucault was a French scholar who was involved in the structuralist and post-structuralist movements. He has had a profound influence on a range of disciplines, such as philosophy and humanistic and social scientific disciplines. A central topic that Foucault spoke about throughout his writings from 1963-1984 was how an individual's knowledge is influenced by existing power relations in social life. Of all Foucault's work, his exploration of the relationship between power and knowledge in society is most interesting. Foucault studied how this relationship between power and knowledge contributed to the collection and development of knowledge in society. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations". Foucault's position is that power and knowledge cannot be separated because they exist interdependently. ~~To have power is to have knowledge and to have knowledge is to have power. Is Foucault's illustration of knowledge and power detrimental or beneficial for society?~~ I will explore this question and Foucault's notion of power and knowledge further.

First, I will interpret Foucault's notion of power and knowledge with the help of various scholars and discuss its interconnected relationship. Second, I will evaluate the interpretation and express why I agree with such an interpretation. ~~As an example of Foucault's illustration of power and knowledge, I will refer to a study which analyzes the representations of dominant knowledge in Chinese school textbooks.~~ I will refer to the school as an institution to demonstrate how the power and knowledge nexus operates in modern society. Finally, I will propose and explore ways in which the power and knowledge nexus can be challenged in hopes of validating and including various types of knowledges in school textbooks that represent various groups, something I argue Foucault failed to discuss.

Thirds

social control  
- classic binaries  
- social regulation

new knowledge is produced  
- dominant knowledges  
- power that exists within dominant of institutions

power/knowledge nexus  
- the text's intertextuality

power/knowledge nexus  
- explain

to further illustrate notion  
Loren to discuss the representation of dominant knowledge in school textbooks

and explore how the power, knowledge nexus can be seen around the world.

by referring to Loren's ideas,

Bring up Loren

① I will argue that the power nexus produces social control & social regulation and...



2

Present tense

According to Foucault, the relationship between power and knowledge is “reciprocal” (Koopman, 2010: 550). That is, power and knowledge exist in light of one another, constantly referring back to each other. For Hall, Foucault <sup>is</sup> was concerned with how knowledge evolved through discursive practices in specific institutional settings in order to regulate the conduct of others (Hall, 2001: 26). Foucault <sup>?</sup> argued that the ‘power/knowledge nexus’ operated <sup>?</sup> within an “institutional apparatus and [with the assistance of] technologies (techniques)” which always involve power and always linked to certain types of knowledges (Hall, 2001: 26). What Foucault <sup>?</sup> meant by apparatus <sup>is</sup> was a system or structure in which processes occur that involve technologies such a laws, rules, regulations, surveillance, etc. Essentially, Hall argues that Foucault <sup>?</sup> believed that “knowledge was always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct” (Hall, 2001: 26). According to O’Brien and Szeman, the nexus of knowledge and power ultimately legitimates forms of social control over particular groups in society (O’Brien and Szeman 41). This type of control is captured through a particular discourse.

<sup>that discourse</sup>  
Discourse, O’ Brien and Szeman acknowledge <sup>?</sup> is the “context of speech or writing, including who is officially permitted to speak on particular subjects and what kind of authority particular kinds of speech (and speakers) carry” (O’Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41). Kramer clarifies how discourses arise from the operations of powerful institutions of control and coercion in the form of, what Foucault called <sup>?</sup> specialized knowledge, which is produced by experts (Kramer, 2011: 11). Such experts could be professors, doctors, teachers, judges, and police officers. According to McCarthy, Foucault strived to disturb the normalization of discourses and <sup>encourages</sup> sought to get individuals to think about what they know and how they know it (McCarthy, 1996: 40). Knowledge, according to Foucault’s concept of discourse “is constituted

Foucault is arguing that individuals have agency and the power to exercise that agency. He is suggesting that individuals do not have to accept dominant ~~esp~~ discourse and can call it into question.

3

through relations of power, which determine what is true, what value is accorded to particular kinds of knowledge and, by extension, what material effects that knowledge will have in the world" (O'Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41). *what individuals and groups consider to be true has been constructed by complex power relations and that it comes into being through the operations of power and it exercises power by making with strive to achieve social control and social regulation.* (O'Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41).

Foucault's illustration of power and knowledge was to demonstrate how the two notions are interconnected. Kramer suggests that Foucault used the convention "power/knowledge to symbolize the interconnectedness of ideas and practices; of specialized knowledge(s) and power" (Kramer, 2011: 11). For Foucault, specialized knowledges assume power and power assumes a kind of specialized knowledge which creates a tension. However, "the problem for Foucault is that we find ourselves increasingly unable to negotiate these tensions" (Koopman, 2010: 546). *Foucault describes that the tense relationship between power and knowledge renders positive and/or negative social outcomes where individuals and groups are either marginalized or privileged. The marginalizing effect of the power/knowledge nexus is most predominately seen within today's society.*

Koopman discusses *how the nexus can operate as* the effects of negative power relations and refers to it as "a technology of power that drives out, excludes, banishes, marginalizes, and represses" individuals and groups (Koopman, 2010: 555). This power results in producing what Foucault called docile bodies *argue that, to a degree,* which are compliant and submissive persons. To a degree, individuals are required to comply with norms, rules, and regulations in order for society to operate in an orderly manner.

However, the manner in which power and knowledge is exercised today produces negative effects where individuals and groups fail to even realize that they are being oppressed. *(what Foucault calls positive power)*

According to Green, the existence of modern power, disciplinary power, transforms "docile bodies into disciplined subjects, including subjects of the state, subjects of medicine and

*und produces disciplinary society.*

*dominant*

*what individuals and groups consider to be true has been constructed by complex power relations and that it comes into being through the operations of power and it exercises power by making with strive to achieve social control and social regulation.*

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*argue that, to a degree,*

*(what Foucault calls positive power)*

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*how the nexus can operate as*

*argue that, to a degree,*

*(what Foucault calls positive power)*

psychiatry, and subjects of empire” (Green, 2010: 317). Individuals and groups are regulated beings <sup>own</sup> ~~premised~~ on dominant norms, ideologies, and discourses that manifest power. <sup>in addition, Foucault discusses that the p/k nexus</sup> ~~On the contrary, the relationship and tension between power and knowledge~~ can produce positive social outcomes in which individuals and groups are inspired, enabled, and encouraged. According to Wandel, Foucault’s greatest contribution to the critical theory project is his conception of power as positive. This notion is formulated on the idea that “power produces, makes, and shapes rather than masks, represses, and blocks” (Wandel, 2001: 369). This <sup>of power</sup> ~~conception~~ supports the belief that knowledges of various kinds can be legitimated and <sup>are</sup> ~~powerful~~ in shaping individuals. For Wandel, after analyzing Foucault’s work titled *The Order of Things*, Foucault claimed that there was a pressing need for individuals to “unmask and reveal a hidden order of things, an order of knowledge” which <sup>he</sup> ~~Foucault~~ <sup>challenge.</sup> ~~opposed to power~~ (Wandel, 2001: 378). For Foucault, he wanted individuals to ~~call into question~~ the structures of domination and the mechanisms of power found in all societies.

that are influenced by

After analyzing various literature <sup>and exploring</sup> ~~regarding Foucault and his examination of the~~ relationship between power and knowledge, I agree with the above scholars’ interpretation. ~~Although there are scholars who take on a different interpretation of Foucault’s work, I believe that Foucault’s exploration of power and knowledge was to interrogate how knowledge is produced, reproduced, and constant in society, who constructs knowledge and why, how knowledge is produced through discourse, and how knowledge is entangled in history and social conflict.~~

Like the above scholars, ~~my~~ <sup>also begins with the idea that</sup> ~~interpretation of Foucault’s quote from *Discipline and Punish*, is that power and knowledge are connected to each other and exist interdependently of one another.~~ I believe that Foucault is conveying that knowledge is power because to know gives

a form of

inter-connected.





5

one the ability to act, enforce, and command. Similarly, power is knowledge because to have power one needs the ability to access certain forms of information, facts, and principles.

Therefore to act, enforce, and command, one needs information, facts, and principles and vice versa. However the relationship is not simple. There are various factors that complicate this relationship, such as dominant norms and values. If the relationship between power and knowledge was simplistic, I would argue that everyone in society can achieve knowledge and at the same time power, or vice versa, because everyone is capable of developing knowledge and exercising the power of that knowledge. But, what we see when analyzing Foucault's work is that certain people and certain institutions are privileged and therefore able to use the authority that power and knowledge produces to exercise control and dominance. It becomes evident after reading Foucault's original work and the interpretations of his work that he is greatly concerned about the dominant knowledges in society, the knowledge that serves the interest and values of institutions which are powerful agents in society, and which create docile bodies. However, although Foucault failed to discuss the ways in which the power/knowledge relationship can be deconstructed. I argue that the interdependence of the power/knowledge nexus can be challenged and agree with Loewen that diverse knowledges can be emancipated from this relationship by enforcing critical analysis.

Foucault discusses both negative and positive power where power can be either debilitating and incapacitating or creative and enabling. However, I argue that in today's society power is predominately debilitating and incapacitating due to dominant norms and values that shape and construct knowledges. I will demonstrate how Foucault's notion of power and knowledge is still relevant in today's society and explore how the relationship of the nexus can be specifically seen in educational institutions, particularly schools. Schools worldwide are sites

*Handwritten notes:*  
- a form of knowledge (pointing to 'power is knowledge')  
- and regulation (pointing to 'control and dominance')  
- towards it (pointing to 'It becomes evident after...')  
- discussed agency, he (pointing to 'Foucault failed to discuss...')  
- promoting (pointing to 'emancipated from this relationship')  
- how knowledge is constructed from dominant ideologies (pointing to 'shape and construct knowledges')  
- today (pointing to 'today's society')  
- the (pointing to 'educational institutions')  
- textbooks (pointing to 'schools')  
- turn to Loewen (pointing to 'agree with Loewen')  
- now focus on (pointing to 'debilitating and incapacitating...')



where some knowledges are privileged while others are marginalized. This can be seen when analyzing school textbooks, ~~which assist in determining~~ <sup>where we can see the</sup> ~~what kind of citizens schools are going~~ <sup>because it becomes evident the</sup> ~~to cultivate and which~~ <sup>the</sup> worldviews students ~~will~~ learn to possess (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 568).

According to Wang and Phillion, determining the knowledge that is included in school textbooks is a worldwide issue as many countries debate what knowledge is most appropriate and the knowledge that students should learn <sup>in schools</sup>. The knowledge that is presented in school textbooks is considered to be truth even though the knowledge is often distorted or constructed for a political purpose (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 567). Like Foucault, the authors suggest that we examine whose knowledge is being presented, in what form, how it was selected, and by who to achieve what ends (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 567). Wang and Phillion argue that knowledge is selected and constructed based on the interests of dominant groups which results in school textbooks ~~in the United States~~ to mislead students and socialize them in dominant culture.

<sup>NY Loewen the wing</sup> For instance, James Loewen, a professor at the University of Vermont, surveyed twelve leading high school American history textbooks at the Smithsonian Institution and reveals that much of what is written as fact throughout the texts is actually misinformation. Loewen argues that textbooks omit the passion, ambiguity, and conflict of America's past and "are so Anglocentric that they might be considered Protestant history" (Loewen, 1996: 313). He also articulates that the education institution, as an agent of socialization, "tells people what to think and how to act and requires them to conform... to accept the rightness of our society" (Loewen, 1996: 307). Foucault would argue that schools have the privilege and authority to exercise dominant knowledge which structures an individual's knowledge and perspective. For Foucault, a school's objective would be to create disciplined ~~deeds~~ bodies which act and think in relation to what they are told. According to Loewen, much of what is written in textbooks is driven by

nationalism and political objectives in order <sup>to foster patriotism in individuals</sup> for individuals to be 'proud of America' (Loewen, 1996: 15). Various public schools in the United States are no longer trusted to successfully educate students. <sup>not only is this a problem facing North America, but can also be seen in a case study in China.</sup> However, <sup>how knowledge is constructed in school textbooks is a worldwide issue and can be seen in countries such as China.</sup> <sup>in a case study in China.</sup>

Wang + Phillion  
tell me more truth

In China, textbook knowledge is constructed by the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) which reflects the culture and ideology of the Han group. Textbooks are created using the knowledge of the dominant groups which legitimizes their culture, ideology, and worldview while minority knowledge is excluded and subjugated. Foucault would argue that textbooks are technologies used by dominant forces in society to ensure social regulation and cohesion. For Foucault, textbooks would achieve the means through which rationalities – any systematic way of thinking about government – are carried out and made possible (Lippert and Park, 2011:176). In addition, Foucault would explain that textbooks are technologies that “guide the self, by the self” (and Park, 2011:176). For Wang and Phillion, “textbooks are not only the carrier of ideologies, values, cultures, and morality but also the arena in which dominant groups maintain their power over knowledge selection and construction and reproduce the power structure” (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 570).

Wang and Phillion conduct <sup>ed</sup> a study which reveals how the dominant Han group, selects and constructs textbooks in elementary schools for the purpose of maintaining the status quo and reproducing mainstream knowledge and values while marginalizing indigenous knowledges. From grades one to six, twelve textbooks about *Yu Wen* (Chinese), twelve textbooks about *Si xiang pin de* (Moral Education), and six textbooks about *She hui* (Social Science) were read and analyzed. The school textbooks were classified into the following categories: minority, Han, and international. Under each group, the examination of the <sup>texts in the school textbooks</sup> is

“Content” of textbooks

7

Study in China

concentrated on seven issues: heroism, patriotism, morality, women, disability, science and technology, and culture. <sup>Wang & Phillips</sup> The author tallied the number of texts related to each of the above. The authors used language and story-line analysis to examine if the texts contribute to the social reproduction of the dominant Han ideology and therefore subjugate minority knowledge.

The findings <sup>show</sup> were that the number of texts in the three school textbooks related to minority groups was 12, which comprises about 1.5% of the total texts in the three textbooks. The number of texts related to the dominant Han group was 667, which comprises about 85.2% of the total texts in the three textbooks. It is evident that the Han group prioritizes Han knowledge in school textbooks while minority groups' knowledge and cultures are deemed less important. The selection of knowledge in school textbooks is selected and reconstructed based on the interests of the dominant Han group. Foucault would agree that the Han group controls all institutions and possesses the power to decide what knowledge should be included in school textbooks, such as heroism and morality, and what should be excluded, such as minority knowledge and culture. Foucault would argue that this is an example of the relationship between power/knowledge in that knowledge is "constituted through relations of power, which determine what is true and what value is accorded to particular kinds of knowledge", which therefore explains the type of material effects that knowledge will have in the world (O'Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41). For example, the textbook *Yu Wen*, there is a description about the Great Wall. The text discusses how it was the magnificent work of the ancient working people who accomplished the Great Wall. However, the text fails to mention that it was built to prevent the northern minorities from entering the Han dominated region and people were forced to work by the ruling class and died in its construction. Foucault would state that this is an example of how technologies assist to achieve not only regulation, but docile bodies by creating normal and

discourses



conventional ways of thinking through non-coercive methods. According to Wang and Phillion, “the Han group does not want students to learn that the harsh and cruel ruling class, in ancient times, did not care about working people’s lives and their families” (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 576). ~~There~~ is little social reality included in school textbooks about poverty, unemployment, corruption, and environmental pollution, which gives the illusion that society is perfect.

The knowledge that students learn in school prevents them from examining their social realities and forces them to accept the production and reproduction of dominant knowledges. within schools, Minority students begin to lose their access to minority knowledge and culture due to few representations of it, which ultimately leads to a student’s identity to be overtaken by the dominant culture. I argue <sup>that</sup> when a minority ~~groups~~ knowledge becomes devalued and under-represented ~~that~~ a social injustice has occurred. It is unprincipled that minority students lack the opportunity to learn their culture, history, and literature and forced to learn the dominant knowledge of any kind. Although China’s political landscape makes it more difficult to combat dominant knowledges and power, there are ways to challenge dominant knowledge. ~~This is something Foucault failed to discuss in his work.~~ I argue, ~~along with Loewen,~~ that once the power/knowledge nexus is fully understood, individuals can counteract the power/knowledge relationship by challenging its existence and effects. Loewen discusses ways in which teachers and students can challenge textbook doctrine by asking five critical questions when analyzing texts. First, why was this written? Loewen suggests that one needs to locate the audience in the social structure and consider what the speaker is trying to accomplish, essentially contextualize the text. Second, whose viewpoint is presented? Loewen suggests that the location of the speaker in the social structure should be analyzed along with his/her ideological interests. In addition, he recommends readers to look for any viewpoints that are omitted. Third, is the account

*such as permitting one interpretation*

believable? Fourth, is the account backed up by other sources? Last, how is one supposed to feel about the information presented? (Loewen, 1996: 317). If such questions are explored when analyzing ~~images, texts, or audio~~ <sup>discourse</sup>, one has a mechanism for defending themselves against simply complying with the dominant knowledges and power that Foucault discusses.

After interpreting Foucault's notion of knowledge and power and analyzing the way in which it still operates in communities around the world, it is evident that knowledge and power have a complicated relationship that benefits some and not others. The above scholars that I have mentioned provide an excellent interpretation of Foucault's power/knowledge nexus and illustrate how it legitimizes the way society operates and the way individuals behave. ~~To refer to my question I posed at the beginning, I believe that Foucault was conveying that power and knowledge operates in a detrimental way as it oppresses and conforms people in dominant ideologies.~~ However, once the magnitude of Foucault's notion is realized, it can be used to liberate those whose knowledges have been suppressed by dominant groups. Although the work of Foucault is at times complicated and ambiguous, his work has had a profound influence in the study of sociology and continues to be insightful when discussing the sociology of knowledge and knowledge production.

*Loewen suggests that the validity of the account must be defined in order for it to be considered truth.*

*Loewen argues that ~~it must~~ an account must be consistent with other accounts and readers must discover this.*

*10*

*if it*

*Loewen suggests one reflects on their own knowledge in relation to the account, then they participate in meaning-making further.*

*Result!*

*- Intro*

*- conclusion*

*He worked!*

*Once we understand or can perceive the way power works, we can resist / challenge it*

## Final Paper:

This is the final paper marked by the course instructor.

### Analytic Paper

*“There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”*  
- Michel Foucault (1975)

Name: Jessica Wills  
Student number: 209709692  
Professor: Alireza Asgharzadeh  
Date: November 29, 2011



J. Wills 1

Michel Foucault was a French scholar who was involved in the structuralist and post-structuralist movements. He has had a profound influence on a range of disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, criminology, and other social scientific disciplines. A central topic that Foucault spoke about throughout his writings from 1963-1984 was how an individual's knowledge is influenced by existing power relations in social life. Of all Foucault's work, his exploration of the relationship between power and knowledge in society is most interesting. Foucault studied how this relationship between power and knowledge contributed to the collection and development of knowledge in society. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault argues that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1975). Foucault's position is that power and knowledge cannot be separated because they exist interdependently. I argue within this essay that knowledge is constructed by dominant beliefs and values in society. I suggest that the existing power relations in society allow dominant groups to achieve social control by creating docile bodies through the regulation and construction of knowledge. In addition, I illustrate how the knowledges that exist outside of dominant representations are marginalized and subjugated.

First, I will interpret Foucault's notion of power and knowledge with the help of various scholars and discuss how knowledge is constructed based on dominant representations. Second, I will outline why I agree with the scholars' interpretation of Foucault and discuss how the 'power/knowledge nexus' produces social control, regulation, and docile bodies. Third, to further illustrate Foucault's notion of power and knowledge, I will refer to Loewen (1996) to discuss the current representation of dominant knowledge in school textbooks and also examine a case study of Chinese school textbooks. Finally, I will explore how both Loewen and Foucault discuss

J. Wills 2

dominant knowledges and examine the ways that Loewen suggests the power and knowledge nexus can be challenged in hopes of validating minority knowledges. ✓

According to Foucault, the relationship between power and knowledge is “reciprocal” (Koopman, 2010: 550). That is, power and knowledge exist in light of one another, constantly referring back to each other. For Hall (2001), Foucault is concerned with how knowledge evolved through discursive practices in specific institutional settings in order to regulate the conduct of others (Hall, 2001: 26). Foucault argues that the ‘power/knowledge nexus’ operates within an “institutional apparatus and [with the assistance of] technologies (techniques)” which always involve power and are always linked to certain types of knowledges (Hall, 2001: 26). ✓

What Foucault means by apparatus is a system or structure in which processes occur that involve technologies such as laws, rules, regulations, surveillance, etc. Essentially, Hall argues that Foucault believes that “knowledge was always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct” (Hall, 2001: 26). According to O’Brien and Szeman (2004), the nexus of knowledge and power ultimately legitimates forms of social control over particular groups in society (O’Brien and Szeman, 2004:41). This type of control is captured through a particular discourse. ✓

O’Brien and Szeman acknowledge that discourse is the “context of speech or writing, including who is officially permitted to speak on particular subjects and what kind of authority particular kinds of speech (and speakers) carry” (O’Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41). Kramer (2001) clarifies how discourses arise from the operations of powerful institutions of control and coercion in the form of what Foucault calls specialized knowledge, which is produced by experts (Kramer, 2011: 11). Such experts could be professors, doctors, teachers, judges, and police officers. According to McCarthy (1996), Foucault strives to disturb the normalization of

J. Wills 3

discourses and encourages individuals to think about what they know and how they know it (McCarthy, 1996: 40). Foucault is arguing that individuals have agency and the power to exercise that agency. He is suggesting that individuals do not have to accept dominant discourses and can challenge them. Knowledge, according to Foucault's concept of discourse "is constituted through relations of power, which determine what is true, what value is accorded to particular kinds of knowledge, and, by extension, what material effects that knowledge will have in the world" (O'Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41). What individuals and groups believe to be true is constructed by dominant beliefs and values that derive from a complex web of power relations resulting in social control and social regulation. ✓

Foucault's illustration of power and knowledge demonstrates how the two notions are interconnected and produce a disciplinary society. Kramer (2011) suggests that Foucault uses the convention "power/knowledge to symbolize the interconnectedness of ideas and practices; of specialized knowledge(s) and power" (Kramer, 2011: 11). Foucault argues that the relationship between power and knowledge creates certain social outcomes, depending on where an individual is in the nexus, which either marginalizes or privileges the individual. Koopman (2010) discusses how the nexus can operate as "a technology of power that drives out, excludes, banishes, marginalizes, and represses" individuals and groups (Koopman, 2010: 555). In addition, Foucault discusses that the 'power/knowledge nexus' can produce outcomes in which individuals and groups are inspired, enabled, and encouraged. According to Wandel (2001), Foucault's greatest contribution to the critical theory project is his conception of power as positive. This notion is formulated on the idea that "power produces, makes, and shapes rather than masks, represses, and blocks" (Wandel, 2001: 369). This conception of power supports the belief that knowledges of various kinds are legitimate and are powerful in shaping individuals.



J. Wills 4

These two types of power result in producing what Foucault calls docile bodies which are compliant and submissive persons. I argue that, to a degree, individuals are required to comply with norms, rules, and regulations in order for society to operate in an orderly manner. However, the manner in which power and knowledge is exercised today produces negative effects where individuals and groups fail to even realize that they are being oppressed. According to Green (2010), the existence of modern power, disciplinary power, transforms “docile bodies into disciplined subjects, including subjects of the state, subjects of medicine and psychiatry, and subjects of empire” (Green, 2010: 317). Individuals and groups are regulated beings that are influenced by dominant norms, ideologies, and discourses that manifest power. However, Foucault encourages individuals to challenge the structures of domination and the mechanisms of power found in all societies. ✓

After analyzing and exploring the relationship between power and knowledge that Foucault discusses, I agree with the above scholars’ interpretation. My interpretation of Foucault’s quote from *Discipline and Punish* also begins with the idea that power and knowledge are interconnected. I believe that Foucault is conveying that knowledge is a form of power because to know gives one the ability to act, enforce, and command. Similarly, power is a form of knowledge because to have power one needs the ability to access certain forms of information, facts, and principles. However the relationship is not simple. There are various factors that complicate this relationship, such as dominant norms and values that have been socially constructed to serve dominant groups in society. If the relationship between power and knowledge was simplistic, I would argue that everyone in society can achieve knowledge and at the same time power, or vice versa, because everyone is capable of developing knowledge and exercising the power of that knowledge. But, what we see when analyzing Foucault’s work is

J. Wills 5

that certain people and certain institutions are privileged and therefore able to use the authority that power and knowledge produces to exercise control, dominance, and regulation. It becomes evident that Foucault is greatly concerned about the dominant knowledges in society, the knowledge that serves the interest and values of institutions which are powerful agents and which create 'docile bodies'. However, although Foucault discusses agency, he fails to discuss the ways in which the power/knowledge relationship can be deconstructed. I argue that the interdependence of the power/knowledge nexus can be challenged and I turn to Loewen (1996) to discuss how diverse knowledges can be emancipated from dominant beliefs and values by promoting critical analysis. ✓

I will demonstrate how Foucault's notion of power and knowledge is still relevant today and explore how the nexus can be specifically seen in the education institution, particularly school textbooks. Schools worldwide are sites where some knowledges are privileged while others are marginalized. This issue is illuminated when analyzing the study on Chinese school textbooks, which demonstrates the ways in which schools produce disciplined and obedient citizens by constructing the worldviews and knowledges of students (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 568).

James Loewen, a professor at the University of Vermont, surveyed twelve leading high school American history textbooks at the Smithsonian Institution and reveals that much of what is written as fact throughout the texts is actually misinformation. Loewen (1996) argues that textbooks omit the passion, ambiguity, and conflict of America's past and "are so Anglocentric that they might be considered Protestant history" (Loewen, 1996: 313). He also articulates that the education institution, as an agent of socialization, "tells people what to think and how to act and requires them to conform... to accept the rightness of our society" (Loewen, 1996: 307).

J. Wills 6

Foucault would argue that schools have the privilege and authority to exercise dominant knowledge which structures an individual's knowledge and perspective. For Foucault, a school's objective would be to create disciplined docile bodies which act and think in relation to what they are told. According to Loewen, much of what is written in textbooks is driven by nationalism and political objectives in order to foster patriotism in individuals. (Loewen, 1996: 15). Various public schools in the United States are no longer trusted to successfully educate students. However, not only is this a problem facing North America, but other nations around the world and can be seen for instance in a case study in China.

According to Wang and Phillion (2010), determining the knowledge that is included in school textbooks is a worldwide issue as many countries debate what knowledge is most appropriate and the knowledge that students should learn. The knowledge that is presented in school textbooks is considered to be truth even though the knowledge is often distorted or constructed for a political purpose (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 567). Like Foucault, the authors suggest that we examine whose knowledge is being presented, in what form, how it was selected, and by who to achieve what ends (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 567). Wang and Phillion argue that knowledge is selected and constructed based on the interests of dominant groups which results in school textbooks to mislead students and socialize them in dominant culture.

In China, textbook knowledge is constructed by the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) which reflects the culture and ideology of the Han group. Textbooks are created using the knowledge of the dominant group which legitimizes their culture, ideology, and worldview while minority knowledge is excluded and subjugated. Wang and Phillion conducted a study which reveals how the dominant Han group, selects and constructs textbooks in elementary schools for the purpose of maintaining the status quo and reproducing mainstream knowledge and values



J. Wills 7

while marginalizing indigenous knowledges. From grades one to six, twelve textbooks about *Yu Wen* (Chinese), twelve textbooks about *Si xiang pin de* (Moral Education), and six textbooks about *She hui* (Social Science) were read and analyzed. The school textbooks were classified into the following categories: minority, Han, and international. Under each group, the examination of the content of the textbooks is concentrated on seven issues: heroism, patriotism, morality, women, disability, science and technology, and culture. Wang and Phillion tallied the number of texts related to each of the above. The authors use language and story-line analysis to examine if the texts contribute to the social reproduction of dominant Han beliefs and values and therefore subjugate minority knowledge. ✓

The findings show that the number of texts in the three school textbooks related to minority groups was 12, which comprises about 1.5% of the total texts in the three textbooks. The number of texts related to the Han was 667, which comprises about 85.2% of the total texts in the three textbooks. It is evident that Han prioritize Han knowledge in school textbooks while minority knowledges and cultures are deemed less important. Foucault would argue that textbooks are technologies used by dominant forces in society to ensure social regulation and cohesion. For Foucault, textbooks would achieve the means through which rationalities – any systematic way of thinking about government – are carried out and made possible (Lippert and Park, 2011:176). In addition, Foucault would explain that textbooks are technologies that “guide the self, by the self” (Lippert and Park, 2011:176). For Wang and Phillion, “textbooks are not only the carrier of ideologies, values, cultures, and morality but also the arena in which dominant groups maintain their power over knowledge selection and construction and reproduce the power structure” (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 570). ✓

J. Wills 8

Knowledge in textbooks is selected and reconstructed based on the interests of the Han. Foucault would agree that the Han control all institutions and possess the power to decide what knowledge should be included textbooks, such as heroism and morality, and what should be excluded, such as minority knowledge and culture. Foucault would argue that this is an example of the relationship between power and knowledge in that knowledge is “constituted through relations of power, which determine what is true and what value is accorded to particular kinds of knowledge” (O’Brien and Szeman, 2004: 41). This explains the type of material effects that knowledge will have in the world. For example, in the textbook *Yu Wen*, there is a description about the construction of the Great Wall of China. The text discusses how it was the work of the ancient working people who constructed the Great Wall. However, the text fails to mention that it was built to prevent the northern minorities from entering the Han-dominated region and people were forced to work by the ruling class and died in its construction (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 576). Foucault would state that this is an example of how discourses assist to achieve not only social control and regulation, but docile bodies by creating normal and conventional ways of thinking through non-coercive methods, such as promoting one interpretation. According to Wang and Phillion, “the Han group does not want students to learn that the harsh and cruel ruling class, in ancient times, did not care about working people’s lives and their families” (Wang and Phillion, 2010: 576). Wang and Phillion’s study of textbooks in China demonstrates that there is little social reality included in school textbooks about poverty, unemployment, corruption, and environmental pollution, which gives the illusion that society is perfect. ↗

The knowledge that students learn in school prevents them from examining their social realities and forces them to accept the production and reproduction of dominant knowledges. Within schools, minority students lose access to minority knowledge and culture due to few

J. Wills 9

representations of it, which ultimately leads to a student's identity to be overtaken by the dominant culture. I argue that when minority knowledges become devalued and under-represented that a social injustice has occurred. It is unprincipled that minority students lack the opportunity to learn their culture, history, and literature and forced to learn the dominant knowledge of any kind. Although China's political landscape makes it more difficult to combat dominant knowledges and power, there are ways to challenge dominant knowledge. I argue that once the 'power/knowledge nexus' is fully understood, individuals can counteract the power/knowledge relationship by challenging its existence and effects. Loewen (1996) discusses ways in which students can challenge textbook doctrine by asking five critical questions when analyzing texts. First, why was this written? Loewen suggests that one needs to locate the audience in the social structure and consider what the speaker is trying to accomplish, essentially contextualize the text. Second, whose viewpoint is presented? Loewen suggests that the location of the speaker in the social structure should be analyzed along with his/her ideological interests. In addition, he recommends readers to look for any viewpoints that are omitted. Third, is the account believable? Loewen suggests that readers critically analyze the content in the text to determine its authenticity and legitimacy. Fourth, is the account backed up by other sources? Loewen argues that readers must discover other sources, such as images, texts, and audio, that validate the account. Last, how is one supposed to feel about the information presented? Loewen suggests that if one applies his or her own knowledge when analyzing and understanding the account, then that account will have a specific meaning for the individual (Loewen, 1996: 317). If such questions are explored when analyzing discourse, one has a mechanism for defending themselves against simply complying with the dominant knowledge and power that Foucault discusses. ✓

J. Wills 10

After interpreting Foucault's notion of knowledge and power and analyzing the ways in which it still operates in communities and institutions around the world, it is evident that knowledge and power have a complicated relationship which benefits some and not others. The above scholars provide an excellent interpretation of Foucault's 'power/knowledge nexus' and illustrate how it legitimizes the way society operates and the way the behaviour of individuals is controlled and regulated. As seen in the example of school textbooks in China, knowledge is constructed based on dominant beliefs and values which marginalizes and subjugates minority knowledges. By adopting a critical analysis of discourse and interrogating dominant knowledge by asking questions outlined by Loewen, one can more fully exercise their agency by deconstructing dominant representations. Once individuals understand and perceive the way power works, they can challenge it and validate other forms and sources of knowledge. Although the work of Foucault is at times complicated and ambiguous, his work has had a profound influence in the study of sociology and continues to be insightful when discussing the sociology of knowledge and knowledge production. ✓



J. Wills 11

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