

CHIRP Lab - What is Power? - Video Transcript

Hi my name is Kate Seddon and I am a Social Work and Theology student here at the University of Portland. I am also a part of the Collaborative Humanities Investigating Religion and Power, which is the CHIRP lab, which is an interdisciplinary working group. And this video is a part of a series that addresses key concepts that play an important role in the ongoing research that we do. So, in this video in particular we will be discussing; What is Power?

To give a brief outline, first we're going to discuss what is power? and how do we approach it and i'm going to provide three separate examples of the signature that power leaves behind. So first how do we approach power? and what is power? Well, power is such a broad and vast word that has so many different meanings that can almost be dangerous to define what power is.

So in this article written by Mitchell Dean, he discusses the idea of power having a signature. He states that, "The concept of power is best approached through its particular signature". So by examining these impacts and markings that power has left behind, which we call its signature, we can begin to greater understand what power is. So for example if we're taking a walk down the beach and you see a set of footprints you may not be able to see who made those footprints but you can see the impact that it left behind. and the same can be done with power by investigating the signature and the impact that power leaves behind.

So this first example of power having a signature discusses the meaning of power-over which can be defined as A having power over B making B do something B usually wouldn't do. So an example of this that applies to our world around us is unpaid student labor. Where institutions and academia have power-over their students to the extent that they can get their students to participate in unpaid work because the students need their experience for the future. They need to be able to participate in these things to benefit themselves in the future, whether or not they are paid.

So moving on to our second example of the signature that power leaves behind, is the idea of power-with. Now power-with is defined as A having power over B but B also having power over A. and it's this mutual exchange of power that makes this work. One of the most important aspects that needs to be incorporated in this power with situation and dynamic is respectability. To respect one another that you're in cooperation with that you're working with, to have respect for one another and the ideas that come to the table.

So the best way that this is exemplified is through academic mentorship. So for example, this CHIRP lab, where professors have power over the students but students also have power over

the professors. where we have a shared ownership and shared responsibilities through this CHIRP lab that creates an intentional interdependence with this mutually beneficial power exchange.

Now finally our last example of the signature that power leaves behind, deals with power-to. Power-to is defined as A now being able and capable to affect B to get A's desired outcome and whether or not A decides to use power-over B is up to A but it's more outcome based. It's basically the capacity of these actors that achieve their purposes. So an example of power-to being used is through tenure. Where tenured faculty members are now able to take more risks in their research knowing that they are protected by their institution. And this example of tenure also shows that very transition from power-over to power-to where the institutions no longer have so much power-over their faculty members but rather give the power-to their members to take risks to step out of the comfort zone without fear of losing their job.

So in this video we discussed; how do we approach power? and what is power? and the signature that it leaves behind, as well as provided a couple examples of power-over, power-with, and power-to which we can now use to analyze the world around us.

If you want to learn more about power go ahead and check out some of the resources underneath our bibliography, as well as a couple more videos that are listed below this.