An Analysis of Social Power

Power and Authority on the Belt Parkway (and Other Places)
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Introduction and Examples

As college students you will encounter many abstract concepts in your required readings for courses. This article differs in that it will present two basic elements of social life—power and authority—in a concrete manner. How power and authority appear in society will be illustrated by focusing on two hypothetical examples of an automobile driver speeding on Brooklyn's Belt Parkway and his reactions to being caught by the police. First, however, I would like to say a few words about the nature of concepts in general.

Perhaps most importantly, concepts are neither right nor wrong. That is because concepts do not make assertions or claims about the world; and it is only such assertions or claims that are capable of being proven empirically—through our five senses—right (true) or wrong (false). Think of concepts as linguistic flat-bed trucks; they convey human meaning from person to person, and while they are necessary for statements "to ride on," they do not make a statement themselves. In this sense, words, or the elements of language that express human ideas, do not mean anything in themselves until humans convey that meaning by using them.

We may also think of concepts as lenses through which humans define and experience reality; our concepts constitute a grid-like structure, whether simple or complex, that shapes our world by determining how much and what portions of the complex world reach the human knower. New concepts can provide us with new ways to look at or define the world. If new concepts help us absorb more details or more aspects of the world than we could previously, then increasing our inventory of concepts can also increase our understanding and appreciation of the world. If the proposed concepts do not accomplish these objectives, however, then such proposals are not helpful to our cognitive aims and may therefore be rejected.

An illustration will help here. I may know very little about the art of ballet, for example. Another way of saying this is that I am ignorant of the ballet. I know very few ballet concepts or have very little conceptual understanding of the art of performing ballet. As a result of my ignorance (in fact, a poor conceptual inventory) of ballet, when I attend a performance I may merely see adults in tights jumping around to music—not a very interesting or enjoyable activity for me, and one not likely to make me an enthusiast.

If, on the other hand, I were familiar with the concepts involved in the art

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of baller—the goals of the dancer, how they attempt to achieve them, the methods available to dancers as a means of self-expression, and so on—if, in other words, I had a conceptual framework within which to understand baller, then this art would have more meaning for me, and I might enjoy it more.

Here is another example: if you are a knowledgeable sports fan, you are probably familiar with the reaction of spectators who, while ignorant of a particular sport, attend a game. Since they do not know the concepts, rules, aims, or means to achieve success in the sport, they may find watching it uninteresting. They do not see the same game that you do. Because they do not have a developed set of concepts of the athletic event, it means less to them. They view the game the way I view the ballet.

Appreciation of any complex phenomenon usually requires some conceptual understanding of it. Some familiarity with the important concepts involved in the activity that help define that activity. Without such understanding of the required concepts, the phenomenon will not be comprehended fully and may, therefore, be considered less significant. From this perspective, your entire formal education becomes an effort to improve your conceptual inventory so that you may experience and appreciate more of the world. The confusing and extremely complex world we live in requires more developed knowledge and greater sophistication about concepts than novices possess. Part of beginning to study any new subject—whether it is physics, painting, politics, society, or ballet—is to learn its essential concepts. One may thus think of a college education as an attempt to transmit new concepts to help you understand the world more clearly, thoroughly, and deeply.

Two very important concepts in the effort to comprehend social life are power and authority. As we have seen, a person who possesses a small conceptual inventory, or who cannot make fine distinctions because of a crude conceptual grid, has less potential for understanding complex aspects of the world, especially aspects of so complex a subject as social life. Thus, the greater our conceptual inventory, the better we can understand and describe the world.

One sign of a sophisticated, or educated, person is the richness of his or her conceptual inventory (or conceptual vocabulary). One goal of Core Studies is 5 and of the entire core curriculum, therefore, is to enrich your stock of concepts in various fields of study so that you can begin to develop a deeper understanding of the world. This article is directed toward improving your conceptual understanding of social life by presenting an analysis of two of its central components: the concepts of power and authority.

The following examples involve a well-known highway in Brooklyn called the Belt Parkway. Anyone who has ever driven on any part of this heavily used roadway knows that, in order even to approach the speed limit of fifty miles per hour, you must drive at a nonrush hour. In our examples, which are purely imaginary and have no relation to any real events or people, a young man has just purchased an expensive sports car that is supposed to go fast. He starts to drive it on the Belt Parkway. At 3:30 a.m. on a Tuesday morning, he drives his car onto the Belt to “air it out.”

While doing eighty-five miles per hour, he suddenly spots an odd police car with its signal flashing and siren blazing away. The police obviously want the driver to stop and pull over. In our first example, this lover of sports cars and high speeds decides to ignore the officers” signals to stop and attempts to elude them by increasing his speed, to see what this new car can really do in the crunch of a high-speed car chase. When the police see his automobile speeding up, they give chase and—outside of Police Department regulations, but in our purely fictional example—believing that a dangerous fugitive must be behind the wheel, they begin to shoot bullets over the speeding car to force its driver to stop. When the young speeder realizes that they are threatening not only his brand new car but his life as well, he finally slows down and stops. He might have risked a summons to give the police “a run for their money” and see if the car delivered what it promised, but he does not wish to die or be seriously injured just to learn about his new car at high speeds.

In a second example, the speeder, who sees the flashing red lights and hears the siren of the police vehicle, realizes immediately that he has been caught speeding. He quickly pulls to a stop to accept a summons for violating the speed limit. While he is not happy to be caught, he recognizes the risks he took by speeding on a public highway and violating existing social rules or laws; that is, he knew beforehand that if he were caught by the police he would deserve a fine and would receive points against his driving record. In this version of our story, the speeding driver immediately obeys the police officers orders to stop and accepts his punishment for disobeying one of society’s rules of behavior, the speed limit on the Belt Parkway.

The different reactions of the two speeding sports car drivers were chosen to demonstrate the concepts of power and authority. In the first example, with the police shooting above the car, we have an illustration of power. In the
second example, with the speeding driver stopping immediately to obey the police, we have an illustration of authority. The ways in which these two important concepts and phenomena differ, and how their differences are significant to social life and its systematic study, will be the topics for the remainder of this article.

*Power and Authority: Meanings and Illustrations*

Let me begin our discussion of these two concepts and illustrations of their presence in social life by proposing meanings for power and authority and clarifying and elaborating on these meanings. I propose these definitions to help you understand social life more clearly and deeply. If these goals are realized, you should then accept these conceptual proposals. If, however, this discussion does not improve your comprehension of society, you are not obligated to accept them. There are no right or wrong concepts, as we have discussed, only more or less useful ones. Their usefulness depends on you and on what problem interests you. I have broken down the components of each concept and have indicated them, by numbers and letters, to show common elements as well as differences between these two concepts. The meaning of power may be considered as follows:

1. a relative term referring to an interpersonal relationship in which one person must be more powerful with respect to, or in comparison with, another;
2. a relationship in which one individual's (the power subordinates') wishes, wants, or needs are made subservient to another individual's (the power wielder's), because of;
3. the subordinates' recognition of a genuine threat by the wielder to something he or she (the power subordinate) values more than his or her opposition to compliance with the power wielder's demands.

The meaning of authority may be considered as follows:

A. a legitimate power relationship; and, like the nonlegitimate power relationship, a relative term referring to an interpersonal relationship in which one person must be more authoritative with respect to, or in comparison with, another;
B. a relationship in which one individual's (the authority subordinates') wishes, wants, or needs, are made subservient to another individual's (the authority wielder's), because of;
C. the subordinates' recognition of the rightful and legitimate claim of the authority wielder, according to the authority-creating rule or law, and

D. that this rule or law is viewed by the subordinates as being just, proper, and acceptable; and/or the process by which the rule or law was made is viewed by the authority subordinates as being just, proper, and acceptable (even if the particular rule or law is not so viewed).

First, my use of the word may indicates the conditional nature of these conceptual proposals. You may or may not find them useful; therefore, you may or may not accept them. Secondly, similarities between points 1 and 2 of power and points A and B of authority suggest that authority relationships may be viewed as a special type of power relationship; but one with a crucially distinguishing trait: legitimacy. Both power and authority (or illegitimate and legitimate power, respectively), in my view, share important components. One is that they both refer to interpersonal relationships, that is, relationships between human beings. It is true that we may also speak of the power of the lion to kill its prey or of a sharpener's power to grind a pencil; but here let us restrict these two significant social concepts to human relationships alone and use other terms for nonhuman actors and objects. Some analysts of power and authority have emphasized the role of the control over scarce social resources (for example, money, oil, land, information, or other resources) to power and authority. While I do not disagree that such control is socially important, I would suggest that control of social resources becomes significant as power and authority only when it involves other persons.

Another similarity between power and authority is that both terms are used in a comparative sense; that is, they refer to traits that people possess in relation to, or in comparison with, other humans. Such relative traits should be contrasted to noncomparative traits, which belong to an individual. Such traits as the color of one's eyes or one's height, for example. One does not have power or authority alone. In my view, one possesses power or authority only in relationship to others, and the complete set of members of the relationship should always be made explicit whenever we talk about power and authority. For example, we can say that the President of the United States has power or authority over some people of his country, but we should not say "The President is powerful," or "The teacher has authority." This is like saying "Jimmy is taller." "Taller" in this sentence is a comparative term and requires a reference to the other things or people that are being compared to Jimmy's height. The same is true with power and authority. An individual has more or less power or authority relative to other humans, and who they are should be delineated. Although my examples focus on individuals—the speeding driver and police...
officers—it should be kept in mind that people will also confront power and authority within such institutional settings as the state, school, workplace, hospital, or prison.

In our examples, components 2 and 3 emphasize that in both power and authority relationships, one person's wishes, wants, or needs (those of the person called the subordinate) are made subservient or are suppressed in favor of another's wishes, wants, or needs (those of the person called the wielder of power or authority). In order for one person's wishes, wants, or needs to dominate those of another, there must be a conflict between the people involved in both power and authority relationships. If everyone is in agreement, there is no need to wield power or authority. It is only when conflict between people's wishes, wants, or needs arises that power or authority is required.

If two friends both wish to see the same movie, then no conflict exists and no power or authority is needed. If a child and a parent both want to eat spinach, then no conflict exists and power or authority is unnecessary. Even in such commonplace situations, however, the chances that everyone will agree all the time are very slim. More often, social life is pervaded with conflicts between the wishes, wants, or needs of individuals. Either for reasons of different needs at different times in their lives, different values and tastes, or scarcity of what humans desire, people seldom agree on what to do or when to do it. Even if they do agree, the amount of what it is they are seeking is often insufficient to avoid conflict. Thus in order for power and authority to exist, conflict is required; but since this prerequisite for power and authority is nearly always present in social life, it is no surprise that these relationships are important and frequent.

How do power and authority differ? The key difference between these two concepts is in their respective foundations or bases. For nonlegitimate power, the reason subordinates do what they do is in order to avoid something worse. In the first Belt Parkway example, the speeding driver eventually decides to stop and take his punishment to avoid the greater danger of death or serious injury. Even though the subordinate (the speeding driver) does not wish to receive his penalties, and although a conflict exists between him and the police, who represent the public, he chooses punishment over the greater danger that is threatened by the police shooting over his head.

The key to the base of nonlegitimate power is the threat of something worse happening if the subordinate does not obey. A parent's threat of "no television unless spinach is eaten" must be recognized as genuine by the child if the warning is to succeed. If the parent has threatened this punishment in the past but has not carried it out, the threat will not be viewed as genuine and will not succeed in getting the child to eat spinach. In this case, the attempt to establish a power relationship is aborted; similarly, the threat of a would-be mugger is undermined if he uses a toy pistol that is recognized as a fake by a potential victim (potential power subordinate).

It should be emphasized that, with few exceptions, most power wielders do not really intend to carry out a threat. They threaten solely to achieve their prime objective of coercing, or forcing, subordinates to do what they do wish to do and would not do if they were not threatened. In the first Belt Parkway example, the police do not wish to kill or injure the speeding driver merely to cause him to stop. Most muggers who threaten "your money or your life" do not wish to kill their victims. They use the threat to form a power relationship to achieve the subordinate's compliance in handing over money and other valuables. Normal power wielders do not wish to carry out their threats, but they use them to establish a successful power relationship and to obtain obedience on the part of a subordinate. Sometimes, however, power wielders must carry out their threats. If parents must actually deny their child television, the power relationship has not been established, nor has the prime goal of the potential power wielder been achieved: the child has not eaten his or her spinach.

If nonlegitimate power is understood in the manner suggested here, the potential and motives for physical violence in society may also be explained. Establishing a power relationship is difficult and can be costly. Potential power wielders must know a great deal about potential power subordinates and their value priorities. A parent must gauge how much a child enjoys television and how much he or she hates eating spinach. If the threat is not sufficient, a comparison to what is being commanded, it will not work as intended by the potential power wielder. Threatening most Brooklyn College students with an F in a course, for example, will not work if the command were to kill an innocent victim. This command would be so abhorrent that the threat becomes ineffective as a deterrent. Potential power wielders must assess the sufficiency of the threat relative to their command and to the subordinate's resistance to it.

Most power wielders do not engage in a serious study of their potential victims' or subordinates' values, however; they merely assume that the subordinates wish to live and maintain their current welfare. A threat to this, and welfare will usually work against everyone, except in rare cases—as with the cases of masochists or suicidal persons. Imagine, for example, a muggers' surprise if he said, "Your money or your life," and the victim exclaimed happily, "I have been trying to kill myself for years and now you can do it. I will not obey..."
In summary, nonlegitimate power requires a successful power base, wherein there is a threat against something the potential subordinate values more than what is being commanded of him or her. Moreover, power is expensive to maintain. The threat must be continuous if compliance is to be continuous. Thus, in prisons, where people are kept against their will, they must always be guarded. Since in these power relationships the obedience of the subordinate is based on a threat, once the threat is removed, the motivation to obey in addition, subordinates in nonlegitimate power relations are coerced, or act against their will, and this very fact may interfere with the goals power wielders wish to achieve. If, for example, an employer continues to threaten an employee with being fired, the employee's efficiency or quality of work can be reduced; similarly, a teacher does not wish to threaten students continuously with an F in order to get them to do assignments, because this very fear reduces the educational value of the assignments.

Nonlegitimate power involves coercion; it is against the free will of the subordinate and is costly both to create and maintain. Remember that power wielders are more interested in achieving their objectives with the compliance of subordinates than in carrying out their threats. For as seen earlier, a threat is usually an indication that the power relationship has failed to be established. The saddened parent, observing the unseen spinach, or the disappointed teacher giving Fs to students who did not do their homework, has not achieved a successful power relationship.

If power is difficult to establish, costly to maintain, and infringes on human freedom, what other means are available to humans to resolve unavoidable social conflict peacefully and voluntarily? Here is where legitimate power, or authority, is both useful and desirable. When we examine authority in society, we see that it, like nonlegitimate power (compare 1 and A), involves an interpersonal relationship predicated on conflict. The essential difference between the two types of social interactions involves the respective bases from which they are derived (compare 3 and C and D). Nonlegitimate power, as we have discussed, is based on an effective threat to something of value to the perspective subordinate. Authority, on the other hand, is a legitimate relationship. Legitimacy, a key aspect of authority, means that the authority relationship is entered into voluntarily by the subordinate because he or she judges it worthy of acceptance.

If authority subordinates still do not do what they wish to do in human conflict exists, you may ask why subordinates agree to make subservient their wishes, wants, or needs. In contrast to the nonlegitimate power base of point 1, the foundation of authority lies in points C and D, and it is here that the heart of the different natures and comparative values of these two social relationships may be found. Perhaps the authority subordinate recognizes the legitimate or rightful claim of the authority wielder to act within a range of authority and accepts the reason for creating social rules and laws. The subordinate considers such a law or the law-making process to be just and proper and, therefore, acceptable.

In the second example on the Belt Parkway: the speeder grants authority to the elected and appointed officials of New York State and New York City to regulate, that is, to make social rules considered authoritative, regarding vehicular traffic, including the setting of speed limits. He also realizes the right, indeed the duty, of agents of the State and City—the police—to enforce such regulations, including the apprehension and punishment of violators according to specific rules of procedure within the criminal justice system. Most drivers of cars want such regulations made and enforced in the interest of their own safety. Otherwise there would be social disorder, with drivers going as fast as they wish. Even speeders want to prevent others from speeding in order to minimize dangers to themselves when they drive fast. Most violators of social rules want rules to exist for others, while seeing themselves as exempt from the same restrictions.

Rules must be made if social disorder and its resulting dangers are to be avoided, but the only way such rules can create social orderliness consistent with individual freedom is if people voluntarily grant authority to a rule-making process and its products. Do you recall our discussion of the cost of establishing and maintaining nonlegitimate power? When authority is voluntarily agreed to by the subordinate, it does not require the same vigilance and cost, nor does it engender the resentment of power subordinates. The goal of all societies is to achieve voluntary obedience on the part of their citizens. This is called a legitimate regime.

Another difference between nonlegitimate power and authority is that all authority is restricted to the stipulated range of the authority-creating law or rule, but nonlegitimate power is limited only by the extent of the power base and concomitant threat to the power subordinate's values. The police, as authority wielders, may act only according to the laws of their jurisdiction, and may not (legally) violate these same restrictions. If they do, their actions lack authority, and they release the authority subordinate from his obligation to obey the command of the authority wielder. From this perspective, authority may be seen to flow upward from the subordinate to the wielder because authority...
must be granted first by the authority-subordinate to the wielder in order for it to be established. If such authority is not granted by the subordinate, it cannot be created by the mere assertion of it by the potential wielder; nor can it be forced on the subordinate, for it would then become nonlegitimate power, not authority.

Let us return to our second example on the Belt Parkway. When the speeder voluntarily stops because he recognizes the authority of the police to apprehend him and issue a summons, he is agreeing only to the restricted or limited sphere of authoritative activity designated to the police. If the police officers were to stop the driver and ask him to make a monetary contribution to the Police Benevolent Society's Annual Ball—in return for their overlooking the speeding incident—they would be acting without the authorization of the laws or rules that govern proper behavior and outside the sphere of authority granted to them by New York State and New York City. Suppose, in this hypothetical situation, the speeder refused to pay the implicit bribe and instead requested a speeding ticket. If the police officer pointed his gun at the driver and demanded a contribution, his authority would be transformed into a nonlegitimate power relationship—no different than that between a mugger and victim—where the threat to the power subordinate is more significant to him than his abhorrence of complying with the command.

Authority can always break down. This usually occurs when, in the judgment of the authority subordinate, the authority wielder has exempted themselves from the authority-creating rules and thus have violated the subordinates' voluntary agreement. Social scientists called this "delegitimization." During the war in Vietnam, for example, many Americans felt that their grant of authority had been violated, or that the process of making rules had been so transgressed by the existing leaders that citizens withdrew their grant of authority and obeyed social rules only when effectively threatened with punishment, not voluntarily. People become alienated from their political system, withdrew their authority, and eventually became revolutionaries seeking to transform the social order. Recall that the only reason a power subordinate obeys a power wielder is to avoid the carrying out of a threat, such as imprisonment or death. Most political leaders find themselves with little authority freely granted by citizens because so few regimes are worthy of acceptance by their people. As these leaders must rule mainly by wielding nonlegitimate power, certain nations-states experience a great deal of force and threatened violence.

When authority exists, no threat to the subordinate's values are necessary. Let us examine a relationship known to both students and college teachers: the classroom. Ideally, the relationship between teacher and student is one of authority granted by students because they recognize the benefits of the knowledge that the teacher offers. Therefore, when term papers are assigned, even though some students may not wish to do them, they fulfill their obligation. They recognize, or accept, the authority of the teacher to make such assignments since they have voluntarily granted authority to the teacher at the beginning of the term. If, on the other hand, the students do not grant the teacher authority and instead attend class only because they are threatened by loss of financial support from their parents if they leave college, the relationship between teachers and students changes dramatically into one of nonlegitimate power. The only motivation for such students to fulfill teachers' requests is to avoid a worse fate, such as receiving an F in the assignment, failing the course, and being thrown out of school.

Why do you do specific acts that you do not wish to do: in the classroom? at home? in society as a whole? Do you do them solely to avoid the threatened punishment of your teacher, parents, or agents of society or the state? If so, then you are in nonlegitimate power relationships. Your freedom is restricted and your accompanying resentment will reflect this sorry state of affairs. If, on the other hand, you obey voluntarily because you accept the prescribed range of demands of the authority-creating rule, whether a teacher, parent, or police officer, you are in an authority relationship consistent with your freedom and should feel no resentment at all.

Conclusion

Let us summarize the important differences between the two types of power relationships—power (nonlegitimate) and authority (legitimate)—as presented in this essay. Nonlegitimate power is based on threatened sanctions to a subordinate if the power wielder is not obeyed. It involves coercion or force and is thus contradictory to the subordinate's freedom. Nonlegitimate power is difficult to establish, costly to maintain, and usually requires a threat, perhaps even of physical harm in order to be effective. Authority, by contrast, is based on a voluntary acceptance by a subordinate of an authority wielder's commands, because they are clearly restricted to a specific range and stipulated by an authority-creating law that the subordinate deems just, proper, and acceptable. Authority is thus compatible with the subordinate's freedom.

Many experts on society and social authority would say that subordinate
are obligated to obey the proper commands of such an authority as a police officer because they have voluntarily participated in and pledged their allegiance to the existing social order and its rules. This may explain the importance of pledges in a political system, and why children are taught to repeat the Pledge of Allegiance in the United States even before they are old enough to know what the words mean. Most people in nonlegitimate power relationships want desperately to replace freedom-denying relations with authority relations that derive from voluntary agreement. Citizens living under dictatoral regimes, which are characterized by fear and coercion, would prefer living in a society where they could grant obedience to legitimate authority voluntarily rather than because of threats of punishment. Under these conditions, angry power subordinates may be driven to fight for their freedom through revolution in the hope that they can create a society worthy of their voluntary support, to create authority to replace existing nonlegitimate power relations.

The fact that American children from kindergarten onward repeat the Pledge of Allegiance daily suggests an issue that an imaginary critic of my conceptual analysis of power and authority might raise, and this provides a good point with which to end this discussion. The critic might agree with my analysis in its emphasizing the important differences between power and authority and the greater desirability of the latter over the former because of its consistency with freedom. The critic might continue, however, by stating that this analysis highlighting the differences between power and authority and the superior value of authority is highly unrealistic in an advanced industrial society like the United States because it emphasizes the conscious voluntary decision on the part of the authority subordinate to obey the potential authority wielder. No group of readers of a society the critic might argue, wants to run the risk of a deliberate choice on the part of the people whether to obey or not. If such a deliberate decision-making process to grant or not to grant authority were to occur, there would be a good chance that many citizens would decide not to grant authority, thus the entire social order or structure of authority relations could be jeopardized.

Critics of my analysis of authority may point out that while, in theory, authority may appear to be superior to power, such a comparison is not applicable to societies like the United States, which have effective means of thought control over its citizens from such an early age that the independent, deliberate decision required in order to enter voluntarily into agreement with authority wielders is virtually impossible. From birth, American children are bombarded with ideas by all the means available to the leaders (the elite) of society. They are trained to support the existing system of social relations, in other words, to grant authority to it. The thinking of young children is deeply influenced by early years spent watching television that is regulated by the state (the Federal Communications Commission), by public schools that require state-approved curricula and textbooks, the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, and by movies and the news media. To speak of a voluntary choice of granting authority to a stable, effective, advanced social order, such as exists in the United States, therefore, seems mistaken. Critics of my theory would point out that citizens of such societies are, in fact, brainwashed, socialized, or educated into unconscious obedience, almost from birth. Such critics might argue further that, according to my analysis of authority, this is not genuine, voluntarily granted authority and, therefore, that such a concept of authority is not applicable even in those societies that we think of as free.

Such criticism is partly justifiable. Advanced industrial societies have indeed blurred the distinction between nonlegitimate, coercive power and legitimate voluntary authority. The same methods of social control that George Orwell described in his novel 1984 seem realized today where leaders control so much of the thoughts and actions of citizens. Freedom means little because this political value assumes the ability on the part of the actor to be independent of his or her society, to be an independent person capable of independent thinking and values. In a society with such extensive and subtle means of invading the minds of its citizens without their awareness, freedom is no longer, if it ever existed, the very possibility of authority. Power becomes irrelevant, for when threats are no longer needed to make people obey, people believe, mistakenly, that they are making their own choices. They think that they are in authority relationships when they are in fact being controlled or manipulated by others. Thus, in an advanced industrial society, manipulation replaces both power and authority, and freedom vanishes for most citizens.

Unlike Orwell’s novel, however, which was originally entitled The Last European Man, no society, not even the United States or the Soviet Union, has been totally successful in controlling the thinking of all of its citizens. Short of comprehensive genetic engineering or control by drugs, what Aldous Huxley describes in his novel Brave New World, there will always be some citizens who are not socially controlled; often it is a socially marginal people, intellectually and skeptically who resist brainwashing or manipulation and are thus able to think independently and hold values that are different from their society. Certainly one goal of this article has been to increase your understanding of these.
of the nature of power and authority. It is intended to make you more conscious of your own involvement in these relationships and to question how often you are the target of manipulation. Do you act most often in order to avoid worse sanctions? Do you thoughtfully and carefully grant authority voluntarily to prospective authority wielders, whose actions are restricted to a stipulated range and are consistent with your freedom, because the agreement is voluntary? Are these questions new to you? Have you ever thought before of why you obey the commands of wielders, whether parents, friends, siblings, police officers, teachers, or the President of the United States?

This article has attempted to provoke your thinking about several crucial issues involved in understanding the nature of power and authority in society, and it is hoped that you will discuss them with your classmates and instructor in your Core Studies 3 class. Power and authority on the Belt Parkway is only one of many examples of how these relationships affect your life. If we are to avoid the kind of society that Orwell describes, one in which advanced industrial citizens have become automatons, pathetically unaware of being controlled by a handful of elites, then we must continue to probe the nature of and distinctions between power and authority.

A chief purpose of this essay has been to help you begin to understand the nature and urgency of thinking systematically about society and of the need to eradicate both power and manipulation. This can be accomplished by creating a society in which freedom-respecting authority can flourish.