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Relational autonomy and ocial Oppression :an analysis of personal autonomy and how it is made impossible by racial oppression.

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Relational Autonomy and Social Oppression

An analysis of personal autonomy and how it is made impossible by racial oppression.

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Content Page

Introduction **p3**

Personal Autonomy **p6**

Relational Autonomy

Social Oppression **p14**

Intersectional Social Identity and Social Oppression

Racism and Racial Oppression

Racial Oppression and Personal Autonomy **p25**

The Black Racial Identity and Racial Oppression

Personal Racial Oppression

Institutional Racial Oppression

Internalised Racial Oppression

Conclusion **p41**

References **p51**

Introduction

Kant and many of his fellow theorists on autonomy believe that an agent can practice autonomy even within a society governed by laws and social norms (Rohlf, 2016). To sum up this topic in Kant's works, Kant believes that the authorities within law and governance, would be impossible without the participation of individuals. This means, for every kind of authority to possess any power over a people, there needs to be participants that are willing to be governed by that given law or authority. The will to be governed by these authorities, Kant suggests, comes about as a certain waving of rights to autonomy by the governed people, to a superior or to a body which is given that authority/superiority over a people. We can say we understand this very notion just by observing our immediate circumstances, such as in the case of democratic states. The democratically elected can in fact rule in a society populated by autonomous people, so long as those people want to be governed by the leader. This claim holds answers to the intuition that autonomy is completely erased in governance. That is not the case. Authority can be said to only exist because of individuality and autonomy of agents, both the governed and the governing.

In our societies, there may be laws that govern our actions: criminal, constitutional and other laws, for example, govern how we should value other people's lives and their property, therefore informing us to refrain from taking the life or belongings of another. There are also regulation laws about smoking areas and codes of conducts that are specific to institutions and public areas, like schools and malls. Even so, these laws and how they affect our lives does not interrupt our intuition about the existence of personal autonomy: frankly, we can still choose to obey these laws even when no one is looking. Kant, and many of us, believe that we not only have choices about our actions, but that we have the ability to exercise choice through our personal autonomy.

It seems, then, that in circumstances where the laws that govern us and influence our decisions contradict our morals, yet still produce actions; those actions can be labelled as coercion. In cases like this, the person cannot be said to have practiced their personal autonomy. In the case of autonomy, "the laws on a given authority have an influence on a person's action only when those laws are in accordance with the person's moral compass" (Rohlf, 2016).

The general understanding that we have about people is that they are social beings; thriving in social settings and not as successful at being alone. This means that the social settings people find themselves in are partially composed of the relationships that people will have with each other. This also means that these relationships form factors that not only influence the various interactions that people share, but also plays an influential role to certain things about each person in that social setting. These factors, which we will refer to as the "social context" or "social conditions" of an individual, come in the form of language; culture; race; tradition; religion and other social relations an individual may have in their social setting. These social contexts are built on common values and norms that are shared by a particular group of people: for example, a person is said to be part of a particular religion by sharing common beliefs, values, norms and traditions with others of that religion. This seems to illustrate that human beings are autonomous social agents. It means that the autonomy of that agent is influenced by their social context.

What is autonomy? I argue that the best concept of autonomy is one that considers all the different elements and influences that allow an individual to exercise agency.

> The 'own-ness' of one's life, globally speaking, and one's decisions, actions, and values, however, is not indexed to the level of detachment one achieves from one's history, relationships, and socio-political context. (Johnston, 2017: 312)

By this, Johnston means that the most appealing form of autonomy in human beings is one that considers the role of social conditions of the person. Relational autonomy is the best concept of autonomy, because it takes into account an agent's social identity, which is the greatest influence in decision-making and active agency.

> Contemporary theories recognize that we are thoroughly socialized and social beings who are in many ways dependent upon and depended upon by others. Contemporary theorists, that is, take seriously the intricate ways in which we are socially embedded. (Johnston 2017:312).

Relational autonomy claims that our autonomy mostly relies on our social identity. Autonomy in human beings is a theory that includes the influence of social conditions on an agent's exercise of choice. autonomy. The agent is an individual, separate and distinct from other agents; and the person's autonomy can either be positively influenced or negatively

influenced by their various social conditions. This theory of autonomy realises the necessity of acknowledging human beings as socially relational beings.

If it is true that particular social conditions can have certain kinds of effects on autonomy; agents that are subjected to social oppression will have limited autonomy. This is because their values, norms and traditions have limited influence on their choice, thus making the agent inevitably a victim of coercion. Any kind of social oppression seems to limit autonomy to an agent in that it restricts the actions of the agent in ways that go against their normal route of decision-making, which should be governed by their norms, values and other building-blocks of their social conditioning had there been no social oppression to begin with.

This paper, then, will be looking at the impact racial oppression, as a kind of social oppression, has on an agent's autonomy and how racial oppression creates limitations to one's autonomy. The first two sections of this paper will focus on making various, relevant concepts clearer: Relational Autonomy and Social Oppression. The sections that follow will involve a critical discussion on the research problem: Racial oppression and its effects on relational autonomy. As part of the paper's conclusion, I will also include a pragmatic look at the significance of the argument in today's society.

There are three forms of racial oppression that will be the focus in this paper: personal/individual racial oppression, which is racial oppression that stems from an individual's personal views about a particular racial group; institutional racial oppression, where policies, standards and prerequisites of an institution can be racially oppressive towards a particular racial group; lastly we will look at the concept of internalised racial oppression, which is a form of racial oppression that has come from social oppression, but has become internal to the individual, against their own racial group and racial identity.

When we understand autonomy as relational; we begin to understand how difficult it is for individuals experiencing racial oppression to exercise individual autonomy, making autonomy, in certain contexts, something of an illusion. I argue that racial oppression makes autonomy impossible under the contexts in which our racial identity is relevant. This implies that racial oppression is a significant barrier to personal autonomy in many instances: if racial oppression does not come from the social environment of an individual, it will come from

within the individual, I claim. It's apparent that race is almost always relevant: whether through personal contexts, institutional contexts, and internal contexts.

Race, as a concept, has been the topic of discussion and debate for decades among many theorists, social scientists and philosophers. The colour of one's skin, as a social identity, is a form of reminder for individuals about the horrors earlier race theories produced for many people around the world: Genocides, Slavery, Apartheid, to mention a few. This has made race a relevant factor in every context of an individual's life, because of the social interactions that push and persuade decisions based on race, by either an individual's personal interactions or institutional interactions. Some of the questions this paper will answer aim to illustrate what exactly personal autonomy is or what it should be considered as; what social oppression is and what it's effects are on personal autonomy; then move to discuss how an individual's race is relevant in the greatest parts of their lives. By sharing the arguments of actual occurrences involving racial oppression and a racially oppressed social group, tis paper also aims to raise awareness to the social difficulties racism brings to the victims. This will lead to a look at how racial oppression comes in three different forms: Personal Racial Oppression, Institutional Racial Oppression and Internalised Racial oppression. The last section of the paper will look at an aspect of the argument that can be applied as an example on how racial oppression limits personal autonomy. This can be done by looking at what kind of responsibility should be granted to the racially oppressed. By addressing the association between relational autonomy and the notion of responsibility, we can understand the pragmatic reasons for arguments of this paper.

Personal Autonomy

There first needs to be an understanding about the theory of autonomy that I refer to in this paper. The Stanford Encyclopaedia (2016) defines autonomy as, "The principle of governing one's own actions." It paints the idea of self-governing or self-ruling. "Relational autonomy" is a term which refers to various perspectives of autonomy. These perspectives have in common their conviction that individuals are to be observed as a "social whole, where social relationships form an individual's identity" and that "Individuals are shaped by intersecting

social determinants, such as race, class, gender and ethnicity" (Soljar and Mackenzie, 2000: 33). It appears relational autonomy, Mackenzie (et al.: 2000) claims, can only be realised through social relations.

This paper makes use of relational autonomy, because this theory of personal autonomy is one that will prove most helpful in trying to answer questions about the influence of one's social environment on one's personal autonomy; how social oppression affects this autonomy; and what role responsibility plays in cases involving those who have limited or completely no personal autonomy. This is because a relational-based personal autonomy considers the social dimensions involved in the personal autonomy of individuals.

Questions about autonomy can be viewed through a normative, conceptual and metaphysical sphere. The normative view looks at questions like the desirability of autonomy: Lorrain Code (1991) claim that autonomy is desirable and says this about it, "The goal of human life is the realization of self-sufficiency and individuality". She describes the character ideal of an autonomous man, in the "Western" culture, as one that is highly preoccupied with the idea of autonomy. She claims that the idea of a descriptive and prescriptive view of self-sufficient independence is the most prominent aspect of this character ideal. The conceptual view looks at the definition of autonomy and the necessary conditions involved in personal autonomy, and the metaphysical view focuses on whether autonomy is real and whether it has any essential features, including what those features are. This paper will look at the concept of autonomy through as metaphysical lens and makes mention of the normative and conceptual views of autonomy.

To illustrate how the concept of autonomy is a real phenomenon that needs correct conceptualisation, Mackenzie and Soljar argue against the four major feminist theory critiques of the concept of autonomy: Metaphysical Care; Symbolic Critique; Post-modernistic; and Diversity critique. Their arguments are not against the entire concept of personal autonomy, rather, they are against the incorrect concept used in feminist theories of autonomy: Individuated/Individual autonomy. Since this paper will be looking solely at autonomy under the scope of metaphysics, the argument against the first claim is most relevant to consider. The Metaphysical critique claims, "For an agent to be autonomous, it is important to realise that agents are separate from each other" (Code, 1991: 72). This means that agents are to be seen as individuals and not as parts of a society.

The metaphysical critique of autonomy describes autonomous agents as agents that need to be observed as separate and or individualistic, where individuality refers to metaphysical individuality. This position of individuality agrees with the existence of relational autonomy, because relational autonomy needs agents to be separate from each other, even if those agents are part of a collective society. The critique, however, focusses more on the individuality or separation of the individual, separated even from society. The individuality of agents in relational autonomy suggests that the individual, as a part of society, can be autonomous. "The concept of autonomy involves three distinct but causally interdependent dimensions or axes: self-determination, self-governance, and self-authorization" (Mackenzie, 2014:17). This means that people prefer to think of their decisions, desires and actions as products of choice; that they are not mere victims of their circumstances, like objects, instead of subjects, snow-balling down the hill of life, with no genuine choice in whether they stop, continue down or turn around. Self-sufficient independence shows that human beings are capable of leading self-sufficient, isolated, independent lives" (Code, 1991: 72), she continues. Having said this about autonomy, it seems only fitting to explicitly say that autonomy, in this paper, can be seen as a loose version of determinism, which we can refer to as Social Determinism. "Social determinism is the theory that social interactions and constructs alone determine individual behaviour" (Colaguori, 2011). This is because it explains the autonomy of an individual as a result of certain social contexts that influence the person's values and norms. Relational autonomy, then, means the organising of these choices with the influence of these socially determining factors.

It is important to give the correct concept of autonomy to avoid making the concept of autonomy be at the expense of social groups, like females, black people, Jewish people, homosexual people and any other oppressed social group. As a way to understanding theories of autonomy, Friedman says that the correct concept of personal autonomy should be established even before there is an evaluation of how autonomy plays a part in individual's actions. Even so, if we have the incorrect concept of autonomy, does it mean that autonomy should be done away with?

Friedman says that the concept of autonomy should not be done away with. He says, "the best way to stand by this is by fixing the illusions of autonomy" (Friedman, 1997:41) By this, Friedman highlights on the illusion that has hovered over early feminist theories of autonomy

which imply that autonomy is the kind of phenomenon that makes women behave in inappropriate ways that go against what is perceived as "their nature" in a patriarchal world. This view brings about the idea that autonomy is an undesirable phenomenon for all. This comes from the idea that human nature should be avoided and law is needed by people to produce the appropriate behaviours. Friedman believes that the consequence of an incorrect concept is the idea that autonomy may be at the expense of others, while it benefits some.

In feminist theories of autonomy, this incorrect concept leads to autonomy being at the expense of women and children, because, he says, "autonomy sees women as socially interdependent" (Friedman, 1997; 42). This means that women cannot be completely autonomous, whereas, it is any and every individual that is socially interdependent, not just women (giving rise to the idea that social contexts play a role in all agents' autonomy). The mistaken notion of autonomy is built on the incorrect concept of individuated/Individual autonomy, where the theory disregards social conditions, saying that if one is socially influenced; they cannot be autonomous. This notion goes against the idea of social determinism and relational personal autonomy, where there should be consideration of the agent's social context.

Should autonomy be done away with, because it seems to support the oppression of some by others? Per Friedman, it appears the answer is a firm "no." He continues his claims by saying that changing the ontology of autonomy can rid the concept of its consequences. To avoid this, he says, there should be a look at how autonomy comes about. There needs to be a look at the features involved in the concept of autonomy. This concept will explain how relational autonomy comes about through a procedural account and not a substantive account of autonomy, showing that agents are in fact products of their socialisations or social conditions.

There are other positions on the role of individuality in autonomy that claim difference and ambiguity between what is meant by "persons are products of their social contexts" in psychology and what this means metaphysically. This ambiguity lies in how the statement could be interpreted in two different ways in their respective fields of study: first, it could mean that persons are products of their socialisations in that they cannot be regarded individual entities, but rather that they are individual parts to a single entity, the society. The second part to the ambiguity says that this statement means the persons are individuals, composed of parts, i.e. their different social identities, that are designed by their social

contexts. The first part of the ambiguity, some philosophers have argued, suggests the non-existence of autonomy. This is because the first explanation of the statement claims that persons are parts of a greater whole, which in that sense, parts cannot be autonomous separately from the rest of the whole. The second explanation, then adds to the suggestion of non-existence of autonomy because it implies that persons are victims of their circumstances or their environments and that their lives are completely determined. If this argument stands, it is a fatal blow to relational personal autonomy.

The position taken by supporters of the latter argument are often observed to be critiquing against autonomy by claiming that "individualism is the idea that persons could be able to exist outside a social setting or context" (Jaggar, 1983: 29). This means that these believers do not stand by the claim, "No man is an island". Their argument does not stand because it grasps the wrong end of the stick by assuming that social contexts have no role to play in the framework of the individual or in their personal autonomy. Personal autonomy is the kind of thing that requires individualism/isolation. There needs to be a clearer understanding of what it means for someone to be an individual, in a social context and still be autonomous.

The individuality argument claims that individuality means that individuals are causally isolated from each other, which assumes two things: the irrelevance of social conditions to one's identity and autonomy. Another claim is that autonomy is not in need of self-direction, self-actualisation and self-determination, because isolation means no relation to the direct influences of the environment, therefore no reference of what a person's autonomy can be directed towards or against; no reference or comparison between the individual and others to actualise what it is that makes them who they are, rather than anything or anyone else. Isolation means nothing to be determined as the self, either than that the individual is an object in space (no personality, preferences, beliefs about the world outside of oneself, etc.), which is impossible even for a man on an island alone his entire life.

If "individuals are causally isolated from each other" means the former, then, this position denies autonomy. This means that there is no relation between the decisions, choices, beliefs, desires and our social conditions, like race, religion, occupation, traditions and cultures. This goes against social determinism and our intuition that these social conditions play a role in our decision making. However, because individuals need their social conditions in order to have choices to make; this position fails. For example, being in a certain religion means that

members of that religion follow a particular mandate that is specific to that religion and not to others. Being a follower of a certain religious mandate sets an individual's decisions apart from those decisions of members of another religion on topics like "forgiveness", for example. If "individuals are causally isolated from each other" means the latter, this denies the third and last position on individualism, because isolation from others robs the person of the very elements required for personal autonomy. These positions, about the involvement of individuality to autonomy, suggest that people have a sense of self that they view as independent from a group association.

None of these positions seem to do away with the notion of autonomy. The positions do not rule out the existence of autonomy, but they suggest that persons are metaphysically distinct individuals which are made up of parts (social identities), parts whose framework can be influenced by social conditions. Per Annette Baier (1985: 17), "all persons are second-persons; no one person can be a person without relations and dependency on other persons". Baier's words can be understood as saying, that for agents to be socially related to each other, there needs to be a metaphysical distinction between those agents. Sentences like, "To see an individual's autonomy, one must look at that agent's social relations" imply a distinction between the agent and its social relations. The agent's social relations may include the agent's relation to other agents, however, the agent's relation to other agents in no way suggests that the agent is not an individual but suggests that autonomy requires the observation of one individual's relation to other individuals.

Relational Autonomy

Relational autonomy is a term which refers to various perspectives of autonomy. These perspectives have in common their conviction that social identity plays an important part in being autonomous. It also claims that individuals are to be observed as a "social whole, where social relationships form an individual's identity" and that "Individuals are shaped by intersecting social determinants, such as race, class, gender and ethnicity" (Soljar and Mackenzie, 2000: 33). It appears relational autonomy, Mackenzie (et al.: 2000) claims, can only be realised through social relations. It also seems that relational autonomy requires an individual to be self-reflective and lead a self-directed life. This, Mackenzi and Soljar claim,

can only be realised through relationships. Self-reflection is the human ability to think about one's own actions, learn more about their fundamental purpose and essence; it is the ability to exercise introspection. A self-directed life is the kind of life that is lived through the person's own choices, directed by a person's own will and motivations, where one does not rely on others to dictate actions in spheres like hard-work, career choices, relationship choices, religious choices, etc.

In this regard, relational autonomy is autonomy conferring, because it has social relations as a necessary condition for autonomy, where social conditions grant the individual autonomy. This claim is based on the idea that without social relations there would be no values or norms for self-reflection. Friedman (1997), explains that there are two different kinds of features which can be involved in the conception of personal autonomy, when it is understood as relational autonomy: conferring features, which are focused on self-reflection, self-examination, values and norms. These features grant autonomy. The second group of features are called impeding features, which are concerned with preventing autonomy. These features can include social conditions which can have a negative influence on personal autonomy. Conferring features focus on the characteristic of an autonomous person: they should be self-governing, for example. These features focus on the means rather than the end result of autonomy. This means that social relations are autonomy conferring and that relational autonomy should be a procedural account and not a substantive one. A substantive account only concerns itself with the outcome of autonomy, rather than the procedures involved before the outcome of autonomy, which refer to a procedural account of autonomy. The substantive account does not consider what processes were involved in becoming autonomous; the ends are more important than the means. In the case of a procedural account of relational autonomy, the process involved in becoming autonomous takes priority. For an individual to become autonomous, it seems that there should be a consideration for what it is that enables the individual to be relational in the first place: social conditions make an individual relational. The involvement of social conditions like culture, race, language, tradition, religion and the like, in one's autonomy, make relational autonomy a procedural account. This means that people are not islands, in that their decisions and actions are driven by the influences their social contexts have on them.

Friedman explains the processes involved in relational personal autonomy by saying that autonomy is the ability to organise one's values and norms into separate "values and norms" boxes, which are acquired or based on our social conditions. An individual may have a new idea or experience, then deliberation begins to take place within the individual about what response this new information requires. Using reason/rationality, the new information is then placed under the appropriate "value/norm" boxes which have been built throughout the individual's life. These boxes are most probably hierarchically ordered, based on the influence of the different socially built norms, such as culture, tradition, customs and religion, Friedman (1997:36) says. For example, an individual has the decision to make about accepting an offer to a job that pays well but goes against some their beliefs: The individual has the ability to self-reflect on who they see themselves to be in respect to their social conditions and in which boxes the specific belief lies. If the job goes against my religious belief and my religion is ranked above the individual's desire for money, then the individual's actions will attest to their autonomous choice between economic class and religion. This illustrates a linear relationship which starts off with the framework of rationality (values and norms); using rationality to form beliefs and desires; which lead to choices, then actions. We can then say that autonomy is one's ability to arrange their values and norms into different value-norm boxes. These value-norm boxes' arrangement, Friedman (1997:46) contends, largely depends on the influences our social conditions produce.

Relational autonomy is the account which will be used to evaluate the influences social contexts have on an agent's autonomy. Mackenzie and Soljar acknowledge that personal autonomy requires self-reflection and a self-directed life; they also claim that self-reflection and a self-directed life are influenced by our social conditions. These social conditions can include the effects of oppression, subjections and agency. The agent's relation to others is compulsory for the social conditions that form a part of the building blocks of personal autonomy.

Social Oppression

> The appropriate social conditions for autonomous agents are those conditions that allow agents to direct their lives with minimum interference… Interferences threaten autonomy when they relegate persons to a position whereby, in order to live in a self-managed, self-directed fashion, persons must resist the interference, or at least resist the temptation to regard the interference as normal and legitimate, even as they adapt to its presence. (Oshana 2006, 88).

Seeing that agents are socially embedded, it appears that the social spheres that a person finds themselves in can be products of subtle, and sometimes vivid, forms of inequality and oppression towards members of a particular social group. “The social realities of having a racialised identity in a racist context, and/or of being a woman in a sexist context, and/or of being queer in a heteronormative context, to give just a few examples, are rightly assumed relevant to considerations of personal autonomy” Johnston (2017: 312) says.

In this section, I will evaluate the effects social oppression has on personal autonomy by discussing an agent’s social identity and how it is intersectional. It is important to dwell on the role the different social identities individuals can have, because it illustrates just how much each social identity affects our autonomy. I will be discussing one particular social identity and making references to other social identities to establish the main argument. I will briefly explain the different forms of oppression relevant to this study. I will also distinguish between the terms racism and racial oppression, which will lead to the next section’s discussion on how racial identity plays an important role in self-actualisation. This will lead to a discussion of how racial identity plays a role in producing one of the vital elements of personal autonomy.

Social oppression can come in various forms, and recent literature on social oppression, in the context of autonomy, is largely focused on problems facing women’s agency and autonomy, this is called the “feminist perspective of autonomy” (Mackenzi and Sojar, 2000). This perspective considers how we are to evaluate the autonomy of women, as agents who are motivated by desires and value and are affected by sexist oppression.

> It has long been acknowledged that sexism works, in part, by conditioning women to desire and value the mechanisms of our own subordination, this acknowledgment raises suspicions about whether desires, preferences, and motivating values are autonomous when they coincide with or overlap with the set of desires, preferences, and motivating values that have typically been thought to perpetuate sexist inequality. (Johnston, 2017:314).

An example to explain Johnston's point on how female oppression works to condition women to desire and prefer being subordinated by men is how sexism makes women feel the pressure to be a good wife by being submissive to their husbands, internally criminalising being the opposite. This preserves the cycle of oppression. Johnston's point allows an evaluation of other social oppressions that can impede on one's autonomy, such as racial oppression.

Johnston's focus is on "analysing the significance of autonomy and of living among others who are permitted, explicitly or implicitly, to be harassers, to engage in racial profiling, and treat members of some oppressed social group as expendable" (Johnston, 2017:313). This kind of analysis requires an understanding of oppression and its relation to autonomy, which will allow an evaluative look at the interference racial oppression has on an agent's personal autonomy.

Oshana illustrates this interference by giving the example of racial profiling known as "Driving While Black." This involves the stopping and searching, by law enforcement officials, of African-American men, (more generally, darker complexion men). These searches, which usually occur while these men are driving to work, are at a disproportionate extent compared to other racial groups in the USA. "The issue is that these persons are socially positioned such that they must adapt to being a person subject to racial profiling, by resistance, or by cunning, or by ingratiation" (Oshana, 2006:90). This, Oshana says, shows that members of a socially oppressed group are subjected to living under conditions in which they occupy a particular status because of who other people in their society are permitted to be. She goes on to explain that the example illustrates how black men, trans women of colour and members of other socially oppressed identities, are exposed to contexts in which they are positioned to have the social status of being expendable. Johnston agrees with this, adding, "Members of these social identities have this status precisely because other persons are

permitted and/or encouraged to be harassers" (Johnston, 2017:319). Though Johnston argues that many theories, pertaining to the relationship between personal autonomy and social oppression, tend to only focus on the internal understanding of social oppression; she maintains that an external understanding of social oppression is just as important. Oshana's interpretation of her own example agrees with Johnston in that many theories focus on the internal understanding of social oppression, rather than the effects of an external understanding: that is, observing the socially oppressed and the external environment that produces, permits and preserves social oppression.

The theories associated with an internal understanding of social oppression and its effects on one's autonomy seem to suggest what Johnston calls *the damage model.* "On the damage model, sexist, racist, and heterosexist social environments affect one's autonomy by causing certain sorts of damage to members of partially subordinated social identities" (Johnston, 2017: 313). Her argument arises from the intuition that it cannot be that social oppression's influence on one's autonomy is solely internal, especially when even internal theories recognise that autonomous agents are in fact products of their external social environments by claiming that internal social oppression is a result of external social oppression. She argues that the oppressed peoples' personal autonomy is not affected because they, as victims, are disposed to being "harassable", but rather that social oppression permits the socially oppressive to be harassers to the harassed.

It is then important to consider that both the internal and external views of social oppression have an inhibiting effect on one's personal autonomy. More specifically subjecting members of a socially oppressed identity to violence, moral violation and any other behaviours associated with oppressive behaviour, interferes with those members' self-reflection, self-actualisation and self-determinism which agents need for personal autonomy. The relationship between an external understanding of social oppression and personal autonomy considers an individual's means to autonomy, i.e. their social conditions, inclusive of the individual's social identity and the oppressive measures taken against their autonomy. This understanding also requires a look at the different social groups an agent can belong to. Looking into the agents' social identities will allow us to understand exactly how social oppression can inhibit one's autonomy externally and internally; making race, and other social identities, a relevant subject or factor in every context.

Intersectional Social Identity and Social Oppression

The self-determined, social agent requires a process of self-reflection about the elements that make up a person's identity and autonomy. An autonomous agent's social identity has the role of showing the agent ability to lead a self-sufficient, isolated and independent life within a society. This plays a role in identifying the agent as a separate being from others, claiming individualism and relation to others as part of that agent's social context. Lorrain Code's (1991: 72) claim that the goal to human life is the realisation of self-sufficiency and individuality within a society, illustrates this about social identity. This means that the true autonomous self acknowledges the importance of social relations and the effects these relations play on one's sense of self or identity. Looking at an autonomous agent as part of their social context requires looking at the parts of identities an autonomous agent is and at what these parts say about the socially determined self.

This is the explanation of enlightenment: intersectionality and the agent's knowledge of it is how an agent becomes autonomous, because enlightenment is based on the idea of "coming to know oneself" in relations to others. Self-actualisation is one of the building blocks of personal autonomy. This means that understanding enlightenment in autonomy requires an understanding that the individual's moral responsibility depends on that agent through duty and reason: Duty, as a product of the agent's values and reason, as what the agent uses to explain their actions. Even in the presence of reason, individuals need to face the social influences and authority figures, laws and norms that, in many ways, play a role in the way an agent is integrated into their society through their actions.

> A procedural notion of autonomy, which envisions a person critically reflecting on her desires and aspirations, could be thought to presuppose that the self can somehow simply transcend the influence of these factors and make oneself anew, to become a fully self-made (woman). (Meyers, 1993: 53).

Diana Tietjens Meyers says that the integration between an agent's individuality and the social environment around them is what constitutes autonomy. This means that the self is socially determined and depends on the various social groups one belongs to. For example, an individual can be made up of various social identities: Female, Black, Xhosa, Student, Woman, Mother, Sister, Grandchild, Employee. Meyers (1993) claims that individuals are knitted quilts of social identities, which means that people are products of their socialisations and are autonomous through consideration of these various social identities or parts, which, like religion, influence our decisions and behaviours. The term "autonomy" is commonly used to express individual will; not a philosophical imagination, but a philosophical art: it is not something of the imagination that we all wish to have, but something that already exists and through philosophy, we should develop an art of understanding it and how it comes about.

Meyers says that phrases like, "Now I know what I really want" express the agent's achievement of autonomy even in a governed or influential society; and phrases like, "I feel at odds with myself" express an agent's lack of autonomy in those circumstances. According to Meyers, people become clear of what it is that they really want, who they are, who they care about and what they believe in when they can attest to their autonomy and that autonomy only comes about through knowing oneself within their environment. When people can act according to their own desires, affections and values, which are shaped by social contexts, those people can claim to be autonomous. Autonomy, to Meyers, is an example of the Intersectional Self.

Meyers' view comes from Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1991; 2) theory of intersectionality. The idea of an intersectional-self states that individuals are part of various group identities, which individuals are socially associated with. These various social group identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and economic class are those that can form an individual's social identity. Even though these groups are socially determined, an individual is born into these social groups and can sometimes be ambivalent towards them. This means that an individual a can either reject or embrace their membership into the various groups, because they have no say about membership. Per Meyers, the term "intersectionality", means that the various social group identities can cross over each other or even conflict. She also claims that these identities can never be hierarchically organised by the individual because

the individual in unable to arrange them in an order that shows one social identity as priority over another. Both Meyers and Crenshaw believe that instead, these social identities come into the spot light at different times, sometimes alone and sometimes paired or grouped together.

> Intersectionality is currently the reigning feminist metaphor for complex identities insofar as they are constituted by race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation together with gender. The trope of intersectionality has numerous variants taken from a wide assortment of domains, including mathematics, cartography, anatomy, and botany. While these images share the aim of symbolizing an identity drawn from diverse sources that may give rise to conflicting desires and rival allegiances, they highlight different potentialities and liabilities of such identities. (Meyers 1993: 154).

The conflict in intersectionality can be illustrated through the idea of a wealthy, black, homosexual man: This shows a mixture of social identities within an individual that can conflict with each other in various contexts. The person's economic class and gender allow him to be treated with respect, however, he may be treated unpleasantly because of his race and sexuality. Intersectionality, then, recognises the power relations that are involved within an agent's membership into the various social groups they can belong to. This power relation involves the conflict between dominance and subordination. These complicated power relations can also be observed in the conflict between white feminists who have opposing views to black feminists, because white feminist may feel that black feminists unfairly support or cooperate with black men in their patriarchal views. This, however, is a case of ideological blindness which is recognised as a consequence of intersectionality. In the case of feminism, the white feminists can be said to be ideologically blind to the shared racial oppression between black females and males.

The view of ideological blindness acknowledges that the power relations involved in intersectionality only affect the privileged side of oppression, i.e. the oppressive social group. In the conflict between subordination and dominance, the ideological blindness serves the interest of the dominant party. This means that it is easier for the oppressed party to recognise oppression than it is for those that do not fall victim to that oppression. The oppression observed under intersectionality can be understood under an internal view and an external view. The examples we have looked at so far falls under an external view of social

oppression, which comes from environmental influences of oppression. An example of an internal view of social oppression, is that of a white male, though privileged, is oppressed by his own ideologies about race, which shape his life, because it focuses more on the internal influences of social oppression This man, can be ideologically blind to his privilege as a white male, thus blind to his own racial oppressive nature.

This kind of ideological blindness, is an objection to Frankfurt's ideas about individuals being transparent and easily explained as belonging to one group and not to another with no intersectionality. Instead, the internal view of ideological blindness suggests that individuals are in fact fragmented. People seem to think of themselves as a whole, whereas they are intersectional. This means that people seem to think that they know what makes them "them", but still constantly feel like they can replace, remove or add something to themselves in different contexts. This also illustrates how different social identities play a role in someone only in the relevant context: for example, being culturally Xhosa in a state that only has Xhosa people does not seem very important or relevant; it only seems relevant when being Xhosa can be differentiated from being culturally something else, like Zulu by moving to a predominantly Zulu populated area. We could even go as far as saying that there is no significance in being Xhosa in a state where everyone else is Xhosa, that a Xhosa person never really identifies themselves as being Xhosa to begin with; they see themselves as human, like everyone else in their predominantly Xhosa populated area. Therefore, the Frankfurt's objection is that being a black, Xhosa, female, student should not be considered a whole package that is always relevant. Sometimes, just being a student is relevant, sometimes being a female is relevant and at sometimes, being a black, female, student is relevant. It seems then, that it is impossible for an individual to arrange their intersecting identities in a hierarchical order, because it is impossible to choose one identity as more important than another at all times.

Meyers claims that treating identities in an intersectional manner gives an individual a better chance at being autonomous, because it eliminates the internalised ideological blindness by introducing the self as a whole with a framework of many social parts. This assists in reaching a point of self-actualisation, thus eliminating the effects of internalised oppression. She suggests that individuals are autonomous when they are an authentic, integrated self (Meyers, 1993: 171).

She claims that this is what makes agents complicated knitted quilts. She suggests that the various social identities one has are the strings of yarn that make up this quilt, while autonomy is the kind of stitch used to knit them together. She explains the social identities' purpose and role by comparing one's whole identity to an orchestra performance, where the individual's different social identities are similar to different instruments that take turns for solos and duets and sometimes all together, with no periods where there is complete silence This orchestral process proposes that individuals can knit the quilt as they go, not that they are able to stand back, plan the end-product of the quilt and execute the plan. By this she means that we cannot be autonomous by just planning on being autonomous, but rather we become autonomous through knowing our different social identities and when they come into play. It appears personal identity with its various social identity parts is important to the notion of autonomy, because it plays the role of fitting the individual into the relevant social context or social relations: An individual's personal identity is composed from the various social groups they belong to, where their intersecting social group identities form elements that make up their personal identity.

The power relations involved in this intersectionality illustrate how internal and external social oppression can limit one's personal autonomy. If an agent's personal identity is reliant on the agent's social relations; and autonomy is reliant on one's personal identity; the agent's autonomy is also largely dependent on the social relations an agent has.

This brings us to questions about how these socially oppressive contexts can negatively influence one's autonomy. As mentioned before, social oppression seems to be the kind of factor that limits and, or, eliminates one's personal autonomy. Just as the different social identities an agent has take turns to be relevant in different contexts, so the different kinds of social oppression affect personal autonomy where that social identity is relevant. An example of this is how female oppression is influential to a woman's personal autonomy when being female is relevant in a particular context and how racial oppression poses a threat to an individual's autonomy when their race is relevant. "The systems of oppression that so deeply and adversely affect Jews and people of colour are substantially the same systems of oppression that so deeply and adversely affect people who are classified as, for example, disabled, intersexed, or transgendered" (McWhorter, 2009: 34). Social oppression is therefore negatively influential to one's autonomy, because it limits one's self-actualisation. One's self-actualisation is, in many

ways, dependant on one's capacity to express all their social identities in an autonomously effective way. An agent's social identities take turns to come to the light of expression at relevant times, it seems, racial identity is always relevant in the modern socialised world.

Racism and Racial Oppression

Ladelle McWhorter, describes racism as follows: "Racism is a set of power relations that produce effects we call anti-Semitism and white supremacy. But racism is not identical with and exhausted by attitudes and actions that hurt people of colour or Jews, as so many people suppose. It encompasses these phenomena, but it also exceeds them" (McWhorter, 2009: 34). Racism, according to McWhorter exceeds these phenomena by not only being an external negative influence on a person's behaviour, but it becomes an internal negative influence on the person experiencing. Internal negative influences on one's well-being can leave long-lasting emotional and psychological scars such as the Johnston's (2017) "damage model".

The term *Racism* is a fairly new term used after the actions of Nazi Germany against Jewish people. The term emerged because of two reasons: the growing scientific evidence against the wildly held ideology that human beings can be characterised based on phenotypical features and physical markers; that "one race is inherently superior than other" (Blaut, 1992: 290) and the second reason being that the Nazism used this ideology to justify their actions and treatment against Jews. The Oxford English Dictionary claims that the English word, *racism*, only dates back to 1936, where it was used by Lawrence Dennis, in a book titled, "The Coming American Fascism". Per McWhorter, *racist* has always been a label given to someone to either discredit them or expose their falsehood. This term has always been used to label someone as a "purveyor of dangerous lies" (McWhorter, 2009: 36). The most accepted notion of the term, however, comes from Robert Miles, in his book, "Racism", saying "Racism falsely claims that there is a scientific basis for arranging groups hierarchically in terms of psychological and cultural characteristics that are immutable and innate" (Miles 1989: 46).

Definitions and descriptions of the term *racism* have changed over time. Earlier definitions described racism as both cognitive and conscious, seeing racism as a set of theoretic propositions or beliefs, but not considering a description involving actions. Although certain

structures and unconscious fantasies could be phobic or hateful, influencing one's actions against a particular race, these structures and fantasies were not seen under the definition of the term *racism*. This means that a person could have racist thoughts and beliefs, but as long as those thoughts and beliefs did not result in racist actions, that person was not regarded racist. It is only after the mid-twentieth century that the term racism expanded to include its applications to institutions and their operations. This meant, per activists such as Robert Miles and Charles Hamilton, that an institution could be labelled racist in spite of the desires and intentions of the members of that institution.

> What is racism? The word has represented daily reality to millions of black people for centuries, yet it is rarely defined— perhaps just because that reality has been such a common place. By "racism" we mean the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group… Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism. (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967:3–4).

In the book *Black Power*, Carmichael and Hamilton define racism as "the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group" (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967:3). As the definition of the term evolved; the concept of racism also evolved to include dispositions and personality traits, where the reliance on the notion of cause and effect began to grow weaker and the reference to racism not only began to address the deep and frequently unconscious features of personality as causes or motives for beliefs, but also considered that such features were racism itself. This meant that an individual could be labelled racist regardless of whether they had ever thought about the theory of racism or not. An individual's decisions, gestures and feelings could be labelled racist as expressions of unconscious racism. This also meant that the definition included those who had no conscious commitment to tenets of the racist theory. Carmichael and Hamilton's definition of unconscious racism stemming from individuals and into institutions is highly resembled as an example of the societies we live in today even long after racist states have been, by law, done away with on paper. Their definitions illustrate the reality of racism existing long after apartheid laws, racial segregation

and so forth. They exist in the conditions in which both individuals and institutions are established and continue even after racist individuals and laws have been removed from such institutions.

Du Bois describes racial oppression as the subordination of a particular racial group and the ascription of particular standards by the dominant group. These ascribed standards are standards of excellence and advancement, only because they do not measure themselves against any other standards but their own. The dominant racial group will ascribe themselves such standards, when in fact, these standards are average and not any more significant than the standard set by all people. The standards set out by the dominant group, exhibit mediocre opinions, views, perceptions, values, images, stereotypes, habits and ideologies. This behaviour then leaves the subordinated, oppressed group with feelings of self-doubt, disgust, disrespect and hate for themselves, their community and their racial group (Du Bois, 1989:3). To illustrate this in an example: saying that black people are poor, dirty and unsanitary when the government in that given area does not put into place equal distribution to government facilities such as sanitary education, employment, etc, for black people and any other race in that government.

Racism and *Racial oppression* have been commonly used interchangeably, if not to assert their identity, then to assert their close relation to each other. Since we have established the concept of racism, we should try defining racial oppression in order to either compare between the two terms or establish them as one and the same thing. Oppression itself directly involves the subordination of one party by another. Racial oppression is identified as a type of social oppression, where social oppression refers to the power relations involved in the social identities of a person. Racial oppression, then, is the oppressive behaviour of one party towards another based on the dominating party's racist beliefs, feelings or actions. It appears that one can be racist without being racially oppressive, as in the case where there is no one of the particular race that one is racist against to racially oppress. However, it does not seem that there can be racial oppression without racism. This means that racism, conscious or unconscious, is an underlying feature of racial oppression.

From this brief distinction between racism and racial oppression, I find it reasonable to conclude that racism and racial oppression are often used interchangeably not because of their identity, but because of their relation to one another. It seems like the use of the one or

the other to mean the same thing, poses no great threat to the meaning of each. For this reason and to reach the conclusions of this thesis, the terms *racial oppression* and *racism* may be used interchangeably in the following sections.

Racial Oppression and Personal Autonomy

How does racial oppression limit or eliminate personal autonomy in the various contexts? I will look at the three types of racial oppression to answer the above questions: Personal Racial Oppression, Institutional Racial Oppression and Internalised Racial Oppression. The answers to this question will show that racial oppression is always present and that racial identity is always consciously or unconsciously relevant to every human being living in a multi-racial society today, making it impossible for victims of racial oppression to exercise complete personal autonomy in their decisions and actions.

The main claim of this paper is that personal autonomy is made impossible by racial oppression under the contexts in which our racial social identity is relevant. To recap: Personal autonomy is the kind of phenomenon that requires considerations of an agent's social conditions. These social conditions determine the values and norms within an agent, that govern one's priorities, beliefs and desires and in turn govern an agent's decisions and actions. If these social conditions become a source of oppression to the agent; the agent's autonomy becomes limited or eliminated. Members of a racially oppressed social identity have limited autonomy where their racial social identity is relevant.

In this section, the objective is to show that when looking at the different forms of racial oppression, internalised racial oppression ensures that those who are racially oppressed are constantly under the influence of racial oppression. This is because internalised racial oppression is the kind of phenomenon, together with external forms of racial oppression, that ensures that one's racial social identity, living in a multi-racial society, is relevant in all contexts. This constant source of oppression towards members of a racially oppressed social group, then, limits their personal autonomy. This section will reach its main point by referring to how racial oppression limits or eliminates personal autonomy in the three

contexts: Personal Racial Oppression, Institutional Racial Oppression and Internalised Racial Oppression.

This section will put a focus on the claim that there is a constant relevance of one's racial identity in every context and that there is a constant presence of racial oppression. This claim also agrees with Charles Mills' when he says that race is a social identity that seems to govern both how one is seen by others and how one sees themselves (Mills, 1998: 41). This claim also agrees with part of Johnston's (2017) point, that internalised theories of social oppression produce "The Damage Model".

The Black Racial Identity and Racial Oppression

Race plays an important role in self-actualisation and plays an important role in reaching autonomy and making decisions. For hundreds of years race has played a vital role in our social identities and it has been more than a hundred years since Du Bois explained the effects of oppressive behaviour and subordination on the Black person's psychology. He described the effects of racial oppression as a "double consciousness", where black people experience the sense of always looking at themselves through the eyes of others and "measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 1989: 6).

Though there has been a long-standing debate about what exactly race is, there is no dispute that we live racialised lives. Of all the conceptions of race, such as Realism, Constructivism and Eliminativism (as established by various philosophers and noted in Charles Mills' *What Are We?),* it seems that Constructivism is applicable to explain race. It explains social groups as socially constructed and can explain racialised experiences as a consequence of social constructions. This means that a constructivist view of race and its social associations can explain the internal war that agents experience concerning their desire to make autonomous decisions and the seemingly unavoidable effects of social oppression on that autonomy.

Naomi Zack states, "The concept of race is an oppressive cultural invention and convention, and I refuse to have anything to do with it.... Therefore, I have no racial affiliation and will accept no racial designations" (1998: 29). However, it seems that even if race is "not real"

and/or a socially constructed phenomenon, whether an individual acknowledges themselves as raced or not, it does not take away from the fact that people in a racialised society will continue to have racialised experiences. Racialised experiences stem from the social environment one is embedded in. Whether one considers themselves raceless or of a particular race, it seems that the racial experience one has is determined by the overall view of the society in which they belong to. An example to illustrate this point, is how one may label themselves as coloured in the South African sense and considered, treated and subjected to Hispanic/ Latin American racial experiences when in North America. By "Hispanic/ Latin American racial experiences", I refer to the social service and education grants specific to the racial group; gang-affiliation stereotyping and so forth. One's racialised experiences seem to prevail over one's ideas or decisions about their own being. This means that society has more authority in deciding to which racial group one belongs in, without any say from the individual. This fits under the description of both racially oppressive behaviour of one individual towards another; and institutional racial oppression.

The fact that we live racialised lives, per Kelly Oliver (1958), is the consequence of colonisation and a "long enough period of slave trade" (Oliver, 1958:4).

> Insofar as the colonial situation produces a double consciousness that locates authority, autonomy and agency, in the beyond the face of which the individual loses authority, autonomy and agency, then its logic resembles the logic of Hegel's unhappy consciousness. In the colonial situation, the most powerful forms of this beyond are God and nature. If the colonized are "inferior and less human" because it is ordained by God or nature, then the authority, autonomy, and agency of the oppressed are compromised by the absolute authority, autonomy and agency of God or nature. (Oliver, 1958:7).

By this statement, Oliver means that the results of colonisation of the black race, by the white race, has in many ways diminished and subordinated the value of the black race in such a way that it can only be described through the relationship between God and nature, God being the creator of nature: white people are God and they decide what to do to black people, whom are regarded as their creation, "nature". This relationship between these two racial groups, then, has been stuck at this level, making authority, autonomy and agency, somewhat of an illusion for the oppressed racial group, i.e. the black racial group. Oliver calls this illusion "the

beyond" (Oliver, 1958:7). She refers to Hegel's *unhappy consciousness* which is defined as the split or double consciousness that "continues the struggle between master and slave within one and the same consciousness that has yet to experience its unity" (Hegel, 1977: 47). Hegel's *unhappy consciousness* is further described as being made-up of opposing, dual-forces within the racially oppressed individual, that can be categorised as follows: the unchanging aspect about the world, the necessary aspect of the world and objective aspect, on one hand; and the changing, contingent and subjective, on the other hand. Of the latter category, he explains that the unhappy consciousness of the black racial group identifies itself with the contingent because it is in this contradiction within itself, where the contradiction between the two sides is not necessary. This means that racial oppression's effect on the personal autonomy of black people can be pin-pointed to how oppression creates the feelings of self-contradiction, affecting agent's ability to recognise that the contradiction between its intersecting selves is unnecessary.

In many ways, racial oppression not only affects the physical lives of those subjected to it, but it interferes with their psychology, thus, disrupting the ability to make choices according to their own desires and values: interfering with agent's ability to make autonomous decisions. Johnston (2017: 312) contends that the significance of oppression to autonomy can be divided in to two understandings: internal and external views. The internal theories are concerned with how answers about an agent's decisions, actions and autonomy are entirely based on criteria internal to the agent. The external view, though involving concerns about the internal factors of an agent, maintains that the internal factors alone are not sufficient in determining autonomy and claims that external factors are significantly relevant. The more relevant view in this paper is the external view of oppression to autonomy, because of its consideration of external factors such as an individual's social context, however, the internal view plays a role, in this paper, of understanding how some types of social oppression are influential in all contexts, because of how those social oppressions are always present: if not externally, internally. This, I claim, is why racial oppression affects personal autonomy of an individual at all times, even the autonomy of those who are racially privileged.

To understand the general impact of racial oppression on one's personal autonomy, then, it appears that an external account of social oppression is sufficient, however, a look at the internal account shows that there is more to racial oppression than most people understand. If

racial oppression does in fact have an effect on one's personal autonomy, it appears that there is more we can say about the role of responsibility in the actions and decisions of those who are socially oppressed. An external account of racial oppression, not very distinct from social oppression itself, focuses on the external factors of racial oppression, particularly on the racial oppression exerted by others onto a given agent, whereas an internal account focuses on the kind of oppression that, though influenced by external factors of oppression, an individual directs at themselves to give reason to their actions and decisions.

Though the general understanding of racial oppression involves the oppression of persons because of their belonging to a certain racial group, racial oppression can come in many forms. It is these three main contexts of racial oppression which all the other forms seem to be categorised under: Personal Racial Oppression, Institutional Racial Oppression and Internalised Racial Oppression.

Personal Racial Oppression

The first of these racial oppressive contexts is the kind of racial oppression an individual can exert towards another, because of their personal views about the racial group the other person belongs to. The underlying nature of personal racism can be described as racist acts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour by a single individual person towards members of a particular racial group. These characteristics seem to indicate the subordination of one racial group by another racial group, according to the negative beliefs and ideologies built against that subordinate racial group.

Laurence Blum claims that all forms of racial oppression involve inferiorising and antipathy. Blum says that it "…violates fundamental moral norms of respect, equality, and recognition of the dignity of other persons" (Blum, 2002:8). He further claims, "The additional opprobrium is racism's integral tie to the social and systematic horrors of slavery, apartheid, Nazism, colonialism, segregation, imperialism, and the shameful treatment of Native Americans in the United States—all race-based systems of oppression" (Blum 2002: 27). It is, however, the dignity of the oppressed that appears to be most associated with the overall identity of the oppressed, it is this disregard of the dignity that illustrates the interference of one's autonomy when under racial oppression. All human beings have a basic dignity that

should be respected. Glasgow (2009) asserts that racial oppression, stemming from racism, is a form of race-based disrespect of one's authority over one's life, because this kind of disrespect can be identified "as something like a failure to adequately recognise autonomousness, independent, sensitive, morally significant creatures" (Glasgow, 2009: 386).

If personal autonomy is the kind of phenomenon that comes about through self-reflection, self-direction and self-actualisation; and the personal or individual racial oppression of one towards a particular racial group does not end at expressing that oppression towards persons of that racial group, but includes personal oppressive beliefs in their actions towards that racial group through institutions and social spheres: then autonomous choices regarding any affiliation one may have with a certain racially oppressive institution or social event will be affected. This limits the racial oppressed members' autonomy, in that they cannot make purely self-governing decisions because of the physical limitations of their actions and behaviours around those who are oppress towards them.

Personal or individual racism is often identifiable due to its overt nature, this form of racial oppression is related to the limited personal autonomy of an agent through the fact that all other forms of oppression are descendants of personal autonomy. This means that other forms, like institutional and Internalised racial oppression, were constructed from the views of a personal racist. However, racially oppressive individuals' ability to be so unconsciously racist and their ability to excuse or mistake oppressive behaviour as individual-preference-based justifications, makes it easy to justify personal racial oppression, but difficult to use as an explanation to how personal autonomy is limited at such a small scale. An example of this can be seen in a social group of only white persons: When asking each individual why they have not incorporated any other race in their group, they would rather give justifying reasons that have nothing to do with racial profiling, but social preferences, such as having similar likes and dislikes. Often than not, these individual's judgments of preferences and common interests among peers are based on the theory of race where stereotyping racial groups' physical or mental abilities comes into play. Agreeing, Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) say that individual racism is often identifiable due to its overt nature, institutional racism is "less overt, far subtler…" in nature. "[it] originates in the operation of established and respected

forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than [personal racism]" (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967: 4).

These views can be reconciled in that the former cannot be taken to represent the definition of personal racial oppression, rather it is an example that only represents cases that present as such; whereas, the latter is what can be said about personal racial oppression in general: from the obvious racial oppression of many in the history of human kind, we can attest that personal or individual racial oppression can be both strongly and vividly expressed. This form of racial oppression, then, can also be used as a means to substantiate the origins and or connections of persons to institutional racial oppression, while also illustrating that personal racial oppression has in effect influenced the makings of internalised racial oppression.

Institutional Racial Oppression

The second type of racial oppression, institutional racial oppression, is the most relevant in the context of relational autonomy, as an external theory, because it considers an agent's social environment and social relations as part of what composes their social identity. This is by far the most discussed form of racial oppression by philosophers and social scientists. This is because institutional racial oppression has been the remaining tattoo of the many historical horrors associated with racial oppression: slavery, apartheid, Nazism, colonialism, racial segregation, imperialism, the shameful treatment of the Native American and the hunting of the Australian Aboriginal people.

All of these historical racial horrors have in common the ill treatment, killings, dehumanising, subordinations and psychological damage of various racial groups. Though, these incidences are in the past, their characteristics have lived on to the present day, with varying severity in different parts of the world. The most recent of these is South Africa's apartheid error, lasting more than 40 years and ending in the early 1990's. Though racial oppression has been formally removed from many constitutions and industry policies, there are many racial oppressive behaviours, ideas and attitudes within governments and organisations that express racial oppressive behaviour, the most commonly broadcasted and shared in today's media involving the criminal justice system of many countries, i.e. the United States of America, London; England, South Africa, to mention a few.

The concept of institutional racism only emerged in the 1960s, brought about by the struggle of Black people in the United states of America for social justice. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967:3) defined institutional racism as the practices of organisations that entail racial disadvantage. Institutional racial oppression can only be described as a form of racial oppression, expressed in social, political and other organisations and governed by behavioural norms that support active racism and racist thinking. (Sueman, 2017). This form of racial oppression can be reflected in things such as criminal justice, political power, housing, wealth, education and health care. It is often unnoticed by those who express it, because of its often-implicit nature in both our ideas and attitudes. Former Judge of High Court, Sir William Macpherson, while addressing injustices pertaining to the Stephen Lawrence case inquiry, defined institutional racism as:

> The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson, 1999: para 6.34).

Institutional racial oppression is an example of oppression existing as a system. Oppression has been designed in such way that it reproduces inequality through the day-to-day operations of a given society and institutions within that society.

The murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young man who was killed on the 22nd of April 1993, while waiting at a bus stop in London with friend, Duwayne Brooks, sparked one of the most spoken about cases of institutional racism in the media. The colour of Stephen's skin is said to be what prompted a group of white young pupils to stab Stephen to death. Through the long struggle of finding justice for the murder of their son, Doreen and Neville Lawrence, finally saw justice play out when two of the group members associated with Stephen's death were tried and sentenced, but not after a "flawed police investigation that has prevented Stephen's murderers from being successfully prosecuted…" (Pilkington, 2011:1). After an inquiry was conducted by former Judge, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, in March 1998, the final report was published in February 1999, which lead to the revisiting of the case and later resulting in the sentencing of the two perpetrators. The summarised conclusions of the report read as follows:

> The conclusions to be drawn from all the evidence in connection with the investigation of Stephen Lawrence's racist murder are clear. There is no doubt that there were fundamental errors. The investigation was marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers. A flawed MPS review failed to expose these inadequacies. The second investigation could not salvage the faults of the first investigation (Macpherson, 1999: para 46.1).

This case was an example of both, overt, personal racial oppression and covert, institutional racial oppression. It can be labelled at an overt, personal racial oppression case, because each individual involved in the murder was openly expressive of their racist ideas and attitudes by killing Stephen Lawrence. The case can also be labelled as covert, because the institutional racism present in the case was harder to detect, almost invisible. Lawrence's race-associated case is definitely not the first of its kind and has not been the last. It seems that cases such as these have always existed throughout history, however, with the changing times, where every human life, according to various countries' modern constitutions, has become valuable, cases like Stephen Lawrence's have become more and more popularly spoken about and made public.

One popular kind of these cases involves killings of young, black males by white police officers, in the United States. These cases have been labelled as results of police brutality, racial profiling and racial hatred and inequality within the United States criminal justice system. The findings of the study found in his book, *Understanding Black, Adolescent, Male Violence: Its Remediation and Prevention,* Amos N. Wilson (1992) aims to illustrate the "typical criminal", as illustrated by the United States Police Service: A black, adolescent male. Macpherson acknowledged that, though institutional racism can be found throughout the British society, the "disease" is most prominent in the Police Service. His extraordinary admission came after more than 30 years of denial by British government official's denial that the government was and could not be institutionally racist. Blauner claims that institutional racial oppression is he kind of phenomenon that is closely related to Colonialism, he says, 'The processes that maintain domination – control of whites over non-whites – are built into the major institutions' (Blauner, 1972:9). This is in agreement with the comparison Carmichael and Hamilton gave for institutional racism and colonialism.

There has been debates as to whether institutional racial oppression requires there to be individual racial oppression within that institution or not. The main debaters of the issue: Garcia (1997), who argues that all other forms of racism come from individual or personal racism; and Glasgow, who argues that institutional racism need not be from personal racism, by claiming that institutional racism can in fact out live the personal racism of individual racists that started it.

> …the claim that institutions are racist at a given time only if some participants in the institutions are racist at that time would implausibly mean that the institutions are racist only until the last racist person dies off, at which point, despite there not being any change to their structure or to their effects on real lives, those institutions magically convert to being nonracist. (Glasgow, 2009: 74)

The report by Macpherson agrees with Glasgow, by stating that there may be no evidence showing that the policies of police and other organisations are racist, but also attests that these policies are characterised by institutional racism. "For Macpherson, the concept of institutional racism does not imply that the policies of organisations are racist" (Pilkington, 2011:3). This implies that the reality of racism and its different, frequently ignored, tenets required attention in a more complex manner, than conversation and fixing of personal racism. Parekh also agrees, claiming that institutional racism has prevailed even in the absence of overt, personal racism. By this gesture, the findings about institutional racial oppression have shown "that, to thrive, racism does not require overtly racist individuals, and it rather arises through social and cultural processes" (Parekh, 2000:71). Macpherson's report about Lawrence's murder case investigation moulded the definition of institutional racism, including how it need not be overt; how it can involve both conscious and unconscious beliefs and; how it can also involve intentional and unintentional racist actions. The doctrine illustrated the definition of institutional racial oppression as carrying all these characteristics and as a result, leading to the disadvantage of the victims involved.

Quite complex mechanisms can result from racial disadvantage, such mechanisms include "the systematic interconnections between discrimination in institutions such as housing, education, policing and employment which create processes of cumulative disadvantage" (Rattansi. 2007:136). Racial disadvantage in higher education has been the topic of the decade and resistance to racially oppressive policies in Higher Education institutions has

varied in size and actions portraying that resistance, ranging from protests to "Western culture" curriculum-questioning debates. A noteworthy aspect about equal opportunity policies, developed in 1996 by British parliament, and later universally adopted, was that the policies neglected issues related to ethnicity and race. Rather, they focused more on issues related to gender: staffing issues pertaining to the female to male ratio and their limited impact (Carter et al, 1999). The initiative to correct this neglection has focused research on topics about race and higher education, resulting in case studies, funded by higher education funding councils of England, Wales and Scotland, researching equal opportunities and diversity for staffing higher education, between the year 2003 and 2004. The data revealed disturbing results, where strong evidence shows that students from minority and/or subordinated racial groups faced an ethnic penalty when applying to "old universities" (Shiner and Modood, 2002: 227). Shiner et. al. claim that these institutions fall under a sector that is more likely to select White pupils and less likely to select Chinese candidates from among similarly qualified applications. "Although…" Shiner and Modood, (2002:228) claim, "ethnic minority candidates may be admitted to old universities in reasonable numbers, they generally have to perform better than do their white peers in order to secure a place."

> Relative to White students, those from every non-White ethnic group are less likely to obtain good degrees and less likely to obtain first class degrees ... The odds of an Asian student being awarded a good degree were half of those of a White student being awarded a good degree, whereas the odds of a Black student being awarded a good degree were a third of those of a White student being awarded a good degree. (Richardson, 2007:10).

These case studies also showed results which indicated a significant relation between race and career progression, where individuals from a minority ethnic group are less likely to be in senior posts even when the length of service was considered. The findings of the Macpherson report have had a radical impact in Britain's police academy, producing various changes to the policies and procedures implemented during investigations and general policing. This report has also served as a catalyst in the observation and changes implemented in Britain's high education sector, increasing the state's influence on universities through funding, by holding institutions accountable for how they spend public money, insuring that racial and gender equality are of priority. "Widening access to higher education is a key priority and

critical to tackling social exclusion" (HEFCE, 2008; para 19), the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett said, in his letter to the HEFC, November 1999. Even so, the dangers of the reported results are that what actually happens in institutions is confused with what the newly implemented policies say about racial oppression.

An institution's policies may be indicative of change and racial equality, but their execution of the policies may be null. "Writing documents and having good policies becomes a substitute for action: as one of Ahmed's interviewees put it, 'you end up doing the document rather than doing the doing'" (Ahmed, 2007:599).

This information also shows how a state can be institutionally racial oppressive. An earlier debate about institutional racial oppression was that institutional racial oppression was non-existent, meaning that states, organisations and the like could not be racist. This argument came from the earlier definition of racism. The earlier description that labelled racism as a set of beliefs or theoretical propositions. This meant that Only beliefs and those who held them could be regarded racists. "Actions were not racist… even though one's theoretical commitments might move one to act in certain ways", Pilkington (2011: 37) recalls. This illustrates how institutional racism has been hard to detect. Institutions could only be labelled as racist when they were objectively devoted to the dissemination of the racism theory and devoted to the applications of that theory. The application of the racism theory by organisations and even large institutions, like countries and states, lead to a rejection of the concept of institutional racism. Macpherson's definition of institutional racism completely applies to the many countries associated with racial historical horrors, this definition is true about those countries and the institutions within them. This is because of the policies that drive the country can be built on the correct concept of racism, leading to racial disadvantage.

Pilkington asserts that intuitional racism is existent and expressible in large scales, such that countries and states can be considered racially oppressive by making the following claim: "The source of differential treatment in terms of race may not lie with a few 'rotten apples' who let the organisation down, but may be the product of a pervasive occupational culture or taken-for-granted organisational practices which, albeit unintentionally, result in racial disadvantage" (Pilkington, 2011: 7). This reminds us that institutional racism is not as Garcia describes it, and that racism does not have to be overtly expressive of its racial prejudice. This again agrees with Glasgow's claim, stating that institutional racism need not stem from a

single individual within the organisation, but rather, be in the policies and legislative documents of the organisation, even when those policies were originally put in place by a racist individual, centuries earlier.

The limitations on one's autonomy through institutional racial oppression are evidently represented by the results presented in the case studies. These case studies were conducted to understand the impacts of racial oppression on various spheres, and how the Macpherson report worked to change this. In cases regarding institutional racism in the police force and in cases of institutional racism in universities: the evidence illustrates a limitation at what career paths in university members of a racially oppressed can pursue, where and when it is safe for them to walk even in the absence of a state ordained curfew, by limiting what they can be accepted for in universities or what crimes they can report to the state police, if they can report and receive hope of justice at all.

This is also an illustration of how personal autonomy can be limited by what the members of these societies can afford to study. Factors such as affording education have been shown to be directly related to the effects of poverty, which is directly associated with matters of race in all countries that have a history of racially oppressive methods. Controlling what people can study and what kinds of jobs they can go into because of their racial identity, is controlling the location of poverty within a state and limiting it to particular racial groups. If this is not a vivid example of the negative impacts institutional racial oppression has on one's personal autonomy, then what is?

Internalised Racial Oppression

This type of racial oppression will be used in understanding the impact social oppression plays in diminishing personal autonomy, in contexts where the agent is not being directly oppressed by their social environment. This will include a look at Johnston's *damage model*, associated with internal theories of racial oppression, which also goes into detail about internalised racial oppression and its effects on one's personal autonomy. This sub-heading has the objective of illustrating how exactly racial oppression is always present to the racially oppressed racial groups as a result of passed experienced with externally influential racial

oppression. First, we should define internalised oppression as a general theory of social oppression.

Internalised oppression is a primary element to various fields of study: the oppression theory, feminist theory, black feminist theory, racial oppression theories, etc. Internalised oppression has been the most under-theorised concept of oppression. It is a phenomenon experienced by members of the oppressed group and members of the oppressive group. It is a concept that arose as a description of the effects of European colonialism on the mental well-being and behaviours of the colonialised African people, as results to the findings in social sciences. Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965) describe these effects as inclusive of a process in which members of oppressed groups are socialised to meet the needs and desires of the oppressive group. "A system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships and operates intentionally and unintentionally, on the individual, institutional and cultural levels" (Hardiman, et.al. 2007: 58).

Theorists like Fletcher (1999); Lipsky (1987); Hardiman and Jackson (1997, 2007) believe that theories of internalised oppression are important to our body of knowledge, because it is one of the fundamental mechanisms which perpetuate and maintain systems of oppression. Understanding internalised oppression makes it possible for solutions to social oppression, and other occurrences that damage any part of a person, to be discussed and applied. The notion of difference amongst people is one of the notions that internalised racial oppression rests on. It is based on how differences are categorised and ranked hierarchically, these differences also form the basis of who will be targeted by oppression and those who will benefit from it. For Young (1990), oppression is a structural phenomenon referring to injustices and inequalities experienced by specific groups of people on a day-to-day basis, caused by "unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequence for following the rules" (Young, 1990: 41) inclusive of the unconscious reflections of people, cultural stereotypes, internet media, print and television.

Internalised racial oppression is a racial oppression theory which focuses on social oppression as an internal theory. It claims that one's fitting into a particular racial group can have oppressive qualities that stem from within the individual, due to the social oppression imposed on that racial group by others in the individual's immediate world. Internalised

racial oppression, is a multidimensional phenomenon which includes the intersections of multiple systems of domination (Pyke, 2010:553). Per Stuart Hall (1989:7), it is the "subjection of the victims of racism to the mystifications of the very racist ideology which imprisons and defines them." Colourism, an ideology that supports the affording of privilege to lighter-skinned black people in relation to their proximity to whiteness, is an example that illustrates internalised racial oppression.

Research about the attitudes of black and white children, conducted by the *Save The Children Fund*, showed shocking results: by the age of three years old, black children were already expressive of the wish to be white and both groups of children valued their white friends more than their black friends (Mason, 1990: 1). This is an example of internalised racial oppression, because it illustrates how one racial group of people are valued higher than another, even by the racially oppressed members themselves, and how members of a racially oppressed group also express desires to be like the oppressive group. This example is based on the theories related to racism and is seen as results of the earlier-mentioned racial historical horrors.

Micheline Mason asserts, "Internalized oppression is not the cause of our mistreatment, it is the result of our mistreatment. It would not exist without the real external oppression that forms the social climate in which we exist" (Mason, 1990:1). This agrees with many racial oppression theorists by arguing that many forms of oppression, especially racial oppression, are a result of colonialism, slavery, genocide and other socio-political stances regarding the theory of race.

> Once oppression has been internalized, little force is needed to keep us submissive. We harbour inside ourselves the pain and the memories, the fears and the confusions, the negative self-images and the low expectations, turning them into weapons with which to re-injure ourselves, every day of our lives. (Mason, 1990: 1).

Pharr, on the other hand, distinguishes between internalised racial oppression and individual low self-esteem. He describes the former as resulting from the employment of specific tools that work to achieve the subjugation of a particular racial group. These tools, per Pharr, include scapegoating, blaming and stereotyping of the racially oppressed, these in turn have an effect by making the subordinated group feel inferior; that there is something wrong with them, as an identity group; robs the group of their sense of self, while also preventing them

from supporting and joining other members of their own group. He describes low self-esteem as caused by "injurious *individual* treatment; while internalised oppression originates from pervasive negative culture messages and mistreatment toward a person because of who s/he is *as a part of a group*" (Pharr, 1996: 34−35). Internalised racial oppression, according to Pharr, not only affects how individuals see themselves, but how they feel about other members of their own group. Hardiman et.al. (2007) claims that the system of oppression is most successful when both the oppressive group and oppressed group internalise their oppression, by accepting the hierarchical relationship that characterises the system of oppression. This relationship is characterised by the power relations involved in oppression.

As mentioned under the section relating to the intersecting social identities of an individual, power relations are what drive all kinds of social oppression: where internalised racial oppression affects the oppressed by limiting their autonomy and affects the oppressive group through ideological blindness.

The example used in the previous section, of a white man oppressed by his own ideological blindness to his privilege, as a white man, is an example of how internalised racial oppression can also affect the oppressive, dominant group. The white person's ideological blindness can be used to explain the violence and ill-treatment that white police officers have been prone to when interacting with black males in the USA and can also explain why white police officers are prone to stop and interrogate black motorists by "instinct". There is high likelihood that white police officers are ideologically blind to black oppression. It is much easier for the victims of oppression to recognise oppression, than it is for the oppressive to do the same.

Wilson (1992), Johnston (2017) and other racial oppression theorists claim that it is internalised racial oppression that awakens the phenomenon of ideological blindness for the oppressive social group and a sense of internal damage experienced by the oppressed group. The racial oppression present in the USA, and other parts of the world, today, stemming mostly from institutionalised racial oppression and internalised racial oppression, is evidently affecting the outcomes of black people's lives. As the aftermath of brutal racial historical events, internalised racial oppression has damaged the black person in such a way that they have hatred towards themselves and other members of their group. Other races, including whites have been internally oppressed by their own ideological blindness, leading to a cycle of racial oppression, from one generation to the next. This racial oppression is stuck to the

skins of black people in such a way that being black comes with certain social characteristics: the biggest one being that black people are criminals, exerting this criminality not only to other races, but mostly to those of their own racial social groups.

"White-on-Black violence induces in the African American community a pervasive false consciousness, one which interacts with the adolescent crises of Black males and the socioeconomic conditions which typify communities to spawn criminality and violence…", Amos N. Wilson says in his book, *Understanding Black, Adolescent, Male Violence: Its Remediation and Prevention*, "One of the reasons for violence of black youths is "white-on-black violence… [which] began with the enslavement of Afrikans and has continued unrelentingly to this very moment" (Wilson; 1992: 27). This illustrates the impact external versions of racial oppression have on the internal mechanisms of understanding within the racially oppressed. Internalised racial, then can be a result of personal and institutional racial oppression. Internalised oppression is a consequence of other forms of racial oppression, which an agent, then, internalises. It causes a damage within the individual that the individual carries with them everywhere they go. Internalised racial oppression, then, is brought to light everywhere that a person's race is significantly noticeable, and everywhere their race plays a role in decisions about how that person will be treated, because of their race.

Personal racial oppression, institutional racial oppression and internalised racial oppression make it so that race as a social identity is always relevant or present in a person's life. This is because these three spheres, together and interchangeably, are always present in the everyday life of racially oppressed individuals. Racial oppression as a whole makes it so that the racially oppressed are under constant social oppression, because racial identity is always present and relevant to the person in their environment.

Conclusion

Relational personal autonomy is the sort of phenomenon that requires considerations of an agent's social conditions. These social conditions determine the values and norms within an agent, which govern one's priorities, beliefs and desires and in turn govern an agent's decisions and actions. If these social conditions come under oppression, the agent's autonomy

becomes limited. Wherever an agent's racial identity is relevant, racial oppression limits that agent's personal autonomy. When looking at the different forms of racial oppression, internalised racial oppression ensures that those who are racially oppressed are constantly under the influence of that oppression, thus completely eliminating their personal autonomy in almost every part of their daily decision making. This conclusion should be at least a seed to a re-look of state laws, institutional policies, education material and many other social systems in which agents are embedded in. These questions could range from what to do about racism and what material or methods could be used to irradiate it; to why agents who are racially oppressed are not personally responsible for their action, how can that be turned around.

What to do with the conclusion of this paper in the world? As mentioned before, this paper's conclusion can be used as a seed to several other questions whose answers would be highly valuable when applied in the social world we already live in. One of the branches to this seed is that of responsibility. What then can be said about the notion of responsibility when people have limited or no personal autonomy and the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed?

Feminist theories about autonomy and responsibility are important to note, so that we can understand the relationship between social oppression and responsibility. In this section, I suggest the best theory of responsibility to be used to understand the responsibility for actions by those who are socially oppressed and lack personal autonomy. This section serves the purpose of finding a pragmatic reason to why we should be looking at concepts of racial oppression and personal autonomy. It serves to illustrate the practical response we should have towards the findings of this paper.

Responsibility is a notion that involves conditions of excuse and blameworthiness. These conditions assist social arrangements to sustain social oppression. In feminist theories of responsibility, according to Paul Benson (1991), social arrangements, like gender social norms, permit men to shift the blame to "it's the way things are", and allows men to completely escape blame for oppressive actions. Had the same actions been performed by the oppressed group, such escape would not be possible. This escape of blame through oppression can be said for police officers and officials of various racially oppressive institutions. According to Wilson, (1992), phrases like, "protocol", "It's just procedure" and

"this is just how the system works" are examples of blame-shifting in racial oppressive circumstances. In feminist theories, the blame-shifting by men means that men can regard themselves above responsibility. This follows Benson's claim, that this shifting of the blame is done "by deflecting accountability away from individuals to larger social systems over which individuals seem powerless" (Benson, 1991: 72).

Responsibility is a concept used to find out who is to be held accountable for actions. It accounts for theories in law, ethics, autonomy, personal identity, etc. It is a concept used to understand what one's actions and the consequences to those actions amount to, but this can only be so if we consider agents to be personally or individually autonomous. This means that we can only say someone is responsible for actions only when that person has performed those actions autonomously. This will bring us to issues stemming from black race criminality, where the black person has been labelled as the biggest criminal of all. If we conclude that racially oppressed individuals are not autonomous in most of their action; what does that say about their responsibility of the criminal actions the racially oppressed perform?

I argue for Paul Benson's relational account of responsibility to explain the kind of responsibility we should award the racially oppressed, with the hopes of sparking a thought at how fields like law, politics and economics can change their views on the causes of poverty and crime in the black societies. This account of responsibility acknowledges a person's social conditions as a key factor to consider when trying to point out at who is to blame for actions of person's who lack autonomy. I argue that there is a difference between being held responsible by others for your actions and taking responsibility for one's own actions. This distinction with show a practical stance on the account of relational autonomy and its relationship with responsibility. Lastly, I argue that racially oppressed can be held responsible, but find it impossible to take responsibility for their criminal actions, because they lack personal autonomy.

If personal autonomy, under the scope of relational autonomy, is limited by social oppression, this raises questions about the responsibility of agents. Feminist theories find the importance of looking at the notion of responsibility and its relations to the oppression of women. There is a relation here in that responsibility directly involves conditions of blameworthiness and excuse, which assist social arrangements at sustaining the oppression of women in topics about autonomy.

These social arrangements, such as gender social norms, per Benson (1991:71) allow men to escape or shift blame for their privileged actions that otherwise would not be handled the same if were done by a woman. This also means that men can place themselves above particular responsibilities, "by deflecting accountability away from individuals to larger social systems over which individuals seem powerless" (Benson, 1991:72). Social oppression is the kind of oppression that feminism concerns itself with. Social oppression is an oppression that allows men to get away with responsibility, while forces women into a corner where responsibility weighs a lot more for women. Feminism reports that not only is there a responsibility by the woman for her own actions, but also a responsibility for the actions towards women by men. This reflects in how male perpetrators of violence, abuse exploitation and harassment are not clearly called out on their actions, because of the social arrangements involved in the oppression of women.

Paul Benson considers the notion of responsibility by pointing out at how important it is for women to reclaim and their personal agency by *taking responsibility* for their desires, beliefs, perceptions and actions. Benson and moral psychologies claim that a person needs to be self-governing, self-constituting and self-sufficient in order to be labelled as responsible for an action. Benson says, "So conceived, the responsible person is the self-governing, self-constituting, and self-sufficient agent whose natural freedom and moral identity do not essentially depend on socially elaborated powers, roles, and relationships" (Benson, 1991:73). This suggests that an agent needs to be able to be make decisions, be reflective and able to recognize their individuality from their social whole. It seems that actions that one can be held responsible for are actions that the agent has performed autonomously. This means that the agents are able to feel that they have a choice and they have the ability to exercise it. Only autonomous agents can cause their actions, so, only autonomous agents can be *held responsible* for their actions. Children, for example, and the mentally unfit, cannot be held responsible for their actions, because they don't know any better. They lack the ability to exercise choice autonomously. They are not fully autonomous and are entirely influenced or coerced. This is because children and the mentally unfit are not entirely able to self-reflect or self-examine. "A person is a morally accountable agent just when she possesses the powers of reflective self-control" (Wallace, 1996: 854).

Jay Wallace (1996) says that the power that enables us to self-reflect is influenced by social and political circumstances, where reflective self-control is a power which allows us to apply moral reason. This power also grants one the ability to make choices through deliberation. This same power allows one the ability to move from decision making to actions according to those decisions, using reason. When this process is executed correctly by an agent; then that agent can be labelled as morally accountable for their actions. Wallace's view suggests that autonomous agents can only be responsible when agents have reflective self-control. The agent is able to have choices and is able to choose between those choices without feeling pushed towards a particular choice by anything, like social oppression, but instead being driven by reason and their autonomy. Self-control is reflective because there must be a framework responsible for allowing the agent to have choice.

Benson's account of responsibility is relational, because it counts the agent relational to circumstance and to others. The same way personal autonomy is relational because it considers the agent autonomous in a socially conditioned context, relational responsibility sees agents as responsible not only for their actions, but in how these actions affect others and how the agent's social conditions influence their actions. Benson's account of relational responsibility is a procedural account, because it considers the procedures involved in attributing responsibility to a person; it considers the means of being responsible, rather than just focusing on the ends involved in being responsible.

To draw on the issues associated with the distinction between *taking responsibility* and being *held responsible*, Benson tells the story of Charlotte. Charlotte's story will show this distinction as well as provide a foundation of how we ought to view criminal actions of those who are racially oppressed. Charlotte, Benson explains, is a middle-class, white, American woman who lives in an 1800s Victorian error. This means her society is built on rigid, conventional gender roles that women, like herself, are expected to follow. This is the perfect example of persons who are perceived to be autonomous but are not.

Charlotte's role in society is to be a wife, a home-keeper and mother. Her gender and age require her to play this role perfectly with no hesitation. This role, for women her age and economic class, is expected to be fulfilling and to bring her satisfaction and joy, however, this is not the case for Charlotte who finds her roles almost unbearable. She, instead, is overtaken by the overwhelming desire to be a career woman: a painter, an artist, a writer and a lecturer.

The dissonance within her is so great that she can hardly resist running off, leaving her husband and children in order to pursue this desire. This, in her context, is are very strange desires for a woman. Her desires and interests are so strange even to her, that she begins to doubt her own sanity. This also sparks doubt about her sanity among her family members and friends.

Worried about her, her husband takes her to a physician. The physician diagnoses her with a serious nervous disorder and prescribes rest. He says, "The patient is to be in bed, without visitors, no reading, writing or painting." Charlotte believes the Doctor's prognosis, believing that she must be gravely mentally ill if her priorities put being a wife, housekeeper and other come second to her desires to have a career as an artist, writer and a lecturer. Charlotte's social conditions do not allow her to prioritise a career more than her domestic responsibilities. As much as Charlotte believes the doctor and his believes in his prescribed rest, she finds it intolerable to follow his instructions and eventually runs off to pursue her desires for a career. Benson continues saying that even after Charlotte's actions have been performed, she cannot let go of the notion that she must be completely insane and has been defeated by that insanity. She is surer of her mental illness now that she decided to pursue her desires for a career than she was before she decided. Her autonomy or moral agency is to be questioned, because of the affects her social conditions that play such a significant role on her thoughts about herself and her decisions.

Charlotte's position requires us to evaluate what it really is that causes her internal dissonance. This conflict is significant because it lets her believe that she cannot have been sane to make the choice that she makes or been sane to even have desired the choice to begin with. She genuinely believes that her choice is a symptom of her insanity.

The conflict within Charlotte is brought about by the social expectations and these social expectations limit her option of choosing to pursue a career without being condemned for it. Her internal dissonance seems to be caused by conflicting ethical responsibilities and her sense of self-reflection and self-actualisation are interrupted by these social expectations. His not only limits her ability to choose freely, but it also suggests that Charlotte doubt her own moral capacity, her ability to know between right a wrong and her ability to make autonomous decisions. The dissonance within her comes from her need to choose between the two life-decisions. This oppressive environment also undermines her ability to recognise

that she can answer for her actions, thus *take responsibility* for actions she performs. To salvage this response to her decisions and actions, we need to recognise that Charlotte cannot escape divide between her moral competence and her ability to be accountable for actions, i.e. being able to answer or give reasons for her actions, because herself of self and her worthiness to make decisions about her life have been diminished. The social oppression she exposed to not only brings her agency doubt by those around her, but to herself too.

Looking at Wallace's view, people are able to make choices based on a hierarchical structure which involves the application of desires, reasons, values and desires. If we say that Charlotte left her family as a means to escape rest and isolation is to say that she was forced to leave her husband and children. In Charlotte's case, however, it appears that finding the kind of responsibility that only autonomous agents can be afforded, which Wallace is referring to, requires a consideration that Charlotte's decisions are a product of her own desires and reasons, not a product influenced by her external constraints. This means that Charlotte was not coerced or threatened with a gun in order to act the way she did. Charlotte can neither claim to have been forced to follow the doctor's instructions by going into rest and isolation; she went through the rest-cure period because she felt like a professional had better authority to make decisions for her life than she did. The view of responsibility Wallace paints, states that Charlotte's doubt about her competency restricts her from acknowledging her ability to make correct choices about her life. Her sense of insanity begins from the feeling that she has distorted values, because her Victorian background makes her feel as though she should genuinely want to be a wife, mother and housekeeper. The conflicting feelings she feels inside comes from her thought, "Why doesn't the female duty of being a wife, mother and housekeeper fulfil me?"

The understanding of the relationship between relational responsibility and personal autonomy evaluates the kind of responsibility an agent with limited or lack of autonomy should be awarded. Social oppression is defined as a power which diminishes the self of an agent, it is a system that denies an individual self-reflective ability. It appears that oppressive behaviour denies the racially oppressed their reflective self-control and full agency. People *take responsibility* for their actions when they can give reasons for their actions; when anyone asks them to justify their actions, they are able to. The racially oppressed are not in the position to *take responsibility* for their actions because they cannot justify their actions

through reason. It is not that racial oppression puts someone in the dilemma of being forced to choose between the two choices, but that the person feels as though they cannot choose between the two choices: They feel as though they have no real options, even when one of the choices is more desirable to them than the other. Charlotte, for example, is in a torturous position that makes her feel like there is a decision to make between two choices, but the position also makes her feel genuinely pulled towards both choices.

Racial oppression, in many ways, limits the choices of those who fall on the receiving end of it. The racialisation of one's experiences means that those who fall victim to racial oppression are subject to Charlotte's dilemma. Though, formally racial oppression has been removed from constitutions and institutions, realistically, constitutions and institutions still hold racially oppressive views. This has limited the choices to take, by oppressed individuals, in order to make their lives better, it has limited their choices to receiving basic human needs, such as food, education and equal opportunities to those races that are on the benefitting side of oppression. This kind of effect on one's decision making shows the effects that racial oppression has on racially oppressed individual's autonomy.

It appears that Charlotte and victims of racial oppression can indeed be *held responsible* for their actions, but Charlotte and victims of racial oppression cannot *take responsibility* for their actions. Other people in Charlotte's social circle have the ability to hold her responsible for her actions, but this ability comes from their lack of insight and regard towards the oppression that affects Charlotte's decisions and actions. The ability for others around Charlotte and those outside of the racially oppressed group to hold those who fall into that group responsible for their actions and decisions, comes from their ideological blindness to the oppression driving these decisions and actions. To claim that Charlotte and the racially oppressed can be *held responsible* for actions produced in a lack of autonomous agency is to believe that victims of racial oppression and Charlotte have autonomous agency to begin with.

> When a racial category is assigned to someone, along with it come many racialized stereotypes, pre-suppositions, and so on—most of them negative. (Mills, 1998: 47).

Mills' point highlights the reality of racializing people in general. Racializing people in this way leads to unjust discrimination, oppression and racism. A vivid, real-life example Mills

gives to support this claim is the instance of the initial use of the categories “black” and “white” in the 1700s: To determine how many members of the House of Representatives would be assigned to each district, the writers of the US Constitution decided that each “black” person would “be counted as three-fifths (3/5) of a person…” (Root, 2000: 635). This resulted in “black” persons being viewed as inferior as or less valuable than a “white” person (60% as valuable as a “white” person, to be precise).

The formal documents about racial equality, such as documents associated with human rights and constitutions, may have been themselves been amended to include black people as equals in all the countries that used to see them as less of human than other races, but the execution of what is written on them about racial equality has not changed much. This is because the results of standards that institutions held in the past are psychologically embedded in the people within the institution, embedded in the culture of those institutions and internally affect those who are oppressed and those that benefit from oppression.

Institutions like universities, law enforcement agencies and countries have nurtured racial oppression through the foundations that make up institutions. By this, I mean that agencies, like law enforcement, have been built on protecting white people and their property, rather than the human species, from danger. This, for instance, can be seen in how the typical criminal, per Wilson (1992), is a black adolescent male. Universities have been built on a financial system that does not support the structure of black people’s economic standard: a standard that supports the oppression of the black race by the white race. This can be seen in how the economy of many countries has a large population of those in poverty, and those in the lowest economic bracket being of the black race.

Since every previously overtly, racial oppressive institution still suffers from the aftermath of being covertly racial oppressive towards people of colour; it is difficult for those who are oppressed to exercise their full autonomy, because social oppression interrupts people’s ability to be self-actualising, self-directed and self-reflective individuals, which are the essential features of personal autonomy. This means that such individuals are unable to view their decisions as completely autonomous which eventually leads to an ideological blindness to the oppression proved by statements like “It’s just the way things are”. It is not that these individuals view the various possible choices they have and lack the ability to choose, but

that their perception of the choices in front of them is limited by the reality that there are far less choices in front of them than there are for the white race or any other race.

Through the arguments brought forward by this paper, it appears that the same laws that place negative and discriminatory labels on black people are ideologically blind to the oppression that drives internalised racial oppression within these individuals, which keeps the cycle of racial oppression in motion.

This is the predicament that racially oppressed groups face: Their actions and decisions are driven by the need to escape oppressive feelings and are products of decisions made without the full excess to autonomy. These decisions and actions have resulted in many black people resorting to crime, but the law itself is built on an ideology that is blind to the black person's oppression, resulting in the law's response: that black criminals are in fact autonomous and responsible for all their actions.

Crime done by black people as a resistance against the economic inequality between black people and white people is a result of forced circumstances; circumstances forced by oppression and the absence of a way out of a vicious cycle that always entraps the black person in poverty and at the receiving end of oppression. These criminals can be *held responsible* by an ideologically blind law and society, but they cannot *take responsibility* for their actions, because as agents lacking autonomy, they are unable to access alternative choices.

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