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**Structural-Functionalist, Marxist and Post-Marxist Perspectives on Women in Education**

**Margaret Eveleigh Archibald-Prashad**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Education**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada**

**May 1988**

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**To Seta and Nandi - with love.**

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---

My love and gratitude:

To Guy Hévey, for his support and ever comforting shoulder;

To my brother, Vernon, for being there whenever the going got tough;

To my daughters, Seta and Nandi, for believing in me and taking care of us all.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Structural-Functionalist, Marxist and Post-Marxist Perspectives on Women in Education**

**Margaret Eveleigh Archibald Prashad**

The focus of inquiry for the present study is an investigation into some existing theoretical frameworks which are used as an analytical basis for the sociology of education. The study examines how Structural-Functionalist, and Marxist/Neo-Marxist theoretical frameworks address the social situation of women, the nature and transmission of knowledge and the possibility of social change with specific reference to the work of Madeleine MacDonald, Paulo Freire, and Dorothy Smith. The results of this examination are used to explore Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action as an alternative, possibly Post-Marxist, theoretical framework which provides some solutions to the problems raised by the initial analysis. Potential directions for future research are suggested. While the present study argues the need for a comprehensive, historically based theory, it is not the intention of this study to generate such a theory. Rather, it is an attempt to investigate the feasibility of theoretical frameworks which make, or imply, such a claim, as applied to the contemporary context of post-industrial, capitalist society.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### 1.1 The problem of gender:

The focus of sociological criticism of democratic-capitalist societies has centered around the failure of these societies to realize their apparently egalitarian ideology. That is, it was seen as the function of society to equalize economic and social disparity. Therefore, social institutions should be organized in such a way as to ensure this equalization over time. Initial inquiry tended to focus on economic issues and equality between the sexes became one of the primary targets of investigation. Governments responded with policies and laws intended to arrest discriminatory job practices such as sex-based salary scales and hiring practices. Governmental intervention notwithstanding, research continues to show women concentrated in the labour force in areas having low salary expectations (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978; Wilson, 1982; Menzies, 1982; Québec, Conseil du Statut des Femmes, 1985). In other words, despite the increasing numbers of women entering the labour force in democratic-capitalist society there has been little, if any, change in the overall occupational position of women. If it is true, as Entwistle argues, that "It is implicit in the concept of equality of opportunity that there will be considerable social mobility..." (Entwistle, 1974: 4), then analyses of the position of women suggest a contradiction in the operation of equality of opportunity for women.

As one of the major institutions through which the process of socialization, and presumably equalization, is fostered in contemporary capitalist society, the education system became the focus of studies which viewed it as an increasingly problematic area. Investigation of the position of women in western educational systems has revealed an apparent ideology of "separate but equal" in such practices as sex-role stereotyping of textbooks, separated curricula, and teachers' use of labelling (Byrne, 1978; Deem, 1980; Dale

et al., 1981; Walker and Barton, 1983; Russell, 1987 ). If such practices lead to lower occupational expectations, it is difficult to see how they can be argued to be "equal" at least in terms of leading to a more equal distribution of social rewards. These studies reveal ideological contradictions in the operation of the educational system and raise serious doubts concerning the possibility of social change being generated by that system, at least in terms of social mobility and greater "equalization".

### **1.2 Focus of the Study:**

The focus of inquiry for the present study is an investigation into some existing theoretical frameworks which are used as a theoretical basis for the sociology of education. The study will examine how these frameworks address the social situation of women, the nature and transmission of knowledge and the possibility of social change. The results of this examination will be used as a basis for the exploration of a tentative theoretical framework which attempts to suggest some solutions to the problems raised by the initial analysis and to suggest some directions for future research. While the present study argues the need for a comprehensive, historically based theory, it is not the intention of this study to generate such a theory. Rather, it is an attempt to investigate the feasibility of theoretical frameworks which make, or imply, such a claim, as applied to the contemporary context of post-industrial, capitalist society.

### **1.3 Approach to the study - theory as problematic:**

One of the problems facing contemporary investigators of social phenomena is the fragmentation of the study of social organization into numerous specialized branches (sociology of law, medicine, education etc.) and the further specialization of these branches into numerous separate disciplines each with their groups of experts and specified domains

of investigation (Sharp, 1980). While the problem of fragmentation is not specific to sociology, but, it is argued, inherent to the organization of social systems, or at least to social systems organized around a capitalistic economy, increasing specialization is particularly problematic for an approach which purports to reveal and to understand the operation of social systems in their entirety. Such specialization has meant the construction of theoretical frameworks specific to each branch and sub-branch of inquiry. Frameworks created using a very narrow locus of investigation may satisfy their specific areas of inquiry but such theories often suffer from serious lacunae when attempts are made to include or transfer the results to a more generalized level of analysis or to the level of practical social action.

While it may be argued that attempts should not be made to transfer theories developed around a specific focus to a more general level, the inter-related nature of social organization demands a theory capable of being generalized. That is, to be effective, a theory of society must consider the interaction of all systems of which that society consists. It is exactly this point that both Sharp (1980) and Persell (1977) make in their justifications for applying a Marxist theoretical framework as the underlying basis for the development of a theoretical approach to the concept of ideology. The utilization of such a framework at least provides a base in a theory developed to explain the overall operation of social organization. Further developing or modifying the concepts originated in such a theory may help to resolve some of the related problematic issues. Constructing a sociological theory, within a framework restricted to the operation of a few, highly specific social components, invokes the possibility of results with very limited application. In fact the perception of the developing separation of theory and practice, the emphasis on empirically derived information as the only valid knowledge, and increasing evidence of the inability of capitalist societies to promote social equality, have provoked a relatively recent orientation in the development of sociological theory. What appeared to be required was a unified and critical social theory having emancipatory application.

It was in response to these problems and to the apparent failure of existing theoretical



frameworks to account for contemporary social organization in "late capitalist" societies that Jürgen Habermas attempted the construction of a unified, critical social theory based on a theory of communication. These same needs (1) coupled with the need for a framework, capable of theorizing gender have informed much of the recent sociological theorizing proceeding from a feminist perspective (Armstrong et al., 1985; Burstyn and Smith, 1985; Hartmann, 1981; MacDonald, 1980; Smith, 1975, 1979, 1984 are a small sample of this group).

Feminist analyses of the position of women in social organization have pointed specifically to the cultural organization of knowledge as a problematic area. Traditional sociological theory while it may acknowledge gender structured social dichotomy, generally perceives such a dichotomy as having a natural (it is sometimes argued "pre-social"), therefore necessary, origin. What tends to be ignored is that this sex-based dichotomy is organized in the form of patriarchal social relations which implies a form of power relations, the domination of women by men. The impact of the patriarchal organization of society on the construction of knowledge according to the feminist argument is that what is viewed as legitimate knowledge is imbued with a male perspective and male interests. The results in terms of sociological theory are theoretical frameworks which either ignore the presence of women as social actors (women are lumped in the category "man" or mankind), or constrain the discussion to their (women's) familial role (Sydie, 1987).

For educational theory until recently, this perspective has resulted in a tendency to treat the position of women in the educational system as indistinguishable from that of men. That is for example, if the "merit principle" applied, it applied equally to men and women; men were selected for the roles for which they were best suited and so were women. The result of taking such an approach meant that questions concerning the role of gender relations in the reproduction of social stratification were not generated (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1982; Wilson, 1982).

#### 1.4 Procedure:

Considering the above argument regarding the need for a theory of society which considers the operation of the entire social system in an historical context and which includes women, Chapter 2 will present a brief overview of two general theoretical approaches, the structural/functionalist, and Marxist/Neo-Marxist conflict approach. A third major theoretical perspective, the "interactionist", is not included in the main body of this discussion. However, this theory is briefly considered in Appendix 1 (2). The two approaches considered in Chapter 2 supply the underlying theoretical basis for much of contemporary sociological inquiry, including investigations into the sociology of education. Therefore, it would seem that a brief analysis of the problems and possibilities implicit in these approaches would be useful, even essential, to further theoretical construction and to the formulation of practical recommendations for action in the area of sociology of/for women. These theoretical frameworks will be reviewed in terms of how the theory develops and accounts for, or fails to account for:

- a) the concept of knowledge and its social interaction, that is, how knowledge is defined by and defines the organization of society;
- b) the nature of the power relations identified by the theoretical approach being reviewed; and
- c) the problem of social change.

Each of these aspects will be examined in terms of their implications for education, for the position of women in education, and the relationship of this to the general social position of women. The investigation of these theories will also be used to identify and define concepts which will be used and potentially redefined or amplified throughout the study.

The central argument of the present study is that existing theories of sociology of education do not adequately account for the social position of women, neither (partly due to this lacunae) do they provide an adequate explanation of the nature, generation and transmission of knowledge nor the nature of power relations. As a result, the explanation of social change provided by these theories becomes problematic. A further examination of the nature of the

knowledge transmitted by education systems and the implications for women will be undertaken in Chapter 3, in the context of a discussion of the approaches taken by Madeleine MacDonald, Paulo Freire and Dorothy E. Smith. While Freire does not approach the theory of education from a feminist perspective, as do both MacDonald and Smith, the work of all three writers will be examined in some detail for the purposes of exploring how their arguments may help to reveal and clarify the actual operation of education systems in democratic capitalist society, particularly with respect to women. Each of these writers begins from what has been labelled a "post-Marxist" position. "Post-Marxist", in the sense it is used in this study, refers to a theoretical position based on a reinterpretation or, as Habermas (1979) terms it, a "reconstruction" of the Marxist explanation of capitalist social organization. Such a position has been frequently adopted in sociological work oriented towards a feminist perspective (3) primarily because it is in the work of Marx and Engels (4) that an initial explanation of the concept of patriarchy, defining male-female power relations, can be found. In addition, Marxist theory provides a discussion of power relations, albeit from the point of view of a class-structured economic organization, which can be used as the starting point for a discussion of the interpenetration of power relations in the social structure. The concept of gender-based social relations, the concept of power relations, and an understanding of the interrelationship of these concepts are essential to a theory which attempts to account for the social position of women. The theoretical framework on which Freire bases his construction of a radical pedagogy, while it does not refer to gender-based social relations per se, does offer a detailed description of the operation of power relationships and of the interpenetration and reproduction of such relationships in an educational system. Such a description may prove useful in explaining the position of women in democratic-capitalist society, particularly vis-a-vis education in that society.

In Chapter 4 an approach to the analysis of social organization which attempts to integrate elements of a number of theories will be reviewed in the work of Jürgen Habermas. The investigation of Habermas's theory will note, in particular, Habermas's explanation of the

functioning of what he identifies as "late capitalist" and "post-capitalist" societies and the possibilities for a "post modern" society (Habermas, 1975: 17). Habermas, like Freire, does not deal specifically with the theorization of gender, nor (unlike Freire) does he deal with the system of education per se. However, it will be argued that the theory developed by Habermas has potential utility for furthering understanding of both education, in general, and, more specifically, the nature of the relationship between women and education.

Drawing upon the results of the preceding discussions, an attempt will be made, in the final chapter, to suggest a tentative theoretical framework for an approach to the sociology of education which will incorporate an understanding of the position of women. The study will also attempt to consider some of the potential implications for social action suggested by such a framework. It is not intended that this framework be in any way considered a final formulation. Rather it is conceived as one very tentative and possibly faulty step on the way to developing an understanding of social processes. If the arguments prove to be mistaken, it is yet hoped the present study may serve to provide some further clarification of the highly complex issues involved in theorizing the relationship of gender and education.

### **1.5 Definition of terms:**

Although a number of concepts and terms will be defined and amplified as the analysis proceeds, it may be helpful before proceeding further to define some of these terms as used in the context of the present work.

One of the problems in dealing with the issue of women in education appears to lie in the lack of standardized definitions for such concepts as social status, and equality of educational opportunity (Anisef and Okihiro, 1982: ix). Nielsen (1978) defines social status as access to prestige, power, wealth and psychological gratification. For the purposes of this study, Nielsen's definition of social status will be used except in cases where a specific author's definition of this concept is being discussed. Equality of opportunity, then, will refer to equal

access to prestige, power, wealth and psychological gratification, that is equal access to external rewards and internal gratification. Given the link between education and social status argued in studies such as those of Jencks (1972), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Persell (1977, 1987) and others, equality of educational opportunity will refer to equal access to educational training related to high social status.

The concepts of ideology, legitimation and gender discrimination are central to the argument presented in this study and appear consistently throughout. Generally, ideology, as it is used by the major writers under discussion, refers to the manipulation of commonly held (that is, common to the population being considered) values and beliefs (norms and customs) in order to establish and sustain a specific power structure. Legitimation refers to the ability of an individual, group or groups to obtain acceptance and approval of social action from the individual, group(s) or population implicated and/or affected by such action. This concept is developed in greater detail in the analysis of Habermas's social theory in Chapter 4. Finally the present study uses the term gender discrimination to refer to social inequality between males and females.

### 1.6 Notes to Chapter 1:

1. For an explanation of this point see Rosemary Ng, "Introduction", in Burstyn and Smith, 1985. See also Maroney and Luxton, 1987.

2. The general structure of "interactionist" theory is not considered in the main argument for a number of reasons. As is noted in Appendix 1, by "interactionist" the present study refers to theoretical perspectives labelled in sociological literature as phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. In general, this theoretical position tends to take a "micro-level" approach to the study of social organization. By "micro-level" approach is meant the fact that interactionist theory argues: if it is not the social structure which determines how individuals are organized (since there are no inherent patterns) but rather the reverse, individuals determine the nature of the social structure, then understanding the social organization is best achieved by understanding the meanings attributed by individuals to specific situations. As Habermas argues this approach tends to consider social processes as entirely the result of meanings "subjectively intended and/or culturally transmitted" (McCarthy, 1979:xii). While the approach provides a number of useful tools for social analysis, (such as questioning the validity of information derived from quantitative methods,) as a complete theoretical explanation of the nature of social organization, the interactionist perspective has a number of weaknesses. Utilizing this approach alone tends to result in an emphasis on individual factors and a concomitant lack of consideration of the effects of structural features of social organization. Knowledge becomes problematic to the extent that, taken to its extreme conclusion, the interactionist position appears to argue the constant recreation of knowledge (defined as commonsense meaning) in every social situation. The present study follows the argument presented by Habermas. While a viable theory of sociology must consider the interpretive framework through which social action is understood by individual actors, reducing social analysis to only the consideration of subjective meaning ignores the fact that meaning can also be used to obscure actual cultural, economic and political conditions (McCarthy, 1979: xi-xii; Habermas, 1977: 335-363). Thus such a theory is not adequate in itself.

The present research argues that a sociological theory which seeks to understand the operation of an education system, particularly as it applies to women, must include a consideration of the impact of structural features of social organization. Since this is not the primary consideration of interactionist theory, and it is the

primary consideration of both structural/functionalist and Marxist/Neo-Marxist conflict theory, interactionist theory is not treated as a major focus of this study. It should be noted however, that the theoretical frameworks of the writers analysed in detail in the present study do attempt some combination of both structural and interpretive elements.

3. For a general discussion of the use of the Marxist approach in the development of sociological theory from a feminist perspective see Sydie (1987). See also Barrett (1978), Hartmann (1981), Armstrong et al. (1983), Smith (1985), Burstyn (1985), Maroney and Luxton (1987). For a more specific discussion of the Marxist approach applied to a sociology of women in education see Wolpe (1978) and MacDonald (1980, 1981) as discussed in the present study.

4. Specifically Engel's discussion of the problem in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Two Major Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology of Education

This section reviews some of the concepts presented in two of the major theoretical perspectives applied to the study of education as a formal institution. Some of the contradictory and/or critical results obtained from recent research (based on these theories) into the relationship of education, equality and the functions served by schools are presented. It should be noted that this is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of either of these theoretical approaches. Rather, they are outlined briefly in order to provide a context for the presentation of some of the contradictory evidence motivating the present study. Particular emphasis is on how these theories explain a concept of knowledge and its interaction with social organization, the nature of power relations and the problem of social change.

#### 2.1 The Structural/Functionalist Perspective:

Functionalist explanations of society are based on the overall premise that society is organized in ways which are necessitated by the nature of the world and of man. The theoretical formulation developed from the application of this approach is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the work of Talcott Parsons (1949, 1954, 1960 etc.). Intrinsic to this perspective is the definition of action in terms of a "means-end" schema involving an agent (actor), "an end, a future state of affairs toward which action is oriented", and a situation "the trends of development of which differ from the end" desired. The situation is made up of non-controllable elements, "conditions", and controllable elements, "means". To the extent that alternative means are available, the situation includes an element of choice which implies a "normative orientation" (Parsons: 1949: 44). "Normative" is defined by Parsons as the element of a system which is viewed by the actor(s) as an "end in itself" for either the "members of the collectivity", "some portion of the members", or "the collectivity as a unit".



"Norm" thus becomes a statement of the action regarded as desirable and to which future action should conform. (Parsons, 1949:75). Parsons takes the position further when he asserts that, "There is no such thing as action except as effort to conform with norms" (Ibid.:76). Thus, according to this explanation, all action is predetermined since both means and ends are, by definition, normative. A logical corollary of this would appear to be that all change is, therefore, predetermined.

Parsons identifies and defines three terms central to the process of this analysis:

1. "structure" which is, "the determination of relevant relations of units in systems" (Ibid.:39).
2. "process", which is "the correlative concept designating the respects in which the state of a system or the relevant part or parts of it changes within the time span relevant and significant for the particular cognitive process in mind"; and
3. "function", a concept whose "reference is to the formulation of sets of conditions governing the states of living systems as 'going concerns' in relation to their environments" (Parsons, 1977: 103).

Using the biological model, Parsons identifies a four-function paradigm defining the conditions or "needs" governing "living systems" and, by analogy, social systems. These functions include adaptation (governing the system's relation to the environment), integration (governing internal relations), goal attainment (governing purposiveness of behaviour), and pattern maintenance (reflected in a social system as values generalization). The argument here is that there are (a priori) conditions, determined by nature, which demand that society, and its subsystems, be organized in a particular manner if they are to function.

As a social system becomes more differentiated, subsystems develop oriented towards resolving the increasing complexity of conditions; thus the political system develops to handle problems related to integration, the cultural system to handle those related to pattern maintenance and so on. It should be noted that while subsystems may develop around a specific function, each subsystem is subject to the four primary system conditions. That is, the subsystem must also satisfy the conditions of goal attainment etc. "...strategically the most important component of culture for the social systems is patterns of value which define

the actor's own situation in crucial respects. Hence in the process of acquisition of culture by individuals the internalization of value-patterns is a central aspect of socialization" (Parsons, 1977: 351). In highly differentiated pluralized western industrial society "cultural specialization tends to give a particularly prominent place ... to the cognitive function. Thus our differentiated cultural system is organized more about knowledge..." (Ibid.: 353).

## 2.2 The Concept of Knowledge in Structural / Functionalist Theory:

Knowledge is accumulated via the investigation of observed phenomena (that is, action) and the interaction of facts (empirically verifiable statements about observed phenomena) and theory ("a body of logically interrelated general concepts of empirical reference") (Parsons, 1949: 6-10). However, not all phenomena can be observed at any given time (indeed, ever), thus a selection process is involved. This implies the application of a system of values. Values or "customs and ideas" thus govern the choice of phenomena for investigation, and determine, to some extent, the concepts reflected in the theory. Knowledge is thus structured by the functional needs and conditions governing social systems. However, valid knowledge is possible via verification of the theory through empirical tests and the application of critical reasoning. As new facts are added there is a reformulation of the theoretical system and those concepts which do not stand up are eliminated. This is in accord with conservative philosophy which asserts that there is "true" knowledge in the form of subject areas which it is the function of the educational system to transmit. The assumption is that verification can be "valid and sound" because it is based on values which are a reflection of the valid "needs" of the system incorporating the phenomena being investigated. Because the system represents a collectivity of individuals, the needs of the system are valid as a representation of the needs of the collectivity which is a more evolved state of man. Therefore, the question of whose interests these needs might reflect is not relevant as a criticism; they reflect the interests of the collective.

Power, then, is defined as "the realistic capacity of a system-unit to actualize its 'interests'...within the context of system interaction and in this sense to exert influence on processes in the system" (Parsons, 1954: 391). Given this definition it would seem possible that individual interests, rather than those of the collective, may be implicated in the development of knowledge,

From a structural/functionalist perspective evaluation is an essential characteristic of all social systems because all action is oriented to the attainment of goals which involves selection. Since evaluation, by definition, differentiates in a rank order, hierarchy is implied. Hierarchical position is determined by "place in the scale of valuation relative to the integrated common value system" and power (Parsons, 1954: 390). The implication here is that stratification is an inherent characteristic of social systems. That stratification is inherent is demonstrated, according to Parsons, in the simplest social unit, that of the conjugal family where stratification occurs according to the "natural" biological divisions of age and sex. However, since stratification implies inequality, which may be perceived to be opposed to the realization of individual interests, it must be legitimated by means of an integrated system of common values. It is via such a system of integrated values that system stability is maintained (Parsons, 1954: 388). This conclusion provides direct support for the ideology of meritocracy, a necessary principle of social organization according to functionalist social theory.

The structural/functionalist perspective suggests that occupational positions deriving from industrialization require particular skills which must be supplied by people with either the ability or training necessary (Collins, 1975). The ideology of meritocracy argues that individuals must be motivated to do different jobs via social status rewards and that those individuals with the necessary talents merit the greater rewards with social inequality as the inevitable result. The function of education thus becomes that of providing the necessary skill training and identifying those individuals who merit the rewards via politically neutral

knowledge and teachers and of ensuring that the pattern of values defining the system is internalized.

### **2.3 Women and the Nature of Power Relations from the Structural / Functionalist Perspective:**

As noted previously, because greater rewards go to those doing the more important jobs and education is a means of identifying those most capable of doing those jobs, education apparently allows for social change by promoting those with the greatest ability to the most socially rewarding positions. However, this does not explain the consistently lower status position of women as compared with men across social classes (Nielsen, 1978; Roos, 1982), unless one is prepared to argue that women are consistently lower in intelligence and academic achievement. This position is not borne out by empirical studies (Cross, 1975) which would seem to support the position that by its failure to question the nature of the ideology, the implicit value structure and those who benefit from it, functionalist theory cannot provide an adequate explanation of contradictory empirical evidence. It is possible to argue that women's lack of motivation and interest in the highest status occupations, not their lack of intelligence, produces the lower status position of women, however, such an argument would bring into question the efficacy of the meritocracy principle which functionalist theory posits as the basis for social change. In other words, why are men interested in high status positions and not women?

Guppy and Giltanen, in a 1977 Canadian study, found, when sex was included as a variable in perception of occupational prestige, "male dominated occupations had a higher prestige ranking than female and that men had higher status than women in the same occupation" (Wilson, 1982:91). Thus, not only do studies indicate social stratification rather than social mobility as the existing situation (Persell, 1987), but they also indicate evidence of sex role discrimination. A Canadian study by Blispen and Carroll (1978) quoted by

Wilson:

"reveals upon close examination that women have higher educational levels and lower incomes than men in the same occupations... Furthermore, women are concentrated in a few jobs that require high educational certification but are rewarded by low income. The majority of men do jobs that require less education but are rewarded by higher incomes" (Wilson, 1982: 92).

This conclusion is corroborated for the Canadian context by studies conducted under the auspices of federal and provincial Councils on the Status of Women and independent studies (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978), as well as by numerous British and American studies (Deem, 1980[b]; Dale et al.[eds.], 1981; Terre des Femmes, 1982; Walker and Barton [eds.], 1983). Such evidence would seem to support the argument of occupational discrimination based on sex.

One of the justifications of occupational segregation on the basis of sex provided by structural/functionalist theory is that social roles are, at least to some extent, prescribed by innate factors which determine interests, needs and abilities. Individuals act out these roles in a prescribed fashion, that is, determined by norms based on the primary functions of a social organization and the values developed by the organization to ensure the carrying out of these functions. Women's role is determined by innate physiological and psychological factors which suggest the argument that the traditional position of women is both right and not open to change. Parsons argues that "the primary structure of the human personality as a system...[is organized] about the social structure of the society and its various subsystems" and in particular the "circumstantially detailed role structure of the social system" (Parsons, 1977: 97). Personality development starts with the family "as an agency of the *socialization* of the child" (Ibid.:97); that is the function of the family, as a collective, is not as a reproductive unit but as a social unit. Parsons identifies two aspects of social action, essential to family organization, with which males and females are associated respectively, the instrumental and expressive roles. The female's reproductive capacity tended to restrict her physically to the family unit more than the male, and, at the same time, tended to develop

an inwardly oriented psychology. Therefore, within the family, the integrative function described by the expressive role, oriented to emotional gratification, was attributed to the wife/female in her position of maintaining family cohesion and providing support.

For Parsons, "Absolute equality of opportunity is clearly incompatible with any positive solidarity of the family..." (Parsons, 1965:79). This is true because equality of opportunity in terms of the occupational structure would allow the possibility of mother and father being in competition for the same position, thus leading to conflict. In addition, since the occupational structure of modern industrialized society tends to a divisive (in the sense of adaptive) orientation expressed by the instrumental role, as opposed to an integrative/expressive orientation, women having equal opportunity to men would tend to overemphasize the instrumental at the expense of the expressive. This would become a destabilizing factor for the family and by extension, the entire social organization:

"The solidarity of a social system may then be thought of as a state of solvency of its 'affective economy,' conditioned both on the flow of instrumentally significant contributions from its members and on their motivational states of gratification... In simple social systems these factors can be conceived to be ascribed; this is true both of primitive societies and of the socializing agencies in which, in a more differentiated society, the child is placed in the earlier stages of his socialization" (Parsons, 1977b: 60).

Thus Parsons posits separate ideologies on the basis of sex: equality of opportunity for males and restricted role training for females. The differentiated sexual position is supported on the grounds of its "naturalness" in terms of innate biological characteristics and the inevitability of present family organization. Because family structure is an essential element of existing social organization, breakdown of the family would lead to breakdown of social organization. As the patterns of social organization were decided by members of the group for the benefit of the group, a breakdown of that organization would obviously mean a loss for all its members.

In Parsons' terms the "group" refers to all members of western industrial society,

including women. What Parsons, and Structural/Functionalist theory in general, fails to do is consider for whose benefit existing social organization actually operates. While the explanation of "legitimation" acknowledges the (potential) fact of the interpenetration of power relations into the value system or ideology of a social organization, it does not apparently, consider the effects of such an interpenetration. In addition, the theory does not appear to be situated within the historical context of the development of social relations; thus 'patrimonialism' can be viewed as a function of increasing social complexity permitting some means of social mobility (Parsons, 1977b :288). There is no question of why 'patrimonialism', as opposed to 'matrimonialism', should have developed or why it should have been a basis for social mobility. In addition, as Beechey (1981) argues, the tendency of structural/functionalist analyses to emphasize normative and evaluative factors in the examination of the social position of women produces a failure to consider economic factors. Thus, such analyses do not provide adequate explanations of women's vertical (concentrated in the lowest paying sectors) and horizontal (concentrated in specific sectors) position in the structure of the labour market process.

#### **2.4 Structural/Functionalist Theory and the Problem of Social Change:**

The potential for social change implicit in the Structural/Functionalist position is limited, particularly in terms of the capacity of the educational system to initiate that change. This position tends to equate "culture" with "knowledge" establishing both in the a-priori position. Teachers thus become the "custodians" of a particular spiritual and intellectual inheritance. If education is seen as the means by which cultural patterns are defined and internalized, and if those cultural patterns are inherent to the social organization, then there are determinable concepts to be learned which cannot be subject to change and which are, by definition, already being taught. Furthermore, because the locus of concern of the functionalist position is basically descriptive to explanatory, change is a focus only as it requires explanation. The

theoretical position does not require a framework that projects for change but rather one that is capable of explaining change as it occurs, hence the meritocratic principle.

Indeed, the question of who decides which positions are most difficult and merit the greatest rewards is ignored. In other words, the existing social structure is treated as an invariable function, the kind of influence exerted by the power structure is not questioned.

Parsons points out that differentiated roles does not necessarily mean unequal however, he notes, "In spite of the nearly obvious qualitative basis of the differentiation of role-function (instrumental-expressive), there has been a very persistent tendency at the same time to define it as a superiority-inferiority relationship. In an important sense a new phase of strain over this problem has very recently arisen in modern societies" (Parsons, 1977b: 288). The problem has arisen because the "humanistic aspect of the feminine role [community integrative function] is only partially institutionalized" (Parsons, 1954: 98) hence, by implication, only partially legitimated and reflected in the value system. According to structural/functionalist perspective this lack of legitimation is due to the focus on the adaptive (instrumental) function in highly industrialized societies whose structural formation demands a diversified, technically specialized, mobile labour pool. Thus the focus is on a function which is oriented toward individuality as opposed to integration.

The action of the educational system in this framework thus becomes to identify those individuals of greater talent, to provide training to fulfill the labour requirements of an industrialized society and to prepare individuals ideologically to fit their innately prescribed social roles. Social change will occur as a result of occupational mobility through the assessment of individual talent, and within the educational system as it adapts to meet the evolving needs of the labour market. However, the means by which the educational system assesses talent has been shown to be suspect (Jencks, 1972; Wrist, 1976); and the relationship of education to occupational mobility has been demonstrated to be equally questionable (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Persell, 1977; Karabel and Halsey, 1977). Levels of education are, according to the ideology of education, determined by ability; that is, movement to a higher



level is dependent on successful completion of the previous level. Success is determined by tests purportedly measuring the amount of knowledge acquired and the ability to apply this knowledge. However, investigation of these propositions produced the finding that educational level seemed to be more closely related to occupation and social class than to intelligence - the higher the family social class, the higher the level of education obtained by the children (Bowles and Gintis:1976; Persell, 1977; Cookson and Persell, 1987). In other words, education does not appear to lead to occupational mobility between classes but rather education would appear to operate to sustain existing social order, that is, existing patterns of stratification.

Byrne, in her analysis of women in the British educational system demonstrates the prevalence in this system, of the ideology explained by the structural/functionalist perspective regarding women. She found that educational position and policy statements deriving from the Central Advisory Council, Teachers' Union committees et al. reflected a "different but 'equal' ideology" (Byrne, 1978: 24) which, in turn, operated at the level of curriculum - different subjects for males and females, - and within subject content - in the form of stereotypic examples and illustrations. Byrne's thesis that the educational system operates on the basis of sex role stratification is supported by the work of Deem (1980a), Nielsen (1978), and others. Byrne and Nielsen argue that, in fact, different is not "equal" in that it has led to lower paying occupations, lower prestige ratings (Goldberg: 1968), and overall lower social status for women.

The structural/functionalist perspective does not consider problematic the question of "whose interests" the determination of "need" serves, nor what influences operate on that assessment except as it functions to preserve the operation of society. Nor does structural/functionalist theory adequately account for uneven distribution of resources throughout society or the unequal distribution of rewards on the basis of gender. How the various social groupings are persuaded to accept uneven distribution, that is, the nature and effect of the operation of power on the legitimation process is not sufficiently developed to

explain the nature of the inequalities observed nor the problem of change.

## 2.5 Marxist/Neo-Marxist Conflict Perspective:

Conflict theory attempts to explain some of the social conditions ignored or inadequately explained by functionalists. Its premises are based on the Marxist viewpoint that the structure of society is founded on economic organization deriving from man's ontogenetic tendency to operate on his environment, that is, to work. Marxian theory further proposes that it is in the nature of power groups to act in order to maintain their control and that it is via class conflict that social change will occur. The theory states (in brief) that individuals form status groups which give them their cultural identity; that these groups then compete for advantage and that education serves as a means of transmitting the culture of whatever status group is in power.

By power we mean what Giddens defines as the ability of individuals or groups to "secure outcomes where the realization of these outcomes depends upon the agency of others" (Giddens: 1981: 238). Conflict is thus a result of the struggle for power by status groups and change occurs when a new status group or class successfully seizes power and control of the transmission of its culture. Marxist theory states that humanity's attempt to control and shape its own world in order to satisfy its needs produces a constantly changing "created" world which necessarily demands groupings of individuals. These groups organize the means by which the changes to the environment will be made and, eventually, the methods by which the products of man's work will be distributed or exchanged. This produces a dialectic which Marx defines as the 'relations of production' - the interplay between the 'forces of production (technology and resources) and the 'social relations of production' (the means by which exchange of products and their production is facilitated). From this perspective social organization is developed to further economic interests. Historical analysis of social organization shows a strong interrelationship between the type of

organization and the prevailing mode of production. Capitalism arose as a result of technological and social developments which resulted in the establishment of two groups of people, those who control the resources or means of production (owners) and those whose only means of subsistence is to provide the labour for production (workers). As capitalism depends on the production of surplus value (capital) which then becomes one of the resources to be recycled into the relations of production, the central problem of the owner/employer becomes how to stimulate labour into the most efficient production of commodities. Thus as Bowles and Gintis (1976) note, the requirement is for the kind of social interaction and organization that will operate to best further these aims.

Conflict theory, applying a Marxist analysis to social institutions; thus asserts that education becomes a mirror image of the marketplace, that it must necessarily be so because its function as an institution organized under the demands of capitalism, is to transmit the culture of the dominant group (owners as those who have the ability to secure outcomes dependant upon the compliance of others) and to legitimize this group's power position. From this perspective, meritocracy is seen as an illusion created by the power group in order to justify and maintain its position. This illusion is supported by such educational tools as IQ testing(1), which does not, in fact, measure ability but instead identifies members of the dominant culture (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Marks, 1976). Conflict theorists (particularly Bowles and Gintis) further assert that schools operate to train and select for particular personality characteristics which employers require of employees, these include passivity and willingness to accept direction, as opposed to aggressivity and independence.

## **2.6 Marxist / Neo-Marxist Conflict Perspective and the Social Position of Women:**

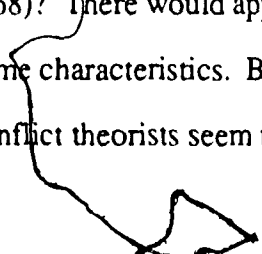
Engels (1972), analysing the capitalist structure, argues that the ideology placing women in the family prevented their direct participation in the processes of economic production -

hence women's work assumed secondary value in that it was not related to primary production processes. Thus knowledge associated with women's functions (effective/integrative in Parsons' terms) received a lower value rating than the knowledge associated with men's functions (Parsons' instrumental/adaptive). Perception of women's role as being primarily related to the family allows their labour market experience to be viewed as temporary (limited by familial obligations) and of secondary importance, even when they are doing the same jobs as male co-workers. When this is added to the assumption that women are better equipped by nature for jobs in particular areas, the result is occupational segregation which allows employers to fix lower wage rates and to use women as a secondary labour force (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1978; Doeringer and Piore, 1979). Documented shifts in the percentage of women in the labour force demonstrate this pattern. Women, as well as racial minorities and youth) form a flexible labour force which operates when economic conditions create a labour gap (Connelly, 1978; Luxton, 1981, 1987). Wilson (1982) and Banks (1980, 1986) note a further labour market pattern for western industrialized societies (Canada, the U.S. and Britain specifically). They suggest that when conditions favour women's labour force participation, domestic responsibilities, such as child care, are defined as social responsibilities; when conditions are unfavourable, women resume their domestic role and again become economically dependant on their husbands. The result: "In economic terms the majority of women under capitalism have little alternative but to marry" (Wilson, 1982: 99). Sidel (1976), Murray (1981) and Heitlinger (1987) note the same pattern of labour force participation in industrialized non-capitalist societies (China, Cuba and Eastern bloc countries). When employment levels drop, women are the first to be laid-off, and the traditional family pattern with the husband as breadwinner is resumed. Conflict theory argues that the benefits of such a labour force would seem to accrue directly to those who own the means of production. It provides a surplus labour pool which can be employed and laid off as economic conditions demand. Thus it would seem to be directly in the interests of the economic/power elite to maintain the traditional ideology of inherent

difference and of the secondary value of female-identified tasks.

Marxian/Conflict theories would seem to account at least in part, for the gender stratification/discrimination of education and the marketplace it supposedly reflects. However, conflict theory posits struggle and social change as arising from class not gender anomalies. In fact many of the arguments deriving from this viewpoint have until recently tended to ignore the influence of gender entirely except as it may be related to a minority group position - Bowles and Gintis (1976), Persell (1977) and Oakes (1982) reflect this position. This is true even of the arguments which utilize the evidence of gender stratification to argue the need for consideration of the female position, but depend on the "class" argument for social change. The argument is that if social inequality is due to class structuring then changes in this aspect of social organization will eliminate inequality. This argument, however, does not account for the fact that gender (sexual) inequality exists across classes and societies (Maroney and Luxton, 1987[b]; Nielsen, 1978; Deem, 1980[b]; Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978; Roos, 1982). Nor does such an argument explain why, given the fact that mathematics and science courses are apparently of direct benefit to capitalism (in terms of improved technology creating increased and more efficient production), women are discouraged both implicitly and explicitly from entering such study areas and their related occupations (Byrne, 1978; Weiner, 1980; Harding, 1980). Furthermore the characteristics that Bowles and Gintis, arguing from the conflict perspective, nominate as those being inculcated in individuals by the education system are those traditionally regarded as feminine: docility and dependence for example (2). In fact, the concept of the secondary labour force demands the ideology of female dependence and both male and female acceptance of such an ideology.

If feminine characteristics are what is demanded by the capitalist marketplace how can one explain the fact that female characteristics are regarded as having lesser value (Goldberg: 1968)? There would appear to exist the problem of both legitimating and de-legitimizing the same characteristics. By focusing primarily on economic/structural aspects of schooling, conflict theorists seem to ignore one of the central issues of education, that is, what is being



taught and how it is being taught; how, in fact, the process of legitimation, which leads, according to conflict theory, to social inequality, is actually carried out by individuals.

## **2.7 Marxist / Neo-Marxist Conflict theory and the problem of knowledge and social change:**

Although Marxist / Conflict theory does explain some social realities, it is limited with regards to its perception of education as a medium for social change and to the possibilities of predicating social change in general. As Young has demonstrated in Knowledge and Control (1971), if it is the tendency of any group in power to attempt to maintain that power, if access to the power groups is strictly regulated by those same groups via social institutions such as education, then the knowledge which is transmitted to the society, in order for power groups to maintain control successfully must also be controlled. However, if knowledge is controlled then where does conflict, the stipulated source of change, originate? If the power group is successful in the transmission of its ideology then conflict between status groups should not occur. Secondary groups will have been convinced of the legitimacy of those occupying power positions.

One is forced to assume that conflict and hence social change, can occur only via the failure of ideological transmission. Marxian conflict theorists have suggested that social change may be promoted via education by means of demystification and self-awareness. However, as we are all products of an educational system which disseminates selected knowledge, according to this theory, it is difficult to see how we can be successfully demystified. One is tempted to suspect that even an apparent awareness of being controlled is a "permitted" awareness with ulterior motives carefully camouflaged by the power group. How else can research revealing social inequality, which would not appear to be in the interests of a power group since it de-legitimizes their power position, be explained? The argument taken to this extreme appears to be both paranoid and self-defeating in the sense of

being capable of explaining or allowing for social change. This reveals one of the major weaknesses of Marxian/Conflict theory, an emphasis on structural, or macro, aspects of social relationships which tends to ignore the effect of individual interpersonal interactions and how these interrelate and affect social structure and provide a potential source of change.

## 2.8 Conclusions:

Neither the structural/functionalist nor the Marxist/Neo-Marxist conflict perspectives appear to supply a viable theory of sociology of education which accounts for the social status of women. However, many accounts attempting to theorize inequalities based on gender have involved the application of Marxist analytical tools to develop an explanation of the relationship of women to the economic structure of capitalism. Part of the reason that such theorists identified Marxism as a potential theoretical framework is that Marx and Engels situated the origin of the development of oppressive social relations within the development of the form of family relations around a patriarchal system of ownership which ultimately evolved into capitalism. Thus, Marxist theory supplies a starting point for the analysis of gender relations as oppressive and a potentially explanatory framework from which to explore the social position of women. In addition, the concept of ideology as developed in a Marxist explanation of the relations of production provided a base for the development of the concept of patriarchal ideology and its operation in sustaining gender-structured power relations. The following chapter reviews three theoretical perspectives based on a Marxist framework, two of which, the perspectives developed by MacDonald and Smith, apply this framework to an analysis of gender-based relations in education. The third approach, developed by Freire, utilizes a reinterpretation of Marxist theory to explore the nature of power relations and to define an approach to education which could lead to social change.

2.9 Notes to Chapter Two:

1. With relation to the development of the I.Q. test in the U.S., Marks notes that such development was supported by institutions such as the Carnegie corporation and the military. Thus, he argues, it is hardly surprising if these instruments reflect the interests of the dominant (power) group. (Marks, 1976).
2. cf. Parsons' argument on causes for the "educational revolution" (Parsons: 1977).



## CHAPTER THREE

### Alternative Perspectives

In this chapter the work of three writers who attempt to apply redefined or reinterpreted Marxist/Neo-Marxist conflict theory to a sociology of education is examined. Both Madeleine MacDonald and Dorothy E. Smith use a Marxist framework as the basis for their analyses of the impact of patriarchal relations on the operation of the education system in late capitalist societies. While Paulo Freire does not explore the operation of gender-based social relations, his discussion of the operation of power relations in capitalist society is based upon Marxist theory. All three writers are concerned with attempting to resolve the problem noted above with regard to Marxist conflict theory, that is, the problem of accounting for social change.

A problem that became central to attempts to use a Marxist framework to establish a theory of the sociology of education which included a description and explanation of women's interests and position was the problem of accounting for the lower position of women across social classes. In other words, the argument of social oppression deriving from a class-structured economic organization did not appear adequate to explain the social position of women. One attempt to address this problem may be found in the framework for a theory of a sociology of women's education proposed by Madeleine MacDonald (1980, 1981). It should be noted that MacDonald's framework is derived from a limited body of work and, from the point of view of the present study, is not considered as developed a framework as the others reviewed in this research. Nevertheless, it is argued that an analysis of MacDonald's framework can be useful in identifying some of the areas of difficulty that require resolution for the development of a viable theory.

### 3.1 Madeleine MacDonald: A Sociology of Women's Education

In order to address the problem of explaining the lower status of women across social

classes, MacDonald suggests expanding the Marxist framework to include an account of the operation of patriarchal ideology. Working from Althusser's identification of an education system in capitalist society as a "state apparatus" constructed for the purposes of helping to ensure the reproduction of the productive forces and of the social relations of production as these are reproduced in a system of ideas which will support and sustain existing class domination, MacDonald argues that patriarchal organization and its supporting ideology is integral to capitalist formation. Focusing on the concept of a secondary labour force, as this concept is developed by Bowles and Gintis (1976), MacDonald cites the weight of empirical evidence that indicates that the largest percentage of women in the labour forces of western industrial societies are concentrated in this secondary labour force grouping. In addition, within the primary labour force women are concentrated in lower status positions as compared to men in all class groupings. This division is supported by patriarchal ideology, "by the attitudes, expectations and ideology of employers who operate and realize historically specific conceptions of female employees, their abilities and their personalities (diligence, lack of boredom with routine tasks, dexterity)" which "are core features of the pattern use of female labour within the economy" (MacDonald, 1980: 15). In this case "patriarchal ideology" refers to the categorization of work into work suitable for females and work suitable for males, based on such arguments as natural ability and women's instability in the labour force due to their domestic role. Such a position is useful to capitalist organization because it provides a reserve group of cheap labour which can be cycled into and out of the labour force at critical points. Further, this ideology allows the retention of women's domestic/familial work, work which is essential to the reproduction of the labour force and the separation of wage labour and family necessitated by capitalist organization (1).

Applying this argument to the educational system, MacDonald notes that neither in Althusser nor in Bowles and Gintis is there an analysis of the manner in which patriarchal organization and ideology operate and are reproduced within the context of schooling. This lack seriously weakens their explanations. In connection with Althusser, MacDonald states:

"A question he forgets to ask is: are women ever inculcated with the ideology suited for the agents of exploitation" [employers, managers] "or repression" [police, army]? "If any ideology is most likely to be acquired by women it is that of the exploited, with relatively few trained to become professional ideologists" [those with the economic and political power to manipulate ideologies] (MacDonald, 1980: 19). Bowles and Gintis on the other hand, in their focusing on the school's transmission of attitudes, behaviour and ideology via a reproduction of the structural features of social organization fail to consider the structural features of the school which reproduce patriarchal relations. For example, while they consider the hierarchical order of the staff and of teacher-student relations, they ignore the fact that this hierarchal order also reflects male/female dominance relations with a greater proportion of men than women in the higher positions and higher forms of education (Smith, 1975; Daresh, 1988).

MacDonald suggests that neither Althusser's nor Bowles and Gintis' framework is adequate to account for gender and that further investigation of the forms of cultural reproduction in the dual organizations of education and the family is required. Using Bernstein's argument that forms of social organization are reproduced by the school through the "categorization of pupils by age, sex and social class" (Ibid.: 22) via the classification of knowledge, the forms of teacher pupil relations, the physical organization of the school and the forms of evaluation, analysis of these elements reveals, according to MacDonald, the operation of gender codes. These gender codes operate to direct males and females to the acquisition of certain forms of what Bernstein labels "symbolic property", which is both abstract, in the form of ideas and attitudes, and concrete, in the form of certificates and degrees. In other words, the school controls the transmission of knowledge in the form of "symbolic property" according to certain criteria determined externally to the system of education.

Since such criteria are determined (for the purposes of the education system) by the social position and organization of the family (patriarchal relations) MacDonald accepts Bernstein's

recommendation that schools cease using such categories as a means of allocating pupils. This would in turn create radical changes in family organization leading to elimination of inequalities originating in the family. To initiate such changes would require numerous educational reforms including "the re-education of teachers", text and curricular reforms and others (Ibid.: 23)

### 3.2 Problems and possibilities of MacDonald's theoretical framework:

There are a number of problems in this theorization of a sociology of women's education. Some of the problems may, of course, be due to the fact that this appears as a brief accounts and not a developed body of work. However, some of the difficulties are inherent to the theoretical framework proposed.

In the first place, if educational knowledge is indeed structured by an ideology of domination/oppression in two senses, that of class-based and gender-based capitalism, and if the structure of an educational system is constrained by the structural features of social organization which it reproduces, how does social change occur? In fact, MacDonald notes: "The constraints which limit the possibility of weakening gender classifications and patriarchal structures are manifold, especially since they are, as has been previously argued, integral elements of the capitalist mode of production" (Ibid.: 23). How then is the knowledge, necessary for the re-education of teachers, to be transmitted in a system which, by MacDonald's own argument precludes by its organization such transmission?

Secondly, MacDonald argues that an essential role for women in capitalist social organization is their domestic/familial work in terms of women's capacity to ensure the biological reproduction of the labour force and the reproduction of the domestic conditions which allow the separation of family and economic processes, that is, the conditions which will make available an unrestricted source of labour. This argument implies that a change in the structure of the nuclear family would transform capitalist organization and that such a

transformation would lead, ipso facto, to the equalization of male/female relations and presumably, since patriarchy is integral to class dominance, to the elimination of dominance based on class. Aside from the fact that this does not explain power relations based on age, race or religion, each of which could also be argued to cross classes, such an argument also does not account for the changing nature of family relations in contemporary capitalist societies. That is, the increasing percentage of one-parent families and rising divorce rates, both of which phenomena seem to be related to the increasing complexity of capitalist social organization, would seem to indicate changes in family structure which have not resulted in the elimination of dominance relations, either by class or by gender.

In addition, MacDonald's use of the term reproduction seems to cover a number of processes which are, in fact separate. For one thing, she uses it to refer to both biological (reproduction of the species) and social processes (reproduction of the forces and relations of production), two general processes which are analytically distinct (2). Classical Marxist analyses view "reproduction of the forces of production" as reproduction of the forces producing exchange value work. MacDonald's inclusion of domestic work in this category precipitates her into the "domestic labour debate" concerned with the question of the position of women's domestic labour in a Marxist analysis of capitalism; a question which does not appear to be resolved by the theoretical apparatus MacDonald brings to bear. Thus MacDonald's account does not clarify the interrelation of these processes. It would appear that MacDonald's framework could benefit from a more detailed analysis of the various processes of social organization particularly the operation of power relations.

MacDonald's shift in focus from a discussion of women's position relative to the economic features of social organization, to a suggested focus on family, derived at least in part as a response to the problematic issue of women's relation to class structure and partly from the Marx/Engels tradition centering patriarchal relations in the family, poses other problems. While MacDonald suggests investigation of the family-education relationship as important for understanding the operation of education, she does not undertake such an

investigation. She proposes the use of Bernstein's analytic method for this purpose, but in using this method succeeds only in describing gender relations in the school, not in explaining them. This may be due, at least in part, to the limitations of Bernstein's theoretical framework, which contains a number of contradictions and tends by the establishment of typifications to operate in a descriptive rather than analytic or explanatory fashion. Further, MacDonald fails to consider the possibility that neither the family nor the education system is simply a mechanical feature into which individuals "fit" (or not) but a social organization created and articulated by human relations. She appears to consider knowledge and consciousness as equivalent and created by a fixed form of social organization.

Like Bernstein (as Sharp, 1980 argues) MacDonald reflects to a certain extent a structural/functionalist or at least mechanistic-Marxist position in the sense of considering social organization as "fixed". In the former case social structures, political, economic, and cultural, are viewed as being established in order to maintain the harmonious functioning of the system; and in the latter case these structures are viewed as being established in the interests of a certain (dominating) group or groups for the purposes of maintaining those interests. Thus no social structure or relation is viewed as having any measure of autonomy within the totality of the social organization and all social relations, including the production of knowledge, are considered the products of forces external to these relations. From this position the family is considered simply as one means by which existing relations of production are reproduced and is therefore viewed as crucial to the system and individuals are viewed as agents of the forces of history (Kuhn, 1978 : 44). In educational terms, the individual can thus be viewed as an "empty vessel", to be filled with ideologically informed knowledge. The failure to consider the psychological dimensions of the family and the individual tends to produce not only an incomplete analysis of social processes but also a limited view of the possibilities for social change. This is not to imply that simply including a consideration of the psychological will resolve all theoretical difficulties involving social

change, but rather to suggest that such a consideration may help to clarify more of the processes involved and thus lead to a clearer perception of the possibilities for change.

Again while MacDonald calls for analysis of the forms of resistance to an ideology of class or gender, she does not consider the possibility of the forms of resistance to an ideology of change. By viewing power and ideology from a one-way perspective, as something imposed upon individuals via forms of social organization, and therefore not considering the possibility of individual interaction, MacDonald fails to account for essential aspects of the power relationship, including how the knowledge/ideological contents of the educational process are themselves legitimated, that is, accepted as valid, by the agents of its transmission as well as those who receive it. A question which MacDonald fails to ask and which might clarify some elements of the argument is: how is knowledge legitimated?

In order to develop a fuller account of the sociology of education this analysis of MacDonald's work seems to indicate that more is necessary than simply to add an account of women's position to existing theories without dealing with the lacunae found in those theories (Barakett, 1987). MacDonald does however, draw attention to a number of possible areas of exploration. She notes the contradictory nature of ideologies operating in the school, for example the opposition of male/manual to female/mental for working class boys which would appear to contradict the ideology of school achievement leading to life success and the ideology operating for working class girls which identifies school achievement as "unfeminine" (Op.Cit.: 23-24). However, MacDonald does not extend this observation to an analysis of the potentiality for change inherent in such contradictions. She also suggests the need for further analysis of gender relations as power relations in the education system but she does not, with Bernstein's theory, provide an analytic tool capable of explaining these relations in the context of human relationships. Individuals tend to be viewed as "objects" of the system not as "subjects" within the system. As a result this theoretical framework is limited, both in terms of providing a clear account of the nature of women's oppression (the nature of power relations) and in terms of providing possibilities for change.

Paulo Freire, in developing a theory of radical pedagogy, has attempted to address some of these problems. While Freire's earlier work (1973, 1982) cautioned against the application of his framework of radical pedagogy to societies which operate from a different historical and social perspective to the one to which the work was addressed, that is, Brazil and Latin America, in his recent work (1985) he asserts a more general application. In fact, Freire's development of his theory in universal rather than particular terms would seem to imply a potential applicability to a generalized theme. This is the position which will be taken in the investigation of Freire's theory for the purposes of the present study. Although Freire does not directly address the problem of gender, he does address the nature of power relations and their interrelationship with the development of knowledge, culture and ideology. As an analysis of the dialectic of power relations in education, the application of Freire's theory to the position of women in contemporary capitalist society may provide some clarification of the nature of women's position in these societies and therefore contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of the social position of women.

### **3.3 Paulo Freire: A Sociology of Radical Education**

Paulo Freire has developed a radical pedagogy based on what he identifies as a Marxist framework. Freire subscribes to the Marxian concept of a power elite in control of the forms and patterns, both material and non material, of production. As such, Freire's own theory must be analysed in terms of the problems imposed by a Marxist position as already outlined. However, Freire attaches to the Marxist framework a Freudian psychoanalytic interpretation, derived from Lacan, which he uses to establish a theory of consciousness, and from which he generates his concepts of desirable and undesirable knowledge. From this he develops the proposition that humanity's ontological vocation is to becoming more human; that is, one is capable of perceiving oneself as an incompleting being in the process of completion. It is on this assertion that Freire rests humanity's potential for social change. The implication



which can be construed from this assumption is that there exists a pattern of completeness (or greater humanization) external to his present being which man can perceive and toward which he can strive. This position appears similar to the structural/functionalist definition of knowledge with the result that it must again be subject to scrutiny for the problems connected with that approach, with particular reference to the fact that Freire proposes his theory as a methodology for achieving social change via education.

#### **3.4 Knowledge, history and culture:**

Central to Freire's conceptual framework is the idea of man's reflective capacity: "Man is the only one (of the uncompleted beings) to treat not only his actions but his very self as the object of his reflection" (Freire, 1982: 87). The result is that reality is established in terms of a subject/object relationship. There is a world which constitutes a "not-I" and a self which constitutes an "I". The reflective nature of consciousness allows man to perceive the world in terms of its externality to a self which has initially identifiable interests. It is via a recognition of self interests, as determined by conscious reflection, that the individual acts upon the world. Since the action is informed by interest, it is conducted with intent for the purposes of transformation and re-creation. This results in the essential historicity of humanity's perception of its position in the world.

The individual acts upon the world in order to overcome situations which limit the capacity to satisfy perceived needs and interests. In other words, the individual acts to free himself. To the extent to which needs and interests are unsatisfied, the individual perceives her or himself as incomplete and not-free. Hence Freire can assert humanity's ontological vocation towards humanization (freedom) while at the same time positing the historical alternative of dehumanization, which is, in essence, the existence of the limit situation. Knowledge derives from the individual's perception of the relationship between self and the world and serves both as an instrument of self preservation (the fulfillment of needs) and to

transcend the self (the fulfillment of interests). However, the ability to effectively transform the world also rests on the capacity to collaborate, that is, to form social organizations which work effectively to serve the interests of the collective whole. "It is as transforming and creative beings that men in their permanent relations with reality produce not only material goods - tangible objects - but also social institutions, ideas and concepts. Through their continuing praxis, men simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings" (Freire, 1982: 91).

In addition, social organization demands dialogue which presupposes language. It is by symbolization of their perceived reality that individuals communicate their perception (needs and interests). Thus the "word" as the concrete symbolization of perception and a basic tool of communication becomes an essential element of reality. However, "within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action" (Ibid.: 75), therefore, "If it is in speaking their word that men, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which men achieve significance as men" (Ibid.: 77). Freire thus asserts for language a primordial place in social relations. If reality and social relations are determined by language, then language becomes the mediator for comprehension and change and understanding of the uses of language becomes essential.

To the extent that a social organization must function to promote collective interests, as opposed to individual interests, it must also establish constraints. Social identity is therefore established in the conflict between instinctual aims and social constraints. Freire views knowledge as being created through learning processes related to adaptation to the environment and self-formative processes related to social communication. Due to the fact that these processes involve constraints two diametrically opposing concepts of knowledge are formulated; one of which Freire perceives as leading to liberation, the other to oppression.

Knowledge which results from reflection, action and critical ~~re~~-reflection, identified by Freire as 'praxis', is exemplified by man's transforming ability, his "work" (Ibid.: 154-155).

Opposing this is the view of knowledge as having an objective existence apart from man's action. It is here that Freire makes clear the difference between his own position and that of structural/functionalism. Freire insists that knowledge which presents itself as the representation of objective reality, without critical reflection on humanity's action in the production of that reality, that is, without considering the subjective interests which inform that knowledge, results in a reification of knowledge. If knowledge is viewed as a symbolization of patterns inherent to that which is being known, then it becomes an object capable of being possessed and is, by definition, limited and incapable of changing. Limited, thus unchanging, knowledge leads to the antithesis of freedom, domination. This approach leads Freire to the identification of the banking concept of education which views knowledge as an object which can be transferred from one individual to another. If, however, knowledge is viewed as that which is created by reflection operating in concert with action (the dialectic of theory and practice, subject and object) then knowledge is no longer relegated to the fixed position of object but is perceived as an interactive and changing process of critical analysis. Education using this concept of knowledge would become, not a process of transfer, but a process of exchange. By establishing the concept of knowledge as a social learning process, not being but becoming, Freire thus sets up the possibility of social change tied to education.

History thus becomes the transformative process generated by humanity's action, informed by knowledge, upon the world. This historical process of transformation produces what Freire labels "epochal units". These would appear to be, according to Freire's description, historical periods identifiable by their particular forms of social organization. Within these periods are developed themes which exist "in dialectical interaction with their opposites" (Freire, 1982: 91). These themes appear to be what Freire identifies as culture. It should be pointed out here that it is difficult for the present analysis to assert with any degree of certainty that, in fact, Freire's concepts of "themes" and "culture" are equivalent, or at least that "themes" are an element of "culture", because he does not appear, anywhere as far

as the present research could determine, to have made this connection explicit. Nor does he appear to provide a general definition of either "theme" or "culture" although he does provide definitions of specific forms of culture, for example, the "culture of silence". This is a rather significant lack since it is from the concept of "culture" that Freire draws his explanation of the interaction of power relations, an explanation which is essential to the development of the theoretical framework on which is based Freire's notion of a radical pedagogy.

However, if the present analysis is correct in its connection of theme and culture, culture for Freire as defined as "a complex of ideas, hopes, doubts, values and challenges in dialectical interaction with their opposites... The concrete representation of many of these ideas, values, concepts and hopes as well as the obstacle which impede man's full humanization, constitute the themes of that epoch. These themes imply others which are opposing or even antithetical; they also indicate tasks to be carried out and fulfilled" (Ibid.: 91). In other words, culture is historically specific and consists of the practices, experiences and material constructions of different groups, that is, it is a form of production directed by and directing forms of social organization (Freire, 1985: 72).

Because these themes constitute antagonistic representations of reality and such antagonistic representations tend to produce polarization and sectarianism, reality tends to become mythicized and unquestionable, in other words, knowledge becomes ideology. In such a situation oppression can become the dominant method of social organization and can be considered a universal theme. Thus Freire can assert "I consider the fundamental theme of our epoch to be that of *domination*" (Op.Cit.: 93). In other words, there is not a single culture in any given period of history but a number of opposing cultures which tend to take the political positions of dominant and subordinate and which are in a constant position of contradiction and struggle.

A point which might be made here is that it is difficult to visualize, given Freire's argument concerning man's ontological vocation which posits struggle and the dialectical nature of all social formation, an epoch when the central theme was not domination. That is,

if one accepts the argument that reality is a creation of man's ability to perceive and to act, and that perception is essentially dual and opposing I/not I, subject/object, complete/incomplete, then the constructed reality as a reflection of this perception must also consist of opposing themes. As long as humanity's essential realization of itself is a realization of opposites, then reality, as constructed, must consist of situations of opposition, with their implication of struggle. Furthermore, if it is in the nature of opposing perceptions to cause polarization which results in the stagnation of the transformative process, and if stagnation implies an oppressive power structure, then the central theme of any epoch must logically be both oppressive and non-dynamic.

The concept of man's transformative action on reality carries the potential for change but the question it raises is, what kind of change? and how are the conditions for initiating such change generated? Freire suggests that the conditions for change are inherent in the contradictory nature of culture and that the transformative capacity, stifled under conditions of dominance, is regenerated when man's essential drive to humanization, that is freedom from limits, reestablishes consciousness of the limit situation which produces dehumanization. At this point humanity acts on the situation in order to transform it in a way that will lead to greater humanization.

History, therefore, should be analysable as a series of progressive steps in each of which humanity, in general, can be shown to have reached a stage closer to completion. However, the meaning of 'completion' would seem to be ambiguous, given the fact that man is, by definition, 'incomplete'. If one can assume 'completion' to mean man's progressive ability to reduce the number of limit situations with which he is faced, history should provide demonstrable evidence of this process. But Freire does not attempt a specific historical analysis of those units he defines as epochs to determine the validity of this implication. Assuming the applicability of a Marxian view of history (since Freire develops his theory from a reinterpretation of Marx) developing around a changing economic organization, it is not clear that this alone could satisfy the Freirian requirement of progress toward completion.

This is particularly true when one considers Freire's assertion that the present epoch is one of dominance. Progress toward completion in the present epoch is therefore, the reduction of the limit situation of oppression. A change in economic structure, while it may, by Marx's definition, change the form of power relations, does not necessarily imply the reduction of such relations. Freire's problem here would appear to be similar to that of Marxian theory - does it logically follow that change can mean anything more than a change in social groupings still operating under a power dialectic? Can there be equalizing, hence liberating, change? Freire's answer would, of course, be yes, but the point here is that while he may be correct his theoretical framework does not provide, at this point, all the steps necessary to demonstrate such a conclusion.

### **3.5 The dialectic of power:**

In present society the essential social relationship, in Freire's terms, is that of dominance. Social relations are therefore organized around the power concept which involves dominance/subjugation, oppressor/oppressed. Freire bases this claim on the Marxist argument that social organization is determined by modes of production. As contemporary modes of production have developed around the structuring of exchange value/surplus value work and the unequal distribution of control and ownership of the forces and relations of production, two general social groupings develop, owners/controllers and workers. In this social structure ownership defines the dominant group since it implies ownership of the resources by which the value of labour is determined, that is the workers have only their own labour to sell, the owners have the resources without which workers' labour has no value. Thus the power grouping defined by owner/worker becomes that of oppressor/oppressed.

Social forms of thought, which are the result of the simultaneous interaction of consciousness and world, serve to formulate and control social organization. It is in the interests of the oppressor group that these be mythicized for the purposes of serving their

particular needs, which include control of the oppressed. A mythicized body of knowledge (ideology) develops, controlled and manipulated by the oppressor. The oppressed thus become dependant on the oppressor both materially (via economic control) and psychologically in the sense that it is via the oppressor's constructs that the individual organizes his or her perception of reality (Freire, 1982: 30). Since the role of the oppressor is originally based in control and ownership (means of production), the need to possess becomes characteristic of this role: "For the oppressor to be is to have and to be the class of the 'haves'" (Ibid.: 44 emphasis in original). The result is the reification of external reality including the deanimation of humanity. Humanity becomes an object capable of being possessed; beings become objects who are possessed. The characteristics of oppressors are thus: the "objectification" of humanity, the need to own hence to place others in a relation of dependence, the need to control in order to maintain the position of owning, hence to manipulate the social perception of reality. The characteristics of the oppressed on the other hand become those of dependence, both economic and psychological, which result in the culture of silence and the fear of freedom, that is, resistance to change. It is particularly in his development of these two concepts the "culture of silence" and the "fear of freedom" that Freire's analysis of the discourse of power may be useful in clarifying some of the elements of power relations that were ignored in MacDonald's account, and in thus providing further insight into the social position of women.

### 3.6 Freire's analysis of oppression applied to women:

That women historically have been and are in a position of economic inferiority and dependence vis-a-vis men has been amply demonstrated in various studies from historical, anthropological and economic perspectives (Nielsen, 1978; Armstrong and Armstrong, 1982, 1985; Wilson, 1982; Maroney and Luxton, 1987). This is not to imply that the only unequal economic relationship in contemporary societies is that between women and men.

Segregation exists on the levels of nations, class, race, and religion to name just a few of the possibilities. However, Nielsen points out, in her anthropological investigation of the position of women compared to that of men in societal development, that inequality exists on the basis of sex, irrespective of other factors. In other words, she suggests that if all other inequality creating situations were neutralized, gender differences alone would create discrimination, given present social organization and ideology.

That women across societies have been reified can be seen in such concepts as the dowry system and, until very recently in western capitalist societies, in the clauses of the marriage contract; pornographic media, the major critique of which is that it turns women into sex objects; the proliferation of violent crime (rape, wife-battering) perpetrated against women (3). In fact, the question of ownership of the female body has been a central issue in the debate over the right to abortion and was focused on in the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision decriminalizing abortion. Abortion was legal, according to this decision, because for it to be otherwise was against the Canadian Code of Human Rights which gave women the right to their own bodies (4). Interestingly enough the question of who owns men's bodies, "men" here referring to the gender group, not only doesn't ever seem to be asked; it doesn't even seem to occur. To use Kuhn and Wolpe's terminology (1978), it isn't "thought". Again the assertion here is not that women alone are objectified, but that in the case of women objectification applies to the collective gender. A woman is subject to violence first because she is a woman and only secondarily because of her "blackness" or "working class-ness". All and any are bracketed in the object class "women" whereas for men it is not the object class "men" but possibly "black men" or "homosexual men"; in other words, being male does not provoke equivalent violence. Women, therefore would appear to form an oppressed group, using Freire's description of the characteristics of economic dependence and reification.

Oppressor and oppressed are both conditioned by submersion in the situation of oppression, which generates two cultures, the "culture of silence" and the culture that "has



a voice". "It is not the dominator who constructs a culture and imposes it on the dominated. This culture is a result of the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators." (Freire, 1985: 72). Since cultural forms describe the nature of social relations, in a society structured around dominance these forms must both describe and prescribe relations of dependence, if the structure of dominance is to be retained. From the oppressor's point of view, "The oppressed, as objects, as 'things' have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them" (Freire, 1982: 46), because the oppressor directs the relations of dependence. This prescription is brought about through control of the cultural patterns by which the perception of reality is formulated, that is, by control of what experiences are perceived as valid, the language which structures the way in which experiences are perceived, and the institutions and media through which information is transmitted. This is the situation which studies analysing sex-role stereotyping and gender exclusion in, for example, literary works, historical works and educational texts indicate regarding women. Women, generally have been excluded or viewed as having limited social roles which place them in a position of dependence (Dunnigan, [1976] 1982; Québec, Conseil du Statut de la Femme, 1985).

Control of cultural forms which express the nature of social relation engenders in the oppressed a dual nature; they are at the same time themselves and the oppressors whose image they have internalized (Freire, 1982: 47). The result, according to Freire, is that the oppressed will exhibit characteristics of fatalism and docility (whatever happens is right, destiny, the will of God) because the internalized image of the oppressor operates to create a perception of existing social organization as the most functional of all possible alternatives. Llewellyn's (1980) observation of the legitimation of academic failure for working class girls, because they would only become wives and mothers anyway, and academic success was not the way to get a husband, seems to reflect the operation of these characteristics (5). Also demonstrating a docile, accepting attitude on the part of women are researches into the wife-battering phenomenon. Such studies indicate that one of the underlying assumptions of

both husband and wife in such a situation is that the man's action is legitimate. The woman is guilty and her tendency is to assume blame (Hanmer, 1982; Skogan, 1981). Not only is it characteristic of the oppressed to be passive, according to Freire, but also to be self-deprecating, having internalized the oppressor's opinions concerning themselves. Studies conducted to examine psychological sex differences found that not only was women's attitude toward women as achievers negative (as noted above) but it also tended toward expectation of failure (Bardwick, 1972). In other words women as a group seem to demonstrate both the attitudes and the conditions that Freire ascribes to oppressed culture, the "culture of silence".

Because the structure of dominance relations depends upon prescription which demands that "the consciousness of the man prescribed" be transformed "into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness" (Freire, 1982: 31), the effect on the oppressed is to create a "fear of freedom". Freedom, with its essential requirements of self-directed action and responsibility, embodies risk which the oppressed, due to the prescriptive nature of their conditioning, are neither equipped nor encouraged to take. Fear of freedom exists in equal measure in the dominating group for which freedom signifies subversion of its present power position. Yet Freire identifies freedom as "the indispensable condition of the quest for human completion" (Ibid.: 31). Any situation which engenders a fear of making choices and of accepting responsibility for those choices is both alienating and dehumanizing, both for the dominator who is afraid of a choice based on contrary interests and for the dominated who is afraid of the risk implied by choosing.

Studies of the occupational and economic status of women in democratic-capitalist and bureaucratic-socialist societies show women continuing to enter the lowest paying sector of the workforce despite apparent awareness that this sector offers little economic opportunity (Québec, Conseil du Statut de la Femme, 1985). The question is, why would the majority of women choose, apparently deliberately, reduced opportunity for economic status and autonomy? One reason proposed in studies by Horner (1972) and others is that women show

a high incidence of what Horner identifies as fear of success, including fear of decision making and responsibility - Freire's 'fear of freedom'. Horner suggests that the avoidance of success is motivated, for women, by their perception of negative consequences, loss of femininity resulting from the assumption of active control. That such perception is a general ideology can be seen in the masculinization attributed to women in positions of power in capitalist society, Margaret Thatcher, for example. According to Freire such a reaction is due to the internalization of the cultural norms of the dominating group such that the oppressed become both dominated and dominator. Women accept their position as passive, since their social experience in terms of the structures in which they live and the culture by which those structures are understood, indicates that passivity is the female role. The result is not only maintenance of the "status quo" but potentially active resistance to forms of change which threaten the established position (6).

### 3.7 Education and Social Change:

It is, in fact, this "cultural invasion" carried out by the dominating group which leads Freire to establish education as a key to transformation and liberation. Language is the means by which perception is communicated and collective action is made possible. Dialogue occurs between people for the purposes of describing and changing the world. However dialogue does not occur when the world is described by one group for the other (cultural invasion) - this produces an antidialogical, hence non-transformative, situation. Education, therefore, as one of the means by which "the word" is made known becomes an essential element of potential liberation/humanization.

As cultural invasion is one of the means by which dominance is maintained (it is both the instrument and the "result" of domination - Freire, 1982: 152), education under such a system must be antidialogical in the sense that it must transfer the dominating culture. This requires a climate of receptivity rather than interaction. Furthermore, because the culture of

dominance deanimates it results in a concept of knowledge as object. This produces what Freire identifies as "the banking concept" of education. In this system knowledge is deposited by the teacher in students who then store it as a form of "capital". This process of information acquisition knowledge/storage demands passive acceptance of the information transferred and hence, progressively reduces the capacity for critical reflection.

Furthermore, the relation of the banking concept to the interests of the dominating group demands that criticism, questioning or analysis of a given situation or phenomenon be discouraged. It is not in the interest of the controlling group to have reality unveiled or demythicized through the application of critical reflection with its potential for transformative action.

The banking concept of education therefore views knowledge as a transferable object, the student as a receptacle, passively awaiting the knowledge from which action can be taken and the teacher as the knowledge authority. Dialogue in such a situation is viewed as wasteful until such time as the students have accumulated an adequate amount of knowledge from which to make informed comments. Of course, by the time testing reveals that an adequate amount of knowledge has been stored, the student/object will have internalized a perception of reality such that the preservation of the status quo is insured.

Not only must the education system function to legitimate the prevailing culture, it must also legitimate the means by which that culture is established and maintained as dominant. The educational structure must present elements of manipulation, domination and division as inherently natural for the preservation of social order. Therefore, the educational system in an oppressive society is structured on a hierarchical framework of authority relations, student to teacher to supervisor to principal, each of which contains a progressively smaller population - hence progress is towards an elite. Division is legitimated on the basis of the channelling of students according to ability determined by the administration of various tests.

This is the nature of the present system of education in capitalist society as viewed by Freire. The accuracy of this description would appear to be backed up by numerous studies

investigating contemporary education systems (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978; Deem, 1980; Dale, 1985). Opposing this Freire posits a system of education based on dialogue organized around problem posing. Such a system, viewing the world as a problem demanding critical reflection with education the process by which critical reflection is aroused, is inherently liberating. Knowledge can no longer be considered a transferable object but, as the core of education, may be seen to be, itself, the result of an interactive process of reflection and action which must be subjected to critical analysis. Thus the question of whose needs are being legitimated becomes central to Freire's educational framework.

However, critical consciousness cannot be imposed by those who have already achieved it. Such an imposition would again be antidialogical continuing the basic subject/object

perception and maintaining the situation of dominance. Critical perception must be aroused in the individual through subversion of the subject/object relationship. Freire proposes that this can be achieved through the medium of dialogue in education which places teacher and student on the level of peers. This requires a constant reversal of roles which will eventually result in the student's perception of him or her self as a Subject not only capable of, but constantly executing, transformative action. The world thus becomes a personal creation capable of being recreated in the individual's own interests. However at the same time the individual must realize that his or her particular interests can best be served with relation to the collective interests of humanity as a whole, of which he or she is, and must be, an active part.

Education for liberation thus becomes an active process established through dialogue on the basis of equality, as opposed to authority; unification as opposed to division; and transformation as opposed to manipulation. The teacher, as revolutionary leader, having achieved a level of critical consciousness, works with the oppressed in an attempt to reach with them a demystification of their perceptions of reality.

### 3.8 Freire's Analysis: Implications for Theory on Women and Education

The assertion that the teacher, having achieved critical consciousness, can then encourage the development of such consciousness in the students, raises a question vital to any evaluation of the potential applicability of Freire's pedagogy. From what source do the teachers obtain the requisite critical awareness? Freire argues that since every situation, social organization, and concept also contains its opposite, the potential for de-mystification, that is, critical awareness, is concomitant with the existence of its opposite. This potential may be realized when the structures and concepts established by the situation of oppression are confronted by the ever-increasing demands of the dominated and progressively fail to either satisfy or even to appear to satisfy those demands. ~~This assumes that these structures~~ will at some point fail to meet the demands made on them. Since these demands require the reduction of the limits imposed upon the dominated group, Freire can justify the assumption of structural failure by the argument that it can assumed to be physically impossible for the power group, as a small elite, to fulfill all the demands of the much larger oppressed group without the dominating group compromising its own power position.

Freire seems to be suggesting a reinterpretation of the position taken using a traditional application of the Marxist framework to allow for potential change through class conflict but generated by perceived contradictions in ideology. By referring to legitimation procedures, in the context of his identification of oppressive tactics, Freire indicates an area identified by Jürgen Habermas as perhaps the most vulnerable to critique, and change, in late capitalist society - failure of legitimation leading to a motivation crisis. However, Freire's concern is essentially with the 'underdeveloped' or 'Third World' countries where illiteracy is the essential condition of existence for the majority of the population. Given such a situation the potential for control, by a dominant elite, of a suppressed majority becomes greater in the sense that it is easier to create illusion. At the same time the potential areas of conflict become broader in proportion to the size of the discrepancies between the two groups. It

might be noted that at the time Freire was working in Brazil, the middle class, as a group, was small and limited in terms of effect. Hence Freire's tendency is to class it with the oppressed and to make only passing references to its influence in terms of his general argument. This situation is not true of democratic-capitalist society where the group of professional and white-collar workers usually labelled the middle class is large and potentially powerful. Furthermore, the problem of illiteracy is greatly reduced due to the prolongation of the education system, a prolongation argued to be concomitant with industrialization (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

Here one might point to a serious weakness in Freire's theory. Industrialization, of itself, would seem to require a reduction of illiteracy. If the motivation of the underdeveloped countries is to parity with the developed countries, to industrialization/technologization, then an investigation of how the developed countries achieved their present state without changing the basic oppressor/oppressed structure might be beneficial to Freire's theoretical framework. This is particularly true given Freire's assertion that "...real development is impossible in a class society" and that progress toward industrialization in Latin America is modernization, because it retains the structures of oppression, not development which would change such structures. In other words, what would seem to be required is a close analysis of the structures of legitimation in the industrialized societies and how these operate. Freire's generalized analysis does not include specific reference to the interconnection of industrial, technocratic organization and the means and structures of legitimation in terms of contemporary western societies.

In fact, Freire's analysis is weak in terms of identifying and explaining the operation of structural features, other than education, organized for political purposes and as Freire himself notes: "...one of the weakest points of my work, on which I've done an autocritique, is the role of conscientization" that is, conscientização. What Freire feels was missing, at least in his early work, was an adequate analysis of the politicization of the process of conscientização and the process of language. That such an analysis is necessary is

emphasized in view of Freire's statement that education for critical consciousness can not alone produce change, that radical structural transformation is also required.

"The idea of education as a springboard for changing reality arises, in part, from an incomplete understanding of the... epistemological cycle...the forces that mold education so that it is self-perpetuating would not allow education to work against them. This is the reason any radical and profound transformation of an educational system can only take place (and even then, not automatically or mechanically) when society is also radically transformed" (Freire, 1985: 170).

The problem is that Freire does not indicate where such structural change comes from, other than by a sort of implication that it derives from the increasing complexification of societies caused by the development of new processes of work - industrial to technological for example (7).

Although the present study has utilized Freire's description of power relations to help describe the position of women, Freire himself does not (8). In fact, Freire could be accused of exactly that "cultural invasion" he ascribes to oppressors with regards to the treatment of women in his work in the sense that women generally are simply not there. Freire uses only male terminology and considering the importance ascribed to language it would seem this is a significant and serious omission. Concerning women and language Freire notes:

"But women's liberation is their struggle. They need to elaborate their own female language. They have to celebrate the feminine characteristics of their language, which they were socialized to despise and view as weak and indecisive. In the process of their struggle, they have to use their own language, not man's language" (Freire, 1985: 186).

Dorothy Smith focuses on exactly this problem in her analysis of the need of a sociology for women.

### 3.9 Dorothy E. Smith: A Sociology for Women



Smith notes: "A distinctive feature of this form of society [western industrialized capitalist] is the significance of ideology in the process of ordering its social relations" (Smith, 1975: 353) as illustrated, for example, by the relationship of symbolically constructed imagery (words, numbers) to power. Smith's social paradigm is similar to Freire's in that for both, Freire and Smith, the oppressor/oppressed concept is fundamental. Smith suggests this concept via the image of "circles of control", stretching from past to present, with defined boundaries and restricted access, an access limited to men. Freire focuses on general aspects of oppressive tactics in terms of myth creation and illusion and on the psychological effects of such tactics; Smith identifies specific instances of such tactics in terms of how women are involved in the ideological process. Interpreting Smith's analysis of ideological structures and women's exclusion from them in capitalist societies may aid in the formulation of a clearer idea of the effects of legitimation processes on human reasoning.

Using a Marxist concept of ideology as the forms of social consciousness, Smith identifies two types of social consciousness, similar to Freire's identification of two forms of knowledge, that which is created by direct experience, need and social interaction and that which is learned, via the transmission of symbols - social forms of thought. Industrialization created the means for rapid, long distance transmission of information to increasing numbers of people; thus, industrialization held the potential for both improved communication and at the same time, increasingly effective control of information. As the communication of ideas and images improve they become increasingly effective as "the means" by which we "examine our experience, our needs and anxieties, and find out how they can be made objective and realized (made real) as a basis for action" (Ibid.: 356). Therefore to the extent that the potentials of industrialization are controlled by a dominating class so is the communication and production of ideas and images. Perception of the world is thus determined by the point of view of the dominating group whose point of view is formulated by their position. Women have been excluded from this position by virtue of their historically narrowed restriction to the domestic sphere. Hence women have had little ability

to influence the prevailing ideology. The result, according to Smith, is that images and concepts related to women's direct social experience lack legitimacy (9). They are not part of the social forms of thought, the "learned" forms which now prevail in western society. Furthermore, because women's experiences lack legitimacy women's silence is taken for granted. Any attempt to break that silence is reacted to with shock and generally results in failure through lack of authority. The action has only negative significance in that it is viewed as an attempt to overthrow existing authority relations. Smith cites a number of historical examples to illustrate this point from the fourteenth century to the present which demonstrates reactions ranging from violent repressive measures to more subtle forms of control. Like Freire, Smith focuses on the notion of a culture of silence as a vital and effective form of control of social relations.

Smith cites the educational hierarchy as an example of women's exclusion from entrance to situations where they might influence the formulation of ideology (social thinking) and thus gain a position of authority which seems to be viewed as legitimacy, that is what is viewed as having authority is viewed as legitimate. She notes that women are concentrated in the lower levels of the educational hierarchy in Canada (public schools) and in the lower status positions (teachers). As the hierarchy progresses upward in terms of academic ideology creation and decision making power the proportions of women is in inverse ratio to the power levels, the levels where policies are created and decided. Even arrived at top academic levels there is a further breakdown by gender into areas which represent what Smith calls the ideologies of "organized action, directly implicated in the formations and media in which power is exercised" and "expression and theory which exercise primarily a control of regulatory functions" (Smith, 1975: 361). Women are concentrated professionally in the regulatory areas while men dominate those fields involved with preparation for the governing structure. The result is that "They [women] are excluded thereby from occupying positions in which innovative thinking in those professions is most likely to be done" (Ibid.: 361) that is, excluded from positions by which they might influence the ideology. A recent

study by Daresh (1988) supports Smith's assertion. Looking at recent hiring of professors of educational administration in universities across Canada and the U.S., Daresh found that 80% of new professors hired in this area were men. This is the area in which people are trained as policy directors, formulators for education. Daresh notes that this finding may be affected by the fact that women do not seem to be entering this field and by the fact that most professors in this area seem to be drawn from the ranks of practicing school administrators and "most practicing school administrators tend to be men" (Daresh, 1988: 24). The result is the double exclusion of women from areas of educational policy-making. The effect of this exclusion is that women's words lack authority - women thus can be viewed by men and by each other as an inferior group (Goldberg, 1968).

This exclusion of women from the ideological work of society is reflected not only in its structural organization but also quite clearly in the media which transmit the ideology, as was noted in the discussion of the application of Freire's model of oppression to the situation of women. Studies of texts used in the educational systems of all western industrial societies, from kindergarten through university have revealed a clear sex role bias with women in the inferior role or (and both Smith and Freire make this point concerning oppressive ideology) simply not appearing at all. Scott (1980) notes this disappearance of women in history texts used in England, as does Trecker (1974) in the history books of American high schools. The implication of this nonappearance is, of course, nonimportance. Even when women are found in school texts their appearance is limited and relegated to specific feminine roles. These tend generally to be roles which require passivity as opposed to creativity and dependence as opposed to responsibility. Women taking an active role are given a negative image (Byrne, 1978).

Analysing school texts in the province of Quebec for masculine and feminine stereotypes Lise Dunnigan concluded that in the majority of books in use in Quebec schools at that time women "are valued for their charm and the services they provide and do not exert control over their situation. Males must be ingenious and courageous and master the outside world

in order to be admitted into the privileged group of "men". The maturity of female characters is not measured by personal autonomy or sense of responsibility but by the way they handle domestic chores..."(Dunnigan, [1976] 1984: 79; translation present writer). There is little reference to women either as historic personages or as contemporary presences. The result according to Dunnigan is that schools are presenting a single role model image for women - marriage and family; while males are provided with a wide variety of role models among which "their family role is treated as a detail having little importance" (Ibid: 179). Since family is viewed as the only role for women and of little importance for men and at the same time men are represented as the active, decision-making members of society it is clear what the implications are for the perceptions of women's social role and social status. Smith attributes this to the dominance of men in the ideology making process which operates to sustain existing social relations and social organization.

Given the importance of language in structuring and controlling social relations and the notion of "social relations" as the forms in which action occurs and is interpreted, Smith argues for a theoretical methodology which will allow such processes to be examined in a manner which can include women's experience.

"To begin from the standpoint of women means finding a method of thinking which does not insist that we put aside aspects of our experience of what we know by virtue of the living we do in an ordinary everyday way in an ordinary everyday world" (Smith, 1985: 3).

There are two factors exacerbated by language and illustrated by the way in which language is used which inhibit much present sociological methodology. One involves the positioning of sociological observer as objective to the social situation which is the focus of inquiry. Smith agrees with the interactionist perspective that positing a non-participant observer produces an inherently falsified result (Smith, 1981a: 313-337). Like Freire, Smith is concerned with the subject/object split in science which, for Smith, is a reflection of class and gender-structured social relations. However, again like Freire, Smith is not satisfied with a completely subjective analysis. For Smith the solution lies in understanding the world

as "brought into being" and held in common by actors but not necessarily "known in common". That is, the language and the understandings of the language used to describe the world, mediated by actual experience, differs: "The multiple perspectives of subjects, the multiple possible versions of the world arising in subjects' experience, do not create an ontological problem when we do not locate the social in meaning, understanding, norms, consensus, the known-in-common, etc" (Smith, 1981b: 47). Instead the social should be located in relations which define understanding.

The second problem which concerns Smith is the "dual systems theory" which argues that gender and class are separate power relations which meet in capitalism. According to Smith:

"To posit a distinct sex/gender system is to inhibit analysis and understanding of the gender-saturated character of social relations by sectioning off those involving women" (Smith, 1985: 2). For Smith, as for MacDonald, "Gender relations are... an integral constituent of the social organization of class" (Ibid: 2).

Therefore a methodological process which attempts to describe the social organization of capitalist society would need to resolve the subject/object split and to consider gender and class as aspects of the same social organization. Using the procedure adopted by Engels, Smith suggests that such a methodology approach the investigation of social organization by inquiring into social relations as opposed to social structures (Smith, 1981b: 35). Working from this perspective Smith attempts an analysis of family as an essential organization from women's perspective. In other words, Smith investigates the family as structured by the social relations of class and gender which develop out of economic organization.

Smith focuses her investigation on capitalist organization. She argues that to understand women's social experience it is necessary to begin with present social organization because:

"The direct and personal character of men's domination over women takes on its actual character within determinate social relations specific to capitalism and to its development. These are the forms in which we experience oppression. These are the only forms we know" (Ibid: 4).

In other words, oppression is understood in terms of the economic context which defines the

forms in which it is made real, visible.

Like Freire, Smith sees history as the process of change articulated by modes of production: "It is important to preserve a sense of capitalism as an essentially dynamic process continually transforming the 'ground' on which we stand so that we are always continually experiencing changing historical process" (Ibid: 7). However, such a point of view leaves capitalism as an essentially 'fixed' process, the nature of capitalism changes but the process of capitalism remains. The problems implied in such a position will be discussed in more detail later in the present study.

Using the Marxist approach to capitalism, Smith identifies it as a mode of production tightly linked to the social relations of class and gender. Class is defined in terms of differing relations to the means of production. Smith identifies two classes in contemporary capitalist society which are internally differentiated - the dominant class including the "petty bourgeoisie", the salaried middle class and the elite "closely linked to finance and top levels of government" (Smith, 1985: 8). The internal differentiation of the working class is due primarily to external forces and visible in the organization of trade unions. Despite her argument that it is necessary to avoid concepts which "fix" history, Smith appears to be forced at this point into using a concept "class" in order to identify a social relation. In addition, whether this is a viable description of dominant and dominated "classes" under late capitalism is questionable. As Smith notes stratification studies have not been able to establish clear class boundaries (not surprising according to Smith's analysis of methodological problems in sociology), but her identification of the working class as defined by external conditions, that is conditions of wage earning, could certainly be argued to be a condition true of the group identified as "salaried middle class" also dependent on wage conditions, although perhaps less tied to market.

The rise of the individual which corresponded, in Smith's account, to the development of capitalism promised equality by breaking down the structures of dependence created in feudal organization. However, it also presupposed a family situation which would free the

individual to sell labour power. In other words, domestic labour created wage labour in the working class. From the point of view of owners, property relations were secured and property expansion controlled by the securing of female sexual relations and domestic labour. Family relations entered property relations, but the management of these relations was controlled in the interests of men via legal controls making women and children the property of men.

As the requirements of the developing capitalist organization change, changes occur in the social relations and forms of production including changes in the organization of the family.

The rise of the corporate form resulted in the separation of the domestic from the external world of work now centered in corporate organizations. Thus women's connection with the social relations of production became increasingly privatised, narrowed and tied to individual male ownership, rather than linked to property relations via biological reproduction. In addition the corporate form of economic organization requires allegiance to the corporation not to the family and specific qualifications become more important than family ties. Institutions which were established to meet the requirements of capital become consolidated as a ruling apparatus where action is defined via symbols thus: "Language is constituted as a discrete mode of action" (Smith, 1985: 16).

The separation of ownership relations from dependency on the family unit meant that class structure which had been defined by kinship ties was now determined by a symbolic system made visible in forms of behaviour, modes of dress, patterns of speech, that is by "performance on social occasions". "The educational system and access to the educational system mediated and controlled by family, home and above all by the work of women as mothers, comes to provide the major transgenerational linkage of class" (Ibid: 16). As economic forms became more abstracted from domestic forms these relations were made visible in the home settings via location of real estate, home furnishings and the domestic activities of women related to the educational system as mothers. However, because advanced capitalism was no longer dependent on family ownership systems the barriers to

the participation of women were weakened for women in the dominant class. Here Smith seems to be arguing that the advance of capitalism was marked by the weakening of gender barriers which had supported class barriers and by efforts to reinforce these barriers visible in the ideology transmitted by the education system. The implication of such an argument would seem to be that the tendency of capitalism is to the weakening of class structure not to its support.

For working class women the social relations of capitalism were different. For working class families women were initially important as creators of exchange value goods and services. However, industrial and technological developments reduced the necessity for domestic labour and made the differences in women's physical capacities and skills developed over a lifetime of labour unimportant. The result was that working class women and men were in competition for the same jobs on the labour market. This was regulated by state and educational apparatuses and functioned in the favour of the ruling class in that restricting women's entry to exchange value labour and narrowing them to the domestic sphere and dependence on the male wage earner meant that the costs of reproduction were borne by the worker. The separation of the male worker from the domestic sphere, on the other hand, meant that the man's masculinity was closely tied to his ability to earn a wage - to lose this ability meant that rights to dominance in the family structure were threatened. Thus resistance to women's working was generated by working class men.

As the process of capitalism continues to change, family relations in the working class are being further transformed. With increasing social services the family is no longer perceived as the only base of support. "For men the assumption of the 'burden' of a family no longer so clearly provides a standard of well being and support which would otherwise be unobtainable" (Ibid: 38).

### **3.10 Smith's Analysis: Implications for Theory of Sociology of Women and Education**



Despite her insistence on viewing capitalism as a dynamic process and her argument that an understanding of social organization must begin with an analysis of present social conditions, by establishing capitalism as her focus of inquiry Smith seems to fall into the trap of regarding capitalism itself as fixed. Though she notes she is concerned with establishing the possible conditions for social change, her argument tends to preclude social change other than change within a capitalist mode of production.

This leads to a problem which appears almost as a contradiction within Smith's analysis. She begins from the assumption that class and gender are integral to the structure of capitalism. However, her investigation of these social relations as they are revealed in the structuring of family organization, reveals that the process of capitalism operates to weaken the barriers of both class and gender (Smith, 1985: 38-39). In fact, these are now maintained via control of an ideological system and, according to Smith's analysis of capitalist requirements, are artificially maintained in the sense that neither is necessary to corporate capitalism which is not based on private ownership. Smith, in employing a Marxist framework and assuming "class" as a defining factor of capitalism, restricts her analysis to that framework. What could be inferred from her argument is that it is not capitalism which determines class but class which determines capitalism. How does one explain the fact that the economic organization of corporate capitalism as it develops, continually threatens class and gender barriers? Why, if Smith's description of the process as it is revealed in familial changes is correct, does this weakening of the barriers to equality occur? Disregarding the background of historical forms of development and the political implications of class, results in Smith's not considering that property relations and "class", in the sense of a dominating group, were also elements of feudal and slave societies. Essentially, although Smith argues for a methodology which starts from the point of view of social relations, she herself adopts a methodology which operates from the assumption of a given organization. Her argument provides evidence of the contradictions her suggested methodology was intended to resolve.

Part of the reason for Smith's difficulty, aside from working from a fixed reference point, is a problem inherent to the methodology she proposes. This methodology is derived as a partial solution to the problem of the non representation of women in present ideology. Because present ideology, the symbolic representation of ideas and actions, excludes women's perspective, and because cultural reproduction sustaining present social organization is achieved through ideologic mechanisms, Smith suggests the need for an ideology based on women's experience. This poses a number of problems. Since, as Smith argues, what is generated by women is not viewed as authentic - how would such an ideology be legitimated? If all concepts reflect male perception, from what does one derive the concepts which would reflect experience from a female perspective? Smith argues that concepts should be ignored in favour of an analysis of social relations beginning with a description of experience. However, she does not consider the fact that there are concepts, values, norms implicit in her own description; the concept of equality for women, for example, of the elimination of class differences, as a desirable goal. It is against these norms as a background "ideal" condition, whether they are stated explicitly as such or not, that Smith places her description of social relations. Furthermore, even to provide a description, particularly a description of something, such as "social relations", which incorporates a certain degree of abstraction, a minimal terminology including the use of concepts is required. Smith herself encounters this difficulty when she attempts to employ the concept "class" as we noted earlier. In addition, a methodology which provides only description, without explanatory power, provides no basis for action; there is nothing on which to build reasoned solutions to problems and possible methods of change. Indeed, at various points in her investigation Smith goes beyond description to attempts at explanation.

The suggestion here is not that Smith's analysis is incorrect, but rather that the theoretical framework she employs does not admit a thorough investigation. This produces constraints which result in contradictions.

Smith charts the essential power relations described by the terms patriarchy and class as

these are reflected in family relations. However, despite the fact that she occasionally acknowledges the effects of such relations on individuals, for example the identity loss which occurs for a working class male when male/female power relations are disrupted by interruptions of the economic process, she does not attempt to analyse the nature of power relations as these articulate and are articulated by individual interaction. While conceding the fact that women and working class men have participated in their own subordination, this seems to be determined by external factors, the factors of economic organization, class and gender which in turn structure ideology and practice. A question which could be posed here is: is it only economic organization which determines the forms of resistance to change?

Where does the individual enter such a process? Smith does not provide an explanation of how these structures maintain validity for individuals in view of the contradictions generated by the processes of social organization. A question she does not consider is: how is crisis and change, implicit in these contradictions, averted?

### 3.11 Summary:

Each of the writers discussed in the preceding sections has suggested a development of a critical theory of sociology of education based on an extension (MacDonald), broadening (Smith), re-application and interpretation (Smith and Freire) of a Marxist analytical framework. However, there have been problems with each of the proposed frameworks.

MacDonald suggests an extension of the Marxist concept of ideology to include an understanding of patriarchy. However, the Marxist concept of ideology does not inherently exclude patriarchy as Smith notes. That a social relation has not been considered does not necessarily mean a flaw in the concept but possibly a misuse of the concept in the literature. This is not to argue that patriarchy should not be considered, but such consideration may not necessarily, and in the case of MacDonald's argument does not, resolve the problems inherent to a theoretical framework. However, although MacDonald's analysis remains

structural, by focusing on the area of social relations articulated by ideological structures and by noting the contradictions which appear to be embedded in these situations, particularly for males and females in the system of education, she directs attention to an area of contemporary capitalist social organization which appears to be becoming increasingly problematic. In addition, MacDonald notes the tight links between symbolic representation and family and the educational system. However, the theoretical framework she suggests remains limited in its explanatory power.

Smith investigates women's position in ideology-creating structures and identifies language as a source of the reproduction of gender and class relations. However, her analysis is also structured around the assumption of economic relations as the motor of social organization. She remains locked in to the notion of the inseparability of class and capitalism and the power of capitalism to reproduce its required structures hence with limited possibility of social change.

Like MacDonald and Smith, Freire also focuses on the forms of cultural relations and the importance of language in the symbolic representation of social relations. Both Smith and Freire note the importance of the "culture of silence" in the reproduction of power relations. However, unlike Smith, Freire focuses on the nature of individual interaction in power relations including developing a concept of resistance to change which appears to provide some explanatory power when applied to the results of studies of women's social position.

One of the major problems in all of the analyses discussed is that they tend to focus on a specific historic process and to "fix" that process, the process of capitalism. Due to this "fixing", the accounts are limited in the possibilities they provide for social change. What appears from all accounts is the contradictory impression of social change continually occurring yet being impossible. Each of the theories seems to indicate a potential for change in the contradictions established in the capitalist mode of economic organization yet none of the frameworks seems able to account for such change without major structural change which would seem, by definition, to be, at the least, improbable. In developing their

theories from an underlying Marxist framework, all three, Freire, Smith and MacDonald reveal the implicit assumption of a notion of systems theory. Though none of the accounts makes this notion explicit, all three seem to founder on the idea that, as a system, social organization operates to perpetuate itself, hence change in the sense of structural change, is problematic. This would seem to be similar to the problem encountered with structural/functionalist theories which employ a systems analytic format.

In addition, although these theories are concerned with language, they tend with the exception of Freire, to present a limited view of language primarily concerning themselves with a description of language as ideology. The view of language in present social organization is that it is a tool of the power group used to develop an ideology which mystifies present social relations and thus enables the continuation of power relations. While Freire's view of social organization as dialectic imputes some possibility of change embedded in the use of language, this is ascribed to man's inherent quest for freedom and not developed from analysis of the ways in which language is used in individual interactions. That is: what are the expectations participants bring to a conversation about the nature of the conversation itself? None of the analyses investigate the possibilities of the qualities of language which allow the mystified accounts to be accepted as accurate, to be counted as legitimate. As a result these accounts are limited in their analyses of the process of legitimation as an aspect of power relations, although again all three, MacDonald, Smith and Freire focus on how the education system is used in the process of legitimation.

The following chapter examines how the theoretical framework proposed by Jürgen Habermas, attempts to resolve some of these problems.

### 3.12 Notes to Chapter Three:

1. Analyses attempting to account for women's domestic labour in a Marxist theoretical framework have precipitated what is known as "the domestic labour debate". For a discussion of the problems associated with this debate see Armstrong et al, 1985, also Hartman, 1981 and Barrett, 1978.
2. See Maroney and Luxton, 1987 for a discussion of this problem. See also the Marxist definition of reproduction in Bottofhore, Harris, Kieman and Miliband (1983).
3. Barry, 1979; Clark and Lewis, 1977; and Hanmer, 1982 (among many) describe the nature and extent of the problem of women and sexual violence.
4. The question of control over women's bodies and the right to abortion "on demand" has become a central issue of women's movements and has been a consistent focus for social analyses deriving from women's perspectives. It is interesting that the issue in Canada as interpreted by the judiciary is based, not on the right to abortion, but the contradiction between the Canadian Criminal Code and the Constitution. The judiciary argues that what is required is a revision of the criminal code which would align it with the Constitution but not necessarily "legalize" abortion. In addition while the Canadian Supreme Court denied the illegality of abortion it did not establish the right to abortion on demand. Thus, a woman requesting abortion can still be required to pass before a hospital committee of doctors and psychiatrists who will decide on whether such an operation should be performed. Since the majority of doctors and psychiatrists are male, decisions regarding women's bodies will still be male-dominated. In addition, the nature of abortion, involving decisions regarding potential human life make it a particularly sensitive issue, especially if viewed from the perspective that control of abortion could mean control of life in the hands of women. Thus, "abortion on demand" would certainly appear to be a power issue and to be being treated as such by governments. An interesting side issue revealed by this controversy would seem to revolve around the power of governments versus the power of formally established institutions governing law. This can be seen in the refusal of a number of provincial governments, most noisily that of British Columbia under van der Zalm, to accept the Supreme Court's decision. This would seem to accord with the argument proposed by Habermas (1979, 1984) that modernization, as it is reflected in capitalist and post-capitalist societies, results in a separation of material and symbolic domains.

5. Spender and Sarah (1980) include a number of studies which reflect this situation.
6. An example of *resistance* of women to the apparently liberating goals of the women's movement in a Canadian context can be found in Lamoureux's description of the "Yvette" movement originating with upper class women in Québec (Lamoureux, 1987).
7. Part of the reason for this lack could be the historical context in which Freire himself was working when he developed his theory of radical pedagogy. Brazil, in the years preceding 1964 when Freire was exiled, was in the process of imposing structural change in the interests of progress, shifting from a 'latifundium' system of land use to the 'ascentiamento' system. Thus the process of transformation from which could be built an education of transformation had already commenced. Another point is that this process was abruptly terminated with the military coup in 1964, a structural factor that Freire did not consider in his initial conceptualization of the effectiveness, both of a radical pedagogy, and of the conscientização process. Freire's view of the need for structural change in conjunction with educational change seems, at first glance, to contradict the entire thrust of his theory of education. However, Freire notes:

"I feel that I should make a few more points. One would be a self criticism, based on my *Education as Practice of Liberation*, for thinking that in the process of conscientization the moment of revealing a social reality is a kind of psychological motivation for its transformation. Obviously my mistake was not in recognizing the fundamental importance of knowing the real world in the process of its transformation. My mistake was that I did not consider the polarities - knowledge of reality and transformation of reality - in their dialectic" (Freire, 1985: 169).

In other words, Freire is once again asserting the unity of the theory/practice relationship. Transformation, social change, requires both thought and action, cultural change and structural change. Freire suggests that while the education system, by its nature, may resist change, the development of critical social awareness can be encouraged by means of educational projects, conducted from the point of view of having one foot inside the system, and one foot outside (Ibid.: 178). Nonetheless, given the power that Freire assigns to the ability of an oppressive social system to maintain the 'status quo', analysis of other structural features and how these interpenetrate education might strengthen the explanatory power of Freire's theoretical model. For example, although Freire acknowledges the possibility of technology to lead toward massification as opposed to

collective consciousness as an oppressed group or class, he does not analyse technological elements in terms of their specific ramifications for education and for the possibility of technology being used to reduce some of the contradictions which lead to critical awareness and change.

8. It should that throughout his work Freire uses only the masculine gender to refer to humanity in general that is "man" equals "humanity". The present study has utilized "humanity" or "mankind" where Freire used "man" and added the feminine gender to certain explanations except when quoting directly from Freire's work.

9. This is similar to Parson's argument regarding the prevailing attitude to expressive action - see pages 16-19 in the present study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Reconstructing Social Theory: Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

In the preceding chapter it was argued that while MacDonald, Smith and Freire had, in various ways, indicated the significance of language in social development, their theoretical arguments proved unsatisfactory in a number of areas. While MacDonald introduced the notion of utilizing an analysis of language and family relations to further clarify the operation of patriarchal relations in the education system, she does not develop this analysis. The suggestion of using Bernstein's theory of symbolic codes while providing some useful insights proves more descriptive than explanatory/evaluative. Nevertheless this argument would appear to direct investigation towards language as a means of clarifying socialization/rationalization processes. Smith focused on the power of language in the production of ideology but did not attempt an analysis of language to discover the links between processes of socialization, ideological formation and communicative interaction. Freire focused primarily on the use of language in establishing and maintaining relations of dominance. While he did address the nature of development of consciousness he restricted rationality to the process of individual development. Rationality was connected to social processes only as they related to power producing reification. Freire made explicit the connection between communication, work and power but tended to restrict his argument to this relation rather than using language as a basis for the investigation of other social relations. Evolution for Freire was viewed as tied to the development of knowledge related to technological processes and the ontological vocation of the individual to achieving freedom. While this could explain technological change related to progressive education, it was not adequate to explain social/structural change. None of these analyses was able to completely resolve the problem of gender relations.

Habermas, in developing a theory of communicative action focuses specifically on the interrelation of language and social development. His theoretical approach developed on the

basis of critical theory which was established by a group of writers known as the Frankfurt school (1). This chapter considers the critical theory proposed by Habermas with reference to how it responds to some of the difficulties related to the theoretical frameworks previously discussed. It is not the purpose of the present study to make a complete in-depth review and analysis of Habermas' theory of communicative action. What will be attempted is a brief presentation of what the present investigator understands to be the major concepts underlying this theory in order to provide the supporting framework for Habermas's analysis of the organization of, and potential for, change in advanced capitalist society (2). It should be noted that in none of his work to date does Habermas focus specifically on the nature of gender relations in advanced capitalist society, a central focus of the present research. However, the present study contends with Fraser (1985) that, while such a lack may indicate a deficiency, it does not, in itself, invalidate the theory. What is required is a "reconstruction" of the theory in order to discover whether, and how, it may help to clarify a thematization of gender. Nor does Habermas focus to any large extent on the specific operations of educational systems in capitalist societies though he does thematize general aspects of education. However, since the entire basis for Habermas' concept of social evolution revolves around the nature of learning processes, education would appear to be a social institution of central concern to this theory. Indeed, Habermas tentatively indicates education as a potential source of legitimation crisis with its potential for social change.

Therefore, this study focuses specifically on those aspects of Habermas's theory which help develop the previously discussed arguments of MacDonald, Smith and Freire and which contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of gender relations, education and the social status of women.

#### **4.1 Knowledge and the Theory/Practice Problematic:**

The initial problem addressed by Habermas in his progressive development of a critical

social theory was the resolution of the theory/practice problematic which had developed from a concept of knowledge based on the positivistic scientific perspective (3). The solutions Habermas developed included ultimately a reinterpretation of Marx and systems theory and a "reconstruction" of historical materialism, the integration of the hermeneutic tradition (understanding/interpretation of meaning) as exemplified in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and the integration of recent developments in cognitive psychology and linguistics.

Like Freire, Habermas views knowledge as deriving from learning processes relating to adaptation to the environment and self-formative processes. Drawing on Marx, Habermas identifies empirical-analytic knowledge, that is, scientific knowledge, as "grounded in the level of development of the forces of production. At the same time this level designates that of a cumulative learning process and thus determines the conditions under which new technical knowledge arises. This knowledge is itself potentially a productive force that reacts back upon the subject via the nature to which it is applied" (Habermas, 1968: 36-37). In other words, Habermas is arguing the inherently reflexive nature of scientific knowledge itself transformed by the results of the actions it generates. Individual and social identity are therefore achieved via the consciousness of an historically transformed environment.

However, while Marx also discusses knowledge derived from self-reflection, in his concern to develop an empirical science, Marx "reduces the process of reflection to the level of instrumental action" (Ibid.: 44), that is, work. Knowledge which allows control of the environment also makes possible the control of social life (Ibid.: 47). Control of social life is self-conscious (as opposed to environment-conscious) and appears in the "dimension of power relations that regulate men's interaction among themselves" (Ibid.: 51). Emancipation from the constraints of nature is related to technological progress, from the constraints of power by revolutionary activity leading to domination-free communication. According to Habermas, this framework which sets up class struggle as dialectic demands a methodology which goes beyond the framework of productive processes. In other words, while Marx's theory contained the concepts necessary for a potentially viable critical theory, restricting his

methodology to the techniques of empirical science limited the ability of the theoretical framework to draw out and explain all potential implications.

For Habermas, knowledge reflects two aspects of social action, moral and instrumental. What is needed for a "science of man" is a methodology which incorporates a critical/reflective, as well as an empirical/analytic, process. While the rules developed out of the empirical/analytic process allow for prediction, "...the *meaning* of such predictions, that is their technical exploitability, is established only by the rules according to which we apply theories to reality...theories of the empirical sciences disclose reality subject to the constitutive interest in the possible securing and expansion, through information, of feedback-monitored action" (Habermas, 1968: 308-309). Such knowledge expresses humanity's "cognitive interest in technical control" (Ibid.: 309) and is derived from experience which is organized according to the success of the actions directed by technical knowledge. Cognitive/technical knowledge then, generates rational/purposive action.

On the other hand, historical hermeneutic sciences, of which Habermas considers psychoanalysis the paradigmatic example, do not utilize technical control as their frame of reference. Such sciences integrate language and experience and "Access to the facts is provided by the understanding of meaning [of language] not observation [of natural events]" (Ibid.: 309). However, because this type of knowledge is concerned with the meaning of statements, Habermas suggests that it too reflects a particular human interest - the interest in reaching some form of agreement regarding meaning (Ibid.: 310).

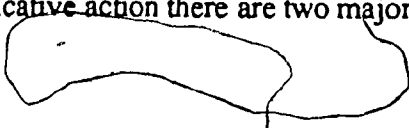
For Habermas then, there is no objective or "value-free" knowledge - all knowledge is constituted of human interests. Human interests derive from learning processes required for adaptation of the ego to the external environment and to the communicatively organized social system and from learning processes required for the construction of an "identity in the conflict between instinctual aims and social constructs" thus, "knowledge-constitutive interests take form in the medium of work, language and power" (Ibid.: 313). Since social organization is what allows humanity control over nature and since social organization

presumes language then it is language which allows humanity to transcend and transform nature. At this point Habermas's argument sounds very similar to the argument developed by Freire, however in the final thesis on knowledge presented by Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, he establishes one of the central principles for the theory of communicative action. Drawing on what he identifies as a Marxist concept of ideology, Habermas argues productive development as the suppression of communication, from this he concludes "the unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed" (Ibid.: 315). Critical social theory then can be constructed on the basis of analysing action as suppressed dialogue, what would the dialogue and resulting action have been if consensual understanding had been achieved without constraint? Ideology becomes the process of suppression of communication.

#### 4.2 Basis for the theory of communicative action:

It is clear from this early characterization of knowledge that Habermas accords a central position to the role of communication in social systems. It is from this basis that he develops his critical social theory as a theory of communicative action. Analysis of Freudian psychoanalytic theory as a theory of depth hermeneutics revealed psychoanalysis as a theory of dysfunctional communication. But dysfunctional communication presupposes functional communication which implies some form of common assumptions - "universal conditions of common understanding" or "general presuppositions of communicative action" (Habermas, 1979: 1) (4).

In its simplest terms Habermas's concept of communicative action can be briefly summarized as follows. Communicative action is inherent to social action. That is, the initiating social action is communicative, functioning on the primary basis of language. Within communicative action there are two major divisions, instrumentally oriented action



and communicatively oriented action. Instrumentally oriented action is focused toward, and legitimated by, the efficient realization of concrete results. Communicatively oriented action is focused toward achieving a shared understanding and legitimated by validity claims inherent to the use of language. There are, according to Habermas, three basic validity claims implicit in ordinary speech which establish the "universal conditions of common understanding". These consist of: the claim of truth-fact/truth-efficiency, the claim of rightness for norms or values, and the claim of truthfulness for intentions (Ibid.: 65-66). While all claims are implicit in every speech act they may not all be emphasized, thus Habermas argues that with instrumental action it is the claim of truth-efficiency which is emphasized to the general exclusion of the others. In communicatively oriented action however, the emphasis is generally on the claims of rightness (backed by norms) and/or truthfulness. Each of these claims can be linked to particular characterizations of discourse, action and worldview. A brief schematic representation of these relationships appears in Table 1 in Appendix II.

The present study argues that, although Habermas has not specifically addressed gender differentiation, this conceptualization of communicative action is directly relevant to a theory of sociology of education which includes a consideration of the social status of women. Habermas's development of the argument for two major divisions of action - instrumental (means-end) and communicative (interpersonal understanding) leads to his identification of social and labour relations as a lifeworld - systems world dichotomy. This establishes a direct basis for the analysis of male-female relations.

In addition to a universal ground, according to Habermas, to be effective a critical social theory must also encompass a theory of social evolution. Habermas begins the construction of a theory of social evolution by linking stages of the development of consciousness as organized in theories of cognitive development with stages of normative development revealed in an analysis of social organization from the perspective of communicative action. He argues:

"But it should not surprise us that there are homologous

structures of consciousness in the history of the species, if we consider that linguistically established intersubjectivity of understanding marks the innovation of the species which first made possible the level of sociocultural learning. At this level the reproduction of society and the socialization of its members are two aspects of the same process; they are dependent on the same structures" (Habermas, 1979: 99).

That is, at the tribal level rationalization processes have not developed to the point where instrumental and communicative action are separated. However as social maturation processes develop via a process of evolution, rationalization processes also mature.

Following this argument Habermas constructs a schema linking the structures of cognitive development to the evolution of world views and the establishment of individual identity in intersubjective interaction with established social roles. (Table 2 in Appendix II demonstrates these relationships). Having established these links Habermas is able to conclude that normative structures posited by systems theory (specifically the norm/social role relationship found in Mead and Parsons) develop as a result of both external and internal history, that is, as a result of two rationalization processes - purposive-rational action leading to the "heightening of productive forces" (Habermas, 1979: 117) and communicative action oriented to "observing intersubjectively valid norms that link reciprocal expectations" (Ibid.: 118). Habermas defines "rationalization" as the removal of relations of force hidden in the structures (language) of communication which prevent consensual agreement or regulation of communication. These relations of force produce "systematically distorted communication" (Ibid.: 120) based on the appearance of being able to justify the validity claims of communication, particularly the claims to rightness and truthfulness. In fact such claims are counterfactual. Rationalization then is the process of learning concerned with revealing and resolving counterfactual validity claims. Ideology becomes the presentation of counterfactual validity claims.

Thus Habermas argues that not only are there two learning processes connected with two types of action and the knowledge associated with these types, rational-purposive action and

technical-cognitive knowledge, communicative action and moral-practical knowledge, but also it is the development of normative structures based on the validity claims inherent to communicatively oriented action which organizes social formation. It is not productive forces, as Marx argued, around which societies were organized, because it is from the normative structures that principles of social organization and integration are generated which in turn make possible the generation of productive forces. Habermas argues that it is not the social organization of production and distribution, but the organization of the family which was the evolutionary breakthrough between humanity and hominids. It was the establishment of the kinship form of organization which broke up the uni-dimensional, single status hierarchical ordering of vertebrate life which characterized hominid, that is pre-human, social organization. Hominid groups had organized forms of social labour, they did not have socially integrated forms of relations.

However, it was "the mode of production of the socially organized hunt" which "created a system problem that was resolved by the familialization of the male..." (Habermas, 1979: 135). Basically the separation of the group into male hunting and female gathering resulted in the separation of males from family relations (the young) and in the need for exchange between the two groups. This was resolved by establishing marriage and regulated descent which permitted "the adult male member to link via the father role - a status in the male system of the hunting band with a status in the female and child system and thus integrate functions of social labor with functions of nurture of the young, and, moreover, coordinate functions of male hunting with those of female gathering" (Ibid.: 136).

Thus, according to Habermas, while a concept of social labour is fundamental to a theory of social evolution, it must be linked to a concept of familial organization. Socialization and the rules governing communicative action which in turn structure role behaviour cannot be reduced to the rules governing instrumental or strategic action which relate to production and the structures of social labour. In other words, Habermas posits two categorically separate areas of social formation initially linked through the organizing principle of the family.



"Production and socialization, social labor and care for the young, are equally important for the reproduction of the species; thus the familial social structure, which controls both - the integration of external as well as of internal nature - is fundamental" (Ibid.: 138). Habermas is arguing a bidimensional view of social organization supporting his bidimensional view of knowledge formation.

In order to understand how Habermas's theoretical framework can be applied to the study of gender, education and the social position of women it is essential to outline the development of his ideas of knowledge and legitimation crisis and how these are related to the processes of education and social change.

#### **4.3 Knowledge, Social Change, and Legitimation Crisis:**

Habermas asserts that social formation is "determined by a fundamental principle of organization, which delimits in the abstract the possibilities for alterations of social states" (Habermas, 1974: 7). By this Habermas means those innovations made possible by the development of learning processes which in turn determine "within which structures changes in the system of institutions are possible; to what extent the available capacities of productive forces are socially utilized and the development of new productive forces can be stimulated; to what extent system complexity and adaptive achievements can be heightened" (Habermas, 1979: 153). Habermas argues that these principles of organization are determined essentially by the stages of communication which determine the levels of social development of the individual (Ibid.: 154).

The concept of the bidimensionality of social formation and knowledge interlinked through individual and social learning processes based on the universal rules of communicative action is the crux of Habermas's critical social theory. It is on this basis that Habermas distinguishes between a lifeworld, reflecting moral practical knowledge based on consensual justification of norms producing social integration, and a system of actions

deriving from non-normatively based knowledge and relating to functional activities necessary for system maintenance (McCarthy, 1986: 29). Using this distinction Habermas argues the uncoupling of the economic and state/administrative systems from normative structures in advanced capitalism. Change is posited as potentially arising from crises of legitimation due to the de-integration of these systems. By crises of legitimation Habermas means the development of a situation in which, for various reasons, existing social institutions are unable to convince the implicated social groups of the rightness or appropriateness of maintaining the status quo (5).

Another point to be noted here is the central position Habermas accords the family as the linking structure between system and social interaction. Considering that socialization within the family has been considered a traditionally female domain and that this has been indicated in feminist accounts as an important area for investigation (Armstrong et al, 1985; Smith and Burstyn, 1985), it would seem that Habermas's framework may provide a potentially useful tool for analysis of the social situation of women. This point will be discussed in more detail later in the present investigation. For the moment we will simply note that these two developments in Habermas's work, the centrality of the family in social relations and the concept of two types of social relations, those dealing with material reproduction and those dealing with symbolic reproduction are of significance for any analysis which attempts to account for the social position of women.

In his reanalysis of Marx, Habermas argues that conventional interpretations of Marxism have fallen into error in considering Marx's definition of "base structure" and economic organization as synonymous. It is only in capitalist society that the organizing principle is economic; traditional societies were organized around the state and tribal societies around kinship. Habermas argues that the idea of dependency of the superstructure (political/administrative, social and cultural spheres) on the base or infrastructure was true "only for the critical phase in which a society passes into a new development level" (Habermas, 1979: 143). The function of the relations of production is to regulate access to

the means of production and indirectly to regulate the distribution of social wealth.

According to Habermas this function was handled by kinship systems in primitive societies, by domination systems in what he refers to as "civilizations", and by the economic system in capitalist society.

"Only in capitalism, when the market, along with its steering function, also assumed the function of stabilizing class relationships, did the relations of production come forth as such and take on an economic form. The theories of postindustrial society even envision a state in which evolutionary primacy would pass from the economic system to the educational and scientific system" (Ibid.: 144 emphasis the present writer).

Social identity and social organization is endangered if systems problems are unresolvable, in the context of the primary form or mechanism of social integration, to such an extent that the form of integration itself must be changed. Since social integration involves more than the integration of the forces and relations of production, such evolutionary change cannot be explained by cognitive/technical knowledge alone. Cognitive/technical knowledge can stimulate technological change and, to a certain extent, explain how change occurs in the relations of production but such knowledge, governed by the rules of instrumental action, does not explain how problems are resolved, that is, how societies move from kinship to state-centered forms of integration for example. Since such changes appear to involve legal and moral systems, for example the development of rules regulating marriage, descent and forms of punishment, Habermas argues that evolutionary social change requires moral/practical knowledge governed by the rules of communicative action. "It requires not an expansion of our control over external nature but knowledge that can be embodied in structures of interaction--in a word, an extension of the autonomy of society in relation to our own, internal nature" (Habermas, 1979: 146).

The problems raised by the Marxist historical-materialist framework can be resolved by expanding this theory to the more universal level of communicative action. This theoretical level combines materialist with psychoanalytic frameworks to integrate systems and social

integration concepts. Habermas distinguishes three levels of speech which, he argues correspond to the three basic levels of development of moral consciousness and are linked to stages of social integration. This consolidates the earlier model supporting the thesis of the evolutionary development of norms and constitutes Habermas's proof of the viability of a model of social evolution based on a theory of communicative action. (The basic outline of this framework is depicted in Table 2 in Appendix II.)

According to Habermas, this argument explains how contradictory developments in forms of social integration occur. Specifically it explains how a cumulative and progressive, by definition of the term evolution as progressive, learning process can be accompanied by exploitative forms of social integration. How, for example, societies organized around class relations, in which relations of domination are "necessarily practised" can be considered more socially evolved than societies organized around kinship in which "less significant inequalities" are "permitted" (Ibid.: 163).

To explain why such an apparently retrogressive movement occurs, Habermas suggests that, while progressive social development relieves some systemic problems, those which are not resolved increase in intensity. Thus the 'powerlessness' regarding external nature, with which neolithic society was faced, was somewhat resolved by the development of a collective political order. This development led in turn to problems of the "*self regulation of the social system*". The problem of the scarce resource, law, was resolved by organization around the state and the need for legitimation of domination, thus a situation of powerlessness reflected in social relations became a central social concern. This process continues in capitalism with the asymmetric distribution of value producing the problem of legitimating inequality - a situation of powerlessness based on lack of the resource value. This has led to the organization of social welfare state, mass democracies, organized around the primacy of the scientific and educational systems, leading to the problem of the regulation of the exchange between social organization and internal nature based on the scarcity of the resources of meaning and motivation. In this last scenario, Habermas is arguing that social

power is in the process of moving from the economic to the socio-cultural domain and that class domination, refracted once via the organization of capitalism, "would be refracted for a second time, not through bourgeois civil war, but through the education system of the social welfare state" (Ibid.: 165-166). In his analysis of advanced capitalist states Habermas argues that it is this problematic development of the scarcity of meaning which is, in fact, being precipitated.

With this argument Habermas assumes a position toward education which is radically different from that taken by most theories of the sociology of education. Not only does Habermas argue a significant role for education in the process of social change in advanced capitalist societies, he accords education a central position in a potentially new form of social integration. Habermas explains this via his theory of legitimation crisis.

Habermas's argument, like Freire's, posits unequal power relations as a central factor for change in social organization. However, Freire's argument held to the Marxist explanation of modes of production as the factor determining social organization and change. This reduced both the explanatory and predictive power of Freire's framework, which ultimately relied for change on some form of class revolution but was unable to explain how such revolution could occur, other than by relying on the activity of an intellectual elite. In contrast, Habermas's framework would appear to provide greater explanatory and possibly greater predictive power. Habermas argues that change occurs, not via changing modes of production but by changing forms of integration which, in turn, free up forces for expanded productivity.

To summarize, knowledge for Habermas is the result of learning processes related to production and to the establishment of individual and group identity. Knowledge related to production is technical knowledge and results from systemically-integrated action involving the validity claims of efficiency and truth. Knowledge related to the establishment of identity results in the production of norms leading to worldviews and derives from communicatively-integrated action - the apparent justification of the validity claims of

truthfulness and rightness. Social development occurs as a result of these learning processes, constitutive of the control of outer nature and the integration of inner nature, regulated by structures of intersubjectivity, that is, structures which establish the distinction between individual desire and statements with a claim to generality. "Generality means objectivity of knowledge [truth] and legitimacy of valid norms. Both insure the *community of shared meaning* that is constitutive for the socio-cultural life-world" (Habermas, 1974: 10). In other words, social development depends on processes of system integration relating to forces of production and processes of social integration relating to symbolic reproduction.

#### ◀ 4.4 The basis for the concept of legitimation crisis:

The nature of social development leading to system autonomy, that is, increasing power over the reduction of external complexity, results in the increasing complexity of forms of organization which are validated by norms and which provide steering capacity for the forces of production. However, while increasing the steering capacity of social institutions may result in improving productive capacity, at the same time this can cause the dissolution of the normative system because of the perceived discrepancy "between secular knowledge and traditional world views" (Ibid.: 13). While such a development may result in the alteration of norms, the new norms may not satisfy the demands raised by the steering mechanisms. In other words, a system breakdown could occur if the changed norms create a need for validation which cannot be met by the available goal values. It is Habermas's thesis that exactly this has occurred in advanced capitalistic societies. "We cannot exclude the possibility that a strengthening of productive forces which heightens the power of the system, can lead to changes in normative structures which simultaneously restrict the autonomy of the system because they bring forth new legitimacy claims and thereby constrict the range of variation of the goal values" (Ibid.: 13).

Habermas agrees with Marx in arguing the built-in crisis tendency of capitalism

developing from a disjunction between powers of accumulation and powers of consumption resulting in a cycle of prosperity, crisis and depression. According to Marx, it is this crisis tendency which had the potential for revealing class conflict which was otherwise hidden behind the view of the economic system being regulated by the "natural" operation of the market mechanism. Habermas suggests however, that Marx's liberal capitalism has become organized capitalism, that is, the state, via the administrative system, has filled in some of the structural holes which led to the cyclical crisis tendencies. Whereas under liberal capitalism the accumulation process was viewed as regulated by a "natural" market mechanism, the failure of the market to function without economic crisis required the intervention of systematic organizational processes. These processes were regulated by an administrative/political system in order to compensate for the "politically intolerable consequences" of the failure of the "natural" mechanism. Such intervention altered the manner in which surplus value was produced and thereby affected the form of societal organization.

This adjustment of the economic process by the administrative system has, in turn, led to changes in the processes of socialization. Habermas argues that these changes were stimulated when heightening of the production of absolute surplus value via such measures as "physical force, lengthening the working day and recruiting underpaid labor forces (women, children) etc. had run up against natural boundaries" (Habermas, 1974: 55). In other words, further pressure would have retrogressive effects on the productivity of labour. This resulted in an investigation of methods for improving both technical and human forces of production, that is, methods of production of relative surplus value. With state organization of "scientific-technical progress and a systematically managed expansion of the system of education" (Ibid.: 56) the processes of heightening labour productivity became part of the production process. Reflexive or indirectly productive labour, "that is labour applied to itself with the aim of increasing the productivity of labour" (Habermas, 1974: 56), the work of scientists, teachers and engineers, for example, is paid for via both the state and

private enterprise. In other words, what has developed is "an altered form of the production of surplus value" (Ibid.: 55).

Habermas argues that traditional Marxist economic theory has ignored the calculation of the value of this form of labour. However, the capital expended in the production of reflexive labour "systematically alters the conditions under which surplus value can be appropriated from productive labour" (Ibid.: 56) and indirectly contributes to the production of more surplus value. Therefore the calculation of reflexive labour needs to be included in the formulation of economic theory. According to Habermas, "the classical fundamental categories of the theory of value are insufficient for the analysis of governmental policy in education, technology and science" (Habermas, 1974: 56-57).

In addition, the need for reducing the effects of the cyclical crisis tendency of capitalism in order to heighten the productivity of the system has resulted in a "quasi-political" wage structure achieved by compromise between business and unions, "quasi-political" because a compromise between business and unions reflects some form of class compromise. This wage structure, too, cannot be measured under the terms of traditional capitalist economic theory because it does not reflect the cost of labour in the production of an exchange commodity, but rather sets an arbitrary standard against which deviations in the value of labour power are measured. Nor can this standard or average wage be defined as the costs of reproduction of labour since there is "no standard for the reproduction of labour costs that is independent of cultural norms" (Habermas, 1974: 57). Attempting to equate average wage and the cost of reproduction restricts issues of class struggle to the economic sphere and suggests a successful outcome of the class struggle in the "visibly altered rate of exploitation to the advantage of the best organized parts of the working class" (Ibid.: 57). However, class struggle originated in the organization of society around forms of political domination. This was merely refracted in capitalism via the organization of society around the appearance of a depoliticized naturally functioning economic system. Far from providing a successful resolution of the class struggle, the altering of the visible rate of exploitation may have



simply succeeded in stabilizing present forms of social organization, including refracted class inequality.

If the strategic investment of capital in the production of reflexive labour is effective in increasing labour productivity, and if the distribution of the results of increased productivity is sufficient to ensure mass loyalty and to meet the functional demands of the capitalist system, economic or structural crisis may be averted.

However, in order to avoid disturbance in growth, the state must skim profits and income (via taxes) and the patterns of use of such value must be viewed as legitimate by the population. This is managed through the expansion of production of collective commodities such as transportation, health care, education and social welfare. But the expansion of the administrative system into the production of collective commodities means that the boundaries between the cultural system and the forces of production shift. This is clear in the entry of the administrative system into areas of educational planning, particularly curriculum planning (6), family planning and health care which were originally based on tradition.

"The final result is consciousness of the contingency, not only of the *contents* of tradition but also of the techniques of tradition, that is of socialization. Formal schooling is competing with family upbringing as early as at the pre-school age. The problematization of childrearing routines can be seen in the popular pedagogical tasks that schools are assuming through parental rights and individual consultations, as well as in the pedagogical-psychological scientific journalism on the subject" (Habermas, 1974: 71-72).

In other words, the movement of the administrative system into the cultural sphere has the "unintended" effect of weakening the power of traditions or worldviews. They are no longer seen as operating on a natural basis and therefore valid, but as contingent on the social system itself. The state relies on the power of traditions, that is, the normative system, for the legitimation of validity claims. Once the power of traditions are weakened validity claims can only be justified through discourse. However, attempts at achieving consensus (the goal

of discourse) via participatory planning are restricted by the state's inability to satisfy legitimization claims under the "condition of an asymmetrical class compromise" and by "conservative resistance to planning". Both of these conditions arise from the nature of the capitalist system which determines that "growth would still be achieved in accordance with priorities that take shape as a function, not of generalizable interests of the population, but of private goals of profit maximization"; that is from the latent class structure. "In the final analysis, *this class structure* is the source of the legitimization deficit" (Ibid.: 73).

Because the sphere of cultural tradition has been weakened by rationalization or "colonization" (Habermas, 1984), "meaning" originally supplied by tradition becomes a scarce resource. The result is an increase in expectations oriented to use values, an increase in what is now labelled consumerism. The lack of meaning-based legitimization must be compensated for by rewards of value. "A legitimization crisis [however] can be predicted only if expectations that cannot be fulfilled, either with the available quantity of value or...rewards conforming to the system, are systematically produced" (Habermas, 1974: 74). What Habermas is arguing here is that a legitimization crisis is the result of a motivation crisis produced by a failure of the motives supplied by the socio-cultural system to match the motives required by the state, educational and occupational systems.

In capitalist social organization, the motivation supplied by the socio-cultural system is based on norms derived from a combination of traditional/authoritarian, capitalist/participatory (bourgeois) and familial forms of political culture. These norms establish what Habermas terms the "syndromes" of "civil-privatism" and "familial-vocational" privatism. "Civil-privatism" provides the underlying motivation for maintenance of the structures of a depoliticized public sphere, that is the structures of the democratic process. "Familial-vocational" privatism is related to interests in consumption, leisure and career and provides the underlying motivation for maintenance of educational and occupational structures. Habermas's use of the term "depoliticized" in connection with "civil-privatism" seems to refer to freedom from power influences, that is to any domain not

overtly based on the class/domination complex.

Perhaps a point to recall here is that, for Habermas, an interaction totally free of power is framed as the "ideal speech act" and, as an ideal, remains to be achieved. This is not, of course, an a priori ideal, since the elements of the ideal speech act are present in all utterances. However, how far human interaction can be released from elements of coercion and violence remains for the moment, as Habermas notes, an unanswerable question. In addition, Habermas argued in his analysis of knowledge that all knowledge was a creation of human interests. To the extent that these interests are generalizable and that positive responses can be made to the questions of validity, the knowledge constituted by such interests can be considered depoliticized, but it is the degree to which power relations are present, not if they are present, on which Habermas focuses. In arguing the possibility of legitimation crisis, Habermas posits such crisis on the grounds of dysfunctional relations caused by the asymmetrical operation of power relations as these are made visible in various social relations and institutions. It is on this basis that he asserts that "class" is the source of legitimation crisis.

Habermas's omission of a consideration of gender relations reduces both the descriptive and explanatory power of his argument. Focusing on "class" as the basic power relation obscures the fact that gender-based relations reflect a situation of domination revealed very clearly in analyses of the educational systems of capitalist societies, as well as in analyses of labour/market relations and institutions, and political/administrative relations and institutions. Habermas's focus on class tends to direct attention away from another powerful inegalitarian relation which operates across classes. This point will be taken up later in the present discussion.

As noted earlier: "Familial-vocational privatism...consists in a family orientation with developed interests in consumption and leisure...and in a career orientation suitable to status competition...This privatism thus corresponds to the structures of educational and occupational systems that are regulated by competition through achievement" (Habermas,

1974: 75).

As far as civil-privatism is concerned, since the participatory behavioural expectations operated by the bourgeois ideology of democracy cannot be sustained in a capitalist organization based on the asymmetrical distribution of value, hence power, these participatory expectations are screened out of affective ideology and replaced with authoritarian traditions carried over from pre-capitalist social formation. The result is that the norms of engagement/participation and rationality/individual interest are balanced (légitimated) by attitudes of particularism and subordinate mentality.

Traditions are transferred into the educational system through "corresponding family structures and techniques of child-rearing. The educational processes lead to motivational structures that are class specific, that is to the repressive authority of conscience [delayed gratification] and an individualistic achievement orientation among bourgeoisie and to external superego structures [immediate gratification] and a conventional work morality in the lower class" (Ibid.: 77). That is, what Habermas is suggesting is that hierarchical patterns of family structure are repeated in hierarchical patterns of educational organization, and that the reproduction of norms in the educational process derive from the class position of the family. This produces the necessary class-based motivational patterns required by the productive system. As noted earlier, Habermas's lack of consideration of gender produces weaknesses in his analysis, in this case a failure to consider the possibility of authoritarian structures in the family being based on sex as well as age. Habermas's concern is with class-based motivational patterns to the exclusion of gender-based motivation and the patterns which derive from the asymmetric distribution of power by gender.

The interpenetration by organized administrative activities into areas considered traditionally private, that is, governed by norms relating to the individual and the family, is stripping away elements of the worldviews underlying these areas - "the remains of pre-bourgeois traditions in which civil and familial-vocational privatism are embedded are being non-renewably dismantled" (Ibid.: 77). In addition, bourgeois ideology based on the

norms of possessive individualism and achievement is being undermined. There is increasing dissonance between traditional worldviews and the positivistic common consciousness generated by scientific secularization; a dissonance particularly visible in the processes of formal education.

#### 4.5 Education as a source of legitimation crisis:

Bourgeois ideology predicates the distribution of social rewards according to individual achievements: "The distribution of qualifications should be an isomorphic image of the achievement differentials of individuals. The precondition for this is equal opportunity to participate in a competition that is regulated so as to neutralize external influences" (Habermas, 1974: 81). This neutralization of influence was expected to be achieved by the "natural" operation of a non-political market. However, economic crises revealed the falsity of the view of the market as a non-political mechanism. Thus, the operation of the education system replaced the market as the non-political mechanism by which occupational success could be mediated. However, this could only be considered non-political, that is, as supportive of generalizable interests, if the following conditions were met:

- <the provision of equal opportunity for admission to higher education;
- <the provision of non-discriminatory standards for the evaluation of school performance;
- <the coordination of developments of the occupational system with the educational system; and
- <the establishment of labour processes which required evaluation according to individual achievements.

These conditions have not been met, nor could they be met according to the definition of capitalism requiring an asymmetrical distribution of rewards. However, what is more essential for Habermas's theory of social change is not that these conditions have not been met, but

the fact that they are not being met is becoming increasingly visible. While Habermas does not cite evidence of this assertion, there are certainly plenty of empirical studies which support his argument.

Persell (1987), Byrne (1978), Chisholm and Woodward (1980), Apple (1983) and others provide evidence of admission to higher education being influenced by class and gender inequality. Jencks (1972), Marks (1976), and Russell (1987) among others show evidence of discrimination based on class and gender in the processes of evaluation utilized by educational systems. Changes in the occupational system no longer appear to be matched by a concurrent expansion of the educational system. In fact studies increasingly show a direct ratio between educational achievement and social status to be problematic (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Finally, increasing automation makes individual accountability questionable as a measure of achievement. Processes are automated therefore the individual cannot be held responsible for the ultimate success or failure of the operation. The fact that the increasing fragmentation and monotony of labour processes due to the application of new technologies is breaking down both occupational identity and the intrinsic motivation to achieve, is supported by Menzies (1982) in her analysis of the effects of computerization on women (7). The result is that "extrafunctional elements of professional roles are becoming more and more important" (Habermas, 1974: 81-82). In other words, not what you know but who you know, who you associate with is increasingly the means by which occupational status is defined.

These developments produce an increase in extrinsic motivation based on rewards provided by the system but extrinsic motivation depends on stimulation by wage income. This can only be assured if the reserve labour force exercised an effective competitive pressure on the market, functioning to keep wages down, and if there appear to be significant income differences between lower income groups and the inactive labour population. However, union activity and welfare state tendencies, the growing production of collective commodities, reduces the need for competition in lower income groups. There is no need to

complete if needs are being satisfied. Thus the state's need to assure adequate stimulation by large income differences is in conflict with its interest in diffusing the effects of capital's crisis tendencies. Hence the probability of this requirement being satisfied is low.

Habermas argues that the traditional (authoritarian) norms and the bourgeois norms of civil and familial/vocational privatism are being replaced by "scientism, post-auratic art and universal morality" based on communicative ethics, the last being the demand for discursive justification of the validity claims implied by the processes of social integration based on communicative action (Habermas, 1974 : 84-89). These processes of social integration, as discussed earlier, include the means by which individual and group identities are established, procedures which require intersubjective communication and the establishment of norms and social roles. These norms do not supply the motivational drive required by the capitalist organization because they replace and do not support the necessary privatistic syndromes. However, even without agreement between normative structures and the economic and administrative systems "motivation crises could still be avoided by uncoupling the cultural system" (Ibid.: 89). By "uncoupling" Habermas refers to the possibility of confining cultural norms to a privatized realm separated from socialization processes. But such a separation would raise the problem of what would replace culture to supply the motivational drive for a particular form of social organization, assuming, as Habermas argues, that demands for legitimation cannot be subsumed by the production and distribution of extrinsic rewards.

Furthermore, Habermas asserts that in advanced capitalist society "*fundamental convictions of communicative ethics and experimental complexes of countercultures ... are today already determining typical socialization processes among several strata, that is, they have achieved motive-forming power*" (Habermas, 1974: 90). Habermas's proof of this argument relies on his analysis of what he terms the "adolescent crisis" which cannot be conventionally resolved, that is resolved in a manner which is not socially dysfunctional, because of a number of situations created by the intervention of the administrative system.

The expansion of the education systems of advanced capitalist societies including a lengthening of training time means that there is more time for those participating in the system to test the validity of traditions. Secondly, "increased schooling of cognitive capacities increases the probability that dissonances between proffered patterns of interpretation and perceived social reality will arise and intensify the problem of identity". Finally, "the development of egalitarian family structures" (which Habermas seems to want to define here as the loosening of sexual prohibitions), and the relative economic freedom accorded to students (according to economic strata) have the potential for producing anxiety free socialization processes and expanded scope for experimentation (Ibid.: 91). In other words what Habermas is suggesting is that conditions exist in present social formation, specifically in the education system, for the development of "post-conventional morality" which is dysfunctional for the capitalist system. In addition, the overloading of personality resources and the inability to stabilize ego formation under the present conditions of increasing legitimation failure have resulted in youth becoming a center of alienation and protest. Habermas cites Kenniston's inventory of protest, including student movements, pacifists and women's liberation, and of retreat, including hippies, "Jesus people" and the drug subculture, to support this argument.

However, there are a couple of problems with this proof. The first, as McCarthy (1979) notes, is that these movements are not sufficiently well established for one to be able to conclude that they will lead to "increased withdrawal and protest rather than to some more hedonistic accommodation with the system or to equally functional motivational patterns" (McCarthy, 1979: 377). Secondly these evidences of withdrawal and protest do not only include "youth" in the sense of students, they also include adults, members of what Habermas has unidentified elsewhere as the "underprivileged". Most significantly for the present investigation they also include women, apparently under the category underprivileged group. However Habermas argues that successful conflict cannot arise from underprivileged groups because they do not represent the mass of the population and their pauperization is



not related to exploitation because the "system does not live off their labor" (Habermas, 1975: 110). Thus these groups are not politically relevant in this situation in the sense that they do not form a class. However, using this definition of underprivileged it is obvious that women are excluded as they can be considered both the mass of the population and subject to exploitation which supports the system. Therefore, although he does not explore it, Habermas seems once again to establish an interconnection between women and social change.

According to Habermas, youth is however, politically relevant not in the sense of forming a social class but rather through establishing a critical phase in the process of socialization. Crisis threatening social organization occurs therefore, not as a result of economic crisis per se, but as a result of the displacement of the potential for economic crisis into the administrative/political system which produces a demand for legitimation and for supplies of organizational rationality to compensate for legitimation deficits. However, the ability of the administrative/political system to supply this is limited by scarce supplies of value and meaning which support motivation. This scarcity of motivation results in the need to produce collective commodities which threatens private interests. "If this rough diagnosis is correct, a legitimation crisis can be avoided...only if the latent class structures of advanced capitalist societies are transformed or if the pressure for legitimation to which the administration is subject can be removed" (Habermas, 1974: 93).

Added to this, the intervention of the state, via the administrative and educational systems, in the operation of the family has produced problematic effects on family organization. In a rare reference to women Habermas notes:

"Today this vehicle [the development of individualistic vocational roles which supported the development of individual identity as autonomous] seems to be more and more slipping away. Thus feminism is an example of an emancipatory movement that (under the catchword of self-realization) searches for paradigmatic solutions to the problem of establishing ego identity under conditions that render problematic - especially for women -

recourse to the vocational role as the crystallizing nucleus of a life history" (Habermas, 1979: 110).

Unfortunately, having reached this conclusion concerning the problematic of traditional role structures "especially for women", Habermas fails to expand his analysis into a consideration of the meaning of this phenomenon for women. Questions he might profitably have posed at this point might have included the question of why the increasing change in vocational roles should be considered especially problematic for women, as opposed to men for example.

What is the vocational role of women which is presently threatened?

A further question, and one which the present investigation would like to suggest as highly significant, is what are the potential social repercussions of this dysfunctional situation involving women? McCarthy (1979) in his analysis of Habermas's work to that date notes that Habermas displays an increasing tendency to move away from a theory "with practical intent" to a generalized theoretical focus with little pragmatic content. He suggests that part of the reason for this is that Habermas's move to a theory structured on the "basic human interest in communication free from domination" results in a situation in which "the politically relevant suppressed generalizable interests is at the same time a 'quasi-transcendental' interest" (McCarthy, 1979: 383). The depoliticization of the class struggle via its refraction into the administrative system has resulted in there being no specific group to which critical theory can address itself as a potential transformative agent (McCarthy 1979: 384-386). The present study would like to propose that a consideration of gender relations may provide Habermas's theoretical framework with the specific focus it is apparently lacking and that such a focus may help to resolve some of the problems which appear to have led to the restrictive definition and separation of systems-integrated and socially-integrated structures highly criticized (McCarthy, 1985; Culler, 1985; Fraser, 1985; Alexander, 1985) in Habermas's most recent work (1984). The implications of dysfunctional vocational roles for women and of the significance of this situation for Habermas's theory will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

#### 4.6 The applicability of Habermas's theoretical framework to an analysis of the social status of women

Habermas's failure to consider gender relations means that he fails to account for domination based on gender. In Habermas's terms, relations of power turn on resource scarcities related to the system of social integration. If this is so, the question to be answered is: what resource scarcity led to the institution of gender-based relations of dominance? In addition, Habermas's neglect of gender relations leads him to posit "less significant" relations of inequality in societies organized around kinship relations. A question which could be critically posed in relation to this affirmation is - less significant to whom? Since unequal male/female status relations appear to be traceable historically to initial patterns of family structuring (Nielsen, 1978; Sydie, 1987), the potential implication of this particular argument is that gender inequality is less significant than other forms of inequality, such as class-based inequality. This is presumably not Habermas's point in structuring this argument since, as noted earlier, what Habermas is attempting is an explanation of inequality which can "fit" a teleologically based theoretical structure.

What Habermas's argument does provide, if considered from the point of view of gender-based inequality is a possible explanation for the rise, in capitalist societies over the past century, of women's movements opposing gender-based oppressive relations (8). The suggestion that while social change resolves some problematic areas, it increases the dysfunctional intensity of those which are not resolved, appears to provide a potentially useful explanatory tool in the analysis of social movements. In addition, Habermas's argument that Marxist theory, by focusing on economic organization, neglected consideration of forces that frame the "lifeworld" other than those elements connected with material reproduction, provides as Nicholson (1986) argues, a basis for the historically situated integration of women's social activity into a theoretical framework. Habermas separates social formation into two types of integration matching his conception of the structuration of

knowledge - systemically organized elements, correlating with cognitive/technical knowledge and material reproduction, and communicatively (socially) organized elements (the lifeworld) correlating with moral/practical knowledge and symbolic reproduction. (Habermas, 1984).

By establishing the difference between processes of social labour (material reproduction) and socialization (symbolic reproduction), Habermas grounds the argument for "two kinds of historically significant activity, 'social labour' and the 'symbolic' activities which include among other things childrearing" (Fraser, 1986: 101). His theory, therefore, allows for the historical significance of activities traditionally considered as female. Fraser (1986) argues that this does not resolve the problem of the theoretical consideration of women but tends instead to lead into the dual systems theory - one economic system organized around gender-based domination and the other organized around class-based domination. The argument against the consideration of these forms of domination as separated systems is that such consideration fails to show the interrelationship between class and gender-based domination as structures of social relations. In addition, the separated systems argument could be considered ideological in the sense that it provides theoretical justification for the continued separation of women's unpaid domestic work and exchange value labour.

However, it could be argued that what Habermas is proposing is first of all, not a "dual systems" theory, but a dual aspect theory based on forms of social integration, not economic organization, as the locus of social organization. While Habermas builds his argument around the separation of systemically-organized and communicatively-organized forms of action and the "colonization" of the latter by the former in advanced capitalist societies, the argument of "colonization" implies more forms of interaction than possible with the concept of a dual systems theory. Secondly, Habermas argued the concept of the production of reflexive or indirectly productive labour as a quality which needed to be added into theories of the operation of economic exchange value relations and into the calculation of exchange value. This argument would seem to indicate that Habermas does not consider this the operation of two systems but of one. In fact, what Habermas is arguing is that aspects of the

relations of symbolic reproduction need to be included in economic theory if such theory is to provide an adequate account of the operation of economic organization.

In addition, "dual systems" theory as it has thus far been developed is argued from the perspective of social formation being developed around the organization of productive forces. It is exactly this argument which Habermas has attempted to counter with his theory of communicative action. What Habermas is suggesting is the progressive draining (devaluation) of elements of the symbolic sphere in the process of social evolution.

In other words, what is being suggested here is that Habermas's concepts do not lead to a "dual systems" theory but in fact indicate the need for revision of present economic theory. Such revision, to include the concept of indirectly productive labour, would ground the economic significance of women's unpaid domestic work including the economic significance of their childrearing activities. Thus, we are arguing that Habermas's framework, far from being necessarily ideological regarding gender relations, when considered from the general perspective of the social status of women proves to provide a framework which serves to establish both the historical and economic significance of women's activity.

In fact, Habermas's argument provides a potential explanatory basis for the historical continuation of gender-based discrimination across societies. One of the problems in any discussion of male-female dominance relations is the question of "why?". Why did the pattern of male-female dominance develop and why has it continued? Most arguments, like the Marxist argument regarding class inequality, devolve ultimately into the need and desire of those in power to retain their power. While this is certainly one aspect of the situation, to argue that it is the only, or even the essential element, results ultimately in the nihilistic viewpoint of the impossibility of emancipatory social change. In the case of explanations of gender discrimination, the final argument has tended to establish the "powerful" class of men in opposition to the "powerless" class of women, reduced ultimately to the individual psychological level of why men dislike women or at least of men against women.

There are at least two problems connected with such an argument. The first is that such a position renders itself vulnerable to the argument of individual responsibility, an argument being effectively used in the educational, legal and health institutions of advanced capitalist societies as a means of maintaining the status quo as Habermas (1979, 1974), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Persell (1977) and others have demonstrated. Secondly, it tends to ignore the fact that women are also included in the class structure.

While it would seem clear that women are an oppressed group (using Freire's definition of such a grouping), it must also be acknowledged that women as well as men are included in the dominant class and as such can certainly not be considered powerless in relation, for example, to male and female members of the working class. In addition, such an argument ignores the fact that women, whether it has been theoretically and historically recognized or not, have also participated in the socialization process that has produced their inequality (9). Any theory which attempts to deal with women's oppression must also account for how women have acted in this process, as Smith (1985) has tentatively attempted, and why women have, historically, accepted a situation of domination. To argue women's biological vulnerability is to ignore the fact that in most social formations preceding the development of urban capitalism, women's physical labour, in the fields as well as in the home, was an essential survival element. In fact as Smith (1985) and others demonstrate, until recently, even under the forms of capitalism, working class women's participation in the labour force was considered essential. In other words, women's biological weakness cannot be consistently sustained as an argument for inequality. Further, it would seem illogical to argue that, if the level of inequality between men and women per se, (that is, looking only at inequality between men and women not other forms of inequality such as ruler/slave and so on), was consistent throughout historical social development, women would simply have docilely accepted it as such. Even more, that women, through their major participation in familial functions, would have socialized their sons and daughters into such acceptance seems difficult to posit even considering the powerful influence of social norms and

structures.

What would seem more likely is the type of explanation proposed by Habermas. As noted earlier in this chapter, Habermas suggests that different types of scarcities have led to the intensification of various forms of inequalities during the process of social development. It could be argued that exactly this is the case for gender-based inequality.

While initially gender-based inequality may have been "less significant" (in Habermas's terms) than the problem of powerlessness over external nature or powerlessness in social relations, the perception of such inequality becomes significantly greater when the question of powerlessness revolves around the question of value for work done. It could be argued that, in social formation preceding capitalism, the question of a difference in "value" between men's external and women's domestic work, for example, was not formally established, not institutionalized as such. It is with the establishment of capitalism and hence value as the scarce resource, specifically exchange value work which took place in a sphere increasingly external to the family, that the nature of gender-based inequalities became increasingly socially dysfunctional and therefore visible.

In other words, what is being suggested in this analysis is that Habermas's concept of resource scarcity causing changes in the forms of social integration provides a potentially powerful tool for the explanation of the increasing focus on gender-based inequality in advanced capitalist society and the lack of such focus in previous forms of social organization. While it could be argued that resource scarcity implies an economic argument, it must be noted that "resource" for Habermas includes areas of communicatively organized action (symbolic reproduction), areas which are not generally included in present economic equations and which were not included in Marx's original economic calculations of capitalist organization. Thus, in considering Habermas's theoretical framework from the point of view of gender it can be argued that this framework can be used to establish the basis for the historical and economic significance of women's work and to explain some of the operation of gender-based inequality.

A further point bearing on the omission of gender is concerned with Habermas's use of the term "class". Despite his argument for the reinterpretation of Marx and the reconstruction of historical-materialist theory based on communicative, as opposed to economic grounds, Habermas retains at least some of the categories and assumptions of the systems/Marxist approach as well as those from a systems/functional approach. The inherent implications of the category "class" tie it to economic organization. Habermas has not suggested that "class" be redefined in terms of power or domination as is at least implied, if not stated explicitly, in Freire's argument. If "class" retains the qualities assigned by Marxist theory, this limits analysis of power to analysis of economic relations. While economics is certainly an integral element of power it is not the only element as Habermas himself has pointed out. Relations in the sphere of symbolic reproduction, while tied to economics, involve more than questions of ownership or material value according to Habermas's account. What would seem to be needed is the establishment of new categories, or at least a redefinition of categories which would help to clarify, rather than obscure, potential power relations. While Habermas has provided such categories in a number of important areas, for example establishing the distinction between "normatively-secured" and "consensually-achieved" forms of socially integrated action (Habermas, 1984: 88-90) (10), by retaining without redefinition, categories from previous theoretical frameworks he leaves his own argument vulnerable to some of the weaknesses inherent to the theories in which the categories originated. In analysing the "fit" of Habermas's theoretical framework to an explanation of the social situation of women, Habermas's use of the term class is especially critical in that it obscures the nature of gender relations as power relations. This in turn limits the explanatory power of Habermas's framework when applied to education and to social relations in general. Unless women are considered a "class", a notion which, as discussed earlier, is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons and in any case does not correspond to a Marxist economic framework, the clarification of gender relations is not aided by this terminology. Furthermore, dividing society into the broad general classes of male and female on grounds of domination is



potentially ideological in the sense that this division replicates the biological division and implies by this, differing needs and interests, hence differentiated educational and economic interests; a situation which would seem to legitimate present social organization and maintain economic barriers rather than reducing male/female inequality.

While Habermas focuses on the failure of system maintenance structures such as the administrative/political, educational and occupational systems to produce adequate legitimation of the asymmetrical distribution of rewards, he views this uneven distribution as based on latent class structures. Therefore, the intensification of psychic disturbance which eventually forces change in the forms of social integration depends upon intensification of awareness of class-based inequality. While the operation of the administrative and educational systems tends to produce this intensification, the possibility of this resulting in a change producing crisis remains limited due to the latent nature of class relations. However, it is possible to argue that consideration of the asymmetrical distribution of reward based on gender, may, in fact, increase the strength of Habermas's argument regarding the potential for legitimation crisis. In other words, it is being argued that there are at least two (possibly more if race is included) forms of inequality producing dysfunctional effects in capitalist societies. The maintenance institutions must be concerned with producing legitimation for two processes governing the asymmetrical distribution of rewards, gender as well as class. If the education system can be considered a potential source of social change as Habermas argues, and if social change derives from awareness of dysfunctional situations, then the application of Habermas's framework to the analysis of the relationship between education and the social status of women would seem to imply a direct connection between women and potential social change in contemporary capitalist society. It would also seem to indicate that any theory which attempts to account for social change, and to explain social organization in general, cannot afford to exclude a consideration of the social status of women.

#### 4.7 Notes to Chapter Four:

1. Initially concerned with the failure of Marxist theory in terms of its predication of a "class" revolution, the Frankfurt school, most notably Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, attempted a revitalization of critical theory via a reinterpretation of Marx. However, in rejecting the objectivism of Marx, the subjectivism of accounts grounded on personal principle, and the belief in God inherent to Hegelian phenomenology, the Frankfurt school group was unable to find a ground on which to establish an immanent critique and resorted ultimately to an inherently elitist argument, centered in the development of intellectuals. This problem of finding a target group or ground to which critical theory can be addressed can also be seen in Freire's work with his suggestion of critical awareness being first established in the intellectual group (Freire, 1982: ). Freire, of course, acknowledges the influence of Marcuse in his theoretical development. Habermas's initial concern was therefore, to establish a ground for the immanence of critique but a ground which by employing "objective" empirical hermeneutic theory would avoid both subjective and elitist pitfalls. A theory combining interpretive and empirical/scientific methodology is not, according to Habermas, a contradiction. He argues that this is exactly the nature of the "science" of psychoanalysis (Habermas, 1979: xii-xiii). In addition, Habermas was dissatisfied with the nihilistic almost fatalistic tone which permeated recent critical theory. Habermas suggests that the necessary grounding for an immanent critique can be found in the "universal pragmatics" of communication (Habermas, 1979: 1-68). Accordingly Habermas investigates the intrinsic qualities of language as these relate to socialization and the development of rationality. It would seem that an investigation of how Habermas establishes the links between communication and socialization might provide a useful theoretical basis for further clarification of women's social status as it relates to education.
2. An investigation of Habermas's work poses a number of problems. First of all Habermas's theory of communicative action appears to be in a constant state of development. As a result, ideas, concepts and interconnections established in earlier work are sometimes ignored, underdeveloped or differently interpreted in his most recent work. Thus the *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1* (1984) seems to argue a more definite split between systems and lifeworld than appeared in earlier work (1974, 1979). It also seems to emphasize a more systems oriented interpretation, with strong links to the theoretical developments of Weber and Parsons, than do Habermas's earlier works which argued forcefully against strict systems models for social

theory (Habermas, 1979). In addition, Volume 1 of *Theory of Communicative Action* is primarily concerned with the logical development of the argument for a theory of communicative action as social theory rather than with its application to advanced capitalist society. Although Habermas does apparently deal with such an application in Volume 2 (according to Alexander, 1985; McCarthy, 1985; Culler, 1985; et al.), while Volume 2 is available in a German publication, it is not available as yet in an English translation as far as the present investigator could determine. Further, Alexander (1985) suggests that Habermas's 1979 discussion of aspects of the theory of communicative action appear clearer than the 1984 discussion. In order to resolve some of these problems the present study has relied most heavily on the discussion of advanced capitalist society appearing in *Legitimation Crisis* (1974) and on the development of the theory of communicative action found in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1979). Some changes which appear to have occurred in the fundamental arguments advanced by Habermas in his most recent work (1984) are acknowledged and discussed in the text where relevant to the present argument.

3. That is, the understanding that all and only empirically verifiable knowledge can be true, which has led, according to critical theory, to the devaluation of the reflective process.

4. Habermas bases the theory of communicative action on a reconstruction of linguistic theory which separates linguistic competence and communicative competence. Habermas's interpretation of a theory of communicative competence builds on the following logic sequence:

- a) The initiating social action is communicative.
- b) Communicative action is intersubjective.
- c) The purpose of communicative action is to achieve intersubjective understanding and consensus.
- d) All communicative speech actions raise validity claims: "In action oriented to reaching understanding, validity claims are 'always already' implicitly raised" because they are "set in the general structures of possible communication" (Habermas, 1979: 97).
- e) There are three validity claims (5) implicit in ordinary speech, the claim of truth-efficiency, the claim of "truth for a stated propositional content or for the existential presuppositions of a mentioned propositional content...", the claim of rightness (or appropriateness) for norms (or values), "which in a given context justify an interpersonal relation that is to be performatively established..." and the claim

of "truthfulness for the intentions expressed" (Ibid.: 65-66, see also Habermas, 1984: 8-42 for the most recent [but perhaps less concise (Alexander, 1985: 405)] description of these validity claims).

f) The claims of truth, rightness and truthfulness apply to communicatively organized action; the claim of truth also applies to instrumentally organized action.

g) While one or more of these claims may be emphasized or thematized in a particular speech act, all are always present and each claim indicates a relation with a particular world which can be verified.

5. In his most recent discussion of a theory of communicative action Habermas (1984) seems to assert a complete uncoupling of administrative and economic systems from normative structures, leading to completely separated social worlds. However, as McCarthy (1986) has pointed out, there are a number of problems associated with viewing economic and administrative structures from a restricted functional/systems perspective, problems which Habermas himself identified in his review of systems theory. One problem and possibly the most significant, would seem to be that Habermas appears to contradict his own argument regarding the presence of all validity claims in all speech actions. Habermas suggests that systems integrated social action, oriented towards economic interests, is not subject to justifications of validity which apply to communicatively organized action. That is, action in economic organizations, for example, does not resort to validity claims other than claims of efficiency. But, as McCarthy convincingly argues, there is a great deal of action undertaken in economic organizations which implies claims of truthfulness and rightness as well as claims of efficiency. It would seem that Habermas's argument is, in this case, unnecessarily restrictive. However, to find Habermas's perception of the separation of lifeworld/systems world too restrictive is not to deny the validity of the argument that such a separation exists, to a greater or lesser extent, in contemporary capitalist society; nor to deny the validity of the implications Habermas draws from this concept. It is possible that a consideration of gender-based social relations would help clarify the nature of the relationship between these two forms of social organization since male and female activity remains primarily associated with this dichotomy. It should also be noted that Habermas does not argue that the action of systems oriented organizations cannot be subjected to analysis on the basis of validity claims other than efficiency. Rather his argument is that the tendency of contemporary capitalist society is to establish situations where the demand for "value" is met and therefore the claims of rightness and truthfulness are not questioned.

6. Wolpe (1978), Boyson (1981) and Pateman (1981) analysing the situation of British education and Apple (1983) reviewing the contemporary American situation note the increasing intervention by government into education. Interestingly from the point of view of the present study, the situation outlined by these writers seems to indicate an attempt by the state/administrative systems to increase the level of participatory democracy, a move Habermas suggests as one possibility for relieving legitimation pressures. However, Pateman notes that this apparent increase in participation is illusory since it carries with it no real power.
7. Chevillard (1982) documents this problem on a world level. CACSW (1982) affirms Menzies' analysis of the problem for Canadian women.
8. Banks (1986) details this movement in Britain.
9. An interesting analysis of women's participation in and resistance to socialization practices which produce inequality can be found in Anyon (1983).
10. See also Fraser, 1985:108 for an excellent discussion of the application of Habermas's categories to the analysis of gender relations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Toward a Viable Framework

#### 5.1 Some problems in Structural/Functionalist Theory:

In the first section of this investigation it was argued that theories of the sociology of education based on a structural/functionalist approach suffered from a number of lacunae, with the result that such theories provide an inadequate explanation of social organization. In particular, theories based on a structural/functional perspective, as analysed through the work of Talcott Parsons, posited certain structural elements as inherent to social organization. As a result such theories provide a limited basis for the explanation of social change. In addition, this perspective does not provide a framework for the critique of power relations. To the contrary the structural/functionalist approach posits the essentiality of a hierarchical power structure determined by merit and supported by the institution of education. This position argues that social values, including the values which establish power relations, derive from the needs and interests of the collective and operate to satisfy these collective needs and interests, since, if collective needs and interests are not met, social organization would cease to function. Therefore, the position does not question whose needs and interests are being supported by the power structure. By definition, if society is functioning it is meeting the needs of all members to a greater or lesser extent. Since movement to positions of higher social status, hence greater power, is determined by merit it is theoretically possible for any individual to move from a lower to higher social position within the boundary conditions inherent to the system. This position operates from a "belief" in the legitimacy of established structures and tends not to consider how such legitimacy is constructed and maintained.

However, as Habermas (1975, 1979, 1984), McCarthy (1985) and Fraser (1985) among others argue (1), using the concepts from a systems approach as the basis for analysis of social organization produces the problem of how to determine the boundary conditions which

limit the development of society. For a biological organism the ultimate determination of success is ability to survive and to reproduce and the conditions necessary for success are relatively easy to determine. However, society is not a biological organism and physical survival is a necessary but not sufficient condition for social survival. Social organization is structured by cultural values and such values may change, that is, the goal function of the organization could change. Structural/functionalist analyses, by focusing on the efficiency of activity in relation to system survival, tend to ignore learning processes which may lead to adaptation as opposed to annihilation. If the highest values in a social system are established by individuals, the norms, reflecting these values established by custom, cannot be considered goal states for the system in the same sense that goal states are considered for biological organisms.

It was argued that the structural/functionalist approach posits the education system as the means by which social mobility is assured but that empirical evidence does not support this position. In addition, it was argued that by not questioning the legitimacy of power relations the structural/functionalist approach fails to adequately account for the social status of women in general, and in particular failed to account for the inherently contradictory norms apparent in the education systems of advanced capitalist societies. From this perspective, the education system is viewed as a primary means by which both cultural and technical knowledge is gathered and disseminated. Merit, awarded by the education system leads to greater or lesser opportunity for social status according to the level of merit awarded. Merit is determined by individual ability. Differing biological functions of males and females are reflected by differing social functions, therefore, the education system, in its role as a socializing agent must provide means of educating males and females for differing social roles. That the education system undertakes this socializing function would appear to be empirically verified. To this extent the structural/functionalist description would appear to be valid. However, implicit in this position is the understanding that differing social roles are equal. If this were so, careers traditionally occupied by women should be equally as

rewarding in terms of social status as those of men. Studies have demonstrated that this is not the case.

In addition, this position reflects the assumption that women's social status is drawn from the husband's according to traditional structure and that this is an adequate means of ensuring women's equality. While this may be an accurate reflection of the ideology underlying advanced capitalist societies, by not questioning the legitimacy of such an assumption the structural/functionalist position fails to supply an adequate explanation for the consistently lower social status of women across social classes. Nor does it account for the increasing povertization of female-headed single-parent families, despite the fact that women's levels of education are generally equal to those of men. What the education system appears to be doing is awarding merit (and distributing individuals into the occupational structure) on the basis of a number of factors other than merit including class and gender. The normative-systems approach employed by structural/functionalist theory fails to account for the power relations implied by the interplay of these factors. Finally, if merit is awarded on the basis of ability, how can the fact that males and females do not have access to equal rewards in the occupational system be justified?

## **5.2 Some Problems in Marxist/Neo-Marxist Conflict Theory:**

Sociological explanations employing Marxist/Neo-Marxist conflict theory while addressing some of the problems apparent in structural/functionalist theory, nevertheless fail to account for a number of apparent discrepancies in the operation of advanced capitalist societies. Conflict theory utilizes the concept of ideology embodied in social norms in attempting an explanation of the operation of power in social relations. This contradicts the structural/functionalist perception of particular norms as inherent to social organization and introduces the possibility of social change related to changing perceptions of power relations as these are organized around the operation of the economic system.



From a Marxist-conflict perspective the purpose of the education system is to meet the needs of capitalism since social organization develops on the basis of the mode of production. Since capitalistic organization is premised on unequal distribution of resources resulting in unequal class relation, it is the business of the education system to ensure the socialization of individuals to meet capital's demand for labour and the perpetuation of an system of unequal distribution of resources. Therefore the education system operates to legitimate an inherently unequal system via the ideology of a merit system which posits reward on the basis of ability but separates individuals on the basis of class attributes. This explanation would appear to be validated by the studies which indicate that the education system appears to function to preserve the status quo, and that there is an increasingly problematic relationship between education and occupational status (Cookson and Persell, 1987) (2).

In addition, the Marxist-conflict perspective argues the crisis tendency of capital which requires a flexible reserve army of labour. This is supported by an ideology which restricts women's functions to the sphere of family management, hence secondary production. This allows capital to draw on women (amongst others) when the supply of labour can not meet production demands and to return women to their primary familial role when no longer required for capital production. Women's secondary status in the labour force resulted in the viewpoint of women's role as having secondary value. Thus from this perspective, the integration of women into the permanent primary labour force would assure their social equality.

However, this perspective does not explain the lower status of women across social classes and in non-capitalist societies. Nor does it explain the lower social status of women who are members of the primary workforce nor why with women composing forty or more per cent of the permanent labour force, their social status remains lower than that of men. In other words, the integration of women into the workforce which Engels (1972) saw as the means for achieving equality does not appear to have produced such equality. In addition,

since gender-based inequality occurs across classes and races, elimination of class inequality, which Marxist-conflict theory proposes as the basis for social change, would not necessarily eliminate gender-based inequality.

Thus Marxist-conflict theory, by inadequately theorizing gender provides neither an adequate explanation of women's social position and how this is influenced by education nor a viable explanation of social change. It was further argued that part of the reason for the difficulties encountered employing this approach may have been an overemphasis on the economic factors determining social organization and a corresponding lack of consideration of the means by which meaning and legitimacy is attributed in social action.

### 5.3 MacDonald, Freire and Smith:

Nevertheless, Marxist-conflict theory does provide a base from which a theorization of gender can be constructed. This was the theoretical base for the analyses of the education system made by MacDonald and Smith. However, even when a theorization of gender is added to Marxist-conflict theory a number of problems remain unresolved. This is illustrated in the review of MacDonald's theoretical framework. MacDonald suggests that including the concept of patriarchy allows an analysis which considers power relations based on class inequality and male dominance. This allows MacDonald to clarify two apparently contradictory ideologies operating in the education systems of advanced capitalist societies - the ideology of achievement and the ideology of fixed social roles based on gender. However, this does not resolve the problem of how the education system may be linked to social change since the approach to education taken by MacDonald remains essentially a Marxist approach. This approach asserts that:

- 1) the structure of the education system is determined by the need to reproduce the structural features of social organization;
- 2) it is the nature of social structure to resist change;

3) and finally, that educational knowledge is structured by the ideologies of class and, MacDonald adds, gender inequality.

Therefore, MacDonald's suggestions of educational reforms as a means of achieving social change is problematic. This is not to say that such reforms should not be made, but rather to suggest the difficulty of realizing this suggestion. How can such reforms be achieved when educators themselves are the product of a system which resists change?

In addition, MacDonald suggests that since capital relies on the nuclear family structure, the changing structure of the family may produce social change. However, she does not consider the fact that it appears to be the changing demands of capital which are producing changes in the family structure. It can be equally argued that it is not the family changing capitalism but capitalism changing the family. In fact that is the point-of-view taken by Habermas in assessing the potential for legitimization crisis in advanced capitalist societies.

However, MacDonald in attempting to address some of the limitations to theory created by a strict adherence to structural analysis does suggest some possible directions for further analysis. In particular she points to the action of language in social interactions and the need for including an analysis of language as part of a theory describing social organization. Although a large body of theoretical work, labelled as interactionist (see Appendix 1), has developed around this point - the problem of determining meanings in social interactions - the present study has taken as one of its starting requirements for a viable social theory the need to include an analysis of macro-structural elements. Since interactionist theory focuses primarily on micro-elements of social organization and tends to exclude analysis of the impact of structural features in ascribing meanings to given interactions, this theoretical approach is not considered, per se, in the present study. However, theoretical approaches which attempt some combination of insights garnered from interactionist theory and from theories focusing on the interaction of structural social features are considered. Both Dorothy Smith and Paulo Freire focus directly on the operation of language and the determination of meaning in social interaction, attempting to integrate this into a Marxist explanatory framework.

Freire ascribes to the Marxist-conflict view of the present system of education operating to reproduce capitalistic social organization and its underlying ideology of domination. That education reflects the exchange process, Freire argues, is clear in the banking concept of education based on the idea of knowledge as fixed and a therefore quantifiable and possessable object. According to Freire, this view of knowledge operates to reinforce the domination/subjugation theme which identifies the present state of social development.

In an attempt to resolve some of the limitations created by a strict focus on the interaction of structural elements, Freire integrates psychoanalytic theory which focuses on individual development, with a theory of social development. Such integration allows Freire to take the view that individuals have some autonomy within and control over, the operation of social organization. Specifically Freire focuses the nexus of this control around the use of language which can be used to both "mythicize" and "demythicize" perceptions of society. To the extent that the individual can bring the inherent process of critical reflection to bear on an understanding of the meanings of social action expressed by language, the individual can exercise control on the ways in which language affects action. In order to use language to demythicize however, it is necessary to understand how language is used to obscure and legitimate relations of domination. This leads to an analysis of power relations. Although Freire does not explicitly deal with domination based on gender, the present study argues that application of Freire's criteria of domination to empirical studies focusing on the social status of women in advanced-capitalist (and other) societies reveals that women, considered as a group, would appear to exhibit the criteria that would identify them with the category of the oppressed. Since it is from this group that Freire predicates the possibility of social change via education, according to Freire's framework women provide an immediate potential for social change.

While this framework may satisfy some of the problems connected with the application of Marxist-conflict theory, considering the possibility of individual action on social structure, for example, there remain unresolved areas. Freire suggests that one factor leading to change

is the individual's inherent capacity for recognizing limits to his/her freedom and to act to reduce those limits. However, the individual or group's ability to effect change in a capitalist system rests on the assumption of the ultimate inability of the power group to effectively sustain the colonization process. But Freire does not provide an adequate explanation of why this process should prove ineffective. He asserts the impossibility of continued control due to the greater physical size of the oppressed group. If physical size is the only, or even most significant, criterion of power then it is difficult to explain how groups have been and are able to maintain relations of power over any period of time. In addition, this position contradicts Freire's own argument regarding the effectiveness of the colonization process. Freire suggests that change may arise from the inability of the power group to meet the increasing demands of the oppressed. Such increasing demands derive from the developing awareness by the oppressed of their situation, which is activated by education in the form of a demystification process. This argument again depends upon the assumption of the failure of the transmission of an ideology favorable to the maintenance of dominance relations. Freire does not pursue the analysis of why such a failure should occur.

Freire's analysis of the operation of power relations allows us to argue the position of women as a suppressed group holding the potential for social change. However the ability of women as an oppressed group to realize emancipatory change remains problematic in the development of Freire's argument. In addition, the link between education and social change has not been resolved in this framework. Nevertheless, Freire's development of an educational model which could reinforce emancipatory change bears analysis. This model operates from a consciousness-raising concept which has a number of similarities to the consciousness-raising format utilized by the Women's Liberation Movement in advanced capitalist societies. Freire, in a later addendum to the initial development and application of this model of emancipatory education suggests that it may be a more efficient tool applied in the form of education projects outside the formal education system. Structural constraints make it difficult to apply this model within the system. However, the operation of such a

process whether it occurs outside the formal system of education or within may stimulate some impetus to change.

This study argues that Freire's analysis points to the possibility of a situation developing in western-capitalist society in which women and education may prove catalytic factors in the process of social change. The limitation to Freire's argument however, in particular, his failure to adequately consider structurally produced constraints on the education process produce too many inconsistencies for this framework to provide a viable theory of the sociology of education. An operable educational project while providing useful insights cannot be considered the sole basis for the structure of an educational system.

Like MacDonald and Freire, Smith is concerned with restoring to the individual a position in the development of social organization, or at least with developing a sociological analysis which considers the influence of individuals in social organization. Like Freire, Smith views a consideration of language as an essential element for any viable theory of society. However, Smith's concern is with the general exclusion of a consideration of women's position from most sociological theorizing. Taking language as a focus, Smith argues that language as the means by which ideologies are both established and transmitted operates as a source for the reproduction of both class and gender-based inequality.

According to Smith, gender-based inequality is particularly demonstrable in the education system: in the overall patterns of employment throughout the various levels of education; in the patterns of authority structures within the general system and within individual institutions; and in the content of materials used in the system. Studies investigating the occupational distribution of women in the education systems of Britain, the U.S. and Canada appear to validate Smith's assertion, as do analyses of texts used by schools in these systems:

Smith's analysis also reinforces the validity of Freire's concept of the culture of silence as one of the means by which relations of dominance are sustained. It also reinforces the point made by the present study that women could be considered to constitute an oppressed group.

In addition, Smith points to another area of concern to the present analysis, that is, the forms and expressions of resistance to change.

Each of the writers considered in detail to this point has raised the question of resistance but none has adequately resolved this question. That is, neither MacDonald, Freire, nor Smith has been able to sustain an argument for social change. The argument made by the present investigation is that all three writers maintain the essentially economic framework imposed by their adoption of the Marxist-conflict approach to social organization. Thus they are reduced ultimately to the notion of social change developing as a result of structural change without being able to posit adequate grounds for such structural change. Habermas, in suggesting a different basis for social organization, combining the integration of productive and social relations, may provide a theoretical framework which resolves this problem.

Smith in pointing out the domination of language by men suggests that one of the ways in which gender-based inequality may be eliminated is by legitimating women's language. While this appears to reinforce Freire's notion that women must find their own language - neither Freire nor Smith provide a very clear idea of how such a concept could be realized. Considering both Freire's and Smith's arguments regarding ideology transmitted by education as an essential medium for the reproduction of dominance relations, it would appear that only the education system's failure to adequately transmit such ideology could create the conditions in which a women's language might be legitimated. Part of the problem here appears to be that neither Smith nor Freire analyse how language is used to legitimate social relations. Neither consider the possibility of assumptions inherent to our use of language in social interactions. Again the present study suggests that some solutions to these problem areas may be found in the theoretical framework proposed by Jürgen Habermas.

#### 5.4 Habermas:

Habermas, reviewing general approaches to sociological theory, as well as linguistic, cognitive and psychoanalytic theory, suggests that integrating concepts derived from these theories into a general theory of social evolution may produce a viable framework for theories attempting to analyse how societies operate.

Habermas centers his attempt to construct such a theory on the basis of language as communicative action. On this basis Habermas posits assumptions inherent to the use of language which he identifies as validity claims. These inherent claims function to structure social action. Thus, according to Habermas, initially it is communicative action which organizes social development. Habermas utilizes much of the framework established by Marxist theory but he argues that the theory of society being structured around a mode of production is true only for capitalism. Society is organized around a combination of labour relations and social relations. These relations were initially integrated by the family therefore it is the institutionalization of the family which marks the beginning of social organization and not, as Marx argued, the organization of labour. The rules governing social behaviour cannot be reduced to the rules governing instrumental-strategic action which Habermas ties to production. That is, social relations are subject to the validity claims of truthfulness and rightness. While these claims may be present in action oriented to production it is the claim of truth-efficiency which dominates such activities.

This framework allows Habermas to posit social change as developing out of the perception of resource scarcities. The attempt to resolve problems created by these scarcities produced various types of social organization which may be categorized historically. Habermas suggests that stages of societal development may be matched to stages of cognitive and social development of the individual. Thus Habermas argues the possibility of evolutionary social change aimed at resolving problems of scarcity. Habermas also suggests that the means (the forms of social organization) used to resolve these problems of scarcity may have served to create or intensify already present dysfunctional patterns which then had the potential to become the focus for the next level of social change.



Capitalism developed, according to Habermas's argument as a response to the scarcity of the resource "value". However, the structural requirements of the capitalistic form of social organization, as it has developed, have produced a situation in which a new resource scarcity is appearing - that is, the scarcity of meaning. Meaning was originally supplied by a system of norms which provided the standards by which social action could be evaluated by the individuals which comprised social groupings and societies. These norms operated to support the forms of social organization. Education was an essential institution in this connection as education and the family served as the major means by which the socialization of individuals, including the transmission of norms, was achieved.

However, in order to combat the crisis tendencies inherent to the capitalistic process, a number of the functions originally served by the market mechanism shifted to the administrative system. This resulted in the increasing production of collective commodities regulated by the state. This implies a movement by the state into activities traditionally relegated to the private/family sphere of action - including the state's increasing manipulation of the educational process. This has led to the perception of norms, originally operating to sustain the functions of the capitalistic process, as increasingly problematic. Norms were no longer seen as being inherent to social organization but as manipulable according to desired ends. This produces the potential, initially for a motivation crisis, leading ultimately, if the administrative system cannot meet the demands of the populace for the production of value in the form of collective commodities, to a legitimation crisis.

Habermas focuses on the potential for a legitimation crisis in the education system, firstly because education is largely concerned with the transmission of meaning in the form of norms. Secondly, the lengthening of the educational process in advanced capitalist societies means that the subjects of this process, students, will have more time to become aware of dysfunctional features. Thirdly, the education systems in a number of advanced capitalist societies are already showing signs of a motivation crisis. This last argument is borne out by the observations of Boyson (1981) and Pateman (1981) among others in Britain, and by

Apple (1983) and others in the U.S.

Whether, in fact, such a crisis occurs, and whether it will lead to some form of developmental social change is of course problematic. Much will depend on the methods utilized by states to meet the demands placed on them. One of these methods may be the employment of participatory democracy in order to resolve to some extent the problem of scarcity of meaning. However, participatory democracy may simply become a form of "co-optation" as Pateman points out appears to be the case regarding the establishment of school boards in Britain. Findlay (1987) describes this process of co-optation clearly when she reviews the progress of the feminist movement in Canada from "grass roots" to formal institutionalization in government councils. The institutionalization, Findlay notes, seemed to accord less, rather than more power to the concerns of women.

Habermas's argument provides a number of solutions to problems previously discussed. For example, he provides a framework for the critical analysis of social organization based on utilizing the validity claims implicit to social action. He also establishes the potential for social change in legitimation crises, grounded in the argument of evolutionary development and not limited to the requirement of structural change. Nevertheless, from the point-of-view of the present research, Habermas's framework at present suffers from a serious weakness, the exclusion of a consideration of the action of gender relations. As a result Habermas's argument for the potential for a legitimation crisis is relegated to the relatively weak position of centering such crisis with youth. The present study suggests that a consideration of gender would not only strengthen Habermas's conceptual framework, but also provide a second focus for the potential for legitimation crisis and thus social change.

A central point for the argument that the inclusion of gender would strengthen Habermas's argument is the observation that the area which, in Habermas's account, is becoming increasingly problematic in capitalist society, is the famailial/privatistic sphere. This area has traditionally, and increasingly with capitalism, (Smith[1985], Burstyn [1985], Armstrong and Armstrong [1983]) been the zone of activity to which women were primarily

relegated. In fact Habermas notes that women's vocational role in the family is becoming increasingly problematic. Thus, if Habermas is correct, using the analyses of women's situation provided by the application of the frameworks established by Freire and Smith, reveals that the intensification of a dysfunctional situation in contemporary society would appear to be disproportionately greater for women than for any other presently existing social grouping.

Secondly, Habermas suggests education as an essential element for social change in advanced capitalist society. While women generally do not hold positions of power in the education systems of these societies, nevertheless, there is a high concentration of women in this occupational area. Thus again, if Habermas is correct, and the education system operates to intensify the perception of dysfunction, the situation for women should become increasingly problematic.

That Habermas's theoretical framework can support a consideration of gender relations has been demonstrated in the argument Habermas makes for the necessity to include a consideration of reflexive labour in economic theory. That a consideration of gender is required by Habermas's framework is implicit in the basis upon which Habermas constructs the theory of communicative action. If, under capitalism, it is men who have been primarily involved in the production process and instrumental/strategic action, under capitalism women's primary involvement has been in the socialization process. If the validity claims for communicative action are to provide a basis for social analysis it would seem essential to include a consideration of women in such an analysis.

### **5.5 Implications for future research:**

The results of the present investigation suggest the following conclusions regarding a theory of the sociology of education:

- a) To be effective the theory must account for the social position of women as it is

revealed and influenced by the system of education.

b) An effective theory should provide a viable explanation of knowledge, its relation to individual interactions, its penetration of and interpenetration by, social structures, power relations and the dominating ideology.

c) Such a theory should also provide an explanation of how knowledge, social structures, power relations and ideology are validated or "legitimated" and reproduced or transmitted in the context of the education system.

d) In addition a viable or effective social theory should be able to account for a comprehensive, historically-based examination of social organization, that is, if the theory does not provide such a comprehensive, historical explanation itself, it should be capable of explanation in such a theoretical context and vice versa. A theory which establishes a general explanation of social action should also be viable when applied to a specific social context.

e) Finally, a theory which seeks to understand the functioning of social systems should provide a logically coherent basis for social change.

These points could help to focus critical analyses, not only of theoretical frameworks, but also of the results of the studies based on those frameworks. In this context it is argued that the sociological theory proposed by Jürgen Habermas, with the addition of a consideration of gender relations based on an application of the work of Freire and Smith, can provide a potentially viable framework for a theory which critically analyses education with a view to having practical application.

## 5.6 Notes to Chapter Five:

1. While both McCarthy (1985) and Fraser (1985) criticize what they suggest is Habermas's overuse of systems theory, or at least his overreliance on Parsons, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1 (1984 - English edition) and Vol. 2 (1984 - German edition) nevertheless the basic argument of all three remains similar. All argue the difficulty of establishing boundary conditions for social organization. Basically McCarthy and Fraser's argument with Habermas centers around their concern with the amount of influence Habermas accords to structural features of social organization and more particularly with Habermas's view of the separation of social action into two apparently autonomous groupings.
2. Cookson and Persell illustrate this in their study of private schools in the U.S. They note a directly proportional link between family social status and acceptance in specific prep schools and between such prep schools and acceptance into highly-rated universities. In addition, they assert that, although the proportion of computers in these schools varied in proportion to their size and "rating", the proportion of available computers did not seem to affect the percentage of use by the students. In general, it appeared that these students were not particularly concerned with computer skills other than with acquiring general information on computers. Cookson and Persell surmise that this is so because these students were anticipating their future occupational positions where specific skills would not be required since such positions were at the level of "executive" not "executtee". Cookson and Persell also note a direct ratio between graduation from the "higher rated" academic centers and upper level social positions.

## APPENDIX I

### The Interactionist perspective:

As has already been noted, both Structural/Functionalist and Marxian/Conflict theories of social organization tend to ignore individual or micro, effects and to focus on larger structural, or macro, effects. The result, in terms of educational theory is that little attention is given to the actual content of the educational process, the knowledge that is being transmitted; and the means by which it is identified as knowledge, learned and transmitted. It is argued that, if social institutions and relations do not hold innate patterns but rather are organized by individuals in order to satisfy their own needs, then it must be the individual who gives meaning to the social structure, not the structure to the individual. Knowledge, at least in "commonsense" terms, becomes the meaning individuals create in any given situation. In order to understand the dynamics of social reality what must be analysed are the interactions of individuals and groups of individuals in order to determine how they attribute meaning to their experience, and what that meaning is. The theoretical positions associated with this basic concept have been labelled phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interactionism. Since, as Meighan (1981) points out, what has been identified as interactionism to a certain extent includes the phenomenological and ethnomethodological perspectives, for the purposes of this research we will consider the three approaches as a single theoretical framework.

### The Concept of Educational Knowledge, from an Interactionist Perspective:

While formalized social organization may affect the way an individual perceives, is perceived in, and acts upon a situation, this cannot be stipulated with certainty without determining what meaning the individual actually gives the situation and how this is interpreted and, in turn, influences, the actions of the other individuals involved. The result

of this perspective is that all knowledge (including day-to-day knowledge) becomes problematic. In terms of education this means that each of the actors in a learning situation may have his/her own interpretation of what is to be known. Keddie demonstrates this "knowledge problematic" arising from different interpretations of a situation in her 1971 study "Classroom Knowledge". Observing the interactions of students and teachers in a particular school she noted that students from a working class background were treated differently in terms of teacher approach to the same question, to students from a middle class background. Keddie's interpretation was that those students from a working class background were not able to tacitly accept the teacher's perspective on a particular subject (the definition of family) - they challenged the teacher's definition of knowledge. In other words, the working class student transmitted an ideology which was in conflict with the teacher's. The result was the teacher's classification of the student as intellectually inferior; a classification based not on overtly applied class bias but on differing meaning interpretations.

A number of problems associated with this approach may be seen here. For one thing, examining Keddie's interpretation of her observations appears to create a circular argument; that is, which comes first - meaning or perceptions based on class which make up meaning? Another question which could be raised is that, if all knowledge is relative, that is, determined by the individual in the situation, how are certain types of knowledge recognized as having more value? Is there a relationship between value and power? What in fact, is the nature of power relations in social organization and more particularly in education, and how are these explained?

Education, from the interactionist viewpoint, is seen as a series of interactions involving continual negotiations in order to establish meaning. As such both teacher and pupil are considered to have the possibility of determining their own knowledge and influencing each other's. Each actor in the educational situation has certain options or means available by which he/she can exercise his/her creative action. Education is thus a dialectic process and knowledge a series of continuously re-evaluated and renegotiated meanings. Not only does

knowledge, viewed in this way, become problematic but there is a tendency to ignore the constraints placed upon actors in the educational situation by external structuring. For example, studies based on a conflict (materialist) approach indicate that individual choice appears to be strongly influenced by economic organization (Wilson:1982; Roos:1982; Oakes:1982); educational choice and knowledge perception would appear to be equally vulnerable to macrostructural sanctions.

### **The Interactionist perspective, women and relations of power:**

Although a number of researchers have analysed the process of power relations (Hammersley, 1976), what those taking the interactionist perspective generally look at are the methods by which power is manifested, not the means by which power or authority is originally established. In addition, though interactionist studies often reveal gender discrimination in operation, they have thus far rarely focused on the nature of this aspect of the interaction. For example, Hammersley quotes the teacher utterance: "Now - **WILL YOU STOP BEING SO SILLY** the next boy who laughs in that stupid manner like a little girl I shall drop on quickly" (Hammersley, 1976:111). Hammersley notes that the identification of pupil action with derogatory terms of silliness, stupidity and girlishness is used to establish teacher authority. What is not questioned in this explanation is the fact that "girl", a term identifying or "signifying" a human grouping, is equated with negative concepts and unacceptable behaviour; how such an identification originated; and how it is continually legitimated in the context. In other words why the term "girl" should be a means of the teacher's establishing authority.

### **Interactionist theory and the problem of social change:**

Using the interactionist perspective, change is viewed as arising out of the differing



interpretations of individuals of their personal and collective situations. Because the individual make-up of the social collective or group is constantly changing, (individuals arriving and leaving) the nature of the group itself, the unifying concepts and objectives, undergo modification. The interactionist position that knowledge is a continuously created construct allows for the possibility of change as individuals recreate reality on the basis of their interpretations of experience. However, this same emphasis on "man the creator" as Karabel and Halsey point out "often fails to take adequate account of the social constraints on human actors in everyday life" (Karabel and Halsey, 1976:58). The tendency to ignore the power of structural features of society to affect the manner in which individuals act and interact, reduces the ability of the theory to provide adequate projections for change.

However, the focus on knowledge as individually constructed does allow for the possibility of differential interests within a group class or social institution. The theory suggests that change may arise from a conflict of interests between social groupings. Using this perspective, gender stratification within social classes (Nielsen, 1978) can be viewed as a potential source of change to the extent that it produces conflict of interests.

What interactionist theory does not adequately explain is why some forms of change are accepted (legitimated) while others are not. The repetitive nature of history and of the forms of knowledge transmitted is ignored. In educational terms, while the nature of authority relations is analysed, the effects of such relations in restricting change are ignored. The possibilities of change are left to the individual, hence the teacher, as the authority in teacher/student, relationships is seen as the source of change and the source of reproduction of inequalitarian relationships. The nature of the structure of the educational institution, educational system, economic system or overall social system in terms of how it may act to structure the individual is not considered. Change is viewed as the inevitable consequence of social action and interaction; the actuality of change in relation to social structuring is not questioned since it is considered to exist a fortiori, within the definition of interaction.

### **The Interactionist perspective and the social position of women:**

The interactionist perspective questions the validity of using quantitative empirical methods alone to provide adequate information on social relationships, since social relationships are viewed as the result of a constant process of action and interaction, based on the individual actors' interpretation of and communication within, a given situation. To understand why individuals act as they do it is necessary to understand the meaning the objects of that world have for the individuals who comprise it. Such a viewpoint with its demand for a methodology involving analysis of the descriptive accounts of the actors themselves and of "objective" surveys of their active situations, has potential implications for the analysis of the social position of women. As Armstrong and Armstrong (1982) have pointed out, present research techniques, operating on the assumptions of patriarchal ideology, have tended either not to gather, or to hide (inadvertent though it may be), information concerning women. Furthermore, Smith (1975) argues that male control of social, economic, and political organization originates and perpetuates a male-oriented, male-interested ideology which ignores female perspectives, interests and needs. The interactionist focus on constructed knowledge/reality with its apparently inherent requirement of non-quantifiable analysis contains the potential for analysis of female determinations of meaning, interest and need, rather than meaning, interests and need which is apparently assumed for females by males.

By looking at the actions and interpretations of individuals within situations, the interactionist approach can do much to reveal the reality of women's social status and how perceptions of this status are transmitted. The belittling revealed in the the Hammersley study (1976) noted above, is confirmed in the work of other researchers (Llewellyn, 1980; Spender and Sarah, 1980; Russell, 1987). Clarricoates (1980) notes how gender discrimination is transmitted to young children in primary school via prescriptive statements, originating from the teacher and reproduced in pupil-pupil interactions.

However, such an approach de-emphasizes the influence of structural factors. It therefore, is not adequate in itself to account for the continued segregation of women from politics, or from top executive or administrative posts (Blaxall and Reagan, 1976; Mednick, Tangri and Hoffman, 1975; Adams and Vickers, 1977; Wilson, 1982; Maroney and Luxton, 1987; Daresh, 1988). It is possible too, that, to the extent that the interactionist position focuses responsibility for the construction of reality exclusively on individuals, it may serve to relieve institutions of responsibility. For example, researchers into the wifebattering and rape phenomena have found that women's reaction to the situation tends to be self-blame and further dependence on the men responsible (Barry, 1979; Clark and Lewis, 1977; Hanmer, 1982; Skogan, 1981). While these phenomena tend usually to be treated as psychological, rather than sociological, they should (if the interactionist position is theoretically valid) also be explicable using the interactionist perspective. However, it is difficult to see how an individualistic solution could, in these cases, produce long term ameliorating social change.

## Appendix II

**Table 1: The Relationships of Action, Language, and Consciousness in  
Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action**

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TABLE 1				
<u>Types of Action</u>	<u>Validity Claim</u>	<u>Supporting Discourse</u>	<u>Dimension of Rationality</u>	<u>World &amp; Attitude</u>
(Means-end)				
1. Instrumental- strategic	Truth- efficiency	Empirical	Cognitive (6)	External & objectivating
(Understanding-meaning)				
2. Assertive- constative	Truth - fact	Theoretical	Cognitive	External & objectivating
3. Expressive (emotional and esthetic statements)	Truthfulness	Therapeutic-esthetic	Expressive	Subjective & emotive
4. Moral	Rightness	Practical	Moral	Social & conformative

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Note: This table was developed by the present writer as an attempt to schematize the relationships Habermas develops in his theory and to simplify and condense his arguments. The information presented in Table 1 is derived from the discussion in Habermas, 1979: 65-66; 1984: 8-42; T.A.McCarthy, 1979; and J.C. Alexander, 1985.

**Table 2**  
**Links between Stages of Development of Communicative Competence, Moral**  
**Consciousness and Social Integration**

Stages of Communicative Competence	Characteristics	Stages of Moral Consciousness	Characteristics	Stages of Social Integration
1. Symbolically Mediated Interaction	<imperativist <participants bound to performative attitudes.	Preconventional	<only consequences of action evaluated in case of conflict.	Neolithic <mythological worldview and action tightly integrated. <legal resolution of conflict pre-conventional - "eye for eye".
2. Propositionally Differentiated Speech	<participants can exchange roles. <system of reciprocal motivation, i.e., social roles. <actions distinguished from norms.	Conventional	<motives assessed independently of concrete action consequences. <conformity to social role or existing norm system.	Early Civilization <mythological worldviews separated from action. <worldviews function to legitimate authority. <conflict regulation by ruler administering justice (according to intent of action).
3. Argumentative Speech	<validity claims thematized. <statements treated hypothetically. <norms & roles require justification <principles distinguished from norms.	Post-Conventional	<norms no longer valid "quasi-naturally". <norms require justification via universal principles.	Developed Civ. <rationalized worldviews. <post-conventional legal & moral representation. <conflict regulation demands conventional morality from ruler - system of law.
4. -----	-----	-----	-----	Modern-Age <differentiation of action domain - strategic & moral. <universalistic principles. <universal doctrines of legitimation <strict separation of legality & morality.

Note: Table developed by present writer based on discussion in Habermas, 1979;1984.

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