RACE, CLASS AND GENDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

RACE, CLASS AND GENDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

THE EXPERIENCES

OF

DOCTORAL STUDENTS

By

SHARON V. SUKHDEO, B.A. HONS.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

MASTER OF ARTS (1996)   McMaster University
(Sociology)   Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Race, Class and Gender in Higher Education: The
Experiences of Doctoral Students

AUTHOR: Sharon V. Sukhdeo, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Jane Synge

NUMBER OF PAGES: ix, 279

ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that the inequalities of the larger society are perpetuated and reinforced in the educational setting. Furthermore, recent literature demonstrates that the inequalities of race, class and gender shape students' experiences in graduate school. This thesis explores how these inequalities shape students' experiences. More specifically, we explore how the inequalities of race, class and gender affect senior students in Ph.D. programmes. We demonstrate that these inequalities have implications for the construction of knowledge and the extent to which students contest the dominant ideology.

This study was conducted at a medium-sized Ontario university. We undertook a qualitative study. Intensive interviews were conducted with graduate students. A snowball sampling technique was used. They came from various departments in the following areas--- the humanities, the social sciences and the physical sciences. We used a theoretical framework emphasizing the concepts of ideology, consciousness, perceptions, subjectivity and structure.

The data reveal that students possess varying levels of consciousness of race, class and gender. Some students perceive that their social position has given them special advantages. This perception is held largely by white, middle-class males. Others believe that their social position has meant that they have encountered certain obstacles. This position is held largely by those of working-class backgrounds, women and ethnic minorities. Some students believe that race, class and gender are not important factors in shaping their education. Others believe that these factors have no effect at all. The latter perception is more common among science students. However, we did not study their perceptions of how race, class and gender will affect their chances of finding jobs and being successful in careers in theirfields. The researcher suggests that one's social position does affect the quality of one's graduate experience and the type of knowledge that one produces. However, the student's view of assessment and the academic record can also influence his/her academic experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of my committee. I would like to thank Jane Synge for her patience, understanding, encouragement, and her valuable insight and advice. Pam Sugiman helped a great deal in the initial stages of planning. Carl Cuneo gave some helpful suggestions throughout the entire thesis journey. Thank you all for your help and your time.

I would also like to thank all those students who agreed to participate in my study. In sharing their experiences, they allowed me to achieve great insight into my topic and they made the experience of interviewing very interesting.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of my family for their support, especially my parents. I give special thanks to my friends, especially to Michael for his understanding and above all his encouragement. Thanks to all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

This thesis explores the implications of social inequalities among doctoral students. Our goal is to describe how inequalities are established and how they are continued. We focus on the university setting. This is a place where dominant ideas are both created and disseminated. And it is here that students can prove themselves by demonstrating their particular talents and abilities. The university setting is particularly important for the discipline of sociology, since it is here that ideas are constructed, reconstructed, contested, moulded and shaped. Moreover, this is the context in which creativity and rational thought are fostered. Some of the research that is produced is beneficial to society. This comes about through the influence of the academy on social policy and on ways of seeing the world.

Most people do not think of the academy as a place where inequalities are reproduced and divisions reinforced.

However, as our review of the literature will demonstrate, people have different experiences, depending on where they stand in the social structure. Carol Schick, a graduate student who studied in the field of adult education, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, comments as follows on these two contradictory views of the university:

> ...the university [is a] place which, on the one hand, espouses values such as academic freedom, collegiality, democratic decision making, meritocracy, and the notion of education as leveller. On the other hand, we see that these values are defined in terms of a class system designed for and by patriarchy. The system is not different from one which supports the status quo and its economic values in wider society (1994:38).

This contradictory view of the university leads me to examine students' experiences, and to consider how these vary by race, class and gender. I also consider the implications of these inequalities for the production of knowledge. The differences in the various experiences of groups divided by race, class and gender tell us something about the constraints and freedoms that exist in the production of knowledge in the university setting.

By exploring graduate students' experiences, we will gain a better understanding of how race, class and gender influence research plans. I demonstrate how students' backgrounds shape their experiences. I also consider how the

university influences students' views of the significance of race, class and gender. To what extent do students' experiences differ according to these divisions? For example, is a consciousness of race, class and gender developed within the university? Ultimately, how do these divisions between students affect the reproduction of dominant ideologies and the structures of the educational system? And how do they affect the production of knowledge?

SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Patterns of access to higher education have changed considerably in the last few decades. For example, women currently constitute the majority of all post-secondary enrollments, both full-time and part-time, in Canada (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:170). It is not surprising then that there are also dramatic increases in the numbers of women at the M.A. and doctoral levels (Bellamy and Guppy,1991:171). Similarly, there have been increases in the numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds enrolled in post-secondary institutions[1] (Herberg, 1984:458). These increases are very significant for visible minorities, for example, blacks and Japanese (Herberg, 1984:458). Given these changing patterns of access, one can ask whether there is a corresponding change in the kinds of knowledge that is being

produced. For example, Phyllis Levy, (1982:50), a professor of education in the United States, feels there is a possibility that "the increase in the number of women in professional capacities may cause changes in the structure of inquiry." She explains in the following manner:

> Women often prefer cooperative to competitive modes and may be more likely than men to engage in cooperative research ... . [And since men too are beginning to realize the disadvantages of competition], professional behavior may shift from competition and empire building to cooperative joint ventures. This possibility would increase the opportunities for both creative women and men to make contributions to their fields (Levy, 1982:50).

Despite these changes, the chances of succeeding are greater for certain groups than others, once in university programmes. For example, although there are increases in the numbers of M.A. and doctoral degrees awarded to women, the majority are still earned by men (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:172). Furthermore, despite the fact that women have made significant advances in non-traditional fields (i.e. medicine, engineering), their numbers have also increased in those areas where women have long predominated, such as education and nursing (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:178).

Another group that faces formidable obstacles are students of working-class origins. The review of the literature will reveal that these graduate students have

greater difficulty fitting into and learning middle-class university culture. They also face greater financial difficulties (Langston, Kadi, Burnside, Sowinska, 1993; Dehli, 1991:61).

What we have then are various groups of people, both faculty and students, who in the past were virtually invisible at the higher levels of the education system, suddenly appearing in the academy (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:163-192). While this in itself represents progress, it may not indicate a unilinear progress. An examination of the significance of race, class and gender will aid in the exploration of the remaining obstacles. For example, how does one's identity in terms of race, class and/or gender shape one's university experience? Is a greater consciousness of race, class and gender developed within the university setting? What kind of "political" involvements do students engage in, both within and outside the university? Does the university prevent people from challenging the dominant ideologies and structures? Does it ever encourage them? In what ways?

In order to understand these aspects of the politics of the university, we need to draw on the concepts of "agency" and "power." There are a number of distinctive perspectives on agency and power. The debate revolves around the problem

of how structures (involving power relationships) determine
what individuals do, how structures are created, and what are
the limits, if any, on individuals' capacities to act
independently of structural constraints? In other words, what
are the limits, on human agency? The debate also involves
questions of whether power necessarily involves conflict and
coercion (Abercrombie et. al., 1994:329-330). Does power, as
a structural relationship, exist independently of the wills of
individuals (Abercrombie et. al., 1994:330)? While my study
will touch on some of these issues, it will not address the
larger philosophical issues of the origins and nature of the
dynamic between power and structure. We will simply suggest
that in any given situation an individual has the capability
of "achieving or bringing about goals which are desirable"
(Abercrombie et. al.,1994:329). For example, many accounts of
"women knowers"[2] reveal the methods by which educational
institutions discourage actions and goals of women (Hartman,
1991:13). They also reveal the methods by which women are
denied power (Hartman, 1991:13). However, my review of the
literature reveals that there are accounts written by women,
racial minorities and those of lower-class origins, taking
issue with dominant ideologies and structures. In the face of
constraints, people draw on their own capabilities (agency) in

order to mould, shape, deconstruct and reconstruct the structural arrangements of the society. What determines whether one fights the system or not? What determines whether one is successful or not in fighting the system? In this study, I will suggest some answers to these questions.

In order to study the agency/structure dynamic, I analyze students' accounts of teacher-student relations in the classroom and relations among students themselves. I also consider the world outside the classroom, which is often thought to be ordered on the basis of "objective"/"positive" knowledge. I am interested in how this world determines our method, mode of delivery and content of learning. Kate McKenna, a feminist activist, who studied in the graduate programme, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, in the early 1990s, has this to say:

> We (both teachers and students) become the starting point for analyzing how our educational practices are both constituted by and constitutive of ongoing relations of power. This suggests looking at the way the dominant ideology is inscribed in the form and content of the classroom material, the organization of the school, the daily classroom social relationships, the principles that structure the selection and organization of the curriculum, the discourse and practices of those who appear to have penetrated the ideology's logic (McKenna, 1991:118).

In my review of the literature, as well as in the

following chapters, I will use various collections of working-class women's and black women's experiences, to illustrate my research questions.[3] Therefore, many of the accounts that are offered are thoughtful personal accounts and not sociologists' interpretations.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

SOCIAL CLASS AND ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

After World War 11, there was massive expansion in educational systems in Western countries (Karabel and Halsey, 1977:12). Canada was no exception. It witnessed sharp increases in post-secondary enrollment during the 1960s (Porter, Porter and Blishen,1973:2). At that time, Canada was lacking in highly skilled and professional workers (Porter, Porter, and Blishen, 1973:2). In 1972, the Commission on Post-Secondary Education noted that higher education was an avenue that would lead to social and economic mobility (Porter, Porter, and Blishen, 1973:4). This was the case since modernization increasingly required skilled workers. Moreover, an expanding economy and rising incomes meant that workers could pay for their children's educations (Porter, Porter and Blishen, 1973:4). Education was also seen as providing personal fulfillment and as a badge of responsible

citizenship in a liberal society.

The Commission on Post-Secondary Education of 1972, recommended that all who wished to pursue higher education should be allowed access with many of the financial barriers being abolished (Porter, Porter, and Blishen, 1973:5). They also felt that equality of educational opportunity would be achieved. However, Porter, Porter and Blishen[4] (1973:5) demonstrate that the effort to equalize educational opportunity did not reduce inequality of income and wealth. In 1971, Porter, Porter and Blishen surveyed approximately nine-thousand high school students. As one would expect, they found that educational aspirations and expectations were related to class position. The financial status of students is a consideration very early in high school and determines what courses he/she will take and how far he/she will go (Porter, Porter and Blishen, 1973:110). Social class was more important than mental ability in determining how far students will go in high school (Porter, Porter and Blishen, 1973:110). Thus, students of lower-class status had lower aspirations and expectations and this was found to be related to their economic level (Porter, Porter and Blishen, 1973:110-111). Bowles and Gintis presented similar findings in the United States.

Since world War 1, there has been a dramatic increase
in the general level of education in the United
States,as well as considerable equalization of its
distribution among individuals. Yet economic mobility-
--ie., the degree to which economic success (income or
occupational status), is independent of family
background of individuals---has not changed measurably.
And the total effect of family background on
educational attainment (years of schooling) has
remained substantially constant. Thus, the evidence
indicates that, despite the vast increases in college
enrollments, the probability of a high school graduate
attending college is just as dependent on parental
socioeconomic status as it was thirty years ago
(1976:7).

The second important finding is in relation to sex. At

that time significantly fewer lower-class girls than boys

expected to go on to university (Porter, Porter, and Blishen,

1973:124). When family finances are scarce it is less likely

that money will be spent on girls than boys. Consequently,

girls plan their schooling realizing their lack of financial

support (Porter, Porter, and Blishen, 1973:124). In addition,

at the time of this study it was harder for girls to find

summer jobs and if they did find jobs their earnings were much

lower than those of boys (Porter, Porter, and Blishen,

1973:124). Thus, parents would have to assist girls to a

greater extent.

Porter, Porter and Blishen show that the ideal of equal

access of all social groups to education was not achieved.

This was partly because limited finances among the lower class

limited the education of their children and, consequently, their range of occupational choices. The educational system tends to mirror the inequalities that exist in society (Porter, Porter and Blishen, 1973:5; Bowles and Gintis, 1976:5). Social inequalities affect students' chances of entering the post-secondary system and the levels they reach (Porter, Porter and Blishen, 1973:77, 136; Bowles and Gintis, 1976:110).

EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH SINCE THE 1970S

What has happened since the 1970s? Bruce Curtis and his colleagues conclude that little has changed. They show that the child of an unskilled worker is about four times less likely to receive a university education than the child of a professional (Curtis et. al., 1992:9). They comment as follows:

> While Ontario people on average received more schooling than their parents did, working-class kids still receive less schooling, and a different kind of schooling, than do kids from middle-class or employer-class backgrounds... . More than a third of the people whose fathers were industrial workers, or were self-employed, dropped out of high school. Nearly half of those whose fathers were unskilled dropped out of high school. Less than [ten percent] of the people whose fathers were company managers or professionals dropped out of high school. Many daughters and sons of employers and professionals can't drop out of a public high school... anyway because they don't attend one--- they go to one of the many elite private schools in the province instead. Almost everyone who goes to one of

these private schools goes on to university (Curtis et. al., 1992:8-10).

Curtis and his colleagues (1992:11) go on to say that with the increase in structural unemployment and chronic underemployment in the last decade, the number of working-class children who are dropping out of high school is on the rise. This is due to the increases in tuition fees and the grade-point averages required for entry (Curtis et. al., 1992:11).

It is clear that those of the working class are still in a disadvantaged position in terms of access to education, than those of the middle and upper class. However, there has been a broadening in our thinking about the issue of equal access to education. In addition to the earlier focus on material measures of class and gender, attention is now being paid to the social and cultural manifestations of class and gender and to the ways in which they may shape educational aspirations. Furthermore, the issue of race is also being explored. For example, the review of research by James Côté and Anton Allahar (1994:42) reveals that in the United States a greater percentage of black and Hispanic students drop out of high school than do white students. The rates for white, black and Hispanic students respectively are 12.4 percent,

13.8 percent and 33 percent(Cote and Allahar, 1994:42). "Even those who actually make it through high school still have a difficult road to travel, because many are weeded out during these studies" (Côté and Allahar, 1994:41).

There is now an interest in the dynamics of race, class and gender once students enter the academy. This has come about as a response to the fact that there are many more different kinds of people in the university today than there were a few decades ago. For example, there are many more lower-class students, especially young women, enrolled in post-secondary institutions (Curtis et. al., 1992:10; Tokarczyk and Fay, 1993). Not only are there many more women (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:17), but there are also many more ethnic minorities (Herberg, 1984:458). Thus, researchers are now considering how the inequalities of the larger society are carried over and perpetuated within the academy. What this means is that it is possible that there are changes in the kinds of knowledge being produced. The dominant ideologies that once prevailed may now be questioned to a greater degree from many different viewpoints. Schick believes this to be the case:

> The Western, middle-class, male hegemony over the creation of knowledge at universities is being called into question, often by those who are not Western,

middle-class or male. Wanting more than minimal participation in the university, those who are not part of its original elite are challenging several traditional notions,including what counts as knowledge, how knowledge may be recognized, whose version of knowledge is credible (1994:7).

In the following section, I will provide a brief summary of this literature. Specifically, I will look at the question of whether inequalities based on race, class and gender prevent people from challenging the dominant ideology and structures and, if so, to what extent? What obstacles do students face because of their gender? Are these obstacles perceived and acted upon differently, depending on one's race or one's class position? And what form do these barriers assume? The obstacles that are faced are not only material, but may also be less tangible in form. For example, they may include feelings of inferiority, lack of confidence, and so on. What is the role of consciousness, subjectivity, and ideology? And how are these related to one another?

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

MATERIAL RESOURCES

The majority of students, at some time during their academic careers, face financial difficulties. However, this poses a greater obstacle for some students than others. Of

course, working-class students experience financial barriers most acutely. For these students, attending higher educational institutions would generally have been impossible without financial assistance from sources such as university scholarships and loans (Kadi, 1993:92; Burnside, 1993:145).

Not only do working-class students face financial problems because their parents cannot support them financially, but money can be withheld if parents do not approve of the pursuit of higher education. For example, Suzanne Sowinska (1993:156), a working-class woman and a professor, states that although her parents could have provided her with financial support, they refused[5]. The reason for this was that they did not want her "to go outside their world, to become unfamiliar, to become a part of any institution that they vaguely sensed were responsible for their manipulation and oppression" (Sowinska, 1993:156).

Lorna Marsden and her colleagues (1975:394) also document how individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds sometimes receive little or no psychological support from families. The lack of support, both financial and emotional, for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds means that they are less likely to complete their studies than those students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Marsden et.

al., 1975:394). Marsden and her colleagues explain why this
is the case:

> Those students from low [socioeconomic backgrounds] who
> perform only reasonably well are unlikely to be
> encouraged to remain in the system because of a lack of
> psychological or financial support from the university
> or their home. For these students, another year of
> university is a much greater risk. Students from
> medium and high [socioeconomic backgrounds], however,
> have more economic and psychological encouragement to
> remain... . By the time students graduate, the low
> socioeconomic background] students who remain are very
> highly selected and highly motivated people... . The
> social structure throughout their university life has
> reinforced high performance, high motivation, and high
> persistence with greater emphasis than among other
> students (1975:394).

Taking on part-time jobs often results in extended
academic careers. This pattern is characteristic of many of
the working-class. Donna Langston (1993:65), a working-class
woman and a college professor, reports that it took her twelve
years to complete her B.A. For the working class, the route
to academia is often "indirect" and "non-traditional." In
Langston's case, she had children and worked at numerous jobs
throughout her undergraduate career.

Reports reveal that "women constitute a larger
proportion of part-time students than men, particularly at the
undergraduate and [M.A.] levels and at the doctoral level,
half of all female students are part-time" (MacMillan,

1989:3). Furthermore, in 1988-89 women represented sixty-four percent of the total part-time enrolments (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:169). A substantial number are women returning after some years spent at home with children.

Part of this has to do with differential funding offered to graduate students in various disciplines. The life sciences and the physical sciences receive more funding for research assistantships than do the humanities and the social sciences (Haley, 1989:33). Since women tend to enter the humanities and social sciences, their financial resources are more limited. Haley (1989:33) notes, that in Ontario women entering chemistry, a non-traditional field, receive more research assistantships than women in other fields. They also have lower drop-out rates. Furthermore, the university does not give scholarships and assistantships to those who are not full-time students. Of course, this leads to the need to work off-campus (Haley, 1989:34).

Foreign students, especially those who are visa students, sometimes face great financial difficulties. The material presented in Chapter Six reveals that visa students, as well as some other students, feel this way. Some of the reasons for their greater financial difficulties include the following: higher tuition fees than Canadian students and

restrictions on working in Canada. Linda Carty, a black woman, and a professor of women's studies, gives her account of this issue:

> Being a student without financial support meant that I had to work throughout my post-secondary education, often times doing both on a full-time basis. In graduate school this was not unusual for most of the "non-white" students, especially those of us who were "fortunate" enough not to be designated as foreign students. Now, in my post-student life, I often wonder how I managed to work, be fairly active in departmental politics, remain actively involved in my community and still complete my doctoral studies in average time (1991:38).

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF UNIVERSITIES

The way the university itself is structured can create barriers for certain groups. Brian MacMillan (1989:3), a research associate of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies, notes that at the faculty level there are only small numbers of women in each division. Furthermore, while women constitute a sizeable proportion of the faculty in fields such as education, nursing and French, they constitute a very small proportion in disciplines such as engineering, physiology, mathematics and anatomy (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:185). Few women hold administrative positions, except, of course, as directors of such programmes as women's studies or nursing. This is significant as it means there is a lack of role models for women at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. "The

consequence of all this is that the majority of students on both college and university campuses (i.e. women), are instructed by men of senior rank, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields from which growing numbers of women graduate (e.g. commerce, law, medicine)" (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:185).

SUBJECTIVITY, IDENTITY AND PERCEPTIONS

SOCIALIZATION

Every individual is born into an "objective social structure," where he/she comes into contact with significant others who are responsible for his/her socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:131). These significant others are forced upon him/her, and their definitions of his/her situation are related to him/her as "objective reality." The significant others who socialize the individual "select aspects of it in accordance with their own location in the social structure, and also by virtue of their individual, biographically rooted idiosyncracies" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:131). Socialization has implications for the formation of individual identities and the development of subjective realities.

SOCIALIZATION AND THE LOWER-CLASS

While the mechanisms by which socialization takes place are the same for all, the lower-class child not only adopts a

lower-class perspective (identity) on the world, he/she internalizes it according to the "idiosyncratic coloration" communicated by his/her parents (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:131). As a result, the lower-class child will come to reside in a world quite different from that of an upper-class child (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:131).

What is learned during early socialization is difficult to overcome in secondary socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:140). However, the following discussion demonstrates that some of what has been learned in early socialization can be overcome, at least partially. This is demonstrated by the following accounts of working-class women who have succeeded in higher education, despite the fact that their family and friends did not.

THE WORLD OF THE WORKING-CLASS

Joanna Kadi, a working-class woman, now a professor, addresses the issue of cultural capital and systemic discrimination. In her view, lower-class individuals lack cultural capital in comparison with those of middle- and upper-class backgrounds (Kadi, 1993:89; Sennett and Cobb, 1973:22-23). Kadi grew up in the 1960s, in a small town where most people were employed by General Motors. She discusses the early socialization of lower-class children and says that

the main lesson that she learned in kindergarten was that she was excluded. This exclusion was primarily shaped by distinct class divisions (Kadi, 1993:90). In this town, one's father either worked on the line or in the office. It was widely known that those whose fathers worked on the line were not a part of the core or centre. Children whose fathers were white-collar employees received the most attention from teachers and were given special consideration by them (Kadi, 1993:90). This group of children often picked mercilessly on those whom they perceived as "lower" than themselves--poor children. The "victims" rarely retaliated. They all "knew" that it was true. Some people were "better" than others (Kadi, 1993:90). Kari Dehli, a middle-class woman and a professor, comments on the situation of the working-class in the small town in which she grew up. She speaks of the "implicit" and "explicit" norms that regulated behaviour and identity.

> Without any direct comment, we as children knew who the children were who represented "trouble," whose parents were poor, whose mothers were found lacking, who came from "broken homes," whose fathers could be seen drunk in the street. Some of these differences were clearly markers of class (Dehli, 1991:61).

These sharp class divisions continue in high school and university. Kadi (1993:90) found that her middle-class

friends would often comment on her modest home "in the sticks." Her teachers would not discuss plans for university with her, even though she received excellent grades in all subjects. In the 1960s in the United States, Aaron Cicourel and John Kitsuse conducted a classic study that addressed the issue of social class and support and encouragement from counselors. Since the American high school is committed to identifying talent and increasing the number of "college-going" students, the perceptions of counselors play an important part in this process (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963:145). "Counselors will tend to devote more of their time and activities to those students who plan and are most likely to go to college and whose parents actively support their plans and make frequent inquiries at the school about their progress—namely, the students from the middle and upper social classes" (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963:145). Therefore, if there are two students of equal ability, one from the middle class, a potential college candidate, and the other from the lower class, both failing courses, the counselor will call the middle-class student in for a conference. Inquiries will be made about the situation (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963:145). In contrast, the lower-class student will tend to be neglected. Kitsuse and Cicourel evaluate this process as

follows:

> The differential attention given to students of middle
> and upper social classes is not here seen as a result
> of direct class pressures applied by parents, but as
> an effect of the counselor's conceptions of the type
> of student who should be doing better, who "wont make
> it if he doesn't apply himself," whose parents "will be
> very upset if he isn't accepted at X University"... .
> It is the college-going student more than his non-
> college-going peer that is continually reminded by his
> teachers, counselor, parents, and peers of the decisive
> importance of academic achievement to the realization
> of his ambitions and who becomes progressively
> committed to this singular standard of self-evaluation
> (1963:145-6).

Jacqueline Burnside (1993:145), a working-class woman, and now a professor, notes that she developed a class consciousness and learned the dominant ideas about class through her casual conversations with peers at university. In discussing the education of family members, many of her fellow colleagues revealed that their parents had college degrees (even doctorates). In fact, many of her class-mates had grandparents who were graduates (Burnside, 1993:145). In contrast, Burnside's grandparents had only achieved basic literacy skills. This has implications for the offspring, because they are not familiar with the kind of language used in academic circles (Burnside, 1993:145).

Another barrier to the working-class is their cultural norms and values which are often interpreted as "the way life

should be" or as "the natural order of things." Kadi recollects a group of boys who were strapped frequently and who did not care how well they did at school. They were aware, as were most working-class boys, that they were only passing time in an institution that would not help them with their futures (Kadi, 1993:90). Similarly, shortly after grade eight many girls either dropped out or became pregnant (Kadi, 1993:90). These perceptions of the "way life should be" prevent many working-class children from pursuing higher education.

A further barrier is lack of emotional support from parents who do not support their children's goals to go on to higher education (Marsden et. al., 1975:394). Sowinska (1993:156) says that her parents openly tried to discourage her from attending college. Her mother constantly told her that she would not be successful and that she would be lucky if she completed her first year. Langston comments on this issue:

> My family was very proud that I went on for my M.A. and Ph.D. but they couldn't quite understand why I would. It was odd and foreign to them. No one they personally knew had done such a thing. When I finished my Ph.D. my grandparents thought I had just finished my M.A. They weren't sure what the difference was between the two (1993:65).

Working-class academics also discuss feelings of isolation in the academy. Langston (1993:64) notes that both in college and in high school she continued to inhabit social circles that her friends did not. She says it was hard to maintain friendships with former classmates who were either out working or attending community college (Langston, 1993:64). Furthermore, she mentions feelings of betrayal in that she was entering higher education, and, therefore, entering a world of privilege not open to her friends or family. Sowinska (1993:152) likewise states "...to be in college and to be able to read and interpret texts meant freedom to experience words and worlds way beyond the grasp of what I had once considered available to me, but it also meant leaving behind familiar validations of experience and community offered by my family and friends."

Exacerbating these feelings, is the lack of support, guidance and mentoring for working-class women in academia. Langston (1993:68) suggests that this is a serious problem, since the network of family and friends of working-class students is not connected to academia. Thus, the emotional support that middle-class and upper-class students have available to them are often denied to those from lower-class backgrounds (Langston, 1993:68).

Despite these barriers, some working-class people do enter higher education. It is useful to consider Kadi's concept of the "conquered self." This term refers to a process by which an individual "buys into" the ideology of the legitimacy of class divisions. The question of belonging is strongly related to the overriding issue of the "conquest of the self" (Kadi, 1993:93). This term refers to the steps that one must take in order to overcome certain aspects of one's identity and to feel legitimate, content and worthy, once that goal has been reached. This can be difficult, because one's identity and one's social surroundings may contain elements that do not validate and may even contradict the desired goal. The "conquest of the self" is an "ongoing fluid process" in which one moves back and forth between the "conquered self" and the "conquest of the self." For some time, one may feel both internal oppression and also the beginnings of internal freedom. "One does not change over night from a defeated person to victor" (Kadi, 1993:93).

The most essential element that is needed in order to achieve conquest of the self" is an understanding of one's situation. This understanding involves the use of words that allow one to make sense of what happened to one in the context of one's community (Kadi, 1993:94). It also involves coming

to terms with one's position as a working-class person, and realizing that one is oppressed because of this position. One must come to understand that class oppression is not a biological phenomenon, but one that is political and finally, that change is possible (Kadi, 1993:94).

Various experiential accounts demonstrate that the self is never wholly conquered, and that individuals vacillate between the "conquered self" and the "liberated self." Most working-class accounts suggest that, no matter what level of higher education is achieved, some people still feel that they do not really belong in academia. Some people continue to feel that they are caught between "two worlds." Sowinska describes this problem:

> Even today I am sometimes haunted by echoes of the shame I once felt but had no words for. I feel a great deal of sadness for the young scholar who carried that shame around and at the same time I am embarrassed by the "simple beliefs" I once had. My newly gained sense of entitlement often seems too fragile to sustain me, and if I'm not careful I can still become too paralyzed to use the privilege in my education to speak. But at last, after a long struggle, I have no need to discard my family or cultural values. I live instead in a strangely ambiguous middle ground, insisting on the validity of my working-class roots and experiences, yet also feeling outside of them, transported by means of education and political awareness to another place I can't quite call home (1993:60).

Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb discuss this issue in

their classic study of the American working class. They term the discontent caused by upward mobility "status incongruity" (Sennett and Cobb, 1973:21). Even though some working-class men attain middle-class jobs and move into middle-class neighbourhoods, they may feel unworthy and discontented. Part of this is the result of a particular American ideology that suggests that one can improve one's circumstances if one has the ambition and the desire. If one does not improve one's social standing, no one is to be blamed but one's self (Sennett and Cobb, 1973:250-251). Thus, it is felt that high culture, which includes education, is necessary in order to exercise self-control (a sign of dignity), in order to earn respect and in order to be in a position to judge others. These are, of course, middle-class attributes and some working-class people strive to achieve these status symbols in order to win respect (Sennett and Cobb, 1973:22). The irony lies in the fact that the working-class individual also views these middle-class privileges with disrespect. In the process, the individual loses respect for himself/herself." And yet, paradoxically, he doesn't respect the content of their [educated people's] powers: just as intellect gives a man respect in the world, the educated do nothing worth respecting; their status means they can cheat" (Sennett and

Cobb, 1973:22). Working-class people feel that there is an honesty in their culture, and that this is lacking in middle-class culture (Sennett and Cobb, 1973:21).

It should be noted that so far we have discussed only the socialization and resulting identities and subjective realities of the working-class. As mentioned before, the mechanisms of socialization are the same for all. However, one's placement in a race, class and gender hierarchy will expose one to a particular set of social structures and ideologies. This has implications for one's identity, for one's subjective reality, and for one's level of consciousness. For example, Tim Dant (1991:166-183), an American professor of sociology, studying in Marxism and ideology, suggests that women's placement in a patriarchal society has implications for how they will view the world and interpret their lives. Similarly, Carty (1991:33) states that the experiences of people of colour is a result of their social position in an advanced capitalist society, and of social hierarchies based on race. These larger societal issues are carried over into academia. A detailed discussion of these issues relating to the dynamics of consciousness will be presented in Chapter Three.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Another pertinent body of literature is the material on the social construction of knowledge. We will now consider the ideas of Karl Marx on this topic. This research considers whose ideas are the ruling ideas, and how these ideas are accorded legitimacy. According to the Ruling-Ideas Proposition, ideas are socially produced, but some ideas are more influential and "legitimate" than others (Marx and Engels, 1970:64). In 1845, Marx and Engels wrote "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Mackie, 1988:7; Marx, 1970:64). The production and distribution of ideas are regulated by powerful people. These ideas reflect an attempt by the most powerful to protect their own interests. When the less powerful groups accept as valid and authoritative the ruling ideas of the more powerful groups they are participating in false consciousness (Mackie, 1988:7). We are, of course, speaking of ideology. This is a controversial concept in sociology. The term will be used here to refer to "any set of beliefs, covering everything from scientific knowledge, to religion, to everyday beliefs about proper conduct, irrespective of whether it is true or false" (Abercrombie et.al., 1994:206).

Ideologies are often used to guide and conduct our

daily lives. They determine what is "proper" behaviour, values and thought. However, individuals do have some autonomy (agency). They do have some freedom to think creatively about the imposed ideologies (Dant, 1991:19). These issues of knowledge, ideology and agency will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Three.

KNOWLEDGE AND GENDER

Dorothy Smith (1991:179) addresses the issue of the construction of knowledge in respect to power relations between men and women. Female and male intellectual worlds are unequal in status (Smith, 1991:179). If mental production is the privilege of the "ruling class," and men dominate women, then the authoritative perspective, the ideas that matter, obviously originate with men. Smith discusses ideological structures and the formulation of ideas. She says that the method of organizing society ideologically has its origins in Western Europe some four to five hundred years ago. It has, of course, been dominated by men (Smith, 1991:233). The educational system is one of the instruments through which this is accomplished. It is the arena in which people are trained and encouraged to adhere to the dominant ideas of their society (Smith, 1991:240). However, these ideas are primarily formulated by white men. Schick (1994:10) notes

that "the traditional university education was designed for and by upper- and middle-class white men."

Marlene Mackie, a Canadian professor of sociology, also focuses on the theme of the construction of knowledge. She says that before the women's movement (when women started to openly question men's dominance), men held "normative power," "the right to define what was appropriate, legitimate, important" (Mackie, 1988:5). The collection of data, the interpretation of results and what was seen as credible research and publication of findings were all largely controlled by men. Smith (1974) notes, "How sociology is thought---its methods, conceptual schemes and theories---has been based on and built up within, the male social universe" (Mackie, 1988:5). Women sociologists were trained by men in a male-dominated system, where only masculine ideology held legitimacy. In order for a woman to succeed, she had to accept this masculine ideology as her own (Mackie, 1988:5). Men were accorded legitimacy because of their gender, not because of their arguments or explanations (Mackie, 1988:6). Furthermore, "men have been the traditional gatekeepers of academia, reviewers of graduate thesis prospectuses, appraisers of proposals for research funding, editors of journals and books" (Mackie, 1988:6). Dale Spender (1981)

points out that publishing is essential, because what does not
get printed simply does not exist (Mackie, 1988:6).

Smith (1991:245) cites studies which reveal that men
are more likely to be viewed as authoritative. Consequently,
their ideas and thoughts are accorded more legitimacy,
credibility and validity. Written words are merely written
words, until they are given force by the authority attributed
to the "author" (Smith, 1991:245). "This effect must
generally diminish the authority of women teachers (at all
levels) vis-a-vis students" (Smith, 1991:246). According to
Smith, when women have no authority, they have no power. The
forms of knowledge and the construction of knowledge will
continue to be predominantly male, and any attempt to negate
these types and modes of knowledge will not be judged as
credible (Smith, 1991:246).

KNOWLEDGE AND RACE IN RELATION TO GENDER

Carty, reflects on her experiences in academia as a
black woman. She discusses how the claims to knowledge that
are given credibility and validity through universities have
been mainly Eurocentric, white and male and, therefore,
essentially gender-biased and racist (Carty, 1991:16). She
can recall having sat in numerous classrooms where she had to
listen to racist professors, both men and women, speak about

a world that was white (Carty, 1991:13). To have her very being denied on a daily basis signalled to her that, not only was her presence not recognized, neither was her history (Carty, 1991:13).

Carty also discusses the inadequacy of both feminist and mainstream approaches in addressing the issue of race. This has led black women to rely on their own agency. "Black women are developing alternative epistemologies for dealing with their 'outsider within' status and these are challenging both feminist and mainstream knowledge claims" (Carty, 1991:160). Marlee Kline (1991:139), another black feminist, argues that white feminists appeal to a universal oppression that are experienced by women of colour. Thus, in ignoring that relations among women are hierarchical, white feminists fail to realize that in a world dominated by white people, women of colour are always in a subordinate position because of race. Significantly, women of colour experience both gender oppression and race and class oppression. They experience them simultaneously (Kline, 1991:46-50; Carty, 1991:27).

What does this lack of understanding about the various forms of oppression mean for students of colour? According to Patricia Williams (1991:82), a black law professor, a major

problem is that a taxing burden is placed on black students.

Either they must unquestioningly accept certain racist

assumptions, or, even if they do question the assumptions,

they must ignore any ideologies that contradict the dominant,

accepted ideologies (Williams, 1991:82). They must do this in

order to pass examinations. This forces blacks to accept as

"truth" what Carty calls "common sense" knowledge,

stereotypes, misconceptions, and accounts that only tell half

of the story about ourselves (Williams, 1991:82). Carty

describes "common sense" knowledge as follows:

> The ideology of domination manifests itself in many
> ways which encourage people to accept unquestioningly
> the myths and beliefs about the social world. This too
> is a form of knowledge based on what some authors have
> referred to as "common sense"---it is taken as what we
> all "know," it can be exaggerated and distorted, but it
> is largely accepted by all... . Common sense knowledge
> then is often oppositional and always contradictory.
> Yet because it appeals to the larger society without
> demanding any intellectualizing for its notions to be
> legitimized, ideology which can be transmitted as
> common sense is beneficial to those in control of the
> relations of ruling (1991:27-28).

In the case of law students, if one fails to follow the

"proper" mode of thought, one is labelled as being unable to

"think like a lawyer" (Williams, 1991:82).

Carty (1991:22) notes that marginalized groups, whose

experiences are often negated, often engage in resistance.

This resistance comes from an "outside knowledge" and a refusal to give up this knowledge. "We [black women] know the knowledge claims that he [the professor] puts forward and what they represent and we know these knowledge claims to be incorrect in the face of what we know about the world..." (Carty, 1991:23).

POTENTIAL CHANGES

What does all of this mean in terms of change in the patriarchal structure of education? Gisele Thibault, a professor of education in Canada, gives a bleak outlook. She says that a great deal of the potential for change has been lost to pervasive beliefs that feminist scholarship is deficient in terms of academic "depth and rigour" or that subject matter to be studied in relation to women is limited (Thibault, 1988:88). Furthermore, many have suggested that feminist research is "biased," "trivial" or "trendy" (Thibault, 1988:88). However, Thibault finds a ray of hope. She says that these ideas may be undermined by the extensive publication of a vast array of literature by and about women. Also important is the recent increase in feminist courses. However, with retrenchments and financial cutbacks, there will be great competition in publishing and the hiring of women in academia will also be affected (Thibault, 1988:88).

Others also believe that women have made advances but they still have to face many obstacles. For example, Louise Lamphere, an anthropology professor, writes:

> Feminist anthropologists can be proud of the fact that we have made more of an impact on the major publications in our field than is true of some other disciplines, but we still have a long way to go in terms of making women and analysis of women central to many of the major topics anthropologists study. At a more basic level, it is also apparent that the feminist literature on women has not been incorporated in general anthropology courses, especially those at the introductory level, which are usually the undergraduate student's only exposure to human prehistory and cross cultural diversity (1987:27).

The same ambivalence about change and progress is felt by black women. Carty comments:

> As a black woman now teaching university in a society where this is extremely rare, I am aware, like the few other "non-white" women in a similar position, of the unique opportunity I now have to redress some of the historical inaccuracies perpetuated by Eurocentric scholars, including feminists, who refuse to recognize the changing nature of the social world. When I stand in front of virtually all-white classes..., attempting to discuss the implications of colonialism, imperialism and their connections to racism, and have to listen to students tell me that "non-whites" who come to Canada should be grateful to the government because they are given the opportunity to become much better off...I realize how much work there is to be done and how much I can contribute (1991:40-41).

POWER AND CULTURE

Foucault analyses the micro-politics of power relations in different localities, contexts and social situations. In his view, there is a close relationship between the systems of knowledge, or discourses, which stipulate techniques and practices for the purpose of social control and domination within particular settings (Harvey, 1989:45). These settings include such places as prisons, asylums, hospitals and universities, where power is independent of any totalizing schema of class domination. "What happens at each site cannot be understood by appeal to some overarching general theory" (Harvey, 1989:45).

In the university, power is located in its customs, which make up its culture. Some of these include the following---the use of networks, formal and informal interaction, and badges of ability. There are certain cues and symbols of belonging. Accents, modes of dress and ways of speaking are all important.

MICRO-POLITICS OF POWER

Levy (1982:47) sees the culture of the university as being based on male characteristics. Schick also notes this pattern:

The context and discourse of the university have

already outlined the identity of the person who will
pass through the classroom door. That outline takes
the shape of a white male or anyone else who can or is
willing to conform to the norms set by this dominating
figure (1994:36).

Like Schick, Levy discusses the work of psychiatrist

Anne Wilson Schaef. She address the four major myths about

white male society. These have been outlined by Schaef

(1978). First, there is the idea that the only society that

exists is that of the white male (Levy, 1982:47). These men

often say, "This is the way it works" or "It can't be done

that way." These statements are classified as "truth."

Second, white male societies are seen as inherently superior

to any other societies. Third, this system knows all and

understands all. Fourth, it is held that there are such

definitive categories as the logical, rational and objective

and that it is possible to entertain all of these at the same

time (Levy, 1982:48). In other words, certain customs, for

example, modes of action, and types of speech, are seen as

constituting proper academic scholarship (McKenna, 1991:125).

These customs not only stipulate what is "proper behaviour,

but also what are "proper" research pursuits and otherwise

"emotional" or "political" pursuits. In other words, these

are "badges of ability."

Sennett and Cobb speak about badges of ability in reference to the working class and social mobility. Working-class people realize that, in order to gain respect, to feel dignified, adequate and legitimate, they must follow certain rules and obtain certain "badges of ability" (Sennett and Cobb, 1973:53-55). They must accept middle-class rules and ways of believing. They must place an emphasis on politeness and self-control. These badges of ability are symbols of self-worth, dignity and belonging (Sennett and Cobb, 1973:62-65). Dehli comments on this issue:

> The hidden curriculum of higher education rewards middle class students, thus producing and reproducing class relations. From an early age I learned to displace and express emotions, passions, joy, rage, and conflict through reasoning, talk and distanced, third person accounts (1991:64).

When these conventions are internalized, a form of "common interest" is created. This brings us into "reasonable" relation to the state and also to one another. Thus, we are taught that speech that is indirect and non-aggressive, that is "reasonable," is acceptable. We are taught that this is the only way that our anger and our politics can be tolerated (McKenna, 1991:126). However, in accepting this regulation, our politics and our views have already been, to some extent, altered. McKenna (1991:126)

notes that the rules of politeness and rationality that govern social dialogues relegate certain topics to the status of "impolite," that certain tones of voice or emotions are "irrational," and that certain issues that are political are labelled psychological.

Rosabeth Kanter (1977), in her research on an American corporation, discusses the cues and symbols of belonging in a male-dominated institution. Although her study involves a corporation, she says that her findings can be extrapolated to all large bureaucracies, including universities. She says that a "masculine ethic" stressing rationality, efficiency and a "tough-minded unemotional" approach to solving problems, were seen as signs of competent management (Kanter, 1977:20-22). These characteristics were thought to belong to men. However, all managers in the beginning were largely white men of Protestant backgrounds from elite schools. When women began to enter management, the "masculine ethic" was used against them as a tool of exclusion (Kanter, 1977:22). Some of the accusations lodged against women were that they were "temperamentally unfit for management," "incomprehensible," "unpredictable" and "not really ambitious" (Kanter, 1977:58). Men made the following kinds of comments, "They changed their minds all the time," "I never knew what they'd do from one

minute to the next," "With women's lib[eration] around I never knew what to call them, how to treat them" (Kanter, 1977:58).

Women were forced to conform to men's standards in order to be seen as competent and to belong. This did not always result in the desired outcomes. Kanter explains why this was the case.

> There was a decided wish to avoid those people with whom communication was felt to be uncomfortable, those who took time to figure out or seemed unpredictable in their conduct. Deviants and nonconforms were certainly suspect for this reason. Even people who looked different raised questions, because the difference in appearance might signify a different realm and range of meanings in communication (1977:58).

Indeed, many female professors tend to be judged on the basis of male qualities. For example, they are expected to be impersonal, objective and unemotional. Those who teach from a feminine perspective and who consider such issues as gender oppression and patriarchy, are more at risk to this kind of evaluation. This is because within the academy, feminism has been equated with "opinion" (Heald, 1991:144). For example, a study conducted by Susan Heald (1989) on sociology undergraduates at a Canadian university in the late 1980s, revealed that only three out of ninety-four students enrolled in a sociology course had anything positive to say about women and feminist issues (Ng, 1991:104). One feminist professor

found that the majority of students found her method of teaching to be "problematic." She "digresses" somewhat from the formal curriculum. One student wrote of her as follows---"a slightly opinionated personality emerged on feminist issues which is all right but sometimes took the topic under discussion astray" (Ng, 1991:104). Thus, students' perceptions of proper conduct and professorial competence are based on behaviours that are judged as traditionally male. These include the following---a formal style of teaching, little student give-and-take, the transmission of a given body of content and little attention to process (Heald, 1991:144).

Styles of speech are also seen as either signalling competence or lack thereof. They also are indicative of belonging or not belonging to university culture. It is well documented that women's styles of speech lead them to participate in conversations in ways that silence them. For example, women talking with men often use styles of speech which turn over the control to others (Smith, 1991:249). For example, women tend to use such interjections as "you know," and they are sometimes unable to name objects or to finish sentences (Smith, 1991:249). Mary Belenky and her colleagues comment as follows:

When women's talk is assessed against standards

established by men's behaviour, it is seen as tentative, vacillating, and diminutive (Lakoff 1975). The pattern of discourse that women have developed, however, may best be considered as an appropriate response to women's work. The care of children, or maternal practice, gives rise to maternal thought and particular modes of relating to the world (Ruddick 1988)... . [For example], mothers may intuit that drawing out the child's ideas helps him or her to articulate and develop emotions and thoughts (1986:189).

In terms of class, it is evident that lower-class people must make conscious efforts to alter their styles of speech in order to "pass" as middle-class (Sowinska, 1991:152). According to Langston (1993:72), "No matter how qualified we are, those of us from working-class backgrounds are seldom viewed as competent as someone with the 'proper middle-class mannerisms.' Furthermore, she says that she feels the safest when teaching and doing research. She feels the most threatened in meetings, serving on committees and attending socials, where she feels she does not belong.

Other cues of appropriate university culture include styles of dress. According to Levy (1982:55), wearing "sexy" or "sweet" clothes is a signal of incompetence. The "sweet image" also includes the following---always smiling, always nodding in agreement and refraining from taking a strong stand. This destroys the image of firmness that is required in order to be taken seriously (Levy, 1982:55). Langston

(1993:67) wrote the following: "I feel the need to dress up and look professional...it's easier for middle-class white male colleagues to wear jeans and sweatshirts and be respected by students."

Ethnic and racial minorities are also judged according to Eurocentric, white, male standards. Williams (1991:95) wrote as follows---"my braids are described as being swept up over my 'great bald dome of a skull'." This was an exact quotation from a student evaluation. Roxanna Ng, a professor of Chinese background, notes that, because of her small size, she was often described as "cute" by many students and colleagues. Despite the fact that these comments were often meant as compliments, she does not know why she always thinks of Susie Wong when addressed in this manner (Ng, 1991:105).

Physical characteristics (or being physically "normal") and sexual orientation are also evaluative cues of belonging to university culture. Heald (1991:146) notes that she has never revealed that she is deaf or that she is a lesbian, because she wanted to "pass" as normal. However, Himani Bannerji, a sociology professor of East Indian background, demonstrates that some women have to strive to achieve multiple "badges of ability" in order fit the "academic image." She has this to say:

> Working in a course on "Male-Female Relations" which I co-designed and co-taught for six years with a colleague---who is male, white, older, taller, bigger and full-time faculty---I saw the specificity of student response towards me, where I had continuously to work against my subordination. Whenever expertise or administration was at issue, my status as an equal worker had to be forcefully underlined. It was rarely, except technically, seen as my course as well (Bannerji, 1991:73).

INFORMAL INTERACTION AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Let us now consider interaction outside the office. Re search has revealed that women have fewer discussions with faculty members outside the office. They also have fewer discussions with their research advisors on the advisor's own research interests. Levy (1982:46) points out that this has major implications for the graduate student, because much of the "important work" in a bureaucracy is accomplished during these informal social times. She explains the ramifications of this pattern:

> Inclusion in such activities would mean forming stronger links with the white males who presently hold the power positions. This would affect one's experience as a graduate student as well as one's future on the job market (Levy, 1982:46).

Part of the problem has to do with the mentor-protégé system. A man has a greater chance of being taken on as a protégé (Levy, 1982:54). In a largely white male institution, it is fairly difficult to find a female role model who suits

one's "style of operation" (Levy, 1982:57; Dagg, 1989:29).

Levy recounts her own experience. She found that it was easier to find female students who would become her role models (Levy, 1982:57). This suggests that females have less incentive to seek out female professors who might adopt them as protégées. Kanter discusses the problems inherent in male mentorship of females:

> In a large, complex system, it is almost necessary for power to come from social connections, especially those outside of the immediate work group. Such connections need to be long-term and stable and include "sponsors" (mentors)... . Sponsors often provide the occasion for lower-level organization members to bypass the hierarchy to get inside information, to short-circuit cumbersome procedures, and to cut red tape... . Sponsors are absolutely essential for women. They offer behavioural advice and fight for them. However, sponsors are often hard to find for women. Research shows that leads choose to promote socially similar subordinates (1977:182-183).

Part of this has to do with the fact that some men are not sure how to interact with women other than as wives and secretaries (Kanter, 1977:42). Sometimes they simply did not know how to behave (Kanter, 1977:42; Levy, 1982:47).

Ella Haley (1989:32), a graduate student studying in the department of sociology at the University of Toronto, also discusses the exclusion of women from the mentor-protégée system and the collegial network (old boys' club). Haley's

study reveals that there are certain professors who harbour negative stereotypes about women students. These stem from their negative attitudes about "the potential of women students to complete programs and to be productive scholars" (Haley, 1989:32). This parallels Kanter's findings. Men regarded women as lacking dedication, loyalty and "single-minded" attachment, which they believed to be necessary to run a company (Kanter, 1977:68).

Women may be able to partly compensate for some of this lack of interaction with faculty or other such males by forming support networks among themselves. Katherine Tracey (1982:75), a professor, discusses the importance of support networks among women graduate students. "In a predominantly male institution we became each other's role models and helped build linkages to the professional world to follow" (Tracey, 1982:75).

People who belong to minority groups have even greater difficulty engaging in interactions with faculty and students. Bannerji (1991:69) noted that "Other students would talk among themselves with ease and were willingly responded to by the professors even when there were disagreements." These discussions would proceed as if she were not there. If she interjected some comment about "other" literature (e.g. "black

literature") there would be a lull in the classroom. During her interjection, students would look at each other and at the teachers (Bannerji, 1991:69). Indeed, Sharon Barnett (1982:64), a professor, states that the foreign student, in particular, experience a lack of support networks because family, friends, spouses and children may be thousands of miles away.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

This chapter began by describing the aims and goals of this thesis. To recap, we plan to examine how the inequalities that are associated with race, class and gender in the larger society are carried over into the university setting and how they affect graduate students' experiences. We also consider the implications of the race, class and gender dynamics for the production of knowledge.

The review of the literature revealed that there are now more students of various backgrounds entering the university than there were a few decades ago. It is suggested that this may have implications for the production of knowledge in the academy. Race, class and gender do have an impact on both students' and professors' experiences in university and, in turn, this shapes the production of knowledge.

While all students face barriers and obstacles, it seems that certain students face greater difficulties than others. Despite the constraints of many of these barriers, human agency is important in enabling some students to contest them. For example, the position of minorities in the social hierarchy leads them to have different experiences and different views of the world. Some students of minority background are able to draw on their own experiences, beliefs and agency in order to combat racial inequalities. Incentives and barriers to contesting traditional university structures will be examined in later chapters.

The question of how much of an impact these students and professors have made on the traditional university structure is up for debate. Some believe that great advances have been made. Alternative perspectives on the structure and values of the university are being published, and non-traditional courses such as those relating to feminist issues are being taught. Others feel that, even though the dominant ideologies and structures are being questioned from a greater number of view points, this does not mean these alternative perspectives are being taken seriously. These questions will be explored further in the following chapters.

ENDNOTES

1. To a large extent, this relates to changes in immigration patterns since 1970 (Mallea and Young, 1984:458).

2. This term refers to the knowledge that women derive from experiences normally (but not always) based on their gender. Thus, women come to feel that this body of knowledge is particularly relevant to them and helps them to explain their experiences of life.

3. Most of these personal accounts come from four books. Two of these books are from the United States. The titles are as follows---Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory (Michelle Tokarczyk and Elizabeth Fay, eds., 1993), The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View (Sue Vartuli, ed., 1982). The other two books are from Canada. The titles are as follows---The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from Travellers and Guides (Ardra Cole and David Hunt, eds., 1994), Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles (Himani Bannerji, Linda Carty, Kari Dehli, Susan Heald, Kate McKenna, eds., 1991).

4. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) offer a similar argument, although their study was carried out in the United States.

5. It should be noted that some middle-class parents also disapprove of lengthy educations for their daughters.

CHAPTER 2

THE SAMPLE

This chapter will familiarize the reader with the sample. First, we discuss the methodology and describe how the sample was obtained. We also provide a description of the general characteristics of the sample. Second, a more detailed discussion of the personal histories of specific respondents will indicate the types of students interviewed in this study.

METHODOLOGY

POPULATION

This research focuses on graduate students in the later stages of their doctoral work. Students in third year and beyond were interviewed. There are four main reasons for choosing this group. First, a major theme of this study is "the construction of knowledge." Doctoral students at this late stage will be more able to address this issue, since they will have more involved and complex research projects than those students writing M.A. theses. Many students at the M.A. level are just doing course work. Those writing M.A. theses

have undertaken more limited projects. Their work may have less personal significance to them. Second, the later years of the doctoral programme are an interesting stage since the consequences of various types of inequalities will have become apparent by this time. Of course, doctoral students sometimes experience problems. They must deal with the fact that funding is running out and the final stages of writing the Ph.D. thesis are under way. Third, doctoral students are more familiar with the culture of the university and are in a better position to offer greater insights into university life. Fourth, students at this stage generally know whether they will complete the programme.

Initially, in the humanities and social sciences several departments were chosen. The "physical sciences" were incorporated at a later date for reasons which will be explained later. Students came from the disciplines of English, history, sociology, classics and anthropology.

The physical sciences were incorporated in this study for two reasons. First, minority women were heavily underrepresented in the humanities and social sciences. However, there were a fair number of them in the physical sciences. Second, the experiences of science students provides an interesting contrast in terms of graduate

students' experiences and the theme of "the construction of knowledge." These interviewees were drawn from the following departments, Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Engineering Physics, Management Science (part of the Business faculty), Material Science and Engineering, Physics and Astronomy. For the sake of simplicity, all of these students are described as pursuing graduate degrees in the sciences. All students in the sciences are described as such in the thesis. Students in the Social Sciences and the Humanities are not designated by faculty. Thus, the reader knows that any student not designated as a student working in the sciences belongs to the other two faculties. These two groups showed certain characteristic patterns. In addition, this division of students into just two groups serves to protect the identities of students.

SETTING

The setting is a university located in a medium-sized city in Southern Ontario. Many of the graduate students are of middle-class origins and only a few are of working-class backgrounds[1].

THE SAMPLE

As has been described, the sample consists mainly of

humanities and social science students. The number of respondents from the sciences are somewhat less since this group was used primarily for the purposes of comparison. Similarly, there were twice as many women as men. Men's experiences were compared with women's experiences. While it might have been interesting to consider the experiences of students with disabilities, this was not within the scope of my project.

The majority of students are of middle-class origin. There were also a substantial number who were of upper-middle class origin. The third group, is comprised of a few students, who did not see themselves as belonging to any particular class. Many of these were visa students. Only a few were Canadians. The fourth group, which is similar but somewhat less in terms of numbers than the third, comprised those of working-class backgrounds.

Students were of a variety of races. Those Canadian students who are of visible minority backgrounds are described as such. We do not give details so that the identities of students can be protected. Sometimes we just use the term "a person belonging to a visible minority group" so that the student is not identified by race. Canadians who are not members of visible minority groups are described as Canadians.

Visa students were from the following regions: (1) Latin America (2) Asia (3) the Middle-East (4) Europe (5) the West Indies (6) Africa. All visa students, except those from Europe and the United States, are designated as coming from developing countries. The reader is then unable to identify students from certain countries or regions. This protects the identities of students. Of course, many of these countries are quite wealthy and some students come from moneyed families.

Visa students were included for the following reasons: (1) their experiences and cultural backgrounds will provide an interesting contrast (2) many of the minority students to be found on campus in the last stages of the doctoral programme are visa students. A description of the characteristics of students by faculty will follow.

In the Humanities nine respondents are women and six are men. The following numbers belong to each class division: (1) five of upper-middle-class backgrounds (2) five of middle-class backgrounds (3) three of working-class backgrounds and (4) two who do not feel they belong to any particular class. Ten students are white and five are visible minorities. Five students are visa students and ten are non-visa students.

In the Social Sciences four respondents are women and

none are men. The following numbers belong to each class division: (1) two of middle-class backgrounds (2) one of a working-class background and (3) one person who feels she does not belong to any particular class. One student is white and three are visible minorities. Two students are visa students and two are non-visa students.

In the Sciences eight respondents are women and five are men. The following numbers belong to each class division: (1) six of upper-middle-class backgrounds (2) four of middle-class backgrounds and (3) three who do not feel they belong to any particular class. Eight students are white and five are visible minorities. Six students are visa students and seven are non-visa students.

Only full-time students were interviewed. These people tend to be more integrated in university life. The goal was to interview students who were probably likely to finish in reasonable time. I did not place any upper limits on age as I felt the experiences of older students might provide interesting contrasts with those of younger ones. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to fifty, with the majority being in their late twenties to early thirties.

I used a variety of methods when gathering my sample. As I proceeded, I found I had to alter my original intentions.

The reasons for this will be explained later. First, I began by contacting various people in the various different humanities and social science departments I had originally chosen. I tried to find out using informal channels the numbers of students who were enrolled full-time in the fifth and sixth years (the original years chosen for this study), in the doctoral programme. There were approximately ten enrolled in each department. I would, therefore, have adequate numbers. However, there were very few students belonging to minority groups enrolled in the years I wished to study. In fact, there were only one or two in each department, and these were mostly men.

At that stage I realized that I would have to expand my range of years to include the third and fourth years, as well as the fifth and sixth years. The third year was the lowest year chosen since a major goal of my project was to explore "the construction of knowledge." My intention was to discuss the development of research topics. By the third year in the doctoral programme, most students have at least handed in a thesis proposal. In addition, I realized that I would have to go beyond the humanities and social sciences departments and that I would have to interview any minority group women I could find.

I used a snowball technique. This involved asking the few students who had replied to a letter I had posted in the department, to suggest names of colleagues, both in and outside their departments, who might be interested in participating in my study. Most of my respondents were contacted by this method. Sometimes other members of departments suggested students I might contact.

After six weeks of contacting students and interviewing, I came to realize that the numbers of minority group women in the humanities and social sciences in the later stages of doctoral programmes were very low. The only solution was to extend the group to include students in the physical sciences. I followed the aforementioned procedures in order to contact this group of people. A larger number of these respondents were found through other members of departments. Since science students have telephones in their offices, I contacted most of these students by telephone.

Towards the end of my interviewing, I asked the International Students Office to help me. Since I had already discovered the names of potential research subjects in the humanities and social sciences, I printed up a letter and asked this office to send it out to all the international students in their files, who were enrolled in doctoral

programmes in the physical sciences. This yielded two or three additional replies, bringing my numbers to thirty-two[2].

Protecting the identities of informants was a very important consideration. Respondents are never identified by a particular department or faculty. They fall into two groups, those in the Sciences and those in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Minor details have been changed in order to protect students' identities. Race and place of origin are often given in very general terms. Where descriptions of specific incidents might lead to the identification of individuals, details have been changed slightly. However, we remained true to the themes of the students' observations. Clearly, we are providing the students' perspectives, and we did not gather any information from faculty members. However, just as we tried to ensure that no graduate student could ever be identified, we also tried to ensure that no faculty member could be identified. Details that might lead to a person being identified were either omitted or changed slightly.

INTERVIEWING

I chose to interview students. Interviews are generally more effective when one is exploring complicated issues such those relating to race, class, gender and consciousness. Moreover, an interviewer is able to make

important observations and to interpret the responses to questions asked in the interview. This is useful when one is drawing conclusions as to what the respondent actually meant. The interviews were recorded. Most took place in my office. A few were carried out in the offices of the respondents.

THE QUESTIONS

Open-ended questions were used. This limits the researcher's structuring of responses. Therefore, a variety of responses are encouraged. Close-ended questions, on the other hand, may lead one to overlook some important issues. They also limit the range of possible answers.

The questions asked about the experiences of the graduate students in all facets of graduate school life. For example, they were asked about the following areas--- dissertation/thesis experiences, social and financial supports and coping mechanisms. The respondent was told that he or she was free to refuse to answer any question with which he or she did not feel comfortable. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix A.

THE PROCESS OF INTERVIEWING

Initially, I was somewhat worried that my status as black, female, and in my early twenties (younger than many of

the respondents I would interview) might hinder the
establishment of rapport. However, I did not sense that these
characteristics affected my respondents. As a matter of fact,
I feel that many female respondents were able to be open with
me. My status as a black person also enabled students from
minority groups to be open with me.

PERSONAL HISTORIES

This section presents profiles of graduate students who
are writing their theses. I will consider such issues as
their educational histories, their aspirations, their reasons
for coming to this university and their reasons for entering
a Ph.D. programme. A more detailed description of the
characteristics of the respondents will follow. Examples of
both the typical and the special or unique cases will be
presented.

CANADIAN STUDENTS

PROFILE #1

Elizabeth is a working-class woman of Canadian
background. She entered graduate school in her thirties. She
is interested in issues relating to race and immigration and
has a friend who is a person of colour. She states that her
conversations with her friend helps her in her work because

she can shed light on the racist aspects of academia. She

makes the following comment:

> We talk a lot, simply because I can really grab on to
> the racist aspect of things by talking to her. And
> even before I met her, I suspected that the basic
> theory of [my discipline] was racist. I used to call
> it ethnocentric, but it's more than ethnocentrism,
> because ethnocentrism is simply saying that we like our
> culture better than yours. And I don't see that as
> being detrimental! But when it becomes elevated to the
> level of some kind of power over other people, then it
> becomes racist. [My friend] sort of helped me to
> confirm that these feelings I had were valid. He's
> sort of a sounding board.

While Elizabeth's parents did not attend university,

all her siblings have graduated from university. The great

majority of our respondents have family members with

university degrees.

Elizabeth says that her immigrant working-class

background has led her to have strong opinions about class.

Few other respondents had strong feelings on this topic. She

says:

> I came here [to Canada] in my teens, so I had a notion
> of what something else looked like. So I've always
> looked at this society through critical eyes, because
> it wasn't the same as the way I was brought up. And
> when I would read this stuff, I began to realize how
> much my upbringing affected how I looked at [the
> literature in my discipline]. Of course, if you're
> talking to people here about that they don't even
> understand what you're saying. If they were born here,
> they have a very shallow understanding of history and
> they don't really seem to care about it. And that

really affects the way they write about other people.
They tend to be less sensitive to what we as [scholars
in our discipline] might be imposing on others. I mean
[people in my discipline] are supposed to be sensitive
to other cultures. So can you imagine what other
social scientists' attitudes are?

ACADEMIC HISTORY

It was her love of the social sciences that led
Elizabeth to pursue graduate studies. She states that she
chose this specific university because of the programme that
is offered. However, Elizabeth's student career has been
somewhat drawn out. She says that most students in her
discipline do not finish the doctoral programme in the five
years for which they are funded. She adds that, there are
numerous reasons why she herself has not yet completed her
dissertation. She has this to say:

> First of all, when funding ran out I had to take on
> jobs to get money. For example, I worked for a year
> and that allowed me to collect unemployment for a
> while. I could not work on my dissertation full-time
> because I had to work. You see, my children were still
> living with me then. And when you're a parent, you
> have to be more concerned about family responsibilities
> and what you're going to do when funding runs out. To
> top it all off, I've had all kinds of problems with my
> committee, because they don't like what I've written.
> And they've been slow at reading my chapters and
> getting them back to me.

Elizabeth says that she does not know what she will do
with her degree, or even if she will receive it. As a

student, she is dependent on her committee's assessment of the quality of her research. However, she is confident that people outside the university will be interested in it, and that her dissertation will eventually be published. Nonetheless, she says it will not bother her if she does not receive the degree. She states:

> If I don't get it, that's fine. At least I've done what I really wanted to do. And I know somebody will publish it. I've just been trying to get this part of my life out of the way.

Part of the reason why she is not upset about this is the fact that she does not necessarily want to work in a university setting. In the course of the research for her dissertation, she developed a strong desire to work in the areas of social work or teaching. She comments:

> If there's one thing my dissertation has taught me, it's to be far more critical and more open-minded where others are concerned. It has given me the basic language to speak with. And I've spent time with different people. Then my committee wants to take these people's experiences and beliefs and negate them. So I can see how immigrant who move here, having different values and beliefs, may have many difficulties.

PROFILE #2

Brad is in his late twenties. He is Canadian and is in the Sciences. He describes himself simply as Canadian. This was the pattern for about half of the respondents. As is the

case with the majority of respondents, several members of Brad's family have attended university. His father has a Ph.D., while his mother has a B.A. and works as a teacher. His brothers and sisters also have degrees.

Brad expresses some clearly articulated ideas about class. This is not typical of most science students. He places himself and his family in the middle class. He explains his views of class as follows:

> My family and myself are probably middle-class. But I think I'll probably get a good job when I'm done. So I might be upper-middle-class. This is based mostly on economics, although I recognize there are ethnic class divisions as well. So educational and ethnic class divisions are the big ones that I see. That would make me of the white, male, educated class.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Brad proceeded directly from his undergraduate work to graduate school. This is typical of a majority of respondents. His reasons for entering graduate school are as follows:

> It was something I wanted to do, and I had the marks. I liked doing research, and this is what graduate school gives me an opportunity to do.

Brad goes on to explain why he chose this particular university for his graduate work.

> I needed a good supervisor. I looked around the

country for somebody who could take me. It was a
professional choice, basically. I needed a supervisor
who could get me a job. I went into the [M.A.
programme] with an attitude that I was going to do
whatever interested me. And when I graduated from [the
M.A. programme] I knew that jobs were scarce, and it
was time to smarten up and do something that would get
me a job. The...department I was in for my [M.A] was
esoteric. The people there were not very practical.
But the...department here is a very practical, money
oriented department. You do the research that gets you
money. So choosing this university was a strictly
professional choice. Funding wasn't an issue because
students in [this department] are funded very well.

Other science students also report choosing this university

because of the reputations of potential supervisors and their

ability to get them jobs upon completion of their doctorates.

Brad is not certain whether he will be done on time.

However, he says that most people do not finish on time. Some

only go a few months over time, while a few take several years

to complete their degrees. He explains why some people take

more time.

Sometimes people choose a problem that does not work
out very well. It's important to choose a problem that
can be done. Sometimes people lose sight of what
they're doing. So they end up following tangents that
lead nowhere, and consume a great deal of time. I
mean, there are a lot of different reasons. In some
ways it is not reasonable to assume that somebody is
going to be able to finish a Ph.D. in three years. Four
years is reasonable.

Brad's goal is to get an academic position in a

university. He hopes that this will include doing research. This is his greatest love.

PROFILE #3

Crystal is a Canadian working in the Sciences. Her parents both have university degrees. However, her mother did not follow a career. Crystal gave the following explanation:

> My mother graduated, but she stopped working when she got married. So she's been a housewife most of her life. At the time my parents got married, it was not viewed very well that the wife would work if the husband is working. It would be viewed as the husband doesn't make enough money. It might not be the same in Ontario.

Several of Crystal's siblings have graduate degrees.

Crystal firmly believes that there are class divisions in Canadian society, but has difficulty explaining why they exist. She comments:

> Well, of course there are class division[s] in Canadian society. To answer why this is the case would take a long time. I would have to think about that to make a good answer. Anyway, it's not an easy question to answer.

She also believes that class is not necessarily a permanent status. She has this to say:

> My family, I would say, is middle-class, based on our education and income. I mean, we're not rich but we're not poor. I myself might be upper-middle

[class] because I'm doing well financially and when
I'm done I think I will get a high paying job. So I
think class status can change. It's also not always
clear what these class divisions mean. I mean, while
I think I'm well off now and definitely will be later,
some may say I'm not because I don't have a car or a
house.

All of Crystal's relatives reside in another province.

She says this does not bother her. In fact, she feels that

leaving her home province has been a positive experience. She

comments:

I'm quite happy I decided to leave. I think I've
learned a lot being here. I'm studying with people
from different countries. The...department is quite
multicultural, and it's very interesting. It enlarges
your view of the world to talk with other people, to
find out the similarities or the dissimilarities. The
people I am talking with are very lucky, because not
every one from their home countries can do what they
are doing. And I guess when I talk with my family now
we don't have the same view of people from different
cultures. But I think my family are learning from me
though. So it's okay.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Crystal did her undergraduate work in a branch of the

Sciences. She says she has two main reasons for pursuing

higher education.

One reason I [enrolled in] graduate school is because
the work I would like to do for a living is in research
and development. And at the time jobs were scarce. So
I decided the best thing would be to go to graduate
school, instead of looking for a job that might be hard
to find.

She goes on to explain why she chose this particular university.

> I decided to go into a certain field. So I asked two professors who were teaching me during my undergraduate to recommend some other professors to me. You have to be careful, you see, to take a professor who is publishing and who is active in research, and also takes care of his students. I mean, if you take somebody who has fifty students he's not even going to look at your work because he won't have time. So I asked them, and I picked this university because of my supervisor mostly. And I don't regret it! Location and money were also considerations. I decided that, if I stayed in Canada, it would be easier to get scholarships by being a Canadian citizen. So it was much easier to choose a Canadian university.

Crystal is confident that she will finish her degree soon. She says that most people in her department finish on time. Her goal is to find work in the area of her current research.

FOREIGN STUDENTS

PROFILE #4

Desmond is in his thirties, a visa student who belongs to a racial minority from a developing country.

> I come from a country where we have thirty-six different ethnic groups. One of the major groups is the [group to which I belong]. I describe myself as a member of [this] ethnic group.

Desmond has his wife and children living with him in

Canada. All other family members live in their home country.
Desmond's parents were farmers. Like most of the students
interviewed, he says that several other members of his family
have attended university.

Desmond believes that there are class divisions in
Canadian society, just as there are in all societies. He
says:

> Oh sure [there are class divisions in Canadian
> society), even though I don't know much about Canadian
> society. But one cannot say there is any society on
> earth without class divisions. And definitely the
> person from the rich background cannot pretend to
> belong to the same class as a person from a poor,
> deprived background.

Desmond says that class is a bigger issue here in
Canada than it is in his home country. He explains the
differences in the ways in which people experience class in
the two places.

> Class is not such a big issue back home because of the
> nature of what you call family units. We do not have
> single or nucleated family units. So the moment you
> become rich, you are respected as an upper-class
> person. And being rich or wealthy does not depend on
> money. It is based on how many people you can draw to
> yourself. The more people you have, the more respect
> you gain in the society. So that if you say you have
> money, and you have wealth and yet you have no one,
> nobody respects you. I think class is more of an issue
> here too, because you have issues such as racism.
> Here, even if you have a degree, as soon as you step
> out of your office you are shifted down to a different

class all together because of your physical structure. In [my country] that does not happen.

When asked if he belongs to a class, Desmond commented as follows:

> Well yes, I've considered that. Considering that in [my country], universities are few, and the chances of everyone who qualifies getting admission is very limited. Once you get in and you get your degree you definitely jump from the peasant class to a kind of what I'll call lower-middle class. This is because you really cannot solve any problem with your first degree unless you are lucky enough to be employed by a multinational corporation, and so on. You're normally an ordinary teacher in high school, and so on. Your salary is as low as the guy in civil service. Basically, you're just surviving. But nevertheless you still belong to a higher class than the guy who just graduated from high school. So we have all kinds of structures.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Desmond completed his undergraduate degree in his home country. Desmond did not proceed directly to graduate studies. He explains why this is so:

> At the time I went to university, there was a programme in [my country] called National Service. You're sent out after your first degree to go and serve the nation. You must do this. Even if you go straight to graduate school and finish ten Ph.D.'s, you must come back and do it. So I did that for a year, and then also went back to the university as a [teaching assistant] for another year before I went on to graduate studies.

Originally, Desmond had planned to do graduate work in

another area. However, through a twist of fate, he ended up

in a different field. He gives the following explanation:

> I'd always wanted to go to graduate school, even when
> I was an undergraduate. I told myself that I wanted
> one of two types of jobs, either to be a teacher in the
> university or to work for the internal revenue service
> where I would make money. (He laughs.) So I worked
> hard and got a good degree during my national service.
> I wasn't thinking of [my current area of study] at all.
> But when the interviews took place I was far away and
> I did not hear about it in time. When I went to
> complain, I met [an administrative official]. He would
> sanction my application if I wanted to go abroad to do
> my degree. So I said okay, you know best. I do want
> to be a teacher. So I rewrote the application, and
> here I am.

Desmond provides an interesting account of his reasons

for choosing this particular university. He states:

> I never heard of [this university] until a friend of
> mine told me about it. Another friend of ours, who
> had come here before us, sent an application from here
> to this other friend. So when he was leaving to come
> to Canada he passed through my place and talked about
> this school. And that's how I got to hear about it.
> By then, I'd placed applications to three other
> universities in Canada. One gave me only two years
> teaching assistantship and a fee waiver. But this
> university was going to give me a better financial
> offer.

Desmond believes that he will be done by his fourth

year, and he says that he "must" finish by then. He offers

the following explanation:

> After four years, you must fund yourself. And I really
> want to finish in four years, because I want to go back

to [my country]. There are a lot of things that are waiting for one to do, like research.

Desmond's future career goal is to go back to his country to teach. He wants to expand the range of material that is taught to students. He says:

> First, I want to show the links between [these countries] and my home country. I went into the social sciences because of these links. It's good for students back [home] to know about this because of the social, historical and cultural links. What they are taught now is so narrow. A lot of areas have been neglected in [my discipline], and I hope to change this to some extent. I would also like to get rid of the lecture format somewhat. I want students to have more real experiences. Like I would bring in researchers and writers. This would give the students a much better understanding.

PROFILE #5

Cynthia is in her late twenties. She is a visa student from Europe. Cynthia's family have all attended university. Her father and mother are both high school teachers and her brother is a lawyer. She is married with a family of her own. Cynthia says that she and her family are all upper-middle-class. She believes that there are class divisions in Canadian society and that distinctions are based on education, on income and on one's social circle. She explains further:

> I think we all strive to get somewhere in society. And some make it, and some just get left behind for various reasons. It's a cycle, and I think it has a

lot to do with your upbringing. If you're encouraged as a child, you get self-esteem and you think you can do something. If you don't, and you come from an abusive family, there's a very slim chance that you're going to break that cycle.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Cynthia completed her undergraduate degree in her home country. She then went on to graduate studies. Cynthia pursued higher education in order to have the opportunity to go abroad. She has this to say:

> I wanted to go abroad, just to go somewhere else. And I knew if I applied for a scholarship and got it, I could go abroad. I just wanted to have a different experience, and experience another university.

Cynthia goes on to explain why she chose this particular university.

> I applied for a scholarship, and I got it. And I knew of this university through a professor who was working at the university I was at. He told me of this well known professor, who specializes in [my area of study] at this university... . So this was my first choice.

Cynthia is currently in the late stages of her programme, and says that she will not have completed her thesis by the fourth year. She explains why this is the case.

> I had a baby in the middle of the programme. So this set me back a bit. But I think the main reason is the programme itself. It's too heavy. No student [specializing in my area] finishes in four years. There are so many course requirements. All of this takes a lot of time, and you usually end up with only

the last year to do your dissertation. You need more time than that to write a dissertation.

Cynthia's goal is to teach. She says that, while her graduate classroom experiences for the most part were positive, she thinks there are aspects of classroom teaching that she will strive to improve. She comments:

> I have said constantly that my classroom experiences have been positive. But I think it can be made better. I find that students are a bit apprehensive of what they are saying, because they know they are being evaluated. I will strive for a more open atmosphere in the classroom, just to make students more comfortable. At the undergraduate level, I would try to change the attitude of the students so that they would be more responsible for what's happening in the classroom; it's not only my responsibility but theirs also.

PROFILE #6

Maya is in her thirties and is from a developing country. She is working in the Sciences. She is married. All of the members of Maya's immediate family have attended university and several work as professionals. Maya does not feel that class is an important issue. In this, she is typical of many other students from developing countries. However, she does believe there are classes in Canadian society. She explains her position as follows:

> You can see from the different situation [s] [of people]. Like the[ir] house[s]. So there is different

income [levels]. Also [there is] different education
[levels].

Maya goes on to explain the differences in the way in
which class is experienced between Canada and her country.
She has this to say:

> In [my country], class [is] not such an issue. You can
> divide by lower, middle, higher. But most people [are]
> common people. Like most compan[ies] [are] run by the
> government and the university [is] run by the
> government. If you work for [a] private company, you
> get higher pay. I find today class division[s] over
> there [to be] more clear. This [is] because some
> people [are] working on their own business.

Maya says that she is not sure what class she herself
belongs to since she is still a student. However, she
recognizes that most of her colleagues are from middle-class
backgrounds.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Maya did her undergraduate degree in her country.
However, she did not proceed directly to graduate studies.

> At the time, I [didn't] want to continue to study. I
> want[ed] to get some working experience. Because in
> [my country there is] no financial problem if you want
> to continue your study. You just pass [an] exam for
> the graduate study, then you can have the financial
> support.

Maya goes on to explain why she eventually decided to pursue
graduate studies. She says:

> I work[ed] in [my country] after I finish[ed] [my]
> undergraduate [degree]. After working, I [felt] my
> knowledge [was] not enough. The other reason I came
> here [to Canada] is because I feel this is a good
> chance. Good opportunity to get a degree outside the
> country. [People in my country] usually feel this is
> a [more valuable] degree [than a degree from my
> country].

Maya discusses why she chose this particular university.

> My husband came out here before me. So I came to be
> with him. Also, I had nothing to do when I came here.
> So I applied to continue my studies.

Maya hopes that she will finish her degree on time, but says that she may go over time by a few months. She has no specific future plans. She simply wants to find a job in her field.

PROFILE #7

Roy is in his early thirties, a visa student from a developing nation, studying in a branch of engineering. He is married and has a young family. Many of the members of Roy's family have university degrees. For example, his father is an administrator and several of his relatives are teachers. Most of Roy's cousins have attended university.

Roy believes that there are class divisions in Canadian society. He discusses why he thinks this is the case.

> There are class divisions imposed on Canadian society.

Some Canadians impose on foreigners this [class status]... . I have discussed class in terms of ethnicity, but it can be based on wealth too. But ethnicity is the one that stands out to me here in Canada. I think this from my dealings in [this city], outside [this city], and from the media. People are always dealing with Afro-Caribbean Canadians as "others," for example. We say, "He is of Asian origin" or "The Muslims are doing so and so." They are Canadian, but they are taken out of the spectrum.

Roy goes on to discuss the differences between Canada and his country of origin in terms of class divisions.

We do not have class divisions based on ethnic background. This is something new which I have been introduced to here. We have divisions based on wealth. You have the wealthy. You have the poor. You have the middle class. And you can integrate the whole society. And you will find the middle class is very dominant, but still there is the wealthy. You can define them by cars, the residences. Class is not based on education, as it is here, either. This is because there's no fee for the university. So it's up to you to get the right grades and enter university.

Roy also provides an account of his own class status, both in Canada and in his homeland. He comments:

I am not in a class back in [my country]. But I am here in Canada. I'm [a] graduate student, you see. I'm here for some purpose or another. And then I [will return] home. So, yes, I [consider] myself [to be a] foreigner, and a graduate student. I'm not putting myself in lower or middle class, or anything like that. I haven't compared myself here to any Canadian, you see. I compare myself to my colleagues, who are also foreigners. I would not compare myself to my supervisor, because he has more means than me, and is wealthier than me. Back home, we don't have this division by ethnicity. In terms of class, the middle

class is so dominant on everything. Like in the university, and the media. So we assume they are representing us. So we don't feel any divisions in that respect either.

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Roy completed his undergraduate degree in his home country. He explains how he ended up in another branch of the sciences in his graduate studies.

> When I was applying for my [M.A degree], I was advised to [also] apply to other departments. And other departments informed us they were looking for graduate students. But [it] wasn't my [desire] to leave my department. [However], I applied [for another branch of science] here and was accepted. Now I have left [my original area of study] for good.

Roy states that he wanted to pursue graduate studies simply because it was a desire of his since he was an undergraduate. He describes his feelings.

> I love [to] study. I like to study and discover things. Back in my country, there are two [main areas of study]. Some people [focus on] theory, and others [focus on] experience irrespect[ive] of theory. And I have been aware of [theory] all my life. So now [the] academic trend is what is related to theory. And all four years of [my undergraduate study] was very eye-opening for me. So that's why I [was] so eager to continue studying. And also it's not easy to get a job [back home] with [the undergraduate degree I have]. So I think, again, there has been no option for me but to try to [get] a higher degree.

Roy goes on to explain why he chose this particular

university:

> I applied to different universities and [was] accepted
> [at this university]. [I was not accepted] by any
> university but [this one]. So it was my only choice.
> Or [I would have to] delay coming for another year to
> look for another university. But there was no need for
> this, because I love [this university] from hearing
> [about] it from my professors back home. Actually, I
> applied here twice. The first time, they [set] certain
> conditions I would have to meet before they accepted
> me. I got another application one year after, sent it
> again, and then I [was] accepted.

Roy is currently near the end of the doctoral programme. He thinks he will be done on time. He adds that most people in his department tend to finish on time. Roy goes on to discuss his career goals.

> I'm going back home. I think I will work in my
> university. Teaching [is my main goal]. My research
> will be independently conducted. In terms of teaching,
> I [would] like to pass on my direct experience with
> nuclear reactors to my students, since we don't have
> reactors back home. In terms of method of teaching,
> one thing I would like to do is encourage students to
> give me feedback. I have found this [to be] a
> difficult thing to do here. I want to know what they
> think about the material.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter was to familiarize the reader with the kinds of students who were interviewed in this study. We described the methodology. We presented information about

the general characteristics of the sample and explained how

the sample was obtained. The seven personal histories provide

a picture of the various types of people who were interviewed.

The issues that were addressed relate to such areas as family

background, family history, feelings about the concept of

class, academic history, reasons for pursuing graduate studies

and future aspirations.

<u>ENDNOTES</u>

1. The method used to determine the class origins of students was
    as follows. They were asked about their parents' occupations
    and educational achievements. In addition, they were asked
    about their conceptions of the term "class." Most students
    felt that class is based on the education and income of one's
    self and one's family. This information revealed the
    following numbers belonging to each class division: (1)
    eleven of upper middle-class backgrounds (2) eleven of middle-
    class backgrounds (3) four of working-class backgrounds and
    (4) six who did not feel they belonged to any particular
    class.

2. The numbers of respondents obtained by each method are as
    follows: (1) twenty-seven were contacted using a snowball
    technique (2) five were contacted by letter.

CHAPTER 3

THE DYNAMICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND RELATED CONCEPTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the role of consciousness in shaping the subjective experiences of graduate students. We demonstrate that students' levels of consciousness of race, class, gender and, in some cases, age are related to their perceptions of the various situations and/or obstacles they encounter in graduate school. Conversely, academia can serve as an agent which heightens students' existing levels of consciousness of race, class and gender. For example, Kate McKenna describes an experience that raised her consciousness of the politics of gender:

> During my first term at graduate school I attended a one-day popular workshop. What happened that day helped me to become more conscious of the significance of what does and does not get said, what gets written down and what does not, and how these work to structure possibilities for understanding and action... . The group was to work together to construct a drawing that addressed some issue we wanted to plan action around... . We decided to focus on the problem of establishing a women's community health centre... . As our picture began to develop, one of the women in the group brought up the issue of abortion... . The facilitator, who up to this point had been using our talk to add to the images, steered the conversation to another direction and did not include the abortion issue... . My own

understanding of the day, as well as experiences in
other learning sites, caused me to...look at my own/our
tendency to defer to "authority--to him as a male, to
see him as the leader, teacher, and/or expert... ."
(1991:118-119).

We show that a student's consciousness sometimes shapes
the form and content of his/her research. It will also become
clear that sometimes the structural forces in academia are
stronger than students' own subjective voices, and that
students may sometimes act in ways that are not in keeping
with their true desires. This issue will be examined in this
chapter. A more detailed discussion will follow in Chapters
Five and Six.

We now provide a general discussion of consciousness
and various related concepts, such as structure (culture),
ideology (knowledge), identity (subjectivity). More
specifically, the dynamics of consciousness will be explored
in order to give the reader insight into how these terms are
being utilized in this study. The second section examines
consciousness specifically in relation to graduate students'
experiences of graduate school. These issues are linked with
the material presented later in Chapter Five on classroom
dynamics and in Chapter Six on the experience of writing the
dissertation. The third section explores how students'
consciousness of race, class and gender influence them in the

construction of knowledge, especially in the development of their theses. The last section will provide a brief summary of the aims and findings of this chapter.

THE DYNAMICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE

One of the main premises of this chapter is drawn from Rick Fantasia, who has studied the consciousness and actions of American workers. Although his main focus is class consciousness, he offers some useful insights into the dynamics of consciousness in general. He views consciousness as a concept that is not static, but, rather, is "structured, fractured, or limited in one way or another by the cultural processes that organize and reproduce daily life" (Fantasia, 1988:16). It is because of this that it is difficult to discuss consciousness without reference to its constituent parts. These parts are themselves products of culture and daily life. Therefore, structure, ideology and identity are all susceptible to change through cultural practices. This means that consciousness is also a mutable concept. To borrow a phrase from Karl Marx, "Man's consciousness is determined by his social being"[1] (Marx, 1978:119). Thus, each individual has a different level of consciousness depending on his/her

ever-changing social environment and his/her place in the social structure.

The following section will give a brief outline of the concepts of structure (culture), ideology (knowledge) and identity (subjectivity). Since these are highly controversial concepts, it is important to explain how they are being utilized in this study. However, it should be noted that it is often difficult to discuss these concepts in isolation.

STRUCTURE

Structure and culture are very similar terms. It is difficult to discuss one in isolation from the other. This is, perhaps, due to the fact that structure is not very different from that which is social (Dant, 1991:185). It also goes without saying that culture is also wholly social. Therefore, the origins of both structure and culture are one and the same. Before describing the relationship between these two concepts, we must consider the definition of culture.

We define culture as the unique and distinctive way of life of the group, the values, meanings and ideas found in institutions, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs and in social relations (Fantasia, 1988:14). However, this does not imply that culture is a static, cohesive entity. There is

often discontinuity and rupture (Fantasia, 1988:14). Thus, we can view various patterns of culture as giving rise to and meaning to various structural features of society. Conversely, structure can act back on and shape culture. Structure, then, consists of patterns of culture that are unique to a given society.

Individual consciousness is limited and/or moulded and shaped by various structural features of society. When there are ruptures and inconsistencies in cultural life, the reactions and actions of the individual will reveal the various characteristics of his/her consciousness (Fantasia, 1988:16). They will also reveal the qualities, ambiguities and inconsistencies of that structural feature. Lloyd Warner carried out research in the late 1940s on factory workers in America. He makes the following statement:

> The best of all possible moments to achieve insight into the life of a human being is during a fundamental crisis when he is faced with grave decisions which can mean ruin and despair or success and happiness for him. In such crises men reveal what they are and often betray their innermost secrets in a way they never do and never can when life moves placidly and easily... . It is when all hell breaks loose that the powerful forces which organize and control human society are revealed (Warner in Fantasia, 1988:16).

The structural features of the society include the individual's social position in terms of race, class and

gender. Hence, when an individual is faced with a crisis, or with an ambiguity in cultural life, his/her level of consciousness of race, class and gender will shape how he/she reacts. When an individual faces a crisis, he/she will also draw on the ideologies and the knowledge to which he/she has been exposed. This informs his/her actions and reactions. However, it should be noted that individuals draw on ideology and knowledge when planning their actions regardless of whether there is a crisis. The next section explores the dynamics of ideology/knowledge with reference to structure.

IDEOLOGY

Ideology and knowledge are also linked. Their roots also lie in cultural practices. One way of viewing the relationship between these two concepts is to see knowledge as having ideological effects. In other words, knowledge gives rise to sets of beliefs, attitudes and opinions. However, ideology is often viewed as having a power of its own. For example, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967:123) state that "when a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest it may be called an ideology." While it is true that this can be the case, our own approach will be to treat ideology simply as knowledge,

not necessarily attached to power interests, which is drawn upon to influence individual and group actions. With that said, the following section explores the dynamics of ideology/knowledge and structure in relation to consciousness.

Ideology is a structural feature of society (Dant, 1988:57). Culture is also a structural feature of society (Dant, 1988:57). Following along this line of thought, it can be said that "no human thought is immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:9). Thus, just as it can be said that culture shapes ideology, so can ideology also act back on and shape culture. In addition, we adopt the Marxian premise that social knowledge must ultimately be seen as being intimately linked to the material conditions of those who produce such social knowledge (Marshall, 1994:138). Once again, we arrive at the premise that man's consciousness is determined by his social being (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:5).

Another way of stating the above is that what is produced as knowledge is indicative of the values and the sociological features (structural elements) of a given society (Dant, 1991:3). However, this is not to say that all the participants have given conscious agreement that adoption of what are deemed to be appropriate values and norms will be

those which will structure their own lives. The individual does have some autonomy to think freely and creatively (Dant, 1988:21). "It is important to remember that cognition is not totally determined by socially given presuppositions and that the individual can think creatively and reflectively on their experience and that of the group" (Dant, 1988:21).

Hence, we have the element of human agency. In this study agency is seen as a catalyst. Some people do overcome formidable ideological obstacles in the course of their graduate studies. However, it will also be demonstrated that some students succumb to ideological forces. Wile these students may question popular ideology, and even negate it, they do for various reasons, end up accepting it. The reasons for this are discussed in detail in the next chapters.

IDENTITY

Subjectivity and identity are also closely related. Subjectivity is simply the self-conscious awareness of individuals (Abercrombie et.al., 1994:417). Identity is a more specific term. It relates to the individual's attempt to achieve some level of uniqueness in situations that structure his/her behaviour to a considerable degree (Lachmann,

1991:138). Identity is a key element of subjective reality "and like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967:73). "The development of subjectivities is intensely social and circumscribed by existing social discourses" (Heald, 1991:136). In other words, the structural features of a given society will inform the identities of the individual citizens. Berger and Luckmann explain this relationship between identity and social structure as follows:

> Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and maintenance of identity are determined by social structure. Conversely, the identities produced in the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure react upon the given social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it (1967:173).

Erving Goffman provides us with some insights into the intricacies of identity. He sees the self as a product of the interplay of what he calls the virtual self and the actual self (Lachmann, 1991:138). "The virtual self is that defined by the situation in which the individual finds himself, without reference to individual characteristics" (Lachmann, 1991:138). For example, a newly recruited soldier has his/her behaviour dictated to him/her for all but a few hours of the

day. A soldier is told what to eat, what to wear, what activities to engage in, and even the type of speech to use when speaking with others (Lachmann, 1991:138). However, it should be noted that the virtual self is often an idealization of what the individual is supposed to be, given his/her assigned place in society (Lachmann, 1991:138). For example, a soldier is supposed to devote his/her life completely to serving the country.

The actual self is that which can be known about the individual outside of his/her assigned place. For example, the new recruit may have enlisted simply in order to please his/her parents, not because of any deep desire to serve the country. The interplay of the virtual self and actual self results in behaviour (Lachmann, 1991:138). Thus, "if the recruit feels he is more an individual than the regimentation of his virtual self allows him to be, he may seek ways to express his actual self, either by performing tasks assigned to him with exceptional skill or by rebelling against the defined conventions of conduct" (Lachmann, 1991:138).

The interplay of the virtual self and actual self can then be seen as giving rise to human agency. The self is a distinctively human ability which allows people to reflect on their own nature and social world through communication and

language (Marshall, 1994:232).

THE DYNAMICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND GRADUATE SCHOOL

We will now discuss consciousness in relation to two major
aspects of graduate school, the experience in the classroom
and the writing of the dissertation. It will become apparent
that students vary greatly in their levels of consciousness of
issues relating to race, class and gender. Furthermore, their
experiences are sometimes shaped by more than one of these
factors. And they are shaped in ways that make them difficult
to separate. Students' perceptions of issues relating to
race, class and gender shape their experiences in graduate
school. These then affect their responses to various
obstacles they encounter in graduate school. Students'
perceptions of these issues also have significance for the
construction of knowledge, both in the classroom and during
the writing of the dissertation. Susan Heald describes the
mechanisms that enable one to question the structures of the
university:

> What enables/motivates/forces our moves into and out of
> the subject positions available to us are the various
> positions we have occupied in the past, captured in
> memories (mental, physical, conscious and unconscious),
> reworked in the lights of events which both precede and
> follow any given moment. In addition, Weedon claims
> that for discourses to be effective, the subject must

identify his/her interests as being best served by the available subject positions within them. In this sense, educational discourses are extremely volatile; as the university becomes less and less a bastion of white middle class males, there are increasing numbers of professors and students who do not find their best interests represented within the discourse... . We are demanding new subject positions, new ways to be within educational settings (1991:139-140).

Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that consciousness is indeed not static and that it is endowed with contradictions. While some students question certain structural features of graduate school, and realize that race, class and gender inequalities exist, they do, at times, succumb to these structural forces and neglect their own desires. This means that at times students will follow the rules, regulations, and directions of the university and university officials, instead of carrying out their graduate work in the way they feel they should. Sometimes students reduce their experiences to explanations of variations in the personalities of colleagues and faculty members. A detailed explanation of the circumstances which allow and restrict students' agency is offered later. The purpose here is simply to explore the dynamics of consciousness.

GENDER AND THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE

The data presented later reveal that it is generally

women who perceive gender differences and inequalities in academia. For example, they offer accounts of the silencing of their voices during seminars, either by male students or by male professors. Women also perceive that gender shapes their experiences more than men in the course of working as teaching assistants and in producing their doctoral theses.

The greater gender consciousness of women can be linked to the fact that their situation and experience as women in a patriarchal social structure give them a particular perspective on the world (Dant, 1991:184; Belenky et.al., 1986:138). One woman of Anglo-Canadian background has this to say:

> I think there's a certain humility that goes along with growing up as a member of an inferior and oppressed class. As a group of people, you learn humility. You question yourself, and you analyze yourself. And you don't just assume that what you're doing is valid, that what you're saying is profound. But you can take that too far and be insecure, and feel like you're an impostor. But at the same time,I think it keeps you thinking.

Women's greater consciousness of gender can also be linked to the wide range of feminist literature that is now available to women. Jean Wallach Scott, an American sociologist made the following observation:

> Bookshelves are now being filled with biographies of forgotten prominent women, chronicles of feminist

movements, and the collected letters of female authors. The book titles treat subjects as disparate as suffrage and birth control. Journals have appeared which are devoted exclusively to women's studies and to the even more specialized area of women's history. The production of materials is marked by extraordinary diversity in topic, method, interpretation (1987:34-35).

The idea that there is a link between the greater gender consciousness of women and their exposure to "feminist" literature and ideas is supported by the fact that women in the sciences are less conscious of issues related to race, class and gender. One explanation is that science programmes are simply not structured around the same issues as are humanities and social science programmes. Therefore, women in the sciences do not deal with the same issues. The material presented below reveals that the women in the sciences perceive little if anything in the way of gender differences and inequalities in graduate school. Those women who believe some gender differences and inequalities do exist often cannot express the exact nature of what it is that they sense. One woman from a developing country, has this to say:

I know there are differences between men and women in the sciences, but I just can't put my finger on what these differences are. I can just sense it. I know, for example, that a man would never cry over a mark he received on an exam like I would.

Other explanations of the differences in consciousness between

science students and humanities and social science students will be offered later.

It should also be noted that women sometimes encounter situations where they perceive that a combination of factors are involved. For example, a black woman, recounts numerous situations where her status as both a woman and a black woman has shaped her experiences. She says that, at times, it is difficult to separate out these factors.

RACE AND THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Minority students offer accounts of experiences that they perceive to be shaped by race. Their heightened awareness of racial issues is a product of what Linda Carty (1991:15) calls the "outsider within." She uses this term specifically to refer to the experience of marginalization in a largely white institution. In some situations, Black students come to realize that their reality and experiences of the world are somewhat different from the reality that is presented as "everyone's reality" (Carty, 1991:18). Our research reveals that these contradictions in realities are present in the graduate classroom, as teaching assistants and in producing the doctoral theses. Himani Bannerji sheds some light on this issue.

When I came to study as a non-white "foreign student"

in Canada---in streets, personal interactions, and in the classrooms and halls of the University of Toronto---my learning continued. I was a student in the English Department, where my self and interests were rendered more silent than I would have thought possible. I remember feeling confused and a growing sense of frustration and rage. Nothing that was relevant to me seemed to count... . Often I was the only non-white student in these classes. Other students would talk amongst themselves with ease and were willingly responded to by the professor. I looked for reasons for their sense of a shared reality (1991:69).

One woman from a developing nation discusses how she became an "outsider." She comments as follows:

In the my country, we have a real sense of self. No one is really categorized there on the basis of race. There are many different kinds of people. At least, I'm not used to being categorized as much as I am here. It was only when I came to Canada that I became "black." It's almost as if I'm something other than the norm.

However, in the case of minority women, race and gender often cannot be separated. For example, Carty (1991:18) feels that her "outsider within" status results from her being a "Black woman sitting in a classroom in a white, advanced capitalist country where privilege usually translates into 'white male'." One woman belonging to a visible minority group, shares her experience.

I have had to sit in numerous classrooms where a white professor, or male colleague is attacking me on the basis of what I feel is a combination of racism and sexism. Sometimes I don't think you can separate them.

> We are the "other" here in Canada. This, of course,
> translates into the university. So when I'm having a
> debate I feel it's an attempt to force this predominant
> white, Euro [centric] male discourse down my throat.
> It's a power thing. They do not want to face the fact
> that their reality is not necessarily the only reality
> that exists.

It is not only minority women who feel that race has affected their university experiences. Minority men, as well as some white women, also feel that race has shaped their university experiences. For example, some women who teach classes on issues pertaining to race have had to respond to the questioning of the legitimacy and validity in their teaching on minority and black issues. This issue is explored in greater detail in later chapters. However, these women also come to attain the status of "other." They realize that they can only relate an approximation of the minority/black experience to their students.

It should be noted that some students see their "outsider" status as a positive attribute. They believe that it gives insight and understanding into certain issues and also it gives additional insight and understanding that others do not possess. However, Carty (1991:15) believes that "While there are definite benefits to be gained from the 'outsider within' status, the drawbacks frequently outweigh the gains."

She goes on to say that no matter what one feels about one's "outsider within" status, the struggle leaves one exhausted (Carty, 1991:15).

CLASS AND THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Some students offer accounts of situations where they perceive that their class status has affected their academic experiences. Those students from lower-class backgrounds often assess their experiences against academic standards that take middle-class values and perspectives as the norm. To borrow Carty's term, in many of these instances these students perceive that they are the "outsiders within." In comparison to those of middle- and upper-class backgrounds, they are lacking in cultural capital (Kadi, 1993:89). In other words, certain behaviour, for example modes of action and types of speech, are considered appropriate in an academic setting (McKenna, 1991:125). For example, one Canadian woman of working-class background, offers some insight into this issue. She has this to say:

> I come from a working-class culture where everyone speaks their mind. I have learned that there are a different set of rules for communication here in academia. One of those is to be polite and not to get overly emotional or hostile. I have learned to play the game and fight against my instincts. But I knew this one colleague who did not know how to play. She was constantly arguing with professors.

Thus, in order to thrive in academia, some students from working-class backgrounds must wrestle with their working class identities. Joanna Kadi (1993:89) calls this phenomenon "conquering the self." However, her personal history reveals that the self is never wholly conquered. Individuals vacillate between the "conquered self" and the "liberated self"; some feel that they are caught between "two worlds" (Sowinska, 1993:160). This was discussed in greater detail earlier.

Students from the middle class do not offer accounts of alienation in terms of class position. A large number of students were conscious of the advantages of their middle-class backgrounds. For example, one man of Canadian background, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, has this to say:

> I know that I'm lucky to come from a middle-class background. My parents have been able to help me out at all levels of my education in terms of finances.

Some students are also conscious of the plight of those from working-class backgrounds. For example, one man of European background, comments:

> I think many graduate students are from middle-class backgrounds. A few might be of upper-class standing. We have an easier time than those from working-class backgrounds, because we know all the right forms of

speech and actions. Those from the working-class have been brought up differently. And I think a lot of their parents don't have the education our parents do. So they don't have the support we do.

It should be noted, once again, that some students perceive that their experiences are shaped by class as well as by other factors. For example, our research reveals that some working-class women cannot separate class and gender as factors in shaping their experiences.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

So what does all of this mean for the construction of knowledge? As was stated earlier, when individuals encounter situations in which decisions must be made, they draw upon various resources to inform their actions. They tend to draw upon their past experiences and their knowledge. Mark Sanford, a professor of sociology in the United States, comments on this issue:

> Students come into graduate school with already established attitudes toward achievement and recognition in their chosen careers. These attitudes are the product of many diverse social and psychological influences resulting from previous experiences in the family, in school, and with other people... . Whatever their psychological sources, attitudes become directives for behaviour and are often subsequently affected by that behaviour (1976:75).

These past experiences do, of course, inform present identities and beliefs. Individuals may choose to abide by what is considered proper social conduct and dominant ideology or they may choose to rely on what Carty (1991:23) calls "outside knowledge." This is a refusal to give up what one knows about the world when another reality is being imposed. As was stated earlier, human agency allows people to reflect on their own natures and on the nature of the social world (Marshall, 1994:232).

The material presented below in Chapters Five and Six reveals that both of these patterns are followed. Students may choose to abide by accepted academic standards. They may also refuse to accept the dominant ideologies which attempt to structure their behaviours and beliefs. Reasons for these patterns of acceptance and rejection will be considered later. Thus, our conclusions can be seen as both positive and negative. Some scholars do question dominant ideologies and do voice opinions in the classes, in their papers and in their doctoral theses, regardless of the consequences. In contrast, other young scholars, in their refusal to question traditional forms of knowledge, reinforce cultural norms and customs which often serve to support race, class and gender inequalities. Bannerji makes the following statement:

> It is obvious that the production of knowledge is part
> of social production as a whole, and as much attention
> must be paid to the social relations of "knowledge" as
> to its content. Teacher-student relations in the
> classroom, relations among the students themselves, and
> the world outside the class which we enter in the
> pursuit of "objective", "positive" knowledge, all
> influence the form and content of our learning. All
> social and cultural relations and forms, both of
> oppression and privilege, directly and indirectly shape
> what and how we learn... (1991:75).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the role of consciousness in shaping students' consciousness. The first section offered a general theoretical definition of the constituent parts of consciousness, namely structure (culture), ideology (knowledge) and identity (subjectivity). The goal was to provide the reader with an understanding of how these terms are employed in this study. The second section considered consciousness in relation to students' experiences of graduate school. Students vary in their levels of consciousness of the issues of race, class and gender. Various reasons for this were considered. It was also demonstrated that race, class and gender are often quite difficult to separate. They act together to shape students' experiences. The last section explored what these differences in consciousness tell us about

the production of knowledge. Here, it was demonstrated that students both accept and reject dominant ideologies. In those instances where the student rejects the imposed ideology, he/she is weakening those forces which tend to foster social inequalities. In some cases, the structural force is of such magnitude that the student will succumb to it and instead, follow the rules of their committees. In this instance, knowledge is created within old frameworks. In fact, those forces which support social inequalities are being strengthened. Reasons for students' acceptance or rejection of dominant ideologies will be presented below.

ENDNOTES

1. This quotation is taken from "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844."

CHAPTER FOUR

CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

This chapter explores classroom dynamics. In particular, it deals with how students' experiences are shaped by race, class, gender and (sometimes) age. Students' consciousness of the importance of these factors have implications for the construction of knowledge, both within the graduate classroom and the undergraduate classroom where students work as teaching assistants.

Our data show that students vary greatly in their consciousness of race, class and gender. Furthermore, experiences are sometimes shaped by more than one of these concepts in ways that make them difficult to separate out.

The dynamics of race, class and gender will be explored in both the graduate and the undergraduate classroom. We explore three factors affecting these dynamics: first, cues and symbols of belonging, second, the construction of knowledge and, third, the power of numbers. We then discuss the issue of personality. Students sometimes offer personality factors as explanations for behaviour that could

be seen as racist, or classist, or sexist. Following this is

an analysis of the data.

THE GRADUATE CLASSROOM:

POWER AND CULTURE

As was described in our review of the literature, there

is a close relationship between the systems of knowledge,

which dictate the norms and rules for the purpose of social

control and domination within particular settings (Foucault,

1989:45). Within the academy, white male characteristics are

often taken as the norm (Levy, 1982:47; Schick, 1994:8).

These norms determine which attitudes or behaviours are seen

as professional and which are seen as unprofessional. They

also determine which activities and behaviours are valued and

rewarded (Levy, 1982:48). However, the data presented in this

chapter will demonstrate that there are differences between

the dominant norms governing academic life and the styles and

behaviours of some women, some minority students and some

students from working-class backgrounds.

CUES AND SYMBOLS OF BELONGING

Cues and symbols of belonging are just one aspect of

the customs that constitute academic culture. These cues and

symbols include what is thought to be "proper" dress, styles

of speech and accent. One Canadian woman offers some insight:

> I think that there's a tendency within academia to
> accept certain types of behaviour---the way you speak,
> the way you behave, as appropriate. Your understanding
> of social rituals goes a long way towards creating an
> atmosphere of respect. And I think that professors are
> far too quick to dismiss people who don't have those
> social rituals down pat. They assume that it's some
> kind of intellectual lacking on the part of the person,
> when really it's just a lack of experience in some
> cases.

GENDER AND SPEECH

Some women offer accounts of the difficulties they

experience in expressing themselves in classrooms. Some feel

that men do not have these problems. Adrienne Rich (1979)

discusses this issue.

> Listen to the voices of the women and the voices of
> men; observe the space men allow themselves, physically
> and verbally, the male assumption that people will
> listen, even when the majority of the group is female.
> Look at the faces of the silent, and of those who
> speak. Listen to a woman groping for language in which
> to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms
> of academic discourse are not her language, trying to
> cut down her thought to the dimensions of a discourse
> not intended for her (Schick, 1994:24-25).

Some women mentioned men's enthusiasm for theory and

technical jargon and their own dislike of such styles of

discourse. They feel that men love to use these kinds of

speech and that women have difficulty understanding the

associated jargon. They state that this makes them feel

uncomfortable. One Canadian woman comments:

> ...women think of things differently. And I could
> think of the example of literary theory, and how men
> who are doing literary theory love this jargon, and
> they love to just spit it out. It seems that they're
> just much more able to sort of get a hold of that
> language, which is not universal.

Another Canadian woman offers a similar argument. She says:

> ...we're [women] just trying to sort out the material
> and perhaps they [men] can use the rhetoric and the
> jargon and the terms a little bit more effectively, in
> order to mask the fact that they don't know it.

Women also described not feeling comfortable when

professors structured the course in a manner which required

and/or encouraged argument as a mode of discussion. One

woman, who belongs to a visible minority group, gives her

opinion of why she thinks this is the case.

> Well, I mean it was pretty obvious in that particular
> course where I felt silenced that every other woman in
> the class was feeling silenced as well. I think it's
> a difference between an approach to discussion... . I
> think many women don't really like to participate in
> arguments, where you're just putting down somebody
> else's point of view. I've noticed that when we have
> class discussions that sometimes men take on an
> argumentative, very hostile type of approach. I just
> think that, for whatever reason, women are more willing
> to listen and take others' opinions into account. Men
> seem ready to tear each other's arguments to shreds.
> It's even worse when a woman offers a gendered opinion.

This student added that in a course in the area of women's

studies in which there was not an argumentative atmosphere, she felt more able to speak. She felt that other women also felt more free to speak.

Some students perceived that "male language" tended to be used as a basis for judgement of professionalism. One Canadian woman said:

> The who idea of orals and the way women speak and the way men speak is different. And what they expect in an oral is a lot of testosterone. And they expect you to challenge them, and they expect you to answer in a certain way. And if you can understand, and you can figure that out, you do extremely well. If you do like a lot of women, and you speak in metaphor, or you hold back or you allow men to speak...you can experience some difficulty. My roommate experienced that sort of difficulty when she was asked a real testosterone loaded question...and answered. And was attacked, and didn't know how to attack back.

One Canadian man recounts his experience:

> When answering, professors are looking for a commonsense, straightforward answer. And he expects this from both men and women. But I think he might pay more attention to how the woman articulates her argument. He will be more on the lookout for her type of response.

One Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, also believes that certain differences in men's and women's styles of speech affect grades. She comments:

> There were some negative experiences [in the classroom], as far as some women in the department felt

> that there were discrepancies in communication between
> female students to the faculty. In cases where we felt
> both males and females did well, on comment sheets for
> a male they might comment, "He didn't explain the chart
> very well." And for a female [they might comment], "Oh
> she didn't understand the chart."

She goes on to explain that this matter was not brought to the

attention of professors, but was discussed among some women in

the class. She adds that most women in her department are not

gender conscious. She has this to say:

> The majority of them [women] do not have many strong
> feminist attitudes. I mean, when I was talking about
> the differences in communication [between men and women
> in seminars] I think a lot of women would not even
> think of that. They [would] just think the world is
> "honky dory." So I would say I am probably one of the
> extreme in the department right now, which is [not]
> very extreme at all.

Indeed, it has been documented that women are in fact,

more willing to listen to others and that they refrain from

speaking out (Belenky et. al., 1986:188). According to Mary

Belenky and her colleagues (1986:188), "...these have long

been considered signs of powerlessness, subjugation, and

inadequacy of women." One Canadian man gives an account of

what he sees as women's lack of self-esteem and their

tentativeness when speaking out in the classroom. He comments

as follows:

> The women students tend to express their views more
> tentatively than men. The male students tend to make
> grand pronouncements with their tone of voice going

down at the end. And women would generally go up at the end---"Is this okay?" "Am I offending anybody?" "Is this right?" [He raised his tone of voice here,in imitation of the women].

Some students also perceive that social class background affects the ease with which one speaks in the classroom.

SPEECH AND CLASS

Students of working-class backgrounds are also judged in terms of their styles of speech. One lesson that they come to learn is that middle-class rules of politeness are held to be the norm in graduate classrooms (McKenna, 1991:126). Thus, speech that is non-aggressive is acceptable, and tones of voice that are emotional are "irrational" (McKenna, 1991:126). One woman of Canadian working-class background, recounts an experience that she feels was shaped by class and gender. She says:

...women's experiences are different, and they're liable to interpret [books], especially books written by mostly male ethnographers, differently. We looked at this one book on [a certain kind of theory], and a lot of [this theory] offended me, because it was so Western and basically North American in outlook. And I could pick up on that right away, because I wasn't born here. In my [working-class] culture, anyone is allowed to voice their opinion, despite age or sex. He [the professor] told me to criticize the book, and he was very annoyed with me. He actually threw the book down the table at me, and said he didn't want to talk about it anymore! I think my gender, and especially my class position, had something to do with this episode. He probably saw as disrespect, my challenging

his ideas. But in my working-class family we were allowed to speak our minds.

Another Canadian woman tells a similar tale.

> I think it's typical [classroom experiences] for people who have been brought up to be polite and consider other people's feelings. This was not always the case for me... . In my working-class family, we all voiced our opinions and said what we wanted when we felt like it. This was not seen as impolite or irrational as it is here in academia.

Most students recognize the advantages of being middle-class in academia. Many suggest that their families played a part in promoting formal education and in teaching them middle-class values, which make them feel comfortable in academia. One woman of minority status, a visa student of middle-class background makes the following point:

> I knew at first when I came here [from a developing nation] I would have to make a lot of adjustments. The adjustments were basically more in terms of age than anything else. I was coming into a situation where everyone was so young. But class, no. I fit in. Since I have the same kind of sensibilities.

One Canadian woman of working-class background, gives a different point of view. She describes her experience as stemming from her working-class background. She comments:

> I was not raised in a family where we sat around the dinner table and discussed philosophy or something. Whereas I know some of the people [who study at this university], whose parents were very well educated, had a very different upbringing in that way. And were

exposed to even literature...earlier. And they didn't have to catch up in the same way that I have felt [I've had to]. Yes, they were more comfortable.

Accents are one element of speech patterns. Some students feel that their accents are not the source of any significant problems. They often talk of it in the terms of others being "patient" or "understanding." One man, a visa student from a developing nation says:

> I have not [found] it [my accent] to be a problem.
> Sometime[s] I have to repeat [what I have said] but I
> find that professor[s] and student[s] are very patient.

One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences, offers a similar view. She says:

> My accent has not been a problem. I think this is
> because there are so many minorit[ies] in the sciences.
> So my accent goes unnoticed. Sometime[s] I have to
> repeat myself but no one has made me feel
> uncomfortable. They [have] been understanding.

Other students give a different point of view about their accents. Some feel that both students and professors are not always "patient" or "understanding." One woman, a visa student from a developing nation has this to say:

> I found at times [my accent] prevented me from talking.
> Students make it obvious that they are straining their
> ears to listen to you. Sometimes they make you feel
> like you don't know what you're talking about. I mean,
> you've done all the readings, and you don't get to talk
> because no one will give you a chance to talk. This is
> frustrating. The professor himself does not encourage
> you to talk. You just feel useless. Not to mention
> this affects grades, especially points for

participation.

Another visa student from Europe, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, gives a similar account, but also suggests that competition and ethnicity are factors that limit his voice in the classroom[1]. He comments:

> I think my accent lead[s] others to believe that I know nothing. I feel [that] others look at me like I'm crazy. But other than this I think students [are] trying to get on [the] good side of the prof[essor]. I mean before the question or the discussion is open, the guys who think they know everything are talking, but talking nonsense. Even the Canadians [students] say this is too much. If you get more air time, the others get less air time, and your marks will increase. So it's nonsense. Also, [there are] some topics I don't know much about. Like when we were discussing K Mart, my knowledge was limit[ed] because we don't have such [a] thing back home. So why speak?

Some students perceive their accents to be problematic because they cannot find the words to express what they mean. Some say that this prevents them from speaking out in class. One woman, a visa student from Europe, describes her experience:

> Often I want to say something, but I do not. I feel it's because of my accent. My English is not as good as others and I feel uncomfortable to speak [out]. They might think I'm not [capable of] understanding the issues [we are discussing]. And sometimes I can't find the words to say what I...mean.

Another visa student, from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, elaborates on this issue.

Sometimes if you have the question you need to think about how to point it out in English so that the professor understand[s] your question. And also sometimes maybe when you ask the questions, [the] professor cannot [understand what you mean]. I know most foreign student[s] have this problem, especially the students [from my country].

STYLES OF DRESS

Styles of dress are also evaluative cues as to who "belongs" and who "does not belong" in academia. Some men and women feel that the way one dresses conveys authority and that some types of dress are not appropriate for graduate school. One Canadian man gives his view of this issue. He relates his own experiences to class.

I found if I wore a jacket, which is a very small change, I would be treated differently. Colleagues and professors would comment on how good I was looking, and presumably how I was doing financially. I suppose I can afford to buy this jacket because I'm middle-class. I think some other students of poorer backgrounds may not be able to do this. But I think it's interesting that some students with much wealthier backgrounds [than myself] would dress like slobs and they would be regarded with less respect.

One woman from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences, gives her opinion of what she believes to be "inappropriate" attire for graduate school. She says:

As an undergrad[uate], I used to dress in a manner which I felt was original. And I knew nobody else wore these clothes I wore in the science classes. I would wear short skirts sometimes. And for a long time I was aware that it was problematic. I felt students and

professors were evaluating me. I'm older now, so I don't go for the really wild things anymore. And I don't think that's appropriate for grad[uate] school.

This student goes on to describe the experiences of a fellow graduate student who did not dress "appropriately." She has this to say:

There was this really beautiful woman who was doing a degree here. She would wear skirts, sometimes kind of short. I think a lot of male students and some professors noticed her body more than the fact that she was also a very good student. So if you dress like that, you can't seem to avoid that kind of reaction. I don't know if you would call this kind of thing class related or what. But I guess the professors have an easier time relating to someone who is more normal looking. If I'd been wearing mini-skirts or a mohawk or something, it might have made an impression on them in the wrong way.

One Canadian woman recalls an instance in which a class-mate did not know how to play the "middle-class game" in terms of dress. She comments as follows:

There was a student here one time who was a friend of mine. She was of a working-class background like myself. But there were a lot of "middle-class games" she didn't know how to play. I already mentioned that she did not know how to speak to professors and students, so she would end up in a lot of arguments. But she also did not know how to dress. She would wear these sort of old looking, hippy-type clothing. I don't know how much of it was that she could not afford other clothes and how much of it was that she actually liked this style [of dress]. Other students and professors would always look at her in a sort of disgusted or evaluative manner. I mean, it didn't bother me [that she wore those types of clothes]. But I think you have to dress a certain way if you want to

> convey authority and [if you want to] get any kind of
> respect. That's just the way it is.

The next section considers classroom dynamics in the
construction of knowledge.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The production and distribution of ideas are regulated
by powerful people. These people claim the right to define
what is appropriate, legitimate, important thought (Mackie,
1988:7). Carol Schick addresses this issue:

> The male domination of interpretive thought found at
> Canadian universities is indeed pervasive. Such
> factors as the curriculum, the method of instruction,
> the sex of the instructor, the organization of the
> department, and the structure of the university all
> contribute to the reproduction of Anglo, Western, male,
> middle-class, thought... . The interpretation of texts
> and contexts...is nowhere more problematic than in the
> classroom, where the method of teaching becomes part of
> the information that is taught. In many ways the
> classroom interaction, the structure, and the implicit
> philosophy is at least as important for the learner as
> the curriculum (1994:18-19).

The next section will explore students' accounts of the
constraints and freedoms they experienced in the production of
knowledge in graduate classrooms.

CONSTRAINT

Some students offer accounts of how they felt

constrained in their speech and/or writing. They suggest that there were attempts to refute what were considered to be their "feminist viewpoints." One Canadian woman has this to say:

> My research deals with women. So I [picked classes taught by] professors who [I felt would] agree with me. In the case where [I had a disagreement with a professor], one of the main causes of our disagreement was [over] the issue of feminist studies. And yeah, I think the guy [is] a raving sexist. He does make a distinction between how he treats men and women in the classroom.

Another Canadian woman tells a similar tale. Her experience involves other students.

> I found there was a lot of strife [in classrooms] as a result of where I stood in terms of feminism. I think a lot of it arose out of ignorance and fear, rather than any real difference of opinion... . As soon as people, especially men, hear the term "feminism," or perceive that your argument is a "feminist argument," they're already up in arms to argue with you. I think the term has a lot of negative connotations attached to it. When I think back, it was mostly men that I argued with.

Some women told of conflicts that were not necessarily related to "feminist issues." One woman from a developing nation says:

> I think they [my classroom experiences] may not be completely typical. I mean, I've heard a few other people who have expressed frustration, or difficulty, especially with gender issues and feeling that they're not free to do what they want or say what they want because they're women. I mean I hear quite a bit of that.

However, some women attribute their experiences to their location in a gender, as well as in a racial and/or class hierarchy. One woman, a visa student from a developing nation has this to say:

> My department is composed of what I guess you'd call a typical "white, male camp." I know I've often felt like an intruder, especially in class discussions. When I would try to interject anything related to my own experiences as a person of colour, sometimes I would sense that they did not regard what I was saying as important. I guess this has to do with race on the one hand. Because this subject area was created and designed for the Western, white male. Most of what has been written was produced by this same group of people. What I can't figure out though is how much of this has to do with gender. There are only a few women in my department. Sometimes I felt that my male colleagues were arguing with me just to prove that their thinking is superior.

A Canadian woman, belonging to a visible minority group, offers her view of this issue. She says:

> Well, when I started critiquing and challenging their [professors'] assumptions, they would get so upset they would walk out, storm out, because I was challenging their divine right, as white people, to define the world around them, including mine and every other person's, including women... . By and large, there were a lot of good people. But again, it was obscured in a lot of jargon that was middle-class, white discourse that had little to do with any realities I was interested in. So I just went along with it... . It has to do with racism and sexism. They're just as powerfully effective in silencing you and demeaning and intimidating you.

She continues to explain that, not only was her spoken word

negated, but so was her right to construct written material based on her culture. She said that in some of her written work she felt compelled to use "white people's text and language" to make sure that she received good grades.

Similarly, a Canadian woman says that in an oral examination she felt that she had to answer in a manner which she knew the professor would favour. Her primary goal was to ensure that she would pass. She links her experience to gender and class differences. She states:

> As far as the conflict I got into with [this particular] professor, absolutely [class and gender were factors], because he, as a professional, upper-middle-class, male,...has a completely different experience than I as a working-class female from the prairies has. He just does not see women's work the way I do. In my oral testing he gave me that question and I was forced to answer in his terms to make sure I did well.

Minorities also offer accounts of having their experiences and their interests negated, and sometimes not regarded as legitimate or valid. They perceive the reasons to be due either to the lack of experience of the professor or to the narrow focus of the course content. One man, a visa student from a developing nation, describes his experience:

> In a course that I took, I was very disappointed in the pro-British focus. I figured that this is a very international university and there would be numerous writers and researchers of different backgrounds. I

was wondering about minority writers. Where were they?

Another visa student, from a developing nation, recounts her

experience. She says:

> There is difficulty in writing either because the
> professor does not have that experience or is not
> interested. So you fall back on Western ways of
> analyzing things.

Another woman, who belongs to a visible minority group, has a

similar tale to tell.

> In [one particular] course I took, the professor did
> not know what to say about a book we were studying.
> He needed an African background to teach it. He could
> not teach it properly and he left us hanging, with a
> lot of questions unanswered. In a course on women I
> had a similar experience. We did things like women and
> ageism, but they were always handled from a white
> woman's perspective. It was like---"Well, today we're
> dealing with women of colour!" (sarcastically)

Some students who do not belong to minority groups also

feel that professors possess great power in determining which

ideas are seen as legitimate and credible or at least more

legitimate and credible than other ideas. This is often

accomplished using the technique of "gentle persuasion." One

Canadian man comments as follows:

> I felt sometimes that the professors had a very
> specific idea of what the answer should be, especially
> in [my discipline]...a very conservative discipline.
> I think they would frame questions that to their minds
> had a very specific answer. But it wasn't really a

political answer, it was just an intellectual answer. There was no real limit on the freedom of expression of ideas, but there was a sense that certain ideas were more "correct" than others.

A Canadian woman gives her view:

> Some professors' angles more than others colour a lot of the discussion. You are not forced but "encouraged" to stick to these angles in discussions and papers. And you will follow what you believe they will favour, because you want to get good marks.

FLEXIBILITY

It is interesting to note that there are also a number of accounts of flexibility in the production of knowledge within the classroom. Even in the case of the visa student from a developing nation who was disappointed by the narrow focus of course texts, the end results were positive. He comments on how he influenced his professor:

> As I said, I was very disappointed in the course materials offered in that class. But the limited reading materials exposed me to how institutions can marginalize other people. On the bright side, I asked my professor if I could study some authors of my choice and I was allowed. The following year I noticed that some of the texts I had read and used in the term paper were added to this course list of required texts. It was great to see these minority authors added. I can't help but feel that my objections had something to do with this.

Similarly, in the case where a woman belonging to a visible minority group felt that at times, a professor did not have

the knowledge to teach a particular course, she was also
allowed to go beyond required texts and choose her own
materials. She comments as follows:

> [That particular] course was the only course I ever
> experienced where I just studied what I wanted to study
> all year. And it was just really neat. And I could
> really identify with these experiences.

Some of the accounts offered by students are indicative
of how some students can feel a sense of liberation in
influencing course materials, while at the same time others
feel constrained. One Canadian man says:

> I think that the professors I had were fair. Not
> surprisingly, they chose a great deal of the required
> books, but I had a fair bit of input my myself. On the
> whole, I'd say they were pretty lenient. And the texts
> covered a wide range of topics.

Another Canadian man gives a similar view. He comments:

> The materials for my courses covered a broad range of
> topics. I was pleased with the topics anyway. I was
> also allowed to choose a number of books myself. So
> the whole experience was good.

However, a Canadian woman gives an opposing view.

> I think the lists [of required readings] were quite
> rigid. I did not have much input myself. I would have
> liked to see more reading about working-class
> experiences and women's experiences. But we're dealing
> with male professors, who are middle- or upper-class.
> They believe certain topics must be covered. And these
> topics don't include some of the things that I'm
> interested in.

Another Canadian woman makes the following comment:

> The materials for my courses could have covered a wider
> range of topics. The focus was pretty narrow. I wish
> that I could have added more books about women's
> history. But there are so many other topics that
> professors feel are important to cover that you don't
> have much say. A lot of this has to do with how
> professors structure their courses. One professor gave
> his students thirty books to read instead of sixty.

We now consider the significance of the relative sizes of
groups for the dynamics of race, class and gender.

THE POWER OF NUMBERS

According to George Simmel (1977:208), the significance
of numbers for social life is that "numerical shifts transform
social life." In other words, in any given social situation,
the dominant characteristics of the majority will allow the
majority to have control and power over that situation.
Shifts in the proportion of majority to minority may result in
shifts of the distribution of power. Rosabeth Kanter has
written about the social relations between men and women in
large corporations[2]. She discusses the issue of the imbalance
of power between majorities and minorities. She comments as
follows:

> The presence of a person or two bearing a different set
> of social characteristics increases the self-
> consciousness of the numerical dominant population and

the consciousness of observers about what makes a
dominant class. They become both aware of their
commonalities and their differences from the token, and
to preserve their commonality they try to keep the
token slightly outside, to offer a boundary for the
dominant (Kanter, 1977:10-11).

Indeed, one Canadian woman describes the unfolding of
her consciousness of the plight of minorities. She makes the
following comment:

> I was never really aware of the difficulties of my
> female colleagues who are not white. As I've discussed
> before, I know that women as a class, we have
> difficulty in engaging in a sort of argumentative
> approach to discussion. But I have come to realize
> through a friend of mine, who is a woman of colour,
> that she has to deal with the extra factor of race.
> She was in a couple of my classes. In the first one
> we took together, she was one of two women of colour.
> She did not say much, and when I asked her why, she
> said that she did not feel that the issues related to
> her experiences. She also said that the times she's
> tried to bring her own opinions into class discussions
> she would be attacked... . But I did not really
> understand what she was saying until we took a
> particular class dealing with women, together. Because
> there were more women in this class, I think we all
> felt we could speak more. I also noticed that the
> women of colour in the class were more than anxious to
> lend their own opinions and experiences.

Some minority students perceive that their numbers have
implications for the legitimacy and importance attributed by
others to their voices in the classroom. They also feel that
their numbers have implications for their own willingness to
have their voices heard. "Minority members have potential

allies among each other, can form coalitions, and can affect the culture of the group" (Kanter, 1977:9). One Canadian woman, who belongs to a visible minority group, comments on this issue. She says:

> All the stuff they had [class curriculum] was written by white males. So they were basically in power and control, and didn't have any room to hear the voices of other alternative views. Sometimes I would say what I thought. But sometimes I would hold back, because I didn't have the patience or energy to engage in yet another argument... . I'm always frustrated at having to defend what I see essentially as my identity, my very essence.

Another woman, who belongs to a visible minority group, had a similar experience.

> What composed the negatives of the classroom was just that sort of feeling of kind of not being able to speak totally freely. The frustration of that course was pretty big. I don't know [she reflects], yeah, I like the professor. I don't know if it is a personal thing but like I say, just being the only brown person in the class, always...made me inhibited... .

A further experience is related by another woman, a visa student, who also belongs to a visible minority group. She makes the following comment:

> When there is at least one other visa student in the class, you're recognized more. Just the presence of another makes you feel different, as you always feel [that] some people don't understand you... . If you're stating an opinion, sometimes that other visa student can lend a hand in explaining it. I think somehow this lends more credibility to what you're saying.

In the Sciences, the presence of larger numbers of minority students leads some students to believe that there is less tension in the classroom. One Canadian man, working in the Sciences has this to say:

> I have not witnessed any kind of conflict in the classroom that was caused by racial factors. I think that this is because the Sciences are [highly] international. So race is not an issue in the classroom... . Every other person in the classroom is from somewhere other than Canada, or at least is not of white background.

One Canadian woman, studying in the Sciences, voices a similar opinion. She says:

> There are a lot of foreign professors and students [in the Sciences]. And professors are used to dealing with all kinds of backgrounds. I can't even think of who is white or not white. I really have to think.

Another science student, a visa student from a developing nation has a similar perception of the situation.

> Over half of the student[s] in my programme are [of my ethnic background]. So this [race] is not a factor in the classroom. [People of my background] have done good work in the past too. So the professors have no problem.

PERSONALITY

Some students perceive that personality can play an important part in shaping their experiences. One Canadian man gives the following account:

> I think that my personality and the personality of all
> graduate students has a lot to do with the quality of
> our experiences. If you have an attitude that says you
> don't really want to be here, or if you get into
> arguments with your professors and other students,
> you're not going to have a good experience.

Some students believe that, in addition to race, class and
gender, personality is important in shaping experiences. One
Canadian woman states:

> I think that this guy [the professor] is a sexist. But
> I also think that personality has a lot to do with our
> argument. Our personalities are quite different.

One man, a visa student from a developing nation, working in
the Sciences gives his opinion.

> I think accents are part of the reason people don't
> speak out. It also depends on the personality of
> people. Like there is one girl, she's in...the
> programme with me. In [a particular class we have
> together], she never talk[s] [like myself]. So I can't
> say it's just because of my language, or because in her
> case she's a woman. It's personality as well.

Other students, who describe experiences that they feel
are shaped by gender, race and class, sometimes fall back on
personality as the more important element in the explanation
of these events. One Canadian woman gives such an account.

> I think my experiences were more personality-based than
> gender-based. Some professors simply structure their
> courses differently than others.

One woman visa student from a developing nation, working in

the Sciences, gives her view of the relationship between personality and women's speech patterns.

> I think men have an easier time speaking in class. Women worry about what others will think. This is because of difference[s] in personality, not gender.

The next section will explore how factors such as race, class and gender affect students' experiences as teaching assistants.

WORKING AS A TEACHING ASSISTANT

This section explores the experiences of those graduate students who work as teaching assistants in undergraduate classrooms. Some students feel that race, class and gender also shape their experiences as teaching assistants. Furthermore, the dynamics of race, class and gender have implications for the construction of knowledge.

CUES AND SYMBOLS OF BELONGING

AUTHORITY

Some students perceive that women have greater difficulty establishing their authority in tutorials. Some women also feel that men have less difficulty controlling their classes. One Canadian man comments as follows:

> I have heard from female colleagues about situations that I don't think I would be put in. I've heard from a few female colleagues that they think that because

they're smaller or women, certain students think they
can come in and bluff their way through situations.
[They have] this minor bullying going on that I would
never have to deal with. So in that sense, there could
be a difference [between men and women's experiences
as teaching assistants].

One woman, a visa student from a developing nation also

discusses this issue.

I've had this discussion with other women colleagues
about teaching undergraduates. And, at one time or
another, we have all felt that students react towards
us in a negative manner because we are women. For
example, the odd time I've felt that a male student is
arguing with me just for the sake of argument, or at
least trying to assert his power over me. I also think
that both male and female [undergraduate] students
question female [teaching assistants'] ability to teach
to a greater extent than males. [For example], when I
grade papers I find I have more students coming to
question me about their marks than my male colleagues
in my office.

Another Canadian woman also suggests that students are more

willing to question a woman's credibility than a man's

credibility as a teaching assistant. She has this to say:

A lot of women talk about things like marks and
students really bickering over marks and not being
happy. And, you know, they're getting the sense that
this person is really challenging their authority... .
I have felt this way at times myself... . So I feel
that being a woman does affect the teaching experience
for sure.

However, minority students also have to deal with the extra

factor of race. One woman visa student from a developing

nation, discusses the questioning of her authority and relates

her experiences to race and also to gender. She comments:

> Especially at the beginning of a school term, I have
> sensed that students are not used to a black person as
> a figure of authority. At least not at the front of a
> classroom. In the first few moments I walk in, I see
> the surprised looks on their faces. Some also have a
> questioning look as if they want to ask, "Are you sure
> you're the teaching assistant?" I remember one time,
> it was the first day of class, and a student poked her
> head in my classroom during the class and said "Oh I
> must have the wrong classroom." The next week she
> showed up and said, "Oh I didn't realize the tutorials
> were on Tuesday" as if she thought I had not remembered
> her from the week before. I think students are just
> not used to a black person as an authority figure.
> This, compounded with being a woman, makes it worse.

A male visa student from a developing nation recalls a similar

experience. He says:

> I think they [the students in my class] were surprised
> to see a man from my country teaching a course on a
> Western topic. They believe that only Americans or
> Canadians are competent to teach.

TYPES OF DRESS

Styles of dress and appearance are also evaluated by

graduate students and undergraduate students. Graduate

students perceive that undergraduate students are more likely

to respect teaching assistants who dress "appropriately." A

Canadian man discusses dress and authority. He comments as

follows:

> I give a seminar on T.A. [Teaching Assistantship
> Training] Day on how to dress. I think it's important
> to dress well, especially the first few times. Because
> these days authority is cheap, and we need to get a
> hold of as many of the trappings of authority as
> possible. This is important for both men an women.
> You want to convey authority. And whether you be a man
> or a woman in a t.a. [teaching assistantship] position,
> your ability to project authority can become
> established quickly depending on how you do it. This
> goes for the graduate classroom and graduate school in
> general. I have seen people who dress outlandishly or
> poorly, and others look at them as if they're strange.
> It's all about respect.

Another man, a visa student from a developing nation, working

in the Sciences gives his views on "appropriate" dress.

> I think that t.a.s [teaching assistants] should not
> dress in certain ways. Like I see guys [teaching
> assistants] going to class in ripped jeans. Although
> they tell me this is [the current] style! (He laughs.)
> Students will not respect you if you dress like this.
> Women, in particular, should dress [well]. I mean, I
> have women friend[s] who tell me they have [a
> difficult] time controlling the class. So they should
> not dress in things like short skirt[s] or they should
> not wear heavy make up. The class will not listen to
> them then.

One woman from a developing nation, has a similar view of the

situation.

> I take particular care with what I wear, especially on
> those days that I teach. I feel that men are ready to
> insult [you] and [to] test your authority any chance
> they get. The last thing I want to do is to give them
> an extra tool to use. I mean, I would not wear
> anything too short or too tight. I have a friend who
> sometimes dresses in this manner, and she has been
> asked out a couple of times by her students. She's

sort of disturbed by this, because she says it makes
her feel as if they don't see her as authoritative,
since they feel they can approach her in that manner.
I told her maybe she should not dress the way she does.
But I don't think she feels this has anything to do
with it. I certainly do.

However, one woman belonging to a visible minority group,

perceives that often experiences in tutorials are not just

based on one factor, but on many. Gender, race, dress and

appearance can all be important.

Yeah, I think being a woman, being a person of colour
affects my experience of teaching. I feel when I first
come into a room of students I don't know, it takes a
little while before they sort of...(she can't seem to
find the words to express what she means). I've heard
this from other women, that they have to establish
credibility. They really have to establish that first,
where a man entering the room has that just by the dint
of being a man. He walks in and already they're ready
to give him credence because he has the authority of
being male. Whereas being a woman of colour, I feel
this is not the case. I don't have the long flowing
hair, and I often dress differently than they would be
used to.

Age is a further criterion by which one can be judged

by the students in one's tutorial. Only women address this

issue . One Canadian woman comments as follows:

I think my age and expertise has a lot to do with the
acceptance of my authority in the classroom. I mean,
I was an elementary school teacher for many years.
I've taught many tutorials and sessionals. I also have
a grown child. So there is nothing that these students
can throw at me that would embarrass me or bewilder me.
The students learn fairly quickly that I'm not to be

messed with. I think this is an advantage I have over younger women. In the past, when I've taught sessionals, I have had younger women who do tutorials for me come to me about the problem of authority and control in the classroom. I try to give them advice on how to establish their authority.

One woman, who belongs to a visible minority group, a visa student from a developing nation, presents a similar argument, but also relates her experience to her class position. She has this to say:

> I know that other students who are people of colour, especially women, have told me that they feel their students do not give them respect. I really don't know how students feel about my racial background. At least none of them have been open about it. But I've often thought that my age has a lot to do with the ability I have to exert control over my students, and also to receive respect from them. You can physically see that I am much older than a lot of t.a.s [teaching assistants]. I think in the students' minds, age is a sign of wisdom. Another thing is that I come from a middle-class background. In my home country, the middle class live side by side with the so called working class. So I am able to cross the boundaries quite easily. I can deal with and relate to students of any background.

A Canadian woman adds her thoughts. She says:

> I find as I age, male students question my authority much less. (She laughs.) I think that students just equate wisdom and authority with age. I still have the odd battle with men who want to show me who is boss. But these instances are very infrequent now. I think I've also become more diplomatic in how I state things. This is something that is not a forte of the working class. If you just blurt out things, especially if they relate to touchy or highly controversial topics,

students will be on you in a second. I've been away from my working-class family since my early teens. So my lessons in middle-class mannerisms began a long time ago. Don't forget, I worked in offices for many years too. But academia has made me more aware of carrying myself in a certain manner to get approval or to win respect.

ACCENT

One's accent can also affect how one is judged as a teaching assistant by students in tutorials. Some graduate students feel that their accents hinder communication with the students they teach. One man, a visa student from a developing nation, comments:

> Sometime[s] it take[s] a while to understand what the student is trying to say to me. Sometime[s] I take a while to understand the student. I wish my English was better so I could help them to understand the issue[s] better. Most [students] are patient but some seem frustrated when they [have to] repeat themsel[ves]. But I feel bad, mostly for them.

Another visa student, a woman from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences, gives a similar opinion. She says:

> I think my English has improve[d] since I c[a]me here. But student[s] still have [a] hard time understanding me. I think they still learn the material. But we spend [a] lot of time just trying to understand each other. I think some of them feel I do not know the material. I would like to be able to communicate better so I could be more helpful to them.

Another visa student, a man from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, recounts his experience. He has the

following to say:

> The bad thing about my accent is teaching the
> student[s]. I often feel embarrassed when I cannot
> understand what [the] student is saying to me. I feel
> bad too when I cannot express what I have to say in a
> way they can understand. Most student[s] have been
> nice. But one time a student complained to [the]
> professor. He said he was frustrated that he could not
> understand me. And he said he felt I did not know
> what I was doing. That bother[ed] me, because I did
> know.

One Canadian man sheds light on this issue.

> I realize that I might have an advantage over those
> teaching assistants who do not speak English as
> fluently as I do. I've had colleagues who have accents
> tell me of their problems in communication with their
> students because of their accents. I've also had
> undergraduate students come and complain to me about
> t.a.'s [teaching assistants] who have accents. Some
> want me to clarify something that they felt their
> teaching assistant did not explain well. However, I
> often suggest they go to their assigned t.a. [teaching
> assistant] and work it out with him or her.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

If there is any questioning of the authority of the
tutorial leader, it is women, not men, who are questioned.
What does this mean for the construction of knowledge? Since
men's ideas (and even their presence) are more often regarded
as legitimate and important, this means that students give
them more authority to define what is legitimate and

important. According to Dorothy Smith, (1991:246), if women have less authority they have less power in the construction of knowledge. The forms of knowledge and the process whereby knowledge is constructed will continue to be predominantly "male." And any attempt to negate these types will be judged as not credible or less credible. Schick comments:

> The masculinist interpretation of knowledge and practice at the university has so successfully projected its own ways of seeing social reality that its view is accepted as common sense and as part of the natural order (1994:7).

White women who teach and construct knowledge about minority issues are sometimes questioned and challenged by some minority undergraduate students. In other words, these students raise the question of whether one should or should not be teaching about experiences that one can never completely experience oneself. One Canadian woman has this to say:

> I have been a teaching assistant for various classes. So I've had to teach some issues about minorities, mostly in relation to women of minority status. I have had professors and colleagues ask me if I feel I should be teaching about issues that pertain to realities that are not my own. I say that I have no problem with this, because in today's society, having a white woman making others aware of the inequalities that minorities face is a good thing. I'm not saying that minorities have no power in dealing with their problems. But having a white woman on their side can add strength to their battle.

Another Canadian woman has a similar opinion. She comments as

follows:

> I have taught as a teaching assistant and as a
> sessional instructor. As a sessional instructor, I
> often incorporate issues of race in my curriculum. As
> a teaching assistant, I was never required to discuss
> issues about race. But I would raise them myself in
> tutorials. I want my students to realize that there
> are other realities out there other than their own.
> One time a colleague of mine sat in on a few tutorial
> sessions. He asked me if I felt I had the right or the
> authority to raise issues of which I do not have first
> hand experience. I said that there are many other
> issues that do not relate to race of which I can never
> have direct experience but I teach those. I also said
> that you have to be careful when teaching issues
> pertaining to race. You have to be aware that you are
> not an authority. And in a class full of white
> students you have to make this clear.

However, one woman who belongs to a visible minority group,

believes that having minority issues discussed by a person who

does not belong to a minority group can have its

disadvantages. She says:

> I taught for a particular professor one semester. He
> chose to have his students study a book by a minority
> group author who wrote about his experiences. I was
> really upset that semester because he did not teach
> this book properly. He took it totally out of context,
> and he did not understand at all, the points the author
> was trying to make. I told my students that I have
> another opinion about the book. I don't know if the
> professor will hear about this. And if he does, I
> don't know what will be the end result. But I could
> not just sit back and have what I consider my reality
> and experiences falsely interpreted and worse yet told
> to large numbers of students. I think it's good that

he wants to add issues of race to the course but he has
made me wonder if non-minority teachers should teach
our stuff if they don't really understand where we're
coming from.

A Canadian woman offers another example of the disadvantages

of teaching about issues relating to minorities. She says:

Being a non-minority [person] teaching minority issues
can have its advantages. I think that a class full of
whites might feel more comfortable dealing with issues
of racial oppression and discrimination if a white
person addresses these issues. Coming from a minority,
they might feel attacked or in some way uncomfortable.
On the other hand, sometimes if you have a lot of
students of colour in the class, there is some
resentment on a white person standing there talking to
them about racism. I had a friend, who is also white,
who had this experience. A student came up to her and
said that she resented having a white person teaching
the course.

<div align="center">PERSONALITY</div>

Some students feel that the personality of the teaching

assistant is an important factor in the undergraduate

classroom. One Canadian woman has this to say:

I think the personality of teaching assistants has a
lot to do with the interactions and enjoyment of the
teaching experience. Some of my colleagues are quite
dismissive of undergraduate students. And some act as
if they resent the "incompetence" of their students.
I think this type of attitude will lead to lack of
enjoyment of teaching. It can also lead to tensions in
the classroom. Some professors and students seem to
recoil from the ethnic mix of [students in this city].
But I think it makes it kind of fun.

Another Canadian woman, studying for a degree in the Sciences,

gives a similar opinion. She comments as follows:

> I enjoy teaching undergraduates. I know some of my
> colleagues don't. But I think their personalities
> prevent their enjoyment. Some of them just see it as
> a burden and something extra they have to do. Some of
> them don't seem to have much respect for the
> undergraduates, like they're superior or something.

Some students feel that personality is an even more

important factor than race, class and gender in shaping

teaching experiences. One Canadian man says:

> While I think race and gender and class can have an
> impact on the teaching experience, I think personality
> has a lot more to do with it. From what I've heard
> from other colleagues, it's their own attitudes that
> lead to positive interaction or negative interaction in
> classrooms. Undergraduates are not stupid. If you
> don't really want to be teaching, they will pick up on
> that.

One woman, a visa student from Europe, offers a similar

comment:

> Teaching is fun. At least that is how I see it. I know
> others don't enjoy [teaching}. And some of my female
> colleague[s] tell me they have problem[s] with men
> because they are women. But I think their approach and
> their attitude has a lot more to do with their
> trouble[s] than sexism or gender or what have you.

ANALYSIS

THE DYNAMICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

As was mentioned earlier, students display various

degrees of consciousness of race, class and gender. In some instances, age is also a factor. In some cases, it is difficult for students to separate out the relative importance of these factors in shaping their experiences. Furthermore, the dynamics of consciousness have implications for the construction of knowledge. We have seen cases where students both accept and reject dominant ideologies. Some explanations for challenging the system were offered in the previous chapter. For example, the location of some students in the gender, race, and class hierarchy leads to a special consciousness of the inequalities in academia and, therefore, to a questioning of the system. In addition, the greater consciousness of these concepts of humanities and social science students as compared to science students was attributed to differential exposure to social issues. Science students are not exposed to subject matter that would sensitize them to these issues. Let us now consider those who do not challenge the system.

It is obvious that some students do not perceive that there is anything wrong with the current system. However, even some who do realize that the dominant ideologies governing academic life may support and condone inequalities, do not challenge the system. What is the common thread that

encourages all students (despite their varying levels of consciousness) to support the system? It is the importance of the academic record.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENT AND THE ACADEMIC RECORD

Students at all levels of education are taught that teachers' assessments of them are important (Sanford, 1976:vi). This is called an academic record. The "academic identity" determines the content of the academic record (Sanford, 1976:9). Mark Sanford explains the importance of the academic identity and the academic record for the student:

> The academic identity is an image of the student that makes up his personal reputation as an apprentice and scholar. [It] is mainly a record of official accomplishments, but it also includes more informal judgments which are formed when the student performs before a group or a class or engages in conversation with his professors. This identity is used to decide how each student will be rewarded; it determines his suitability as a newly recruited graduate student, his eventual comparative rank in his department, and his placement after graduation (1976:9).

Thus, students may employ various "system-beating" strategies (to be discussed shortly) in order to ensure favourable academic records (Sanford, 1976:3). This type of behaviour indicates a dependence on the system, since the student strives to appear as if he/she is in agreement with the aims

of the institution (Sanford, 1976:3). It should be noted,
however, that not all students will try to beat the system.
Science students, in particular, are less likely to exhibit
this kind of behaviour. The following discussion will explain
this issue.

DIFFERENTIAL VIEWS OF "OBJECTIVITY"

The information which students receive about their
performance varies widely in clarity and content. For
example, students in the physical sciences tend to have a
clearer idea of their assessments, and the information that is
communicated to them is fairly objective (Sanford, 1976:9-10).
Sanford (1976:10) discusses the situations of students in
other fields:

> The quality of academic work in the humanities and
> social sciences, on the other hand, more often allows
> for a variety of interpretations, and a graduate
> student in these fields of study may have considerable
> difficulty in obtaining unequivocal cues from
> professors concerning his promise as a scholar and his
> relative standing in comparison to other students.
> Graduate students in these fields usually have a more
> difficult time learning exactly what the assessments of
> their abilities are, and thus are usually less certain
> about their academic identities.

Furthermore, a student in the physical sciences achieves a
greater awareness of his/her academic identity at an earlier

stage than those in other disciplines. This is partly because these students are channelled into independent research sooner (Sanford, 1976:11). "In some science departments students begin to do research almost immediately upon entrance, whereas in the humanities and social sciences the opportunity to engage in specialized research comes only after two or three years of course work" (Sanford, 1976:10-11).

In addition, students in the physical sciences have less distrust of the evaluation system. The majority of science students interviewed by Sanford felt that the evaluation of course work was based on clear, quantitative criteria (1976:56). This is because examination in those fields generally include problem sets which leave the professor little opportunity to employ qualitative criteria for assessment (Sanford, 1976:56).

Another related issue is financial support. Many science students are supported either by a fellowship or by some other form of institutional financial aid[3] (Sanford, 1976:81). Thus, grades and external evaluations did not affect whether a student would be able to finish the programme (Sanford, 1976:81). Most students are quite aware of the greater financial support accorded to students in the physical sciences. Consequently, the winning of scholarships is

probably of greater importance to those in the humanities and social sciences. Since professors must offer recommendations for a student to win a scholarship, humanities and social science students might be more careful in protecting their academic identities. "The implication is clear: a higher percentage of those who distrust the system try to beat the system" (Sanford, 1976:58). The student's main goal becomes the passing of examinations rather than the acquiring of knowledge (Sanford, 1976:16).

SYSTEM-BEATING STRATEGIES

One strategy that can be used to obtain the favourable opinion of those in positions of control is simply to conform to their expectations. In graduate school, there are rules and regulations that indicate how a student should conduct his/her studies (Sanford, 1976:16). These include the requirements that a student must satisfy in order to graduate. Some of these are the completion of required courses, the passing of preliminary examinations and the writing of a dissertation (Sanford, 1976:16).

Another system-beating strategy is to conform to the opinions of others. "This conformity is not so much a response to social pressures as a tactic to influence social

responses: a student will conform in order to appear attractive to professors" (Sanford, 1976:24). Sometimes it is necessary to accept professors' opinions. Grades are important in graduate school, and professors often believe that their own views are superior (Sanford, 1976:25). One student in an American study states, "I get the impression that, if I went against one of their ideas on an exam, I'd get marked down" (Sanford, 1976:26). Linda Carty recalls an instance where she perceived that students did not challenge a professor because of their concern over grades and assessment.

> ...in the political science class...though there were two Black[4] male graduate students sitting in on the course, they did not challenge the professor all year, nor did they support me when I did. Yet they would come to me after class to let me know that I had their support... . Often we [Black women] have to work separately from Black men because, though we share a great deal as victims of racism, patriarchy allows them certain privileges which we are denied. Whatever those privileges were perceived by my male counterparts in that class, they were not about to risk them by getting on the wrong side of the professor... . Since they were being supervised in their graduate work by the same professor, they were in that class for one reason, to fulfill his expected wishes (1991:6).

It would be wrong to believe that students always agree with a professor's ideas in order to gain favourable evaluations (Sanford, 1976:26). Students can truly respect the work, insights and opinions of professors. In addition,

students who are system-beaters will not necessarily conform to the opinions of all professors, but more than likely they will conform to those who they perceive as being able to advance their careers (Sanford, 1976:26).

PERSONALITY

The data reveal that some students perceive that personality is an important factor in shaping their experiences. In fact, some students believe that personality is a more important factor than race, class and gender in shaping their experiences. In these cases, personality is a perceptual filter that has been adopted through cultural practices. It prevents students from seeing racism, sexism and classism. There are also instances in which students recount experiences that they perceive to involve racism, classism, or sexism. But they fall back on personality as an explanation. In these cases, personality may be the strategy used by the individual to manage or deny unpleasant encounters. Another explanation might relate to Kadi's concept of the "conquered self," discussed in Chapter One. If those who have been oppressed come to realize at some point that they have been oppressed, and even if they develop an awareness of the nature and source of this oppression, they can still vacillate between the new identity and the old

identity which has developed over many years.

CONCLUSION

The classroom is one avenue through which knowledge is disseminated. Accepted types of knowledge are to a large extent based on Western, middle-class, male ideology (Schick, 1994:3). Those who occupy different positions in the social hierarchy often find their realities at odds with those defined by the dominant ideology as universal. Schick comments:

> ...I saw that the university's definition of knowledge was not just racist or sexist, but ensured that marginalized voices could not speak in anything but previously defined roles. We cannot interpret the world in ways that represent our experiences if the criteria for what is worth knowing has already been set for us. Furthermore, if our interpretations are categorically defined as unacceptable and "other," then our otherness is also unacceptable (1994:4).

This chapter has explored certain aspects of classroom dynamics through the examination of students' personal accounts and their subjective feelings about their experiences. As was mentioned earlier, students vary greatly in their consciousness of the significance of gender, race and class. The dynamics of consciousness have implications for

the construction of knowledge. More specifically, students' consciousness of these issues will influence what they say in class and what they write in papers and in examinations. Some students conform to the dominant ideologies, while others choose to challenge them. Various reasons for the differences in consciousness of students were offered in the previous chapter. A number of reasons were put forward for students' acceptance and rejection of dominant ideologies. This chapter has elaborated on reasons for conforming to academic rules and regulations. Fear of receiving poor grades provides an incentive to abstain from challenging the system. This is the case even for the most radical and outspoken of students.

ENDNOTES

1. Other students also mention the existence of competition in the classroom. They feel this is an attempt to score points for participation and/or to get into the good graces of the professor.

2. As was mentioned earlier, although Kanter writes about men and women in a corporation, her research results can be extrapolated to all large bureaucracies, even to the universities.

3. This has also been documented in a Canadian study by Ella Haley (1989:33).

4. As used here, the term "Black" refers to people who are not of the white majority. This includes anyone not of Anglo-Saxon or European decent, for example, Chinese and Latin Americans.

CHAPTER 5

THE DISSERTATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the experiences of graduate students as they choose research topics, conduct research and write their dissertations[1]. The construction of knowledge will be a major theme. There will be a particular emphasis on ideology. What is generated as knowledge/ideology reflects the values and the features of a society (Dant, 1991:3). In this instance, we are dealing with the university setting, and with graduate students and the members of their supervisory committees.

It should be noted that the dynamics of ideology/knowledge are more important in some areas than in others. In many disciplines, issues relating to race, class and gender are not relevant. However, in the social sciences and in the humanities these factors are often relevant, though less so in such fields as demography and statistics. Nonetheless, in the sciences as well as the humanities and

154

social sciences the quality of relationships between graduate students and the members of their supervisory committees has significant implications for the content of their dissertations.

The form and content of knowledge are shaped by race, class and gender (and sometimes age). These act as filters through which ideology is shaped, moulded and contested. The findings are similar to those presented in Chapter Five. We show that students vary in their consciousness of race, class and gender. Furthermore, experiences are sometimes shaped by more than one of these factors, in ways that make them difficult to separate.

These dynamics involved in the construction of knowledge affect each stage of the production of a dissertation. These stages include the choosing of a topic, the choosing of a committee and the process of conducting research and writing up the results in the form of a dissertation. As in the previous chapter, one important finding is how graduate students use the concept of personality as an alternative or perhaps parallel explanation of how experiences are affected by race, class and gender. An analysis of the perceptions of graduate students with regard to the usefulness of their dissertations will shed light on

the extent to which they believe they are producing new knowledge. These perceptions do, of course, have implications for the process whereby ideologies are continually being contested in the university setting. The following section will provide an analysis of the data, with an emphasis on the stresses that students encounter and the great importance they place on the most important pieces of work they have ever produced, their dissertations.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

One of the most important steps in writing a dissertation is that of selecting a topic (Smith, 1982:37). Refining and defining the topic in order to make it manageable is also of great importance (Smith, 1982:38). However, finding a specific topic is often difficult. Ellen Regan (1994:138), a graduate student studying in the early 1990s, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, calls this task a "germinating process." This means that the research problem generally begins in one's general area of interest, and is then narrowed down to a sub-field of the general area (Regan, 1994:138). It often takes a great deal of time and a great deal of consideration of all the possible areas that one would like to explore, before one can find a topic that is of

interest and is also manageable. Catherine Comuzzi, who was a graduate student in the early 1990s, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, describes the difficulty of this task:

> I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that I went through three different topics, three proposals, two different methodologies, and three different committees before I finally settled on and felt committed to my final topic (1994:44).

Some graduate students enter the graduate programme with specific research interests in mind, while others have general ideas or no ideas at all. When students perceive the "choice" as being completely their own, their personal ideology is drawn upon to a greater extent than in those instances where the supervisor plays a major role in the decision. In both instances, race, class, gender and sometimes age shape the choice of topic. However, for science students, these factors shape the choice of dissertation topic to a much lesser extent. Nonetheless, there are some common factors that students in the sciences and those in the humanities and the social sciences have in common when choosing topics. These include: pursuing work in an area of interest that stemmed from an undergraduate degree or an M.A. degree. Some make choices simply out of interest. Some are

thinking of the relevance of the topic for future jobs.   In reference to jobs, Mark Sanford (1976:33) who conducted research on graduate students, says "Choices are often determined by the student's degree of conservatism and by a consideration of how many jobs may be available in the new areas in comparison to the more traditional ones."   The following discussion will address these issues.

<center>STUDENT'S CHOICE</center>

In terms of race, minority students, especially visa students, often choose topics related to their own cultures. For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing country makes the following comment:

> I chose this topic because I have always had the desire
> to understand my own culture. One of the issues I am
> looking at is the issue of skin colour and identity.
> I've noticed ever since I was little that one's skin
> colour is related to one's status. Obviously, those
> with lighter skin colour have greater prestige. This
> has always been of interest to me.

This student feels that her choice of topic is also informed by her own middle-class upbringing and by her age.   She has this to say:

> My choice of topic was also a product of my class and
> my age.   I grew up in a culture in which the middle
> class lived side by side with the "so called" lower
> class.   Therefore, I've always been comfortable
> interacting with those of the lower class. And through
> reading and taking classes here, I came to realize that
> class dichotomies can be more pronounced in some

societies than others. So I decided to explore this
question of identity in terms of my own culture. In
terms of age, I think that I'm more focussed than a lot
of younger students. I'm pursuing something that has
always been of interest to me. Age has a lot to do
with this. A lot of younger students are really
worried about getting jobs when they're done, and their
choice of topics might be influenced by this.

Another visa student, from a developing nation, feels that his

choice of topic was a product of his culture as well as job

considerations. He says:

> I [chose] this topic because this religion [is]
> dominant in my country. I'm proud of my countr[y's]
> traditions. Also, I have [a] lot of background from my
> undergraduate degree in this area, and I figure[d] [a]
> Ph.D. would not be too difficult. And I figure[d] I
> could teach in my country. Teaching job[s] [are] very
> stable in [my [country]. They pay well, and there are
> many teaching job[s].

Those not of minority status also choose topics related

to their cultural backgrounds. One Canadian woman made such

a choice. She also explains why she does not look at issues

of class in her dissertation.

> Well, it [my cultural background] certainly has
> affected my choice. I mean, my background is British,
> Irish, Scottish and Welsh. And I guess that's why I
> chose to do this thesis topic. And I'm not looking at
> class issues, which you keep asking me about, probably
> because I'm from the upper-middle class. If I were
> from another class and felt oppressed or something, I
> might be more apt to investigate those questions.

However, class sometimes directly informs students'

choices of dissertation topics. For example, one Canadian man relates his choice of topic to his working-class origins and to the ease with which he crossed class boundaries.

> My family is basically of working-class background. But in one generation, me and my siblings, through our education, have become middle-class. Class divisions and aspirations, I guess, have been an interest inspired by watching my own family. And this philosopher who I discovered in my M.A. year, discusses such issues. And I grew up with those same thoughts and ideas.

He goes on to discuss a further reason why he chose this topic, and relates it to his lack of concern about future jobs. He says:

> The other reason I chose this topic is simply out of interest. I'm not sure how feasible it will be in terms of getting a job. But I know a lot of my colleagues are really worried about getting jobs when they are done. I think this adds a lot of unnecessary stress to their graduate work. I don't really care about what job I will get. I mean, I took a year off to go to Europe, which puts me a year behind where I should be. This would concern a lot of students, but not me.

Gender often informs women's choices of dissertation topics. Furthermore, the goal is frequently to address those past interpretations of women's issues that the student perceives to be too narrow or incorrect. For example, one woman, who belongs to a visible minority group, links her choice of topic to both race and gender issues. She comments

as follows:

> Well, I have been reading a lot of [literature] since my undergraduate degree on women and race issues. You know, a lot of feminist literature. And I just saw areas where things were missing. And then figuring that being a woman of colour, and, like I said, feeling the need lately to connect with my own [people], I thought [a particular course] on women's autobiography would be perfect. I wanted to critique a lot of the [literature] written about women and about my ethnic group.

Another Canadian woman discusses how gender informed her choice of topic. She says:

> My department is one of the most male-dominated departments in this university. This is the case in terms of both faculty and curriculum. I noticed, even as an undergrad[uate], that writings were mostly about men. I always wondered what the women were doing while these men had centre stage. So now that I have a chance, I want to write about the experiences of women, which I feel has been greatly overlooked.

INFLUENCE OF FACULTY

In some instances the choice of topic involves considerable discussion and negotiation between graduate students and their supervisors. Thus, ideologies are presented and discussed and some kind of consensus is reached. Sometimes students' original ideas are rejected, and the resulting choice may be seen by the student as less than satisfactory. The rationale from the point of view of the committee members is often that they are preventing the

student from making a serious mistake[2]. However, the student

sometimes does not share this point of view. One Canadian

woman comments as follows:

> I know a lot of people who have difficulty coming up
> with a topic that they are interested in, that is
> suitable for their committee. I know students who are
> discouraged from doing topics that they find very
> interesting. I know there are professors who would not
> have approved my topic, because of some of the feminist
> issues that I address.

In terms of race, there seems to be a relationship

between students' choices of topics based on their cultures

and supervisors' lack of expertise in these areas. It should

be noted that faculty are not allowed to supervise students

working in areas in which they do not have expertise.

Therefore, as fields change, there is a natural tension.

However, students do not always accept this point of view.

For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing

nation comments on this issue:

> I wanted to look at the social history of the kinds of
> things that black people were doing in a certain
> society. But [my supervisor] felt that he wasn't
> qualified enough. And he thought it was too much work.
> At least that's what he said! So I just accepted it.
> Either I was going to spend all my time arguing, or I'd
> just do what he said, and get on with it and have as
> few problems as possible.

Another visa student, a man from a developing nation makes a

similar point:

> I know some foreign students have problems finding
> supervisors and committees that have the expertise to
> supervise their topic. But in my case it is not that
> my supervisor does not have expertise in this area.
> The problem is he sees this issue in a different way
> than I do. I think a lot of this has to do with a
> difference in my culture and his culture. So I had to
> change the topic significantly. I am lucky though. I
> know of one student who came from my part of the world
> in [another department]. He went back because his
> supervisor did not accept his ideas and they could not
> work it out.

Some women feel that gender is a factor in the kinds of

negotiations that go on between themselves and their

supervisors as they choose a topic. For example, one woman,

a visa student from Europe says:

> Through reading and writing papers in my M.A., I became
> interested in this topic. But I realized that not much
> importance was allotted to women writers of this time
> and in this area. So I decided I would pursue that.
> I also realized that I would have to find someone who
> would be interested in this, and, most important, see
> it as a valid topic. So I asked some of my female
> colleagues for advice. Some mentioned one woman
> professor who has some feminist interests. Not that
> I'm necessarily heavily into feminism. But I knew a
> lot of male professors would not want to deal with
> gender issues. So I approached her and we discussed
> what I wanted to do. She liked my idea, but she made
> some suggestions which changed my topic quite a bit.
> But the final topic is even more appealing to both of
> us. Yeah, so I think gender had a lot to do with my
> choice of topic and my supervisor's enthusiasm to
> pursue it.

Another Canadian woman feels that the misgivings of her

committee with regard to her topic are related to gender and class issues. She comments as follows:

> I think that women normally pick "safe topics," not one that's a male domain. At least that's the way I see it. Part of my problem is that I chose a topic that's a male domain. I don't think [my committee] thought I could handle it. But when you come from my culture and having my class background [working-class], you become aware of how politics and economics affect individuals. The thing is they [my committee] don't recognize that a lot of their theories are racist to the core and based on views of a privileged class---the white males versus the less privileged groups they study. I think they let me go ahead with the topic because they figured in the end they could influence my analysis of the data. I think a lot of women might have given in and not done the topic, or they would have analyzed the data in the fashion their committee desired.

THE SCIENCES

Science students, more often than those in the humanities and the social sciences, collaborate with their supervisors in choosing dissertation topics. It is rare to find a situation where a science student enters the graduate programme with a specific topic (or even a general topic) in mind. There are a variety of reasons for this and they are linked to the nature of scientific work.

The first reason has to do with the nature of scientific research. It involves team work. In addition, many science students receive part of their income from teaching assistantships and part from professors' grant money.

Grants are given for research on specific topics. Therefore, it is common for students to be working on aspects of projects in which the professors are involved. Obviously, these topics are not chosen by these students. The second reason is that in the sciences professors sometimes conduct research under contracts. They are funded by companies that require specific research. Students who have such supervisors have the option of working on these kinds of projects. Again, they will not be choosing their own topics. Third, when science students choose supervisors, they often have their future employment prospects in mind. They talk of the topic having "real life applications." Sanford (1976:32-33), in his research on American graduate students in the 1960s, discusses this issue:

> When Chemistry students were asked about how they came to select their research directors, they often mentioned that their professors were working in areas which were believed to show promise of producing important scientific discoveries. The students wanted to be in new and different fields and to do work that would be recognized.... . Students obtained clues about the most prestigious areas from the professional journals in the field... . Almost every student interviewed claimed that his current field was currently "hot" or fashionable, or at least that it would be so in the near future.

One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences has this to say:

> My supervisor has a reputation for having contacts with

many companies. And when I started working with him, he informed me of the types of things that are "hot topics." What we ended up choosing is a good topic, because it has "real life applications," and this is better for getting a job.

However, not all students will choose a currently fashionable topic. And some may decide to play it safe, choosing a more traditional area which is already established (Sanford, 1976:33).

A related consideration in terms of choosing a topic and future jobs for science students is how "solvable" the research problem is. In the sciences, publication only occurs if a project solves its research problem. Of course, most science students feel that having a publication to their names would be an asset in their careers (Sanford, 1976:34). One Canadian woman, studying in the Sciences comments:

I know students who have done two or three different topics. This is because they get part way through and realize the problem is not going to be solved. If the problem is not solved, this is not good for many reasons. First, the student and the supervisor are not pleased. I mean, they are not satisfied. And most important, you do not get publication. This is important for a future job. It is good if your work is recognized. I mean, even if your problem is solved and you do not publish, people will be suspicious of how good your work really was.

Even in those cases in which students do not necessarily have jobs in mind, their choices are often

restricted because of the nature of science. The finding of
a suitable topic often comes after months or even years of
experimentation. Students in the sciences sometimes describe
this as a process of "evolution." One Canadian man, working
in the Sciences remarks:

> He [my supervisor] gave me the topic and his point of
> view. And I thought it made sense. So I started
> working on it. After about five months of
> experimenting, I can better define my topic. And then
> after a year, it was better defined and so on. It's an
> evolution, you know.

DEPENDENCE VERSUS INDEPENDENCE IN CHOOSING TOPICS

It should be noted that, while some students like to
choose topics themselves, others do not always find such
independence desirable. Some prefer or require more guidance
in the choosing of their topics. This is not unusual among
students just embarking on their research. William Alexander
(1994:2) recalls how, when he was a graduate student, he would
ask for advice a number of times early in the process, only to
have his questions answered with further questions. At the
time, he was frustrated. But now, as a professor, he
understands why this was the case. He explains the situation:

> The supervisor and committee might ask questions for
> clarification and even criticize the problem if not
> clear, or the methodology inappropriate. But they

generally do not see their job as providing specific
direction---an appropriate stage one response under
normal circumstances (Alexander, 1994:6).

Another reason why some students work on their own is because

supervisors regard them as weak students and do not want to

entrust portions of their research to them when there are more

competent students available to them. One man, a visa student

from a developing nation, working in the Sciences, discusses

his experience of choosing a topic. He says:

> For my thesis, I was totally free to choose my topic.
> And I [found] myself kind of in an ocean, not know[ing]
> what to do. My supervisor want[ed] me to find my topic
> on my own, but I need[ed] more guidance. So he helped
> me a bit to discover it.

Those who have the freedom to choose their topics often

comment that they are independent. Some also believe that, at

the stage of writing up the dissertation, independence is

essential. For example, one Canadian woman holds this view.

She associates her independence with her age.

> I really liked the fact that I was free to choose my
> topic. I think a lot of students are looking for what
> they "should" be doing, and are often trying to please
> their supervisors. But I think independence is a must
> at this stage [the dissertation stage] of the
> programme. You know what...I think maybe my age has
> made me more independent, because I know exactly what
> I want to do.

Another woman, a visa student from a developing nation, tells

a similar tale:

> I think a lot of students who are much younger than
> myself are looking for what they "ought" to do, instead
> of what they really want to do. And many are looking
> for guidance from their supervisors. Well I've just
> been around a lot longer. I have more than one degree,
> and I'm doing this because I'm more independent at this
> age. I'm also more focussed, and I've just come to
> know exactly what topic I want to do. When I pursued
> my first M.A. degree, that was for job purposes. But
> my outlook changed. Now I'm pursuing something out of
> pure interest---something just for me.

CHOOSING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The behaviour of committee members does, of course,
have significant implications for the experiences of graduate
students. Thus, "the selection of committee members is a
critical decision because advisers and committee members can
also be major deterrents to the process" (Vartuli, 1982:11).
This is because support, encouragement, feedback and
evaluation from committee members are important for the
student's success in the dissertation journey (Comuzzi,
1994:46; Vartuli, 1982:13). In addition, their opinions are
often drawn upon in the course of the development of the
student's research topic. Thus, their ideology shapes the
form and content of the dissertation. Students tend to choose

committee members they perceive as having similar points of view. If the viewpoints do not coincide, then problems may emerge (Alexander, 1994:4). One woman, a visa student from Europe says:

> I know some people have big problems. But I did not. I think the reasons for these problems is he relationship between supervisors and students, and sometimes the committee members and students.

There is, of course, some flexibility and some constraint in choosing committee members, even in those instances in which the student perceives the choice to have been his or her own. Furthermore, science students are more likely to defer to their supervisors in choosing committee members than are students in the humanities and the social sciences. This means that they rely to a greater extent on their supervisors' perceptions of other faculty members' ideas and viewpoints.

STUDENTS' CHOICE

Students often choose supervisors on the basis of prior knowledge of their work. For example, students may gain familiarity with the individual from courses taken at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Students may also acquire information through conversation with other professors, secretaries and/or students. For example, Katherine Tracey

(1982:74), a professor in the United States, recalls her
graduate years and says, "I soon learned that significant
information was communicated informally from student to
student about courses and professors." Students coming from
other universities often gain information from professors at
their former universities about the character and reputation
of certain professors at the new university. As a matter of
fact, some students state that the main reason for coming to
the university is to work with particular professors. For
example, one woman, a visa from a developing nation, studying
in the Sciences says:

> Back home, when I was consider[ing] applying to
> graduate studies here, one of my professor[s] told me
> of a professor [whom] he knew here. They had met at
> [a] conference many years ago. He said that this
> professor does good work, and does work in the area I
> was interest [ed in]. So that is the main reason I
> came here, and how I [chose my] supervisor.

Furthermore, when students in the humanities and social
sciences enter graduate programmes they are assigned advisors,
usually people specializing in the student's area of interest.
Thus, the advisor often becomes the student's supervisor.
Since most science students in this sample did not do
undergraduate work here, they often conduct informal
interviews with professors soon after their arrival. They

then choose one to become their supervisor. For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences comments:

> I do not know why, but before I came here I receive[d]
> a letter explicitly saying that I should not contact my
> potential supervisor. From what other student[s] tell
> me, they receive[d] a similar letter. So I had no
> contact whatsoever with my supervisor before I came
> here. Then I decide[d] when I got here to conduct some
> interviews with professors. And then I [chose] one.

Despite the freedom to choose supervisors and committee members, there are often a limited number of faculty who specialize in the student's area. In fact, some supervisors may not have the expertise to supervise the proposed topic. This is especially problematic for minority students, who often want to do topics that relate to their own cultures. For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing nation comments as follows:

> I had problems finding professors in my department with
> knowledge of my country. I had to go outside my
> department to the humanities. There, I found a man who
> is also from my country, and he does European
> literature and especially black literature.

A Canadian woman had a similar experience.

> No one in my department really does work in this area.
> This is not a typical topic. My committee members were
> not too happy to be chosen, because they have to do a
> lot of work to learn about my topic.

In terms of gender, many students comment that women faculty are few in number. Brian MacMillan (1989:2) notes that in Ontario universities, at the faculty level, the number of women is limited. This situation is even more pronounced in the sciences (Bellamy and Guppy, 1991:185). For some women, this is not a problem. However, others feel that they would like to work with women, especially when the topic involves issues relating to gender. One Canadian woman says:

> I had to go outside my faculty to find a woman to be on my committee. It really disturbed me, because of my heavy concentration on women's issues. I just feel the need to work closely with a woman, because she would be more able to relate to women's issues.

Sometimes women who want to pursue a topic relating to feminist issues have difficulty finding suitable supervisors. Carol Schick addresses this issue:

> Feminist students in particular frequently have to teach their supervisors something of a feminist perspective so that these faculty members can supervise them. Not surprisingly, the results are often unsatisfactory with the students being told that their feminist orientation is unacceptable (1994:57).

Indeed, one Canadian woman describes the problem:

> One of my female colleagues was quite frustrated when she was trying to find a supervisor. The problem had to do with her topic, which had to do with feminist issues. There was one woman who could have supervised her. But she did not want her [as a supervisor] because of some personal differences. So she went to

this one professor, a man, who told her quite bluntly not to use patriarchy as a category because it was too "fuzzy." So she decided to do another topic. I felt bad for her.

While some women are bothered by the lack of availability of women faculty, others feel that it is better to avoid women. The reason for this is that they feel some women faculty can be more oppressive than men. "It should be noted that there are gender-obsessed women who can be even more harmful to women than men" (Levy, 1982:57).

Science students also realize that female faculty are fewer in number than men. However, women students in the sciences do not perceive this to be as pressing an issue as do those women in the humanities and the social sciences. In addition, they do not perceive there to be any negative ramifications in terms of the production of knowledge. One Canadian woman, working in the Sciences has this to say:

> I would like to see more female faculty, just because I sense it is unfair that there are so many more men in my department-and all of science, for that matter. I don't know, I can't figure it out really, but I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that women are still doing a lot of the [work] in the home. I mean, grad[uate] school takes a lot of time.

Another woman, a visa student from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences comments:

There are definitely a smaller number of women than men in my department. This does not bother me. But it would be nice to see more. You know, just to see that having children, a husband and a career are all possible. I mean, women still have to do more than men in the house. Sometime[s] I wonder if this is why there aren't that many women professor[s].

However, the general consensus among science students is that gender is not a major consideration in terms of choosing committee members. One Canadian man states:

I don't think gender plays a role in terms of committee members. The only question you ask about a scientist is, "How well does he do science?" There's no difference between men and women in doing physics.

INFLUENCE OF FACULTY

In some cases, once a supervisor is chosen the graduate student and supervisor work together to choose the other committee members. Some students prefer this method, because they trust the advice of supervisors who usually have intimate knowledge of faculty members, something which students do not possess. Linda Williams, a former graduate student, comments:

With his experience in the department, my supervisor knew in whose field my interest lay and which individuals would be "good" to have on my committee, politically and academically (1994:155).

This is especially true for foreign students and for others who have not completed their undergraduate or their M.A. degrees here. These students are not already familiar with

faculty. For example, one man, a visa student from a developing nation, found this to be his experience:

> I had choice. But it was mostly my supervisor's idea who would be on my committee. When you come here, you may not know any faculty. You know your supervisor basically. So I met with him, and he suggested who would be the best choices for my committee.

Another visa student, from a developing nation, had a similar experience:

> My supervisor pick[ed] my committee member[s]. I was new to the department. I figure[d] he would have better judgment [than myself]. No, this did not bother me.

The next section will explore students' experiences when conducting research and when writing it up in the form of a dissertation.

WORKING ON THE DISSERTATION

Relations with committee members, especially with one's supervisor, are of prime importance throughout the development of the dissertation. "Styles of supervisors should match thesis students' styles and the journey goes more smoothly if both parties know and adapt to this style" (Alexander, 1994:4). The following discussion will explore the kinds of problems that students encounter when working on their

dissertations. We pay particular attention to issues relating to race, class, and gender and ideology.

FLEXIBILITY

There are numerous ways in which being of a minority race, class and gender can either help or hinder one when one is pursuing graduate work. For example, students of visible minority backgrounds are sometimes considered authorities when the topic under study is related to their cultures. One man, a visa student from a developing country comments:

> My committee is actually learning from me, since I know more about the topic than they. They are now reading about [these particular poets], and they're enjoying it. So I have quite a bit of freedom in pursuing the topic, since they see me as somewhat an authority on the topic.

Another visa student from a developing nation, gives a similar account. But she also relates her experience to gender.

> My committee is very flexible. They give me the impression that I know more about my society than they do. For example, I had total freedom in designing the questionnaire, because I know what questions are and are not acceptable in my society. I think I have a lot of freedom, too, since I am a woman dealing with women's issues. So they see me as having first-hand experience with the topic.

Other women, not necessarily of minority status, also find that their gender is something perceived to be a positive attribute, especially when there is another woman on the

committee. They phrase their experiences in terms of "being able to relate to the topic" if the topic focuses on women's issues. They also talk of "being able to relate to each other" because of a common gender. One Canadian woman says:

> I like the fact that there are two women on my committee. They're interested in topics of family, also [in]women's issues. I just feel they are able to relate to the topic---and to me. We can relate to each other, because we have similar experiences. And I think they take a special interest in me on a personal level because of that.

Being middle-class was mentioned as being a positive attribute. Having the same mannerisms and feeling comfortable in a predominantly middle-class setting was important. Indeed, Donna Langston (1993:72) discusses the comfort of understanding middle-class behaviour and the sense of discomfort when one does not. This pattern is also reflected in classroom dynamics. Thus, students are generally aware that there are advantages to being middle-class in the university setting. One Canadian man has this to say:

> I think we're [my committee members and myself] from similar backgrounds. They're also white men with beards. So we're sort of a type or of the same class. We speak the same language when it comes to [the philosopher I study], who is also of the Christian tradition.

Older graduate students sometimes benefit in certain ways[3]. For example, some mature students feel that, because

they are closer in age to their committee members, there is

more respect for their opinions. Furthermore, mature students

tend to see themselves as being more independent than younger

students. They do not have to rely as much on committee

members for direction. Committee members also appreciate

this. One Canadian woman believes this to be the case:

> I think I haven't run into a lot of problems because of
> my age. I'm closer in age to my committee members than
> a lot of younger students, and I just think there is
> respect because of that. I'm also much more
> independent at this age. And I know exactly what I
> want to do, which I think my committee also respects.

However, it should be noted that some students perceive

that race, class and gender do not have anything to do with

their experiences. One Canadian man states:

> You know, just because the other members of my
> committee are white and also male, I don't think that
> has anything to do with the way I interact with them.
> I don't think in general, race, and class, and all that
> really come into play. I think for most students, it
> either works or it doesn't. They either get along with
> their committee, or they don't.

CONSTRAINT

There are also cases in which students feel constrained

in the production of knowledge. Alexander (1994:7) suggests

that, in most cases, the desires of committee members for

changes in content or interpretation stem from their beliefs

that the dissertation will be more adequate. However, he goes

on to explain that this is not always the case.

> If the supervisor is insecure, overly sensitive to
> criticism or brand new and naive about the process,
> then he or she may be particularly hard on the thesis
> student. The student is left with the complex task of
> protecting the reputation of the supervisor, the
> committee, the department and the university
> (Alexander, 1994:7).

One Canadian woman comments on the issue of disagreements
over perspectives:

> It comes down to a fundamental disagreement about how
> one perceives the world. I mean, for my committee
> members to accept the way I look at things at face
> value would mean they'd have to give up the way they
> look at things. And they're not going to [do that].
> That's one thing I've learned, academics will not give
> up the way they look at things. And they only give
> them up very slowly if at all.

In terms of race, we noted several instances in which
the ideology of the student did not coincide with that of
his/her committee members. For example, one woman, a member
of a visible minority group, discusses a disagreement with her
committee members over the issue of theory.

> My committee wanted me to incorporate post-modern
> theory, but I was not happy about this. If you go
> right back to the assumptions of white society's
> theories and their methodologies, they're racist. You
> can't take the racism out. So I tried to do this, and
> what I ended up with was a reflection of two realities,
> one my own and the other white. And it just wasn't
> working. So I rewrote it, and I threw all the theories
> out, and just came at it from an another perspective.
> Whether they pass it or not, I don't care. I'm not

using my people's tragedy to prove one ridiculous
theory or another.

Another minority student, describes difficulties that
developed because of the lack of experience with issues
relating to her ethnic group among her committee members. She
makes the following comment:

My committee has been just as supportive as they can
be. But I feel there is a point beyond which we just
do not understand one another. I've been increasingly
feeling this need to have someone who knows exactly
what I'm talking about. And not this sense of the
blank stare or the feeling of, "Who is teaching who
here?" I went to an all black university, and you talk
to somebody, and they know exactly where you're coming
from.

When one is pursuing a topic related to one's own
culture, one is often hindered by difficulties in obtaining
material. One man, a visa student from a developing nation,
recounts his experiences:

I am sometimes frustrated at the distance I have to
travel to obtain materials. A lot of times I have to
go to the universities [in a city some miles away]. I
mean, I'm frustrated that [this university's] library
has very little literature [in my area of study].

Other students indicate that they often have to wait
considerable lengths of time for materials to arrive from
overseas. One man, a visa student from a developing nation,
says:

> I encountered some...problems in terms of finding enough materials in the library. I write home for things, but it can take a long time to arrive.

A student's class and political perspective can affect his/her experiences. One Canadian woman of working-class background, describes her difficulties with her committee and links these problems to class and gender differences. She makes the following point:

> Coming from a working-class background, I've always been aware of political and economic differences between groups. And a lot of it revolves around power. This trickles down into my thesis also. I'm saying that this group of people do not like our Western institutions, and they like theirs. My committee does not agree with my interpretation, because they're from a more privileged class and they want to believe that in no way are we abusing these people. They're also of the old boys' network, and think they have the power to negate a woman's point of view.

Another Canadian woman of working-class background, tells a similar tale:

> I've said before that, in my working-class family, we were always allowed to say what we wanted. Age and sex were never factors in voicing our opinions. I think this has caused some trouble with that one committee member [mentioned earlier]. When I would have discussions with him about the content of my thesis, he seemed angered when I did not agree with his point of view. I don't think he expected me to speak up as much as I did. And he probably expected me to back down. I know part of this has to do with class. But some of it has to do with gender. But I'm not sure how much of a factor it is. He made it quite clear that he did not like my "feminist slant," as he called it. So

I really hope we can get him off my committee.

One Canadian man offers a different point of view:

> There are certain rules that govern academia. And I
> think if you want to get along with others you should
> follow them. I have heard of people who get into
> arguments with their supervisors and committee members.
> And I would not doubt if some of this has to do with
> class differences. I mean, I come from a working-class
> background. But I choose not to wear my working-class
> beliefs on my sleeve.

THE SCIENCES

Science students are much less conscious of issues
relating to gender, race and class. Women are somewhat aware
of gender differences, but they often state that they are not
sure what these differences are and that they cannot pinpoint
the nature of these differences. For example, one woman from
a developing nation, studying in the Sciences, remarks:

> I sense there are differences between men and women in
> doing our work. But you know, I can't put my finger on
> exactly what these differences are. I had a male
> supervisor before I switched to my present supervisor.
> And while they're both nice people, I just feel more of
> a bond and a common understanding with [my female
> supervisor]. Part of it is that she has a husband and
> children, and she makes me see that a career and a life
> are possible. This also makes her more understanding
> of the difficulties I might have as a woman in pursuing
> a graduate degree.

However, most science students do not perceive there to
be any differences based on race, class or gender in the

university setting. The explanation they often give is that the sciences are very "international." One Canadian woman has this to say:

> There are people of many different cultures in my
> department, and [all of] the sciences as a matter of
> fact. I think the professors and students are just
> use[d] to dealing with all sorts of different people,
> and I'm just another one. I don't think it's an issue
> that I'm white or Francophone. What about the one from
> India? What about the Chinese? Or South American?

Another reason science students offer is the nature of their work. They do not deal with social issues. One man, a visa student from a developing nation, comments:

> I am working with mathematical things, so race and
> gender and all those background things don't come into
> play. We're not looking at social issues. I mean, how
> can one get excited about $E=mc2$?

One Canadian woman offers a similar explanation. She says:

> In the sciences, race, and class and all that really
> does not come into play. I mean, we're just not
> dealing with highly charged emotional issues. The only
> question you ask about a professor is how well does he
> or she do his or her work? And how much time does this
> person give to his or her students? Our criteria for
> evaluation are somewhat different, I would think. I
> mean, we are either getting close to solving the
> problem, or not. Or using the right equipment, or not.
> Maybe science students are not as worried about
> personal opinions entering evaluations.

DEPENDENCE VERSUS INDEPENDENCE IN PURSUING RESEARCH

It should be noted that, while some students like

independence in pursuing their research, others prefer more
guidance from their supervisors, especially during in the
initial stages (Alexander, 1994:5). Sometimes students do not
receive as much guidance as they would like. One Canadian
woman, studying in the Sciences, comments:

> Academically, my [committee members] are pretty good.
> My supervisor is helpful, but he's not as focussed on
> my project as I would like him to be. He sort of just
> didn't give me a lot of direction, which I'm not really
> sure is his job any more. At this stage, maybe I
> should be more independent. But I don't think it's
> something that can be helped. He really has a lot of
> projects he's tied up with.

Another woman, a visa student from Europe, finds herself in a
similar situation.

> Sometimes I wish my supervisor would provide more
> direction. I think that he just want[s] me to discover
> things on my own. So he's not trying to be difficult
> or anything. He just thinks this is the best way to
> learn. Part of it might be that he is very busy. He
> has other student[s] to supervise, and [he has] his own
> work too.

Those who prefer less guidance from their supervisors
often link their preference to their desires for independence.
One Canadian man says:

> My work has basically been self-guided. I know some
> people consult their supervisors about every little
> detail. That might work for them, but I can't help but
> feel that at this stage you should be somewhat more
> independent. If you're not, I think you're in some
> sort of trouble.

Other students see their desires for independence as being linked to their age. For example, one man, a visa student from a developing nation states:

> I don't require a lot of guidance from my supervisor or my committee members. I know some students require more guidance than I do. I can't help but feel that my age has something to do with this. Most students are ten to fifteen years younger than myself. Some of them are looking for what they "should" be doing. I guess, at one time, I was like that. But now I'm pursuing something I really want to pursue. And I don't really care to defer to professors to gain their respect. Perhaps younger students feel they must do this. So my age might be an advantage, because there is an automatic respect from professors.

PERSONALITY

While we have described several instances in which graduate students feel that race, class and gender (and sometimes their age) have affected their experiences, others feel that personality is more important. One Canadian man makes the following comment:

> I have heard of instances where students have had problems with committee members. But I think, in most cases, what stood out was personality differences more than anything else. I mean, my family is of working-class background. And I could come in here raving about my working-class origins. But, I choose not to. Why would I want to cause trouble for myself?

Even those who describe situations in which they feel
that race, class or gender had been significant, often
downplay their experiences and tend to see any problems that
arose in terms of personality differences. A Canadian woman,
who belongs to a visible minority group says:

> Gender does not matter, because women can be just as
> oppressive as men. A woman might not have liked my
> focus on my people's experiences or my disregard for
> theories either. It's really the personality of the
> professor that counts.

Science students, in particular, feel that personality
is more important in determining behaviour than race, class or
gender. One man, a visa student from a developing nation,
working in the Sciences, has this to say:

> When I was choosing a supervisor, I considered [a woman
> from my home country]. Then I thought, she knows more
> about me than others. Back in [my country], if a
> professor asks you to work all night, you do it. So I
> thought she might expect more from me. I also heard
> she causes trouble for students in the department. So
> I think the personality of the person is what counts.
> A man could be just as nice or just as mean as a woman.

Some students simply believe that racism, sexism and
classism are discussed too much. For example, one woman, a
visa student from a developing nation, working in the Sciences
states:

> Actually, I am quite tired of people jumping on the
> race or gender argument or what have you. It's only
> since coming here that I have heard of this race

division, and this division between man and woman. I think female[s] in Canada have made good improvements toward equality. And they act like men are treating them so bad, and like there will be a war between the sexes. I think, in [the] graduate programme anyway, it's the personality of the people that matters.

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

MADE BY THEIR DISSERTATIONS

Students' perceptions of the usefulness of their dissertations reveal their feelings about the new knowledge they are producing. Furthermore, these perceptions have implications for the various ideologies that are being contested. We now explore these issues.

Some visa students believe that their research will help others in their home countries. For example, one male visa student from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences says:

Since I am getting my education abroad, I will take this knowledge and experience back home, where I will pass it on to my students. It will help them get a broader knowledge of the topic. I mean, we do not have nuclear reactors back home, so they can never get first-hand experience. But I did. So this will help them.

Another visa student offers a similar account:

I hope my dissertation will help other women back home and in the Third World in general. I did a lot of

reading before I chose my topic, and I came to realize
that a lot was written on women's reproductive health.
So I thought I would look at other problems women face.
It seems that the literature is saying that all women
know how to do is to produce, and that the only
problems they have are in relation to reproduction.
So I hope it does help other women, especially those
back home.

Those who are not of minority status also tend to think their

dissertations will help others. One Canadian woman makes the

following comment:

I think I will send [my dissertation] back to [the
country I studied]. And I think it will help them. It
will give them the words by which to stand up for
themselves against unwanted Western customs.

Some students feel that their dissertations will

correct misinterpretations and explain previous perspectives.

One Canadian woman remarks:

I think one of the main problems with feminist history,
up to this point, has been a tendency to isolate women
from other forms of history, and to treat women's
history as a separate discipline... . What I think my
thesis does is to draw women back into the larger
picture. And, yes, gender is a crucial part of it.
I'm in that school of women's history, a kind of
revisionist women's history, that realizes that the
history of women can only be understood in relationship
to the history of men.

Others believe that they are contributing new knowledge

in an established area, or developing a better understanding

of a new area. Science students often say this. One Canadian

woman, working in the Sciences comments:

> There's a lot of people publishing about this topic,
> and they view the process [a] certain way. When they
> work with this material, they do it in what I would
> call an archaic fashion. It's very "trial and error."
> Nothing is very [well] thought [out] and plan[ned], and
> I think my work will contribute to a better
> understanding of the process.

Another contribution of the dissertation is the provision of new information on a neglected topic. For example, one man, a visa student from a developing nation gives the following account:

> I think it [my dissertation] will [bring more
> recognition] to researchers and writers [who] are not
> mainstream. I think I've already had [some] influence
> here [by influencing the content of] course curriculum.
> And back home I plan to expose students to these [works
> of neglected researchers and writers]. Even back home,
> they teach only [works by particular authors].

Another student, a Canadian man has a similar reaction:

> I think in looking at Canadian-American relations in
> history, sometimes we stress the differences between
> the two countries, and at other times we stress
> similarities. Often in this process there hasn't been
> a focus on local issues to see how they relate to the
> wider issues. So I think I will be discussing a topic
> that is often neglected.

Some students believe that their dissertations have provided valuable critiques of previous perspectives. One woman visa student from a developing nation says:

> I think it [my dissertation] critiques the discipline itself and my region in terms of identity. It addresses, head on, the issue of colour and power relations, and who constructs them, and who continues to use them, and why. I think it has relevance for the discipline in terms of [encouraging academics in my department] to critically look at themselves. It looks at the whole question of "the other" and past constructs of identity.

ANALYSIS

THE DYNAMICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The interviews reveal that there are instances in which issues relating to race, class, gender and, in some cases, age are associated with ideologies that are contested in the university setting. While students occasionally disregard the wishes of their committees, there are also cases in which students have willingly or unwillingly accepted the ideas of their committees. For example, some visa students unwillingly adopt the perspectives of their committee members, because they want to avoid any complications that would delay their degrees and force them to pay further tuition fees. One man, a visa student from a developing nation has this to say:

> Why would I want to argue with him [my supervisor],and
> cause problems for myself? I hoped to have written it
> [my dissertation] from a more religious point of view,
> but mostly I just want to get the degree and not have
> to pay extra fees.

One Canadian man offers a similar account:

> I feel it's important to have your supervisor on your
> side. Not only knowledgeable, but also sympathetic to
> the kinds of things I'm looking at. However, I'm not
> going to take any controversial view that would cause
> me any problems.

Another reason for refraining from questioning dominant ideologies is the student's awareness of the importance of his/her assessment and the academic record. These issues were discussed earlier in relation to classroom dynamics. Students at all levels of education are very much aware that teachers' assessments of them are important (Sanford, 1976:iv). Students recognize that formal and informal judgements affect their academic records (Sanford, 1976:9). Furthermore, the academic record determines whether or not the student enters graduate school, his/her rank in the department, and his/her eventual placement after graduation (Sanford, 1976:9). Therefore, the need to maintain a good academic record discourages the student from questioning the present academic system. They are also discouraged from questioning what is considered to be established ideology.

It should be noted that producing a dissertation that is in accordance with one's true subjective beliefs can be particularly difficult. It is the single most important piece of work the graduate student has to tackle. It is the most important indication of his/her abilities as a graduate student. The quality of the dissertation determines his/her future as an academic. In addition, it is a very long and tedious process. Thus, the student may refrain from questioning the approaches of his/her committee members, in order to ensure that the dissertation does not take longer than is necessary. For example, some visa students have suggested that they do not want to challenge their committee members, because they do not want to have to pay further tuition fees or to delay their returns to their home countries.

PERSONALITY

While some students perceive that factors relating to race, class and gender shape their experiences in academia, others believe that personality is the most important factor. In these cases, personality is a perceptual filter that prevents students from seeing racism, sexism and classism. There are also instances in which students recount experiences they perceive to involve racism, sexism or classism. But they

then fall back on personality as an explanation. In these cases, seeing the problem in terms of personality may provide the individual with a means of managing unpleasant encounters and denying the existence of the underlying problem.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the experiences of graduate students who are conducting research and writing it up in the form of dissertations. The construction of knowledge is a main theme. We consider how the dynamics of race, class and gender, and in some cases age, shape, mould, and construct ideologies in the university setting. Examination of issues relating to race, class and gender reveal that students vary in their consciousness of these concepts and, therefore, in the extent to which they are likely to question ideologies. However, it has been demonstrated that it is not always the case that a student who perceives the system to be unfair will openly question it. Some of the reasons for deferring to faculty members were described. For example, students need to have strong academic records.

These dynamics involved in the construction of knowledge were examined at each stage in the student career. First, there is the choice of a topic. Second, one must

choose committee members and conduct research. Then, one must write the research up in the form of a dissertation. Our discussion of the importance of personality reveals that consciousness is not static. And it is imbued with contradictions. Some students see personality factors as parallel and sometimes alternative explanations to experiences shaped by race, class and gender. In some cases, this prevents students from seeing the inequalities of race, class and gender. In other cases, seeing problems in terms of personality clashes, provides a coping mechanism which allows students to deny the seriousness of the problem. The final section explored students' perceptions of the contributions made by their dissertations to the construction of knowledge. This offered insights into what students' feelings are about what they are actually producing and its value to society.

ENDNOTES

1.   Students in the fields of the humanities and the social sciences often use the term "dissertation" to refer to a doctoral thesis. Science students use the term "thesis." To simplify matters, the term "dissertation" will be used throughout.

2.   Some of the serious mistakes include choosing a project that requires too much work, or one which has been so well researched that no publication is possible from it.

3.   Some current literature (for example, the various experiential accounts offered in Cole and Hunt) suggests that older graduate students tend to pursue research relating to their prior careers. This is not the case in our sample. One woman had chosen a topic for her M.A. thesis that related to her prior job, but her later degrees were undertaken purely out of interest.   Another woman had been an elementary school teacher, and had left the profession when she married. Upon deciding to return to the workforce, she realized that she would need more than a B.A. in order to be competitive.

CHAPTER 6

COPING MECHANISMS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with coping mechanisms. Students often find that graduate school is demanding, both physically and emotionally. This is especially the case during the stage of doing research and writing the dissertation. "The thesis travel is challenging, exhilarating, richly rewarding, arduous, seemingly endless, and very lonely" (Cole, 1994:35). Some students report that it is the hardest thing they have ever done. A student can become egocentric and can lose perspective on life (Vartuli, 1982:11). Margaret Patterson, who worked on her Ph.D. thesis, in the late 1980s, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, says:

> I found that during the data analysis and discussion phases of my thesis, I became totally absorbed in my thesis and had great difficulty focusing on such necessary things as my day-to-day work, my family, and personal responsibilities (1994:120).

The loneliness experienced at the stage of writing the dissertation is problematic for many. Ardra Cole, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, explains:

197

> Writing a thesis is a very lonely and all-consuming
> process and no one outside the academic community
> understands, or really even cares to know, exactly what
> you are doing or why... . It is difficult, if not
> impossible, for someone unfamiliar with the process, to
> understand it. It is unfair to expect otherwise
> (1994:39).

Therefore, many require other sources of rewards and

validation. Katherine Tracey offers some suggestions:

> The key to maintaining physical and emotional health
> during the doctoral process seems to center around
> developing and maintaining an adequate support system,
> and maintaining a physiopsychosocial balance of
> meaningful activities (1982:67).

A student's support system often includes the following

people: advisers, peers and family members (Vartuli, 1982:4).

Indeed, much has been written about the importance of friends,

family members, colleagues and committee members in providing

academic and social supports throughout the process of writing

the dissertation (Alexander, 1994:10; Comuzzi, 1994:47;

Vartuli, 1982:4).

In exploring coping mechanisms, three main issues will

be discussed. First, there are financial issues. Second,

there are supports and academic advice. It will become

evident that some sources of support are more accessible to

some students than others. It will also be demonstrated that

race, class and gender often shape the abilities of students

to cope with the demands placed on them at this stage. In addition, experiences are sometimes shaped by more than one of these factors, and in ways that make it difficult to separate out individual factors.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Most students, at some time during their academic careers, face financial difficulties. However, this is a greater problem for some students than for others. The first section deals with the various material resources to which students can turn for financial support.

PART-TIME/FULL-TIME WORK

While some graduate students survive on the wages they receive as teaching assistants, a few must seek supplementary income. This may entail obtaining jobs off campus. Once their funding has run out, graduate students often have to seek employment in order to support themselves. If one is a parent, finding a job is of even greater importance. For example, one Canadian woman makes the following comment:

> I can't say being a parent made things more difficult. I mean, it made me a lot more organized about the times I would work [on my dissertation]. I know some people say they can't work between these hours and these hours, because it's not their rhythm or whatever. Well, when you're a parent you just have to do things when you have to do them. But you know what was more of a strain was being more responsible in terms of getting a job when funding ran out.

Another Canadian woman gives a similar account of the
financial implications of being a parent. She states:

> Being a parent has affected me in at least two
> different ways. On the positive side, it gives me
> motivation to do very well, to get the scholarships, to
> get the job [she teaches sessionals], or whatever. In
> fact, I am the financial support of our family, since
> my husband and I decided we wanted one of us to stay
> at home and raise the kids. I'm not sure I'm self-
> motivating enough to have worked that hard without the
> motivation of the kids.

Science students tend to be better funded than
humanities and social science students (Haley, 1989:33). One
Canadian woman, working in the Sciences has this to say:

> I think science students, in general, are better off
> [financially] than arts students. I think I'm better
> off. At least this is what I gather from talking to
> other students, especially humanities students. They
> don't get paid a lot.

Another explanation could be that when funding runs out
for science students, they are sometimes supported from their
advisors' research grants until they complete their
programmes. These sources of funding come from professors'
government grants for research. One Canadian man, pursuing a
degree in the Sciences, says:

> My funding will run out in a month and a half. But I
> have made an agreement with my supervisor to pay me
> after that. You see they [supervisors] have money from

NSRC[1]. And whether they pay you or not depends on your own particular case. If your supervisor can afford it, then, yes.

One Canadian woman, studying in the Sciences, offers a similar account:

I'm lucky that my supervisor has agreed to pay me, but this only covers the rent and tuition. So I am worse off than when I was funded. But on the bright side, I have my parents, who are very generous. They send me money when I need it.

The following section will consider parents as sources of financial support.

PARENTS

Some students can rely on their parents' help when they are facing financial difficulties. Some state that, while their parents have not given substantial financial support, they have been there at crucial times. One Canadian woman who belongs to a visible minority group says:

Well, they haven't helped me substantially, but they have been there when I was really feeling a strain. You know, they'd lend a couple a hundred bucks here and there. And my dad bought me a computer one time.

Other students feel that their parents provide substantial financial help. One Canadian woman from a visible minority group, pursuing a degree in the Sciences has this to say:

Oh yeah, they've been a great help...for important things like holidays and a car. When it looked like I needed a vehicle, they gave me their old car, which is

in fine working order. I don't need it absolutely, but it makes life a lot easier. They also send me money without me asking. I could get by without their help. But because of them I can afford all the little extras that make life more tolerable.

This student links her ability to rely on her parents for financial help to her cultural background.

I think I'm typical in getting help from my parents in terms of [my cultural] community. The parents are always there for the kids, and families stick together. I have friends who are [of the same cultural background] that did graduate work or went to law school or medical school. And I'd say their parents helped them out as much as mine helped me. I mean, they never had to worry about going hungry.

One woman from a developing country tells a similar tale:

I think I'm atypical because a lot of students have debts from [their undergraduate years] that they carry over into graduate school. My parents paid for my undergraduate schooling. Part of this, I think, is because of my culture. I think family support is much stronger in my culture than what I've seen of Canadian culture. My parents would be happy to support me as much as they can even now. It's not a question of you're eighteen or twenty-five, and you're on your own. And I mean, it's just since I've been in graduate school that I've been financially independent. They've helped me all along.

Some students link their ability to rely on their parents for financial support to their class backgrounds. For example, one Canadian man comments as follows:

Well, my parents aren't lending me any extra money. They're lending me money they've saved for their retirement, and I'm feeling quite guilty right now.

Since funding has run out, I've been borrowing two to three hundred dollars a month from them. I'll probably owe them about twenty thousand [dollars] by the time I'm done. But, you know, I'm fortunate that I can borrow from them. If they were working-class, they might be completely reliant on government pension, which would put them at a very low level. And they wouldn't have any reserves to spare.

Some science students also feel that their class position has had positive effects on their careers. One Canadian man, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, describes his situation:

Yes, [my class position has had an impact] in the sense that I wouldn't be here in the first place if it weren't for my parents' class position and their help. I wouldn't have been able to afford to go to university. Or if I did go, and kept going, I would have had staggering loans by now.

One Canadian woman comments:

I know that I cannot rely on my family. They do not have the money. And for that reason I have been pushing myself to get done in the four years. And I know people in their fifth year, when you don't get funded anymore, have completely relied on their parents. And because I know I can't, I'm doing everything possible to get done. I think I also face additional stress because, if I don't get a job when I'm done, or don't get done, I'm in trouble, because I can't rely on my parents. I'd have to get a job. And I wouldn't be able to work on my thesis. Whereas friends receive cheques from their parents every month so they can continue. And they are thirty years old! I mean, it kind of annoys me,

Some visa students also rely on their parents for

financial support. However, this is sometimes difficult because of the fluctuating exchange rates. For example, one woman from a developing nation, says:

> When I was [back home, my parents] provided everything. I didn't have to worry about anything. They really can't help now, because the exchange rates are so terrible.

Another visa student, a woman from a developing country, describes having similar problems:

> Well, they haven't helped me considerably. But there were times when they helped a great deal. Like at the [M.A.] level, when I first came here, and my husband hadn't arrived yet in Canada, my parents would send me a little bit of money now and then. They could not help too much, because of the value of our money in Canada. But I also consider it financial help that my mother would send me clothes. Because I couldn't have afforded to buy clothes anyway. Even though they didn't always send me physical cash, they helped, because I could spend my money on other things. So they did help in that respect.

Some visa students report that their parents pay for their airline tickets. Parents pay for them initially, when they came to Canada, and also when they return to visit. For example, one man from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, comments:

> After I came here, they couldn't help too much. You know, the money exchange. But last year I got my flight ticket to go back. And when I came here too. So they always pay for that.

PARTNERS/SPOUSES

Those graduate students who have partners or spouses often rely on them for financial support. Those involved in common-law relationships often report that their partners do not necessarily support them or give them money. However, they pool resources or rely on one another when there is a shortage of money. A Canadian woman describes her situation:

> We lend each other money when one person is flush and the other person isn't. It equals out. So I wouldn't say he gives me money. But it's good that he's there as sort of a safety net. So I think I'm luckier than others in that sense. And also I have my parents, who would help if I needed it.

Those who are married often report that their spouses support them. Often because their spouses have full-time jobs. One visa student from Europe relies on her husband.

> I think I'm lucky because my husband has a fairly well-paid job. I'm much better off than most of the other students.

Some students who are married report that their spouses do not necessarily support them. However, they do share their incomes. They also see this as advantageous. One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, working in the Sciences, comments:

> It's not like [my husband] gives me money as such. We pool our resources. It's comforting to be able to rely on each other if one of us is out of money.

SCHOLARSHIPS

There is a general consensus among those who hold scholarships that they are lucky to have won these, and that they are much better off financially than those who do not have scholarships. For example, one Canadian woman, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, finds this to be the case:

> I sure am lucky to get a [scholarship]. It has been of substantial help. And yeah, I think I am better off than those that do not have scholarships. I was able to buy a car, clothes, a dog. (She laughs.) I was able do a lot of fun things.

Those who do not have scholarships are also conscious of the better financial positions of their colleagues who have scholarships. One man, a visa student from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences has this to say:

> I know if you are a Canadian getting NSRC or OGS[2] you're getting almost fourteen thousand [dollars]. So yeah, they are better off. They don't have to pay as much tuition as I do, and this year they brought in a new law so visa students have to pay OHIP[3].

However, some students who hold scholarships, while they consider themselves to be lucky to have attained such awards, believe that others who have parental support are equally lucky[4]. They feel that they are in even better circumstances if they also have scholarships. One Canadian

woman of working-class background, comments:

> I'm lucky to get this scholarship. But some people who
> don't have scholarships have parental support, which I
> don't have. So perhaps it evens out. And I guess
> those who have scholarships plus parental support are
> even luckier!

Another Canadian woman gives a similar account:

> I guess I'm atypical, because I have the SSHRC[5]
> [scholarship]. But, on the other hand, I don't have
> the outside funding that many people without SSHRC do
> have. Like I know people who get their visa bills paid
> by their parents, and their plane tickets home, paid
> for. So I think in many ways it probably evens out.

It is interesting to note a few of the students

interviewed perceive that there is a gender bias in the

awarding of scholarships. More specifically, some students

feel that the new Affirmative Action policies in wider

Canadian society have trickled down into the university, and

now affect the awarding of scholarships. Some men who were

interviewed believe that Affirmative Action is resulting in

reverse discrimination against white men. For example, one

Canadian man says:

> I have not received any [scholarships]. I believe
> that, as a white male, I'm virtually shut out from
> receiving OGS and SSHRC [scholarships]. It's all tied
> to the government and the whole question of Affirmative
> Action, and so on. So if you're studying trendy
> initiatives, trendy fields, then the funding council
> smiles upon that.

One Canadian woman provides the following counter-argument:

> I think some people, especially men, would say that I
> received the scholarship because I'm a woman.   I
> obviously do not accept this.   I think my funding is
> dependent on my marks.   I really do.   I worked hard to
> get good marks.   I'm not going to rely on the
> "government policy" argument.   And no one knows how
> they make their decisions anyway.

Another Canadian woman says:

> When you're a woman in graduate school, you have the
> added pressure of always being told you get everything
> because you're a woman.   It got so bad when [another
> woman in my department] and I got the [scholarships]
> that one of the men was very upset.   It didn't matter
> what sort of records we had!

One Canadian woman who belongs to a visible minority group,

makes the same point:

> I think I got my scholarships because I'm a hard
> worker, and I've established a reputation for being a
> worker.   My marks are very high.   My reputation, which
> I have built for myself, also leads people to ask me to
> do projects related to certain issues and they fund me.
> But I've earned this.

A Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, gives her opinion

of Affirmative Action and issues relating to gender.

> If you get the scholarship just because you're a woman,
> then it doesn't have the same meaning.   This is why
> sometimes when people make a big issue about women.   I
> don't like it, because they miss the point.   They have
> a goal, but they don't go about it in the right way.
> They just end up making the point that women are
> different.

VISA STUDENTS

Most students believe that visa students are in a worse financial situation than their Canadian counterparts. This perception is in part related to the fact that visa students cannot receive government scholarships. One woman visa student from a developing nation, has this to say:

> If you're a visa student, as soon as you come here you're put in an economic situation that is worse than most of your colleagues. I mean, we only have access to a certain amount of money. We can't get scholarships, and our tuition is higher than other students. If it weren't for my relatives, and being able to live at their place, I don't think I could have done it.

Graduate students are generally not allowed to work, except as teaching assistants. Some visa students feel this restriction makes life especially difficult for them. One woman from a developing nation, comments as follows:

> Being a visa student means I can't do any work outside campus. This means I only have access to funds from my teaching assistantship. However, I do have funds that my husband contributes. If I had the opportunity to work, even on campus during the year, it might be a bit different. I know all visa students have this problem. They wish they could do some extra work to make things better. But they can't, so they're frustrated about that. I would say money is my biggest concern and pressure as a graduate student.

Canadian students are also aware of the often more precarious financial status of visa students. One Canadian man working in the Sciences, says:

> Being a Canadian makes a difference financially. The
> foreign students don't have access to this kind of
> funding [scholarships]. I don't think their lifestyle
> is nearly as fun.

It should be noted that there are different categories of visa students. Among visa students, there is a common consensus that certain scholarships are better than others. For example, some scholarships pay the student's tuition fees. One woman from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, says this:

> I'm a CIDA[5] scholar. It's one of the best. At least,
> I've heard that from the people I know in the
> department. It's Canadian funded, I think. The CIDA
> pays my tuition fees. So what I would have paid for
> tuition I get every month to spend. So in that sense,
> I think I'm better off than some other visa students.
> And I have my parents to help me too.

Another student from a developing nation is in the same situation:

> My tuition is paid by CIDA. So I'm luckier than my
> spouse, who has to pay it out of the teaching
> assistantship.

Another type of scholarship available to visa students is the Bilateral CIDA. One student from a developing nation discusses why he would have been in a more advantageous financial position if he had received this type of

scholarship.

> It would have been much better if I had the CIDA
> Bilateral scholarship. This is government to
> government, where your family is taken care of. There
> would be money for my wife and the and the child, even
> if [my wife] wanted to go to school.

Some visa students can also receive a waiver that

allows them to pay Canadian fees instead of the higher visa

student fees. One woman from Europe says:

> When I started the programme, I got a waiver. So I
> payed Canadian fees, which was a great help. I think
> you get this differential waiver depending on your
> marks. I'm not sure how I got it. All of a sudden,
> I just had it. And I think I'm lucky because of that.

However, it is not always that easy to get a differential

waiver fee. One man from a developing nation has this to say:

> When you are a visa student, you have to pay higher
> tuition fees, and you have to fight with them for the
> differential fee waiver. I think the only criterion
> is your marks. But the first year I came here my marks
> were good. Then I got it. So that makes things a lot
> easier.

The next section considers the social supports of students.

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL/LIFE EXPERIENCES

Many students report that their parents have great

influence on their education, at all stages. Some students

believe that their parents' lack of education resulted in

their desire for their children to attend university.   One

man, a visa student from a developing nation says:

> My peasant illiterate father believes in education.
> So he pushed all of his children, including his
> brothers, to go to school.   He didn't have the
> opportunity, so he made sure that we all went to school
> and stayed in school.   And he provided the home; that
> is a home of love and care and that kept us going.

Another visa student from a developing nation, describes a

similar situation:

> At home, we struggled.   My father died when I was
> nine, so my mother struggled.   I think because of that
> she encouraged me to get an education.   So I would not
> end up in her situation.   My father had also encouraged
> me to get a good education.   He himself was an
> immigrant, and found that getting a good job was
> difficult.   So he definitely saw the value of a good
> education.   And he had me taking private lessons and so
> on.

Other students suggest that they wanted to pursue

higher education because of their parents' university degrees.

They had a certain social inheritance.   For example, one woman

from a developing nation, states:

> [My parents] are both well educated.   Education has
> always been an important thing in our family.   They
> encouraged my brother and myself to pursue our
> education and to take it as far as we want to go.   And
> there's never been any barriers to going.

Another Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, describes the

influence of her parents.

> I think that my father influenced me to consider a career in science. He works in this area. My mom also encouraged me to go into science, although she does not work in this area. So I think they were a big influence on my education.

A woman visa student from a developing nation, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, also comments on the importance of her social background:

> My parents always said it was good to get an education. And I guess they influence[d] me, just because I grew up in that background. My father is a professional back in [my country]. And my mother is too.

Other students directly see connections between their parents' class status and their own education. For example, one Canadian woman comments:

> My class background certainly did [affect my education]. Both of my parents are professionals, which I guess would make us at least upper-middle-class. My parents were in training up until I was fifteen. So there's a certain lifestyle that I'm quite familiar with. However, because my father is a professional, this has led to significant opposition from him. He thinks that I should be doing something more practical than [studying in the field I have chosen]. So I've had to stick to my guns a few times, and that has led me to feel quite secure about what I'm doing. And to feel that what I'm doing is important.

Another Canadian woman describes the importance of class background:

> I think that the fact that I come from a middle-class

> family has clearly affected me. The idea of
> university, well, there was no question that my
> brothers and sisters and I were going! Although my
> parents have never supported [financially] my
> university [career]. They have never given me a cent
> towards it.

One Canadian man, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, offers a

similar account.

> I think the fact that I am in [science] is directly
> attributable to my middle-class background and the fact
> that both my parents have university degrees. They
> also have nice jobs and a nice house. And you just
> think you're naturally going to do the same thing.

One Canadian woman comments on her lower-class background.

> My lower-class background probably affected my
> education in that I did not go to university right
> away. You see, my parents did not go to university.
> And again, that's part of class. I took a course in a
> technical institute, just to get a job. So I worked in
> an office for years, and it never occurred to me to get
> a university education. What was the point?

What this student experienced for the greater part of her life

is what Joanna Kadi (1993:90) addresses in her account of her

own working-class childhood experiences. She discusses the

nature of the working-class child's environment. Children do

not question their working-class status or their parents' lack

of education. Nor do they question their own tendencies to

drop out of school at an early age. Consequently, they do not

pursue higher education. These young people have certain

perceptions of the way "life should be" or the "natural order of things" (Kadi, 1993:90).

Another woman of lower-class background, discusses the lack of emotional support from her parents.   This graduate student, a Canadian woman, remarks:

> I would say my parents' lower-class background has definitely affected my education. Some of my friends are lower-class, and we've discussed the lack of support and understanding from our parents. They think we're not working somehow, and we can just go grocery shopping on a Tuesday afternoon, because we're home anyway. But the basic point is they just don't think we're working. You know, I don't even know how I came from that family. I look at the world in an entirely different way. I mean, if I tell them they're being racist, they just don't understand, and tell me to shut up. I can't even participate in conversations with them any more. And I think that's partly my fault. I've isolated myself through my education. I can't relate to them any more. And that bothers me. I'm more comfortable with my colleagues.

OTHER INFLUENCES

Some students report that people other than their parents also influenced them to pursue education.   Other family members were sometimes important. One woman, a visa student from a developing country says:

> My aunts, my mother's sisters, were all very influential. I think that they're also very aware of the value of a good education. As I've mentioned before, in the my country, in addition to skin colour, education is the only other way up in terms of status. So they see my education as their education, something they have never had. It's not just something for me,

but for the [whole] family.

Other students feel that the educational achievements of particular family members served as examples. Once again, we see the importance of social inheritance. One Canadian woman makes the same point:

> My older sister has always served as an example in terms of education. When I was ten or twelve, I went up to visit her at university, and I saw university life. And that was the point [at which] I decided I was going to university. I think this might be typical of a lot of us, having other family members who have been to university before us.

Another Canadian woman tells a similar tale:

> My sister has a Ph.D., and my brother nearly has his M.A. I think that, because my sister went through this ahead of me, it has made it a hundred times easier. Because I knew what to expect, and I had someone who knew exactly what I was going through.

Another source of influence for graduate students is friends. For example, one Canadian man discusses the influence of his friends and links this to class position.

> I think the friends I grew up with were somewhat an influence on my education, and this will reflect economic class. Most of my friends are white, and most of them are men. And they all have gone on to higher education as well. So I guess having similar backgrounds and values, we all thought higher education was the natural thing to pursue.

One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, reports

that a friend of the family was very influential.

> There is a very good family friend of ours [my family]
> who has always pushed me to do things... . She's
> always been there, since I was little, saying, "Don't
> let anyone tell you that because you're a woman you
> can't do this and you can't do that... ." She was a
> paediatrician. And so, coming from her, I knew that it
> could be done. And she was successful at it. She's
> been a good role model for me.

One Canadian woman belonging to a visible minority group, feels that her friends are influencing the direction her dissertation is taking. She relates how these friends contributed to her understanding of issues relating to gender and race.

> I think the association with my friends in the theatre
> groups and the feminist community affects the things I
> want to study and the outlook I want to take in my
> dissertation. They confirm that this alienation I'm
> feeling, in terms of having no other blacks around in
> my department who can relate to my experiences, is not
> nonsense. This is because some of these people hold my
> views in terms of differential experiences based on
> race. And, in terms of the feminist community, they
> confirm that the alienation I feel as a woman is indeed
> real. So this encourages me to address these issues in
> my thesis, and make them seem all the more important to
> me.

Some students feel that their teachers, even those at the high school level, influenced their educational careers. For example, one Canadian woman, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, reports:

> Some of my teachers in high school, for better or for worse, were influential. So you had both sides. I remember one math teacher who was really helpful, but the [science] teacher was the worst. So I'm surprised I'm in [science] right now!

Others report that professors at the undergraduate level were important. One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences says:

> There were some professors in my undergraduate programme that I think were influential. They served as role models in that you see how much they enjoy what they're doing. And that makes you want to do it too.

FRIENDS

Friends are another source of support. Students' networks include colleagues, both within the student's own department and in other departments, friends outside the university, especially in those cases where students have come from far away, parents and other family members and, finally, partners/spouses. However, most students mention multiple sources of social supports and only a few described faculty as friends.

COLLEAGUES

Some students report spending a great deal of their time with other colleagues. Linda Levstik, a professor of education in the United States, recalls her graduate student years, and explains why she believes friendships with other

students are essential.

> Graduate student friends can listen and share their own
> experiences. They know and sympathize with the
> problems of their colleagues. They can see the humor
> in it all. One day, for instance, I observed my three-
> year-old playing with her dolls. She had decided to
> move on to something else, so she carefully laid each
> doll in the carriage, kissed them gently on the
> forehead and said, "Be good, now. Mommy has to go to
> class." A neighbour to whom I related the incident
> shook her head and sighed. My graduate student friends
> laughed and shared similar tales (1982:100).

Colleagues can also help when there are periods of low

productivity during the research and the writing of the

dissertation. Solveiga Mieztis, who studied at the Ontario

Institute for Studies in Education in the early 1990s has this

to say:

> Peer support and external validation can be invaluable
> at critical times to enable students to get over thesis
> blocks and dispel the debilitating attacks of self-
> doubt. I felt I was back on track and I was able to
> seek out the statistical advice which I needed to
> complete the analysis (1994:102).

One Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, discusses her

relationship with her colleagues.

> Oh yeah, I spend a lot of time with other graduate
> students here. Most of them I hang out with are from
> my department. My only other close friend is back in
> Quebec. But here, yeah, we do a lot of fun things
> together. Professors do not really join us. Only when
> we have departmental activities.

One man, a visa student from a developing nation, pursuing a

degree in the Sciences, gives a similar account.

> I socialize a lot with students, other colleagues from
> all different departments. Since I am in [a student
> group], I made lots of friends. They're not all [from
> my country] though. We do lots of things. Like we go
> [to] Tuesday night movies. Two of my colleagues are
> not only people to have fun with, but they help me with
> my thesis. When I am having problem[s] with writing,
> they will sit down and discuss [the problem] with me.

However, some visa students report spending most of
their time with other visa students or students of their own
nationality. For example, one man from a developing country
says:

> I spend a lot of time with other [students from my
> country], but not with a lot of students in my
> department and definitely not professor[s]. [Myself
> and colleagues from my country] discuss our homeland
> and sometimes school, but not often.

One woman, from a developing country, working in the Sciences,
gives a similar account:

> Both academically and socially, I spend a lot of time
> with colleagues. This is mostly the case with the visa
> students or others who don't have family around. We
> just sort of do things together on a regular basis.

Some students report that they spend very little time
with other students. There are a variety of reasons for this.
One reason is that, once course work is over and the student
begins to work on the dissertation, the writing and analysis

is often carried out in isolation. One Canadian woman describes her experience.

> I used to spend more time with colleagues. Now, I spend a lot of time working on my own. What happens is when you're doing course work you're there at the university. Now, I find I don't work in my office, but at home. And the friends you make in your courses are normally the ones you keep. As the years go by, so many new faces come in, and it's not as easy to become familiar with them as if you were taking courses with them. With all the work I have to do too, I find you can easily come in and get side-tracked with socializing. Now, I zip in and use the library. But most of the time I'm at home working.

Another reason for spending very little time with colleagues is marriage. Some students also have children. Sharon Barnett, who worked on her Ph.D. in the late 1970s, says that this was her experience in graduate school:

> Married students tended to have more friendships outside the program and to participate more in non-academic groups. Single students tended to center almost all contacts within the program (1982:66).

Rosalind Williams, who worked on her Ph.D. thesis in the early 1980s, explains why this might be the case.

> The woman with a husband waiting for dinner or children at home will not be able to stop with friends for a drink or dinner after a late afternoon class. Likewise, she may have difficulty finding time to get together with other students outside class to work on a take-home exam or to do joint studying (1982:89).

One woman, a visa student from Europe has this to say:

I used to socialize more with students, but I think
what has happen[ed] is social circles have changed.
Like when my husband got his job and got to know people
from work, we start[ed] socializing with them. And
after I had my children, I became closer to women who
also have children, like my next door neighbour.

Another woman, a visa student from a developing nation,

describes her experience.

Before my husband came [from my country], I spent more
time with other students, mostly other visa students.
Now, I don't hang around the university as much as I
used to. I want to go home to spend time with him.
And I feel more compelled to make dinner on a regular
basis. So more of my time is being taken up. I can't
afford to spend so much time socializing any more.

One man, a visa student from a developing country, pursuing a

degree in the Sciences, makes a similar point:

I can't spend much time with students. I mean, I have
so much of my own work. And when I'm not doing my work
there is my wife and child to consider. Of course, I
have to spend time with them.

Other students suggest that the main reason why they

spend little time with other students is because they are

coming to the end of their programmes. They need to immerse

themselves in their work in order to complete their theses on

time. One Canadian woman, studying in the Sciences, says:

Not any more. I used to. I'm working a lot harder
than I used to, and so I don't have any time for that.
I want to give [my thesis] the best shot in terms of
being done on time. And any free time I do have I

prefer to just spend going home or going to my dance group to relax. And I prefer to spend lunch hours working rather than socializing now.

A further reason for spending very little time with colleagues is a sense of alienation or the lack of a feeling of belonging. One Canadian woman comments:

> Until this year [I spent time with colleagues and faculty]. Since I've had this problem with my committee, especially my supervisor, over my dissertation, I just don't want to be around here. In terms of students, well, I was never terribly close to many. But some I don't even want to see now. You see, word gets around about everything in our department, and I don't need any snide remarks about the problems with my committee.

One Canadian woman who belongs to a visible minority group, discusses her feelings of alienation from other students. She relates this to gender and to race.

> I've never socialized much with students. And a lot of this has to do with the "blank stare" I've been talking about. I mean, even if people seem to be sympathetic to what I'm telling them, you still get this look. And you know they don't really understand. I actually feel alienated from students and faculty too. That's why as a black feminist I socialize more with people and groups outside of the university... . I belong to theatre groups composed of minorities and some feminists.

Some students regard their parents and/or other family members as their best friends and see them as important sources of social and emotional support. One woman from a

developing nation says:

> My family are my closest friends, actually. My parents
> are very supportive of my pursuing a Ph.D. My brother
> is going through the same thing, and he and I talk all
> the time. So we're very supportive of each other.

Another woman, a visa student from a developing nation has the

following to say:

> I would say my family are the closest [friends]. I
> mean, most [of them] are back home. But if I call and
> I'm complaining or upset, they will try to comfort me.
> My parents and siblings write often as well, and they
> always give me words of encouragement. So they're my
> main source of support, I would say, and my best
> friends also.

Those students who have partners or spouses often

indicate that they are their best friends and also sources of

emotional support. One Canadian man says:

> My wife is my best friend. We don't always discuss my
> school work. Especially after working on it all day,
> I don't want to talk about it. But if I'm having
> problems, she's there to listen, and give some comfort
> and sometimes advice. So she's been a real asset to
> me.

One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, gives a

similar account.

> My husband has always been a good source of emotional
> support. Whenever I feel down or I feel like giving
> up, he simply says, "Oh just take a vacation, and when
> you come back to [your work] you'll feel better." And
> he understands because he just got his Ph.D. And he
> knows what it's all about.

Another visa student, a man from a developing nation, working

in the Sciences, also says that his wife is important.

> My wife is the closest [friend], especially when we
> came here. We found ourselves in [a] strange place.
> So we rely on each other for confidence.

ORGANIZATIONS

Some students feel that they benefit from belonging to

groups and organizations.   Students report a variety of

reasons for joining.   One commonly mentioned reason is the

desire to engage in an activity that is different from work.

One Canadian woman says:

> I don't belong to any clubs in [this city].   In [a
> neighbouring] province, I belong to the NDP [New
> Democratic Party], which means I do a lot of political
> work.   It's much more fun than working on my
> dissertation!   I guess the main reasons I belong are
> because it's interesting and it's just something
> totally different than school work.

One Canadian man has a similar view of the importance of

organizations.   However, he adds that his involvement in

organizations also helps to relieve stress.

> I belong to [a student group on campus].   I think it
> adds something to my life.   I mean, it's a long haul,
> the Ph.D.   If you don't have these other things, I
> think you're likely to become unbalanced.   [Belonging
> to this group] relieves some stress by just changing
> the mix of things you do.   It's just important to take
> your mind off your work every once in a while.

Some students report that they engage in physical

exercise, because this is something different from academic work. They also find that it helps to relieve stress. One Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, comments as follows:

> Every day at lunch time, I go for a swim. I find it relaxes me and it relieves stress. It's good to get away from your work. I find, when I go back to my work, I can concentrate much better. I think everyone should do something that's not associated with their work.

People also join organizations in order to socialize. This is especially important for visa students, who do not have family members here. One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, working in the Sciences states:

> I belong to [an organization on campus for students from my country]. This [provides] you with more social activities. You will get to know more people. All my family and friends [are] back home.

Another woman visa student from a developing nation, also values the student organization to which she belongs:

> I belong to [an association of students who are from my country]. I don't socialize with students even in my own department. If I do, it's with other students from my country. Other students are nice, but somehow I just feel different. So that's mainly why I joined, for identity and socialization. We normally don't talk about Canada. So it's a way of bringing home here. I mean, when I came here I missed my family so much. I just cried a lot, and ate a lot of ice cream. (She laughs.) Soon after I joined this club.

Some students join organizations for a variety of social, religious and spiritual reasons. One man, a visa

student from a developing nation, studying in Sciences says:

> I belong to [a religious group] on campus. [People of
> my religion] should pray five times a day. There is a
> prayer here on Friday. When I came here, I asked
> around to see what was available, because religion is
> important to me. Then it became social. We have some
> activities, and we have a small magazine. But I'd say
> the religious part is of greater importance than the
> social part.

One woman from a developing nation, gives similar reasons for

belonging to a religious organization. She has this to say:

> I'm a member of [a religious group] here on campus.
> Faith is a very important part of my life. It's
> probably the most important thing. It's a way of
> getting in touch with other [people of this religion]
> on campus, and doing things and organizing things. So
> it's partly social, but mostly religious.

Other students report joining organizations in order to

help others. One Canadian woman remarks:

> I help out at a women's centre downtown. We help women
> that are abused, or poor, or whatever the case may be.
> I belong just to help those that are less fortunate
> than myself. I feel like it's selfish to just be
> involved in my own work and nothing else.

One Canadian man, studying in the Sciences, has a similar

altruistic approach:

> I [belong to a group that helps immigrants] and also
> [to] an organization that tutors inmates. These are
> volunteer organizations. I belong to them for social
> conscience reasons, I guess. Just to help.

Some students report joining organizations for

professional reasons. One Canadian woman gives this reason.

> I'm quite active in [a group that is interested in the
> same issues I address in my dissertation]. It's the
> field I'm interested in, and I want to meet with other
> people who are interested in that field and exchange
> ideas. Part of it is social, and part of it is
> professional.

One man, a visa student from a developing nation, pursuing a

degree in the Sciences, describes his involvement in a

professional group as follows:

> I belong to a science group. I want to get in touch
> with other colleagues from different countries, to see
> what they're working on. So it's [a] good career move.
> It's good to get your name on the list, and people can
> contact you if they want to know more about your work.
> It's part social, I guess, too. You can meet people,
> even if [it's] not face to face.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

MENTORS

A mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser. Some

students report having had mentors at various stages in their

academic careers (Bolig, 1982:18). For example, a Canadian

woman who belongs to a visible minority group, discusses her

experience of mentorship at the undergraduate level, and links

her experience to her status. She says:

> I had a couple of mentors that were really good. They
> gave me the whole political strategy of the university.

> [They] kind of laid things out for me. I met both of
> them in my undergraduate [years]. I really only have
> contact with one of them now. They taught me the ins
> and outs of the university, and they just validated and
> acknowledged that there is racism. It was just to hear
> me out, when I was blowing my top or wanting to
> quit... .

One Canadian man, working in the Sciences, describes the

mentor he had when he was an undergraduate.

> I had a mentor at the undergraduate level. He gave me
> advice on what universities to choose for my graduate
> work, and, basically, what and what not to do in terms
> of my future career. He was really wise and very
> inspirational.

One Canadian woman, gives her account of mentorship at

the graduate level and links her experience to gender. She

comments:

> I had a mentor at the [M.A] level. She's unfortunately
> gone now. She seemed to me to be different than any
> other professor, so much so that she was inspirational.
> I thought that maybe I can get through all of this.
> And I can be like her, and organize my teaching
> assistants like her, and teach my classes like her.
> She gave me verbal advice, mostly in the context of
> teaching. She was very supportive, just by helping me
> to get through the programme and being able to talk to
> her. I think, in my case, since she was a woman and I
> am also, this had an impact [on our relationship]. I
> think it might be easier for the men to find mentors,
> because there are more male professors around. In
> fact, talking to someone yesterday, she said that she
> can't find a female role model at all in the department
> anymore. I mean, the one that may have been good is
> gone now.

One Canadian man, studying in the Sciences, describes his experience of mentorship.

> My current supervisor is a mentor in the sense that he advises me, not just on research, but also on professional matters. He makes suggestions that will help me in my future career. I mean, some supervisors are better at [mentorship] than others. I happen to have one that's good, and I was sort of looking for this. But I had no clue that I was actually going to get it. I mean, a mentor is someone that cares about how you're progressing or someone that sends you to the right conferences, who introduces you to people, and who is interested in the development of your chances of getting a job. Some supervisors never consider that. They're just interested in what research you're churning out.

LACK OF MENTORSHIP

Some students report not having mentors. There are various reasons for this. One is that the student simply does not see the need for a mentor. For example, one man, a visa student from a developing nation, discusses his lack of interest in finding a mentor, and links this to his culture. He makes the following comment:

> I don't need a mentor. You see, in [my country] we don't have mentors at all. You get advice from your parents. You don't get close to your teacher, because it's not allowed. You don't even talk to your teacher. So I'm not sure about the issue here in Canada.

Others who do not feel the need for mentors link this to their own independence and sometimes to their ages.

Another Canadian man says:

> If I had anyone even close to a mentor, it would have
> been at [the M.A.] level. Other than this, no. This
> probably has to do with my age. I think I'm more
> independent than some people at this stage of the
> Ph.D., only because I'm older and a bit more
> experienced in certain things. I think it might be
> more important at an earlier stage.

A number of other students stated that they would have
liked to have had mentors early in their graduate careers.
This could be linked to the anxiety and insecurity often
reported by students in their first year (Vartuli, 1982:3).
For example, one Canadian woman, pursuing a degree in the
Sciences, remarks:

> I think I would have liked a mentor in the beginning
> of the programme, when I got here. I would have liked
> somebody to tell me which directions to take in terms
> of my research. Is my work correct? Should I have
> more results? Are my results normal? Yeah, at that
> point, I would like to have [had] one. But I know more
> about what I'm doing now.

Some students simply do not see the need for mentors.
One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, studying
in the Sciences, comments:

> I never had one, and it never bother[ed] me. [In] my
> opinion, I don't think most students need an advisor.
> I am not asking anyone [to be my mentor]. I don't want
> to copy anybody, and I don't want somebody to tell me
> [what to do] all the time. I'm not taking one person
> as God or mentor.

However, other students report that they regretted their lack of access to mentors. Women are most likely to suggest that this is a problem. They often link their lack of access to mentors to issues relating to gender. Indeed, Phyllis Levy (1982:47) documents that a male student has a greater chance of being taken on as a protege. Levy offers a possible explanation:

> Many adult males are simply uncomfortable with women. Men often do not know how to communicate with women as equals and competent professionals; they have experience only in playing the roles of son, brother, husband, father, and sex partner and cannot play the role of friend or colleague. Finally, there are those men who cannot see a woman as anything but an object for sex (1982:47).

Furthermore, in an institution staffed largely by white males it can be fairly difficult to find a female role model who suits one's "style of operation" (Levy, 1982:57). For example, one Canadian woman links her lack of access to mentors to gender as well as to class. She says:

> Oh, it bothers me immeasurably. I have not been able to talk to anybody in a position of authority about my thesis and the problems I'm having with my committee. I just can't talk to [my committee], because I'm not even sure they can understand what I'm trying to say or do. I am not going to toe the middle-class line, and do what they tell me to. I'm not going to write what I think is incorrect. I think this is why I don't have a mentor. I mean in [the field in which I specialize] we don't have any women [professors], so I can't really turn to anyone who might be able to relate to me on a gender level. Basically, I think women just see the

world in a totally different way than men, and I really
believe a woman would be more supportive of the views
I've taken. I think a lot of women, at least in my
department, can't find female mentors. So they're
going outside the department.

One woman, a visa student from a developing nation, gives a

similar account. She also links her experience to race.

I would have liked a mentor, especially here in a male-
dominated department. I think that a few of my male
colleagues do have mentors. And they find it easier to
have mentors, because there are so many male professors
in the department. They probably find it easier to get
along, perhaps because of the comfort thing, being
white and being male.

One Canadian woman, pursuing a degree in the Sciences,

describes why she would have liked to have had a mentor.

When you're going to graduate school, you're always
thinking about children. When am I going to have them?
How am I going to support them? It would be nice to
see how a woman juggles that, a career and a family,
and all those other womanly duties. It is much harder
for women to find mentors in science. The guys could
pick [from many male] professors to be their role
models or mentors.

One Canadian man believes that women find having a

mentor especially helpful.

From what I've seen in my department, and what I've
heard from [my partner], women, in particular, need
mentors. I think a lot of this has to do with the
alienation they feel in this context. I mean, a lot of
departments are still male-dominated, and I think women
have to put up with a lot of gender related remarks and
put downs.

Indeed, some students suggest that, within their own departments, they feel that women have closer relationships with their supervisors who are also women. One Canadian man states:

> I think, the way I've seen it, is some of the females might have closer relationships with their female supervisors than males with their male supervisors.

One Canadian woman says:

> I'd say the women faculty members do have closer relationships with their students than the men. And the women faculty members usually are supervising women students. [Usually only] women faculty deal with feminist issues, and you don't find a lot of men doing feminist [work]. And maybe it's because I have a male supervisor that I don't have this kind of close relationship with him.

One Canadian woman who belongs to a visible minority group, offers a different reason for her lack of access to mentors. She makes the following comment:

> In my case, I don't think being a woman has so much to do with it [my lack of access to mentors] as race. I think it's easier to find a mentor if you're white. I think this is specific to this area and this university though. I mean, at one particular university there's a whole heap of black professors that black students can choose from. Like I've said, there are professors here who are sympathetic. But unless they're black, and have had my experiences there will always be a wall there.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

An important part of the process of writing a dissertation is having people with whom to discuss ideas. These sources include academic friends, supervisors, family members and partners/spouses. Discussion of one's research with family members or partners and spouses is often described as being quite general. For example, one woman from a developing nation has this to say:

> I discuss my work with my supervisor, and my committee to a lesser extent. Occasionally, I discuss it with other graduate students. I also discuss it with my family members sometimes. But more in generalized terms, not about the specific details. I don't seek help that often, but there are times when I do need some input or advice. And I do have people to turn to.

Another woman from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences, gives a similar account. She comments:

> Oh absolutely! My entire office is available to talk to. They all work under my supervisor, so they have some idea of what I'm doing. There's also my supervisor, and, once in a while, my committee members. They're all there. All you have to do is knock on their doors. There have been times, I must say, when I was really stuck, and at least one of these people have helped a great deal.

Others feel that they can turn to their partners/spouses to discuss their research. One Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, makes the following statement:

> I discuss my research with my supervisor and my

husband. But my husband first. He's in [my area of study], so he knows what I'm talking about. It's really nice, because it's so abstract, what I do, that I can't explain it to anybody else. He's been a real help, and I consider myself lucky.

It should also be noted that science students often turn to post-doctoral fellows[7] for help. One man, a visa student from a developing nation, studying in the Sciences, has this to say:

If I'm having [a] problem with my research, I will normally talk to the two post-doc[toral students] in my group. If they advise me to go seek my supervisor or another person, I will. I really see them as very wise as they have work[ed] in this area long before me. I don't really speak to my committee. We meet twice a year, as a group, and discuss my progress. But I'm satisfied with the help these two post-doc[toral students] give me.

Some students report that they lack people with whom to talk when they need to discuss their research. One reason for this is that very few people are familiar with the student's topic. One male visa student from a developing country says:

I can't really brainstorm, as such, with anyone. There is one other colleague I can talk to, but on a general level. As for my supervisor, he, himself, is now just getting into reading about [these issues]. I'm the one who's introducing him to these issues. He's very far behind. However, I know people at other universities. Like [a university that is nearby] is very strong in my field, and I can call any time for a discussion. So, while I wish there were more people close at hand sometimes, I know I can find others. But I have to go to greater lengths to reach them.

One Canadian woman from a visible minority group, also reports a lack of people with whom she can discuss her research. She states:

> Well, I could talk to my supervisor, I guess. But, like I've said so many times before, those who aren't of my group can't really relate to my experiences. Actually, I feel so alienated right now that I've been kind of avoiding my supervisor. I much prefer to discuss my research with my friend [a student who belongs to the same group and who studies in another department]. I just get so much out of it. We're like sparks, and it just clicks and away we go and it's like real recognition.

Other students report that they have no desire to discuss their research with others. They often link this to independence. One female visa student from a developing nation has this to say:

> Well, I guess there would have been people to brainstorm with if I'd went looking. But I never did. I never felt the need. I think it has to do with my age again. When I decided to go to graduate school, I knew exactly what I wanted to do. And I just didn't feel I needed any input from anybody.

One Canadian woman from a visible minority group, gives a completely different reason for not seeking others with whom to brainstorm.

> [I only discuss my thesis] with this group I'm studying. It's their community, their [values and their way of life] being written about. They are the only ones that have the right to decide what is written, how it's written, what needs to be in my

thesis and what he important points are.

The next section will deal with the relationship between support and completion.

ANALYSIS

Students' perceive that their levels of support, (financial, social and academic) have implications for their rates of completion. We now deal with finances and completion rates.

FINANCES AND COMPLETION RATES

Some students believe that their financial status has impeded the completion of their dissertations (Holdaway, 1994:1; Sheridan and Pyke, 1994:85). For example, taking on a part-time job, and sometimes a full-time job, before the completion of the programme sometimes slows down a student's progress. Some women point out that having children, which sometimes requires the taking on of part-time and/or full-time jobs, can slow one down. For example, one Canadian woman says:

> I'll say having children did! When you have children, finances are even more of an issue. It's not just

yourself you're worrying about. Some students, who are single and do not have children can go on unemployment at various stages. But when you have children, you need a substantial amount more. At one time, I put my doctoral work aside for a year so I could earn enough money to support myself, my family and continue in the programme.

Another Canadian woman makes a similar point:

I'm not sure how much longer I will take. But I think having a husband and children has slowed me down immeasurably. Until recently, I have been the sole financial support of my family. Children also take up a lot of your time. You have to play with them, read them stories, tuck them in. And the list goes on and on!

Indeed, Linda Williams discusses the stress often associated with being a married woman with children and also pursuing doctoral studies.

Juggling between Kindergarten and babysitters, making suppers and cleaning house, driving to soccer and music lessons, I was able to collect my data by June 13. I understood what women live through! For the rest of June I could just be Mom with the exception of a few letters and phone calls to complete this stage. My supervisor and a colleague jokingly suggested I should write my thesis on the transition to mom (1994:156).

Financial constraints can sometimes force students to complete their programmes on time. This is often the case for visa students. For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing nation, experienced this pressure. She also talked of her maturity and of her high level of motivation[8].

I have passed my defence and I just have a few final things to do. Yes, I did complete my degree in four years. I just worked really hard. Being a visa student, I cannot work here when my funding runs out. And I cannot receive any loans from the Canadian government. So part of my drive was because of financial reasons. But I think I'm very motivated at this stage of my life. I knew from the very beginning what topic I wanted to do. And it was a topic that I was really interested in. I think a lot of younger students make the mistake of doing a topic that they think their supervisor would like. And therefore, they might not really be interested in the topic. This could slow them down.

Another visa student from a developing nation, gives a similar account:

I think I will be finish[ed] on time. I have to [finish], because when funding run[s] out I cannot get money from anywhere. And I'm also anxious to return home.

One Canadian woman also perceives that financial constraints will encourage her to finish on time. She links this to her working-class status.

Oh, I must finish on time! My parents are not in a financial position to help me out if I go over time. Whereas I know a lot of middle-class students have that option. Actually, even if my parents had the money, I don't think they would help. As I've said before, they think that I'm getting too much education. I'm also not willing to accumulate loans or to work, because I know this will slow me down. So I must finish on time.

Most science students report that they will finish on time or go only a few months over time. Some suggest that it

is the higher levels of funding that science students receive that leads to earlier completion (Holdaway, 1994:5). One Canadian woman, working in the Sciences says:

> I'm positive I'll be done on time. Most of my colleagues feel they will finish on time too. In the sciences, most people finish on time, or only go over by a few months. From what I know of my friends in the humanities and the social sciences, I think funding has a lot to do with this. We get a great deal more money than they do.

Those science students who say they will not finish on time do not attribute this to finances. The reasons they offer will be discussed below.

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SUPPORTS AND COMPLETION RATES

Some students believe that one reason for extended completion times is numerous requirements. For example, one woman, a visa student from Europe, comments:

> No [I will not finish on time]. I think the programme is too heavy. There's no [students in my area of study] who finish in four years. There are too [many] course requirements and comprehensives. All of this takes time to fulfill... .

Another woman, a visa student from a developing country, offers her point of view:

> I don't think four years is feasible. You have courses and comprehensives. And all this time, you're teaching when you're supposed to also be working on your thesis.

> So you really don't start [working on the dissertation]
> until fourth year. And writing takes [a] long [time].
> You're not just churning out chapters. Writing just
> doesn't work that way. And people have lives other
> than academic work. So other things might crop up.
> And for most adults things do crop up---marriage,
> death, children.

One Canadian man, pursuing a degree in the Sciences, describes

how unforseen occurrences can set one back.

> I will go over time about six to eight months. The
> reason for this is that my brother died. That was very
> difficult and set me back.

Another reason for going over time is the research

itself. Sometimes the programme of research does not unfold

as the student had planned (Holdaway, 1994:5). Science

students often give this reason. For example, one Canadian

man, working in the Sciences, remarks:

> There's a lot of different reasons why students do not
> finish on time. Sometimes you choose a problem that
> doesn't work out very well. It is important to choose
> a problem that can be done. If you choose a topic that
> does not work out very well, you will probably have to
> choose another and start all over again. This takes a
> lot of time. Some people lose sight of what they're
> doing. So they end up following tangents that lead
> nowhere and consume a lot of time. This is often a
> problem for science students.

Science students also suggest that there can be problems with

equipment and instruments. These are beyond the control of

students. One woman, a visa student from a developing nation

has this to say:

> For a lot of science students, there is one problem
> that can slow them down. You cannot really control
> this. We often deal with instrument[s]. And sometimes
> they just do not co-operate. So sometimes you have to
> wait days or weeks for them to decide to co-operate or
> to be fixed. I guess there are instances where you
> lose time. It can't be helped.

Another reason offered by students for going over time

is lack of appropriate supervision (Holdaway, 1994:1; Musella,

1994:110). One woman, a visa student from a developing

nation, studying in the Sciences, makes the following comment:

> There are different reason[s] for finishing late. One
> has to do with your supervisor. Some supervisor[s]
> [have higher standards] for the quality of [the]
> thesis. Some say, "Okay! That's done." Others say,
> "No! You missed this and this." Some professors
> correct thes[es] very quickly. And others just leave
> it there for half a year or one year, and then correct
> it.

Indeed, Donald Musella, a graduate student who studied at the

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, in the early

1990s, comments on this issue:

> We all know the example of the professor who has an
> average turn around time of four to six weeks. Using
> the business metaphor, this seems to me to be a waste
> of money and time for the student (1994:110).

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored financial, social and academic supports as coping mechanisms for graduate students. We have demonstrated that students have different levels of access to these sources of support. Some students feel that their race, their class and their gender, have implications for the levels of support they receive. This affects how well they cope with the demands of graduate school. Some students also feel that age and maturity have helped them to cope better.

Some students perceive that the levels of support they have received had implications for the length of time taken to complete the dissertation. For example, some science students feel they complete on time, or shortly thereafter, because they have more generous funding. Some women with husbands and children feel that their progress is slower because they must find jobs to support their dependents and/or their families consume a great deal of their time. A further consideration is the selection of students. If good students are selected, they will probably complete. However, it should be noted that students tend to view themselves as all being rather similar and do not see ability as a factor. Nor do they discuss the significance of a student's undergraduate education and the extent to which he/she is prepared for work at the graduate

level. In conclusion, it seems that how one copes with the demands of graduate school has implications for the quality of the experience and the time taken to complete the degree.

ENDNOTES

1. The Natural Sciences Research Council supports research in the sciences in Canadian universities.

2. All graduate students in all faculties are eligible to apply for the Ontario Graduate Scholarship.

3. OHIP stands for the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

4. It is possible that students are trying to avoid seeing too much difference by offering such statements.

5. SSHRC stands for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

6. CIDA stands for Canadian International Development Agency.

7. Post-doctoral fellows are students who have already graduated from a doctoral programme and who have received scholarships enabling them to conduct research and to teach at the university.

8. Edward Holdaway's (1994:5) study suggests that high motivation is an important predictor of successful completion of a doctoral degree.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

When we began this study, we started from the premise that research often has demonstrated quite clearly that the inequalities of the larger society tend to be reinforced and perpetuated in the educational setting. We also pointed out that recent literature demonstrates that the inequalities of race, class and gender shape one's experiences as one completes a degree. Therefore, in order to understand who does and does not complete a degree, we need to understand what is involved in the process. We also felt that these findings would have implications for the construction of knowledge. Hence, we felt that the university would be an ideal setting in which to explore such issues. More specifically, we decided to look at the experiences of students in the later stages of Ph.D. programmes. This is the case since a main area of focus is the construction of knowledge and it is here that budding scholars are free to produce knowledge. Furthermore, students in the later stages

247

are often working on their dissertations. We felt that this would enable us to explore the possible freedoms and constraints in the production of knowledge. In essence, we would be exploring the extent to which the university is an arena where the politics of social inequality, in its various forms, are negotiated. We would also be able to explore the extent to which the inequalities of race, class and gender prevent people from challenging dominant ideologies.

Our conceptual framework stemmed from our decision to use data derived from interviews with students. We realized that students face tangible obstacles, such as financial strains. However, they also face other types of obstacles, for example, feelings of not belonging in the academic setting. Thus, students' views and perceptions about themselves and how they fit into the university setting, their goals and their ambitions inform our study. We relied on such key concepts as ideology, consciousness, identity, perceptions, subjectivity, structure and agency. In order to contest dominant ideologies, a person must develop a certain kind of awareness. Students' perceptions of their own beliefs, their social backgrounds and their experiences all shed light on the mechanisms that enable some students to perceive inequities and challenge ideologies, while other

students do not.

OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS OF THE DATA

THE DATA

The data reveal that students have varying levels of consciousness of race, class and gender. Some students perceive that these factors do, in fact, shape their academic experiences. The students who hold this view tend to be women and members of ethnic minority groups. For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing nation, suggests that she has more difficulty gaining respect from undergraduate students because of her race and her gender. She says that students are not used to seeing a minority group woman as an authority figure in the classroom. She is but one example of those students, mostly women, who believe that it is difficult to separate out the factors of race, class and gender in shaping their experiences. However, one's social position is not always felt to have negative implications. For example, one woman from a visible minority group, believes that while her background has created some difficulties, it has also allowed her to have what she perceives to be a richer and broader understanding of life than most other people.

Some students believe that such factors as race, class

and gender have only minor effects or no effects at all in shaping their experiences. Those who hold this view tend to be white, middle-class males and science students. For example, one Canadian woman, working in the Sciences, believes that these factors are not significant because there is a large number of minority students in the sciences. Therefore, she feels that both students and professors are familiar with and comfortable working with those of minority backgrounds. She also does not believe in the concept of class. This is not to say that all of those who believe race, class and gender have not shaped their experiences in academia do not perceive that the experiences of other students might be affected by these factors. For example, the majority of middle-class students perceive that their class position gives them greater financial advantages than those of the lower class. One Canadian man feels that his middle-class background allows him to borrow money from his parents. He recognizes that this is not available to classmates of lower class backgrounds. He also believes that his class position makes him more comfortable with the social rituals of academia.

Some mature students believe that their age has shaped their academic experiences. For example, one Canadian woman

feels that her age has been an asset in her experiences as a teaching assistant. Her former career gave her skills that many younger students have yet to learn. In addition, she believes that because of her age students do not question her authority as much as they do younger teaching assistants.

The data confirm another of our initial propositions. One's social position does appear to have implications for the production of knowledge. Some students feel that their social position has helped them in their research. For example, one woman, a visa student from a developing nation, believes that her status as both a woman and a woman of colour has helped her in pursuing her dissertation. She feels that, because she knows the customs and values of her home country much better than her committee members, they have allowed her more freedom to conduct her research than otherwise would have been the case. Other students believe that their social positions have created some obstacles.

We also found that one's social position affects whether one does or does not contest dominant ideologies. Those students who display a greater consciousness of race, class and gender are more likely to perceive inequalities. Therefore, they are more likely to contest dominant ideologies. However, there are other factors besides the

awareness of these inequalities that determine whether or not a student will contest dominant ideologies. For example, some students will not pursue ideas that are not in favour with their committee members because they do not want to delay the completion of their theses. This is especially the case for the visa student. Another factor in determining the likelihood of contesting dominant ideologies is assessment and the academic record. This will be discussed below.

Some students believe that their social backgrounds affect how they cope with the pressures of graduate school. Some believe that their social backgrounds have forced them to develop coping skills. For example, one Canadian woman feels that her gender has resulted in forming close relationships with her female committee members, especially her supervisor, who she sees as her mentor. She suggests that they can relate to her experiences as a woman, and especially to the pressures she faces as a woman in academia who also has a husband and children. However, some women feel that, because there are fewer female faculty than male faculty, they have difficulty finding mentors. One black woman feels this way. She adds that she feels alienated because there are no black women professors with whom she can speak.

One interesting finding is the importance of students'

perceptions of the role of personality. Some students reduce their explanations of experiences to discussions of personality. For example, one Canadian woman believes that the difficulties that she had with a particular professor over feminist issues were more the result of personality differences than of gender differences. Some students believe that personality is a more important factor than race, class and gender in shaping their experiences. For example, one Canadian man believes that his female colleagues' complaints of difficulties in controlling undergraduate students relate to their individual personality traits rather than to gender.

ANALYSIS

In reviewing the data, we suggested that one's position in a race, class and gender hierarchy has implications for one's level of consciousness of the significance of these factors. Those who believe that their experiences in academia are shaped by these factors tend to be women, ethnic minorities and those of the lower class. Their experiences are shaped not just by the structures of the university, but also by those outside. While it is possible that one could become conscious of these issues in academia, it seems that

this consciousness stems from experiences in earlier stages of one's life. For example, women have struggled for many years against the forces of patriarchy that have allowed men to be the dominant sex. They sometimes find that the discrimination they face in the world outside the university is also present within the university. Of course, gender discrimination is an experience that women as a group experience. Men do not experience it, they may not be aware of it and they may tend to deny its existence. This social positioning may make women more conscious of and more willing to accept feminist approaches in the humanities and the social sciences.

Science students display lower levels of consciousness of race, class and gender because their academic work does not explore these issues. On the other hand, the work of social science and humanities students does deal with these issues. This may perpetuate, reinforce or develop the student's consciousness of these issues. And students who are interested in these issues, will of course, be attracted to these fields.

We also suggested that a student's level of consciousness of race, class and gender determines whether or not he or she is likely to contest dominant ideologies. Those students who possess higher levels of consciousness of these

issues are more likely to perceive inequalities. Therefore, they are more likely to contest dominant ideologies. However, there are several reasons why this is not always the case. One reason that was mentioned earlier was the student's desire not to prolong the length of time required for the completion of the dissertation. Another reason is assessment and the academic record. Some students are more concerned about their marks and personal assessments, which will affect their future careers, than they are about producing research that is in keeping with their personal beliefs.

We believe that personality plays a dual role in students' assessments of their academic experiences. In some cases it is used by the student as a coping mechanism. It allows the student to reduce the impact of unpleasant experiences. In other cases, it is serves as a perceptual filter that prevents the student from seeing the inequalities of race, class and gender.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES

There is some question about the advances that have been made in achieving greater equality. While many people believe that great advances have been made, they also believe that many

obstacles are yet to be overcome. Jessie Bernard, a well-known American sociologist, uses the "half-filled glass" analogy to describe these views. In specific reference to the impact of the field of Women's Studies on sociology, she says "The half-filled glass, though not empty, is far from full" (Bernard, 1987:210). The following discussion will address some of the advances that have been made and also some of the obstacles that remain.

THE DEBATE

In terms of sheer numbers, great progress has been made. For example, in the USA in 1969 there were only sixteen courses in the field of Women's Studies. In 1982, there were about twenty-thousand courses and four-hundred and fifty degree-granting programmes (Bernard, 1987:194). In addition, there were no fewer than thirty centres conducting research on issues relating to women (Bernard, 1987:195).

This has resulted in a great number of books, conferences and publications (Bernard, 1987:195; Thibault, 1988:88). This means that there is now much more research on women's views and experiences. One result has been the weakening of the structure of patriarchy (Schick, 1994:82-83). Carol Schick discusses her view of the progress that is being made:

The feminist intent of social change is a slow process that takes place daily in classrooms as people support each other... . Women articulate the political, self-reflective, and historical practices of their lives; their experiences are recognized and recreated in the writing and interpersonal activities they share with other women. Women affirm the right to use both the heart and the head in learning, and to speak, argue, and debate in classes without translation (1994:82-83).

Bernard believes that attitudes towards women's issues have also changed. In 1969, the field of Women's Studies was sometimes the object of ridicule (Bernard, 1987:195). Today the most blatant forms of sexism are no longer acceptable and they are not tolerated (Bernard, 1987:195). Despite these advances, some women wonder whether they are not sometimes being "ghettoized." The concern here is that amongst the various disciplines, the field of Women's Studies receives little recognition and the ramifications of feminist theories are not taken seriously (Bernard, 1987:196). Gisele Thibault echoes this concern. She says that many have suggested that feminist research is "biased," "trivial" or "trendy" (Thibault, 1988:88). "Considerable numbers of academics continue to view the whole idea [of Women's Studies] with suspicion, disdain, or indifference" (Bernard, 1987:206).

Methodology is not a major focus of this study. However, several points are worth mentioning. It is well

known that the traditionally accepted methodology is quantitative research. It is thought to be "objective" and "unbiased" (Mackie, 1988:5). Those who have an affinity for this type of methodology have a preference for "hard" data, laboratory experiments, isolating and controlling variables and using statistical tests of significance. However, some researchers in the field of Women's Studies believe that a qualitative approach, involving intuition and experience, provides insights and findings that cannot otherwise be researched (Bernard, 1987:206). However, scholars who prefer traditional methods often question the reliability of such research (Bernard, 1987:206). To suggest that disciplines need to adapt their ideas or methodologies is to challenge professors' beliefs about what they understand to be the fundamental assumptions of their disciplines.

Bernard describes the expansion of the feminist research network to include women from all over the world. This does not mean that these women have been included only as objects of Western research but as researchers themselves (Bernard, 1987:195). These women meet at conferences in order to offer insights and to exchange ideas and criticisms.

Linda Carty attests to the great strides that have been made by minority women. However, she also notes that many

obstacles remain. This is evident to her when she teaches undergraduate students who make blatant racist and sexist remarks (Carty, 1991:40-41). Himani Bannerji is also of the same opinion. She says that, while white feminists have invited minority women to join their cause, they do not take into account the specific histories and experiences of minority women. These are often very different from their own (Bannerji, 1991:82-85). In not recognizing these differences, white feminists do not acknowledge their superior class position. Therefore, they are perpetuating and reinforcing class divisions.

Another obstacle that will be mentioned here briefly is the "political correctness" (PC) movement. This is a neo-conservative group involving such groups as the media and intellectuals. This movement initially targeted anti-racist and feminist groups within universities, labeling these as "forms of tyranny that destroyed academic freedom and merit" (Richer and Weir, 1995:3). This movement gathered force in the early 1990s. The great success of the political correctness movement as a news theme was adopted by those lodging a neo-conservative campaign against what has come to be known as the "inclusive university" (Richer and Weir, 1995:4). This campaign includes the objections from

universities when policies relating to sexual harassment and discrimination are implemented. They cry out that these are limits on academic freedom (Richer and Weir, 1995:8). Some faculty fear that they will have their behaviour challenged. Of course, this would limit their autocratic authority ((Richer and Weir, 1995: 9).

Given that the power of the political correctness movement comes largely from the mass media and serves to delegitimize movements designed to achieve greater equity and the claims of marginalized groups by denying them authority in the public domain, certain comments must be made. The effects of this movement carry over into the university. Stephen Richer and Lorna Weir, professors of Sociology in Ontario universities, suggest that the challenge of building the inclusive university is not simply a matter of adding numbers of women, ethnic minorities, lower-class and disabled individuals. It is essential to contest the political correctness movement, both in relation to human rights and affirmative action policies and within classrooms (Richer and Weir, 1995:11). For example, while it is difficult to remedy the situations in classrooms where men are "garrulous" and women lack the confidence to speak, human rights policies prohibiting sexual harassment (including sexual remarks) can

give some degree of power to female students (Richer and Weir, 1995:5-6).

Despite these obstacles, there have been changes for the better. While some may believe that we have numerous obstacles yet to face, we must remember the starting point. In the 1960s discussions of issues relating to feminism and racial inequities were often ridiculed and marginalized. Now most universities have courses that address these issues. This is indeed a great step forward. Much has been written, both inside and outside the university, to enlighten people about the inequalities in our society. The very fact that I, as a black woman, am able to write this thesis, with the support of two white committee members and one minority committee member, in itself says a lot. Finally, I agree with Bernard that most sociologists, and I would add many other academics, will come to realize that the composition and culture of the university is changing and that this is something they will have to accept and/or deal with. Bernard has this to say:

> It might happen one day when the brightest doctoral
> candidate in the department asks if he can do his
> dissertation on a feminist-oriented topic and his
> mentor realizes that his usual down-putting,
> discouraging remarks---about how bad it would be for
> his career if he did write on a feminist-oriented
> topic---fall on uncomprehending, if not incredulous

ears. And that he is going to have to run fast to keep up with the oncoming generation (1995:210-211).

FUTURE RESEARCH

We now offer some suggestions as to how this topic can be developed through future research. The first suggestion relates to sampling procedures. There were a very small number of minority group women in the later stages of Ph.D. programmes to be found on campus. While the information that was offered by those minority women who were interviewed was very rich, a greater understanding would emerge if we had had a larger sample. Thus, it is suggested that further studies be conducted in other cities and in universities with more minority group students. For example, it would be very interesting to conduct a study of this type in certain universities in New York city or California, where so-called minority group students outnumber white students on some campuses.

It is important to remember that we did not ask about students' perceptions of how factors relating to gender, class and race would affect their ability to find jobs or to be successful in careers in their fields. It is likely that some of the students in the sciences who did not perceive these

factors to be important at the doctoral stage might feel that they would be more important at later stages. It is also important to remember that many Ph.D. students are not yet fully aware of how the academic world functions, or of the importance of recommendations and informal networks in academia.

Another approach is to look at the perspectives of faculty. This research examined the student's perspective. Students emphasize the "sameness" of each graduate student. If one were to talk to faculty, one might find that the process of supervision is perceived by some faculty as being different for each student.

Finally, some additional issues might be addressed. For example, one could explore students' perceptions of their chances of being successful in their chosen careers. Students' views of the importance and validity of various methodologies might also be explored. Here we are referring specifically to quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social sciences. For example, students might be asked about any problems that they had encountered when wishing to use certain methodologies. Research on the students' experiences of writing comprehensive examinations might be explored. This

could provide interesting information, as this appears to be one of the most stressful stages in graduate students' careers.

APPENDIX A

THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PERSONAL DATA

1. What department are you studying in?

2. What year did you start the M.A. programme?

3. What year did you start the Ph.D. programme?

4. What stage are you at in this programme?

5. Are you a part-time or a full-time student?

6. Are you a visa student?

7. What year were you born?

8. What is your ethnic background? probe: Anglo-Saxon(English) French Canadian Native Canadian European (specify) Asian(specify) African(specify) West Indian(specify)   Other (specify)

9. What is your father's occupation?

10. What is your mother's occupation?

11. Have any other members of your family attended university? If yes: What type of degree did they attain?

12. Where do you reside?

13. With whom do you reside? (married/single, children, common-law relationship, parents) probe: Do you have children?

14. Is your partner a student as well? If yes probe: Is he/she employed on a full-time basis?

15. Do you think there are classes in Canadian society?

<u>probe</u>: Why or why not?

16. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a class? I yes <u>probe</u>: Which class?

17. What is your definition of class? (What do you mean by class?)

ACADEMIC HISTORY

18. Where did you do your undergraduate degree?

19. What was this degree in?

20. How long did it take you to complete your undergraduate degree?

21. When was your undergraduate degree completed?

22. Did you go to graduate school right after you completed your undergraduate degree? If no <u>probe</u>: Why not?

23. How do you explain how you got to graduate studies?

24. Why did you choose this university? <u>probe</u>: Was it a specific faculty member/scholarship/location/programme?

25. How did you find the course work section of your Ph.D.? Probe for classroom dynamics:

26. Did you feel free to express your views:

27. Do you feel classroom discussions were restricted in any way? <u>probe</u>: Do you feel that the fact you are a woman has anything to do with this? (The subject "woman" might be replaced with "man," black woman," "visa student," "working-class" etc.)[1] For visa students or others with an accent probe: Do you think your accent/language skills have any affect on classroom interaction?

28. Were classroom discussions relevant to your own experiences?

29. Do you think that your experiences/feelings are typical or atypical of most <u>graduate students</u>? (The subject "graduate

student" might be replaced with "man," "black woman," "visa student," "working-class" etc.)[2]

30. Why did you choose the courses that you took?

31. Did you do your M.A. at this university?

32. How were your experiences of your M.A. similar or different than your experiences of your Ph.D.?

Now let's discuss you as a teacher/teaching assistant.

33. What are the positive and negative aspects of teaching undergraduate students? probe: Do you feel that the fact you are a woman has anything to do with this?

34. Do you think that your experiences are typical or atypical of most graduate students?

35. Do you feel you allowed your students to express their own views?

CURRENT RESEARCH

Can you tell me something about your dissertation research?

36. How did you arrive at your research topic? probe for the following:

37. Did you enter university with a specific research interest in mind? If no probe: How did it develop? If yes probe: How has it changed?

38. What influenced your choice of methodology?

39. How free did you feel to pursue the topic you wished? probe: To what extend did faculty influence your choice of topic?

40. To what extent did other graduate students influence your choice of topic?

41. How do you feel about your supervisor and other committee members? probe: Are there any women on your committee? Was this your own choice?

42. Do you think that the fact you are a woman has anything to do with your dissertation experiences?

43. Do you think that your feelings/experiences are typical or atypical of most graduate students?

44. What are the positive and negative aspects of your current research?

COPING MECHANISMS
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Can you tell me something about how you have funded yourself throughout university?

45. Did you have to work part-time/full-time?

46. Did your parents help you out?

47. Did your partner help you out?

48. Did you receive loans or scholarships?

49. Now that funding has run out how are you managing? (if applicable)

50. How does being a parent affect your studies? (if applicable)

51. Describe a typical day in your life?

52. Do you think that the fact you are a woman has affected your financial situation?

53. Do you think that your feelings/experiences are typical or atypical of most graduate students?

OTHER MEANS OF COPING
SOCIAL SUPPORTS

54. How do you cope with the pressures of being a graduate student? probe for the following:

55. How has your parents' educational/life experiences influenced/affected your studies? For visa students probe: How does having your family members back home affect your studies?

56. Are there people other than your parents who have influenced your education?

57. In what ways do you see continuity and discontinuity between you and your family?

58. Who are your closest friends?

59. With whom do you discuss your research?

60. Do you have a mentor(s) to advise you? If no probe: why? Does this bother you? Do you feel that the fact you are a woman has anything to do with this?

61. Do you think your feelings/experiences are typical/atypical of most graduate students?

62. Do you belong to any organizations on or off campus? If yes probe: What are your reasons for being a member? If no probe: Have you ever belonged to any such organizations?

Follow up:

63. Do you spend a lot of time with other students/faculty?

64. Are there other people to brainstorm with to get intellectual input?

65. Do you feel that being a woman you have different concerns/experiences/pressures/strengths?

66. Do you feel your class position has had an impact on your educational pursuits? probe: why or why not? Do you think your feelings/experiences are typical or atypical of most people of your class position?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

67. For those who have not completed their fourth year: Do you think you will finish in four years? Why or why not?

68.   What do you plan to do with this degree?

69.   What kind of contribution do you think your dissertation has made/will make?

70.   If you were to become a professor are there any changes you would like to make to the university system/curriculum?

71.   Would you like to add anything?

72.   Have I missed any important issues?

ENDNOTES

1. This will be the case in all forthcoming questions where "woman" is indicated.

2. This will be the case for all forthcoming questions where "graduate student" is indicated.

REFERENCES

Abercrombie, Nicholas, S. Hill, and B. Turner (1994)
 Penguin Dictionary of Sociology. 3rd edition. Toronto:
 Penguin Books.

Alexander, William (1994) "Going Backwards and Other
 Reflections." Pp. 1-10 in A. Cole and D. Hunt (eds.)
 _The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from
 Travellers and Guides_. Toronto: The Ontario Institute
 for Studies in Education.

Bannerji, Himani, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Heald and K. McKenna
 (1991) _Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site
 of Feminist Struggles_. Toronto: Women's Press.

Bannerji, Himani (1991) "But Who Speaks for Us? Experience and
 Agency in Conventional Feminist Paradigms." Pp. 67-107
 in H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Heald and K.
 McKenna (eds.) _Unsettling Relations: The University as
 a Site of Feminist Struggles_. Toronto: Women's Press.

Barnett, Sharon (1982) "New Brains for Old Bodies: The Impact
 of Emotional and Physical Stress During the Ph.D.
 Process." Pp. 61-69 in S. Vartuli (ed.) _The Ph.D.
 Experience: A Woman's Point of View_. New York: Praeger
 Publishers.

Belenky, Mary, B. Clinchy, N. Goldberger and J. Tarule (1986)
 _Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self,
 Voice, and Mind_. New York: Basic Books Inc.,
 Publishers.

Bellamy, Lesley A., and N. Guppy (1991) "Opportunities and
 Obstacles for Women in Higher Education." Pp. 163-192
 in J. Gaskell and A. McLaren (eds.) _Women and
 Education_. 2nd edition. Alberta: Detselig Enterprises
 Limited.

Berger, Peter and T. Luckmann (1967) _The Social Construction_

of Reality. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc.

Bernard, Jessie (1987) "Re-Viewing the Impact of Women's
    Studies on Sociology." Pp. 193-216 in C. Farnham (ed.)
    The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy.
Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Bolig, Rosemary (1982) "The Ambivalent Decision." Pp. 15-26 in
    S. Vartuli (ed.) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point
    of View. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Bowles, Samuel and H. Gintis (1976) Schooling in Capitalist
    America. New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers.

Burnside, Jacqueline (1993) "A Farmer's Daughter in Academia."
    Pp. 140-147 in M. Tokarczyk and E. Fay (eds.) Working-
    Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge
    Factory. Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Carty, Linda (1991) "Black Women in Academia: A Statement from
    the Periphery." in H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S.
    Heald and K. McKenna (eds.) Unsettling Relations: The
    University as a Site of Feminist Struggles. Toronto:
    Women's Press.

Cicourel, Aaron V. and J. Kitsuse (1963) The Educational
    Decision-Makers. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Cole, Ardra and D. Hunt (1994) The Doctoral Thesis Journey:
    Reflections from Travellers and Guides. Toronto: The
    Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Cole, Ardra (1994) "I Remember...Critical Incidents of the
    Thesis Journey." Pp. 35-42 in A. Cole and D. Hunt
    (eds.) The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from
    Travellers and Guides. Toronto: The Ontario Institute
    for Studies in Education.

Comuzzi, Catherine (1994) "I Did it My Way." Pp. 43-52 in A.
    Cole and D. Hunt (eds.) The Doctoral Thesis Journey:
    Reflections from Travellers and Guides. Toronto: The
    Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Côté, James and A. Allahar (1994) Generation on Hold. Toronto:
    Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.

Curtis, Bruce, D. Livingstone and H. Smaller (1992) <u>Stacking the Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class Kids in Ontario Schools</u>. Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves Education Foundation.

Dagg, Anne I. (1989) "Women as Graduate Students: Discrimination and Accessibility." Pp. 28-31 in C. Filteau (ed.) <u>Women in Graduate Studies in Ontario</u>. Toronto: Ontario Council on Graduate Studies.

Dant, Tim (1991) <u>Knowledge, Ideology and Discourse: A Sociological Perspective</u>. New York: Routledge.

Dehli, Kari (1991) "Learning the Comfort of Home: Working Through Feminisms." Pp. 45-65 in H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Heald and K. McKenna (eds.) <u>Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles</u>. Toronto: Women's Press.

Fantasia, Rick (1988) <u>Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers</u>. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Farnham, Christie (1987) <u>The Impact of Feminist Research on the Academy</u>. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Filteau, Carolyn (1989) <u>Women in Graduate Studies in Ontario</u>. Toronto: Ontario Council on Graduate Studies.

Gaskell, Jane and A. McLaren (1991). <u>Women and Education</u>. 2nd edition. Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited.

Haley, Ella (1989) "Support Systems for Women in Graduate School." Pp. 32-39 in C. Filteau (ed.) <u>Women in Graduate Studies in Ontario</u>. Toronto: Ontario Council on Graduate Studies.

Hartman, Joan E. and E. Messer-Davidow (1991) <u>(En)Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe</u>. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.

Hartman, Joan E. (1991) "Telling Stories: The Construction of Women's Agency." Pp. 11-34 in <u>(En)Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academe</u>. Knoxville: The University of

Tennessee Press.

Harvey, David (1989) The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change. Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Inc.

Heald, Susan (1991) "Pianos to Pedagogy: Pursuing the Educational Subject." Pp. 129-149 in H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Heald and K. McKenna (eds.) Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles. Toronto: Women's Press.

Herberg, Edward (1984) "The Vertical Mosaic Influx." Pp. 452-476 in J. Mallea and J. Young (eds.) Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations. Ottawa: Carleton University Press.

Holdaway, Edward. A. (1994) "Organization and Administration of Graduate Studies in Canadian Universities." The Canadian Journal of Higher Education. XXIV(1):1-29.

Kadi, Joanna (1993) "A Question of Belonging." Pp. 87-96 in M. Tokarczyk and E. Fay (eds.) Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory. Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Kanter, Rosabeth (1977) Men and Women of the Corporation. New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers.

Karabel, Jerome and A.H. Halsey (1977) Power and Ideology in Education. New York: Oxford University Press.

Karabel, Jerome (1977) "Education, 'Human Capital,' and the Labor Market." Pp. 307-312 in J. Karabel and A.H. Halsey (eds.) Power and Ideology in Education. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kline, Marlee (1991) "Women's Oppression and Racism: Critique of the 'Feminist Standpoint'." Pp. 39-63 in J. Vorst, L. Allbutt, K.McCallum (eds.) Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Lachmann, Richard (1991) The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sociology. 4th edition. Connecticut: The Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc.

Lamphere, Louise (1987) "Feminism and Anthropology: The Struggle to Reshape Our Thinking about Gender." Pp. 11-33 in C. Farnham (ed.) The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Langston, Donna (1993) "What am I Now? The Politics of Class Identity." Pp. 60-72. in M. Tokarczyk and E. Fay (eds.) Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory. Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Levstik, Linda (1982) "The Impossible Dream: The Ph.D., Marriage, and Family." Pp. 93-104 in S. Vartuli (ed.) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View. New York: Praeger Press.

Levy, Phyllis S. (1982) "Surviving in a Predominantly White Male Institution." Pp. 45-49 in S. Vartuli (ed.) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View. New York: Praeger Press.

Mackie, Marlene (1988) "Sexism in Sociological Research." Pp. 1-23 in W. Tomm and G. Hamilton (eds.) Gender Bias in Scholarship: The Pervasive Prejudice. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

MacMillan, Brian (1989) "The Flow-Through Hypothesis: A Review of the Data." Pp. 1-13 in C. Filteau (ed.) Women in Graduate Studies in Ontario. Toronto: Ontario Council on Graduate Studies.

Mallea, John R. and J. Young (1977) Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations. Ottawa: Carleton University Press.

Marsden, Lorna, E. Harvey, and Charner, I. (1975) "Female Graduate Students: Their Occupational Mobility and Attainments." Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology. 12(4): 385-404.

Marshall, Gordon. (1994) The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marx, Karl and F. Engels (1970) The German Ideology. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl (1978) "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844." Pp. 106-142 in R. Tucker <u>The Marx-Engels Reader</u>. 2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc.

McKenna, Kate (1991) "Subjects of Discourse: Learning the Language That Counts." Pp. 109-128 in H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Heald and K. McKenna (eds.) <u>Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles</u>. Toronto: Women's Press.

Meiztis, Solveiga (1994) "The Journey Continues: From Traveller to Guide." Pp. 99-108 in A. Cole and D. Hunt (eds.) <u>The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from Travellers and Guides</u>. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Musella, Donald (1994) "Never Give Up." Pp. 109-114 in A. Cole and D. Hunt (eds.) <u>The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from Travellers and Guides</u>. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Ng, Roxanna (1991) "Teaching Against the Grain: Contradictions for Minority Teachers." Pp.99-115 in J. Gaskell and A. McLaren (eds.) <u>Women and Education</u>. 2nd edition. Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited.

Patterson, Margaret (1994) "Exploring the Country is Not Climbing a Ladder." Pp. 115-124 in A. Cole and D. Hunt (eds.) <u>The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from Guides and Travellers</u>. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Porter, Marion R., J. Porter and B. Blishen (1973) <u>Does Money Matter? Prospects for Higher Education</u>. Toronto: Institute for Behavioural Research York University.

Regan, Ellen (1994) "What's it all about Alfie?" Pp.135-139 in A. Cole and D. Hunt (eds.) <u>The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from Guides and Travellers</u>. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Richer, Stephen and L. Weir (1995) "Political Correctness and the Inclusive University." Pp. 3-20 in S. Richer and L. Weir (eds.) <u>Beyond Political Correctness: Toward the</u>

<u>Inclusive University</u>. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Richer, Stephen and L. Weir (1995) <u>Beyond Political Correctness: Toward the Inclusive University</u>. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sanford, Mark (1976) <u>Making it in Graduate School</u>. California: Montaigne Inc.

Scott, Joan W. (1987) "Women's History and the Rewriting of History." Pp. 34-50 in C. Farnham (ed.) <u>The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy</u>. Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press.

Sennett, Richard and J. Cobb (1973) <u>The Hidden Injuries of Class</u>. Toronto: Random House.

Sheridan, Peter M. and S. Pike (1994) "Predictors of Time to Completion of Graduate Degrees." <u>The Canadian Journal of Higher Education</u>. XXIV(2):68-88.

Schick, Carol (1994) <u>The University as Text: Women and the University Context</u>. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Smith, Dorothy ((1991) "An Analysis of Ideological Structures and How Women are Excluded: Considerations for Academic Women." Pp. 233-256 in J. Gaskell and A. McLaren (eds.) <u>Women and Education</u>. 2nd edition. Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited.

Sowinska, Suzanne (1993) "Yer Own Motha Wouldna Reckanized Ya: Surviving an Apprenticeship in the 'Knowledge Factory'." Pp. 148-161 in M. Tokarczyk and E. Fay (eds.) <u>Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory</u>. Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Thibault, Gisele (1988) "Women and Education: On Being Female in Male Places." Pp. 63-69 in W. Tomm and G. Hamilton (eds.) <u>Gender Bias in Scholarship: The Pervasive Prejudice</u>. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Tokarczyk, Michelle and E. Fay (1993) <u>Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory</u>. Boston:

The University of Massachusetts Press.

Tomm, Winifred and G. Hamilton (1988) Gender Bias in Scholarship: The Pervasive Prejudice. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Tracey, Catherine (1982) "The Diary of a Web Spinner." Pp. 71-78 in S. Vartuli (ed.) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Vartuli, Sue (1982) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Vartuli, Sue (1982) "A Professional Socialization Process." Pp. 1-14 in S. Vartuli (ed.) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Vorst, Jesse, L. Allbutt and K. McCallum (1991) Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers. 2nd edition. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Williams, Linda (1994) "Keep on Trekking: It is Exciting!" Pp. 153-159 in A. Cole and D. Hunt (eds.) The Doctoral Thesis Journey: Reflections from Guides and Travellers. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Williams, Patricia (1991) The Alchemy of Race and Rights. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Williams, Rosalind (1982) "In and Out of Relationships: A Serious Game for the Woman Doctoral Student." Pp. 79-92 in S. Vartuli (ed.) The Ph.D. Experience: A Woman's Point of View. New York: Praeger Publishers.