ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY
Volume 48, Number 1, Fall 1997, 3-17

EMPOWERMENT AND EMANCIPATION

TOM INGLIS

ABSTRACT

The concepts of empowerment and emancipation have gained common currency in recent years, not just within adult education but also in organizational management and industrial training. The notion of enabling people to take control of their own lives and to free themselves from the structures which dominate and constrain them is attractive. But in the debate about people becoming empowered and freeing themselves from power, there has been an absence of a discussion about the nature of power. This paper attempts to clarify the nature of power and the distinction between individuals being empowered within an existing social system and struggling for freedom by changing the system. In particular, it challenges the notion of freedom and emancipation being attained through personal transformation.

The struggle for power involves us in a daily battle of influencing, persuading, commanding or, when all else fails, forcing people to do what we want while, at the same time, preventing them from exerting their will over us. But power extends beyond this mosaic of interpersonal struggles. It pre-exists us. It is invested in rules, regulations, discourse, and practice. It flows through us like an electric field. Foucault argues that power must be seen not as something which is static and possessed, but which circulates within and between us. "It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth" (1980a, p. 98).

Although discourse and practice pre-exist us, we learn to harness them to our own end. The notion of power being located within rules and regulations which are continually adopted and transformed by individual agents is central to Giddens' structuration theory of power (1984, p. 14). Foucault is known for his work analyzing changes in the discourse and practice of discipline and punishment, particularly in relation to education (1977a) but, with the exception of Dwyer's (1995) study of post-compulsory education in Australia, his theories have not had any major impact in adult education (Westwood, 1992).

To understand the notion of empowerment and emancipation, we must begin with an analysis of power. This leads immediately to a fundamental problem: If power dictates or produces truth, how do we recognize true statements about power? More fundamentally, is truth possible beyond power? We may believe, with Habermas, that there is a realm of truth which exists beyond power and which is central to authentic human being, communication, and voluntary social order. Habermas (1984) argues that the "orientation to reaching understanding" is

TOM INGLIS is Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University College, Dublin.
This article was accepted for publication under prior editorship.

from the SAGE Social Science Collections. All Rights Reserved.

a universal feature of human communication which is central to overcoming self-interest and the domination of economic and political power in our lives (p. 286). This is also the fundamental assumption underlying Mezirow's (1994; 1995) theory of adult learning. Foucault, however, insists that there is no truth without power (1980a, p. 131). It is in and through power that what is known, what is said, what is taken for granted, and what is regarded as the truth are constituted. The tensions between these two positions are central to the following discussion.

It is argued that for people to become emancipated it is important first to be able to distinguish social action deriving from power as opposed to, for example, love and affection. It is also important to distinguish different types of power. This is something which is missing in Mezirow's work. Within a Habermasian framework, understanding how power works is crucial if people are to prevent the colonization and technization of the lifeworld by power and money and develop a society based on free, undistorted communication (Habermas, 1987, p. 183). It is argued here, that for emancipatory learning to reach its full potential, there is a need to go beyond an analytical realist typology of power to a Foucauldian structuralist analysis which helps people understand how they are limited and controlled by discourses and practices (Honneth, 1993; Kelly, 1994).

The central tenet of this paper is that empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation concerns critically analyzing, resisting and challenging structures of power. The first section begins with an analysis of empowerment. Empowerment used to be associated with a wide variety of radical social movements (Bookman, 1988; Davis, 1988; Hanks, 1987; Inglis, 1994; Kieffer, 1984; O'Sullivan, 1993; Solomon, 1976; Villerreal, 1988). In more recent years, however, it has been appropriated by organizational management and industrial training. An analysis of how empowerment has come to be understood in business not only helps distinguish empowerment (working within the system) from emancipation (trying to change the system), but how a process which supposedly leads to increased or devolved power leads, in effect, to a more subtle form of incorporation. The emphasis on people becoming self-regulating, disciplined, and controlled, in the absence of critical analysis, can be seen as part of a process of empowerment which corresponds with Foucault's theory of a gradual movement in Western society towards softer, more subtle and pervasive forms of control (1977a).

An analysis of Mezirow's theory, particularly in terms of the psychologization of the process of emancipation, is the second task of this paper. Transformative learning focuses on the individual and the reconstruction of the notion of self. This is the locus for social as well as personal change. Power becomes reduced to blockages preventing a true realization of the self, with adult learning becoming the process of revealing and dissolving these blockages. While not abandoning this emphasis on self-critical individuals engaging in a process of self-realization, there is a need to take an understanding of human emancipation away from notions

of liberating a pre-existing, essential self toward a more realist or structuralist understanding of power. Instead of individuals, the focus shifts to fields of discourse and practice within which individuals are constituted. Thus, without an analysis of power there is a danger that transformative learning, instead of being emancipatory, could operate as a subtle form of self-control.

Empowerment in Management and Industrial Training

Each decade would seem to demand a new concept to inspire management to get workers to be more efficient (Burdett, 1991, p. 23). Empowering workers has come to mean encouraging them to share information and participate in management, to critically reflect about their attitudes, values, and behavior in the workplace, and to get them to be more self-directive and better communicators (Kizilos, 1990, p. 49; Putman, 1991, p. 5). Empowerment is linked to the concept of total quality management (TQM) and the notion of the learning organization, both of which "have a strong emphasis on feedback, creativity, teamwork and problem solving" (Clutterbuck & Kernaghan, 1994, p. 28). An essential ingredient in this process is to encourage workers to view the organization not as something outside of them but as a family or community to which they belong. Empowerment involves getting workers to share the same values and practices as managers and to work with them to improve competitiveness, quality, innovation, loyalty and, most of all, productivity and profit (Clutterbuck & Kernaghan, 1994, pp. 23-26).

This conception of empowerment can be located within a structural-functional or systems theory of organizations and society. Empowerment is a process by which the role of workers becomes redefined in order to enable the organization to achieve new goals and adapt to a changing environment. One of the central criticisms of structural-functional analysis is that it "projects an over-harmonious integration of motivational forces (at the level of individuals) into the systematic values of the organization" (Power, 1990, p. 112). It assumes that workers are committed to the norms and values of the organization and to contributing to the generalized capacity to achieve shared objectives (Parsons, 1951, pp. 121-2; Alexander, 1983, p. 89). Parsons' definition of power—as the "capacity to secure the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of collective organization" (1967, p. 308)—closely resembles organizational management's conception of empowerment.

Worker empowerment, it is emphasized, is about creating a different culture (Kizilos, 1990, p. 51). Yet, it is a culture in which structures and values are not questioned or hierarchies challenged. Empowerment implies a decentralized structure. Yet decentralization never really occurs (Dandaker, 1990, p. 211). The process of interaction and communication between management and workers is constituted within existing hierarchical divisions. Interpreted from a Habermasian perspective, the culture of the organization is not something which emerges through communication, interaction, and dialogue between equal participants at the negoti-

ating table. Rather it is something that is created, supervised and, when necessary, vetoed by management. Empowerment thus becomes a strategic discourse employed by management to legitimize changes to increase production and profit which are often "above and beyond the interests of employees" (McCabe, 1996, p. 36).

The old issues of exploitation, control and deskilling of workers have not gone away; rather, they have been wrapped up in different management clothing (Gilbert, 1996, p. 13). What is deemed to be empowering becomes part of what Freire terms *banking* education (1972, pp. 45-50). Workers do not learn to "read" the world of work. There is no democratic decision-making process, no collaborative or self-directed learning. There are basic epistemic and sociocultural assumptions which are not open to question (Mezirow, 1990, p. 15). Empowerment, then, is not really about radical economic, political or social change in the workplace. It is not about people learning to take control of their own lives and the environment in which they live. Empowerment is not about those with less power (e.g., workers learning to read through the rhetoric of management and to see the false consciousness concerning the real conditions of their existence and then collaborating to create change). Rather, it is about encouraging workers to rationally choose to commit themselves to the values, goals, policies, and objectives of the organization as a rational means of improving their life chances. In the move toward more subtle forms of discipline and control, instead of having to be supervised, workers internalize their own surveillance (Foucault, 1977a; Tuckman, 1995, p. 75).

Emphasis on the Individual

Since the appearance of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), learning to challenge and change existing systems has been a dominant issue in adult education. Freire is adamant that freedom from oppression can only take place through theory and praxis. He emphasizes the need for a social critique of power, that is, of understanding the structural, particularly the ideological, forces of oppression and the need to link this theoretical understanding to a radical political practice.

In some respects, when it comes to people becoming empowered, Mezirow seems to closely follow Freire. He too is adamant that praxis is a "requisite condition" of transformative learning, arguing that all too frequently transformative learning remains at the level of individual development and does not move into the task of "learning to successfully overcome oppressing power in one's external world through social action" (1990, p. 357). This appears to refute repeated criticisms that Mezirow not only lacks a critical theory of power, but that he balks at collective social action (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990b; Tennant, 1993). Despite his call for social action, however, Mezirow's theory leads to an over-reliance on the individual rather than social movements as the agency of social change and, consequently, to an inadequate and false sense of

emancipation. Mezirow believes that money, power, and ideology are simply distortions preventing open, honest communication between people (1995, pp. 54-55). He rejects a structuralist position: both the strong version which would argue that individuals are constituted within and function only as elements within structures of power, and the weak version which argues that individuals, although constituted within structures, through their agency not only reproduce but change these structures.

Adult Education and the Search for Truth About the Self

Transformation theory "seeks to explain the way adult learning is structured and to determine by what processes the frames of reference through which we view and interpret our experience (meaning perspectives) are changed or transformed" (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiii). Individuals develop a self-concept through socialization and interaction with significant others (pp. 2-3). Although the meaning perspectives and knowledge acquired during socialization lead to preferred ways of thinking and behaving, they do not have a necessary determining influence. Mezirow argues that in order to be free we must be able to name our reality and to speak with our own voice (p. 3). In this regard, Mezirow seems to be arguing for some pre-social, authentic, essential self. Once this authentic self can be discovered and revealed, it can become a force for liberation. It is through the process of discovering one's authentic self, through renaming one's world, that new patterns of thought and behavior, new social practices, and processes and new forms of authority can be created. Through a dialogue with others, adult learners can become critically self-reflective of the ways they have come to read and understand the world. This enables them to become "communicatively competent," that is, to negotiate meanings and purposes rather than passively accept other people's definition of reality. This, in turn, enables them to engage either in personal transformation (Roth 1990; Kitchener & King, 1990) or social transformation (Hart 1990a; Heaney & Horton, 1990). The fundamental theoretical assumption which Mezirow makes is that social life is made up and shared by individuals who, through continuously negotiated communication, sustain and recreate it. From this Meadian, symbolic-interactionist perspective, social change takes place through a form of voluntary critical self-reflection.

From Foucault's perspective, we can analyze the shift toward self-control in adult education discourse as part of a more general shift in the discourse of discipline and punishment. Instead of producing docile, amenable, regulated bodies through external forms of control (from torture and physical punishment to prisons to education), there has been a shift to more subtle forms of control. Through an ongoing process of externalizing, problematizing, and critically evaluating one's being, actions, and thoughts, a critically reflective self is constituted. This self becomes the center of control. If properly constituted we no longer need the regulatory discourse of psychiatry. Through emancipatory learning, we become our own psychiatrists.

There is no end to power. The only freedom or emancipation comes from resistance and turning power back in on itself. As much as oppressed people have to reveal to themselves the power of the oppressor and the way in which it operates, so too educators and students have to be able to read and announce to themselves the power of the education system, the college, and even the teacher (Cunningham, 1992; Hart, 1990b; Tisdell, 1993). But since power is constituted in discourses, narratives, and games of truth, as well as in economic and political structures, this means that it can be critically analyzed as a part of the process of resistance, challenge, and subversion which does not, as Zacharakis-Jutz has argued, necessitate revolutionary, antagonistic, and violent change (1988, p. 45). Missing from adult education is this critical analysis of discourse and power structures and the way they operate in the lives of people.

In other words, the world for Mezirow is primarily shaped through individual agency. This is turning a materialist perspective on its head. It is not that social being determines consciousness, but rather human consciousness, albeit emancipated, which determines social being. Although Mezirow would appear to have abandoned a philosophy of consciousness and moved toward a Habermasian theory of communicative action, there is nevertheless a conception of an autonomous, rational subject set against an objective, material world. Both Foucault and the Frankfurt school are adamant that such conceptions have to be abandoned:

> The atomistic and disengaged Cartesian subject has to be dislodged from its position at the center of the epistemic and moral universes, and not only for theoretical reasons: it undergirds the egocentric, domineering and possessive individualism that has so disfigured modern Western rationalism and driven it to exclude, dominate, or assimilate whatever is different. (McCarthy, 1994, p. 244)

Learning about the Self as an Agent of Social Change

The problem with a psychological perspective on empowerment is the lack of emphasis given to an analysis of the social-structural and class constraints of oppression and to an examination of how these constraints may be overcome (LeCompte & deMarrais, 1992, p. 13). Being able to transform social life necessitates being able to understand different types of power and the ways in which they operate in society as a whole, as well as in the lives of individuals.

However, to overcome oppressing power it is necessary to be able to identify, describe, and analyze it. We need some kind of theory about how power works. It is here that Mezirow runs aground. He argues that such a theory can emerge through the interaction of the teacher and the learners; that, acting as an empathetic provocateur, the teacher can help the learners to critically reflect about their experiences: "The analysis of incidents from different perspectives leads to critical assessment, this leads to interpretation, which, in turn, leads to explanation and the formulation of theory" (1990, p. 360). In valorizing the unique educational context of each interaction of teachers and learners, Mezirow seems reluctant to

import any existing theory to help learners understand how power operates in their lives. In other words, the teacher helps learners read their lives as texts and offer alternative explanations, but does not encourage them to read texts about power. It is as if all that has been written about power can be discounted and the teacher and the learners by themselves can formulate their own theory of power.

LeCompte and deMarrais (1992, p. 14) are correct to identify and describe the factors which constrain individual agency. These center around people being excluded from the system because they do not know the right things or behave in the right way. The oppressed do not have the same ideas, interests, and practices as those who are economically, politically, and socially more powerful. They do not have the same *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55), the same predispositions or tastes. They do not read, understand, and participate in social life in the same way. This is related to not having access to the same *cultural capital* which, through the education system, has become central to obtaining *economic* and *political capital.* It is cultural capital which is primarily acquired at home and later developed in school which enables the powerful to pass on their power from one generation to the next (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). It is an outlook, a way of thinking, talking, and being in the world into which the powerful are socialized and which, in turn, becomes part of their very being, enabling them to be at ease with other powerful members of society. The powerful recognize, promote, and support cultural capital. In an even more deeply-rooted structural way, they define not only what is good and bad, right and wrong, effective and ineffective, ugly and beautiful, but also what is worth knowing. Power constitutes knowledge; resistance deconstructs truth.

LeCompte and deMarrais (1992, p. 16) suggest two ways of addressing power. The first is through micro-level or site-specific struggles in classrooms, colleges, small groups, and local organizations. These struggles involve challenges to the existing structures of power through devising and enacting alternative ways of doing things (Inglis, 1994). However, it is essentially reformist. The second, more radical, approach is at a macro-level and involves challenging and changing existing structures of power. O'Sullivan (1993) argues that social change can be created through socially-committed programs which are based on educative action. A defining characteristic of such programs is that, while they involve individualistic learning which results in personal empowerment, this is not their terminal objective: "The qualifications, knowledge, skills and personal development are for a purpose beyond the benefit and enhancement of the individual involved" (p. 20). However, while involvement in a socially committed program may bring about change in the existing structures of power, it does not necessarily involve gaining an understanding of power itself.

Macedo (1993) complains that teachers rarely help students to "read about the racist and discriminatory practices that they face in school and the community at large" (p. 189). Ellsworth has argued that many of the critical pedagogic practices centered around "empowerment," "student voice," and "dialogue" are, in effect,

"repessive myths that perpetuate relations of domination" (1989, p. 298). Two things may be happening here. In the first place, teachers may not require students to analyze the social and political structures that inform their realities because they themselves are the primary structure of power which most students encounter. We may like to think of schooling and education as something to which students are freely and voluntarily committed. The reality is that for most students school is a coercive system to which they must comply (Marshall, 1989; Ryan, 1991). If we want students to analyze the social and political structures that constitute their lives, we have to begin with those which are socially and politically the closest. In effect, this means that teachers must enable students to understand what power they, the teachers, have over them; the strategies and tactics by which this power is operated; and, paradoxically, the strategies and tactics by which they could be empowered to take control of their own learning. This involves enabling students to recognize and challenge the structures, hierarchies, privileges, rhetoric, rules and regulations of the educational institution within which they operate. However, as Ellsworth found, no matter what the intentions of the teacher, this may prove difficult within the current institutional structures of most of higher education (1989, p. 316).

Second, we have to ask ourselves why it is that students do not read about the discourse and practices of power which affect their lives. Is it that they do not have any interest in freedom and emancipation? Can we assume, because they do not read about power and how it operates in their lives that they have no interest? There would appear to be two things happening here. First, the world in which they live is constructed around notions of family, community, group, organization, society, and nation in which they, like everyone else, supposedly believe and belong. In other words, we belong to a system to which we are voluntarily committed. To read it otherwise is to see the system as a construct of power which operates primarily in the interests of those who already have a disproportionate amount of economic, political, and social resources. Second, power has not been written about in a way which is attractive and meaningful. If and when it is, it is primarily in terms of individuals learning to be more powerful. This is essentially what most empowerment involves. An example of this is seen in forms of popular psychological literature where people learn to be more self-aware, self-confident, assertive, effective, and dynamic so they can do better within the existing system rather than change it.

Towards a Pedagogy of Power

By laying bare its features and by announcing the various strategies and tactics through which it is exercised, adult educators can help people, particularly the less powerful, to know and understand power and to see how it operates in their lives. But to do this educators have to change from engaging in a discourse about power among themselves. Journal articles such as this have the consequence, albeit unin-

tended, of reproducing adult education as a discourse *of* power rather than an emancipatory discourse *about* power. We must not abandon theory, but we need to develop a way of talking and writing theoretically which is not elitist or abstract and which reveals the nature of power in a clear and accessible manner (Freire, 1970, p. 206; McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993, p. 54). The process of emancipation involves a continual struggle to reveal the ever-changing nature of power. Emancipation is the process of pulling power out from agreement, love, and affection. Emancipatory learning could begin, for example, with questioning the epistemic assumption that social life is founded on shared meaning arrived at through communicative action. It is not that looking at our lives through a discourse about power is always necessary or desirable. But showing people how to read their lives and the family, groups, organizations and society in which they are involved in terms of a struggle for power can be emancipating. It is important to remember that it is not the only way of looking at social life; it is an epistemological or learning framework.

Characteristics of Power

At the level of everyday social life, power is best understood in terms of an acquisition which either an individual or organization possesses. In this perspective, individuals are powerful when they have sufficient resources to get their own way and do what they want despite, as Weber says, the resistance of others (1978, p. 53). But it goes beyond specific actions to being able to limit what others do, say, think, and perceive. How does this come about? Leaving aside physical power or military strength, most people are able to get their own way from different forms of capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Throughout history, one of the most effective ways of getting one's own way has been *economic capital* (wealth, income, property, resources). Another effective method has been *political capital* which enables one to rule rather than be ruled, by having, for example, a high position in an organization or group. *Social capital* derives from social networks or being well-connected. *Cultural capital* derives from people having greater prestige, honor, and respect due to knowledge, education, manners, and morals.

Much of Bourdieu's sociological analysis concerns itself with theoretically elaborating and clarifying the links between these different forms of capital or power and how they are empirically manifested (1977a, 1986). In other words, power can be seen as different types of resources which some have in abundance and others do not, but which we are all in a struggle to attain and maintain. For example, the individual who can personally transform him or herself, who can obtain new knowledge or skills (cultural capital), who can adopt and fulfill the ethos and objectives of the organization (social capital) can attain a higher position (political capital) and better pay (economic capital). In this way empowerment can be understood as the process by which individuals or groups seek, by working within the existing system, to obtain greater economic, political, and social power.

But there is another way of understanding power which affords a greater possibility of emancipation. Instead of seeing power as kinds of capital, Foucault wants us to see power in terms of discourses and practices which operate in and through each and every one of us. There are ways of thinking and writing about ourselves and our bodies and how we relate to each other which shape and limit what we do and say over and above the particular struggle for economic, political, and social power. Foucault himself, for example, was interested in the discourses (the "truths") which were produced about "mad" people and how these discourses led to the practice of separating them from reasonable, civilized people and incarcerating them in asylums (1973). He was interested in the way obsession with sex in Western society became a very subtle force of discipline and control which has produced healthy, productive, regulated bodies (1980b). In a way, our disciplined, sexualized bodies augment the discipline and control instilled through the education system (1977a). Foucault argues that in the modern era there has been a shift in the operation of power away from limitation and control to people being productive and efficient. We can see how empowerment fits in exactly with this new operation of power. The major form of power in modern society is that which is

> working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it; a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 136)

In other words, the process of empowerment described earlier can be seen as a more subtle development within a series of apparatuses whose purpose is to produce greater discipline, create obligations, and develop good productive work practices.

It is within this concept of power as discourses, practices, and strategic plays between organizations and individuals that we can gain a better understanding of knowledge and truth. The latter, in effect, ceases to exist outside of power; indeed, they are the mechanism by which power operates (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 203). The discourse of management science and empowerment, for example, is simply part of an overall discourse of the human sciences which produces and secures order through the investigation, documentation and analysis of human behavior. The managerial science of empowerment becomes another knowledge producing a more subtle penetrative power. Empowerment is surrender and compliance to this power; emancipation is resistance and transgression. It is not that we will reach an emancipatory truth outside of power. It is rather that, without ongoing challenges and resistances, not only will power become absolute, but the possibility of constructing an individual, authentic, ethical life is diminished (Foucault, 1991, pp. 15-19; 1980a, pp. 132-133; 1980b, pp. 93-97).

Power operates within discourses and practices through the deployment of strategies and tactics. Although this would suggest that the exercise of power is intentional, this is too narrow a view. To understand power it is necessary to get

beyond the notion of it being exercised by one person over another, that is, in terms of rulers and ruled. Rather, power can be seen in terms of an ongoing permanent disposition to general approaches and specific ways of achieving or doing things. Strategies and tactics may be intentional or unintentional and may have intended or unintended consequences. For example, a doctor may prescribe pills as a means of curing an illness. But, regardless of his intentions and intended consequences, it is a strategy which reproduces the compliant disposition of the patient who surrenders his or her body to the doctor who determines what is right and wrong, good and bad for him or her (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 187). The same process takes place in most education environments.

Power may arise through specific intentions, but the actual outcomes, strategies, and tactics of power are carried forward beyond individuals and become embodied in practice. The power of educational organizations centers around established practices developed and inculcated in bodies over centuries. Self-disciplined students arrive and place themselves in an orderly fashion in seats facing toward the teacher to whom all students' eyes and bodies are directed. The power of the teacher is within the unquestioned, inherited, accumulated practices which reproduce, on the one hand, knowledge and truth and, on the other, ignorance and obedience.

Since social life is and always has been a product of power, it cannot be eliminated; power can, however, be subverted and transgressed, an essential process in emancipation praxis. What is important for teaching emancipation is that teachers can and often do engage not just in attempting to surrender their power, but in encouraging subversion and transgression of that very power. Emancipatory adult education practices are often centered around helping students to see through and transgress traditional pedagogical practices - who decides, who assigns, who controls, and who knows.

Distinguishing Empowerment from Emancipation in Adult Education and Training

Education and training for empowerment center on helping individuals attain greater economic, political, and social power. This form of learning is a classical example of what Freire terms "banking education;" people making greater commitments and investments as a means towards obtaining greater rewards. Despite Freire's hopes and expectations, most people may want to learn to read and write as a means of getting on in the world, rather than changing it (Inglis, 1990). It is difficult to get any job if you cannot read or write or lack "basic social skills." Empowerment is, thus, centered on creating self-confidence, self-expression, and an interest in learning. Becoming empowered involves expressing oneself and saying what one feels, likes, thinks, and wants. Empowerment may have its roots in the social action ideology of the 1960s but, as Kieffer indicates, it has become synonymous with concepts as varied as coping skills, personal efficacy, compe-

tence, self-sufficiency, self-esteem, mutual support, natural support systems, community organization, and neighborhood participation (1984, p. 10).

By contrast, education for liberation and emancipation is a collective educational activity which has as its goal social and political transformation. If personal development takes place, it does so within that context. But this process involves structures rather than individuals. For Freire:

> Liberation is a social act. Liberating education is a social process of illumination. . . . Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment and freedom. (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 109)

Hart emphasizes the importance of the struggle against the blinding and distorting effects of power. This struggle is, she argues, effective when it moves beyond perfecting critical reflection and communication through developing practices that issue from "involvement in concrete practical experiences" (1990b, p. 137).

This raises fundamental issues which have been close to the heart of feminism for some time now: How it is that people move from personal transformation to social and political transformation? The answer is that, although critical self-reflection is fundamental for the radical transformation of society, it is not enough by itself (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 110). Adult educators can help in emancipation when they become part of the power struggle of an oppressed people. This means that emancipatory education is not brought by an educator to a community or group, but rather emerges from within the oppressed themselves or through an invitation from oppressed to the educator to join their struggle (Heaney & Horton, 1990, p. 87). This, of course, raises problems for educators working within institutions such as universities. Can emancipatory education be taught in an institution which emphasizes hierarchy, individualism, and competition (Zacharakis-Jutz, 1988, p. 45; Foucault, 1977b, p. 208)? It also raises the old historicist question as to whether any attempt to struggle against power is redundant unless it emerges from an oppressed people. The practical implications are summed up in the slogan, "we cannot inspire unless we first conspire." Mezirow, on the other hand, argues that involvement in a social movement can be detrimental to critical self-reflection (1989, p. 172).

There is, then, a balance as well as a tension between individual transformative learning and emancipatory education. The former is a necessary, but not a sufficient, base for the latter. Without necessarily becoming a political activist, there is a clear role for the educator in facilitating a progression from individual transformative learning to emancipatory education. Such a facilitation, it is argued, is partly dependent on the educator helping the oppressed to be able to see and understand how power operates in their lives. This requires a competence and commitment to read and interpret social life in terms of a struggle for power. It also

requires a theoretical or conceptual framework which enables the oppressed to see the different types of power so that they can learn to see how they are being dominated.

It may well be that adult educators committed to emancipatory learning have become caught up in the contradictions of the postmodern era. On the one hand, they are constrained by a Foucauldian pessimism which binds their discourse and the search for truth into an endlessly evolving politics of power in which they implement discipline and order. On the other hand, adult educators can be enthused by Habermasian optimism, namely that power and its colonizing effects on the lifeworld can be overcome; that it is possible to reach a just, free and equal society through rational communication. In all of this, adult education has a crucial role to play.

This paper has not attempted to resolve this contradiction. It has argued that we understand our lives between these two extremes. Indeed, emancipation may well involve a continual juggling between the two. However, if adult education is to make a contribution to emancipation, it needs to provide not merely a theory of power, but one which comes in a language that can be understood by the oppressed. It is this goal of producing an analysis of power which is at once attractive and accessible that lies at the heart of moving transformative learning beyond the individual into social emancipation.

References

Alexander, J. (1982). *Positivism, presuppositions and current controversies. Theoretical logic in sociology. Vol. 1.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alexander, J. (1983). *The modern reconstruction of classical thought: Talcott Parsons. Theoretical logic in sociology. Vol. 4.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bookman, A. (1988). *Women and the politics of empowerment.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1977a). *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. and J-C. Passeron (1977). *Reproduction: In education, society and culture.* London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.). *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp.241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P & L. Wacquant (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Burdett, J. (1991). What is empowerment anyway? *Journal of European Industrial Training, 15*(6). 23-30.

Clark, M. C. & A. Wilson (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly, 41(2),* 75-91.

Clutterbuck, D. & S. Kernaghan (1994). *The power of empowerment.* London: Kogan Page.

Collard, S. & M. Law (1989). The limits of perspective transformation: A critique of Mezirow's theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 39*(2), 99-107.

Cunningham, P. (1992). From Freire to feminism: The North American experience with critical pedagogy. *Adult Education Quarterly, 42,* 180-191.

Dandeker, C. (1990). *Surveillance, power and modernity.* Cambridge: Polity.

Davis, A. (1988). Radical perspectives on the empowerment of Afro-American women: Lessons from the 1980s. *Harvard Educational Review, 58*(3), 348-353.

Dreyfus, H. & P. Rabinow (1982). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dwyer, P. (1995). Foucault, docile bodies and post-compulsory education in Australia. *British Journal of Sociology, 16*(4), 467-477.

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review. 59*(3) 297-324.

Foucault, M. (1973). *Madness and civilization.* New York: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1977a). *Discipline and punish.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1977b). Intellectuals and power. In *Language, counter-memory, practice.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, M. (1980a). In C. Gordon (Ed.). *Power-knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings: 1972-1977.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1980b). *The history of sexuality: Vol. 1.* New York: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1991). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom. In J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (Eds.). *The final Foucault* (pp.1-20). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Freire, P. (1970). The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom. *Harvard Educational Review. 40*(4), 205-225.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gilbert, M. (1996). New technology: old industrial sociology? *New Technology, Work and Employment, 11*(1), 3-15.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Vol.1.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action: Vol.2.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hanks, L. (1987). *The struggle for Black political empowerment in three Georgia counties.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

Hart, M. (1990a). Liberation through consciousness raising. In J. Mezirow and Associates. *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp.47-73). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hart, M. (1990b). Critical theory and beyond: Further perspectives on emancipatory education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 40*(3), 125-140.

Hart, M. (1992). *Working and educating for life.* London: Routledge.

Heaney, T. & A. Horton (1990). Reflective engagement for social change. In J. Mezirow and Associates. *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 74-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Honneth, A. (1993). *The critique of power.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Inglis, T. (1990). Could we all come down from the clouds again? Frank C. Laubach and World Literacy. *International Journal of University Adult Education, 29*(3), 1-22.

Inglis, T. (1994). Women and the struggle for daytime adult education in Ireland. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 26*(1), 50-66.

Kelly, M. (1994). *Critique and power.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kieffer, C. (1984). Citizen empowerment: a development perspective. In J. Rappaport & R. Hess (Eds.). *Studies in empowerment.* New York: Howarth Press.

Kitchner, K. & King, P. (1990). The reflective judgement model: Transforming assumptions about knowing. In J. Mezirow and Associates. *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 74-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kizolos, P. (1990). Crazy about empowerment. *Training, 27*(12), 47-56.

LeCompte, M. & deMarrais, K. (1992). The disempowering of empowerment: Out of the revolution and into the classroom. *Educational Foundations, 6*(3), 5-31.

Lyotard, J-F. (1992). Answering the question: What is postmodernism? In C. Jencks (Ed.). *The postmodern reader.* London: Academy Books.

Lyotard, J-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

McCabe, D. (1996). The best laid schemes o' TQM: strategy, politics and power. *New Technology, Work and Employment, 11*(1), 28-38.

McCarthy, T. (1994). The critique of inpure reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School. In M. Kelly (Ed.). *Critique and power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas debate* (pp. 243-282). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McLaren, P. & Tadeu de Silva, T. (1993). Decentering pedagogy: Critical literacy, resistance and the politics of memory. In P. McLaren and P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 47-89). London: Routledge.

Macedo, D. (1993). Literacy for stupidification: The pedagogy of big lies. *Harvard Educational Review, 63*(2), 183-206.

Marshall, J. (1989). Foucault and education. *Australian Journal of Education. 33*(2), 99-113.

Mezirow, J. (1989). Transformation theory and social action: A response to Collard and Law. *Adult Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 169-175.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow and Associates, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (pp.1-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding Transformation Theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4), 222-232.

Mezirow, J. (1995). Transformation theory of adult learning. In M. Welton (Ed.). *In defense of the lifeworld: Critical perspectives on adult learning* (pp.39-70). Albany, NY: State Univesity of New York.

O'Sullivan, D. (1993). *Commitment, educative action and adults.* Aldershot, England: Avebury.

Parsons, T. (1951). *The social system.* New York: The Free Press.

Parsons, T. (1967). *Sociological theory and modern society.* New York: Free Press.

Power, M. (1990). Modernism, postmodernism and organization. In J. Hassard and D. Pym (Eds.), *The theory and philosophy of organizations.* London: Routledge

Putnam, A. (1991). Empowerment: In search of a viable paradigm. *Performance Improvement Quarterly, 4*(4), 4-11.

Roth, I. (1990). Challenging habits of expectation. In J. Mezirow and Associates, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 116-132). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ryan, J. (1991). Observing and normalizing: Foucault, discipline and inequality in schooling. *The Journal of Educational Thought, 25*(2), 104-119.

Shor, I. & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education.* South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.

Solomon, B. (1976). *Black empowerment.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Tennant, M. (1993). Perspective transformation and adult development. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(1), 34-42.

Tisdell, E. (1993). Interlocking systems of power, privilege and oppression in adult higher education classes. *Adult Education Quarterly, 43*(4), 203-226.

Tuckman, A. (1995). Ideology, quality and TQM. In A. Wilkenson and H. Wilmot (Eds.), *Making quality critical* (pp.54-81). London: Routledge.

Villerreal, R. (1988). *Latino empowerment.* New York: Greenwood Press.

Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society.* In G. Roth and C. Wittich (Eds.), Berkeley: University of California Press.

Westwood, S. (1992). Power/knowledge: the politics of transformative research. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 24*(2), 191-198.

Zacharakis-Jutz, J. (1988). Post-Freirean adult education: A question of empowerment and power. *Adult Education Quarterly, 39*(1), 1-47.