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ABSTRACT

A theory, anchored in a socialist feminist perspective, is presented about the state and the education of women. Propositions of the theory are compared with data from a study of 31 international development agencies about the behavior of the state regarding the education of women. The study focused on basic education, defined as the first 4 or 5 years of regular primary education or the various forms of nonformal education addressed to adult women. The agencies comprised 17 multilateral, 7 bilateral (representing Canada, England, France, Italy, Sweden, the United States, and West Germany), and 7 foundations and semigovernment agencies. Data on the work of nongovernment agencies and women's groups were also included in the study. The empirical data support the position that the state will tend to make a rhetorical use of education as a means of improving the conditions of women but that it will neglect the design of effective and comprehensive programs to address womens' needs for an improved social order. The data also show that state agencies tend to address only those areas of knowledge that they consider essential to the family. Political action should be directed toward the state so that it provides funds for projects, but the form and content shaping the new projects will have to come from the women themselves. Appended are 6 notes and 28 references. (MLF)

THE STATE AND THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN: TOWARD A THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

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Why different social classes persistently derive different benefits from schooling is a critical question in the sociology of education. In trying to explain why individuals from low-income families tend to attain limited education and to enter university in low numbers compared to those in more economically advantaged groups, competing theories have been developed. These theories range from the attribution of negative values toward education among lower classes to the existence of cultural deprivation among these classes to the assertion that different social class positions lead to different costs and benefits of education (Hansen, 1986). A fourth set of explanations is found under class-domination theories according to which dominant social classes, mainly through actions by the state, shape the school experience it provides so that upper and middle classes find the setting and the messages more congruent with their social norms and thus tend to succeed in what is conventionally known as "academic performance." More recently, the question of differential benefits from education has extended from the consideration of social classes and ethnic groups to the analysis of female and male social groups.

Theories focusing on the state as the main explanatory or mediating agency between individuals and their schooling attainment have in common the assumption that the state--the set of government policies, institutions, and personnel that determine collective benefits and services and which in turn reflects the social forces that created it--is not neutral and that it operates mainly to represent the interests of those who command economic power in society. From this perspective, the

state was seen as an instrument that maintains existing hierarchies in society, promotes the acceptance of the dominant social order, and ensures that the citizens are socialized into willing acceptance of the dominant values (Bowles and Gintis, 1977). More recent theories of the state and education (e.g., Carnoy and Levin, 1985) argue that the state is not simply an agent of the dominant classes but rather possesses some autonomy and becomes an arena of "contradiction between the unequal relations underlying capitalist production and the democratic basis of the liberal democratic state" (p.4). This view, also shared by Ruggie (1984), is less deterministic than the original position in that it allows the possibility of coalitions among classes with diverse interests. It seeks to explain why states that are similar in nature (e.g., capitalist) may nonetheless produce different social policies. But this new version of the state is not without its critics. A well-known feminist, Catherine MacKinnon, considers that "The idea that the state is relatively autonomous, a kind of first among equals of social institutions, has the genius of appearing to take a stand on the issue of reciprocal constitution of state and society while straddling it" (1983, p. 642).

In this paper, I would like to present a theory about the state and education of women that is anchored in a socialist feminist perspective. My discussion will not assume merely a one-to-one correspondence between the state and patriarchal objectives. Following Poulantzas' (1973) conceptualization of the state as an agency capable of attaining a measure of autonomy,

the proposed theory does accept that, under some circumstances, a coalition of less powerful classes can shape state decisions in their favor. I will discuss the various propositions that such a theory would make about educational policies and practices pursued by the state and then compare these theoretical expectations with data derived from an empirical study. This study focused on basic education and examined the policies and practices of states in developed countries toward women in the Third World (Stromquist, 1986). I will conclude by identifying spaces that feminists can use to make education serve the needs of women.

Feminism and the State

As feminist theory has grown more sophisticated over the last 15 years, the state has become the object of attention in studies seeking to explain the persistence of gender subordination in societies that call themselves democratic and which are ostensibly doing their best to eliminate the differential behavior and consequences of schooling across social classes. There is no consensus about what the state can do for women, however, and it has even been asserted that feminism needs urgently to develop a theory of the state. Jaggar (1983) identifies four competing theories about the subordination and oppression women encounter in most societies. Of these, three discuss the state and attribute to it diverging roles in what they can and will do to transform gender and society.[1]

From the perspective known as "liberal feminism" the state is perceived as the product of multiple coalitions and thus to be

quite responsive to pressures from external actors. The main assumption within this perspective regarding the state is that it will respond to women's needs as these become more identified and articulated. The presumption is that when informed about social inequalities and aware of ways to change the schooling experience so that it benefits women, the state will undertake significant steps to put the new measures in place. As Jaggar sums it: "liberal feminists rest great hopes in educational reform" (1983, p. 149).

Although there have been advances for women in terms of educational expansion (particularly in developing countries where it was most needed) and greater access to nonconventional careers, women still benefit less than men from the formal education system. This is true in both developed and developing countries, even though the relative levels of education attained in these societies can be very different.[2]

Judging from the educational results thus far, liberal feminism seems to have underestimated the strength of forces opposed to any major advancement of women. The other feminist perspectives are in fact much more critical of the state. The second perspective, Marxist feminism, considers that the problem of women's inequality in society is real but a consequence of capitalism and its creation of class inequalities, which provide a material basis for the oppression of women (Jaggar, 1983, p. 223). As long as the social system remains linked to a capitalist form of production, this theory argues, the state will behave with "benign neglect" toward women. The state might take a stand against sexual inequalities and combat some of them but

will remain within the limits of a capitalist mode of production, which means that any reform that might drastically modify the structure of family--upon which a stable and disciplined labor force rests--will not be considered. Marxist feminism assumes that with a new state that incorporates the working class there will emerge a society that no longer needs to exploit the domestic work of women; ergo, schooling will be available equally to men and women and the latter will benefit significantly from it.

The third feminist perspective, socialist feminism, claims that a strong correspondence between the state and male power exists. It sees women's subordination as the product of both a capitalist logic of production and a patriarchal ideology, which defines man as the measure of all things and declares non-man as inferior.

> The functioning of the state both reflects and constructs the relations of power in society.... The state condenses the relations of power in society--which function through economic, sexual, and racial hierarchies. The ruling class, therefore, is represented as a bourgeois class, although it is simultaneously white and male. The capitalist class, as the ruling class in the state, is thus actually much more than capitalist, in that it represents and protects the patriarchal and white supremacist aspects of politics. (Eisenstein, 1984, p. 331.)

This perspective shares with Marxist feminism the view that the family is the "cornerstone of women's oppression" (Jaggar, 1983, pp. 336) and that it is in the state's interest to keep the family untouched because it is needed for the socialization into obedience and discipline of future generations of workers. But in contrast with Marxism, socialist feminism argues that insofar as

the state is at the same time patriarchal--i.e., based on an ideology that considers man superior to women--it will not offer real possibilities for a gender-free social order, even in countries operating under socialist modes of production.

In a position congruent with a socialist feminist perspective, Margherita Rendel maintains that the "reproduction of the population has always been of interest to states and that a large and healthy population has been seen as a source of strength both for peace and war" (1981, p. 19). She goes on to assert that the state is against suicide and abortion because these acts deprive it of the direct and indirect services of the individual. Historians endorsing the socialist feminist perspective, in turn, reject the view that women's rights have been won with the achievement of suffrage and education. Instead, they would argue that women's dependency continues today through state actions.

The question then becomes, why does the state persist in the subordination of women? Various reasons are advanced in the case of the capitalist state: (1) the domestic work of women in the home alleviates various political, administrative and practical problems confronting the state. Women's unpaid work (e.g., taking care of children, the sick, and the old) saves the government significant resources in public expenditures, (2) women help the state as intermediaries between state services and the family. For instance, taking children to the hospital and discussing problems with housing and social security officials saves a lot of time for men, and (3) because of the sexual division of labor, men dominate the process; policy making

becomes a process of conflict and accommodation between dominant and subordinate men: excluded at one point from the political process, women continue by inertia to be excluded from it. (Dale and Foster, 1986.) Another set of reasons rests on the "reserve of labor" notion, that holds that the sexual division of labor allows capitalism to have access to a cheap and flexible labor force (Hartmann, 1979).

Given these material advantages to keeping women under subordination, a socialist feminist perspective would not expect the state to undertake significant measures to help women. Nonetheless, the state would be considered a target for reform.

The State and Education

With the emergence of democracy as a widely shared value if not reality, the school has been given the task of democratizing society by making itself available to all members of society and subsequently letting merit emerge as the main basis for the distribution of rewards and prestige. Shrewd observers of the educational process realize, however, that the school, as the state, operates at two levels: manifest--advocating liberalism and formalistic equality, and latent--endorsing patriarchy (see, for instance, Willis, 1977).

The literature on the role of the state in education which draws from Marxism (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 1977; Carnoy and Levin, 1985) takes production or work as the most important dimension of social life. This perspective emphasizes the need for the state to have control over the reproduction of the labor

force by making sure that individuals from different classes are taught to accept different social and occupational fates.

Another body of literature, focusing on the relationship between power and knowledge rather than on the relation between the state and education, argues that forms of domination can exist outside the confines of the labor process and that today the cultural realm--particularly mass-cultural institutions such as the schools--serves as both a determinant and a fundamental agent of social consciousness. This second view, which brings to the fore the importance of ideology, is particularly useful to the development of a feminist theory of the state and the education of women.[3]

The role of the state in the production and legitimation of knowledge is well accepted today. Knowledge is essentially a political activity because it provides the grounds for the use of persuasion thus making it less necessary to resort to force to ensure compliance, which is a relatively expensive mechanism in terms of the resources (weapons and lives) it consumes. The state therefore keeps a constant monitoring of the educational system and ensures that this setting in fact contributes to the acceptance of both the state norms and the attribution of legitimacy to the state. This monitoring implies control over the persons who become teachers and over the type of knowledge that is determined "appropriate" and "correct". How does the state control the persons who become teachers? And if so many teachers, particularly at the primary educational level, are women, why is it that these persons do not challenge the state?

Expansion of female teachers at primary school levels has

indeed occurred but it has coincided with a characterization of primary education as linked not only with knowledge transmittal but also with the provision of nurturance and physical care. Besides, people become teachers only after credentialing, a process which ensures that individuals with "proper" training and value espousal become teachers. Further, the process of schooling involves much more cooptation into rather than challenging the social system. It makes little difference that most of the teachers are women because most teachers, regardless of sex, are imbued with an ideology that justifies the present social order.

But how does the state control the production of knowledge? According to Weiler (1983), the state because of its power is in a position to confer status to some forms of knowledge over others. It does so through three mechanisms: by offering credentials in some fields for some occupations--the idea being that credentialed occupations acquire more prestige than those which are not; by allocating research funding for some subjects considered "worthy of study"--thus eliminating others as unimportant; and by making technical and scientific knowledge important and then restricting access to these fields.

Within the schools themselves, various forms of knowledge control related to gender are in effect. Kelly and Nihlen identify the strategy of "normalization." It consists of depicting women essentially in domestic responsibilities and in portraying a nuclear family in which the father works and the mother takes care of the children. This image and message,

transmitted through many of the textbooks, inculcates among students the notion that this is the "normal" state of affairs.[4] Another instance of normalization is the enforced leaves for pregnant teachers, which thus "normalize" the notion that maternity and work are incompatible, and the limited number of women principals and superintendents, which normalizes the notion that leadership is male (Kelly and Nihlen, 1982, p. 169). A second strategy of knowledge control within the classroom refers to the "endorsement of the status quo" or conversely the "pushing aside of reality." This means no discussion of controversial issues such as prostitution, ERA legislation, and lesbianism, or nontreatment within the established curriculum of issues that do not fit the existing ideology, such as working mothers, non-payment of alimony, and salary differentials among men and women. These issues may be discussed now and then but the exceptions arise as instances of spontaneous discussion. Evidence that students are treated differentially by gender, with males receiving more punishment but also more academic attention from teachers and girls being encouraged to act passively, is well documented in the literature (see review by Levy, 1972). Girls are also encouraged to go into traditional fields, particularly in capitalist countries (Shafer, 1976) and teachers hold strong sex-role expectations regarding the students (Evans, 1982). Although instances of resistance--of varying levels of political significance--by female students to these messages and treatments have been identified (Anyon, 1983; Davies, 1983; Gaskell, 1983), the overwhelming conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that a great deal of knowledge control occurs within classrooms

and that this control favors men over women.

Theory about the State and the Education of Women

I take as a point of departure the notion that the state, because of its patriarchal nature, has identified only one means of organizing society. This organization of society is based on the family as the basic structural unit and holds it as the main setting for the reproduction of three conditions: the reproduction of the labor force (the biological creation of individuals), the reproduction of beliefs about the existing social order (the reproduction of dominant ideologies, including those about free enterprise), and the reproduction of existing gender differences, which call for a division of labor in which women are assigned the role of family keepers and child reproducers. As Rowbotham (1973) contends, the state keeps women morally responsible for children. This in turn leads the state to seek a permanent link between women and their families.

Since the state assigns such a high value to the family, it follows that the school system will be used to buttress the family. This means that the state will extoll the virtues of the present social and sexual division of labor and will not support educational programs whose content will attack or even question the family, will not teach young minds to question the existence of gender differences in society, and will continue to favor the education of men--the official breadwinners. At the same time, since the capitalist state considers the market a key actor in the shaping of the social order, women will be taught through the school to develop consumption patterns that ensure the survival

of the market.

A critical view of the state's role in the education of women would lead feminist researchers to go beyond the mere expansion of schooling and to examine the curriculum, textbooks, and instructional practices to detect forms in which schooling reinforces women's oppression. It would lead them to look behind the formal curriculum to other experiences within the school that promote the reproduction of gender differences, either by failing to counter the gender-based socialization in the family or by conveying subtle but still powerful messages of gender asymmetry.

Some Basic Theoretical Propositions

The theoretical propositions below seek to link state policies and practice on education to the subordination of women, but they also admit an intersection with class attributes.

1. Because schools are expected to deliver the democratic promise of equal opportunity, the state will endorse educational policies that recognize the need to improve women's education and to provide equal opportunity for male and female students.

2. Regardless of social class, ethnicity, and religion, the state will engage in the sexual conditioning of all women into values of femininity and domesticity, and the educational system will be used to perform this function.

3. Tied to the democratic creed, the state will engage in the expansion of its educational services but this expansion will have less to do with gender equality than with the training of women to become efficient mothers and home managers, as well as generous consumers of market-produced goods.

4. Since the state sees the education of women as linked to their better performance in the domestic sphere, the levels of education the state will promote will be lower for women than for men. Therefore, there will be a tendency to see problems when women do not attain literacy or primary education, but a more relaxed attitude will be adopted regarding secondary schooling and particulary higher education.

5. Programs providing women with empowerment skills--i.e., enabling them to think of themselves as powerful or as agents of change--will not be offered by the schools but by alternative agencies and usually in confrontation with the state.

6. Education systems will not engage in gender consciousness approaches, teaching women of their subordinate position in a male dominated society. In fact, consciousness raising might be delegitimized by not being considered scientific enough.

7. Countries in which the working class has attained successful incorporation into the state will tend to benefit women. The educational policies of these states might therefore address the needs of women by providing more feminist programs and assigning sufficient resources to them.

8. States that because of internal conditions have assumed a more egalitarian position toward women will reflect this position in the adoption of pro-women policies in their foreign aid. Thus, there will be variation in the level of commitment of development agencies to women's education depending on the state these agencies represent.

9. States which are not particularly willing to advance the interests of women will sometimes fund progressive programs as a result of bureaucratic accidents, such as the lack of intimate knowledge of actual recipient behaviors.

10. The best programs to advance the interests of women will tend to be those outside the state. These programs will be either in the hands of non-government agencies (NGOs) or women-run organizations.

Some Empirical Evidence

A study of 31 international development agencies provides evidence to test the behavior of the state regarding the education of women. The study focused on basic education, which was defined as the first four or five years of regular primary education (i.e., young students) or the various forms of nonformal education addressed to adult women. The agencies comprised 17 multilateral, 7 bilateral (representing Canada, England, France, Italy, Sweden, the U.S., and West Germany), and 7 foundations and semi-government agencies. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews and official agency documents and reports. To further understand the behavior of the state toward women, data on the work of NGOs and women's groups were included in the study; these data were also gathered through interviews and the reading of these agencies' documents.

Two assumptions are made in this study. First, that the behavior of the development agencies is a faithful reflection of the interests of the state or states they represent. Second, that although in this case we are examining the behavior of the

developed-country state toward women in Third World countries, there is little reason to assume that this behavior is different from the behavior it would adopt toward its own female citizens. The assumption is that the state--through its agencies--will display the same gender ideologies and behaviors abroad that it displays at home. It should be underscored, however, that since development agencies in general seek to alleviate the problems of poverty, the women on which these agencies focus are from low-income rural and urban areas; therefore, the validation (or lack thereof) provided by the data below refers only to one social class of women.

1. Policies toward Women

Most of the 31 agencies were found to have policy statements regarding women and national development, yet these policies tend to be brief paragraphs offering little guidance for action. Only three of these agencies (AID, SIDA, and CIDA--the U.S., Swedish, and Canadian bilateral agencies, respectively) have produced extended documents in the form of policy papers on the question of women and development.

Surprisingly, the reference to basic education and women appears minimally in policy statements. The AID paper on its education sector strategy does not explicitly address women except to recommend that "an educational component added to a maternal-child health or nutrition project for pre-school children may be [tried as] an experimental innovation in some country programs." The CIDA document is written at a high level of generality and does not mention specific areas such as education. The SIDA policy paper, the longest of all three with

53 pages, asserts that education for women is one of the most sensible instruments for national development and identifies as crucial problems those of unequal access to schooling for girls and women and the existence of differential teacher treatment of girls and boys.

Only two other agencies in the group offer policy statements about women and basic education. These are UNESCO and UNICEF, agencies that by organizational mandate are supposed to address educational issues. UNESCO proposes to identify obstacles to access and retention of women in the formal education system (and thus to address the question of equality of educational opportunity). UNICEF calls for nonformal education training for women, particularly in "occupational skill training that holds prospects for attaining jobs and cash earnings." Yet, the only type of formal education it offers for women is limited to nutrition education.

The agency with the largest investments in education, the World Bank, has not produced an educational policy statement since 1980. Its education sector policy paper of that date, however, urges the adoption of compensatory measures, especially for the persistent disparity of male and female school enrollment.

Summarizing the educational policy position of these agencies, one is struck by their weak reference to women. In the few cases where there is a reference to women, this attention is often justified on the basis of their reproductive roles and only incipiently on the basis of their productive roles. The

question of equal opportunity for women is mentioned only in limited instances.

Going back to our original propositions on the state and the education of women, proposition 1 is supported in that we find state endorsement of the need for women's education, although these policies are often brief and vague.

2. Conditioning Women into Values of Femininity and Domesticity

Matching the limited discussion of women evident in the policy statements, the educational programs sponsored by the international agencies generally do not identify beneficiaries by gender.

Women do not figure prominently in the development of country programs, which represent the bulk of international cooperation assistance. Women as specific targets for basic education are more likely to emerge in nonformal rather than formal types of education. Also, concern for women is more likely to emerge in initiatives proposed by NGOs than in those proposed by state agencies.

Agency support for primary education involves the construction of new facilities; the provision of supplies and schol equipment; and assistance in teacher training, book production, and curriculum design. Yet, this support is seldom linked to specific strategies for target groups, particularly women.

In the few cases of formal education in which attention is paid to women, they are expected to benefit by enrolling in traditionally female courses such as health, nutrition, and

cooking. The only subject matters concerning women that are considered in agency projects supporting curriculum activities are population education and health. UNICEF is promoting the incorporation of health components in numerous school systems in developing countries. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities promotes a population curriculum that discusses population trends, family life and human sexuality, and the impact of population on the environment.

It is in the area of nonformal education that support for women shows an even clearer bias in favor of women's responsibilities at home and to children. Much of the training by agencies such as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Health Organization, AID, and UNICEF covers topics such as health, nutrition, family planning, water use, sanitation, infant feeding, and food preparation. These training programs are attended mostly by women. Even in the case of progressive agencies such as the Canadian CIDA, a large portion of women-oriented projects goes to training in skills such as sewing, knitting, crafts, and home economics.

Some agencies such as the Food and Agricultural Organization and UNICEF continue to offer home economic activities only for women, but they report having redefined these programs to include agricultural extension, crops and animal raising, and uses of fuel energy.

Comparing the training of women in the conventional fields identified above with those of a less traditional nature such as agricultural training or industrial skills, it is evident that

the agencies emphasize the provision of programs that promote the values of domesticity among the participant women. Overall, proposition 2 receives wide confirmation.

3. Expanding the Educational Services

The educational projects developed by the agencies generally address the expansion of the educational system. But, as noted above, the emphasis is on serving boys and girls indiscriminately.

The assumption, widely shared among development agencies, is that the expansion of educational facilities will help students of both sexes. But, since women face special problems attending schooling due to their domestic work and to cultural norms constraining their participation, it can be argued that this expansion will benefit boys more than girls. In addition, this expansion is not being accompanied by measures that will change the content of messages and treatments of male and female students. The removal of gender stereotypes from textbooks, the retraining of teachers on gender issues, and the reshaping of curricula to eliminate gender-typed courses are simply not being considered.

There are very few evaluations of the extent to which school expansion projects by these agencies actually benefit girls. One of these studies, focusing on World Bank projects having a primary education component, found that while 25 of 68 projects attempted to promote equality of opportunity, "reference to providing for an increase in female enrollment occurred in eight cases and, in three of these, a campaign to encourage girls to

attend school was considered necessary" (Romain, 1985, p. 9). These findings suggest that scant attention is given to the equal opportunity of women and that few strategies are actually implemented to ensure that females do benefit from the available facilities.

Expansion of educational facilities without an accompanying questioning of gender messages is likely to favor the maintenance of traditional roles assigned to women. Although the data do not allow us to determine to what extent female students are also being inducted as consumers, they do show that conventional female roles are not being challenged.

The behavior of the development agencies does not disprove the performance anticipated in proposition 3. Rather, when representing their states in other countries, these agencies seem to adopt positions that are even weaker in this respect than the ones they would adopt in their own societies.

4. Emphasizing Lower rather than Higher Levels of Education

The agencies in the study were consensual in their belief that educational problems related to women existed when the developing countries were not able to provide access to education at the primary level. Reference thus was made to countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, where serious disparities exist between men and women at the primary education levels. In contrast, there was a marked tendency to consider that in countries where the high school enrollment of girls was about on par with that of boys there were no educational problems affecting women. By this criterion, many Latin American countries were judged by agency personnel as "having solved" the

problem of women's equality of opportunity in education. Thus a recent report by the World Bank maintains that "gender differences in the size of the primary schooled population for Latin America and East Asia are low enough to suggest that the issue of gender inequality may be moot" (Horn and Arriagada, 1986, p 21).

The question of higher education, which plays such an important role in determining access to high-status occupations, is not seen as problematic even though the agencies are well aware that in many cases, particularly in South Asia and Africa, female enrollment represents at best one-third of the university enrollment (for national educational statistics by gender across all three levels of education see Sivard, 1985).

This finding is congruent with the theoretical expectation expressed in proposition 4 to the effect that women's education will be valued by the state insofar as it helps to produce women that can perform well as domestic managers and mothers. Since the levels of education required for these tasks are not high, agencies (and the states they represent) will be satisfied with enabling women simply to attain primary levels of education.

5. Empowerment in Educational Programs

The programs sponsored by the development agencies seldom address the questions of leadership and organization skills which can help women become more active and effective as social actors. The average educational program for women is defined in such a way as to convey one narrow skill or experience, usually linked to the role of women as mothers and child caretakers.

Only three agencies in the study--Ford, Carnegie, and the Inter American Foundation, all private foundations--were found to sponsor programs that convey civic education and human and political rights information for women. These programs include leadership training, public speaking, problem solving, and knowledge about existing laws concerning marriage, inheritance, and employment.[5]

Overall, the data support the expectations expressed in proposition 5.

6. Gender-consciousness in Educational Programs

Consciousness-raising, defined as the "collective critical reconstruction of the meaning of women's social experience, as women live through it" (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 543), is widely accepted as the fundamental feminist method for liberation.

And yet the development agencies, with few exceptions, shy away from sponsoring programs that discuss gender practices and ideologies and how these affect the development of gender identities. Agency personnel even manifested a strong reluctance to deal with issues such as sex stereotypes in either the curriculum or textbooks, adducing that these were "too delicate a question" or that it was unlikely that developing countries, especially those requesting educational loans, would "want to borrow money at 10% interest to take stereotypes out of books."

However, many gender awareness-raising activities do go on. They are usually conducted by NGOs, both international and national, and by church organizations. Curiously, these activities are also supported to a large extent by the development agencies, but agency personnel--with rare

exceptions--do not seem to be aware of them.

The data supports the expectation expressed in proposition 6 to the effect that gender-consciousness will not emerge in state-funded programs. However, to the extent that the development agencies channel funds outside the state, i.e., give grants to groups outside the bureaucracies of the developing countries, these programs do emerge. The data, on the other hand, do not address to what extent consciousness-raising has been deligitimized by the development agencies.

7. Programs in States with Working Class Participation

The hypothesis that states with working class participation would develop educational policies highly favorable to women cannot be tested with the existing data, since development agencies do not serve domestic constituencies. Data from other state agencies will have to be used to examine proposition 7.

8. The Match between the State and its Provision of Foreign Aid

Most of the agencies in the study took a hands-off attitude toward women and education, meaning by this that they did not take it upon themselves to promote the education of women if the developing country being supported did not express an interest in addressing this issue. The lack of an advocacy position in favor of women was justified by the agencies on the grounds of "neutrality," "nonintervention in internal affairs," and their unwillingness to "impose foreign values."

The only agencies in the sample which did take a position in favor of women were SIDA and SAREC, the Swedish bilateral agencies for development and research, respectively, and UNICEF.

SAREC employs what it calls "a concerned participation strategy"; this involves a dialogue between personnel from the Swedish agency and those of the developing country where, according to SAREC officials, "we inform them of our point of view." This position is far from accidental. Sweden is a country where labor groups have been successfully incorporated into the state (Ruggie, 1984). In consequence, it has developed legislation that in protecting the category of workers also protects women. On the other hand, England--a country where "a fundamental cleavage" exists between labor and the state, is a country where workers have not benefited from comprehensive labor legislation and where women "have remained a particularistic claimant, one among many" (Ruggie, 1984). ODA, the bilateral English agency, was found in the study to be one of the most uncommitted to women. However, the British Commonwealth--a conglomeration of states linked to England by ex-colonial and cultural ties--has adopted a position more favorable to women. This position seems to have been shaped in part by the presence in that organization of countries where women have traditionally been a strong social force, such as in the Caribbean.

The other bilateral agencies in the study, representing the U.S., Canada, France, West Germany, and Italy, varied in their degree of support for women--some having more explicit policies and more programs than others--but they shared a lack of advocacy for women's issues. These are all countries where the domestic situation of women is still subordinate to that of men, judging from differential access to income, occupational status, and

political power. Further, three of these countries (West Germany, Italy, and the U.S.) have signed but not ratified the U.N. Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (Sivard, 1985).

UNICEF's advocacy position, the only one among the 16 multilateral agencies, is partly explained by its official mandate to focus on women. What is unexpected in this agency, however, is its support of women beyond their role as mothers and child caretakers to cover projects that seek to give women financial autonomy through the generation of income.

The behavior of agencies regarding women does reflect the nature of the state they represent. Exceptions to this pattern exist but are very few. The evidence from the study suggests that proposition 8 is valid.

9. The Support of Progressive Women's Programs by Conservative States

Since state bureaucracies are complex, develop numerous projects, and disburse large amounts of funds, imperfect and incomplete knowledge exists. This knowledge gap between what recipients are believed to do and what they actually do creates a space where progressive forces, particularly NGOs and women-run organizations, are able to administer programs that are much more sensitive to women's needs by becoming not only multidimensional but also by offering supportive services for their participation. Although these programs emerge only in the area of nonformal education, since the state has a monopoly over formal education, quite a few women benefit.

During the interviews with personnel of development

agencies, it was not uncommon to find administrators who reported that they would not, or did not support consciousness-raising when in fact--from talking to some of the recipient organizations--it was clear that they did. These discrepancies can be interpreted as accidental spaces likely to emerge in large bureaucracies but which do not represent the intended objectives of the state. Many of these spaces are created because a few female progressive officials in the development agencies make a deliberate effort to fund them. Proposition 9 is validated by the empirical evidence and this suggests that organizational factors, as opposed to ideological ones, affect significantly both de-facto policy and policy implementation.

10. The Provision of Education by NGOs and Women's Groups

There is a clear distinction between programs offered by the state and those offered by NGOs and women's groups. Although the NGOs are not a homogeneous group and some of them hold traditional attitudes toward women, by and large, these organizations provide programs to women that integrate various kinds of knowledge and skills. In a few cases, budget permitting, these organizations also try to provide women with supportive services--such as childcare--so that women may participate. In contrast, state-designed programs for women are usually narrowly defined, center on the provision of one or two skills only, and fail to discuss the condition of women.

Initiatives by international NGOs such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the Women's International Tribune Centre, the Overseas Education Fund, and ISIS (Women's Information and Communication Service, International), have been

essential in providing women with the skills not only for the generation of income but also with knowledge about gender, family and labor legislation, and social and economic conditions. Within numerous countries, it has been through the work of national NGOs that women have received critical knowledge about their conditions of subordination at home, in the workplace, in their sexuality. Women-run NGOs in Colombia, Brazil, the Philippines, Peru, the Caribbean, and Nigeria have initiated and implemented nonformal educational activities dealing with diverse but nonetheless important issues such as labor rights for women in the domestic service (a major source of women's work in the informal sector), "legal literacy campaigns," and information about women's sexuality. Often with a minimum of economic resources and limited staff, these NGOs have been able to gain access to destitute women, conduct critical tasks, and attain goals not easily matched by state efforts.[6]

Proposition 10, from the evidence on the constrasting features between education programs offered by the state and those offered by NGOs and women's groups is validated.

Conclusions

I have advanced and tested several preliminary propositions of a theory about the state role in the education of women. As we have seen, the empirical data examined herein support the position that the state will tend to make a rhetorical use of education as a means of improving the condition of women but that it will neglect the design of effective and comprehensive programs to address their needs for an improved social order. The

data also show that state agencies tend to address only those areas of knowledge that they consider essential to the family; thus, they will seek to give women the knowledge to improve their performance first of all as mothers and home managers. The empirical evidence, however, refers only to international development agencies. I hope that the theoretical propositions identified above will be considered in the examination of other state agencies in the future.

It should be observed that state behaviors toward women--and other groups--tend to respond to needs that vary according to historical periods. We know that during wartime, the state has provided women with skills so that they could replace men in factories and other production settings. At present, the need for the incorporation of women into the formal labor force is less pressing (and may even be perceived as creating problems outside the family, such as increased unemployment).

The poor performance of the state in educational policy and practice should be subjected to close scrutinity by feminists, since it is obvious that the state does not give priority to the needs women have for the creation of an improved social order. Feminists should certainly put pressure on the state to improve its performance. On the other hand, major initiatives to improve the education of women, albeit only in the nonformal educational arena, will come from the women themselves. The state should be targeted so that it provides funds for projects, but the form and content shaping the new projects will have to come from the oppressed people themselves, in this case the women.

In closing I should underscore that the purpose of this paper is not exclusively academic. Rather, it is based on the conviction that women must engage in disciplined collective activity and that this activity will be all the more successfully carried out if preceded by a correct theoretical understanding. As Mary O'Brien has remarked (1981), we still need theories to express the historical and present realities of female experience and to link that experience to women's oppression and class struggle.

NOTES

[1] A fourth feminist theory, radical feminism, locates the site of women's oppression in sexuality. Therefore, it concentrates its efforts on women's liberation through the transformation of sexual relations (particularly child bearing) and the creation of new social values, which include the absence of institutionalized relations of power and domination and the creation of a "womanculture" that would do away with bureaucracy and make the state unnecessary (see Jaggar, pp. 249-260).

[2] Thus, gender disparities can be as favorable to women as in Mongolia, which claims 144 women for every 100 men enrolled in the tertiary system, or as detrimental to women as in the Arab Republic of Yemen, where only 14 women are enrolled for every 100 at the primary and secondary levels (Sivard, 1985, pp. 23-23).

[3] These arguments are developed by various exponents of the Frankfurt school of critical theory. For a discussion of some of their main ideas see Giroux, 1983.

[4] The presence of gender stereotypes in textbooks has been detected in numerous studies, based both in developed and developing countries. For a review of some of these studies, see the national cases studies sponsored by UNESCO since 1980.

[5] Many state agencies, particularly AID, are encouraging the implementation of income-generating projects among women. The acquisition of financial resources by women is being advocated as a means of providing them with autonomy and greater self-esteem. Income-generating projects, however, tend to be chronically underfunded and participants in these projects are not given the information that would allow them to question existing patterns of gender subordination. In consequence, these programs do not lead to "empowerment" but rather to minor increases in the women's productivity.

[6] Further supporting the claim that the state and NGOs tend to run different types of programs for women is a review of nine welfare programs in Peru with massive participation of low-income urban women. While all programs gave attention to basic human needs, those programs run by either the local government or women's groups tended to give much more importance to organizational training and even to consciousness raising (Chueca, 1985).

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