CORPORATE POWER AND THE MARKET:
AUTOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE AND THE
AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

by

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CORPORATE POWER AND THE MARKET:

AUTOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE AND THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

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This dissertation is an examination of the sociological debate over the nature of corporate power and the market for consumer goods in modern society. Two sociological theoretical positions, the pluralist/functionalist and the elite/class, are compared and contrasted with respect to this issue. They are then critically tested by applying them to the automobile industry and the development of the meanings and physical shape of the automobile, in particular, the controversial meanings and designs associated with those non-transportation themes subsumed under the notion of "performance."

In comparing and contrasting the pluralist/functionalist and the elite/class theories three basic conceptual areas must be examined: (1) the nature of power and its exercise; (2) the nature of corporate behaviour; and (3) the nature of the market and consumption in modern society. The pluralist/functionalist position depicts corporate power as well socialized and externally controlled whereas the elite/class position depicts a corporate elite/ruling corporate class able to control the political arena and the market. Empirical research has done little to resolve this debate. It is suggested that part of this loggerhead is due to the inadequate conception of power which underlies these positions. This conception is individualistic and limited in its scope. This is particularly problematic for the elite/class perspective because much of what it describes as corporate power is not consistent with this basic concept. A more sociological

conception of power is proposed to comprehend this description based upon the works of Steven Lukes, Tom Baumgartner et al., and Bernd Balduš. Termed the meta-power view it conceives of power as the exercise of relational control, that is, the ability to structure social relationships in an interaction system by manipulating action possibilities, reward structures, and orientations. This conception is applicable to the collective actions of organizations and institutions. A number of power strategies are discussed and special attention given to the strategy of the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns.

Corporate behaviour is conceptualized in terms of the model of organizations in action developed by James Thompson. Both theoretical positions are applied to this model and the respective views of corporate behaviour in the market discussed. Both positions are also examined regarding their similar views of the market as a major social location for the expression of individual freedom, creativity, status, etc. Their differences with respect to the role of culture in determining human needs and their expression, and the role of advertising are discussed.

The two positions are applied to the American automobile industry and the development of the automobile. Hypotheses are derived from each predicting the nature of the interaction between automobile manufacturers and consumers with respect to the determination of automotive design and meaning. These were tested using secondary sources: The meta-power view was supported. It was found that manufacturers exercised relational control over the market by selectively emphasizing and developing automotive designs and meanings which measured high in the dimensions of exclusiveness, machismo, styling, ergonomics and reputation. Other dimensions such as safety, technology, economy, functionalism, and durability were measured low in emphasis and development. The dimension of machismo which contains the themes of power, performance, speed, masculinity has proven to be a particularly problematic automotive dimension. These performance themes have

been the subject of increasing public concern and criticism, particularly since World War II. Parallel with this criticism has developed a subculture known as hot rodding which utilizes the automobile as a physical and symbolic resource to express performance and machismo values and motives, as well as others such as rebellion, freedom, hedonism, and action-seeking. Originally viewed as a deviant and dangerous minority, by the 1960s it had achieved a degree of social respectability as a commercial sport. To explain the machismo and performance content of American automotive design, several hypotheses were derived from each theoretical position regarding the nature of the relationship between the auto manufacturers and hot rodders. They were tested by assessing the attitudes of the manufacturers and the public toward hot rodding through a content analysis and a historical analysis of the relationship in question over the postwar period to 1968. It was found that hot rodding functioned as a complementary behaviour pattern which was selectively incorporated and supported by the industry. This incorporation was based upon certain structural considerations and priorities of the manufacturers in their efforts to reduce demand uncertainty for their products. In the 1950s hot rod symbolism was incorporated into design and advertising aimed at middle class consumers by framing it in a context of comfort and controlled expression. In the 1960s such symbolism was no longer contained within the middle class context but stood on its own. Hot rod races were used to legitimize horsepower increases and to "proxy" durability and progress. Hot rodding was also viewed as a means of tapping the youth market. It was supported directly and indirectly by the manufacturers at various levels. Without this support and without the increasingly powerful automobiles provided by the industry, hot rodding would not have developed into the market or the spectacular sport it has. The performance market of the 1960s is thus a structured outcome of the industry's actions in the 1950s to develop and incorporate hot rodding.

This disserations shows the utility of the conception of power in terms of meta-power and relational control. The emphasis on structural variables and interaction systems provides a sociological orientation to power that is missing in the predominant approaches to power. As such it is able to comprehend situation as involving the exercise of power which would not be considered as such by the traditional approach. This enables the terms of reference to be expanded and a more adequate representation of social reality to be comprehended in sociological analysis.

To the memory of my Father

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is an examination of the sociological debate over the nature of corporate power and the market for consumer goods in modern society. Two sociological theoretical positions, the pluralist/functionalist and the elite/class, are compared and contrasted with respect to this issue. They are then critically tested by applying them to the automobile industry and the development of the meanings and physical shape of the automobile, in particular, the controversial meanings and designs associated with those non-transportation themes subsumed under the notion of "performance".

In comparing and contrasting the pluralist/functionalist and the elite/class theories three basic conceptual areas must be examined: (1) the nature of power and its exercise; (2) the nature of corporate behaviour; and (3) the nature of the market and consumption in modern society. The pluralist/functionalist position depicts corporate power as well socialized and externally controlled whereas the elite/class position depicts a corporate elite/ruling corporate class able to control the political arena and the market. Empirical research has done little to resolve this debate. It is suggested that part of this loggerhead is due to the inadequate conception of power which underlies these positions. This conception is in-

dividualistic and limited in its scope. This is particularly problematic for the elite/class perspective because much of what it describes as corporate power is not consistent with this basic concept. A more sociological conception of power is proposed to comprehend this description based upon the works of Steven Lukes, Tom Baumgartner et al., and Bernd Balduş. Termed the meta-power view it conceives of power as the exercise of relational control, that is, the ability to structure social relationships in an interaction system by manipulating action possibilities, reward structures, and orientations. This conception is applicable to the collective actions of organizations and institutions. A number of power strategies are discussed and special attention given to the strategy of the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns.

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the relationship in question over the postwar period to 1968. It was found that hot rodding functioned as a complementary behaviour pattern which was selectively incorporated and supported by the industry. This incorporation was based upon certain structural considerations and priorities of the manufacturers in their efforts to reduce demand uncertainty for their products. In the 1950s hot rod symbolism was incorporated into design and advertising aimed at middle class consumers by framing it in a context of comfort and controlled expression. In the 1960s such symbolism was no longer contained within the middle class context but stood on its own. Hot rod races were used to legitimize horsepower increases and to "proxy" durability and progress. Hot rodding was also viewed as a means of tapping the youth market. It was supported directly and indirectly by the manufacturers at various levels. Without this support and without the increasingly powerful automobiles provided by the industry, hot rodding would not have been developed into the market or the spectacular sport it has. The performance market of the 1960s is thus a structured outcome of the industry's actions in the 1950s to develop and incorporate hot rodding.

This dissertation shows the utility of the conception of power in terms of meta-power and relational control. The emphasis on structural variables and interaction systems provides a sociological orientation to power that is missing in the predominant approaches to power. As such it is able to comprehend situations as involving the exercise of power which

would not be considered as such by the traditional approach. This enables the terms of reference to be expanded and a more adequate representation of social reality to be comprehended in sociological analysis.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the end of the second world war the corporate form has emerged as the characteristic institution of American society. Its rise has rendered irrelevant time-honored theories of politics and economics, and its explosive growth has created new breeds of men whose behaviour can no longer be accounted for by conventional rules of conduct (Hacker, 1964a:1).

The development of the corporate form as the dominant type of business organization in modern society has resulted in an increasing concentration of economic resources in the hands of the relatively few persons who head the major corporations. This concentration has aroused considerable concern among social scientists about the effects of such concentration and the base of power it provides. Much attention has been given to the internal working of corporations in such areas as the effectiveness of corporate bureaucratic structures and the quality of work experience within these structures. But the central sociological concern with corporate power per se has been on the relationship between corporations and their social and political environments. The question most frequently asked is whether the power centered in corporations is exercised in a responsible manner which is accountable to the community. Most discussion and research on this question has dealt with the issues of the distribution of power in society, the supposed transition in corporate control from ownership to salaried manager, and the effectiveness of external constraints

on corporate actions.

In sociological discussions, these issues have tended to split between the two major theoretical perspectives, taking the form of a debate between the traditional pluralist and structural-functionalist orientation and the conflict/Marxist orientation. Pluralists and functionalists see the exercise of corporate power as basically responsible to the community and in harmony with its values and interests. When and if that power is not used effectively and efficiently to achieve those values and interests, is used to achieve interests not in the public good, then the community through political and legal means and through the market is able to constrain and control those actions and bring them into line. Conflict theorists and Marxists, on the other hand, have argued that the relatively few persons who control the corporations are able to pursue their particular, limited interests with little regard for public goals and welfare, and to resist, neutralize, and even direct the political process in its efforts at regulation.

A further issue, much debated but little researched by sociologists, is whether or not corporate business enterprises manipulate consumer demand and control the market for their products. It is this issue which is the subject of this dissertation. Of course, the sociological discussion of this issue is characterized by the basic theoretical disagreement noted above. The pluralist/functionalist position argues that corporate behaviour in the market is limited and in fact controlled by consumers. Consumers determine their needs for particular goods and services and express these needs as

various demands in the market. Corporate producers can only respond to these demands by competing to supply the goods and services which will satisfy them. The conflict and Marxist position (which will be referred to as the elite/class position) argues that corporations are able to subvert this consumer sovereignty by lessening competition and manipulating demand to their advantage with little regard for social benefits. According to the strongest statement of this position, corporate domination and control of the market is virtually complete: consumers are told what to consume, when, how, and at what price. They are given shoddy and inefficient goods on top of it. From this point of view corporations are instruments used by a powerful elite or a capitalist ruling class to dominate and control society in its own interests.

This dissertation will examine both of these positions and their conceptual interpretations of the nature of power, the nature of corporate behaviour, and the nature of the market and consumption. In the process, a conception of power will be proposed which is more consistent with the description presented by the elite/class position. This conception will be termed the meta-power view. A more adequate conception of corporate behaviour will be presented, and the symbolic nature of the market explored. The pluralist/functionalist theory will be critically tested against the elite/class position supplemented by the meta-power view. This test will consist of the application of the two theories to a case study of the market for automobiles and the relationships between the automobile industry and consumers. There is little need to docu-

ment the importance of the automobile and its industry to the economic, political and social life of North American society.¹ The automobile is the second largest single purchase, next to housing, that most persons ever make. It is a product that provides many consumer benefits and satisfactions, but it is also involved in numerous physical and social negatives (such as accidents, pollution, congestion, etc.). The automobile industry is often viewed as the model of corporate organization and operation. Galbraith based his analysis of The New Industrial State upon it. General Motors in particular often is cited as the model of a decentralized corporate structure which is efficient and effective (Perrow, 1972). The Ford Motor Company was specifically patterned after GM when Henry Ford II took it over at the end of World War II.

The focus of this test will be the social process by which the automobile is constituted as a cultural and physical form, that is, the manner in which the automobile comes to have the particular meanings and physical characteristics it has at any given time. One significant aspect of this "content" will be selected for analysis as a further test of the two positions. This aspect is the meanings and characteristics associated with themes of performance, power, speed, and machismo. These themes as used in promotional activities and their automotive embodiment have been the subject of a long standing public issue. The American automobile industry has been criticized and even investigated by the government as to their promotion and development. As such, this case study will provide a good test site in which to examine the relationships

between corporations, markets, and society as postulated by the two theoretical positions discussed above. It will follow the development of performance as a major automotive theme from the end of World War II to its peak in the late 1960s.

Theoretical Development

The theoretical debate over the nature and effectiveness of corporate power has generated a long tradition of discussion, research and criticism. The two positions are little closer to some form of resolution at present than they were forty years ago. It is obvious that ideological predispositions have affected the outcomes and perceptions of research data in subtle ways. Yet, from a scientific point of view, the debate should be resolvable with the presentation of adequate evidence. The gathering of such evidence is dependent upon the directions and guidance provided by the conceptual foundation of the theories -- problems of operationalization notwithstanding. It is suggested that conceptual difficulties have prevented the development of a more profound dialogue in this matter. In comparing and contrasting these two views of corporate behaviour in the market, three basic conceptual areas must be examined: (1) the nature of power and its exercise; (2) the nature of corporate behaviour; and (3) the nature of the market and consumption in modern society. With respect to the first two areas, power and corporate behaviour, it is argued that they have been conceptualized in terms that are not sociological enough. They have been conceptualized in terms of the individual level of analysis and treated as

variables which operate in relationships between individuals. In the case of power, what is not considered is the social and cultural context within which these relationships take place. In the case of corporate behaviour, what is not considered is the context of corporate structure within which corporate decisions and actions are made. These two aspects will be considered immediately. The third conceptual area, the market and consumption, will be discussed thereafter.

One of the basic tenets of the social scientific approach to social power is that it is a relational phenomenon which can exist only in a plural setting where two or more people interact with each other. Many conceptions and models of power relations have been devised -- as well as methods of measurement. The literature is vast. But in discussions of corporate power one particular conception has provided the base for most analyses. This basic conception is a long standing one which has entered into sociological predominance through Max Weber and Robert Dahl. For Weber, power is viewed in terms of one person dominating another: power is defined as "the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber in Gerth and Mills, 1946:180). Dahl's definition differs only with respect to power as "chance" or potential. He argues that such potential cannot be measured -- only actual behaviour can be measured and thus power is the actual realization of a person's will over another's resistance. Both of these definitions are phrased in terms of individual action and interaction. Resist-

ance is specifically included as a criterion for the exercise of power while excluding, especially in Dahl's (1968:407) formulation, "relations with inanimate or even non-human objects". Thus relationships which are non-interactive and/or resistance free are not considered as possible power relationships. And the impact of structural and cultural variables is also eliminated from consideration.

However, a number of analyses of corporate power, especially those from an elite/class perspective, consider in their descriptive analyses some aspects of these latter dimensions -- even while paying lip-service to the Weber-Dahl conception (if they refer to a conception at all). This is not a productive situation. This discussion will build upon these descriptive analyses. The work of Steven Lukes, Tom Baumgartner, et al., and Bernd Baldus will be utilized to develop a conception of power adequate to these descriptions which can be tested against the predominant version. Termed the meta-power view, it is a sociological concept which defines power as the exercise of relational control, that is, the ability to structure social relationships in an interaction system by manipulating action possibilities, reward structures, and orientations. This conception is applicable to the collective actions of organizations and institutions. A number of power strategies will be discussed with special attention given to the incorporation into corporate action of behaviour and symbolism in the environment useful in some way to corporate goals (termed by Baldus complementary behaviour patterns).

This basic conception will be developed by an explication of the literature on organizational theory in order to formulate a model of organizational behaviour which can comprehend the types of corporate action under scrutiny here. With a few exceptions, power as a structural variable has not been studied in the literature on organizations -- in fact until fairly recently power in any form was not a topic of great concern in this body of work. And what concern there has been has focused mainly on power relationships internal to organizations. This is consistent with the predominant focus on the internal dynamics of organizations and the relative lack of attention to the relationship between organizations and their environments. When this relationship has been considered, the environment has been viewed as the locus of values, power, and control in which organizations exist in a relation of dependence and adaptation. This is correlated with the major research sites utilized in this literature -- mainly relatively trivial, inconsequential organizations rather than large scale corporate business enterprises. Charles Perrow has argued this case and has suggested that the organization-environment relationship as passive and adaptive is in need of reconceptualization when the focus is on these important but sociologically neglected corporate enterprises. It is the environment which often has to adapt to these organizations and their actions.

It is precisely because the dominant organizations or institutions of our society have not experienced goal displacement and

have been able to institutionalize on their own terms, to create the environments they desire, shape the existing ones, and define which sections of it they will deal with, that the failure to link organizations such as these with society is so alarming. It is from the muckrakers, journalists, congressional committees, historians, and, occasionally, the economists and political scientists that we learn about the ways in which organizations shape our environment, not, ironically, from the organizational sociologists. The WCTU may drift, but General Motors does not (Perrow, 1972:201).

It is the intention of this study to contribute to the closing of that gap in sociological knowledge noted above by Perrow. It is argued that the lack of a more useful dialogue in the matter of corporate power is also due to the lack of an adequate description and comprehension of the nature of the corporation and its operation in the literature. The quotation by Andrew Hacker which opens this chapter is indicative of this lack. Hacker (1964a, 1964c, 1970, 1973) and several others (eg., Galbraith, 1967; Stone, 1975; Nader and Green, 1973) argue that the development of large business corporations has created sociological conditions which have not been given adequate attention by analysts. These conditions are the corporate structures themselves and the manner in which they determine the interests and actions of the people who supposedly "operate" them, irrespective of the motives and interests of those persons as individuals. From this perspective corporations are social entities which must be analyzed at a level which conceives of them not as an aggregate of people who act in such a way as to realize their particular purposes and

goals, but rather as actors in themselves with interests and goals, independent of those who staff them, which determine the actions of those people within them. Christopher Stone in his book Where the Law Ends; The Social Control of Corporate Behaviour describes these conditions in the following manner:

In this setting each man's own wants, ideas -- even his perceptions and emotions are swayed and directed by an institutional structure so pervasive that it might be construed as having a set of goals and constraints (if not a mind and purpose) of its own. This is not, of course, to say that the large business organizations is just like an ordinary person, a "boss". But there is no reason to suppose that the motives of a corporation, the way it will respond and adapt to external threats, the way it will scan its environment for information, the way it will calculate and weigh its pleasures against its pains -- in sum, its decisions and the way it arrives at them -- will coincide with those of any one person within it, not even necessarily those of the president. Nor should we with any confidence presume to treat its decision processes as though the corporation were merely the aggregate sum of all the persons who are laboring within it (Stone, 1975:7).

This emphasis on corporations as actors, the necessity of analyzing them at the organizational level, and considering their structural dimensions has received increased attention recently but remains theoretically undeveloped and lacking in solid empirical research. There has been discussion on the nature of corporate interests, corporate decision-making, areas in which corporations are relatively free to pursue their interests without interference, ways corporations act to maintain/increase their power, the social effects of corporate action, and ways of controlling that action. But these discussions are hampered in their analytical development by the unexamined limits imposed upon them by the operational acceptance

in most of them of the predominant conception of power which, it is argued, is inadequate to the organizational level of analysis. It is unable either to integrate the range of corporate behaviours raised for scrutiny or to allow consideration of other important aspects of corporate behaviour. The meta-power view to be developed herein includes a structural dimension and can comprehend the interaction of corporate structure and administration and the resulting collective activity. This view of corporations as active agents will be formulated on the basis of the work of James Thompson and John Kenneth Galbraith. Corporate actions will be conceptualized in terms of strategies designed to reduce uncertainties and risks in the environment. Particular attention will be given to corporate strategies to reduce market uncertainty, especially the manner in which certain behaviours and symbols in the environment (complementary behaviour patterns) are utilized or incorporated into the goal-directed action of corporations. Both the pluralist/functionalist and the elite/class (supplemented by the conception of meta-power) frameworks will be applied to this analysis of corporate action.

The third conceptual area noted above is the nature of the market and consumption. This relates to the above emphasis on behaviour and symbolism in the corporate environment, for the conceptualization involved here is the social meaning of the market and the role of needs and the total domination it implies. This alternative is based upon the work of William Leiss and John Alt in particular. They view the market expressions of individuals as both free and constrained in keeping

with the meta-power conception. Consumers are able to use commodities as resources to create their own meanings and gratifications even while being constrained by the structures and meanings given to the commodities by corporate producers. However, they argue that the constant changing and fragmentation of images and designs disorients consumers and prevents the rational articulation of needs and satisfactions. Advertising is an important cultural variable in this process. In contrast, pluralist/functionalists do not see advertising as an influential device; rather it is a more or less neutral tool which is a reflection of the needs and demands of consumers. This difference between the two theories will be explored in some detail.

Part II of this dissertation will elaborate this theoretical discussion by examining relevant theoretical and research literature from each of the perspectives. Their conceptual difficulties and their resolution as discussed above will be developed there as well. In Part III the two theories will be critically tested by applying them to the market for automobiles and the development of the symbolic and physical characteristics of the automobile. A brief delineation of this substantive problem will now be presented.

Automotive Performance and the Automobile Industry

The theoretical division noted above characterizes discussion of the market for automobiles. The conventional wisdom of the pluralist/functionalist perspective views the

market for automobiles as basically "free" and competitive with consumers in the power position. In this market consumers express their needs and desires for automobiles and it is the role of the manufacturers to respond to these expressions by supplying products which will satisfy them. From the array of automotive designs supplied by the various producers, consumers choose those found to be most satisfactory. Designs not successful in the market must be abandoned or redesigned by the producers in order to better compete against other designs. The operation of the market in this manner optimizes the selling price of automobiles, the design of automobiles, and the efficient allocation of resources.

This position is the one voiced by the automobile manufacturers themselves. Spokespersons for the industry argue that their product designs and marketing strategies are dependent upon consumer demand and response. They attempt to sell automobiles using the most effective approaches. They try to assess the wants and needs expressed by consumers in the market and to respond to changes in them quickly with the best product they can supply, sold by the most informative and appealing methods. A typical statement of this position is given by J.O. Wright who at the time was a vice president in the Ford Motor Company:

Our normal position is one of abject prostration at the feet of our customers. Far from leading the consumer by the nose, we are forever trying to fathom his wants and to keep up with him (cited in Stetson, 1958:76).

On the other hand, there is the view of numerous critics of the automobile industry. They argue that the American auto-

mobile manufacturers have interfered with the market by reducing their dependence upon consumers, manipulating consumer needs and suspending competition. They produce the types of automobiles which are most profitable for them but which do not meet the "true" and legitimate needs of consumers (and thereby do not meet those of society). The manufacturers are able to do this because of the economic power they have. In his book, What's Good for GM Edward Ayres (1970:83) presents a typical statement of the position.

All this concentration of economic power has a crushing effect on the people who drive cars. There was a time, presumably, when manufacturers decided what to build on the basis of what the customer said he wanted. In the modern automobile industry, the manufacturers first decide what to build, then how to make the customer want it. With corporate planning replacing competition as the principal determinant of the product, the old process of supply-and-demand is short-circuited. The customer no longer has the power he once had to get the product he once got by inducing different producers to vie for his patronage. Among the concrete manifestations of the consumers waning influence are higher costs (both of purchase and of repair), poor quality, and technological obsolescence. Desired improvements fail to materialize, while changes for which the customer never asked, proliferate.

The critical literature has raised numerous issues, especially within the last fifteen years.² The predominance of the automobile as a private commodity used for personal transportation is directly related to problems of traffic congestion, air pollution, energy use, the thousands of "accidental" deaths and injuries each year, the high construction and maintenance costs of streets and highways, suburbanization and central city decline, etc. Critics have argued that the social

and environmental costs of the automobile are too high, that the consequences are socially "irrational" (Whitt, 1979:95). The causes of, or responsibility for this state of affairs is said to be the corporate actions of the automobile manufacturers who control the market and other relevant aspects of their environment. Control of the market, as noted above, interferes with its efficient and rational operation allowing the producers to realize their interests at the expense of consumers and society. At the institutional level, it is argued that the manufacturers and their corporate allies in the so-called highway lobby act to promote legislation and public policies which favour the private use of automobiles and block the development of effective alternative systems of urban transportation. Of course, the automobile producers deny this responsibility. They are supported by other analysts in their position that the market and consumers determine corporate actions.

It is the market level of analysis which is of interest to this discussion. For some reason, there has been very little sociological research designed specifically to address these concerns. The available research has been conducted mostly by economists and market researchers whose interests are only partially relevant to the sociological questions of corporate relationships with the market and society.

In the case of the automobile industry, research which focuses on competitive strategies and their operation, or on the nature of consumer demands, often is not directed to the most salient dimensions of the sociological problem. The study of the relationships between corporations, markets, and society

requires a problem in which the actions of the automobile industry, consumers, and social groups in society can be observed. The problem chosen to be the vehicle for this study is the development of the meaning and shape of the automobile. One significant set of meanings and related designs has been further selected for analysis. These meanings and designs are those related to the themes of performance, power, speed, and machismo.

The elite/class theoretical framework supplemented by the conception of meta-power and the pluralist/functionalist framework will be applied to this problem. Hypotheses derived from each predicting the nature of the interaction between automobile manufacturers and consumers with respect to the determination of automotive design and meaning will be tested. This test will involve the use of secondary sources of data. To explain the performance content of American automotive design, several hypotheses will be derived and tested. In deriving and testing these hypotheses the specific contours and history of the automobile market and the industry must be considered.

Performance themes are significant and worthy of study because they have been the subject of increasing public concern and criticism since the end of World War II. This public criticism asserts that performance meanings and designs developed and produced by manufacturers are over-emphasized and have deleterious effects upon the consumers, the transportation system and society. These performance themes are not related

to the primary use of the automobile as transportation. As such, they are said to be irrational, to appeal to the emotions, and to excite motives which are not functional in the transportation system. These motives (sometimes referred to as "extra motives") are believed to be "a major factor of dangerous traffic behaviour and hence contribute greatly to the high accident toll" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:26). These themes and their associated motivational base also encourage unnecessary driving, the waste of energy, and the formation of attitudes which make various safety devices and regulation difficult to apply. The automobile producers in promoting such non-transportation themes are said to play upon consumer foibles and weaknesses, prevent them from making rational choices, manipulate and artificially stimulate the demand for automobiles. Moreover, the argument continues, the automobiles they produce are not properly balanced with respect to the relationship between the power, weight and braking capacities. These unbalanced designs are not rational or safe as transportation devices. The industry profits greatly from such behaviour while the interests of consumers and society suffer.

The manufacturers deny these charges and specifically deny their responsibility for the consequences pointed out by critics. In line with the conventional sociological wisdom, they argue, with the support of other analysts, that the types of automobiles they produce and promote are a response to the wants of consumers expressed in the market. A typical counter-argument representing this position is presented by Kenneth

Ford in a Special Report to the readers of Printer's Ink, a prominent advertising industry trade journal.

The effectiveness of Detroit's advertising style is beyond question -- it sells cars at an increasing rate, and that is the name of the game. Or was. For now the auto safety fanatics are challenging Detroit's advertising techniques. They charge that it glorifies speed and power, encourages reckless driving and is at least in part responsible for the nation's 49,500 annual traffic death toll.

This is utter nonsense. As Irving Rubin . . . noted . . . "Powerful cars are no more dangerous than a rope. The rope is not dangerous until someone decides to make a noose and use it to kill" (Ford, 1966:9-10).

The conceptual guidance provided by the theoretical frameworks suggest specific variables and their relationships as significant for explaining this issue. In both cases the automobile market is recognized as having a significant symbolic or cultural dimension. Both more or less agree that the automobile can be used as a resource by individuals and groups for the pursuit of experience and gratifications, for meaningful self-expression, and for meaningful social interaction. Both agree that these meanings and uses come to be reflected in the commercial symbolism and designs of automobiles. They disagree on how these "reflection"s come to be there. They also disagree on the representativeness of these reflections of consumer interests. And they disagree on the effects of sales strategies such as advertising and product design.

The pluralist/functionalist view emphasizes consumer demand and its legitimacy. The combined elite/class meta-power view (to be termed simply the meta-power view) emphasizes the manner in which behaviours and symbols in the environment of

power structures are utilized by or incorporated into their goal directed actions. With respect to the performance issue, it is found that around these themes has arisen a subculture, to be called the performance subculture, which is enthusiastically devoted to the automobile and its use in the satisfaction of these values and motives, among others. Of all the manifestations of this subculture existing today, that form known as "hot rodding" is the most visible. The sociologically interesting thing about hot rodding is that in its early history around the end of World War II and throughout the 1950s, it aroused great public concern and was labeled as a deviant and dangerous activity pursued by irresponsible delinquents and "rebels". In many respects hot rodders and their hot rods were the social embodiment of the negative aspects of the arguments raised by critics of the automobile industry. Yet, in the 1960s hot rodding had achieved a degree of social respectability as a commercial sport. And the automobile manufacturers began to produce their own hot rods for the market. These automobiles came to be known as "Muscle Cars" or "Super Cars".

Over this period of time automobile manufacturers were not only promoting performance themes but were also involved in hot rodding in various ways. This promotion and involvement was the subject of continual public criticism. Several government inquiries into traffic safety focused upon this issue. In 1957 the Automobile Manufacturers Association decided that manufacturers should voluntarily stop supporting racing teams and advertising performance. Apparently this did not eliminate

the promotion and development of performance. In 1962 the agreement was overthrown by Ford and Chrysler.

This history and the theoretical concerns mentioned above suggest that to understand the development of automotive performance themes the relationship between the performance subculture, operationalized as hot rodding, and the automobile industry is significant. Hypotheses regarding this relationship will be tested by assessing the attitudes of the manufacturers and the public toward hot rodding. Data will be obtained by a content analysis of relevant periodical literature. This will be supplemented with an historical analysis of this relationship. Involved in this test and analysis will be the application of the conceptual concerns discussed previously.

The test period will consist of the twenty-one year span from 1948 to 1968. This will apply to the content analysis, while the end points will loosely limit the historical analysis where relevant data from earlier or later periods must be considered. The year 1948 is an appropriate basic point to begin the study for the following reasons. (1) By 1948 the economy had recovered from the effects of World War II and also from the depression years of the 1930s. A period of long term growth was begun which has no counterpart in this century. Real per capita disposable income increased from the previous year continuously throughout the period except for three years: 1949, 1954 and 1958 (Economic Report of the President, 1974:169). This growth was a basis for rising expectations and was an important impetus for automobile sales. (2) By 1948 the automobile industry had been fully reconverted

from military to domestic production. It had begun a pattern of volume sales which exceeded pre-war volumes. In 1949, the record volume of sales established in 1929 was broken for the first time (4.8 million cars sold in 1949 to 3.8 million cars sold in 1929); sales discontinuously expanded through the period to 9.4 million in 1968 (White, 1971). (3) The industry introduced postwar models and styles with the independent manufacturers in 1947. The Big Three introduced their new models and designs over the next few years (Edwards, 1965). (4) Associated with these introductions was a rapid increase in tooling costs and advertising expenditures per car. From 1950 to 1958 these expenditures tripled (Banner, 1954; Lanzillotti, 1971). (5) Hot rodding had by 1948 grown large enough to start organizing itself, especially in Southern California but also in the Mid West and East Coast. The first issue of Hot Rod magazine was published in January, 1948. Hot rodding was being noticed as a social problem, especially at local and regional levels (Balsley, 1950; Parks, 1965).

The year 1968 was chosen as the end point of this study for the following reasons. (1) The year 1968 is a high point in the development of the Super Car and its cousins. It marks the beginning of a down-turn in performance themes in advertising content (Van Til, 1975) and the approaching saturation of the performance market. (2) The production of horsepower had reached a technological plateau beyond which further increases would require costly development programs. (3) Hot rodding had grown tremendously. It had become very commercialized and professionalized with a large economic base -- it was seen

as the "growth" sport of the 1970s (Yates, 1976). (4) Most important, however, were the trends which were taking shape in the 1960s and which began to crystallize in the late 1960s and 1970s. These trends mark the beginning of a new era in the relationship between the automobile industry and its environment characterized by increased complexity, increased organization of countervailing powers, and increased governmental intervention into the operation of the industry. By 1968 the countervailing power of the environmental movement, the consumer movement and the safety "crusade" was beginning to affect the industry in many complex ways. Under the threat of federal legislation, pollution control began "voluntarily" in 1963 with the PCV devices (positive crankcase ventilation) but tougher standards on exhaust emissions were imposed by the Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Act of 1965 and the Clean Air Act of 1970. By the 1970s The Environmental Protection Agency was publicizing pollution and mileage per gallon data for various automobile makes independently of the manufacturers. And, significantly, the criticisms of performance and safety were galvanized in the consumer movement spearheaded by Ralph Nader and his associates. According to the analysis of Paul Halpern (1972) in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Nader almost single handedly influenced public policy on automobile safety. His confrontations with the automobile industry and his efforts to institutionalize the creation of publicity markets were significant in establishing the institutionalization of consumer interests (as defined by a small number of interpreters) in government agencies. By attempting to institutionalize "the muck-raking

function", he has created publicity markets on consumer issues (although these markets do not necessarily represent any organized private consumer concerns). These markets function as new constituencies for policy-making agencies who formerly had to rely on organizations for input -- which in the case of automotive safety were organizations closely linked to the automobile industry and state highway agencies. In 1966 automotive safety began to come under federal legislation with the passage of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

Of course, Nader's successes depended upon many situational factors in the political arena. But they also depended upon the larger environmental situation as well. Such factors as changes in population and family demographics, the increased status of other consumer goods in competition with the automobile, the rising maintenance costs, traffic congestion, etc., were all important in creating the context within which Nader acted. And there is a direct sense in which these changing conditions were a result of the contradictions and social costs which accrued as the automobile became the dominant form of transportation, sold as an individual solution to private transportation needs by profit-seeking, growth oriented corporations. These changing conditions and the new automotive era they are bringing about are far beyond the scope of this study.

Contributions

This dissertation will examine and critically test two theoretical views of corporate power, market behaviour, and the social meaning of consumption. These two views tend to

opposite ends of the spectrum over who controls the market, consumers or corporate elites/capitalist ruling class; both tend to be totalistic in their assessment of the degree of control manifested. The traditional pluralist/functionalist view will be contrasted with the elite/class view. The latter framework will be conceptually grounded in a conception of power (as meta-power) which is more adequate to its description of corporate behaviour. This conceptual development will contribute to moving beyond the long standing debate between these two orientations by shifting the focus to the social and cultural context within which behaviour takes place. The application to the market and consumption will contribute needed clarification to a neglected area of sociological concern. Again the terms of the debate will be altered by conceptual developments which do not deny the validity of human needs nor reify cultural variables.

The critical test of these positions is in the form of a case study of the development of the symbolic and physical content of the American automobile. Special attention will be paid to the themes related to automotive performance. The relationship between the automobile industry and hot rodding will be analysed. In the process, this dissertation will contribute to an understanding of the development of the dominant form of transportation technology in modern society and the mechanisms whereby it has come to be designed and used for purposes and in ways which are detrimental and dangerous for "rational, efficient transportation" and the significance of such purposes and uses. In the 1980s, with inflation, congestion, pollution,

regulation, energy problems, etc., changing the environment drastically, new demands are being formulated and made, new patterns taking shape. The types of automobiles which will be produced, their characteristics, the way people will respond to them, what they will mean to them, and the way they drive them in the 1980s certainly must meet these new demands. But automotive production and use are the products of patterns developed over a long time and are not easily or swiftly changed. Significant relationships and patterns often carry over into future conditions, although in modified form. To meet present and future conditions, it will help to know what the past was like.

Outline of Study

Part II of this dissertation will discuss the two theoretical frameworks and develop the conceptual foundations for the revised elite/class view. Chapter Two will outline the two views of the social context of corporate capitalism and its development with special attention to the increasing social importance of the market and consumption. The literature on corporate power will be reviewed and the concept of meta-power developed. Chapter Three will outline the pluralist/functionalist view of corporate behaviour in the market and develop a model based on the work of James Thompson and others which corrects the deficiencies of this view but is still compatible with it. Chapter Four will present the meta-power view of corporate behaviour and the process of demand management based upon Galbraith's analysis of The New Industrial

State. The Fifth Chapter will then discuss the two views of the market and the role of culture in determining human needs and their expression. The role of advertising will be examined in some detail. Chapter Six will summarize the theoretical discussion.

Part III of this dissertation consists of the case study of the shape of the automobile and the critical test of the two theoretical frameworks. Chapter Seven will present a discussion of the public issue of automotive performance and its relationship to those "extra motives" argued to be detrimental to the transportation system and society. The development of hot rodding will be examined and a brief review of the criticisms directed to the automobile industry presented. In Chapter Eight the two theoretical perspectives are applied to the automobile industry and the behaviour of the producers. Hypotheses from each position are derived predicting the general nature of the relationship between consumers and the manufacturers with respect to the content of the automobile. Hypotheses are also derived predicting the nature of the relationship between hot rodding and the manufacturers.

In Chapter Nine an initial test of the general determination of automotive content is presented. The methodology for the test of the hot rod manufacturer relationship is discussed. Chapter Ten presents the results of the content analysis where it is found that the automobile manufacturers are involved in hot rodding and utilizing aspects of hot rodding in their design and promotional strategies. Their involvement and incorporation is found to begin at a time far earlier than

predicted by the pluralist/functionalist hypothesis. Chapters Eleven and Twelve are the historical analysis of the relationship between hot rodding and the automobile manufacturers. A specific feature of this analysis is the attempt to follow the interaction between the structural and planning priorities of the manufacturers, the sales strategies employed by the manufacturers, and the changing states of consumer demands. The manner in which the manufacturers utilize and incorporate aspects of hot rodding into their sales strategies and product development is traced through this interaction. This is a case study in the exercise of relational control based upon the incorporation of a complementary behaviour pattern.

Finally, Part IV presents the conclusions to this study in Chapter Thirteen. The results of the critical test are discussed. The implications of the exercise of relational control for understanding the development of the automobile and the behaviour of the manufacturers are developed. The theoretical significance of the findings for the ongoing theoretical discussion are explored.

FOOTNOTES

1

The literature which provides this documentation is vast and covers both the positive and negative aspects of the social, political, and economic -- as well as physical -- importance of the automobile and its industry. For a selected sample, see Denison, 1956; Donovan, 1965; Edwards, 1965; Flink, 1972, 1975; Brownell, 1972; White, 1971; Purdy, 1960; Chandler, 1967, 1969; Mowbray, 1969; Rothschild, 1973; Snell, 1975; Bruce-Briggs, 1977; Botkin, 1970; Finch and Smith, 1970; Bogart, 1976; Johnson, 1975.

2

This critical literature is mostly an examination of the negative impact of the automobile upon people, cities, countryside, culture and society. Little of it is based upon systematic research or solid empirical data. See, for example, the following sample of work: Carasso, 1970; Moffitt, 1976; Merritt, 1971; Mumford, 1966; Drew, 1966; O'Connell and Meyer, 1966; Schneider, 1971; Rothschild, 1973; Flink, 1975; Moynihan, 1959, 1960, 1966; Jerome, 1972; Ayres, 1970, Leavitt, 1970; Buel, 1973; Keats, 1958; Burby, 1971; Center for Auto Safety, 1972; Nader, 1959, 1963, 1965/1972. For a spirited defence of the role and position of the automobile and its industry, see Bruce-Briggs, 1977.

The lack of serious research attention to the impact of the automobile and transportation problems has caused difficulties for both analysis and policy-making. On this see Tobin, 1974 and Burby, 1971. The critical studies by Ralph Nader and his associates on the Corvair and the Volkswagen deserve comment. Nader's (1965/1972) Unsafe at Any Speed and the controversy which it fostered was an important factor in the increasing "politicization" of the automobile (of which the literature cited above is an example) which took place in the late 1960s and 1970s. The book is a compilation of research, statistics and opinion which condemn the Chevrolet Corvair as produced from 1960 to 1963. Nader charges that the Corvair (and by implication most if not all American made automobiles) was poorly designed, and that manufacturers knew it but for cost and other reasons introduced it to the market. The results were unnecessary deaths and injuries. The controversy these charges made are well known. However, serious questions about the charges and the data upon which they are based are raised by a little publicized study financed by the Department of Transportation conducted by Texas Transportation Institute at the Texas A & M University. This research and its evaluation concluded that the 1960 - 1963 Corvair met or exceeded contemporary standards regarding stability, cornering and roll-over capabilities. The Corvair was judged not to have a safety defect and to be no more prone to roll-over than other contemporary automobiles. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1972). The Nader group's The Volkswagen: An

Assessment of Distinctive Hazards (Center for Auto Safety, 1972) made similar charges against the Volkswagen. But an evaluation of the sources and data cited by them supplemented with other available data led the staff at Road and Track magazine to conclude: "Ralph Nader alleged that Volkswagen automobiles are distinctively hazardous. Road and Track, after investigation, and on the basis of its considerable experience in the automotive field, asserts that Ralph Nader is wrong" (Tomerlin, 1972:33). This situation certainly does not help resolve the issues involved in the problems of automobile safety and the role of the manufacturers.

PART II

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 2

CORPORATE POWER AND ITS CONCEPTUALIZATION

The study of social power is and always has been a central concern of the social sciences. Power and its exercise has been examined in many different locations and settings and at many different levels. The literature which has accumulated is as vast as it is diffuse. Fortunately there is no need to examine here all the nuances and critical dialogues in this literature -- for when all these are boiled away, there remains the basic concept of power which informs the various works. It is from this basic concept and its uncritical acceptance that many of the problems facing the conceptualization of the power of the automobile industry derive. The problem of the power of the automobile industry is the problem of producer interference in the operation of what is supposed to be a "free" market and political arena. That is, free in the sense that the market and the political arena should be under the control of the aggregate voice of autonomous individuals who express their interests and values in the form of the demand for consumer goods and in voting preferences. Producers and politicians are to be passively responsible to the voice of their customers and constituents and to provide the output and policies necessary to the satisfaction of those expressed concerns.

This chapter will describe first the rise of corporate capitalism as the social context within which the automobile industry operates. It will present the two major interpretations of this historical process, liberal and revisionist, and

their theoretical underpinnings. Next, the differing views on the distribution of power and its operation in the capitalist system of these two traditions will be presented. The problems of definition of the concept of power which underlie these two views will be discussed and more adequate concepts will be developed. Specifically, a conception of power will be presented which considers: (1) structural and historical factors; (2) the "mobilization of bias" in non-interactive relationships; and (3) the manner in which the unsolicited behaviour of other members in the system (termed complementary behaviour) can contribute to the maintenance of a power structure. From this structural perspective it is hypothesized that the performance subculture in the form of hot rodding is a complementary behaviour pattern which the automobile industry began to incorporate into its structure in the early 1950s. Several hypotheses will be presented on the nature of this incorporation.

Corporate Capitalism, Revisionist History and Neo-Marxism

It is important to place the automobile industry and the complex of industries and services which ride along with it in its social context. This is because it is within this context that the industry developed and took its present structure. And this structure, as shall be discussed, is very important in understanding the present contours of the demand for the automobile as well as the very form of the automobile itself as a consumer durable. The development of the automobile and its industrial complex since the turn of the century

is of a piece with the development of corporate capitalism. That is, the transition from industrial or entrepreneurial capitalism to corporate or monopoly capitalism, as it is sometimes referred to. There are literally hundreds of accounts of this historical development. While there are many disagreements over details, causal factors, consequences, and interpretations, there is substantial agreement on the basic form this transition took. Only a brief sketch can be presented here. The main features of this change in capitalist form are:

- (1) the incorporation of science into industrial production processes in the late 1800s; (2) the rise of science based industries at the turn of the century; (3) the growth of industries to large size and the increasing adoption of the corporate form of organization; (4) the increasing adoption of machine production processes, and the development of mass production techniques; (5) the development of a corporate reform movement and its political affiliations; (6) the increasing intervention of the state into economic and social realms; (7) continued corporate expansion and enlarged production; (8) the development of modern "scientific" management; and (9) the growth of consumption as a mainstay of the economy.

The interpretation presented here of the events and motives underlying these changes follows that of the revisionist tradition in the social sciences.¹ In the late 1800s the chronic overproduction which characterized the industrial capitalist system (as it does the corporate capitalist system) led to price depressions, efforts to expand markets, and intense competition. David Noble (1977:54-55) summarized the

situation as the twentieth century began:

By the turn of the century the larger corporations which had survived this competition undertook to stabilize the chaotic economic situation, to keep capitalism alive by eliminating much of the economic freedom that had both made it so popular and driven it to the brink of disaster. In the place of economic freedom, they offered the goods, the abundant fruit of efficient and regulated industrial production. Toward this end, and in a country whose laissez-faire traditions precluded the establishment of legal cartels, these corporations expanded to control as much of the market and the production process as possible, to eliminate lesser competitors and coordinate the many aspects of each industry. By means of consolidations, mergers, trusts, holding companies, trade associations, and, ultimately, government regulatory agencies, they struggled to regulate production and stabilize prices. At the same time, they undertook to rationalize the sprawling empires which they had acquired in the process -- to make them profitable as well as powerful by utilizing expensive plants at maximum capacity, fully realizing the potential of technological developments, and co-ordinating all the varied activities under their command. In the science based industries (which served as the models for today's large industrial corporations) this meant the rationalization of modern technology itself as well as the production process it made possible: the regularization of patent procedures, the efficient organization of scientific research, and the systematic production of technical power.

The rationalization and mechanization of production created problems with the labour pool and this was compounded by the tremendous influx of immigration which continued until the 1930s. This resulted in labour unrest and at the same time helped to prevent labour unity and to provide opportunities for employers to maintain low wages, rationalize production and to keep labour unorganized. Predominant members of corporations

were active in the Americanization movement which aimed in part to orient workers to industrial conditions. At the political level there was a great deal of concern about industrial conditions, and the possibilities of technology and industry in realizing the democratic goals of the United States. Many conservatives were opposed to the increasing concentration of power in corporate hands, saw corruption and abuse in the system, and wanted political action to maintain the free market. The progressive reform movement in particular sought to redistribute wealth and opportunity through welfare legislation, woman's suffrage, industrial "uplift" programs; it also attempted to rebalance economic power by the use of anti-trust legislation, further government regulation of business and the market, and support of trade unions. Other groups such as the socialist and anarchist movements were devoted to the elimination of the capitalist system. The business community's response to these challenges was not uniform and went in several directions. But the people in the large corporations developed strategies designed to minimize conflict wherever possible and to isolate the more radical elements. They attempted to develop strategies which they believed would reconcile the liberal tradition of individualistic democracy with their own "corporate-capitalist and scientific-technological demands for order, stability, and social efficiency" (Noble, 1977:61). This "corporate liberalism", as it has been called, worked through the "capture" or other redirection of government agencies, creation of private associations such as trade associations and chambers of commerce, development of research agencies, promotion of social welfare legislation, and the attempt to treat

labor unions as voluntary partners in the corporate industrial system in order to prevent damaging conflict.²

To the extent that corporations were able to gain control over the production process, pricing and markets, they were able to generate very large profits which allowed for further expansion of output. In the early decades of this century as productive capacity continually increased, markets eventually became saturated and demand would slip, even with efforts to regulate output. Ways to expand existing markets without diminishing profit were sought as were new markets and new techniques of marketing and merchandising. The rising surplus had to be consumed and this was recognized in the business community. In 1934 Edward Filene, a famous department store magnate, in a book entitled, The Consumer's Dollar, wrote that it was no longer

socially necessary to direct wealth from consumption to the uses of capital. With our present rate of productivity, in fact, it has become foolish and is no longer good business. Continuing in that course would destroy capitalism; for there can be no adequate spending, and spending on a scale which only the masses, with mass leisure can achieve (Filene, 1934:20).

As opportunities for capital investment declined within the sphere of necessary goods production, capital began to be invested in areas of leisure goods production. The serious problems of unemployment emerging as production was rationalized were alleviated to some extent by the employment opportunities in the expanding service industries which both created and served leisure. Thus in the 1920s began the "sales effort" (Baron and Sweezy, 1966) and the development of such social strategies as advertising, installment and credit buying, higher wages and shorter

working hours. The Depression and the Second World War delayed its full implementation until after 1945. Ewen's (1976) analysis of the trade journals, speeches, and books of this early period brings out the following themes: (1) demands for worker control in industry (i.e., "bolshevism") would be weakened by increasing access to consumer goods; (2) corollary to the first, the notions of "participation" and democracy were redefined to mean the exercise of consumer choice; (3) advertising would help to "Americanize" non-English ethnic minorities and create a uniform national "taste"; (4) the realms of production and consumption would be kept separate; (5) the family would come increasingly under social pressures, for example, by new consumption models taught in "home economics" classes at school and brought home by the children; (6) sexuality and sex roles were useful in selling goods; (7) personal consumption and the skills associated with it would change as manufactured goods would replace home-made goods.

This revisionist history is a revision of the traditional, mainstream liberal history which dominated the social sciences -- and in many respects still does. Some of this revisionist history has been written by neo-Marxist and radical-liberal social scientists while others of these orientations have utilized it in their formulations. In either case, the historical "data" are used as an explanation as to why the worker revolution predicted by orthodox Marxism did not arise and why socialistic and communistic political movements failed to gain much popular support. The capitalist class and their corporations, able to gain government support, able to rationalize

production and management, able to neutralize political dissent, and able to shift the realm of individual freedom and its meaning to consumption, etc., were able to resolve the contradictions of industrial capitalism and defuse the revolution of the working class. In this they were helped by the changes made possible by the development of technology (such as transportation and communication) -- especially suburbanism. The overall result was the growth of a corporate capitalist society which has been characterized as the "mass society", the "abstract society" (Zijderveld, 1970), the "one-dimensional" society (Marcuse, 1964), the "pluralist" society. What these terms refer to is a society characterized by a distinction between public and private, work and leisure, and the relegation of individual freedom, self-expression, and the search for experience mainly to the private sphere (called leisure) and its realization mainly through the consumption of commodities. Often this is called "privatization".

The neo-Marxist interpretation, represented by the so-called critical theorists, theorizes that such factors as scientific management, the progressive movement, suburbanism, etc., were instrumental in destroying the basic conditions necessary for the working class to develop as a class. Such social formations as collective associations in the work-place and the community, and an autonomous cultural tradition which recognized and opposed economic domination/exploitation and expressed these deprivations in the form of an ideological rationale -- these were eliminated and the workers were left isolated in both work and community. This allowed them to be socialized into the practice and values of individualism and the private pursuit of

monetary and material interests. The replacement culture, critical theorists argue, was provided by the values associated with consumption and commodities. The public world of collective associations of class and the community were replaced by the private consumer who now had no alternative sources for the discussion and development of transcendent ideologies. Commercial products, it is argued, were offered as the means of resolving and alleviating the problems of life and labor for the individual, the community and the polity; the functional substitute for class politics. And the satisfactions were immediate and sensually real.

Traditional democratic ideals -- freedom, citizenship; social needs for comfort, friendship, relaxation, status, leisure; as well as ideological themes and demands for industrial democracy; were co-opted and reified instrumentally to the promise offered by mass commodities as immediately -- realizable modes of satisfaction. Instead, therefore, of capitulating to working class demands for a better and democratic way of life within and without the factory, access to the consumer goods market place was offered as a substitute utopia and democracy. Problems of person, community, and politics, were defined as solvable through participation in the mass consumer society. By thus offering democracy and a better way of life as a consumable commodity, the capitalist class thereby cemented this social hegemony to the performance of labor (one must work to earn an income in order to consume) (Alt, 1977:178).

Thus, corporate capitalism was legitimated by a culture based upon private gratification -- "the private person as reaching new heights of fulfillment and satisfaction through commoditized sensual gratifications. As the corporate class' answer to the social question of change, then, the frustrations, passivity, and unrest of daily life were to be replaced with the

sensual excitement and fulfillment of consumerism" (Alt, 1977: 179).

The capitalist need for profit conditions the imperatives of production and consumption and the capitalist efforts at controlling the social environment. Production and consumption come to have, it is argued, little to do with the satisfaction of basic human needs but rather are geared to manipulating and stimulating trivial and irrational aspects of the human psyche for the sake of profit. Goods are produced on the basis of potential profitability with little concern for social welfare or rationality.

The upshot of this situation, according to most critical theorists, is that class domination is mystified (but still remains) by the distorting lens of the private, gratification based culture. This domination takes the form of corporate capitalist production and consumption, and the actions of the capitalist class erode the "communicative competence" of the working class and replace it with the instrumental rationality of technology and the "restricted linguistic code" of consumerism (Habermas, 1971, 1975; Meuller, 1970, 1973). Thus is created the "one-dimensional" society, the "repressive desublimation" of traditionally autonomous ideals and ways of life through the generation of "false needs" to induce consumption (Marcuse, 1964).

History, Liberalism, and Pluralism

The above interpretation is a revision of a history that is based upon the view that developed with corporate liberalism. What the neo-Marxists see as the ideology of the capital-

ist class, mainstream history and social science see as basically representative of reality. Little space will be devoted here to the details of this history. This interpretation culminates in the notion of the "end of ideology" (Bell, 1960), meaning that the development of corporate capitalism and its attendant changes has obviated the necessity of critical political views which see domination and exploitation in the system and argue for its (the system's) abolition. From this point of view, these latter perspectives are "ideological" -- meaning irrational, out of touch with reality -- because corporate capitalism has indeed resolved the contradictions of industrial capitalism and abolished class domination. Seymour Martin Lipset (1963:440) has argued that "the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved; the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship". With the Good Society at hand, all that remain are minor "operating problems" which can be solved on a non-ideological basis; to attack the system is illegitimate.

This perspective views the system of corporate capitalism as consisting of numerous "groups" focused around such dimensions as economics, religion, ethnicity, geographical location, etc. Each group has some input in the formation of socially binding decisions; each constrains and is in turn constrained through a process of mutual group adjustment; and the major groups share a broad system of beliefs and values which channels conflict into established channels and allows disagreements to be worked into compromise solutions. This process promotes a plurality of socially desirable private and public ends. Be-

cause the dimensions of the plurality of groups overlap at the individual level, individuals have access to a multiplicity of groups. Thus they gain a diversity of experience and interests which provide the language, deliberate powers and sense of purpose to enable them to assess their situations and to act autonomously and effectively in their interests. A pluralistic system thus "develops individual capacities, protects individual rights and freedoms, identifies important social problems, and promotes a politics of incremental change while maintaining a long-run stability based on consent" (Connolly, 1969:4).

The pluralist perspective acknowledges that economic power has become concentrated in large corporations, but argues that this power is subordinate to political and market power. Political institutions are held to be autonomous domains wherein the numerous interests in society are expressed and satisfactory resolutions are achieved. Talcott Parsons (1957:131) argues that "in a complex society the locus of power lies in the political system" and that "the main focus of the development of our political system has been control of economic organizations and processes, and coping with some of the social consequences of economic growth and industrialization". According to some pluralists, the state functions as the location or arena where major group conflicts are debated and resolved. There is no ruling class or power elite which is able to dominate the government over a wide range of issues. One or more of the numerous bases of power in society -- wealth, prestige, strategic position, voting power -- while not equally distributed are available to most groups in the system and they make use of their

advantage in the effort to realize their goals (see especially, Dahl, 1958). The second interpretation sees the social bargaining process as taking place largely outside of the state with the state acting more as an umpire than a participant. This second view takes into account the development of large corporations in the economy which are able to initiate unilateral actions outside the governmental process and to limit the constraints of the market on their actions. However, it is argued that the corporate administrators are responsible citizens. Moreover, the state, responsive to the general public, will act on them if they stray from the public good. Further, "countervailing" groups will organize to reassert limits and restore balance. Recently, a variation of this second view has been proposed by certain revisionists. Large corporations and their technological imperatives are seen as being able to insulate themselves from public input and/or to co-opt or neutralize countervailing power groups at the same time that their actions are becoming more public. But the corporate elite are said to be constrained by a new system of checks and balances among various "estates" (political, administrative, professional, and scientific) which curb each others' excesses and fight for their own interests (Price, 1965). Galbraith's (1967) analysis points to corporate dominance over the public and the market but argues that the scientific and educational estates can give effective voice to public values. Unfortunately, there is no room in these latter interpretations for the autonomous individual actors so highly valued by the pluralist orientation -- and apparently little regret for their loss.

Like the political sphere, the economic market for goods and services is held to be an autonomous domain in the ideal where no producer(s) or consumer(s) have inordinate power. With increasing economic concentration and power lodging in large corporate enterprises, most liberals tolerate a limited amount of state intervention into the "free" market in order to curb and regulate this power. Consumers express their needs and wants as autonomous individuals in the market in terms of buying particular products and services. This demand is supplied by producers who design their products to meet this expressed demand. Competition among producers insures that production processes are efficient; it also insures that the products themselves are efficient and designed to satisfy consumer needs -- for unsatisfactory products will not sell well.

Who Controls The Corporation?

The debate between revisionists and liberals has generated a good deal of theoretical development, polemic, and research about the development of large corporate business enterprises, the concentration of economic power they represent, and the threat to political and market pluralism posed by that power. Numerous issues and problems have been raised but not all have received equal consideration, especially at the empirical, research level. Because corporations and those who own and control them are the locus of economic power, one of the central concerns in sociological work has focused upon the relationship between corporations and their political environment while the market relationship, the focus of this study, has been discuss-

ed but much less researched. It will be instructive to examine briefly this central concern in order to see the kinds of difficulties in analysis which arise and the views of power which underly the various positions. This concern has revolved around the problem of corporate responsibility and accountability -- the question of whether or not corporations or those who control them are able to act in ways which maximize their particular interests, shaping the political environment in their favour and overriding other interests. This focus has taken the form of two related issues: (1) the supposed shift in corporate control from owners to managers; and (2) the nature of external control over the corporation.

The supposed shift in corporate control from owners to managers, often referred to as the "divorce of ownership from control" or the "managerial revolution", refers to a postulated consequence of continuing economic changes in capitalist societies. It is argued that as business enterprises grow they become more complex organizationally and technologically and therefore must rely increasingly on the employment of specialist managers. Also, they finance their expansion through the issue of more share capital which is bought by a body of shareholders which itself is rapidly growing both because economic development enables more people to invest in shares and because large share holdings are broken up by progressive taxation. With shareholding more dispersed, control is divided among numerous, relatively small owners who come to take little interest in company activities. The power vacuum created by this situation is filled by an increasingly entrenched management who have

little or no share ownership. The consequences of this change in corporate control are outlined by John Child (1969b:36):

Thus anxiety about business power has become allied with uncertainty over the legitimacy of senior management's access to that power. If it can no longer be assumed that managers are effectively accountable to the legal owners of a private business, then to whom are they, and should they be responsible? On what criteria are they, and should they be selected for office? What are their objectives, and what should they be? In general, does a "managerial revolution" presage a new socially responsible definition of business power?

Although not the first to recognize this trend and its implications, Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means' (1932) work, The Modern Corporation and Private Property, is regarded as the classic statement of the thesis. It is also a classic statement of the pluralist tradition. Berle and Means were aware that economic concentration was increasingly located in large corporate enterprises but felt that this power base was no longer malevolent because of the rise of the salaried professional managers who now separated self-interested and profiteering capitalists from corporate control. They argued that these managers acted like responsible trustees who cultivated a "corporate conscience" and ran their businesses with an eye to the general welfare. They operated in conditions in which they did not have to maximize returns to ownership and as such were able to pursue policies which emphasized a set of goals which were more "balanced" in that they met not only economic requirements but a wide range of social interests. Berle and Means argued that management was developed into "a purely neutral technocracy,

balancing a variety of claims by various groups in the community and assigning to each a portion of the income stream on the basis of public policy rather than private cupidity" (1932:356). In Berle's later works (1954, 1956, 1957, 1959a, 1959b, 1964) he reiterates that this development has separated power from property and helped to create a "people's capitalism". He (1954:210) argues that economic power "is actually controlled by the operation of the public consensus which can engender public opinion leading to political intervention in any one of a number of forms" and is also limited by economic competition and economic pluralism. The result is that "no single organization has been permitted to grasp more than a limited number of functions or even, as a rule, to achieve monopoly in any one function. In the main (though not universally) the result at present is an equipoise of strong organizations" (1954:210; see also Means, 1931, 1964). Carl Kaysen (1957) has called this the model of the "soulful corporation". This basic position has several varieties but all share the view that management must accept prevailing societal values. (For the "human relations" approach, see, for example, Mayo, 1933, 1945; Whitehead, 1936. For the functionalist approach, see, among others, Drucker, 1943, 1946, 1951, 1959; Parsons, 1951, 1956a, 1956b, 1958).³

The pluralist view of the divorce of control from ownership has supported its case by attempting to show that managers do in fact control corporations and that managers are effectively constrained by factors in the environment of the corporations. Managerial control has been documented using "mechanical criteria" (Gordon, 1961:166n), such as the relatively

minute numbers of shares held by senior managers, as evidence of their separation from ownership, and the low concentration of voteholdings among the few largest shareholders as evidence that managers have effective control over policy. (See, for example, Berle and Means, 1932; Gordon, 1961; Lardner, 1966; 1970; Florence, 1961). Managerial constraint or responsibility is taken to be indicated by the development of a managerial belief system or ideology which stresses the role of managers as responsible to groups both within and outside of the corporations (Bendix, 1966; Walton, 1967). The rise of this ideology, its advocacy by business spokesmen and its opposition by other groups "seems to add some plausibility to the argument that the trend towards a formal separation of ownership and management has encouraged a redefinition of business responsibilities from a purely private towards a social conception" (Child, 1969b:47). Beside beliefs and attitudes, managerial behaviour is also used to indicate separation and responsibility. Proponents of this position attempt to document two behaviours: (1) profit maximizing behaviour would be reduced while other goals would be pursued, and (2) profit would be distributed primarily not to shareholders but would be maximally ploughed back into the firm (see Copeland and Towl, 1968; Dively, 1972; Gordon, 1961).

The Marxist position on the managerial revolution does not dispute that managers have taken over the practical operation of corporations but argues that they have not gained control from the owners, that what has happened is merely a functional differentiation which has no real effect on the

basic class structure or the ability of the propertied class to pursue its private interests through corporations. Managers and capital-owners do not constitute distinct groups in any sociologically important respect; managers are neither a new elite nor a new independent technocratic group. (See, for example, Mills, 1956; Samuel, 1960; Aaronovitch, 1961; Villarejo, 1961, 1962; Blackburn, 1965; Westergaard, 1965; Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Miliband, 1968; Mankoff, 1970.) Proponents of this position have, like the pluralists, supported it mainly through the application of mechanical criteria. But they have utilized different criteria. (Economists Beed, 1966, and Allen, 1967, have criticized pluralist methodology.) They have marshalled evidence that attempts to show that ownership is by no means highly separated from control: (1) operationally, large shareholders represent a concentration of ownership sufficient to ensure control in the sense of preventing managers from adopting policies detrimental to their interests; (2) shareholdings are increasingly taken by financial institutions such as insurance companies, pension funds, etc., which often intervene in company policies (Aaronovitch, 1961; Fitch and Oppenheimer, 1970; Perlo, 1957; Perrucci and Pilisuk, 1970); (3) the power of large shareholders is reinforced by a system of interlocking directorships which extends their influence to other organizations, especially financial ones (Baron and Sweezy, 1966; Dooley, 1969; Sweezy, 1972; O'Connor, 1972; Sonquist and Koenig, 1975, 1976; Allen, 1974); (4) even though senior managers may not own a significant amount of stock in their own companies, this ownership can still represent a considerable investment for them personally

and thus influence their policy decisions in the direction of business ownership (Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Cheit, 1964); (5) senior managers tend to share similar socialization patterns, backgrounds, value orientations, and social relationships (Kolko, 1962, 1963; Domhoff, 1967, 1970, 1974; Nichols, 1970). The managerial ideology of responsibility from this point of view is not simply the result of the control position of managers and their lack of property ownership, nor does it necessarily express the views of practising managers (Child, 1968, 1969a; Nichols, 1970). As to behaviours oriented to goals other than profit-maximization, research argues that modern managers with their sophisticated techniques are much better able to maximize profits than the classical entrepreneur (Baran and Sweezy, 1966: Chapter 2). Moreover, within the limitations of knowledge it has been found that at least the more successful corporations do pursue the highest profits attainable (Earley, 1967; Baldwin, 1964; Mintz and Cohen, 1971). With respect to the reinvestment of profit and the payment of low dividends, research has found evidence against this plus ownership incentives in favour of low dividends, both of which weaken the pluralist position (Nichols, 1970; Baran and Sweezy, 1966).

The debate is far from resolved. The assessment of the author is that available evidence seems to indicate that the behavioural differences between owner-managers and non-property managers is not as great as pluralists hypothesize. Apparently there are wider economic, social and technological constraints operating on corporations which set definite limits to the courses of action open to persons in managerial positions,

propertied or not. But this is not to argue, as some Marxists do, an oversimplified view of the range of objectives held by owner-managers or the deterministic importance of property per se.

The second issue, the nature of the external control of corporations, is directly related to the discussions of corporate responsibility ("which implies a voluntary and somewhat diffuse willingness of those directing a business enterprise to abide by, and perhaps actively enhance, socially approved practices" Child, 1969b:52). Berle (1954) has argued that the development of the "corporate conscience" was a reaction to the force of public opinion and the threat of governmental intervention (see also Cheit, 1964). Similarly, the continued appeal by even non-propertied managers to the sensitivity of private property and more generally to the notion of "managerial prerogatives", is certainly based in part on the desire to maintain their freedom from external controls and political interference (Gordon, 1961:34; Mason, 1959:11). But, in spite of these ideological positions, considerable efforts at controlling corporate behaviour are mounted in modern societies. Many of these efforts are generated spontaneously, as it were, in response to the growing power of corporate enterprises in order to compensate for such growth. Reisman (1950) calls these efforts at compensatory power "veto groups". Galbraith, in his early work, calls them "countervailing powers" which act to prevent the abuse of power. These countervailing powers arise automatically to restrain corporate activities and to protect the public: "Countervailing power is a self-generating force Power on one side of a

market creates both the need for, and the prospect of reward to, the exercise of countervailing power from the other side. This means that, as a common rule, we can rely on countervailing power to appear as a curb on economic power" (Galbraith, 1952: 113). Among the countervailing powers noted by Galbraith are big government, big labour, big agriculture, and big distribution. The government, representing the people, must support the efforts of emerging interest groups against the vested interests of big business. Thus, says Galbraith, the government supported the rising trade-union movement in the 1930s. In this respect too the government has rendered the business corporations accountable for their actions through the creation of numerous agencies which regulate the conduct and limit the power of corporations and their leaders such as the National Labour Relations Board, the Anti-Trust Division of the Justice Department, the Internal Revenue Service. Powerful labour unions limit the power of business to arbitrarily determine wages, working conditions, etc. The growth of large retailers and suppliers with differing interests limits the power and influence of corporations. And, of course, "there is the ubiquitous public that must be satisfied at all stages lest bankruptcy be the consequence" (Hacker, 1964c:136), that is, the corporations are dependent upon the public and its needs. The administration of the corporations "must always steer its course with an eye to how its actions will look, not only to its employees, its shareholders, and the government, but also to the general public" (Allen, 1952:187). Corporate administrators must act in socially responsible ways, they must be guided by considerations of public practice and

public welfare. To act against the public consensus invites such consequences as "loss of prestige, public standing, and popular esteem", and "if loss of prestige does not produce results more acceptable to the community, other more forceful means of imposing the ideas embodied in the public consensus . . . commonly appear" (Berle, 1959:90. See also Dahl, 1958, 1961, 1967; Bell, 1960; Lipset, 1963; Lilienthal, 1952).

Thus, pluralists see a wide range of action which counter the concentration of business power and prevent or correct its abuse. But the question is raised as to how effective these efforts are in practice. Special attention has been given to the problem of government control. Numerous studies show that government regulatory commissions have not been very effective -- in fact it is often found that they tend to operate more in the interests of the regulated businesses than of the general public. Corporations have been able to insulate themselves from outside control by such strategies as vertical integration, mergers, collusive price setting, etc. (More on these actions will be presented shortly.) Governments have tended to rely on business advice in the formulation of policy and of legislation -- thus insuring representation of business interests. Anti-trust legislation seldom has been applied to many giant industries. Many Marxists argue that the reason for the ineffectiveness of countervailing power and of government regulatory efforts is that the state is the "servant" of the capitalists who control the property and corporate wealth of the nation. There has been a concerted effort to prove that the state acts in the interests of and is in fact, run by representatives of

a power elite or even a "ruling class" (see Mills, 1956 on this distinction).

G. William Domhoff (1967, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1974) has done the most work to prove that an economic elite exists which is so powerful and so integrated that it can be termed a "ruling class" mainly through the utilization of a reputational methodology. Other works have utilized network or graph theory to demonstrate the extent of organizational interlocks in various sectors of society. For example, Sonquist and Koenig (1975, 1976) used graph theory to show the closeness between corporations. McLaughlin (1975) used smallest-space analysis to reveal which organizations emerged as the elite in Phoenix, Arizona. Gabriel Kolko (1962, 1963) shows a working partnership between business and political elites linked through cultural as well as economic and marital ties. Kolko outlines the development of "political capitalism", that is, the increasingly systematic use of the state for the benefit of business. He argues that those few with great economic power are able to share the policies of the liberal state. Kolko's later analysis (1968, 1969) argue that American foreign policy from 1944 to 1960 has been conducted primarily by a relatively small number of representatives from the largest corporations, banks, investment houses, and Wall Street law firms which serve the corporate world. The imperialistic policy Kolko finds characterizing U.S. foreign relations is, he argues, clearly related to economic class interests, that is, the perceived need for economic expansion into new foreign markets.

Similarly, Weinstein (1969) and Domhoff (1967, 1970)

document the influence of the economic elite on the government and their importance in policy making via their financing and domination of organizations and foundations (such as the National Civic Federation, National Planning Association, Committee on Economic Development, Council on Foreign Relations, Brookings Institution, etc.) which train future governmental leaders and permit corporate leaders to communicate with each other and with academic experts as well. Also documented is the service of economic elites on presidentially-appointed commissions and task forces and special committees of the executive branch departments as well as their frequent appointments to the executive branch of government as cabinet or sub-cabinet officials. Several studies document the influence of the economic elite on the military elite (Pilesuk and Hayden, 1965; Kolko, 1969; Phelan, 1969).

These studies and interpretations of the power and influence of elites and the corporate elite/ruling class in particular, have met with doubt and criticism on the part of pluralists. Among the criticisms raised are: (1) the revisionists employ a faulty methodology in that they do not define or describe the goals of the "power elite" nor do they adequately discuss what responsibility entails; (2) the power structure is not monolithic but diffused -- there being many small elites, each operating in different spheres of life, i.e., "strategic elites"; (3) the population is made up not only of the mass but of organized groups and publics as well; (4) the political system is highly autonomous; (5) the economic elite do not have inordinate power nor is there a significant relationship between

political power and property ownership; (6) it is not possible to demonstrate any genuine unity of purpose among the economic elite due to internal conflicts within the business community and the parochial concerns of various business groups -- business is incapable of articulating, much less pursuing, its class interests; (7) similar argument as (6) for the military. (See, for example, Parsons, 1957; Dahl, 1958, 1961; Drucker, 1959; Bell, 1960; Hacker, 1975; Lipset, 1963; Keller, 1963; Rose, 1967; Merelman, 1968; Berle, 1968; Polsby, 1963, 1968, 1970; Wolfinger, 1960.)

These are the main outlines of one major aspect of the debate over the distribution of power in society. That aspect is the controversy surrounding those who own and control the large corporate business enterprises in modern society. The first issue of the controversy is whether the managerial revolution has separated ownership from control of the corporations and allowed management to behave in socially responsible ways, or has been merely a functional differentiation in which managers pursue policies of limited self interest in their own/or their employers' service. Pluralists argue the former and theorists of a power elite or ruling class argue the latter. The second issue of the controversy is whether corporations are or can be controlled from the outside, that is by forces in their environment. This controversy has focused in particular on two areas: the rise of countervailing power groups and of government intervention and regulation. Pluralists argue that these mechanisms are effective in controlling or correcting corporate behaviour when it strays from social responsibility

or the public welfare. Elite/class theorists argue that they are not.

By and large it appears that those who are looking for pluralistic balance, corporate responsibility, and effective controls will find them "or know the reason why". Those seeking a power elite or ruling class, or corporate power and its abuse seem to find what they are looking for, too. It is clear by now that no real resolution is in sight within the terms of the debate. Not only is the debate -- the objective assessment of the distribution of power in modern society -- one of the most difficult tasks which sociologists face (Lockwood, 1964), but the terms of the debate themselves are of questionable significance. John Child (1969b:57) has argued:

The investigation of business power has rarely moved beyond an assessment of the power which could be imputed to given configuration of formal positions and statuses. Clearly one needs to move beyond this primarily mechanical analysis, though the practical difficulties of research in such complex and sensitive areas are severe . . . more research is required on actual processes of policy formation within the business enterprise; it is also important for sociologists to investigate the frames of reference and objectives of businessmen in enterprises with different ownership situations, allowing for interdependent factors such as size and industrial environment. As a starting point to such further investigation, the conceptualization and operationalization of power as a variable (or set of variables) must be taken to a more satisfactory level of development than is currently the case.

The sociological literature on corporate behaviour in the market place is characterized by the same split in terms of where the power lies but has little empirical research to back up either side. The basic arguments were presented earlier.

Briefly, the pluralist/liberal argument is that of consumer sovereignty -- the power lies in the hands of the consumer with the state ready to intervene if corporations step too far out of line. The elite/class argument takes several forms but basically revolves around the notion of the manipulation of needs or the creation of false needs by corporations and their leaders in the name of profit. These positions will be developed fully in the next chapter. However, this issue is in need of the same conceptual clarification noted above by Child. That task will be addressed immediately.

The Conception of Power

One of the reasons the assessment of the distribution of power in modern society is so difficult is that the very notion of power itself is extraordinarily difficult to define and analyse. And the basic conception of power which is utilized will condition the entire analysis which is built upon it (Dahrendorf, 1959:166; Parsons, 1957:139; Gillam, 1971:8). On the problem of conceptualizing power, Kaufman and Jones (1954: 205) have observed:

There is an elusiveness about power that endows it with an almost ghostly quality . . . We "know" what it is, yet we encounter endless difficulties in trying to define it. We can "tell" whether one person or group is more powerful than another, yet we cannot measure power. It is as abstract as time, yet as real as a firing squad.

This section will delineate the differing conceptions of power which guide the theoretical and empirical work discussed above and will argue that the gap between them is not directly resolvable. It will then present the notion of the "two

faces of power" as developed by Bachrach and Baratz and suggest that their second face of power provides a direction for the creation of a more adequate conception of power -- one which is sociological in its orientation.

It is fair to say that the definition of power provided by Max Weber has provided the basic dimensions within which most contemporary sociological discussions of power are framed. Weber (in Gerth and Mills, 1946:180) defined power as "the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action". Thus, in Weber's view power is a social phenomenon which contains five elements: (1) it is intentional, (2) it can arise only in interaction between two or more persons, (3) there must be some manifestation of resistance on the part of the person(s) against whom power is being exercised, (4) it is a capacity or potential, and (5) it is implicitly a zero-sum or "scarcity" phenomenon. Baldus (1975) has noted that the element of intentionality has been interpreted by many at an individualistic level and this has led to subjectivist reductions. Baldus also notes that most research on power has concentrated on the elements of interaction and resistance guided by numerous attempts to operationalize them (see the references cited in Baldus). While these three elements have been widely accepted in the literature, the last two elements, the notion of power as "potential" and the zero-sum model, have been controversial. And around these elementary controversies and disagreements about the operationalization of the element of resistance hinge much of the debate between

pluralists and revisionists, especially those who theorize the existence of a power elite or a ruling class.

The controversy over the zero-sum model involves its assumption that there is only a given amount of power in any social system and an increase in the power of one person or group must come at the expense of another. It follows from this model that inequalities in power necessarily stimulate conflict, coercion, or domination. Some pluralists hold this view seeing conflict but little coercion or domination because of the plurality of power bases and interests in society which tend to balance each other. But it is with proponents of class or power elite theories that this view is most often accepted, explicitly or implicitly. On the other hand, pluralists of a structural-functionalist persuasion argue that such a model emphasizes the distributive functions of power at the private level at the expense of the collective purposes for which power is used. In discussing the zero-sum conception of C. Wright Mills in his book The Power Elite, Talcott Parsons (1957:139) says, "The essential point at present is that, to Mills, power is not a facility for the performance of function in and on behalf of the society as a system, but is interpreted exclusively as a facility for getting what one group, the holders of power, wants by preventing another group, the 'outs', from getting what it wants." The problem with this interpretation, according to Parsons (1957:139) is that it elevates "a secondary and derived aspect of a total phenomenon into the central place." The primary and original aspect of the total phenomenon of power, then, is "the capacity to mobilize the resources of the

society for the attainment of goals for which a general 'public' commitment has been made, or may be made. It is mobilization, above all, of the action of groups, which is binding on them by virtue of their position in the society" (Parsons, 1957:140). This is a power as "resource" model which stresses the necessity of social consensus and the positive benevolent role power plays in the achievement of common social goals. In this model, the exercise of power is quite limited -- it cannot be used to achieve limited self-interests, but must be "in the best interests" of all of society's members and "in accordance with the standards of the common value system" (Parsons, 1954:388); "the threat of coercive measures, or of compulsion, without legitimation or justification, should not properly be called the use of power at all" (Parsons, 1963a:236).

To Parsons power is a resource of the total system, that is, it is a property of the social system used by persons in that system to accomplish the goals of the system. There is no room in this view for the conflictual aspect of power, for the ways compliance is secured from people when they are in opposition. Giddens (1968:265) notes this and makes an important point:

Two obvious facts, that authoritative decisions very often do serve sectional interests and that the most radical conflicts in society stem from struggles for power, are defined out of consideration -- at least as phenomena connected with "power". The conceptualization of power which Parsons offers allows him to shift the entire weight of his analysis away from power as expressing a relation between individuals or groups, toward seeing power as a "system property". That collective "goals", or even the values which lie behind them, may

be the outcome of a "negotiated order" built on conflicts between parties holding differential power is ignored, since for Parsons "power" assumes the prior existence of collective goals.

The point that social structure and values are socially constructed and may reflect differential outcomes of struggles for power is an important one. It shall be encountered again shortly.

The view that power is a potential as expressed in Weber's definition of power as "the chance of a man . . ." has been reiterated by many analysts. D'Antonio and Ehrlich (1961: 132) define power as "a capacity or ability to control others and . . .to control the decision-making process". They argue that power as a potential for control and as the exercise of control itself are not mutually exclusive: "persons who exercise power must, by definition, have had a power potential, but not all persons who hold potential power do in fact exercise power" (1961:132). Because power as potential may differ significantly from the behaviour which is the exercise of power, the measurement of power as potential must be based on indicies which do not include behavioural evidence. Indicies that have been used include reputation and the composition of power groups as measured by social background, career lines, membership in social clubs, concentration of wealth, and the interlocks between corporations and between corporations and government. This is the type of power and methodology that many class or power elite theorists employ.

The power as potential view and its reputational methodology have been criticized on a number of counts. Polsby (1963: 60) has argued that the notion of power as potential is vague

and "not easy to discuss in a scientific manner". In particular the problems raised by critics have been mostly related to the difficulties in measuring power of this type. (But see those noted in the last section above.) Research attempting to document the existence of a powerful economic elite or a capitalist ruling class is said to be methodologically unsound for the following reasons. (1) The samples are diverse and the criteria for inclusion are often vague. (2) The indices provide a measure of a statistical aggregate; but a statistical aggregate is not necessarily a group with a uniform set of goals, purposes, or ideology. (3) There is an assumption that membership in a predetermined elite is sufficient for the exercise of control over the economy. (4) The problem of infinite regress in measuring elite control as raised by Dahl (1958:463):

If the overt leaders of a community do not appear to constitute a ruling elite, then the theory can be saved by arguing that behind the overt leaders is a set of covert leaders who do. If subsequent evidence shows that this covert group does not make a ruling elite, then the theory can be saved by arguing that behind the first covert group there is another, and on.

Most of the critics and the elite/class theorists accept that in order to demonstrate that an economic elite is the most powerful of all elites or that a ruling class exists, or, indeed, that any individual/group is more powerful than another, it must be shown that this individual/group does in fact get its way at the expense of others. This means that it must be shown how the individual/group in question gets others to act in particular ways even though these others resist such direction. Many of the critics have argued that such a demonstration can only be

made by focusing on the actual exercise of power, that is, on its behavioural manifestation. They propose that power not be conceived in terms of potential but in terms of actual behaviour. For example, in an influential article, Robert A. Dahl (1957: 202-203) has defined power in this manner: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do." This narrower definition enables the analyst to focus on the political process and to ask empirical questions about specific decisions. Those who accept this orientation emphasize the study of concrete, observable behaviour. Polsby (1963:121) argues that the researcher "should study actual behaviour, either at first hand or by reconstructing behaviour from documents, informants, newspapers, and other appropriate sources". This behavioural focus has been operationalized as the study of decision-making in various social settings. Thus, for Dahl (1958:466) power can be analyzed only after "careful examination of a series of concrete decisions", and for Polsby (1963:4) the identification of "who prevails in decision-making" seems "the best way to determine which individuals and groups have 'more' power in social life, because direct conflict between actors presents a situation most closely approximating an experimental test of their capacities to affect outcomes". As indicated by this last quotation decision-making is assumed to involve the manifestation of conflict which can be observed, and analytic attention is to be given to those areas where decisions are being made about issues which are controversial and generate actual conflict. Such "key" issues must be selected for, according to Dahl (1958:467), it is "a necessary though

possibly not a sufficient condition that the key issue should involve actual disagreements in preferences among two or more groups". Thus, the operational criterion in an experimental test of power attribution is the existence, expression, and observation of conflict between the preferences of the parties to the decision. These preferences are assumed to be consciously held by the participants and revealed in their actions -- and are thereby observable. A further assumption, pointed out by Lukes (1974:14), is "that interests are to be understood as policy preferences -- so that a conflict of interests is equivalent to a conflict of preferences". Lukes (1974:15) summarizes this view as involving "a focus on behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation".

This behavioural view of power is held by most pluralists. It has been applied by them mostly to "key" political issues, especially at the community level but also at the national level where they tend to find a plurality of interests expressed and a more or less balanced decisional outcome. The pluralist methodology has been criticized for being, among other things, parochial, ahistorical, and unable to deal with important aspects of power and its exercise as a result of its self-imposed limitations.

One aspect of power which the pluralist methodology with its emphasis on decision-making excludes is what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz in two very important articles termed the other "face" of power, namely, "nondecision-making".

Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970) argue that power has two faces. The first face is power in the behavioural sense as measured in key issues settled by concrete decisions with direct and observable conflict. The second face of power is composed of key issues which do not result in a decision-making process in the political arena but rather are prevented from reaching that arena by a process Bachrach and Baratz call "nondecision-making". Whereas a decision is "a choice among alternative modes of action" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970:39), they define a nondecision as "a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-makers" (1970:44). And the process of nondecision-making is "a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making area; or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process" (1970:44).

This second nondecision-making face of power is built on Schattschneider's (1960) concept of the "mobilization of bias" inherent in any form of organization. Bachrach and Baratz (1970:43-44) incorporate this concept into their discussion of power by describing it as:

a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ("rules of the game") that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests. More often than not, the "status

quo defenders" are a minority or elite group within the population in question. Elitism, however, is neither fore-ordained nor omnipresent: as opponents of the war in Viet Nam can readily attest, the mobilization of bias can and frequently does benefit a clear majority.

Thus, there are two situations in which power may be expressed which must be included in a conception of power:

. . . power may be exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public considerations of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970:7).

And to the extent that A succeeds in doing this, A has power.

While Bachrach and Baratz add a second dimension to the concept of power as behaviour, they share with that earlier view the operationalization of the element of resistance as the manifestation of actual, observable conflict. This conflict may be directly and overtly expressed in the political arena as in the case of decision-making. But in the case of nondecision-making the criteria of resistance are broadened: observable conflict is still required but its expression may be covert or indirect. That is, its expression may be outside of the political arena in the form of grievances which have "not been recognized as 'worthy' of public attention and controversy", but are "observable in their aborted form to the investigator" (1970:49).

A number of analysts, especially of the elite/class

orientation, have argued that the decision-making view, while greatly expanded by the addition of the organizational mobilization of bias in its nondecisional form, is still problematic. The major insufficiency according to these people is the requirement for observable issue-oriented conflict even at a covert level. There are significant situations of power where no resistance is observable, situations where consensus reigns which cannot be comprehended by these views. Many of these analysts argue that a particular person or group may be unable to articulate their interests, or they may be mistaken about them, or even unaware of them. Some argue the applicability of Marx's notion of false consciousness and/or the creation and manipulation of false needs (as in the critical theory of consumerism of Marcuse, 1964). In this perspective, there is said to exist certain "real" or "true" or "objective" interests which are being suppressed through the acceptance of a prevailing ideology that is manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, by the ruling group who stand to gain by that ideology. The acceptance of this ideological belief system mystifies the actual social position of those who are subordinate to the powerful and prevents them from rationally assessing it. Thus, they remain unaware of their real interests, or unable to articulate them or even mistaken about them -- and as such are unable to resist when directed to act against their real interests.

Pluralists, as well as a number of elite/class theorists, are opposed to such a position primarily on the basis that it cannot be empirically falsified. Nelson Polsby argues that the notion of real or objective interests underlying situ-

ations with no observable, measurable conflict must be rejected because:

If information about the actual behaviour of groups in the community is not considered relevant when it is different from the researcher's expectations, then it is impossible ever to disprove the empirical propositions of the stratification theory (that is, the Marxist theory of class), and they will then have to be regarded as meta-physical rather than empirical statements. The presumption that the "real" interests of a class can be assigned to them by an analyst allows the analyst to charge "false class consciousness" when the class in question disagrees with the analyst (Polsby, 1963:22-23).

Bachrach and Baratz even though they are concerned about non-decision and mobilization of bias also take this view. They argue that without the manifestation of conflict, overt or covert, "the presumption must be that there is consensus on the prevailing allocation of values, in which case nondecision-making is impossible". Without observable conflict "there is no way to accurately judge whether the thrust of a decision really is to thwart or prevent serious consideration of a demand for change that is potentially threatening to the decision-maker (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970:49-50).

There the debate has stood for a long time. There appears to be no resolution available within the terms of the debate.

Reconceptualization of Power

If no resolution to the debate between pluralists and elite/class theorists appears possible as it is presently constituted, then changing the terms of the debate may provide such a mechanism (hopefully without the need for an accompanying

"leap of faith" or "conversion experience"). One important term which has been suggested recently for resolving the debate is the problem of levels of analysis. Another important term which bears scrutiny is the conception of power which informs and underlies the debate.

Levels of Analysis: Power As Structure

The controversy as to the existence of a so-called power elite/ruling class, its nature, membership, and measurement has raged for a long time. Some studies demonstrate that there is an elite, others show that pluralism is the rule. In contrast to the work of Domhoff and others to show the existence of a cohesive and integrated ruling elite/class, recent reconceptualizations and studies have shown that: (1) there are a variety of elites, (2) non-elites also figure in decision-making, (3) there is often competition among elites, and (4) the state has a degree of autonomy. Several studies have undermined the notion of a cohesive, integrated elite. Koenig (1977) employed graph theory to link corporations throughout the U.S. and found the existence of regional networks that are not part of a larger elite. Margolin (1976) studied membership in elite foundations and policy-making groups and found less elite representation than expected. Useem (1977) did an indirect test on the extent to which the American capitalist class is integrated by examining a sample of 1307 businessmen who responded to a 1968 national probability sample of college and university trustees by differentiating them along an axis of group centrality. Those who served as corporate executives and sat on the boards of large firms were seen as members of a central group, while those

who oversaw only a single firm were seen as outside of the inner group. When they were compared in terms of their political consciousness it was not found that "elite" businessmen differed from those on the fringes. As Useem (1977:1) notes,

It is suggested that the inner group may play a limited role in unifying and controlling the business community but that it does not provide a means for the integration and promotion of general class interests.

Thomas Dye's (1976) massive study of 5000 institutional elites found that the resources of the U.S. are concentrated but also that the "resources available to individuals in America are infinitesimal in comparison with the resources available to the nation's largest institutions". He found that 4000 individuals in 5000 positions control a majority of the country's financial resources but that many of them have little to do with one another. He found relatively little interlock between the government and the corporate world. He further found that this elite of 5000 was relatively unstable -- only 12 percent of them inherited their positions; most of them climbed through the ladders of their firms, and went to non-elite schools.

Recent work by a number of analysts suggests a more complex relationship between the economic elite and the state. Such writers as Miliband (1969, 1970, 1973), Poulantzas (1973), Offe (1972), O'Connor (1973), argue that the state is not totally captured by the elite nor is it their "servant". Instead the state is seen to have a degree of autonomy, its own interests, and to serve a number of interests and demands, many of which are conflicting. The state is depicted as often using the corporations to carry out its objectives, such as economic growth,

and to help them where necessary -- because the state is not a capitalist organization it must rely on the corporations and the economic growth they can achieve to help it accumulate and grow. (See Gold, et al., 1975, for a discussion of Marxist theories of the state.)

The divergent interests among elites, competition between them, their lack of unity, and the relative autonomy of the state have caused further reconceptualization. Several authors (for example, Esping-Anderson, et al., 1976; Alford, 1975; Whitt, 1979) have expanded the pluralist -- elite debate by adding a new term to it -- "class" -- and developed a structural view of class power which can contain such factors as those above which weaken the elite hypothesis. They argue that, at root, the pluralist versus elite debate cannot be resolved because each "perspective" (Esping-Anderson, et al.) or "paradigm" (Alford) or "model" (Whitt) focuses on a different level of social organization for analysis. The addition of a class perspective/paradigm/model helps to distinguish them and account for their disparate findings by providing a larger unit of analysis within which the two are subsumed. The pluralist perspective focuses, it is suggested, upon situational contexts and the processes by which individuals and groups mobilize and take political action within a framework of cultural consensus. The "instrumentalist" perspective (called the "elite" paradigm by Alford and the "elitist" model by Whitt) focuses on the structure of large organizations to examine the bargaining and exchange process within and between them and their impact on the general policies that set the parameters for particular decisions.

The class paradigm (called the class-dialectic model by Whitt and treated as two perspectives by Esping-Anderson, et al., the structuralist and political class) focuses on the class structure and the manner in which class relations set the parameters for the basic forms organizations can take. These three levels of social organizations are not perfectly correlated with each other. "There is an important element of contingency or 'slip-page' between these levels, each of which is causally important and cannot be reduced to the others. This independence provides each paradigm with its explanatory potential within its own level or context" (Alford, 1975:150). Table 2.1 reproduces Whitt's classification of the three views along various dimensions.

The significance of the "class" approach is that it takes the highest level of analysis and examines the structure of the institutions of society to determine their influence on the lower levels of analysis such as the organizational and the situational. It thus takes into consideration not only the possible suppression of political issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962) by dominant classes, but also

the political implications of strategically allowing the bias of social institutions to determine political outcomes with no observable decisions or actions, as such, being required of dominant political actors. The class-dialectic model argues that one must understand the logic and biases of social institutions as well as the observable political behaviours of social classes and individual actors. There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between social institutions and dominant classes: dominant classes act to preserve those institutions which are the basis of their own hegemony. Institutions shape behaviour (of both dom-

TABLE 2.1

Characteristics of Models of the Distribution of Power in Society

	Pluralistic	Elite	Class Dialectic
Basic units of analysis	Interest groups	Institutional elites	Social institutions; social classes
Essential processes	Interest group competition	Hierarchical dominance by elites	Imperatives of social institutions; class domination and conflict
Basis of group power (resources)	Many bases: organizational, governmental, economic, social, personal	Institutional position, common social background, convergent interests	Class position; degree of class consciousness and organization
Distribution of power	Dispersed among competing, heterogeneous groups	Concentrated in relatively homogenous elites	Held by dominant class, but potentially available to subordinate classes
Limits and Stability of groups power	Unstable; limited by democratic value consensus, shifting strength among organized interests and by cross-cutting allegiances	Stable, no identifiable limits to elite domination	Historically contingent; generally stable, but limited by class conflict and contradictions within and among social institutions
Conception of role of state	State is a broker, able to reserve some autonomy by balancing competing interests	State has little, if any, autonomy; captive of elite interests	State serves interests of dominant class, but requires a degree of autonomy from segments of dominant class in order to act to preserve basis of class hegemony

Source: Whitt, 1979

inant and subordinate classes) and the dominant class often shapes institutions (Whitt, 1979:84).

Whitt's class-dialectic model of power argues that there is a dominant class in society based upon its ownership of the means of production. However, this class is not monolithic or all powerful -- it varies in terms of the degree to which it is class conscious and politically organized. As such it is characterized by intraclass conflicts. Subordinate classes are able to challenge the dominant class, and even take control of the means of production, if sufficiently class conscious and politically organized. And the state, while predominately serving the interests of the capitalist class, is, according to some analysts, open to input from subordinate classes as well as sometimes serving its own interests. Moreover, economic development taking place within the class structure generates contradictions which often constrain the options available to the capitalist class to act upon. This latter point provides the dialectic. Whitt (1979:84) says of his model: "It is this dialectical conception of power, of the most important difference separating the elitist and class-dialectic models."

Conceptualizing Power As Structure

The above structural views have been developed with much attention to the basic definition of power which underlies their applications. Some conceptual grounding has been provided by Steven Lukes (1974) in a recent discussion wherein he develops a theoretical concept of power as a structural phenomenon -- a concept he terms a "radical view" of power. Lukes presents an analysis of two views of power and then a third view

which he believes corrects the deficiencies of the first two. He treats these views as focusing on particular aspects or "dimensions" in a fashion similar to the levels of analysis views presented above. The one-dimensional view -- that of the pluralists -- focuses on the "behavioural study of political actors, but it inevitably takes over the bias of the political system under observation and is blind to the ways in which its agenda is controlled" (Lukes, 1974:55). The two dimensional view tries to examine this bias and control. The two dimensional view applies Schattschneider's (1960) notion of the "mobilization of bias" inherent in organization to the analysis of power by looking at both decision-making and so-called nondecision-making. The latter refers to the power to control the content of the political agenda by excluding "potential issues" from it. In Bachrach and Baratz's formulation of this two dimensional view, a behavioural criterion is utilized which emphasized that actual, observable conflict, overt or covert, must be formed in order for there to be power being exercised. This means that the interests of those excluded from the agenda must conflict with those of the nondecision-makers and that these grievances will be manifested overtly or covertly, that is, within or outside the political system. Lukes finds this view too restrictive because its behavioural focus on actual decision-making processes in situations of observable conflict over observable issues of grievances is not sociological enough. In particular it ignores the effects of collective action and of the mobilization of bias inherent in organization which make the decision-making process move in directions not consciously chosen or in-

tended by the individuals involved in it. It is here, Lukes argues, three-dimensional power focuses. In this view, "power can be exercised without the exerciser being aware of what he (it) is doing" (Lukes, 1974:51). It can be exercised through action as well as by inaction, and it is a collective phenomenon which results from the systemic effects of organizational or institutional structures rather than from individual decision or behaviour. This is not, argues Lukes (1974:55), to assert a form of structural determinism:

. . . to identify a given process as an "exercise in power", rather than as a case of structural determinism, is to assume that it is in the exerciser's or exercisers' power to act differently. In the case of a collective exercise of power, on the part of a group, or institution, etc., this is to imply that the members of the group or institution could have combined or organized to act differently.

Also as a result of this structural focus, the three-dimensional view of power can deal with cases where no behavioural manifestation of grievance is apparent and thus there is no observable conflict. The successful aversion of an issue from the political agenda does not require actual conflict to be considered an instance of power, Lukes argues. Such cases of potential conflict may never be "actualized", but remain as "latent" conflicts, that is, "a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude. These latter may not express or even be conscious of their interests", but Lukes (1974:24-25) argues that indirect or counterfactual evidence can empirically establish these real interests. There is no need here to discuss how he would go about establishing these needs. (See the discussions

by Bilgrami, 1976; Bradshaw, 1976; Lukes, 1976). Table 2.2 illustrates the basic facit of the three views of power as developed by Lukes.

Another significant contribution to the conception of power in terms of a structural-historical model has been made by Baumgartner, et al. (1975, 1976). They develop the concept of meta-power which refers to efforts to create and shape social relationships and social structures by manipulating the components of what they call the "interaction system" which determines the behaviour of the interactants. These components are: (1) "The interaction situation -- the complex of possible actions available to the actors in a particular situation, both those implicit in a given structure as well as available alternatives. Possible actions are constrained by the physical and social environment, the availability of resources, and the actors' perceptions of available actions." (2) "The interaction payoffs -- or outcome structure -- is the aggregate of outcomes associated with particular actions or combinations of actions. The structure of gains and losses may promote certain actions and discourage others." (3) "The actors' attitudes and orientations toward one another -- i.e., their predisposition to to act in particular ways toward particular (classes of) actors based on a culture of normatively defined as well as emergent values and orientations among the actors" (Baumgartner, et al., 1976:220-221).

When persons or groups exercise meta-power they gain control over social relationships and social structures -- this is called relational control by Baumgartner, et al. Re-

TABLE 2.2

THREE DIMENSIONS OF POWER

One-Dimensional View of Power

- Focus on (a) behaviour
(b) decision-making
(c) (key) issues
(d) observable (overt) conflict
(e) (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences revealed by political participation

Two-Dimensional View of Power

(Qualified) critique of behavioural focus

- Focus on (a) decision-making and nondecision-making
(b) issues and potential issues
(c) observable (overt and covert) conflict
(d) (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences or grievances

Three-Dimensional View of Power

Critique of behavioural focus

- Focus on (a) decision-making and control over political agenda (not necessarily through decisions)
(b) issues and potential issues
(c) observable (overt and covert) and latent conflict
(d) subjective and real interests

Source: Lukes, 1974:25

lational control as the exercise of meta-power is distinguish- from social power. Persons having social power in an inter- action system have "greater ability than others to select a preferred outcome or to realize (their) will over the opposi- tion of others within that social structural context"(1976:225). But this does not mean that they necessarily have meta-power or relational control. Baumgartner, et al., (1976:225) deline- ate relational control of the three interactive system compon- ents and some ways it may be accomplished:

Relational control of the interaction situa- tion consists of exercising power to shape the aggregate action and interaction possi- bilities of these involved in the situation, i.e., to remove certain actions from those repertoires and to create or facilitate others. This may be done, for example, by limiting their ability to communicate or to associate with one another. . . Structur- ing the gains and losses associated with particular actions and interactions so as to promote or to discourage certain interaction patterns represents relational control with respect to interaction payoffs; for example, the creation of payoff structures such as "zero-sum" or "prisoner's dilemma" to pro- mote conflictive or competitive interests. Relational control carried out with respect to orientation might entail promoting dis- trust or an individualistic self-interest ideology or trust and a social co-operation ideology.

Baumgartner, et al., also note that actors other than the dominant actor with relational control may also be able to exercise relational control in the interaction system to some extent -- even over the dominant actor. As such, though an elite may be the dominant power it may not have complete or direct control over social relationships and structures. Sev- eral factors may contribute to this, the most important of

which for the present discussion is the development of secondary or unintended consequences as a result of the exercise of relational control.

Steven Lukes' conception of power emphasizes the organizational and institutional levels of analysis and the decision-nondecision-making process which create structural effects. But he does not elaborate on the process of organizational decision-making nor on strategies which might be employed to create and manipulate structural advantages. Baumgartner, et al., fill in this gap to some extent by focusing on strategies. One further contribution to the structural-historical conception comes from Bernd Baldus. Although he does not deal with organizational decision-making either, he fills out Lukes' analysis, raises issues not considered by either Lukes or Baumgartner, et al., and provides further insight into the manner in which structures of power behave. Like Lukes, Baldus (1975) argues that conflict free situations, where there is no observable behaviour indicating a grievance, can and must be included in the analysis of power -- and that only a structural view can provide this. However, like Baumgartner, et al., Baldus does not consider the problem of the "real interests" of subordinates or their determination. Whereas Lukes considers power only within the political arena, Baldus considers power in a more general manner. He (1975:180) defines power as "the ability of a center unit to maintain, reproduce, or reinforce over time its position with respect to a periphery unit in a structure of inequality of which both are a part". He suggests that the empirical analysis of power must (1) util-

ize structural, not subjective indicators and (2) be directed to the investigation of the causal processes which determine the maintenance or the change of a pattern of structural social inequality. More particularly, it must investigate the behaviour of the units in the structure of reference which contribute to its continuity or change. Such an analysis treats the maintenance of a referent structure as a dependent variable, and its behavioural determinants as independent variables. The latter includes all behaviour which can be empirically identified as causal factors in the continuity of the structure of reference. This comprises, among other forms of behaviour, behaviour which is not conflict-oriented and behaviour which is not part of a direct interaction connecting the units observed.

The last point, that behaviour which is not part of a direct interaction connecting the units observed should be considered an independent variable in maintaining power structure, is where Baldus really goes beyond Lukes. As Baldus correctly notes, most discussions of power, explicitly or implicitly accept the basic definition of power as defined by Max Weber (1964) and elaborated by, among others, Dahl (1957). These definitions are based on some form of resistance as part of the criterion for a power relationship to exist. This criterion has already been disposed of. These definitions also consider that a power relationship must be an interactive one in a direct sense. But, as Baldus shows, direct interaction is not the only way units are connected or linked in complex social systems. In fact there are many types of non-interactive relations which

link the various parts of a social system -- and which are:

essential to the system's functioning. In the most general sense they include cases in which a behaviour of one unit becomes a necessary condition for the goal-realization of another even though the two do not interact. The ignorance of the general public, and the very absence of any reaction for this reason, is an essential condition for the success of political corruption. Such non-interactive links are of prime importance in maintaining and reproducing system structures, including structured forms of social inequality. . . . (Baldus, 1975:181)

These diverse, non-interactive relations which prove to be useful to a power structure in some way, Baldus terms complementary behaviour patterns. They are not caused or planned by the power structure, but are "autonomously" generated by persons and groups in the peripheral environment of the power structure. Usually these behaviours are oriented to a goal of direct relevance to these peripheral actors but the power structure finds them of use for its own purposes. Thus they can contribute to maintaining the position of the power structure. The original intentions of the peripheral actors and the meaning of the behaviour to them is of no real concern to the power structure. It is only interested in the "instrumental utility" of the behaviour in facilitating its own goal-realization -- which goals are of quite a different nature than the actors' goals. Often the actors will not even be aware that this behaviour is complementary. Nor does the power structure necessarily have to be conscious that it is using it. This complementary behaviour contributes to the maintenance of the power structure while it appears to the periphery that it is pursuing goals of its own choice without interference from outside.

Complementary behaviour is of crucial importance to the maintenance of any complex social system. Since it is judged only by its identity, it makes it possible to organize behaviour which serves the diverse personal goals of individual units into directed schemes of collective action whose objective need not be known to the contributing units. In addition, complementary behaviour accrues to its ultimate beneficiary frequently without any costs. Unlike periphery behaviour which results from persuasive or coercive control, complementary behaviour represents an unsolicited contribution to the center's position (Balduş, 1975:191).

Another form of complementary behaviour is the result of an adjustment in the behaviour of peripheral actors to limitations imposed upon their behaviour. Adjustive behaviour occurs in situations where the behaviour and/or motives of peripheral actors are not compatible with the requirements of a power structure, i.e., with its mobilization of bias. These requirements place limits on the behaviour options available to peripheral actors who often experience them as stressful, depriving, frustrating. This strain is reduced by adjusting their behaviour to a pattern which reduces the strain in some way and establishes compatibility. Once compatibility is established, adjustive behaviour functions in the same manner as complementary behaviour for the power structure.

From Balduş' perspective, a power structure, that is, a sector in some larger social system, is viewed as a group of people with various interests who organize in a particular way to achieve them. This organization itself influences the goals and their achievement. The people in the structure must monitor and make sense of their environment in order to secure the necessary inputs they require from actors in the

periphery. Baldus sees this problem as one of complexity reduction. Various strategies are available to power structures to be used in gaining their required inputs from the environment. Baldus talks of two forms of strategy: (1) interventive control and (2) the use of conditions already existing in the periphery which are complementary to the interests of the power structure. Interventive control strategies are those which originate in the power structure usually aimed at (1) coercion -- to prevent, restrict, eliminate, or correct conditions and behaviour in the periphery which is perceived as threatening or dangerous, or (2) socialization -- to create supportive behaviour and motives in the periphery and delegitimize alternatives. The incorporation of complementary behaviour, which originates in the periphery, into the concerns of the power structure is a much less "costly" control strategy than intervention for obvious reasons. Baldus argues that in systems which become increasingly large and complex, periphery behaviour becomes more autonomous from structures of power, and the costs of intervention control efforts increases. Thus power structures under such conditions to be successful must rely more upon the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns.

The strategy of coercion fits into Baumgartner, et al.'s relational control scheme as an interaction payoff or outcome, as a means of structuring the gains and losses associated with particular actions or interactions. Socialization is obviously a relational control strategy aimed at structuring orientation. But the strategy of the incorporation of comple-

mentary behaviour appears to cut across all three of Baumgartner, et al.'s interaction system components. It would appear to be able to create or facilitate certain actions, to create payoff structures, and to create orientations.

The work of Lukes, Baumgartner, et al., and Baldus is a significant contribution to a structural-historical conception of power. They each argue for an organizational or institutional level of analysis which focuses on the biasing effects of organizational structural strategies on action possibilities, outcomes, and orientations in situations where there may be no resistance and/or direct interaction between the power structure and other actors in the system. Such a focus requires a historical methodology which considers the process of the creation, development, maintenance, and change of power structures (which Baumgartner, et al., term amplification, morphostasis, and morphogenesis). And it can utilize indicies which are both behavioural and nonbehavioural. This view proposes an image of organizational/institutional power structures as active on their own level. Numerous power strategies are delineated. An especially interesting strategy is the incorporation of complementary behaviour by power structures.

Both Baumgartner, et al., and Baldus have applied their conceptions in a brief and rudimentary manner at the institutional level. Baumgartner, et al., examine the emergence and rise of early capitalism, the development of empires, the formation of the state, and processes of decentralization and disintegration. Baldus (1977) utilizes his conception to analyze the rise of capitalism as well. His analysis raises several

aspects which will prove useful to this discussion. His analysis argues that the transition from feudalism to capitalism was caused, in part, by the increasing growth and complexity of the social environment during the feudal period, exacerbated by the development of capitalism as the major form of production. The feudal class was unable to cope with and control this increasingly complex and diverse environment because it tended to rely on the main form of social control it had utilized -- interventive control strategies. The success of the capitalist class in achieving and maintaining relational control was that it realized it was not longer necessary to directly intervene in the environment.

Autocratic dominant classes had seen periphery diversity as a threat to their interests and had tried to suppress it. The new dominant bourgeoisie realized not only that this was not possible, but that it was not necessary. It was the historic discovery of the individual capitalist that he could solve the apparent contradiction between his own interests and those of an increasingly diverse periphery by letting others work for him while allowing them to pursue their own personal goals. It was the historic discovery of capitalists as a class that this could be done on a large scale and that their means and needs could be satisfied to a large extent by the many supportive and complementary features of diverse and autonomous periphery behaviour, with the added advantage that they maintained a semblance of periphery independence. Seen from this perspective, the liberal "freedoms" the bourgeoisie proclaimed as its proudest achievements were nothing but a rational change to a more efficient form of rule, or more precisely, the correct organizational response to growing system complexity (Baldus, 1977:254-255).

As such, the use of complementary behaviour in the periphery was increasingly utilized as a control strategy in the develop-

ment of capitalism. As Baldus formulates this development it is a dual opportunity structure in which both the dominant class and the members of the periphery come to "see each other increasingly as opportunity structures".

The dominant class scans the periphery for whatever conditions are complementary to its own objectives and intervenes generally only where these conditions are insufficient to meet its requirements or where periphery behaviour interferes with its interests. Similarly, members of the periphery come to see the existing structure of inequality and its symbolic and ideological representations as a structure of opportunities for the realization of their personal interests (Baldus, 1977:258).

Baldus argues that this dual opportunity structure is the foundation of liberal democracy, and gives the appearance of personal freedom -- that is, a high degree of periphery independence for its members -- while obscuring the relational control of the dominant class. The notion of the dual opportunity structure is important and will be raised in the discussion of consumption.

One other point Baldus makes is that as corporate capitalism concentrates ownership and production in large corporate enterprises, the demands of these enterprises become less diversified as when there were more competitors. The structural and technological imperatives of these large enterprises require more standardized, homogenized inputs. But in the face of an environment or periphery increasing in its diversity, it seems that the opportunities for finding complementary patterns which will satisfy corporate goals decreases. "The larger the capitalist enterprise, the more it tends to lose the organizational flexibility of the small capitalist to adapt

quickly to changing opportunities in his environment and to take advantage of complementary conditions -- if necessary, by modifying his own operations. As a consequence, there is an increasing tendency to return to interventive control in order to mobilize needed periphery behaviour" (Baldus, 1977:261). At the general level this is a plausible hypothesis and it is clearly related to the notion of Baumgartner, et al., about the secondary outcomes or unintended consequences of the exercise of meta-power. This is an important aspect which will be related to the changed environmental conditions of the automobile industry in the late 1960s and 1970s.

This section has outlined the basic conceptions of several authors of power as a sociological variable which must be analyzed at that level. Power conceived of as meta-power or relational control emphasizes the construction and manipulation of social relationships and structures and the effects of such action. It is obvious that such formulations are still in their early stages of development and are not highly refined or conceptually elaborate. On the basis of the above discussion, a definition of power as a sociological phenomenon, that is, as meta-power, will now be proposed. Groups, organizations, institutions will have power to the extent that they are able to (1) maintain their own structures of action, reward and orientation in a stable state in the face of uncertain and changing environmental conditions, or (2) alter their structure in such a way that their fundamental interests and relationships are maintained (functional equivalence). This is accomplished by collectively deciding upon particular courses of

action chosen from a number of possible alternatives which exercise relational control with respect to (1) those persons, groups, organizations, institutions important to them in their environment, whether in direct contact or not, and/or (2) aspects of their environment which are of less relevance to their functioning.

This is a relational conception of power which is posed at a level which includes numerous dense and complex interactions, interrelationships and interdependencies, that is, social relationships and structures. Relational concepts are always difficult to formulate with clarity and specificity, and are thus vague by definition, so to speak. However, such conceptions are preferable to the more simplistic ones which were discussed earlier with their individualistic, subjective, and thereby "measurable", notions of causality. Power as an explanatory variable has been defined to fit into prevailing models of science which emphasize monolinear causality. These definitions present a view in which power is an intention of an individual (or an organization or institution considered as an individual) which is effected through its exercise upon other individuals (or organizations/institutions) in a direct, immediate manner with an observable outcome shortly thereafter. If the individual has power, the outcome is symmetrical with the intentional input. James Ogilvy, in his cogent philosophical analysis of the structure of modern society, Many Dimensional Man, has described this model of power in terms of the metaphor of an individual playing an organ with tracker action. He applies this metaphor of the Kappelmeister to the use of

entrepreneurial power:

Reading from the notes on the score of his intentions he pushes the appropriate keys thereby setting in motion a series of direct mechanical pushes and pulls whose final effect is to release the force of proletarian billows in precisely the right pipes at precisely the right instants. Assuming those pipes have been tuned correctly and that all is in order in the elaborate mechanics of the keyes, pedals, levers and pulleys that make up the bureaucracy of the State, the intentions of the single voiced Kapellmeister will issue in a rich polyphony sufficient to delight all those humble folk who have taken part in the ceremony (Ogilvey, 1977:30).

What both the predominant conceptions of power and the metaphor of the Kappelmeister have in common is the assumption that social relations and structures are little more than direct, mechanical input-output processes which give direct, linear outputs to intentional inputs.

Such simplistic assumptions of social structure and action and the simplistic notions of causality which they try to satisfy are simply inadequate to understanding power and its exercise in society. Structures of social relations in modern society are very intricate networks of interlocking patterns which form in Ogilvy's terms an "ecological system". Interrelationships and interdependencies in such systems create processes in which intentional inputs are constrained, limited, even transformed in their movements through the system. Power in such systems is less the capacity or ability to realize specific intentions than it is to limit choices to suitable ranges and/or render some possibilities virtually inconceivable.

In writing on the topic of general concern in this study -- corporations and the market -- Ogilvy formulates the

problem in a manner which relates to the issue of levels of analysis raised by Alford, Esping-Anderson, et al., and Whitt earlier in this section, and to the discussion of consumerism by critical theorists. Ogilvy (1977:31) argues that

Maintaining consumerism is not the work of some single power conceived on the model of mechanical pushes and pulls. Consumerism is instead the air we breathe, the very atmosphere maintained by and maintaining our economy. An ecological metaphor is far more adequate than the magisterial. But in that case the language of power is inappropriate, the logic of cybernetics more germane.

At this level, which is the institutional or class level, the problem is incredibly complex and oceanic in its ability to swallow up the analyses that try to sail it. Discussions at this level -- which is where most in this area have been -- tend to deal with the issues at a general level. They also treat what is called in this discussion relational control only in broad outline with little detail or systematic analysis at lower levels of analysis of how actual decisions are made, what aspects are chosen for development (or non-development), and their effects. This study will focus on the organizational level of analysis. It will examine actual operations of corporations within the institutional context in order to specify how directions are chosen for development, the contents of those decisions, and their effects by analyzing the interaction between corporations and elements of their environment which they are able to utilize in some way. A statement of the research problem follows.

The Research Problem

The sociological focus of this dissertation is the nature of the relationship between corporations and their environments, specifically between corporations and patterns of cultural behaviour in their environments, the way corporations respond to or use these patterns, and the effects on their environments. The analytical focus is the relationship between the automobile industry and the market for automobiles within the context of the larger cultural environment. The issue selected for analysis is that of the relation between "extra motives" in the automobile-highway system and the automobile industry. Extra motives are operationalized in terms of themes of performance, power, speed, machismo, youth and associated automotive design characteristics as manifested in the performance subculture. The performance subculture is operationalized as the hot rod subculture. Thus the research problem is the relation between the automobile industry and hot rodding and its effects on the development of the automobile and on hot rodding.

In examining this relationship the basic units of analysis will be the automobile manufacturers as a collective unit and the hot rod subculture as a collective unit. The unit of analysis will shift to the level of individual manufacturers in order to examine the specific patterns and actions which combined to produce the collective results.

The contrasting ways of conceptualizing the relation of the automobile industry to the market pose several ways of conceptualizing the specific relation between the industry and

hot rodding. The pluralist/functionalist view would suggest that the industry would become interested in hot rodding only around the time it became legitimized and large enough to comprise a viable market. The nature of this relationship would be expected to be the reaction of a group of business organizations to "give the public what it wants", that is, catering to a market and in the process thereby helping to accelerate the growth of hot rodding. The view suggested by considering the automobile industry as a power structure would argue that the relationship is more complicated than this. It would suggest that the relationship should originate at an earlier period of time when hot rodding was still a deviant behaviour pattern in the public eye. And it would suggest that hot rodding may be a complementary behaviour pattern for the industry.

Baldus (1975:191) notes that "contributions to the maintenance of inequality which originate from the periphery have received virtually no attention". This study will attempt to assess the hypothesis that hot rodding is a complementary cultural behaviour pattern which the industry incorporated sometime not long after World War II. The matter of incorporation is hypothesized to be determined in its form by the structural characteristics of the industry, while the specifics of that incorporation are hypothesized to be a result of individual and group decision and nondecision-making within the industry. The results of this incorporation reflect the ability of the industry to structure and systematically direct/develop certain aspects of the physical and symbolic components of the automobile and to ignore (or develop to a lesser degree) other

aspects by not building them or not promoting them. These hypotheses will be examined against the hypothesis of the pluralist/functionalist position which holds that the development and shape of the automobile is a result of the free choice of autonomous individuals who express their interests in the market and to which the industry responds with a product whose appropriateness is determined by the consumers.

In order to add the needed specificity to these hypotheses and to fill out the nature of the power structure under consideration here it will be necessary to explicate a theoretical framework of corporations as power structures and their relationship to their environments. This will be done in the next chapter by drawing upon the work of Talcott Parsons and the literature of organization theory, to present a pluralist/functionalist model. This model will be contrasted with an alternative structural model which will be developed in Chapter Four. And in Chapter Five, the environment will be conceptualized in terms of the nature of the market, the meaning of consumption.

FOOTNOTES

1

For representative works in the revisionist tradition of the economic history of the transition from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism, see, among others, Recent Economic Changes, 1929; Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Chandler, 1962, 1969; Porter, 1973; Thorp, 1924; Kirkland, 1961; Soule, 1947; Faulkner, 1951; Kolko, 1963; Williams, 1961; Noble, 1977; Weinstein, 1968.

2

On corporate liberalism see Sklar, 1960; Weinstein, 1968; Williams, 1961; Gilbert, 1972; Radosh and Rothbard, 1972; Eakins, 1966; Israel, 1972; Noble, 1977. For a critique of the revisionists' interpretation of corporate liberalism and its significance, see McQuaid, 1975.

3

There is another group of analysts, primarily economists, who see the separation of control from ownership to managers but who do not see the restrictions on the exercise of managerial power or their acceptance of societal values. They argue instead that the "managerial revolution" (the title of Burnham's 1941 book) was the emergence of a new ruling class within the corporate state who would inevitably exercise power in their own interests. That is, they assumed that managers would act rationally so as to serve their own best interests. Among those of this view there is disagreement as to how this self-interest will be expressed. Some believe that profit-maximization will remain a prime aspect (Earley, 1957; Baldwin, 1964). Others argue that managers will act to maximize other variables which can fulfill important functions for them beside the need for profit -- such as sales revenue (Baumol, 1967), growth of assets (Marris, 1964), or long-run profits and growth (Penrose, 1959). Williamson (1964), Gordon (1961) and Galbraith (1967) take the position that the actions of managers would be the expression of a utility function based on some combination of financial and non-pecuniary rewards. Galbraith in particular believes that the relative importance of pecuniary rewards decreases as one moves up managerial hierarchies. Cyert and March (1963) argue that because managers must operate with imperfect knowledge and uncertainty with respect to the outcome of their actions, they will in practice seek to achieve a "satisfactory" rather than theoretically maximum level of return. However, these economists show little concern about the possible social consequences of self-interested managerial control in corporate enterprises and thus will not be considered in the main discussion. The exceptions here are Gordon and Galbraith. Galbraith's views will be discussed later in the text.

PLURALIST/FUNCTIONALIST VIEWS OF CORPORATE BEHAVIOUR AND THE ENVIRONMENT

To proceed with this analysis it will be necessary to have a theoretical framework of the nature of the organization-environment relationship in which the analysis may be placed. The discussion in the last chapter on the corporation and its power was phrased at a general level and dealt with the political environment and external controls. It provided little insight into the nature of corporate behaviour. The discussion there of power as a structural variable points up the need to have a view of organizations which sees them as active entities engaging their environments. This chapter will present the traditional pluralist/functionalist view of the organization-environment relationship and its application to the market. The literature on organization theory will be reviewed with respect to this relationship and recent developments in theoretical views of organizational behaviour which presents them as more active in their relations with their environments will be described, in particular through the work of James D. Thompson. This view is compatible with the basic assumptions of the pluralist/functionalist model; but it also sets the stage for the development of the view of organizations as power structures to be developed in Chapter Four. Last, a review will be presented of research in the "institutionalist" tradition which is more sociological in orientation and examines the relationship between various cultural elements in the environment with

organizational variables.

The Pluralist/Functionalist View of Organization-Environment Interaction

The two basic conceptions of power which have occupied the sociological literature described above have had their major applications in the realm of political decisions at the community and national levels. For pluralists and functionalists the political institution is an autonomous realm to which various individuals and/or groups come to express their conflicting interests and to receive satisfaction through the allocation of rewards and resources in the decision-making process. In this view the economic power represented by the corporate elite is balanced by the numerous countervailing powers in the wider society and the power of the state. The institution of the market is conceived analogously. The market is also an autonomous sphere in which individuals express their needs and interests which are met by various producers who compete to provide goods and services to satisfy those wants. The decision-making process of the market is much the same as politics, with the state in the same role as either umpire or arena of conflict resolution. Here the economic power of the corporate elite is balanced by consumer autonomy, various countervailing groups, the state, and, of course, competition. It is also constrained by the social value system.

At the general level of theory construction there have been few attempts to build models of interaction between organizations and the environment. Many theorists of organizations have until recently utilized closed system models which do not

include the environmental context of organizations (McNeil, 1977; Perrow, 1970, 1972; Terreberry, 1968; Thompson, 1967). The most significant effort in conceptualizing this relationship is the work of Talcott Parsons (1956a, 1956b; Parsons and Smelser, 1956) who develops an open systems functionalist model. In Parsons' model of the organization-environment interaction, economic organizations are seen as providing a primarily adaptive function for society, with their goals being established exclusively by the environment in terms of functional requirements of society as a whole. The rationale and continued integration of a business enterprise is assumed to center on commonly accepted goals which are oriented to the fulfillment of general social needs. The business organization is viewed as an organized system of interdependent and interrelated roles, and behaviour in these roles is constrained by values and norms. Moreover, the business organization and the business system of which it is a part are related to the economic, social, and cultural systems and are dependent upon them for legitimacy. As such, the interests and actions of individual business persons and business firms, and of entire industries, are always patterned and constrained by the normative pattern via the sanction system. This means that the ability of business persons (at any level) to control, reduce, or neutralize the uncertainties, competition, and criticism any business system faces from diverse peripheral sectors in its environment is restricted and their autonomy is kept to a minimum; they can merely react to changes in their environment with little ability to influence, control or initiate them (see Parsons, 1958).

Similar restrictions apply to the entrepreneurial role often played by business persons and the corporate elite; entrepreneurs take risks and innovate in order to introduce technological, managerial or distributive innovations which reduce their costs, and thus make the economic system more efficient. Their abilities are limited by the public consensus not only in terms of what they can introduce and when and how they introduce it, but also in their efforts to control, reduce or neutralize the risks involved in such innovation.

There is a vast literature and even a journal devoted to the study of entrepreneurial behaviour dominated by the functionalist perspective -- a testimony to the significance attached to the entrepreneurial role in economic development. The exact nature of this role varies from one theorist to another as Hoselitz neatly sums up:

A study of economists' opinion on entrepreneurship leads to strange and sometimes contradictory results. Some writers have identified entrepreneurship with the function of uncertainty-bearing, others with the co-ordination of productive resources, others with the introduction of innovations, and still others with the provision of capital (Hoselitz, 1952:98).

The dilemma of varying emphases in the definition of the entrepreneur has led to the definition of entrepreneurship in terms of entrepreneurial role behaviour. The characteristics of entrepreneurial role behaviour are summarized by McClelland (1961) as (1) risk-taking; (2) energetic and/or novel instrumental activity; (3) individual responsibility; (4) knowledge of results of actions (money as the measure of results); (5) anticipation of future possibilities; and (6) organizational

skills. For example, Jenks (1949, 1950) bases his analysis on the organizational requirements of the business unit regarded as a system of exchanges, a system of productive performances, and as an organization. Thus the requirements of the entrepreneurial role are determined within limits by the very nature of the business on the one hand, and by the commonly shared expectations of what constitutes proper and improper behaviour in particular roles on the other. He sees the business firm as an organized system of interdependent and inter-related roles, and behaviour in these roles is constrained by values and norms. In effect, Jenks applies Parsons' system model and his analysis of personality to business and the entrepreneurial personality.

Thomas C. Cochran (1949) develops this line of thought further by viewing the changes wrought by entrepreneurs as the consequences of deviance from expected roles. He examines the sanctions which impinge on the role of the business person and their relative effectiveness. In a later analysis Cochran (1960) shifts his focus to an analysis of cultural behaviour. He posits that cultural definitions are internalized values and presuppositions and in "traditional" societies, such as Latin America, act to hinder entrepreneurship and hence economic growth. Similar analyses are given by Cochran (1965), Belshaw (1955), Landes (1951), Pelzel (1954), Johnson (1951), Rostow (1966), Cole (1954), Murphy (1966).

Entrepreneurs may be analyzed as individuals (Passer, 1949; Chapman, 1932; Flinn, 1953; McLaughlin, 1954) or as organizations (Strauss, 1944; Harbison, 1956). In either case

most studies which are sensitive to the milieu in which entrepreneurs act utilize a framework based on Parsons or McClelland or Hagen. Entrepreneurs are seen as adventurous, enterprising and innovating "deviants" who take risks, etc., in order to introduce technological, managerial or distributive innovations to reduce their costs and thus make the economic system more efficient and thereby help to stimulate economic growth. However, their interests are always patterned and constrained by the normative pattern via the sanction system. Their contributions to change are usually analyzed from an economic context with little attention to the social implications of their behaviour. (See Swenson, 1948; Mathias, 1957; Rosovsky, 1954; Parker, 1954; Harbison, 1956; Kahn, 1955; Meyer, 1958; Cole, 1954; Cochran, 1965). The purist extreme statement on the role and influence of the corporation on social life by a functionalist is given by Wallich (1967:257-258):

The belief that the corporation has significantly shaped our living habits is an illusion, analogous to the European illusion that Europe is being "Americanized". All that the United States has experienced, and Europe after it, are manifestations of rising per capita income. . . .the corporation has not greatly influenced . . .the principle aspects of American living habits.

In this view of entrepreneurial and corporate behaviour, their productive and marketing activities are guided by achievement and efficiency values subject to control and sanction ultimately by consumers who express their power through the market. On those few occasions when the market process is subverted or not able to work effectively because of the nature of the product or some other factor then supplementary action may be

taken either in the market by countervailing power groups or by governmental intervention. However the ideal which guides policy decisions and market evaluations is laissez-faire -- the market should be free from "outside" interference. For if the market mechanism is left alone the expression of demand by consumers on the one hand, and its supply through the competitive efforts of business persons on the other, will act to set prices and utilize resources in the most efficient manner as well as providing the greatest amount of consumer satisfaction. This is the conventional wisdom of economics and, as noted earlier, is the basic model of politics as well.

The expression and satisfaction of human needs in and through the market and its competitive pricing mechanism means that only socially legitimate needs will be satisfied and these satisfactions distributed on a wide and efficient basis -- of course, as disposable income rises and subsistence or primary needs are satisfied, these needs will become more concerned with "secondary" needs and desires. From the economists' point of view (and that of the producer, as well) as long as the demands expressed in the market place are socially legitimate their satisfaction is legitimate, for the consumers and the market are, in the sense outlined above, always right and it is the "duty" of the producer to "give the public what it wants". Galbraith (1958:147) comments that economists have divorced

economics from any judgment on the goods with which it was concerned. Any notion of necessary versus unnecessary or important as against unimportant goods was vig-

orously excluded from the subject . . .
 Nothing in economics so quickly marks
 an individual as incompetently trained
 as a disposition to remark on the legit-
 imacy of the desire for more food and
 the frivolity of the desire for a more
 elaborate automobile.

Underlying all of this is the individual, the cornerstone, so to speak, of liberal democracy. The individual in this view is an autonomous, rational, decision-making person who is able to organize, control and lead a productive and satisfying life if given the proper conditions. Those analysts who see organizations as eclipsing individuals and increasingly becoming the actors in society tend also to see the change merely as one of degree: now organizations are autonomous and rationally present and pursue the interests of their members (as in countervailing power groups and numerous varieties of elite groupings). In terms of expressing needs in the market, individual consumers and consumers as a collectivity are the best judges of their needs. The laissez-faire market ensures the proper satisfaction of these needs by instituting conditions which minimize the power of producers and maximizes the power of consumers. The basic assumptions of this "consumer sovereignty" view are outlined by Scitovsky (1976:64-65):

(1) what consumers choose to do is an accurate reflection of their tastes, that is, their behaviour is revealed by their preferences and vice versa; (2) consumers develop their own tastes and preferences independently of those of other consumers; and (3) without sufficient means to satisfy all their desires, consumers must "keep unsatisfied margins on all [their] needs and desires" in order to insure that "any extra dollar

[they] spend on one thing yields [them] as that extra dollar would if they spent it on any other thing."

The predominance of pluralist and structural functionalist views in the sociology of organizations has meant little attention has been given to organizational power. Much effort has gone into the quantification of such variables as "task structure" and "formalization" and conceptual models of organizations emphasize how organizations adapt efficiently to their environments -- portraying organizations, as noted above, as passive systems "adapting to external forces and internal structural 'needs', with little interpretation of organizational domination" (McNeil, 1977:23). Even the work of many people like Peter Blau and his colleagues who focus on structure and structural variables utilizes a basically adaptive model. Thus they focus on how systems of control flow "logically" from the task structure -- that is the division of labour, hierarchy of offices, official rules and regulations, control and sanctioning mechanisms, personnel policies (Blau, 1957:56). In this scheme there is little room for administrative elites to choose among strategies of control. Their efforts were directed to developing a perspective of organizations as functioning systems. In so doing they tended to study organizations as the unit of analysis but divorced from the context of the wider economic system. Blau hypothesized that certain structural configurations were functionally necessary for efficiency and he attempted to develop "causal" analyses which put power struggles within organizations into a social-psychological category and treated them as intervening variables between

formal structural characteristics and output (1957:56). From here it was a short step to the comparative analysis of organizations in structural terms -- comparing structure with variables like size, age, environmental resources, etc. -- in the search for generalizable laws of organization abstracted from any specific historical setting. This is not to say that organizational power was not a concern of these researchers, but that their methodologies prevented them from developing research strategies which would enable them to examine it. For there was an implicit assumption that structure promotes efficiency (and that efficiency in a democratic society benefits everyone). However, with power conceptualized as a social-psychological intervening variable between structure and efficiency the issue of organizational power becomes a problem of the structure itself. Blau (1974:634) in his presidential address to the American Sociological Association just after Watergate, said that the "challenge of the century" is to find ways to curb the power of organizations. But if the "insidious" power of organizations which led to the abuses of Watergate (and to other abuses by other organizations) is an attribute of the structure itself, then the problem of democratic control is a technocratic one of finding new/better structural arrangements which promote sensitivity or spread decision-making. (For other comparative studies using somewhat different theoretical approaches but with similar views of the task structure, see among others, Hage and Aiken, 1967; Pugh, et al., 1969; Udy, 1959; Hall, 1963).

If structure is assumed to promote efficiency but ir-

rationalities sometimes result, then according to this view, the "improper" structures were instituted. However, it takes the exercise of power to build the structures that are efficient as well as those which are inefficient or are abusive to society. Administrative elites, thinking they are being efficient may create a variety of "irrational" consequences through the actions of the task structures they create. The extent of these irrationalities and the problems they pose for society will obviously vary with organizational size, age, etc. The focus on the structural variables of the task structure can provide certain generalizations about the structural forms of internal efficiency. But it cannot explain the differences in power between, for example, the actions of the automobile industry and the toy industry. This focus on internal efficiency and the task structure isolates the organization from its environment, or at best sees it as a passive responder to the environment at its task boundary. Of course, organizations are not passive in many of their attitudes and actions with respect to their environments (or parts of them). They are often active and seek outside support from other sources of power in their quest for efficiency, such as government subsidies, or favourable legal codes. These actions help it reduce the complexity and unpredictability of its environment. Yet by theoretical and methodological fiat such action-orientation on the part of organizations is excluded from consideration.

Moreover, the functionalist assumption that the goals of the business organization are determined by consensual

social values leads to the view of organizations as functionally integrated social units. This view stresses co-operation and integration within a "working organization" directed to a common task. And because of this orientation it treats members of organizations as parts of the system with no autonomy or rationale of their own. (Partly this is due also to the organic metaphor which informs this system model.) Thus, it ignores the members' needs and expectations shaped by the roles they occupy in the environment which they bring into the organization and express politically therein (Child, 1969b; Haas and Drabek, 1973; Perrow, 1972). This is not to say that the model cannot be modified to include more member autonomy and an action orientation within its frame. In fact, that is what has happened in a sense in recent developments in organization theory. While not strictly functionalist, the "organizations in action" approach shares enough assumptions with functionalism that they are often treated as the same (for example, see Champion, 1975). This approach will be discussed in the next two sections.

Organization Theory and the Environment

The functionalist perspective has been very influential not only in sociological circles but in other disciplines concerned with organizational behaviour such as political science, administrative science, economics, etc. This multi-disciplinary interest in organizational behaviour has given rise to a body of knowledge commonly known as organizational theory which comprises the inputs from these various disciplines. Combined with the management interest in efficiency and control on the part of many analysts, the functionalist orientation has helped

limit the focus to the internal structure and behaviour of organizations by suggesting that organizations are systems (or subsystems of the larger social system) which are consciously designed sets of arrangements to maintain the survival and prosperity of these enterprises -- which arrangements are acceptable and agreeable to members, for in order to prosper organizations must be harmonious and integrated. Thus the great concern about the quality of the internal environment of organizations, for example the human relations school (Mayo, 1933, 1945; Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1947), management theory (Barnard, 1933, 1949), etc. This is among the reasons why the category of the external environment remained undeveloped and oversimplified for a long time. Recently, organization theorists have turned more attention to the external environment and begun to conceptualize it and how it interacts with organizations. However, these recent efforts are still rudimentary and not well developed (Duncan, 1972; Benson, 1974). This discussion will now briefly present some basic concepts of organizations, a few of the ways the environment has been conceptualized, and some views of the interaction between the two. In this literature a model has developed which replaces the passive functional view of the relationship with a more active organizational role. However, it still tends to focus upon the organization and the effects of the environment upon it.

Talcott Parsons (1956a) defines a formal organization as a system primarily oriented to the attainment of a specific goal, which constitutes an output of the system and which is

an input for some other system. This view is widely accepted (except for the problem of one specific goal) and the basic concept of organizations is defined in terms of input-output production processes. Figure 3.1 schematically illustrates the skeletal structure of an organizational system. The environment is thus known to organizations at their input and output boundaries. Arrows coming into a system represent input and arrows going out of a system represent output. This schematizations shows only one-way directionality and depicts energetic inputs (for example, personnel and materials) and output (for example, product). Informational inputs are not so easy to conceptualize (Terreberry, 1968). There are many types of inputs and outputs -- which are of no concern here.

FIGURE 3.1

STRUCTURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM

Fundamental to organizations as systems are their boundaries. The way in which organizational boundaries have been described has shown a degree of uncertainty. The empirical determination of organizational boundaries has presented considerable diffi-

culty. It is very misleading to conceive of them in any simple, sharp and single line. More realistically, they are a composite "semi-permeable membrane" (Goffman, 1961). There are varying degrees of mutual permeation between organizations and their environments along several fronts and at several organizational levels. The empirical clarity with which boundaries can be established will differ with the various components entering into interchange with the environment. For example, outputs such as materials and products enter and leave organizations at discrete, recognizable points both physically and in terms of ownership. In contrast, the multiple roles and overlapping commitments held by the various members of organizations renders the empirical distinction of an organizational boundary extremely tenuous in their case (Schein, 1965:89). Haas and Drabek (1973:18) define organizational boundaries in terms of frequency and content of interaction, but note that "depending upon the analysts's interest, boundaries may be drawn at different places for different analyses. The organization may be viewed as a dependent and/or independent variable in different types of analysis." They distinguish such analytical boundaries from "normative boundaries" which are based upon the normative definitions of members.

As noted, the environment has not been well conceptualized in organization theory. Few intensive analyses of organizational environments have been made to date (but see Stinchcombe, 1965; Thompson, 1967; Lawrence and Lorsh, 1969). The environment has often been treated as a residual category, that is, as everything not contained within organizations,

and definitions are subsequently platitudinous, comparable to the conceptions used in the general vernacular. For example, Litterer (1965:422) says that "by environment we mean that portion of the world external to the organization with which it comes in contact". Similarly, Hawley (1950:12) states that "environment is a generic concept under which are subsumed all external forces and factors to which an organization or aggregate of organizations is actually or potentially responsible". Thompson (1967:27) likewise views the term environment as referring "to everything else". Recent efforts to come to terms with the environment have recognized that these definitions are too abstract and ambiguous, and thus impossible to measure. First, it is obvious that the environment cannot be conceptualized except with respect to some focal organization(s) or organizational component(s). This means that the environment must be treated as a quasi-independent domain because of the interaction or transactional interdependencies between organizations and their environments. Second, the conception of environment at a high level of abstraction as "everything else" poses it as undifferentiated and all-encompassing with no way of ascertaining the differences between the elements that compose it. Third, such a conception assumes that everything outside organizations is in concert and uniformly exerting influence upon them and thus provides no way to specify linkages and relationships between elements or to begin to analyze sources, directions, magnitudes, and shapes of effects. Gillespie and Kim (1974) have proposed a definition of organizational environment which meets the above criteria and is

acceptable to this discussion. They define the environment as "a set of material and social conditions comprised of numerous, discontinuously, nonrandom varying elements which may be observed to produce or receive an effect from the existence of an organization" (Gillespie and Kim, 1974:10-11).

However, as Gillespie and Kim rightly note, definitions are only useful with respect to some framework which organizes how the definitional content is to be looked at. In the literature, works which incorporate some or another aspect of organizational environments have been appearing for over two decades; they continue to be produced systematically by a diverse group of analysts using a variety of perspectives (Rubenstein and Haberstroh, 1960:2; Stinchcombe, 1965:143; Hall, 1972:49-50). As a consequence, there is a lack of consensus regarding a framework for interpreting the interplay between organizations and their environments. The variables chosen and their theoretical status have varied considerably according to individual tastes and become a matter of subjective debate (Gross, 1970: 506). However, there is one area where there has been considerable theoretical agreement and a great deal of research conducted on various aspects. That area is the cultural environment. From a functionalist point of view it is assumed that cultural elements "supercede and order the relations among the other environmental factors" and mediate the relationships between the numerous variables in both environment and organization. Critical theorists and orthodox Marxists would agree that cultural elements mediate relationships but argue that these elements must be examined in their historical moments and in relation

to the material/productive base upon which they ultimately depend. In any event, there has been a great deal of research on the impact of cultural elements upon organizational structure and behaviour -- especially by the so-called institutional school (Perrow, 1972). The sociological concern of this study is with the relationship between particular cultural behaviour patterns and organizational behaviour. But instead of the impact of culture on organization, the interest is with the manner in which values and experience are used by organizations and the effects on the environment.

Only a few of the recent efforts at conceptualizing the environment will be dealt with here based on relevancy for the topic under analysis. Many variables at many levels of the environment have been singled out as important. William Dill has proposed a view of the environment which limits the variables considered to those in the immediate or "task" environment. The task environment denotes those parts of the environment which are "relevant or potentially relevant to goal setting and goal attainment" (Dill, 1958:409). His study of two Norwegian firms found their task environments to be composed of four major sectors: (1) customers (both distributors and users); (2) suppliers of materials, labour, capital, equipment, and work space; (3) competitors for both markets and resources; and (4) regulatory groups, including governmental agencies, unions, and interfirm associations. The components of the task environment may be persons or other organizations. When the focus is on other organizations in the environment which make a difference to the focal organization, the other org-

anizations may be conceptualized as an organization set (Evan, 1966). Task environments are extremely variable in terms of the composition of the major sectors with respect to any organization -- no two are identical.

Other useful efforts have attempted to classify the environment in terms of variations in degree of interdependencies in the environment itself. Dill distinguished several dimensions of environmental variance: homogeneous-heterogeneous, stable or rapidly shifting, and unified or segmented. Emery and Trist (1965) have postulated four "ideal types" of environment based on the degree of "system connectedness" that exists among the components of the environment. The first type of environment is a "placid, randomized" environment which is characterized by the relative stability of so-called goods and bads for the organization and which are randomly distributed. The second type is a "placid, clustered" environment wherein the goods and bads are relatively unchanging in themselves but clustered. Emery and Trist argue that this type of environment characterized the earliest formal organizations to appear in the United States (in agriculture, retail trade, constructive, mining). Important inputs, such as natural resources and labour, as well as consumers, comprised an environment in which strategies of optimal location and distinctive competence were critical organizational responses. They (1965: 29) note that two important attributes of placid-clustered environments are: (1) the environment is itself not formally organized; and (2) transactions are largely initiated and controlled by the organization. The third type is the "disturbed-

reactive" environment, a significant qualitative change over simpler types of environment. Here the significant feature is similar types of organizations in the field. Emery and Trist argue that developments in transportation technology, in communication and automated technologies that increased economies of scale gave rise to this type of environment in which oligopolistic conditions meant that similar formal organizations became important actors in an organization's field. These other organizations are responsive to its actions and it must be responsive to theirs. The critical organizational response now involves complex operations, requiring sequential choices based on the calculated actions of others, and counteractions (Emery and Trist, 1965:25-26). The fourth and last type of environment is the "turbulent field". The turbulence derives from the field itself and not merely from the interactions of components; the combined effects of the actions of component organizations and linked sets of them "are both persistent and strong enough to induce autochthonous processes in the environment" (1965:26). Turbulence is characterized by complexity and rapid change of causal interconnections in the environment. The conditions of such an environment are a multitude of other formal organizations and these become increasingly the market, the supplier of material, labour, and capital, as well as sources of regulation for an organization. Emery and Trist illustrate the transition from a disturbed-reactive to a turbulent field with the case of a company that had maintained a steady 65 percent of its market for its main product -- a canned vegetable -- for many years. The firm

made an enormous investment in a new, automated factory that was set up exclusively for the traditional product and technology at the end of the second World War. But at the same time postwar controls on steel strip and tin were removed, so that cheaper cars were available; importers were able to obtain surplus crops more cheaply; the diversity of available products increased, including substitutes for the staple; the quick-freeze technology was developed; home buyers became more affluent; supermarkets emerged and placed bulk orders with small firms for retail under supermarket names. These changes in technology, international trade, and affluence of buyers gradually interacted and ultimately had a pronounced effect on the company -- its market dwindled rapidly. Emery and Trist (1966:24) note that "the changed texture of the environment was not recognized by an able but traditional management until it was too late."

Emery and Trist suggest that this ideal type scheme is an evolutionary model of the changing environments of organizations in modern societies. This hypothesis has been more formally proposed by Terreberry who marshalls some evidence to show that modern organizational environments are increasingly turbulent and that this evolutionary process "has resulted in the replacements of individuals and informal groups by organizations as actors in the social system" (Terreberry, 1968:601). These arguments and conceptions fill out Baldus' analysis of the increasing diversity of the periphery. They also support the approach to corporations as actors taken in this study. Environments which are heterogeneous, rapidly shifting, dis-

turbed, turbulent, diverse all add up to conditions which are difficult for organizations to deal with in strictly rational terms, for there are limits to organizational rationality but no necessary rationality to environmental conditions. This creates uncertainty and risk in organizational decisions about which course of action to follow. These notions have been taken up by a group of analysts who use uncertainty and unknowability as keys to defining environments and develop from there the basis for a new model of organizational behaviour.

Organizations in Action

The work of Herbert A. Simon (1957a), James March and Simon (1958), and Richard Cyert and March (1963) has been the basis for a new conceptualization of organizational behaviour and interaction with the environment. They begin with the conceptualization of the environment of organizations as complex, uncertain, and only partially knowable. Organizations faced with such environments have only a limited capacity for gathering and processing information and predicting the consequences of alternative strategies. In order to deal with environmental complexity, organizations must develop ways and means for searching and learning about the environment, as well as for making decisions about what actions to take. Organizations facing environments so complex that they would be overwhelmed if they faced them fully, have great difficulty in defining their situation if they try to achieve maximum efficiency in their actions. Simon (1957b) argues that organizations must set limits to their definitions of situations and make their

decisions in terms of a bounded rationality; they must make decisions on the basis of satisficing rather than maximizing. From this perspective, organizations are viewed as problem-facing and problem-solving phenomena. The focus is on organizational processes which are related to choices about courses of action in an environment which cannot be fully assessed as to the outcomes of the various alternatives available to them.

James D. Thompson in his important book, Organizations in Action, has applied these ideas of organizations as coping with uncertainty to an open systems approach. He (1967:10) defines "complex organizations as open systems, hence indeterminate and faced with uncertainty, but at the same times as subject to criteria of rationality and hence needing determinateness and certainty". The major problem for organizations is uncertainty; the major problem for administrators is coping with uncertainty. Administrators must translate abstract general criteria such as profit maximization into specific criteria for unique management situations; that is, they must develop a rational calculation which provides some measure of assessing their indeterminant environments. Organizations must be able to conduct their business "precisely, unambiguously, continuously and with as much speed as possible" and according to calculable rules "without regard for persons" (Weber in Gerth and Mills, 1946:215). This need is translated into various strategies designed to stabilize the unpredictable and uncertain environments of organizations. This translation is made possible by the use of various modes of calculation or administrative rationalities (Weber) or organization-

al rationalities (Thompson).

The process of administration may be thought of as providing boundaries within which organizational rationality becomes possible. In this view administration is merely the defensive absorption or blockage of uncertainty. Administration includes a more aggressive co-alignment aspect which keeps the organization at a nexus of several necessary streams of action. Bounded rationality involves not only the reduction of complexity by the elimination of uncertainty or provision of certainty equivalents, but also the incorporation within the arena for action of the variables necessary for purposive action (Thompson, 1967:162).

This view is certainly compatible with the views presented in the last chapter on the nature and action of power structures. However, as will be illustrated, it lacks a sense of structure, and as such is compatible with a pluralist/functionalist orientation.

In keeping with the organizational model in Figure 3.1 organizational rationality, according to Thompson, involves the three major component activities: (1) input activities; (2) transformational, that is, technological, activities; and (3) output activities. These component activities are not only interdependent, but both input and output activities are interdependent with elements in the environment. "Organizational rationality, therefore, never conforms to closed system logic but demands the logic of an open system" (Thompson, 1967:20). Because the technology of manufacturing organizations like the automobile industry is very costly and single purpose, such organizations will tend, it is proposed, to insulate their technological cores from environmental influences. Thompson describes four strategies to accomplish this: (1) buffering --

the absorption of environmental influences by stockpiling materials and supplies, preventive maintenance, and training, and indoctrination of personnel on the input side; on the output side by maintaining warehouse inventories, distributor inventories, of items in transit; (2) levelling -- involves efforts to reduce environmental fluctuations through such means as special inducements in slow periods; (3) anticipation and adaptation -- allows organizations to prepare for change and incorporate it into their operations; and (4) rationing -- establishing a system of priorities for allocating capacity under adverse conditions.

Thompson's work is rich in theoretical description of numerous strategies (stated in propositional form) organizations may use to reduce uncertainty and complexity in order to gain a modicum of control over their environments. There is no need to discuss all of them here. For present purposes only those relevant to the analysis at hand will be mentioned. One of the major themes of his work is organizational coping and much of his attention is directed to the response of organizations to environmental change and its effects on organizational adaptability and goal structure. Within this major focus Thompson notes that administrators are continually monitoring their environments, evaluating changes therein, and deciding upon an appropriate response. An appropriate response is one that best meets organizational demands for autonomy, prestige, and security. Organizations respond by acting on their environments so as to try to expand these dimensions. As such, administrators are continually involved in negotiations with

aspects of their environment. Thompson (1967:29) emphasizes that they seek to engineer new states of consensus regarding expectation sets for both organizational members and for others with whom they interact, "about what the organization will and will not do". In this manner organizational response is an active interaction process much of it aimed at manipulating expectation sets held by environmental sectors in order to maintain or expand existing levels of autonomy, prestige, and security. But the expectations Thompson talks about are only those of organizational "domain consensus", that is, expectations "about what the organization will and will not do". Haas and Drabek have diagrammed the process of organizational response in Figure 3.2. This model is straightforward and will not be commented on. The range of coping behaviour, as discussed by Haas and Drabek (1973:286-291) will be listed, also without further comment: (1) toleration; (2) delaying tactics; (3) smoke screens; (4) dismissal; (5) condemnation; (6) co-optation; (7) organizational birth; (8) organizational death; and (9) self-renewal.

Important for this discussion is the notion of power held by Thompson and others in this new orientation. Power in this view, as in the structural views, is a relational concept. The power of organizations often determines what kinds of other relations they will have with the environment. Haas and Brabek (1973:210-214) list four of these other relations: (1) responsiveness; (2) activism; (3) opportunism; and (4) security and benevolence. A key variable in the determination of power is the degree of independence between organizations

FIGURE 3.2

FACTORS IN RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Source: Haas and Drabek, 1973:287

and their task environments. Thompson (1967:30-31) argues

Since the dependence of an organization on its task environment introduces not only constraints but also contingencies, both of which interfere with the attainment of rationality, we would expect organizations subject to norms of rationality to attempt to manage dependence . . . dependence can be seen as the obverse of power. Thus an organization has power, relative to an element of its task environment, to the extent that the organization has capacity to satisfy needs of that element and to the extent that the organization monopolizes that capacity.

Thompson notes that this conception of power has several advantages. It specifies power as the result of particular relationships between organizations and elements of their task environments. Thus it does not see power as a generalized attribute of organizations and focuses on "net power" as manifested in a set of organization-environment relationships. Another advantage, according to Thompson, is that this view is not zero-sum: two organizations can both become increasingly powerful with respect to one another and this increasing interdependence may increase net power. This is the basis of coalitions.

It is clear that this view of power is limited to relations of direct interaction and has little concern for external structural effects. The direct interaction increases the environment's potential to control the focal organization, Thompson argues. This is illustrated by Thompson's discussion of strategies whereby organizations may "acquire" power. One strategy is competition: power over the environment may be gained by acquiring prestige; power of the environment may be

minimized by maintaining alternative sources, that is, by "scattering" its dependence. The other strategies are all forms of co-operation: contracting, co-opting, and coalescing. Each of these involve exchanges in an increasing order of magnitude and thus the opportunity for the environment to take part in decision-making and goal formation also increases.

Thompson's model of organizations as active open systems is a most useful development. As in his delineation of numerous strategies, organizations may use under varying environmental and internal conditions to deal with uncertainty. However, his view of organizational power is very limited; especially in its lack of structural considerations and its restriction to direct interaction involving exchange. Moreover, he talks about the activities of organizations in the environment but does not examine the nature of the effects or consequences of those actions on the environment -- he looks only at the results for organizations.

The Institutional School

One open systems tradition which has considered structural effects is that of the "institutionalists" (Perrow, 1972). Basically functionalist in orientation this tradition examines organizations holistically to chart the "natural history" of the interchange between organizational structure and function, guided by the organic metaphor. This metaphor provides such notions as growth, decline, evolving whole, etc., and also the problems of unplanned adaptations and changes. These latter problems are predominant concerns in this tradition. Given

the functionalist orientation it is not surprising that the environmental elements most often singled out are cultural conditions. Many analyses focus on the manner by which cultural conditions in the environment influence organizational processes in such a way that the values and goals of organizations are weakened or subverted and they must adapt their structural arrangements in order to harmonize with the changed cultural conditions or else go out of existence. As organizations adapt to their environments, their actions modify their basic structures and "personality". This is the structural dimension in these analyses -- that organizations have "characters" based on their values and goals and the structural patterns designed to accomplish them. This character is also shaped by the history of past adaptive responses to challenges and demands from the environment. Although the environment is much discussed in this literature, the concept remains unanalyzed. Only a few representative studies will be reviewed here.

Phillip Selznick's (1949) study of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is a classic in this tradition. The TVA was a federally funded, locally administered organization established fundamentally to produce electric power, fertilizer, and to control flooding; but also to maintain and extend forests and help poor farmers develop recreation areas. Selznick found that the vested interests of the local administration, the land grant colleges, and their value commitments to conservation groups at the local and national levels were opposed to many TVA policies. A "threat" was created to which the TVA administrators had to adapt in order to survive as an organization.

One response to this threat was the co-opting of representatives of the conservative groups by inviting them to serve in various decision-making positions. As a result the organizational goal of helping poor farmers was neglected while the goals developed were those favouring big business and big farming. But congressional opposition to the TVA was minimized. And those hurt by the displacement of the original goals -- the poor farmers-- were unable to mount effective counter measures.

Messinger's (1956) study of the Townsend Movement, an organization established during the depression to provide welfare assistance to the aged through a radical economic plan, found that a loss of legitimacy after the depression resulted in the organization changing its goals in order to continue its existence. Gusfield's (1955) study of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) found, in contrast, that a loss of value legitimacy led to a shift in the goal-object, rather than a change in the organization's goals per se. The Townsend Movement gave up the task of caring for the aged, and invented the new goals of friendship and the production of patent medicines. The WCTU only shifted its moral reclamation goals from "poor demoralized drinkers" to the "demoralized" upper class. Many other studies have been conducted in this vein (Clark, 1960; Perrow, 1961; Scott, 1967; Nonet, 1969; Zald and Denton, 1963; Demerath and Thiessen, 1966; Lipset, et al., 1956).

Another group of studies have examined the importance of cultural values for shaping the structure and behaviour of organizations. Michel Crozier's (1964) important work, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon, shows among other things, the manner

in which the values of individualism and equalitarianism in French culture are reproduced in public service bureaucracies by the development of an extensive set of formal rules and rituals which protect individuals from problems of authority conflicts and dependence upon personal relationships. In a similar vein Abegglen (1958) compared the close correspondence between the values and behaviour patterns in the cultures and the structures of industrial organizations in Japan and the United States. The influence of prevailing cultural behaviour patterns on a women's prison was studied by Rose Giallombardo (1966). She found that there was a pattern of adaptation by women in the prison which took the form of an informal social structure which fulfilled many physical and emotional needs not met by the formal structure. This structure was a hierarchy of roles whose definitions were largely dictated by the normative standards in the larger society. However, homosexuality, normally defined as deviant on the outside, was redefined in this structure as legitimate (if it was practiced in the context of developing a significant and emotionally satisfying relationships between the two women) because there were no opportunities to develop normal heterosexual relationships. Women not participating in homosexual behaviour were ascribed a lower status. (For other studies of prisons, see Cressey, 1958; Sykes, 1958; on reform schools, see Zald, 1960; Street, et al., 1966; on mental hospitals, see Perrow, 1965; Goffman, 1961). Thus, although very concerned with the environment and more attuned to structural effects, the problems with this tradition are the same as those of the

functionalist approach. And the basic problem is that they do not consider the utilization of cultural variables by organizations in ways to maintain or strengthen their positions nor the effects of organizations on their environments. Perrow (1972:203) stated the criticism as follows:

This school, almost alone among those we have considered, has taken the environment seriously and tried to understand the organization's relationship to it. No neat conceptual schemes have emerged; it is a vastly more complex problem than understanding the internal working of organizations. But again, I have argued that the school has led us astray. It has seen the organization as adaptive to and dependent upon the environment. It has not considered the other possibility, which, for important organizations in our society, is at least equally possible: that the environment has to adapt to the organization.

Summary

This chapter has examined: (1) the pluralist/functionalist model of organization-environment interaction; (2) its application to corporate behaviour in the marketplace; (3) its conceptualization of the market environment; (4) some conceptions of the environment drawn from organization theory; (5) the predominance of functionalism in organization theory; (6) the development of a model of organizations which describes them as more active in their relationships with their environments; (7) the role of cultural variables on organizational behaviour and structure.

The most comprehensive and noteworthy model of organization-environment relationships is the one developed by Talcott Parsons. In Parsons' model organizations are analyzed as subsystems of the larger social system that are related to

this environment in terms of their contributions toward institutional maintenance and survival. When applied to business and corporate organizations the relationship is conceptualized in terms of the fulfillment of a primarily adaptive function for society. Corporate goals are established exclusively by environmental requirements, that is, the functional requirements of society as a whole. Corporate legitimacy as well as corporate rationale and integration are assumed to center on commonly accepted values and goals which are oriented to the fulfillment of general social needs.

In this model corporations are basically passive, adaptive and dependent upon the environment, especially the common value system. It follows that the market is viewed as an institution, like the political institution, where the common value system receives expression through the aggregation of individually formulated demands for goods and services. The role of corporate enterprises is to respond to these demands by supplying appropriate goods and services which satisfy those demands. The market is populated by individuals who are autonomous and rational, and who formulate their preferences and tastes independently from those of others. The market operates as an autonomous institution wherein the range of freely formed, freely expressed preferences and tastes of individuals balance each other and determine by weight of demand the most efficient (for society) allocation of resources, price levels, and array of goods and services.

As noted in the previous chapter, power in this model is conceptualized as a system resource. Corporate power is

therefore exercised to accomplish social values and goals as determined by the market. Corporate behaviour is controlled by the internalization of the common value system in corporate administrations and structures. State intervention and countervailing powers exert external control if socialization proves inadequate in certain areas. The internalization of the common value system results in the establishment and maintenance of a set of unified goals within corporate enterprises which are accepted by members over and above their personal objectives. The model of corporate structure and function is symmetrical with the model of the larger social system of which it is a subsystem. Organizational and corporate power, while not exactly ignored, have not been major research topics in part because of the theoretical biases of the conception of power and structure in this model.

In this model, the environment is not well defined beyond its emphasis on cultural variables. The literature on organization theory was reviewed and several differentiations presented based upon the types of components in the environment, such as those in the task environment, and upon the degree of system connectedness among components of the environment, characterized as placid-randomized, placid-clustered, disturbed-reactive, and turbulent field. These latter aspects have come to be defined in terms of degree of uncertainty faced by organizations which must accomplish certain goals in particular environments. The work of Simon, March and Cyert built upon this conceptualization of the environment to create a new model of organizational behaviour. This model emphasized the limita-

tions of organizational rationality in the face of environments which were not fully knowable nor predictable. Organizations are characterized here as problem-facing and problem-solving entities which make decisions about courses of action based upon satisficing criteria rather than maximization criteria.

James Thompson's work placed this new model into an open systems perspective and developed a view of organizations as active, rather than passive, in their involvement with their environments. In his view, organizations in the face of an uncertain and changing environment monitor and analyze their situation and devise certain strategies to neutralize, deflect and overcome, gain power over elements in the environment in order to accomplish their goals. This model is a significant development in organization theory. It develops a sensitivity to structural variables such as technology within organizations and a view of power within organizations which is also sensitive to structure by focusing on the control of decision premises. However, its functionalist assumptions limit its view of organizational interaction with the environment.

The functionalist model emphasizes cultural elements in the environment, especially values, as the prime determinants of organizational structure and behaviour. The model has a very limited conceptualization of power and social structure. Power is viewed as a system resource and its exercise is monocausal in the sense that system goals are intentionally realized directly and effectively through social structures. In this view organizations are the passive instruments of cultural intentions. Thompson's more active image of organiza-

tions still tends to emphasize organizational adaptation to environmental uncertainty in terms of the alteration of goals, structures, and behaviours to align with changing conditions. While sensitive to organizational efforts to alter the environment, these efforts cannot be described or analyzed succinctly because the conception of power focuses only upon situations of direct interaction and is restricted to types of interaction based on exchange (competition) or some form of co-operation -- all of which emphasize the ability of environmental elements to exercise power or to influence organizational decision-making. Moreover, organizational actions and interactions in the environment are not analyzed in a very sociological manner because structural conditions are not considered at that level.

Last, some of the research was reviewed which examined the interactions of cultural variables in the environment with organizational variables. Most of this work has been done by the institutional school of organization theory. Basically functionalist in orientation, this research has focused on relatively trivial and insignificant organizations. Cultural variables are found to have great impact upon organizational legitimacy, goals, structure, and behaviour. In order to survive in changing cultural conditions organizations must respond, adapt, and restructure themselves to fit the new environmental conditions. Such a limited focus has not considered large scale organizations like corporate business enterprises which are able to control significant elements of their environment and to which those elements must adapt. The next chapter will consider corporations from a sociological perspective which

builds upon the organizations in action model but is sensitive to structural variables and historical development at the organizational level. The pluralist/functionalist assumptions will be contrasted with this view as to specific corporate behaviour in the market such as advertising and product development.

CORPORATE POWER STRUCTURES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

This chapter will present a view of corporations as power structures which exercise various types of relational control over their environments. It will be noted that many analyses which argue that corporations have a significant degree of power are limited by the traditional conceptions of power they utilize. The neo-Marxist argument of capitalist class domination and the exercise of power through consumerism will be considered as a description of relational control exercised by corporate elites. A discussion of corporations as power structures based upon Galbraith's The New Industrial State will be presented. Galbraith's description of corporate structure and behaviour remains one of the best available in the literature. His analysis runs a counter to the traditional approach to corporate action. He argues that corporations must be considered as more than simple input-output processes in which intentions are realized directly. The technological structures* and the goals and plans of corporations are important factors to be considered in analyzing the market. Galbraith's discussion of the interaction of these factors will be considered in some detail. Also given consideration will be Galbraith's analysis of corporate strategies to reduce uncertainty and risk in the consumer market, especially advertising and product development. He considers these efforts so effective that consumer demand actually comes under the control of

the corporations. He calls this process the "revised sequence" or "demand management". From the meta-power view, this is the exercise of relational control.

Corporations as Power Structures

Organizations are by definition socially constructed systemic structures oriented to a purpose or a number of purposes. The development, maintenance, and change of organizational structures is dependent upon both the material and socio-cultural conditions of the environmental context. The environment is a "causal texture" (Emery and Trist, 1965) which structures the patterned ways organizations may orient to and interact with elements in their environments. But organizations also act on their environments and because they are structured patterns of action they place limits and constraints upon the action possibilities of environmental elements. To the extent that organizations have power (meta-power) they will be able to (1) maintain their own structures of action, reward and orientation in a stable state in the face of uncertain and changing environmental conditions, or (2) alter their structures in such a way that their fundamental interests and relationships are maintained (functional equivalence) by collectively deciding upon particular courses of action (chosen from a number of possible alternatives) which exercise relational control with respect to (1) those persons, groups, organizations, institutions important to them in their environment whether in direct contact or not, and/or (2) aspects of their environment which are of less relevance to their functioning. Some of the

strategies organizations as power structures utilize were discussed previously and will not be repeated here.

It is clear that most large-scale corporations have been able to maintain their technological and organizational structures in a stable, controlled state of expansion since World War II. The issue which is problematic in dealing with corporate meta-power is their ability to exercise relational control. Many people, as discussed in the last chapter, do not believe corporations are able to exert significant control over their environments. Moreover, meta-power and relational control are concepts foreign to most analyses of corporate behaviour. Those who argue that corporations are in fact very powerful do so with limited concepts which are violated in the process of description. The following analyses, which are mostly speculation and theorizing, present some of this type of description. There appears to be relatively little awareness on the part of the analysts that they are discussing power in a sociological meta-power sense without an adequate conceptual grounding. Andrew Hacker argues that corporations in modern society have limitations imposed on them only in certain areas while in other areas their power is unrestricted. Moreover, this power is not simply economic: "its influence reaches far into society and has a deep impact on the character and personality of individual Americans" (Hacker, 1964c:141). In his works Hacker (1964b, 1970, 1973, 1975) has examined these areas where corporations have a free rein in making decisions of social consequence and shows them to be: in administering prices; in maintaining a profit level; in wages and salaries;

in deciding on how many and what kind of jobs; in the methods and materials used in production; in selling its goods; in locating; and in investment. The power to determine when and what to invest in is the basic power, often determining the other decisions mentioned.

While top executives will be attuned to the public's buying expectations, it can just as well shape those expectations by announcing a bouyant expansion program. The good will of investors need not be courted, since large corporations can use their retained earnings for investment purposes the power to make investment decisions is concentrated in a few hands, and it is the power to decide what kind of nation American will be . . . the corporate elite sets the order of priorities on national growth, technological innovation, and ultimately the values and behaviour of human lives (Hacker, 1964:139-140).

Kaysen (1959, 1967) has argued that corporations actually subvert, confuse, and create values. He views the contribution to value formation on the part of the corporation under three rubrics: (1) "the definition of work, and in particular, worthy achievement in work. This last, in turn, has a significant impact on the definition of a worthy or ideal person for the society, especially its male members"; (2) "the shaping of the symbolic environment, verbal, visual, and perhaps to a much lesser extent, auditory"; (3) "the shaping of the material environment" (1967:211). Certainly the power of the corporate elite to shape the nature of work has many deep consequences, for work is the central defining agency of man and society, and thus the nature of work is most important (see Morse and Weiss, 1955; Marx and Engels, 1959; Nosow and Form, 1962; Smigel, 1963; Weiss and Reisman, 1966; Wilensky,

1966; Matejko, 1970). And, he argues, the power of the corporate elite over the mass media is self-evident -- the content of the media, both verbal and pictorial, is mainly explicit "sales talk" promoting the idea that "consumption is happiness".

The power over the material environment is shrouded by the ideas that the producer only gives the public what it wants, and that success is dependent upon the effectiveness in meeting public demand. Kaysen shows how these ideas become ambiguous and misleading when faced with such facts as the initiative displayed by producers in designing and offering goods, "the rapidity of introduction of new products, and the role of advertising and consumer followership in determining what is bought" (1967:212). A more sophisticated version of the notion that the consumer receives only what he demands is similarly misleading. This version argues that while consumer preferences are not fixed, consumer learning capacities with respect to taste formation are, i.e., "it is easier to learn to like some things than other things". Hence the designer and distributor must find out what consumers will readily learn to like. Against this Kaysen argues:

But, of course, what they (the consumers) will learn to like will depend to some extent on the past history of what they have learned to like; thus the order of experiments, so to speak, affects the outcome. But once we admit this description of the process, or something like it, the case for believing the underlying proposition of the rationale for the market, that consumers ought to get what they want, becomes much less clear. It is one thing to accept the rule of given consumer preferences; it is quite another to admit that preferences are shaped within some broad constraints, but not to inquire into the process by which they are shaped (Kaysen, 1967:212).

Braybrooke (1967) extends and develops the argument of Kaysen. He shows how these notions readily accepted by liberals obscure certain other facts such as (1) the manner in which economic policy decisions are made on inconclusive and impressionistic data; (2) the great influence of corporations in creating consumer wants; (3) the extent to which corporations have operated to confuse the public about values and hence to produce consumer misjudgment about goods (e.g., linking sex with selling automobiles "so that people have their wants for automobiles and all sorts of other things seriously mixed up with their sexual interests. The automobile companies . . . have strenuously assisted in mixing us up about sex, making it more urgent, but also more diffuse, and commonly misdirected") (1967:230); (4) the operation of the corporations to obstruct institutional remedies to consumer misjudgment and ignorance; (5) corporate control over the introduction of innovation and thus the variety of products offered the public, i.e., the power of the corporations to not offer alternatives to their product; (6) "the existence, or possible existence, of wants that consumers may have but can satisfy only by concerted action, not in the market" (1967:232).

The Corporate Capitalist Class and the Market

The discussion of the revisionist history of corporate capitalism in Chapter Two presented a brief summary of the neo-Marxist theory that a major, if not the major, form of social control in capitalist societies is corporate control of the market and consumption. The development of technology and the

capitalist imperative of increasing production led to the imperative of consuming that production. The development of consumerism, as it is called by critical theorists, is one of the major mechanisms used to explain why the working class under entrepreneurial capitalism did not revolt as predicted by orthodox Marxism. Consumerism in conjunction with the other processes described earlier were collective strategies, it is argued, to maintain and strengthen the dominance of the capitalist class.

The process by which this took place is described by these theorists in terms of the creation of social structures and the manipulation of cultural variables -- terms which are the basic elements of a meta-power conception, although such a concept is lacking in their vocabulary. Placing their description into the framework of meta-power and relational control allows a simple summarization of a complex and detailed historical process. The strategies of the capitalist class (there is a tendency on the part of these writers to attribute a high degree of collective awareness to this class) such as scientific management, mass production, corporate liberalism, and the social processes they helped to guide, such as suburbanization, immigration, combined to alter the structure of the interaction situation in the society. The overall result was the destruction of the traditional social structure and culture of the society, especially the working class structures which were quite integrated in terms of the range of experience they encompassed. Much of working class life, it is

argued, was lived within the social and cultural formations of collective associations and the values associated with them. The new social structure which began to replace the traditional one was much looser in terms of its integration of significant areas of human experience into its structures -- Peter Berger, et al., (1973) calls it "under-institutionalized". Sociologists have described this structure as the "mass society", the "abstract society", etc. The key notions in this description are privatization and the separation of public and private realms, in particular, the separation of work and leisure. The public realm remains institutionally integrated and its demands, i.e., those of work, government and education are binding. But away from those social realms, in the realm of leisure, or more broadly the private sphere of experience individuals are seemingly not restricted or limited in their choice of commitments and associations. But lacking institutional arrangements to facilitate such choice individuals are left to themselves and must make their own decisions as to how to organize their activities. They must get meaning and direction from themselves. Peter Berger (1973) calls this "subjectivization". However, the social structure limits the availability of resources like money and time and directs the search for meaning and activity to the institution of the market, the place where individuals take their wants and needs to be satisfied. Only now instead of simply subsistence and pure exchange needs, identity and other needs also are expressed there. This new social structure was created, it is argued, in response to the crises of entrepreneurial capitalism. As

phrased by John Alt (1977:170):

It was imperative for industrial growth and class harmony that traditional cultures (communitarian values, self-determination, thrift, communal leisure associations, etc.) and institutions (lodges, saloons) be domesticated and transformed in favor of a bourgeois culture of private gratification.

Another strategy of relational control was directed to the orientation and beliefs of individuals. In promoting and attempting to legitimize a system of values which extol individualism and self-interest, democratic ideals, and particular justifications of the distribution of power and resources, the capitalist class linked them to the market and the commodities produced there. The satisfaction gained in the consumption of those goods would then legitimate the entire system. The primary social bond became defined in terms of the identification of individual self-interests and the maximal satisfaction of individual needs with the interest of society as a whole, which is to maximize total productive output. The identification is between the well being of every individual and the steady rise of the Gross National Product (Leiss, 1976:4).

Thus the interaction situation and rewards were structured by this combination of social structure and orientation. Individual needs are linked to commodities as the means of satisfying those needs. And commodities are given symbolic definitions which celebrate the values of individualism, progress, etc. The resulting fusion of meaning, need, and gratification in commodities creates people who "recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile.

hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment" (Marcuse, 1964: 9). As a reward structure, it operates this way:

The public symbols of mass commodities, as in advertising, attacked traditional forms of leisure and taste, as associated with the work group, the family, the community, and advanced the private person as reaching new heights of fulfillment and satisfaction through commoditized sensual gratification. As the corporate class'answer to the social question of change then, the frustrations, passivity, and unrest of daily life were to be replaced with the sensual excitements and fulfillments of consumerism (Alt, 1977:179).

The market in this situation is celebrated as free and open but is in fact controlled and operated in the interests of capitalists. Production no longer satisfies the real needs of consumers. In the effort to stimulate consumption all sorts of probing and manipulating is done to find hidden urges and frustrations in order to tie their satisfaction to commodities. Waste and commodity obsolescence are encouraged by marketing strategies and advertising techniques. Advertising, in particular, is the strategy singled out to convey the symbols and messages of the capitalist ideology. The products themselves and their use provide excitement, sensual gratification, and other satisfactions (Shapiro, 1970; Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Aronowitz, 1973; Ewen, 1976, 1978). Yet if this situation is in fact against the real interests of consumers and the working class some mechanism(s) must be brought forward to explain the relative lack of resistance or expression of grievance. Marcuse utilizes the traditional Marxist notion of false consciousness. He argues that as a totality the production system is surrounded by a belief system which legitimizes it as a whole:

The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces "sell" or impose the social system as a whole. The means of transportation and communication, the commodities of lodging, food, and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune to its falsehood (Marcuse, 1964:11-12).

Under these conditions the fate of consumers is to be manipulated into consuming goods and receiving gratifications which are somehow spurious and artificial. The needs which they bring to the market are not their true or real needs but those created by advertising, market research, etc. -- needs which are thus false needs.

These notions have proven to be most problematic to researchers because they are not easily operationalized or falsified. It was precisely this mechanism and its shortcomings which in large part stimulated the development of power as measurable by behaviour or reputation. Steven Lukes is the only one of those considered here who dealt with the problem of determining real interests in grievance free situations. But it is not an easy matter. Even though the issue under scrutiny in this dissertation involves the expression of grievances and thus interests can be established, the idea that automobiles are purchased on the basis of false needs cannot be allowed to remain in the analysis. This will be accomplished by drawing upon Habermas' (1971, 1975) conceptualization of "communicative competence" and recent work on the concept of hegemony

and on the dual symbolic-material nature of consumption. This will be developed in the next chapter.

In Marcuse's scheme the consumer is virtually the helpless pawn of the corporate controllers. It is interesting to note that the basic description of the market control of capitalists and the manipulation of consumers is taken as a fairly accurate picture by a number of analysts of conservative and of liberal persuasion. Where they disagree, of course, is with the notions of class domination, exploitation, false consciousness, and the implicit or proposed need to overthrow the capitalist system. For example, John Kenneth Galbraith (1967) presents in the broad outline of his work a remarkably similar analysis of modern corporate capitalism to Marcuse's -- but as a liberal using a theory of democratic elitism. Andrew Hacker's views are also very similar in the broad stroke but he writes from a conservative perspective. The issue of the market, consumption, and corporations and the debate between pluralist/functionalists and the revisionists in general (critical theorists in particular) appear to have little in the way of middle ground. The next chapter will present a theoretical approach to this middle ground which analyzes the symbolic nature of consumption and the satisfaction of needs without resorting to the manipulated, falsely conscious explanation. However, before moving to that discussion it is necessary to present the view of corporations as power structures and their relationship to the environment, the market in particular.

Corporate Power Structures and the Environment

There are many sources from which a picture of the meta-power view of corporations could be drawn but this discussion will rely mainly on John Kenneth Galbraith's version in his book, The New Industrial State. His work is one of the best and most comprehensive presentations (although he refers to it as a "sketch") of corporate behaviour in an "organizations in action" framework. Not only that, as an institutional economist his whole analysis is informed by structural effects. Moreover, he is one of the few economists, institutional or otherwise, to examine the problem of corporate power in society -- and he does this by analyzing corporate strategies as exercising what, in the terms of this discussion, is relational control and its effects. Add to this the fact that he relied heavily on observations of the operations of the automobile industry. Unfortunately, his descriptive-theoretical account of corporate behaviour is based on little actual research evidence and more speculation and theorizing. This is understandable for little sociological research has been permitted within corporate domains. Galbraith's arguments have received widespread criticism on many points and issues (see the compilation and discussion in Hession, 1972) but it remains as basic and authoritative a guide to the sociologically inaccessible and mysterious world of corporate management as is available.

Since World War II Galbraith (1967:13) contends that large corporations have promoted "the application of increasingly intricate and sophisticated technology to the production of things". The development of these technologies has generated

the problem of meeting their operational requirements in order to keep them performing efficiently and profitably. These demands Galbraith calls "technological imperatives". They have special consequences for corporations, which he illustrates by comparing the production processes employed in manufacturing the first Ford automobile with those used in producing the 1964 Mustang (1967:23-29). Many readers have interpreted Galbraith's analysis of technology and its imperatives in corporations as technological determinism. Indeed, he provides support for this by arguing that technology is not dependent, as in Smith's Wealth of Nations, on the extent of the market. Rather, the technological division of labour is carried as far as it is because it is the only way organized knowledge can be brought to bear on performance. Galbraith regards technology not as a given, static factor but as a powerful, dynamic force "having an initiative of its own". He tends to treat it as if it were a primary, autonomous force in its own right. He apparently argues a structural determinist view when he says: "The imperatives of technology and organization, not the impact of ideology, are what determine the shape of economic society" (1967: 19). Yet he is acutely aware of the analytic-descriptive dilemma he is in when trying to deal with structural and behavioural "causality" in a descriptive-theoretical effort of this magnitude. For he notes:

In examining the intricate complex of economic change, technology, having an initiative of its own, is the logical place at which to break in. But the technology not only causes change, it is a response to change. Though it forces specialization it is also the result of specialization. Though it requires extensive

organization it is also the result of organization (Galbraith, 1967:32).

This is no mean problem as every social scientist can affirm who has tried to describe the historical development of the interaction between structure and behaviour across even a few variables. It is a problem this study will address shortly.

The consequences of technological imperatives for corporations are increasing commitments of time and capital, the greater inflexibility of this commitment, increased need for specialized labour and organization, and, especially, increased need for planning. This emphasis on planning derives, Galbraith argues, from the fact that technological development has reduced the reliability of market relations. While not solely due to technology, it is true, the market environment has become more complex and diversified and turbulent and this is not conducive to the demands of technological production. Thus corporations, Galbraith argues, must be able to not only anticipate but to control factors at both their input and output boundaries in their environment as well as insulate their technological cores from disruption. Sources of supply must be secured at low cost. Consumer demand must be maintained at favourable prices. Competition must be prevented from being destructive. Various strategies for accomplishing this are utilized. So far this description is a more or less pluralist/functionalist description of corporations in action.

However, for Galbraith, structural considerations are important and, although his vocabulary does not contain the terms meta-power or relational control, his argument is that

the strategies employed and the way they are employed as directed by corporate planning structure the market and other aspects of the environment in ways conducive to the realization of corporate goals. He also talks about power relations between: corporations and the government; managers and the technostucture within corporations; and the "planning system" (the corporate sector) and the "market system" (the entrepreneurial owned and operated business sector). These power relations will be given less emphasis in favour of the market relation, the topic of interest here. Galbraith argues that corporate planning takes over the market. He calls this management of demand the revised sequence -- a revision of the consumer sovereign model -- wherein producers manage consumer behaviour and shape the attitudes of those they serve. The purpose is to reduce environmental complexity and diversity in order to insure that people buy what is produced. This is accomplished by creating and placing workable limits on the exercise of consumer discretion and thus stabilizing it.

To attempt to gain this type of relational control (a concept not in Galbraith's vocabulary but which his analysis illustrates), corporations utilize a wide variety of strategies and techniques. Clearly size is important (achieved through vertical integration, merger, etc.) and limiting the number of competitors is also. Both contribute to the ability to plan the volume of production and to control prices on that projected volume as does General Motors (Galbraith, 1967: 41-42). Most important are strategies to manage consumer demand. With reliable demand corporations can regularize their

own demands for supplies, etc., on the input side. The strategies used include advertising and product design. The intention of advertising and "its related arts" is to "help develop the kind of man the goals of the industrial system require -- one that reliably spends his income and works reliably because he is always in need of more" (Galbraith, 1967:219). This shaping of consumer preferences and making the consumption of goods the source of fulfillment, happiness, etc., in life is "a relentless propaganda on behalf of goods in general" (1967:218) and literally becomes an environment which not only manages demand but also conditions and structures appropriate attitudes. Although Galbraith himself talks mostly about advertising, he notes that the management of specific demand entails much more:

Although advertising will be thought the central feature of this management, and is certainly important, much more is involved. Included among the managers are those who sell goods and design the strategies by which they are sold. And so are many who are thought of as engaged in the production of goods. The management of demand consists in devising a sales strategy for a particular product. It also consists in devising a product, or features of a product, around which a sales strategy can be built. Product design, model change, packaging and even performance reflect the need to provide what are called strong selling points. They are thus as much a part of the process of demand management as an advertising campaign (Galbraith, 1967:213).

These efforts at relational control of specific demand are supplemented and reinforced by management of total or "aggregate" demand. This is effected by acting upon the government for public policies which insure the provision of trained

labour through the educational system, the underwriting of new capital and technology, and, to some degree, the promotion of wage-price stability.

With regard to the decision-making or planning process within corporations Galbraith argues that because of scale, complexity, etc., individual decision-making and planning is eclipsed by group and committee processes. There are two dimensions involved in this process --the people involved in planning and decision-making and the goals to which the plans are oriented. The planners are obviously those persons who make up the collective entity known as "management" -- chairpersons, presidents, vice-presidents, division or department heads, etc. However, management groups contain only a fraction of those upon whom they must draw for information upon which to base their decisions. These contributors of information are the large number of specialists and technicians who span corporate structure from the top edge of the blue and white functionaries to the lower boundary of senior officials. "There is no name for all who participate in group decision-making or the organizations which they form", so Galbraith (1967:82) calls them the technostructure. Adding a new wrinkle to the debate over the transition of control from ownership to management discussed in the last chapter, Galbraith asserts that the technostructure has become the real locus of decision-making in corporations -- it is "the guiding intelligence -- the brain -- of the enterprise" (1967:82). Galbraith argues that the actions of corporations to insulate their costly and complex technologies from outside interference from stock-

holders and the state has given the technostucture a high degree of autonomy -- and the cause of corporate prosperity and growth is the accomodations made to the needs of their technostuctures. Given the autonomy and power of technostruc- tures it follows that their particular goals will dominate plan- ning. Galbraith goes on to analyze the motivations of techno- structures in relation to their location in corporate structures in terms of how these people come to identify with and adapt to the imperatives of technology. These imperatives require them to manufacture goods and to manage the demand for these goods. This production and management must be legitimated by being defined as of great social value. Increased production is of even greater social value, and thus technological innova- tion and development is socially valuable. Of course this leg- itimacy must be consistent within corporate boundaries and across them into society. Galbraith (1967:171) argues it this way: "the goals of the mature corporation will be a reflection of the goals of the members of the technostucture. And the goals of the society will tend to be those of the corporation." The social purpose of society becomes adapted to the interests of the technostucture; the ideal of economic growth, that is, that social progress is identical with a rising standard of living, becomes an article of faith, and social policy supports such growth.

Technostuctures gain their power when technology re- quires planning and thus requires specialized knowledge and group decision. They remain in power as long as their corpora- tions are profitable enough to pay stockholders acceptable

dividends and to finance capital reinvestment. As such the prime goals of technostuctures are a "secure level of earnings and a maximum rate of growth consistent with the provision of requisite reinvestment" (Galbraith, 1967:186). Other goals, such as technological innovations and dividend rates, will be secondary and still other goals, such as those associated with corporate social responsibility, will be further down on the list. This primary goal is defined not in terms of profit maximization but rather growth maximization which, in turn, is operationalized in terms of sales. The expansion of output is most obviously in the interests of technostuctures because it means more jobs and promotions -- as does technological innovation. The maximization of profit, however, is not a desirable goal because it "requires the individual member of the technostucture to subordinate his personal pecuniary interest to that of the remote and unknown stockholder" (Galbraith, 1967: 181).

With the various specialists in the technostucture pursuing their interests and goals within the limits of their specialties, the role of management becomes that of mediator reconciling the postures of subordinates and technicians and thus balancing the different thrusts of different specialists. Managers must control events in a way that demonstrates improvement at the end of a specified planning period. Data must be amassed to show corporate growth. Under conditions of bounded rationality managers must anticipate the future by estimating a range of possible outcomes and the probability of each one. Thus understatement and conservatism are in their inter-

ests; managers tend to choose actions which minimize losses rather than maximize gains (because to pursue maximum profit is to invite increased risk of loss).

Summary and Comment

This long and involved discussion of Galbraith's model of the structure and behaviour of corporations and the manner in which they attempt to exercise relational control over elements in their environments is still only a brief outline of the complex and detailed presentation in The New Industrial State. Yet it was necessary to have a basic view of corporate action as a power structure in order to contrast with the pluralist/functionalist model and to apply them to the automobile industry. Galbraith's model has three basic components: (1) the imperatives of technology which necessitate specialization and organization -- giving rise to technostuctures -- and the need for corporate planning in order to stabilize environmental conditions for technological production; (2) the planning process as committee-based and directed by technostuctures and their interests -- with management acting to balance the conflicting demands of the technostucture and to chart a course of corporate action which is the least risky but insures growth (as measured by sales); (3) the strategies employed to insulate technological cores and to manage specific and aggregate demand -- vertical integration, the sales effort, attempts to direct public policy, etc.

With respect to the imperatives of technology, Galbraith argues that they "determine" other structural variables such as

the division of labour and organization. As noted earlier, many people have interpreted his view as structural or technological determinism, and he gives evidence to support this. It is important to critique such a determinist position for, applied to the automobile industry, it would mean that there was little choice on the part of either the technostucture or management or even the market as to the size, shape and form of the industry or the volume, shapes, and types of automobiles it produced. This is not a viable position for it must be recognized that structural variables like technology are social creations which result from decisions to commit resources and labour in particular ways. These structures, once created, feed back into social action and limit social choice in the next historical moment but do not determine it. Of course, this is a basic tenet of the meta-power view of social structure. When applied to technology it recognizes that any technology has a number of alternative ways in which it may be designed and constructed and a number of alternative ways in which it may be socially organized and operated. Thus, any technology may be variable in its actual form and structure, and while a given, existing technology sets limits to the type of social organization possible around it, this social organization is not determined by the technology but is chosen from a range of possible types and can be manipulated within those limits. Moreover, both technology and social organizations are themselves limited by the need to maintain the economic viability of corporate enterprises. It is ultimately this social interest which determines which range of technological

forms and corresponding social organizations will be developed. This position can, it is argued here, be seen in Galbraith's work, although only a short argument will be made. In the quotation near the beginning of the last section where Galbraith (1967:32) qualifies his description of technological imperatives, he notes that he has to cut into "the intricate complex of economic change" somewhere and technology as a structural variable which has "an initiative of its own, is the logical point at which to break in". By this "initiative" Galbraith is, of course, referring to the physical and structural requirements (or imperatives) any technology has in order to operate. In discussing corporate behaviour at a high level of abstraction over a wide range of areas, Galbraith minimizes the historical dimension of the creation of technology and the mutual feedback of structures and choice for good reason -- corporations have been able to insulate their technological designs, structures and social organization from outside influence, stabilized them, and have acted to encourage their expansion for the economic returns they are able to gain by the increasing production of goods. Yet reading his discussion of management as a process of balancing the demands of conflicting segments of the technostructure it is clear that choices are made as to particular emphases, directions, and designs to develop or not to develop, to what extent, and with what degree and type of organization.

Overall, Galbraith's discussion of corporations as organizations in action and even the technological determinist bent is not necessarily disagreeable with either elite/class

or pluralist/functionalist assumptions -- many of both orientations use technological determinist theories. Nor does the above description of the limiting but not determining interaction between social action and technology necessarily violate them. Yet people of both orientations have raised numerous criticisms of Galbraith's work. As noted earlier, the basic thrust of Galbraith is very similar to that of Marcuse -- and neo-Marxists and other radicals do not criticize Galbraith for his model of corporate action (except on some small details), rather they are critical of his refusal to utilize a class analysis and/or to argue for the social and moral bankruptcy of the capitalist system. They object to Galbraith's liberal, democratic elitism and his overriding faith in the system. Such criticisms are mainly philosophical and value-based and are not easily dealt with within the realm of scientific discourse. Those of a pluralist/functionalist orientation also have been critical of specific details of Galbraith's work but especially his "sketch" of demand management or, in the terms of his discussion, relational control in the market. As this is the topic of interest in this study, this critique will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONSUMPTION AND CONTROL: NEEDS, CULTURE, THE MARKET AND CORPORATIONS

A brief summary of what has been covered in this discussion of corporate power and the market and how it fits together is in order. Chapter Two discussed the two predominant versions of the social and historical context of corporate capitalism and the differing views of the nature of corporate power held by them. The view of power as a structural variable was introduced with the concepts of meta-power and relational control. This view, it was argued, appears more adequate to the understanding of the exercise of power by corporations. It is the conception which was implicit in many elite/class descriptions of corporate and class power but lacked articulation. Especially stressed was the concept of the incorporation of complementary behaviour as a means of maintaining power structures. Chapter Three outlined the pluralist/functionalist view of the nature of corporate interaction with the environment, especially with the market. A more adequate model of corporations was discussed in terms of the one provided by Thompson's "organizations in action". The environment was discussed and defined in terms of complexity, uncertainty and unknowability for corporations. The corporate-environment interaction was discussed in terms of corporate efforts to reduce complexity and risk within the limits of their rationality and power. This power was viewed as distinctly limited in operation and clearly bounded by and dependent upon cul-

tural values. Cultural variability was seen in this perspective as causing organizational changes or adaptations in goals, structures, and behaviours. The last chapter outlined two approaches which were applications of the meta-power concept. The critical theory view of corporate capitalist class structure and its domination of the market and society through consumerism was discussed first. This overall view has a structural description which is compatible with the model of corporations in action as developed by Galbraith. This model was discussed and the emphasis both approaches make on demand management or relational control of the market through sales strategies such as advertising and product development noted. Both approaches, however, are phrased in general terms and present little in the way of specific analyses or systematic, propositional theory.

What all of this gives to this study is: (1) a view of corporations as organizations in action; (2) a view of the environment as complex and uncertain; (3) two views of power and its exercise by corporations -- the pluralist/functionalist view and the meta-power view; (4) two views of the market and consumption behaviour. But this last point, the market and consumption, is still an undeveloped category. This chapter will attempt to fill in this category and thus complete this conceptual discussion. As noted earlier, the market and consumption patterns have received little sociological concern or research attention at the societal level. In a 1976 article entitled, "Toward a Sociology of Consumption", Francisco Nicosia and Robert Mayer have commented on this lack. There is a great

deal of research on consumer decision-making at the individual level and the interaction of economic and social variables with individual psychological attributes.

Neither sociologists nor consumer researchers, however, have accepted the challenge of studying a society's consumption in relation to other societal characteristics, despite its potential as a social indicator. Understanding some of a society's characteristics could provide a consumer researcher with the context necessary to help the study of individual consumer choices (Nicosia and Mayer, 1976:65). (See also Nicosia and Witkowski, 1975; Foxall, 1974; Burns, 1964.)

This chapter will consider the two extreme views of the market, the producer sovereign view associated with Galbraith and neo-Marxists (critical theorists) and the conventional wisdom view of consumer sovereignty. While both are in basic agreement about the basic sociological nature of the market in corporate capitalist societies, they obviously disagree over the distribution of power in it. Moreover, they tend to view the role of cultural variables differently and this has implications for the way in which they view the effectiveness of corporate sales strategies, such as advertising. This is an important issue, because cultural variables play an important part in determining the content (meaning and material characteristics) of commodities and the gratifications they provide. In delineating these positions, the version of critical theory, which posits total producer domination based upon the manipulation of false needs, will be replaced with a more adequate version which does not rely on such a problematic concept. This latter position argues that the control of the market is relational, but that within the limits of its struc-

ture and orientation, gratifications which are authentic and self-actualizing are possible. This description relates to Baldus' notion of dual opportunity structure. The two opposing views of the market will be contrasted in the last section.

The Market: Producer Sovereignty versus Consumer Sovereignty

In this section a view of the market as an interaction system will be presented. The two extreme views of producer sovereignty and consumer sovereignty will be delineated briefly and basic points of disagreement noted.

In modern capitalistic societies the market is a social institution in the form of an interaction system based upon economic exchange. In this system human needs and wants are mainly satisfied through the economic production of various goods and services (commodities) which are sold on the market for this purpose in return for monetary profit. As a system of interaction it is characterized by the three components noted in the discussion of meta-power: the interaction situation, the outcome structure, and the orientation component. The interaction situation comprises both the wider physical and social environmental context, and the relationship between consumers and producers who meet in and through the products or commodities on the market. This discussion is concerned mostly with the latter relationship. The reward or outcome structure is the distribution of satisfactions obtained in the exchange process and the consumption of commodities. And the orientation component is the cultural values and norms which define the appropriate forms and range of both need satisfac-

tion and the mode of satisfaction. Thus they also define the nature of the relationship between producers and workers, consumers, and other aspects of the environment.

The operation of market relationships obviously presupposes the existence of normative agreements (ultimately sanctioned by the state) which define the general conditions governing the formation of contractual ties, etc.; but these norms merely specify the boundaries to the framework. The market is thus a system of economic relationships founded upon the relative bargaining strengths of different groupings of individuals (Giddens, 1973:102).

This much is basic sociology. Where the disagreements start is over the distribution of power in the market, the role of culture, and the effects of corporate sales strategies.

As noted in the last chapter, Galbraith is concerned with the cultural determination of human needs and the role of advertising and product development upon this process. Although he makes qualifications, he also makes statements such as the following on the effectiveness of demand management:

It is true that the consumer may still imagine that his actions respond to his own view of his satisfactions. But this is superficial and proximate, the result of illusions created in connection with the management of his wants (Galbraith, 1967:224).

Such a view is very similar to that of the critical theorists who are also concerned with the way human needs and wants are culturally determined and the role of advertising, among other things, in this process. However, their assumption of producer sovereignty (corporate capitalist class sovereignty, actually) is not made for the sake of argument. Their totalistic view of manipulation and the loss of consumer autonomy

must posit some mechanism which explains the lack of awareness and protest on the part of consumers/workers as a class. This mechanism is the concept of false consciousness and the creation and satisfaction of false needs through emotional and irrational appeals and promises of satisfaction. Unfortunately, these views have little, if any, empirical research to support them. Given Galbraith's totalistic bent and his affinities with critical theory it is not hard to see why many readers did not take his qualifications seriously. Thus, Scott Gordon's (1968:640) interpretation:

The consumer enters the Galbraithian picture of the American economy as a puppet of the productive system -- his function is to purchase whatever the technostructure has decided to produce in the quantities and the prices set by the technostructure's plan. (See also Stigler, 1967, 1968; Demsetz, 1968; Reich, 1970; Caves, 1970.)

Such manipulation, it is argued, is simply not consistent with reality. This total determinist view sees producer power exercised in the direct input-output of a puppeteer -- or, as in an earlier metaphor, in the manner of the Kappelmeister. Those who argue for consumer sovereignty also take a determinist position. Only now the organ which is played or the puppets whose strings are pulled are the producers. Consumers express demands in the market and, through the physical and social machinery of the manufacturers, goods are produced which satisfy those demands directly and efficiently with little distortion of original intentions. Products reflect both recently voiced demands and current primary wants, tastes and needs.

The manipulative role of advertising in dictating con-

sumer wants, tastes, and needs has been vigorously criticized from this perspective -- especially by Taplin (1963) and Brink and Kelley (1963). Samuel A. Greyser (1972:24) has summarized the argument against manipulated consumers:

Yet a substantial body of consumer behavior research tells us that the consumer is hardly a helpless pawn manipulated at will by the advertiser. We know, for example, that almost all consumers are very selective in what advertising they pay attention to, perceive, evaluate, and remember -- let alone act upon. This process on the part of the consumer not only varies considerably with the characteristics of the individual, of the product and brand involved, and of the ads in behalf of those products and brand; but it also often varies for the very same individual under different buying circumstances, e.g., for inexpensive versus expensive products.

In the next section the pluralist/functionalist view of the market and consumption will be presented. The following section will present a view based upon a critical theory which does not require any notion of false needs but which is sensitive to cultural variables and relational control strategies.

The Pluralist/Functionalist View

The pluralist/functionalist view of the market is standard Talcott Parsons and as such will not be discussed in any great detail. In this view the market is a subsystem of the larger social system of which it is a part and for which it performs adaptive functions. The market is functionally integrated into the larger system and its interaction system is bounded and shaped by the common value system of the society. This common value system is built upon a consensus of the individual system members, which itself is the result of the

balancing and equilibrating of individual and institutional tensions and goals. In the market, just as elsewhere in the social system, individuals are considered to be autonomous, rational persons who make decisions and act independently of each other. These decisions and actions, and the human needs and wants which underlie them, are guided and channeled in their expression by the cultural code or value system. The expression of consumer demand is thus an expression of the needs of the system and the market is organized in such a way as to meet these needs efficiently. This mode of organization is the free or laissez-faire market in which competition between suppliers insures efficient production, proper pricing, and fair distribution. This is the view of consumer sovereignty. A brief description of the recent effort of Nicosia and Mayer to develop a sociology of consumption from this perspective will illustrate its emphases and deficiencies.

Nicosia and Mayer (1976) apply the Parsonian framework to what they call "the consumption of a society" or the consumption activities of a society. They define consumption activities in terms of three types of activity: buying, using, and disposing. They define the "domain of a sociology of consumption" as concerning

the study of three classes of variables: cultural values, institutions and their norms, and consumption activities. It also includes the study of the possible relationships between these classes of variables -- for example, (1) from cultural values to institutions and then to consumption activities, (2) from cultural values directly to consumption activities, and (3) possible feedbacks from consumption activities to institutions and/or

cultural values (Nicosia and Mayer, 1976:68).

They proceed to describe the institutional arrangements or social organization of consumption activities by examining buying, using, and disposing patterns as having shifted from the location in the family as in the past to commercial institutions and non-consumption institutions (where many use activities are carried out). As a result consumption activities are increasingly diffused among both types of institutions with the result that there is a multiplicity of consumption norms which are potentially conflicting but none of which are very enforceable.

Nicosia and Mayer also examine the role of cultural values upon consumption activities. They note that identifying which values are relevant to consumption and establishing relationships is difficult. Then they mention the manner in which institutions may interpret values and mediate between values and consumption activities. And the "feedback" of changes in consumption activities into institutions and norms and into cultural values is discussed. In this latter discussion they describe the "deflection" of cultural values into consumption activities when, because of changes in those activities and "social change in general", nonconsumption activities are no longer able to "interpret and translate a particular cultural value into activity-specific norms" (Nicosia and Mayer, 1976:72). They wind up presenting a view of modern society which is the standard sociological description. Consumption has become the area where values of individual achievement, success and personal distinction (deflected from pro-

duction) and individual freedom of choice (deflected from numerous institutions which have become centralized and technologically complex) can be realized. But they do not analyze the sources of the changes which cause these deflections. Presumably these sources would be phrased in the traditional functionalist interpretation of the rise of corporate capitalism.

This view is reinforced by the interesting fact that in this analysis of consumption, Nicosia and Mayer do not even mention the supply of commodities for consumption -- the role of corporations and of advertising and other sales strategies is completely missing. This is entirely consistent with the pluralist/functionalist view of social structure and the operation of power. Producers are like the Kappelmeister's organ referred to in Chapter Two: they supply goods and services which are directly satisfactory to consumer demand over a period of competition. The role of advertising in this context is to provide information about products and product characteristics which is relevant to consumer decision-making about how best to allocate their incomes to achieve the greatest utility or satisfaction. The goals of advertising are to persuade consumers of a product's superiority and to help provide this product to the market. In the process, advertising can cause a higher level of total consumption for a product than if it were not advertised at all. The content of advertising is dependent upon the nature of the product and the nature of consumer wants. It is a neutral tool to display the links between the two categories. It exerts no influence upon either one. The nature of the product is a result of the expression of consumer

demand, and the values of consumers are independent of the advertising process. The values of consumers which shape the nature and expression of their wants, tastes, needs are learned from sources outside of the advertising process; advertising can only appeal to these sources of potential motivation. This position is stated clearly by Petit and Zakon (1962:15):

. . . advertising must be compatible with the values of the consumer if it is to influence his behaviour. . . . It must relate the product characteristics and consumer benefits to values the customer has already learned.

Samuel A. Greyser (1972:143) summarizes this approach in an article in the Harvard Business Review:

Consumers are seen as rather more intelligent and less seduced than in the manipulative model. A credo of the service model is: "Consumers cast their ballots at the cash register every day . . . and besides, we know what they want via market research". Advertising is seen as helping to facilitate choices made by consumers who generally know what they want.

In this theoretical perspective, corporations and their sales strategies are more or less simple input-output mechanisms which process consumer demand into appropriate commodities. Even when viewed as organizations in action their effectiveness is still limited by cultural values, consumer demands, and other environmental controls. Consumer demand is a function of the cultural interpretation of needs and is expressed according to such factors as income, taste, etc. This view is illustrated in the theory of consumer demand developed by Kevin Lancaster (1966a, 1966b, 1971). His theory attempts to explain how various product characteristics (the real, physical proper-

ties of a commodity) affect consumer demands for multi-dimensional goods. He makes two basic assumptions: (1) "All goods possess objective characteristics relevant to the choices which people make among different collections of goods . . ."; and (2) "Individuals differ in their reactions to different characteristics . . . It is the characteristics in which consumers are interested. They possess preferences for collections of characteristics, and preferences for goods are indirect or derived in the sense that goods are required only in order to produce characteristics" (Lancaster, 1971:7). From the producers' point of view, what they are selling is "characteristics collections rather than goods" (Lancaster, 1966a: 21). Interestingly, Lancaster applies his theory to automobile consumption. There is no need to detail his analysis here. His basic assumption is that consumers search for an automobile that contains the optimal collection of characteristics available at that time, and that competing cars can be ranked in order of decreasing quality in various measurable characteristics. There are several criticisms which can be made of his application, but the one of most relevance here is that he does not distinguish between objective and perceived reality. Between the objective characteristics of automobiles and consumer perception of the satisfactions and benefits they can provide is a zone wherein cultural influences such as advertising can alter or direct evaluations regardless of the actual physical comparisons. However, such a role is not a theoretical possibility in this orientation.

Critical Theory and the Market

Both the functionalists and critical theorists agree that in corporate capitalism the market has become the main locus of individual freedom and achievement, the major source of identity and gratification. For those of the former persuasion the market is structured to allow and respond to individual demand exercised independently in the market within the liberal social context. The critical view argues that the market distorts and manipulates this demand. Corporate imperatives and sales strategies are not culturally neutral, but are active in this perspective and interpret human needs and wants directing them into commodities designed and determined by producers. For critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, like Marcuse, the capitalist class through its sales efforts creates false needs and a false consciousness, thereby exercising a totalistic control in society. Such notions are complex and not easy to verify. These are not reasons to dismiss them out of hand. But there is a way to deal with the issue of market domination without recourse to them. Critical theorists William Leiss (1976) and John Alt (1977), among others, have argued that the hypothesis of false consciousness implies that the whole cultural system must be false and thus inherently self-destructive. But the only verification for such an hypothesis is the collapse of the system. As long as the people in it function at some level effectively enough to maintain it, the hypothesis remains speculation.

Moreover, the notion of false needs implies that there are true, objective needs which exist. But their location has

proven most problematic. Leiss argues that a sociological perspective which grants that all human needs are historical and are conditioned in their expression and satisfaction by the means available cannot maintain a distinction between true or authentic needs and false needs. From this perspective all needs are authentic within a social context which determines what the need is and the way it can be satisfied. This is to say that human culture and its symbolic mediations provide the framework through which human needs are interpreted and guided to the socially-appropriate modes of satisfaction. Moreover, this cultural code "includes autonomous domains, not determined by the mode of production, that structure individual experience and behaviour" (Leiss, 1978:43). This is certainly compatible with the functionalist orientation. But the company parts when it comes to the issue of sales strategies.

Leiss argues that commodities are symbolically mediated collections of physical characteristics, both of which are assembled by producers in specific orders and designs. Advertising is the systematic linking of symbols to objects and thus provides guides and directions as to appropriate modes of need satisfaction. Individual needs and wants are

complex states of feeling, encompassing both physiological maintenance and psychological well being (self-esteem, ego-enhancement, interpersonal comparisons, and so forth). In the marketplace, goods that he or she encounters combine what may be called 'objective' characteristics -- such as physical dimensions and performance capabilities -- and 'imputed' characteristics (symbolic associations with success, happiness, etc.) (Kline and Leiss, 1978:14-15)

Commodities are defined symbolically as being able to create feelings of happiness and satisfaction through their consumption and the consumers' experience with them. Life style models and values are incorporated into the symbolic definitions given to commodities. These symbolic representations suggest the type of experience consumers will have by consuming the good. And the good itself becomes a sign of personal identity in its use by

becoming a message in itself . . . it identifies him or her within the social structure. The use of the commodity with particular symbolic qualities merges with the identity of the user. In this sense, product images were never designed merely to increase purchases, but to transform the personal significance of the products' everyday use (Kline and Leiss, 1978:19).

Thus, ambiguous and generalized social needs and values are symbolized in advertising and product design. They communicate the message that social values such as creativity, communality, fun, spontaneity, freedom, mobility, status, etc., are available through consumption. To be successful they must "communicate an experience which matches generalized or ambiguous needs to particularized or differentiated consumer experiences" (Alt, 1977:241). These needs, values, and experiences, as noted, have entered the market or been "deflected" into it because other, traditional institutions and social relations such as the family, work, the community, are no longer able to provide them. Commodities and consumption are "events, situations, and thingified activities where individuals can gain a sense of identity and transcend the anomie, the partiality, and the restrictions of everyday living" (Alt, 1977:241).

For functionalists these symbols and the values and needs they represent are more or less independent aspects of individual psychological utility; combined with the material product characteristics this duality of symbol-product is evaluated by individuals in terms of their personal demand schedules -- this is the "marginal utility" theory of economics. And if advertising, product design and producers are seen as neutral, then the market is still subject to the sovereign consumer.

For Leiss and Alt the market is a system of social control in which social actions, orientations and outcomes are manipulated and limited. They argue that corporate sales efforts do not necessarily "create" needs but that marketing research uncovers existing needs as well as cultural tendencies, inchoate or inarticulate needs, social troubles or issues. Commodities are then designed to provide appropriate satisfactions. As people live their lives through commodities the messages they communicate are powerful socializing agents -- they provide people with world views and culture. Consumer experiences becomes the basis for social communication and community. But the symbols and values which are attached to commodities are changed and altered regularly. Commodities become more complex materially and symbolically. They become unstable and fragmented sets of symbol characteristics. Without institutional guidance in traditional cultures, privatized consumers are not able to understand commodities in any technical sense and are limited to decisions based upon imputed claims, but are not provided normative definitions of appropriate use.

As a result, human needing itself becomes fragmented and ambiguous.

Consumers are offered sensual gratification, excitement, fulfillment, identity through the consumption of commodities. These satisfactions are what sustain and legitimize the capitalist system and its ideology of progress and economic growth. Yet needs are satisfied only to be restimulated or rendered obsolete by the continual shifting, recombination, and introduction of redesigned and new commodities -- called progress and growth but really the imperatives of capitalist production. The messages of commodities are ambiguous, indeterminate and fluid. They are limited to the immediate concerns and gratifications offered through consumption (Klein and Leiss, 1978; Wagner, 1975; Leymore, 1975; Williamson, 1978). As such, the culture of the market constitutes a "restricted linguistic code" which provides no basis for a deeper understanding of the market situation and its actual nature. No adequate means are available for consumers to articulate and communicate their inevitable dissatisfactions. These dissatisfactions are in fact stimulated and then offered resolution in new and better products. Consumers, confused about their needs and unable to determine whether or not a particular good provides adequate satisfaction for a particular need, must learn to tolerate a continual state of dissatisfaction with consumption choices or somehow become indifferent to the discrepancies between their needs and the means of satisfaction.

There is little opportunity for individuals to apply human reason in the sense of rationally correlating objectives

with appropriate means of satisfaction. And human freedom is limited to the choices made available within the restricted range of modes of satisfaction in the market. What is controlled are the dimensions of interpretation and the structures of experience within the market. But this is not a total control. And it is not devoid of authentic satisfaction and enjoyment. For while corporate sales strategies can manipulate the symbolism and design of commodities, consumers faced with a wide and changing array of commodities are able to select and employ them in their own ways to construct their own lifestyles. "The whole market place is divided into semi-autonomous sectors which respond to different cues or to the same cues in different ways" (Klein and Leiss, 1978:13). This illustrates what Klein and Leiss call the "double symbolic constitution of utility" wherein culture is used by both corporations and consumers for their own ends. Consumers try out commodities and their meanings, accept or reject or even modify them, use them -- and thus do achieve an experience of freedom, innovation, and social identity. But, of course, they are already socialized by the meanings of commodities. And they are limited in their personal movement and innovation to the range specified by the framework of the commodity. In the process they create cultures which are authentic and constitute themselves as active, self-conscious social subjects. They gain a certain ability to assert their intentions and actions, to be free and maintain dignity not available elsewhere (for example, at work or in politics).

The instabilities of commodities and needs in the mar-

ket creates uncertainties and risks for corporate producers. They must be continually acting to order and reduce that uncertainty while at the same time undermining it to keep increasing production. Hence their control is relational and applies to the long run. Galbraith, in response to his critics, has also said that his analysis of demand management refers to the long run; in the short run it may appear that consumer choice is dominant. And he also says that producer sovereignty is not absolute. This being the case, corporate producers face uncertainty in the market and must act to reduce it. But neither the critical theorists nor Galbraith provide much in the way of specific analysis of the decisions and strategies used in managing or exercising relational control over the market. To treat the matter only in terms of the long run may allow analysts to see more control than the case may warrant or may miss significant developments which alter courses of action in subtle ways at lower levels but which nevertheless contribute to the overall picture. As Hession (1972:185) has noted, "if we do not know what happens in the short run, how confident can we be in our analysis of the long run which, after all, is simply a culmination of a number of shorter periods?"

Corporate strategies of advertising and product design are singled out as important but little attention is given to where the content comes from beyond references to market research and consumer decision-making in the market. With respect to this point Stewart Ewen in his critical history of

advertising has noted how the language, imagery and style of the numerous groups who expressed opposition and resistance to capitalism or were "deviant" in some way were "appropriated" into advertising.

Appropriating the lingo and styles of the New Left, the counterculture, feminism, neoagrarianism, ethnicity, drug-vision and other phenomena, the advertising industry, seeking markets, has generated a mass culture which reflects the spirit but not the cutting edge of this resistance (Ewen, 1976: 218).

In the process of this appropriation these cultural behaviour patterns are turned into a positive sales theme for the producers with little concern about the original intentions.

Within advertising, the social realm of resistance is reinterpreted, at times colonized, for corporate benefit. Ads mirror the widespread judgement that mass-produced goods are junky and unhealthy. Products are advertised as if they contain this anticorporate disposition -- praised for their organic naturalness and their timeless quality. Modes of anticorporate resistance and sentiment reappear in the ads themselves, miraculously encased within the universal terms of the market (Ewen, 1976:218-219).

Of course, what Ewen has described here is the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns by corporate advertising. Corporations not only monitor their market environment but the larger social and cultural environment as well. There they find behaviours and values which are useful to their goals -- even behaviour and values critical and oppositional to them and/or deviant with respect to society can be useful. But there has been little systematic study of this process from a sociological point of view. One notable exception is the work of Frederick Elkin (1964, 1969, 1971) who examined how French

Canadian advertising agents working in predominantly Anglo-phone advertising agencies were able to utilize their positions in the corporate structure to subvert the predominant corporate advertising orientations and get their particular values into advertisements. The incorporation of Quebecois themes in advertising helped to promote and accelerate the Quiet Revolution of Quebec. Elkin's work, while not grounded by a conception of meta-power, is most suggestive of the great returns of examining relational control at the corporate level and through a series of short runs. At this level it is necessary to consider corporate variables such as structure and planning and the interaction between commodities and consumers over periods of time in order to assess the actual nature of relational control exercised, if any.

This section has presented the critical theory view of consumption and corporate capitalist control of the market. The Frankfurt School position of total control through the manipulation of false needs was replaced by a more satisfactory view which sees all human needs as authentic within their social and historical contexts. The formulations of William Leiss and John Alt were presented. They view the control of the market by capitalist producers as a matter of cultural manipulation utilizing strategies which shape orientations, outcomes, and actions. The market has come to be the locus of individual self-expression, freedom, and identity in corporate capitalism. These values and the values of the capitalist class are attached to the commodities produced for the market. Advertising provides the cultural code by which these values

are socialized and defined. What it communicates is experiences, feelings, and meanings; what it promises is satisfaction, sensual gratification, enjoyment, status. But the advertising culture is a restricted code geared to present pleasure. It provides privatized consumers no way to articulate or communicate their dissatisfactions publicly or to build a transcendental view of their situation. Moreover, consumer dissatisfactions are stimulated and necessary for capitalist production. Symbols and product characteristics are changed and rearranged regularly to stimulate consumption. Under such conditions there is no direct relationship between the consumers' needs and the objects sought as means of satisfying those needs. Needs and commodities become fragmented and unstable. The result is consumer confusion and a destabilization of human personality. But while there is domination and capitalist control, within the limits of the market there is room for creative, expressive action on the part of individuals. This control is relational in nature. What Klein and Leiss call the double symbolic constitution of utility is a description of what Baldus has called a dual opportunity structure. Consumers can also manipulate and use culture and commodities as a resource in creating meaningful life styles. As long as consumers stay within the market framework interventive control is not necessary -- and even opposition and deviance can prove to be useful when incorporated as complementary behaviour. Not discussed here are the views of the critical theorists on the inherent contradictions in this process and the potentials they provide as a basis for changing the system to one

which restores autonomous, rational individuals/consumers to sovereignty.

This theoretical position is a critical phenomenology of consumption (Leiss, 1977). It views cultural variables as resources to be used by individuals and corporate personnel in the pursuit of their particular interests. It views advertising as a cultural variable which is both a socializing agent and a resource for consumers. It does not say much about the manner in which product characteristics structure consumer action. The pluralist/functionalist position, on the other hand, views culture as virtually deterministic, although it remains an unanalyzed category. From this position, values are the prime movers in a social system and tend to be treated in a reified manner. This point has been noted many times in sociological critiques; it seems simplistic when stated baldly. But the ramifications of this treatment are illustrated in the conventional wisdom of the market and its operation. The critical theory view is phrased more at the individual level of analysis where it examines the consumption of commodities by consumers in a structured market. It examines the consumption process in a holistic manner with little focus on the origins and development of commodities by producers. It was suggested that a focus upon the corporate level, the level at which most sales strategies are implemented, could provide important insights into the exercise of relational control. Galbraith's model of corporate action is very useful but, unfortunately, is vague on sales strategies. In the next section, these points will be developed more fully.

The Two Views Considered

Although both the pluralist/functionalists and critical theorists have focused on the market and consumption activities, there are substantial differences between their analyses even though they agree that the market is the main area of individual self-expression and action. What they differ on is their views of the nature of culture and the effectiveness of sales strategies. For both orientations culture is an interpretative code which stands between human needs and objects of satisfaction. There is no necessary incompatibility between the functionalist view and the critical theory view of culture as a resource and the dual character (symbolic-material) of commodities. Nor is there any necessary disagreement on the critical theory view of what is sold on the market -- experiences, sensual gratifications, enjoyment, etc. There is disagreement on the effectiveness of sales strategies in shaping the interpretation of needs. For functionalists the interpretation of needs is made at the individual level by autonomous and rational persons within a broad framework provided by institutional norms and cultural values -- although at present there is a tendency to underinstitutionalization and for norms governing consumption to be dispersed in both consumption and nonconsumption institutions. Consumers formulate their wants independently of the sales strategies of producers. These strategies are not able to affect cultural variables. In fact, the content of commodities and sales strategies is determined by the expressed wants of consumers in the market. Advertising and product design are thus both reflections of consumer demands

and exert no formative influence upon them. Producers are equally dependent upon consumer expressions for the determination of their efforts to supply goods. Even when considered as organizations in action, their structures and behaviours are limited to monitoring and anticipating trends and reducing uncertainty by developing legitimate markets. Such actions could be considered in terms of the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns.

For Galbraith and the critical theorists, the content of commodities and sales strategies is determined less by consumer demands and values and their legitimacy than by the interests of corporations and the usefulness to the corporation of particular values and needs. Commodities as advertising image and material characteristics in this view are able to structure the market by providing orientation, gratification, and by limiting action possibilities (by virtue of the material characteristics designed into the product). This is the key to the exercise of meta-power in the market. But it remains undeveloped. Functionalists do not consider corporate structure, behaviour and sales strategies to be of much consequence -- Nicosia and Mayer do not even mention advertising or product design in their discussion of consumption activities, even though their prime concern is with institutional and normative definitions of such behaviour. Critical theorists focus more at the individual level and leave corporate aspects unexamined. Galbraith discusses the nature of corporate structure and planning but sales strategies are barely explored.

These are the basic parameters of the two positions on

culture, sales strategies, and commodity content. Extrapolating from them, it can be asserted that in order to understand the development of the content of a commodity, the types of satisfactions and gratifications it provides (or could provide) must be understood. From the critical theory point of view, it is these satisfactions more than the commodity itself which is demanded in the market by consumers. Of course, cultural codes define legitimate and illegitimate types of satisfaction and modes of satisfaction. If corporations and sales strategies are unable to influence culture and consumer decision-making then consumer demand is met on the basis of the strength of demand and competition between demands. But if sales strategies are aspects of relational control, then all the satisfactions demanded in the market may not necessarily be met -- even if some of them are very strong and/or socially significant. For corporate decisions can structure the types and range of satisfactions provided by their commodities, and they can limit what they make available to those they find the most profitable and useful. The next chapter will summarize and integrate the entire theoretical discussion in Part II and formulate the two positions with respect to the problem of corporate relationships with the market and the development of the content of commodities.

THEORETICAL SUMMARY AND FORMULATIONS

To study the problem of the power of the automobile industry, the focus chosen was the development of the meanings and shape of the automobile, in particular the controversial meanings and designs associated with performance motives. Conceptualizing this problem in theoretical terms has taken this discussion down several long and twisting roads. Three basic conceptual frameworks had to be developed: (1) the nature of power and its exercise; (2) the nature of corporate behaviour; and (3) the nature of the market and consumption.

In reviewing the discussions of corporate power and behaviour, it is necessary to explicate the theoretical interpretations of the historical development and sociological implications of corporate capitalism as the social and cultural context within which the automobile industry is situated. It is important to understand the theoretical interpretations of this context and the way they formulate its influence on the industry and the market. The two major theoretical positions both see the rise of corporate capitalism as creating a consumption-oriented society with the market becoming the major institutional sphere of individual freedom and self expression. For the pluralist/functionalists this market is basically a free, competitive market characterized by consumer sovereignty and efficient production and distribution. For elite/class theorists the market is a major arena of social control maintained by corporate manipulation of consumer demand.

A review of the literature on corporate power revealed that part of the reason for the seemingly unresolvable disagreement which exists between the two theoretical positions is that they use a concept of power which tends to take the institutional structure and cultural framework for granted. This conception is individualistic in orientation and focuses upon limited aspects of the exercise of power. The elite/class theorists often focus on structural and cultural aspects, but with no adequate conceptual foundation to guide their analyses their work is limited in its development. An alternative conception of power was proposed which views power in terms of the ability to structure social relationships in an interaction system by manipulating action possibilities, reward structures, and orientations. This view was built on the work of Tom Baumgartner, et al., Steven Lukes, and Bernd Balduš. Adopting Baumgartner, et al.'s terminology of meta-power and relational control, this conception is applicable to collective action because it views organizations and institutions as structures of action. A number of power strategies were discussed and special attention was given to the strategy of the incorporation of complementary behaviour.

Because this study is focused at the corporate level, it is necessary to have a conception of corporate behaviour. Both theoretical positions have a view of corporate action and interaction with the environment. The pluralist/functionalist conception sees corporations as passive, adaptive and constrained by cultural variables and external controls -- in the market they are unable to gain enough leverage to dominate it. Such a

view of corporate action has been criticized by organization theorists. Their critique was reviewed and their work on organization-environment interaction discussed. When the environment was discussed in terms of uncertainty, it was theorized that organizational administrators were not able to apply organizational rationality in any complete sense but had to act as problem-solvers. James Thompson's view of organizations in action took this development a step further and proposed a model of organizations as actively engaging their environment and insulating themselves from environmental influences. However, this view is based upon a limited notion of power compatible with the pluralist/functionalist framework. A view of corporations as power structures was described which is based upon the meta-power conception. This view was illustrated by John Kenneth Galbraith's discussion of corporate structure and behaviour. Emphasis was placed on the manner in which corporate structure determines the range of behaviour and the goals of corporations. Also emphasized was the nature of the planning process, and the management of consumer demand through advertising and product design.

These two views of corporations in action and their differing perceptions of corporate action in the market form the basic conceptual frameworks which will be applied to the automobile industry in the next part of this discussion. There they will be evaluated by testing several hypotheses drawn from them. However, the two views of corporate action in the market do not provide enough theoretical input to make specific inferences about market behaviour and product development. In order

to understand the construction of the content of commodities it is important to know: (1) what it is the consumers need and want; (2) what it is that is sold to consumers; (3) how the market structure shapes the interaction; and (4) what the effects of sales strategies are upon consumers. To obtain this input, the two positions were examined for their views on the structure of the market and the role of culture as a mediator between human needs and their social expression and satisfaction.

The pluralist/functionalist position is basically a version of cultural determinism and its reified view of culture presents the market as a culture in which autonomous, rational individuals express their needs in the market to be satisfied by corporate suppliers in a mostly direct and undistorted way. Sales strategies such as advertising and product design are not inordinately influential in the formulation of needs or their satisfaction in consumption. The pluralist/functionalist view says little about the nature of the satisfactions sought and provided in the market. The critical theory phenomenology of consumption also notes the cultural coding of needs and their satisfaction. But it argues that culture can be used as a resource -- both by corporate producers and by consumers. The satisfactions sought and provided by consumption are sensual gratification, enjoyment, status, identity, etc. Most pluralist/functionals could basically agree to this. But they do not agree with the critical theory view that advertising and product design are cultural and structural mechanisms of control. Advertising is a socializing influence -- it pro-

vides interpretations of experience and needs and promises satisfaction. It thus affects orientation and outcome structures on the market behaviour of consumers over time. Product characteristics structure action possibilities and outcome structures. But these relational control strategies, along with others used by corporate administrators, are in the form of restraints and constraints. Within the limits of the market and commodities, there is consumer freedom to construct life styles and meanings. Thus the market is a dual opportunity structure.

It is not possible in a single study to analyze at the institutional level the theoretical interpretations about market efficiency versus control, corporate power and institutional relationships, corporate power and institutional relationships, the market as the locus of identity through consumption, the extent and effects of the fragmentation and destabilization of needs and commodities. As should be clear from the theoretical discussion to this point, the theorizing is far from conceptually clear and the significant relationships involved are not well understood. Moreover, ideological biases and value judgements interfere with objective assessment. To make a manageable (?) study, this dissertation has restricted its focus to a case study of a single industry and the construction of the symbolic and physical characteristics of its product as determined by the interaction between the industry, market, and larger environment over a period of time. Actually the focus is not on all the meanings and characteristics of the product but only one important dimension. And only the

sales strategies of advertising, product design and the incorporation of complementary behaviour will be examined. There has been little work done in this area. It gains further significance when it is noted that the institutional focus with its long run emphasis often misses significant developments in the shorter run or at lower levels which influence outcomes in important ways. The corporate level of analysis can provide not only insight into the nature and meaning of consumption and the relationship between corporations and the market, but also the basis for building towards more adequate analysis at the institutional level.

Now this discussion is equipped with two views of the corporate-market-environment relationship and the construction of product content (image-material characteristics) as a consequence of these relationships. Products are multi-dimensional collections of physical characteristics and symbols. For the pluralist/functionalist approach, consumers decide the content of these collections by their demand curves over time in the market. Corporate producers, even if viewed as organizations in action, can only respond to these demands. They may monitor the environment, anticipate trends, and even develop markets -- and as such incorporate complementary behaviour patterns. But they cannot serve illegitimate demands or develop illegitimate markets. Moreover, their sales strategies are basically neutral devices which have little effect upon the determination of which collections of characteristics consumers choose. The satisfactions they sell -- enjoyment, utility, gratification, status, etc. -- are based in common cultural

definitions and are selected for consumption by consumers.

The meta-power approach argues that the content of products, while dependent upon consumer response, is also shaped by the structure and behaviour of corporate producers. They respond to demand but at the same time sales strategies such as advertising, when considered in total for a product or group of products, provides interpretations and promises of satisfaction and omits others. It thus structures consumer orientation and expected rewards, shaping the way they think about and express their wants for a product. Over time the selected emphases, which have proven successful in the market, are refined and developed while other aspects are not developed or are dropped. Similarly for physical characteristics. By designing and presenting only certain ranges of characteristics or limiting the range on one characteristic, consumer action is structured and the satisfactions received channeled into certain areas. Of course, these emphases, restrictions, and limits must be on aspects which consumers respond to, but the decisions as to which emphases, restrictions, limits to institute and promote are made by the producers. There will be monitoring and market research activities, etc., in order to find and develop new products, find useful cultural images, etc. There may be definite social limits to the markets and meanings they can develop, as well as to their actions in the market. But they may also pursue markets not legitimate and/or utilize strategies which are not necessarily ethical, responsible, or legal -- if they perceive it in their interests to do so. Incorporating complementary behaviour patterns may be

one such strategy if: (1) they have relevant aspects useful to production and sales which can be utilized on a pick and choose basis without taking on the whole complex of the behaviour and/or (2) effective counter-action (or non-actions) can be taken if negative responses are encountered.

Unfortunately, little is known about the decision-making process in corporations. But, as Galbraith has made clear, technology and other structural variables are important in determining how a product is produced and what characteristics are feasible and profitable. Decisions are made among competing characteristics, designs, and images to produce certain combinations, certain emphases, etc. Within corporate planning processes, various interest groups in the technostuctures will be competing and striving for their particular "favorites" and administrators will have to assess the arguments and data presented by all parties to the process. The final decisions will be made in the interests of the corporate enterprise (however these interests are defined).

In the next part of this discussion these two theoretical formulations will be applied to the automobile industry and its market. Several hypotheses derived from them will be tested and the implications analyzed.

PART III
AUTOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE,
THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY,
AND THE CONSUMER

CHAPTER 7

THE AUTOMOBILE AND ITS DEFINITION

This part of the dissertation will present the substantive problem and the critical test of the pluralist/functionalist and meta-power theoretical frameworks. This chapter will introduce the substantive problem as the development of the definition of the automobile in general and specifically as the development of definitions relating to themes of automotive performance. These performance themes have been the topic of a good deal of public criticism directed to the automobile industry. The basis for these criticisms will be discussed through the concept of the "extra motives" which are stimulated and expressed behaviourally through the promotion and development of these themes. The social embodiment of these themes in the hot rod subculture and its rise from deviant to an ambivalent respectability will be examined. Specific attention will be paid to the relationship the automobile manufacturers to this development. Last, a review of the criticisms directed to the industry over these developments will be presented.

The Substantive Problem

According to the pluralist/functionalist conception of power, in order for a situation to qualify as the exercise of power there must be some behavioural manifestation of resistance. Even Bachrach and Baratz's reformulation maintains this requirement. The meta-power view does not. However, this can make a critical test of the two theoretical perspectives difficult if a problem is chosen for analysis in which no resist-

ance is expressed. It would mean first of all establishing the "objective" interests which are being violated by the powerful -- a problem in itself, as noted previously. And it would mean that the pluralist/functionalists could counter the establishment of these objective interests, the definition of the situation as an exercise of power, and the results of the test. To minimize this difficulty a market problem was selected which contains a public issue involving the expression of conflict and resistance -- although this resistance is not necessarily expressed solely in and through the market and consumer decisions. To further minimize difficulties the pluralist/functionalist methodology will be utilized focusing on the behaviour and decision-making of the participants in the market setting. If the pluralist/functionalist framework should be supported by the results, the possibility is open that this is an artifact of study design. However, if the results support the meta-power view there can be little doubt of their being caused by the research methodology.

The substantive market problem chosen for the critical test is the development of the symbolic and physical content, that is, the definition of the automobile. This definition is the result of the interaction between consumers and the automobile manufacturers in the market. In this process symbolic meanings are attached to the automobile and the satisfactions or utilities it provides. Each framework has a different view of this interaction and its automotive results. The first aspect of the critical test must explicate these views and derive hypotheses predicting the general behaviour of consumers

and producers in the market. The pluralist/functionalist view argues that consumers determine the content of the automobile through their demands and the competition among producers to meet them. This view is predicated on the assumption that consumers are autonomous, rational actors who interpret their needs through common cultural codes and choose automobiles which best satisfy those needs. The meta-power view argues that manufacturers manipulate cultural meanings and structure consumer choices by selecting aspects of meaning and design for development which suit their interests and imperatives. Thus, at this level, the test involves assessing the role of producer strategies, especially advertising and product development, in affecting consumer interpretations of their needs and their perceptions of the automobile. The high consumer demand for automobiles over the test period may or may not prove that consumers got what they wanted, that is, that the producers provided an adequate range of products for consumers to choose from. The traditional view argues they did. The meta-power view argues they may not have. David Braybrooke, (1967:231) has stated this latter position:

In the automobile industry, with its high concentration and high barriers to entry, the variety of products is especially subject to arbitrary limitations on the producers' side. But from the fact that given a choice between x, y and z, N expresses himself as wanting z nothing can be inferred about his wants for u, v, w, goods that were not offered him. Many consumers might prefer very different cars -- if they are never produced, so that consumers have a chance to see them or to try them out, how can it be shown that they are not wanted?

However, this general level of analysis does not provide insight into the actual content which is created into the automobile. In order to gain information on this process and to further test the two perspectives, one specific aspect of the definition of the automobile was selected for analysis. This aspect is the themes related to the notion of automotive performance. Automotive performance has been the topic of concern among certain segments of the public and consumers for a long time, especially since the end of World War II. This issue basically concerns how the automobile has developed definitions which are not related to the prime function of the automobile, namely the transportation of people from one place to another. Performance has been singled out in particular as a problem, and an increasing amount of public criticism directed to the industry over this aspect. Critics have argued that the nontransportation themes of automotive performance have been overemphasized in design and advertising by the industry. This is a problem, it is argued, because they encourage designs which are not "rational" or "efficient" for transportation purposes -- in fact, which are overpowered, unsafe, and wasteful of gasoline. It is also a problem because these themes stimulate and provide cultural models for motivations, attitudes, and behaviours which are detrimental and dangerous to the transportation system and society.

In order to expand upon the notion of automotive performance and its meanings it will be helpful to view the automobile in terms of the conception of commodities as discussed in Chapter Five. From this perspective the automobile is

a multidimensional collection of symbolic and physical characteristics which offers numerous psychological and physical satisfactions or utilities. Roy Van Til, in a significant study of automobile advertising to be discussed later, has come up with a list of ten basic dimensions. He derived this list from a content analysis of advertising in Life magazine.² He feels that "within these ten basic categories of appeals can be found every variation of perceived product characteristics and consumer benefit that has been connected with the automobile" (Van Til, 1975:124). The ten basic categories are: (1) safety; (2) exclusiveness; (3) economy; (4) machismo; (5) styling; (6) functionalism; (7) ergonomics; (8) reputation; (9) technology; (10) durability.³ Within each category are numerous subcategories of appeals and satisfactions. His detailed breakdown and description of the subcategories in each dimension is much too long to be presented here. Moreover, it would not add a great deal to the discussion.⁴

What is of interest here are those themes related to what this discussion has been calling performance. These are classified under Van Til's dimension of "machismo". Van Til, (1975:149,n30) defines machismo as "the Spanish word referring to the cult of masculinity in which power and muscle play a great role." He feels that in this context, "It serves better than any English word to describe appeals to power, speed, racing, sex, and youthful vigor found in automobile advertising" (Van Til, 1975:149,n30). This discussion, however, will continue to refer to these appeals as performance themes. As described by Van Til, these themes as manifested in the graphics of

his sample of advertisements are illustrated "by pictures implying high speeds and other dynamic images, sports, youth, and rugged masculinity" (Van Til, 1975:130). In the copy of these ads, these themes includes references to: (1) power, especially high levels of horsepower; (2) large engine size -- displacement in cubic inches; (3) rapid acceleration; (4) high top speed -- more than maximum legal speeds; (5) high torque output of engine and technological devices designed for increasing torque, horsepower, acceleration, and top speed -- such as high lift camshafts, multiple carburetion, etc.; (6) high speed handling in non-emergency situations, driving as a sport; (7) the make's success in racing; (8) racing car options -- speed accessories, racing gearshift; (9) total performance; (10) "total speed or power in designed racing look, name or feel" (Van Til, 1975:135). Van Til notes that certain subcategories of other dimensions cross reference with machismo appeals, and that styling and exclusiveness often are used to reinforce machismo appeals.

To critically test the two frameworks with respect to the development of these definitional themes will require an examination of consumer behaviour and other automotive users. This examination must focus upon the uses and gratifications obtained from the automobile and the relationship of the industry to them. In the next section the uses and gratifications of performance themes will be explored through the concept of "extra motives" as developed by Näätänen and Summala. The negative consequences attributed to these motives, their stimulation and direction by the promotion of performance themes will be discussed. Next, the social embodiment of these themes in the so-called performance subculture of hot rodding

will be examined. The development of hot rodding and its rise from a deviant form of behaviour to a quasi-respectable and legitimate sport will be seen to be significantly related to various economic interests-- especially the automobile industry which eventually came to treat it as a full fledged market with specific designs formulated for it. These factory-built hot rods were known as Super Cars. Finally, the last section in this chapter will present a sample of the more formalized criticisms of performance themes as put forward by various traffic safety experts, consumer crusaders, journalists, and literary persons. It will be suggested that the hot rod subculture and its development as the embodiment of performance themes is a good focus for critically testing the two perspectives with respect to the role of culture, the producer strategies of advertising and product development, and the consumption of the automobile.

Automotive Performance: "Extra Motives"

The themes of automotive performance have been singled out by traffic safety experts, in particular, as problematic to the safe and efficient operation of the transportation system. This is because they stimulate, direct and interpret various human motivations which are not related to the primary purpose of the automobile as transportation. These so called "extra motives" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976) are not related to the "official" goals of road use and are hypothesized to adversely affect the manner in which drivers operate their vehicles. These extra motives, hypothesized to be determinants

of driver behaviour, are believed to be "a major factor of dangerous traffic behaviour and hence greatly contribute to the high accident toll. (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:26).⁵

It is also suggested that extra motives influence other aspects of the total highway traffic system such as: (1) emphasizing design characteristics which disvalue safety features and promote style, speed rapid acceleration capability, etc.; (2) difficulties in applying various safety devices and regulations; (3) inducing unnecessary traffic; (4) increasing the proportion of especially dangerous automobiles on the road; (5) emphasizing traffic flow over safety in the traffic environment and regulated legislation (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:22-26).

Surprisingly, very little research has been done into the nature of these extra motives and exactly how they influence the automobile-highway system. Näätänen and Summala are among the few who have attempted even to deal with them and they merely provide a basic classification and bring together previous research which relates in some way to the hypotheses. They list six categories of extra motives of the drivers.

- (1) Goals set for the trip or during it.
This category refers to the objectives of drivers with respect to their travel either in terms of the whole trip or particular situations involved in the trip. Included here are such goals as those "stemming from haste, a competitive spirit, timetable pressures, etc., or such more transitory objectives as, for example, those attending the attainment of a more agreeable position in the traffic flow" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:66-67).
- (2) Emotions.
 - (a) Emotions stirred up in a traffic situation. For example, one driver

annoyed by another. This annoyance may be expressed in dangerous driving maneuvers and/or anti-social behaviour on the road.

- (b) Emotions or emotionality originally external to traffic. For example, particular frustrating or anger provoking experience may be carried on to the highway where drivers "blow off emotional steam" through erratic, aggressive, or careless driving.
- (3) Behavioural models. Among the factors which influence driver behaviour are: the particular norms which characterize the social groups to which drivers belong; the notion which drivers have of "correct" and admirable driving behaviour as stimulated by advertising, movies, television, etc.; the example of driving behaviour provided by other drivers; etc.
- (4) Showing off and the need to prove oneself. Some drivers feel that they must prove that they are competent and skillful behind the wheel. The major criteria of driving skill for such drivers are the exhibition of speed and the frequent passing of other automobiles on the highway.
- (5) Hedonistic objectives. This refers to "the excitement of driving, to its sensual pleasures, the pursuit of which is often reflected by the decisions taken in various traffic situations. The automobile is a desirable and beloved plaything" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:68).
- (6) Risk for risk's sake. The behaviour of some drivers is motivated by the desire to experience the sensation and thrill of risk-taking. Näätänen and Summala cite Klein's (1971) study which argues that risk-taking and the sensations which accompany such behaviour are being reduced/eliminated from many activities -- especially work. Seen in this light, the seeking of risk on the road is especially significant.

This taxonomy is obviously filled with overlaps and is not highly refined in terms of conceptual clarity and the establishment of relationships. The point is to note the difficul-

ties and complexities involved in the enterprise. The contribution of Nääätänen and Summala brings together many of the explicit and implicit criticisms (as contained in the concept of extra motives) of the automobile and the automobile industry found in the literature and attempts to sort out the indirect research support and develop a testable model of driver behaviour. While their model is provocative and useful, it is the concept of extra motives which is important to this discussion and it will be useful to elaborate upon their more detailed discussion of them. In particular, points 3, 4, 5 and 6 are of most relevance as they are the ones which have most often been mentioned in the critical literature as the most problematic for traffic and for society.

Of point 4, showing off and the need to prove oneself, they talk about the self-assertive form such driving takes as "a competitive, 'sporty-kind' of driving". They attribute such motives to the popularity and esteem which sports cars have over more basic transportation -- even though sports cars cost much more. The sports car "surpasses a regular model in the values set on self-assertion. It is easier to 'show off' with a sports car and gain the admiration and envy of others. Also the 'pleasure' of driving might be greater with the sports model." They state their conclusion in no uncertain terms: "Describing flashy cars with fast acceleration capabilities as 'sports' models and talking about 'driving for sport' clearly demonstrates the unofficial secondary objectives of drivers -- objectives presumably of a detrimental nature in traffic, objectives that at the crucial stage might replace the pri-

mary one" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:44-45).

With regard to point 5, hedonistic objectives or the pursuit of sensual pleasure for pleasure's sake, Näätänen and Summala note several important aspects. (1) There are the sensations, felt through the body's perceptual systems, of the road and of physical aspects of the car which can be pleasurable. (2) There is the pleasure and also fascination with speed and especially acceleration in terms of the experiences of g-forces on the body; the same basic thrill that people pay to get on roller coasters and other such "rides" at amusement parks. (3) The control the driver has over the vehicle and the ability to regulate its movement in traffic is also a "hedonistically positive circumstance". (4) Näätänen and Summala also attribute to these hedonistic objectives the constant experimenting and changing to new car models even though the older car still may be perfectly useful from a transportation point of view. They compare this to people who switch partners (and hint that the switchers in both cases may be the same people). "The motivation in both cases is probably one of a desire for novel experiences and pleasures in the same sphere. Others (the 'faithful' ones), again, prefer to continue driving the car to which they have become accustomed. Perhaps they have become attached to a certain experience of the kind specifically provided by the car in their possession" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:47).

It is worth quoting Näätänen and Summala, two serious traffic safety researchers, at length on their views of speed

and its relationship to people. Note in particular the language they choose to capture the experience of speed.

Speed and the excitement generated by it evidently has a potent effect on us. It is like a drug that makes us forget our troubles, our boss' criticism at work, our wife's scolding as it rankles in our mind, our anxieties, and our apprehensions. The big problem modern man has to cope with is a too complicated life in the cross currents of numerous different influences. Speed offers one of few directly efficacious means of escaping the pressures of daily existence. The matter might be expressed in terms of the psychology of learning by stating that speed signifies a direct reduction of tension or drive (alleviation of a disagreeable state of excitement). Speed relieves tensions (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:46).

Having defined speed as a mechanism of tension relief, they go on to use speed as the explanatory extra motive for fast driving when there is no need for hurry. It also is the basic motivation, it seems, for owning and driving sports cars -- but somehow it has become blended with sexual motivations as well.

All this makes more understandable the importance of the driving qualities of a motor vehicle to its owner and his willingness to pay incredible prices for flashy accessories -- incredible, that is, if his purpose is simply to travel from place to place fairly comfortably and relatively fast. Nothing must spoil the hedonistic pleasures to be enjoyed. The lustful desire for possession of a "sports car" is likewise understandable in light of the anticipated delights of driving one. In "driving for sport", these delights reach their culmination. Plans to have general speed limits imposed arouse excited opposition expressly because, among other things, the pleasures of speeding are threatened. The "speed demon" often does not drive fast so much to reach some destination as to enjoy the primitive sensation of speed for its own sake. The speedster drives fast when he is in no hurry (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:46-47).

Hot Rodding: Extra Motives From Deviant to Legitimate

Presumably all drivers tend to have some extra motives and could be rated on a scale to measure the types and their strengths. Nowhere are these extra motives more clearly exhibited or held more strongly than in those subcultures organized around various forms of automobile racing and around particular types of automobiles -- especially sports cars and hot rods.⁶ Näätänen and Summala mention sports cars often in their discussion but not hot rods. This is because they are European and their work was published in Europe where sports cars are popular but there is virtually no hot rodding. As Tom Wolfe (1965) the perceptive social observer noted, hot rodding and its associated activities are uniquely North American developments. And although both sports cars and hot rods are popular today, at the end of World War II and well into the 1950s hot rodders in particular were very much a deviant social form.⁷ And part of the reason they were viewed in such a way stemmed from the extra motives they displayed on the road. In the early 1950s there were few hot rodders and they were viewed as speed-mad maniacs, reckless destructive hoodlums driving souped-up power wagons -- menaces to other drivers and themselves, a problem to police and family. The typical image of the hot rodder presented in the mass media was that of a deliberate and premediated law breaker:

Possession of the "hot rod" is presumptive evidence of an intent to speed. Speed is Public Enemy No. 1 of the highways. It is obvious that a driver of a "hot rod" car has an irresistible temptation to "step on it" and accordingly operate the vehicle in a reckless manner endangering human life. It

also shows a deliberate and premeditated idea to violate the law. These vehicles are largely improvised by home mechanics and are capable of high speed and dangerous maneuverability. They have therefore become a serious menace to the safe movement of traffic. The operators of these cars are confused into believing that driving is a competitive sport. They have a feeling of superiority in recklessly darting in and out of traffic in their attempt to outspeed other cars on the road (Director of the New York Division of Safety, New York Times, June 19, 1949, cited in Balsley, 1950:355).

This image was also projected by a newspaper comic-strip character by the name of Hot Rod Happy who was the very antithesis of the ideal image of American youth.

Yet by the 1960s hot rodding had grown substantially and had achieved a degree of public acceptance and legitimacy -- although this was an ambivalent acceptance as powerful moral entrepreneurs continued to speak out against it. Throughout the 1960s it continued to grow and in the late 1960s it was touted as the "growth" sport of the 1970s. For example, in 1969 there were over twenty magazines and newspapers that dealt exclusively with that aspect of enthusiasm known as hot rodding. In 1960 \$25 million was spent annually in advertising to this market which was estimated to be approximately 4 million primary readers each month with an additional 6 to 10 million pass-along readers each month (Yates, 1969:93). The industry which caters directly to hot rodding, the performance accessory or speed equipment industry, did over \$1 billion worth of business in 1969 (Yates, 1976:102).

There are no statistics available on the total number of hot rodders, however some data are available regarding drag

racing. Drag racing has more than doubled its size every five years since its introduction shortly after World War II. In 1970, 6 million spectators attended drag races at the 164 drag strips sanctioned by the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) in the United States and Canada. Drag strips sanctioned by the American Hot Rod Association (AHRA) and unsanctioned (or "outlaw") drag strips, whose combined total was almost 140 in 1970, drew close to 5 million. More than \$10 million was paid out to drag racers for their various victories by NHRA drag strips in 1969; purses at small, weekend drag events averaged \$3,000 to \$4,000; purses at major events like the NHRA Winter-nationals or the NHRA World Series Championship are as high as \$350,000 (Hart, 1974). AHRA and outlaw drag strips have figures which are slightly lower than the NHRA data. According to a market research report conducted by Paul Haluza Associates of Alexandria, Virginia, the typical spectator at a drag strip in 1969 was 22 years old, had graduated from high school and earned between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year. About one-third of them had attended college, and more than half were unmarried.

A more complete picture would be obtained if information derived from other aspects of hot rodding were added, such as stock car racing, circle-track racing, Trans-Am racing, Bonneville Salt Flats competition, custom shows and customizing, street racing, and street rodding (which includes those hot rodders who build, drive, and show their coupes, sedans, roadsters, customs, etc. -- and actually form the core or backbone of hot rodding). Then, one must consider the significance of facts such as the number of films produced about hot rodding

-- The Wild One, Drag Strip Girl, Hot Rod Gang, Ghost of Drag Strip Hollow, Two Lane Blacktop, to name only a few. Many hot rod novels have been produced and many hot rod comic books and joke books are on the market. Toy manufacturers have loaded the market with hot rod, drag racing and custom car model kits. Another area is phonograph records and popular music: Hot Rod Race sold 200,000 copies in 1950; Transfusion by Nervous Norvus sold 950,000 copies; in the 1960s the Beachboys made several hits based on this theme -- Little Deuce Coupe, "409", etc. There are even records featuring only the sound of various types of hot rod and drag strip engines and machinery. Clearly, hot rodding has penetrated deeply into economic, social and cultural life.

There was nothing inevitable about the growth of hot rodding. In fact, it was both quite like yet unlike other sub-cultural organizations of young men in the 1950s and 1960s. Hot rodding in particular is noteworthy because of its transition from deviant to legitimate. The social creation of the hot rod subculture has many parallels with the analysis presented by Stanley Cohen (1973) of the social creation of the Mods and Rockers in England. Cohen examined the process by which the Mods and Rockers were labelled as "folk devils" through the generation of a moral panic in the population (or at least important segments of it) which fed back into and amplified the deviant behaviour of the Mods and Rockers. He shows how commercial and ideological exploitation reinforced their deviance by giving them "a greater structure and common ethos than they originally possessed" and "polarized the deviants further

against the community" (1973:176). Like the Mods and Rockers, hot rodders were indeed discovered, labelled and subsequently typed as folk devils. And a moral panic was generated which in turn helped to stimulate the further growth of hot rodding as a deviant subculture.

A similar historical-sequential analysis of postwar unconventional life styles using a natural history approach has been developed by John Irwin (1973). Irwin analyzes surfing in the 1950s by applying a four stage model which consists of these historical moments: (1) articulation, (2) expansion, (3) corruption, and (4) decline. He argues that the history of surfing "seems to be the prototypes of a series of collective movements which have swept through American youth since World War II" among which he lists the beat life, hot rodding and motorcycling (Irwin, 1973:132-134). It is true there are many similarities in the articulation and expansion phases between hot rodding and surfing. Like the case of the Mods and Rockers and the case of surfing, the moral panic, the deviant label which sustained both of them faded away for hot rodding too. Unlike the Mods and Rockers or the surfers, it was only the deviant label which faded away, not the membership. Hot rodding was the subject of a good deal of exploitation by business interests which capitalized on its deviant status -- as mentioned earlier in terms of movies and records. Such exploitation stimulated the growth of hot rodding, its deviant status, and its corruption just as exploitation stimulated surfing and the Mods and Rockers. But it also stimulated certain elements within and around hot rodding to take action to

counter the negative stereotypes and images of hot rodding. These elements strived to legitimize hot rodding by becoming more organized internally and attempting to eliminate many of hot rodding's incompatible behaviours and motivations. These elements, which were not present in the Mods and Rockers' case and only minimally present in the surfer's case, consisted of morally concerned hot rodders, parents, various sympathetic control agents, and especially, a number of entrepreneurs associated with hot rodding. These latter elements, the entrepreneurs, are very significant in the legitimation process. They include magazine publishers (especially Robert E. Petersen), speed equipment manufacturers, drag strip and stock car track promoters, etc. These entrepreneurs exploited hot rodding but their relationship with it was not dependent upon its deviant status, but rather on its continued growth and achievement of legitimacy. Of all the business interests which had a vested interest in the transformation of hot rodding to a legitimate pursuit, the most important and consequential was the automobile industry. Over the years, the auto industry has invested heavily in hot rodding, has incorporated hot rod innovations in its products and hot rod themes in its advertising.

In the early 1960s the automobile manufacturers began to design and market their own hot-rods. These automobiles soon became known as "Muscle Cars" or "Super Cars". Over several generations of cars and through the model line-ups Super Cars in one form or another were attractive vehicles to sell. Dealers placed them in the main sales positions -- the most visible to passers-by (for example, in the main window of show-

rooms), those which meet customers upon first entrance to showrooms, etc. This treatment indicates that Super Cars functioned as leading symbols of their respective model lines, and, indeed, of the entire line-up of manufacturers. Apparently, Super Cars got people "excited" and moved them into the showrooms.⁸

The Super Car concept was expanded into other models and makes throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The Super Car and its cousins, being more or less factory built hot rods which were accorded great status and prestige, not only brought about a number of changes within hot rodding, but involved many people indirectly with hot rodding by making them more aware of hot rodding and linking them to certain aspects of hot rodding, especially street rodding with the drive-in set and street racing (especially, the stop-light variety).

Along with the Super Cars of the mid-1960s came Ralph Nader and several governmental inquiries into aspects of industry behaviour (such as safety, energy, pollution, anti-trust). From this point on various interest groups became more organized and vocal. Channels of grievance were institutionalized at the governmental level, and the government began to regulate important aspects of automotive engineering and design. By the early 1970s these factors along with increasing costs and a saturated market contributed to the death of the Super Car. By the end of the 1970s the so-called energy crisis, the increased scope and stringency of government regulation, traffic congestion, and the increasing number of multi-car families, among other things, altered the demand structure of the market. The American automobile industry began to eliminate V-8 engines

and to downsize their products. Economy instead of power became a major promotional theme. Yet the performance theme was not abandoned: it may be contended that as performance was dropping as a major promotional theme of the American industry it was picked up by foreign manufacturers (who heretofore had been paragons of "rationality"). Moreover, the theme diffused to other types of vehicles -- such as trucks, vans, motorcycles, off-road vehicles, dune buggies, etc.

Incitement to Performance: The Automobile Industry Indicted

The proliferation of extra driving motives, as crystallized in the growth and ambivalent legitimation of hot rodding, sports cars, etc., and the diffusion of these motives into the automobile system has been noted and criticized by many people. Among those factors held responsible for this state of affairs, the automobile manufacturers were cited again and again as the culprits most guilty. Näätänen and Summala put their emphasis on the provision of behaviour models (point 3 in their classification of extra motives) by the manufacturers in their advertising. They note how auto ads emphasize speed, acceleration, excitement, and pleasure.

In motor vehicle advertisements, the terms mentioned are aimed at appealing to the deepdown motivations of drivers, and this way sales are made. As things are, such expressions are effective sales pitches; they appeal to other than the practical motivations of buyers; and, unfortunately, they also at the same time create and strengthen such extra motives and thus also in this manner influence behaviour in traffic. It is precisely the different kinds of extra motives of the road user that commercial advertising often plays upon by exciting superfluous aims, which from the stand-

point of getting from place to place are secondary, extraneous and often downright dangerous (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:45).

John Keats in his influential book The Insolent Chariots used more extravagant language to make a similar point:

The Buick Company, for instance, says that driving a Buick "makes you feel like the man you are" -- which is just another way of saying we can't distinguish between illusion and reality, but that buying a Buick will create in our misty minds the illusion that we really are what we really are. Other manufacturers entertain an equally thin view of us -- with result that automobiles are not marketed as reliable machines for reasonable men to use, but as illusory symbols of sex, speed, wealth and power for day dreaming nitwits to buy (Keats, 1958:58-59).

In 1970, Edward Ayres illustrated the same basic point and added a moral evaluation.

One cruel irony of automotive advertising is that it achieves its purposes by making promises no car can fulfill. Because it teases constantly it never satisfies -- and its readers remain eternally hungry. For the young, it paints a false picture of youth, thereby encouraging millions of young people to believe their own experience is abnormal. An ad showing a curvaceous Mercury Cyclone surrounded by teenage males tells its readers, "We made it hot. You can make it scream." The ad does not merely encourage dangerous and illegal driving, it also represents -- can anyone help reading between the lines? -- a gross perversion of normal sexuality (Ayres, 1970:169).

Ayres goes on to cite other advertisements and to strengthen his critique:

A GM ad tells the reader he will have "an almost neurotic urge to get going". Another ad tells its potential driver to "Drive it like you hate it." A Chevy ad claims "Nobody said a nice car can't play mean now and then." The gospel of Detroit is full of such incitements to physical and moral violence. The Big Three and their

advertisers are among the most prolific purveyors of obscene literature in America. Yet people who are worried about the effects of Picasso nudes or sex education diagrams on their children have been blinded to the effect of automobile advertising (Ayres, 1970:169-170).

Jeffrey O'Connell and Arthur Meyers note that not only is the driver

encouraged to think of himself as a hot pilot blasting off into the unknown -- as too often he is. The names Detroit hangs on its product are so much a part of our folklore that we don't even notice. A future archeologist digging in our ruins may well be bemused by some of these:

Thunderbird! Wildcat! Fury! Tempest! Barracuda! Marauder (one who pillages and lays waste the countryside)! Flight Hawks! Golden Hawk, Silver Hawk, Sky Hawk, Power Hawk! The archeologist might get the idea we were violent people . . . "Sex sells cars." Consider Buick's ad for its "Wildcat". A lad and his lass emerge mistily from a clump of bushes, strolling languidly toward the sharp-focused, faithfully waiting Wildcat. ". . . very definitely for the sports-minded male and his equally adventuresome mate." . . . (O'Connell and Meyers, 1966:142-145)

Jeffrey Schrank (1977) also focuses on automobile names. He categorizes the names under the following categories: (1) upward bound names; (2) exotic and usually upper-class places; (3) speed names; (4) power names; (5) animal names; (6) stick-it-to-the-other guy names. He cites Robert Heilman as saying that automobile names are ". . . subliminal entrapments of our secret selves, betrayers of ambition, limitacy, libody". Schrank (1977:67) argues that "these subliminal entrapments promise the magic, power and excitement missing from ordinary lives." Regarding the use of animal names for cars he says:

Auto animism uses only the names of those

animals the citybound dweller imagines as being "wild" and "free". There are no cars names Cheshire or Beagle or Canary, no matter how lovable or desirable these creatures might be. The animal names used for cars are those that connote freedom and rapid movement. And these two qualities are very much a part of auto psychology (Schrack, 1977: 69).

He poses a question which would make an interesting null research hypothesis: "Would a complete change in auto names result in less aggressive driving?" (Schrack, 1977:60).

It is not only the automobile industry's advertising image of the automobile and driving which has been singled out. Also important is the actual physical form of the automobile as constructed by the manufacturer -- that is, the engineering, design and style of the car. Design and style form the basis for the appeals made in the advertising, it is suggested by the foremost automotive critic, Ralph Nader. Designers or stylists must construct cars which physically and aesthetically express those extra motives which relate to people's emotions. And they must redesign/restyle their cars every few years because of the policy of "dynamic obsolescence".

Different designs for what General Motors styling chief Harley Earl called "dynamic obsolescence" must be created for many elements of the car: front ends, rear ends, hoods, ornaments, rear decks and rear quarters, panels, tail lamps, bumper shades, rocker panels, and the latest items being offered in an outburst of infinite variations -- wheel covers and lugs.

These styling features form the substance of sales promotion and advertising. The car makers' appeals are emotional; they seek to inspire excitement, aesthetic pleasure, and the association of the glistening model in its provocative setting with the prospect's most far reaching personal visions and wish fulfillment. This approach may seem flighty

but the industry has learned that the technique sells cars to people who have no other reason to buy them with such frequency (Nader, 1965/1972:182).

The basic problem with emphasizing style and its emotional correlates, according to Nader, is that safety is neglected. He cites such stylistic features as tail fins and the "sharp as a chopper hood" on the early Mustang as examples of dangerous stylistic innovations which callous stylists foist upon the public. Although several designers and executives are mentioned and quoted, none is given more vilification than William Mitchell who became head of GM Styling after Harley Earl retired in December, 1958. Mitchell was the "principal creator" of the Cadillac tail fin (in 1948) which set basic patterns for North American cars for almost 20 years (eliminated on Cadillac in 1966). Mitchell is an unabashed auto enthusiast and has said so publicly many times. It is to these motives that Nader attributes Mitchell's "callousness" (his failure to "anticipate" the consequences of his tail fins):

To understand how a man could devise and promote such a potentially lethal protuberance, it is necessary to understand the enthusiasm of Mr. Mitchell, who frequently confides to interviewers that he has "gasoline in his blood". His vibrancy in conversation revolves around the concepts of "movement", "excitement", and "flair". Samples of his recent statements are illustrative: "When you sat behind the wheel, you looked down that long hood, and then there were two headlight shapes, and then two fender curves -- why you felt excited just sitting there. A car should be exciting." Or, "Cars will be more clearly masculine or feminine," and "For now we deal with aesthetics . . . that indefinable, intangible quality that makes all the difference." Mr. Mitchell's reported view of safety is that it is the driver's responsibility to avoid accidents, and that if

cars were made crashworthy, the "nuts behind the wheel" would take even greater chances (Nader, 1965/1972:190-191).

It is worth quoting another Nader quote of Mitchell's which he uses for evidence to prove the neglect of safety considerations by automobile designers:

It is also clear that the manufacturers are increasingly relying upon and encouraging a demand for automobiles which has little to do with a demand for transportation. General Motors' vice president, William Mitchell, pointed this up succinctly: "The motor car must be exciting and create a desire and not become mere transportation, or we will have just a utility and people will spend their money for other things, such as swimming pools, hi-fi sets, or European vacations." (Or, it might have been added, education, clothes, food, medical care, furniture and housing.)

Such an attitude is not likely to give much attention to safety beyond the minimum demands for it in the market place (Nader, 1965/1972: 280-281).

Besides style, the other physical manifestation of the automobile is its actual mechanical and structural components. Ralph Nader (1965/1972:150) has a lot to say about the manufacturer's and the automotive engineer's lack of contribution to making "the modern car as safe as technology can make it." He argues that automotive engineers, because they are employees, must accept the goals and interests of the corporation and work within those limits. Those limits are very limited indeed when it comes to vehicle design for crashworthiness. Moreover, Nader garners evidence to show that General Motors engineered the Corvair with a rear suspension system which was inherently problematic and knowingly sold it to the public. (His technical data have since been refuted by an independent study as noted in Chapter One.)

One aspect Nader did not deal with, but which has been a focus of great public concern over the entire period since World War II, is the horsepower of automobile engines and the manner in which the industry not only kept increasing horsepower ratings yearly, but the manner in which they associated horsepower with speed, performance and racing in their marketing and advertising. In fact, the so-called "horsepower race" which began in the early 1950s saw the manufacturers participate in various forms of auto racing to capitalize on the results of these contests. Most of the concern was directed to the behaviour modeling effects of the promotional images, i.e., "conditioning many drivers to accept the idea that automobiles were meant to be driven at high speeds and in an individualistic, competitive manner" (Eastman, 1973:120). But increasingly over the period engineering criticisms were made which argued that horsepower increases tended to throw the relationship between the power, weight, and braking capacity of the automobile out of balance.

Often times, larger, heavier engines were installed which changed the weight distribution -- putting more of the vehicle's weight on the front wheels -- resulting in less satisfactory handling and braking characteristics and in harder steering. The increased power of the engine put a strain on all of the other vehicle components -- especially the brakes -- unless they were also redesigned, which was rarely the case. The increased top speed of the vehicle almost inevitably made it possible for an automobile to travel at speeds beyond the capacity of the rest of the vehicle -- especially in regard to occupant protection in case of a collision -- of the operator, and of the roadway. Faster, more powerful cars had an adverse effect on the highway system as a whole by adding to the heterogeneity of vehicle types, producing a less and less efficient vehicle mix (Eastman, 1973:119).

The views expressed here were shared and voiced by a number of persons and groups in the public realm since World War II. It is impossible to obtain data on how many people actually held these opinions, what their social and demographic characteristics were, etc. What is available are published accounts which represent such views in various public media. The fact that they were published does not necessarily indicate a wide acceptance of such opinion but does indicate that editors thought such material interesting, stimulating, useful enough to their particular readerships to include in their publications. The volume of concern is indicated again by agitation over the issues of highway safety and the "horsepower race" in the early 1950s which led, in 1956, to a congressional investigation of highway safety and the causes of accidents. As a result of these developments, and for other reasons, the Automobile Manufacturers Association in 1957 agreed to voluntarily shift the advertising emphasis

. . . to encourage owners and drivers to evaluate passenger cars in terms of useful power and ability to afford safe, reliable and comfortable transportation, rather than in terms of capacity for speed (O'Connell and Meyers, 1966:149).

They also agreed to put a ban on participation in auto racing and speed and acceleration tests, and the use of such tests and results in advertising.

By the early 1960s hot rodding and drag racing had grown quite considerably. It would appear that among the reasons for this growth was the activity of Detroit and its money in this area, even though the 1957 agreement forbade this. For

in 1962, The Wall Street Journal (March 5, 1962:1) reported that "the spirit, if not the letter of the agreement, has been well shattered." The pact collapsed before the industry's "urge to woo customers by bragging about the number of horses under hood." Even more than the horsepower race, the factories were sneaking back to the race tracks: ". . . reporters at the recent 500 mile stockcar race at Daytona, Florida, noticed that engineers and officials at GM's Pontiac division were much in evidence in the pit area. Pontiac placed one-two-three in the race." Ford Division Chief Lee M. Iacocca was quoted in this article as saying that Ford had decided to "improve the breed" and at the same time "improve sales, if possible, by entering all the races and rally competitions that came along. The company made a calculated decision last summer to put aside any sham and to race openly -- despite a voluntary industry ban against racing and advertising of race results and horsepower." The results were felt by September, 1963, as reported in the New York Times (September 7, 1963:1):

Does winning automobile races sell cars? You bet it does, according to leading automotive executives. The Ford Motor Company is a case in point. During the last two years, Ford's over-all industry sales penetration slipped noticeably behind Chevrolet's.

One of the reasons was that other car makers, particularly the General Motors Corporation, were consistently winning stockcar and drag racing events and using the prestige to register sales gains. . . . General Motors, through its Chevrolet and Pontiac divisions, led the way in racing. It flouted an industry-wide ruling adopted in 1957 by the Automobile Manufacturer's Association to prohibit company participation in racing events. GM, incidentally, sponsored the rule. Ford took retaliatory action. It made a public announcement that it would no longer abide by the ruling because it has become a sham.

Conclusions

This chapter has presented the problem which will provide the basis for the critical test of the two theoretical perspectives under scrutiny in this study. The general process by which the definition of the automobile is developed and the specific issue of the development of performance themes have been selected for this purpose. This problem will allow the two views of corporate power, market behaviour, and consumption to be examined and assessed. It was noted that the issue of performance themes has involved an element of public and consumer resistance. This brings it within the realm of the pluralist/functionalist conception of power. From this point of view, the predominance of performance themes would mean that consumers who desired the satisfactions provided by these particular definitions would have to have more power than those who were critical of them. However, an examination of the alleged negative behavioural consequences of these themes and the extra motives behind them reveals definite social interests which are violated, not developed or satisfied. An examination of the crystallized social expression of these themes in the hot rod subculture -- those who would be expected to be the most important market for these appeals -- reveals that they were a deviant minority of young men who were the focus of a moral panic in the early 1950s. Yet by the 1960s this subculture had grown substantially and redefined itself somewhat successfully as a legitimate sport. Involved somehow in this process were the automobile producers who ultimately began manufacturing and advertising automobiles and symbols directly to this market.

It is suggested that this specific issue within the larger problem of the definition of the automobile can provide a good test for the two views of corporate and consumer behaviour in the market and the role of advertising and product design in this interaction. And specifically it will provide a test of the differences in the utilization of cultural and social variables by producers which characterize the two approaches.

In the next chapter, the two approaches will be applied to the automobile industry and its interaction with consumers. The hypotheses will be derived for the critical test to follow.

FOOTNOTES

1

It is true that this interaction between consumers and the manufacturers takes place within the social and cultural context of the larger society. This context is obviously important in determining the definition of the automobile as well. However, as both the consumers and producers are operating within this context, its influence can be said to be realized through their actions and choices. To examine the influence of this context at its own level of analysis is beyond the scope of this discussion.

2

For other classifications based upon automobile advertising content, see Reid, 1938; Callenbach, 1953; Starch, 1961; Zager, 1965. Van Til's list is the most comprehensive, as he says. For works that consider automobile advertising but make no attempt at classification, see Frostick, 1970; Einstein, 1959.

3

In terms of the satisfactions provided by these dimensions, Van Til (1975:255, n.3, n.4) defines them in terms of extensions of some aspect of human needs. (1) "Safety is an extension of life and health;" (2) "exclusiveness is an extension of ego and wealth;" (3) "economy is an extension of purchasing power;" (4) "machismo is an extension of human power and sexual prowess;" (5) "styling is an extension of 'human looks and aesthetic sense';" (6) "functionalism is an extension of the desire to move and accomplish tasks;" (7) "ergonomics is an extension of the environment and comfort;" (8) "reputation is an extension of the fear of mistakes;" (9) "technology is an extension of physical skills;" (10) "durability is an extension of times to enjoy a product."

4

See Van Til (1975:130-132) for his discussion of the components of these dimensions in the graphics. For the components as contained in the copy, see his Table 4.2 (Van Til, 1975:134-137).

5

Näätänen and Summala (1976:43-44) argue: "From the safety point of view, the road user's decision in traffic should naturally be based on the objective facts of each traffic situation and nothing else. Extra motives of the driver may suggest some other line of action -- like overtaking other vehicles -- besides the one 'dictated' by the immediate traffic circumstances and, evidently, the stronger such a motive is the greater the risk of a driver letting it influence his decisions. In other words, the driver is liable to decide on moves he would not make if he had no extra motive. Consequently, it might be that the accident risk rises in the proportion to the force of the extra motive."

6

For the purposes of this discussion, a hot rod is defined here as an automobile modified for increased performance over stock, and/or with body modifications, either functional or nonfunctional. The following four types of automobiles qualify as hot rods: (1) automobiles in which minor additions to the exterior have been made, such as the application of dress-up accessories which imply or improve performance (such as cut-out mufflers, injector pipes, etc.); (2) automobiles in which the engine is modified to increase horsepower and acceleration; (3) automobile which have their motors modified and their bodies functionally altered, e.g., lowered or raked or raised for better handling, hood scoop added, spoilers mounted on rear, etc.; (4) automobiles which are for racing only such as dragsters, alteredds, stock cars, etc., in which engines are so highly modified they will not run on the street and whose bodies are structurally the bare minimum, i.e., acid dipped or made of fibre glass, etc., for weight reduction.

7

A definitive or even a complete social history of hot rodding remains to be written. On the development of various aspects of hot rodding, see, in addition to various back issues of hot rod magazines, Balsley, 1950; Borgeson, 1966; Boyle, 1961, 1963; Brock, 1971; Engle, 1967, 1968; Hough and Frostick, 1967; Huntington, 1961, 1964a, 1964b; Parks, 1965; Russo, 1960; Wagner, 1949.

8

The Super Car was "officially" born in late 1963 when Pontiac introduced the first Tempest GT0. This was followed by an intense advertising campaign via a popular record, GeeT0 Tiger (which sold over one million copies), and a nation-wide contest. Other manufacturers retaliated by bringing out their own Super Cars.

The basic characteristics of the Super Car consist of the following: (1) an engine of large displacement (383-460 cubic inches) which is moderately to highly tuned (one or two four-barrel or three two-barrel carburetion, high compression, hot cam, etc.) to produce high horsepower (335-525+) and torque (400-530+ lb./ft.); (2) a moderate-size chassis (110-117 inch wheelbase) of reasonably light weight (3,000-4,000 pounds); (3) a rear axle ratio which permits the engine to operate efficiently (3.23-4.56+); (4) a transmission which provides optimum engine operating conditions (4-speed manual or 3-speed automatic); (5) drag strip times in standard showroom trim of approximately 14 seconds or less and trap speed of 95-100 miles per hour or better; (6) special exterior and interior trim to set the car off from average cars, for example, special emblems, special instrumentation, dual exhausts, racing stripes, hood scoops, magnesium or chrome wheels, wide-oval tires with red walls or raised lettering instead of white walls, etc.; (7) easily identifiable names characterized by combinations of letters and/or numbers, for example, the Pontiac Tempest GT0, Firebird 400 H0, the Plymouth Satellite GTX and Barracuda S,

the Oldsmobile Cutlass 4-4-2, the Chevrolet SS427 and Chevelle, Chevy II and Camaro SS 396, the Buick Skylark GS 400, the Dodge Coronet and Charger R/T, the Ford Fairlane and Mustang GT and CJ 428 and CJ 429, the Mercury Comet and Cougar GT and CJ 428 and CJ 429, the Mercury Cougar XR-7, the American Motors AMX, etc.

It is clear that the guiding principles of the Super Car were: (1) status, (2) aesthetics -- both manifested in special paint, trim and race-car type additions, and (3) performance, in the guise of big motors and big horsepower, with minor attention to the other engineering details such as braking and handling.

THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY, THE CONSUMER AND THE HOT RODDER

The automobile is a complex machine composed of 15,000 parts (White, 1971:19) whose primary function is transportation. This transportation device has come to have invested in it a host of meanings which are not related to its prime function. The public issue concerning the promotion of performance themes by the automobile industry involves the problem of defining the nature, shape, and meaning of the automobile. The industry has been accused of manipulating consumers into buying automobiles which are irrational, unsafe, uneconomical, etc. The industry has denied this and it has proven most difficult to resolve the issue. This is an interesting issue sociologically because it concerns the exercise of corporate power, the nature of consumer demand in the market, and the consumption of commodities. Now that a basic formulation of corporate behaviour and two views of such behaviour in the market are available they shall be applied to the automobile industry. First a view of the industry will be presented which delineates relevant structural and behavioural aspects and the nature of the uncertainty it faces in its environment. In the following section the two views of corporate behaviour will be applied to the construction of the content of the automobile in general and also with respect to the matter of performance themes and the satisfactions they provide. The research hypotheses will be derived from this application. Hypotheses from the pluralist/functionalist position will be tested against those drawn from the

meta-power position regarding the product strategies of automobile manufacturers, and their general behaviour in the market with respect to consumers. Hypotheses from each position will also be derived regarding the timing of the manufacturers' involvement with hot rodding and the nature of this relationship. Chapter Nine will present an initial analysis of the hypotheses regarding general market behaviour and discuss the methodology to be employed in assessing the hypotheses about hot rodding and the industry. Chapter Ten will present the results of a content analysis tracing the changing attitudes of the business community and the public toward hot rodding over the 1948-1968 period. Chapters Eleven and Twelve will present an historical and analytic account of the relationships between the industry and hot rodding.

The Automobile Industry and the Automobile

The American automobile industry is highly concentrated. Over the 1948-1973 period, General Motors sold 46.5% of the automobiles purchased in the United States. The Ford Motor Company sold 25.4%, Chrysler Corporation sold 15.2% and American Motors Corporation sold 3.7% (which includes sales from AMC's predecessor corporations, Nash and Hudson). The four firms' sales concentration ratio was 90.8% with respect to all automobiles sold in the U.S. from 1948 to 1973. Of the remaining 9.2% the small domestic independent producers sold 1.7% while the remaining 7.4% were sold by numerous foreign producers from Japan and Europe (some of them such as Capri and Opel sold through domestic companies). The four firm sales concen-

tration rates with respect to domestic production only was 98.1% (figures tabulated from Automotive News, 1974 Almanac Issue).

The high degree of concentration is insured by the enormous barriers to entry which characterize the industry. Joe Bain (1956:129) describes the disadvantages facing a prospective entrant:

Brand allegiances based on advertising product reputation, conspicuous consumption motives; allegiances to established dealer-service organizations. Lower trade-in values on used products of entrant for a long period.

Lawrence White (1971:61) analyzed the cost of entry barriers and calculated that the "total, then comes to around \$1 billion . . . Billion dollar corporations are not common phenomena, and forming one from scratch would be virtually impossible." Since the entry of the Chrysler Corporation in 1924 no domestic entrant has been successful in maintaining itself in the market. American Motors, as noted above, was not a new corporation but the merger of two old and established makers -- Nash and Hudson.

There are many studies by economists which attempt to measure the exact nature and degree of economic concentration and the competitive behaviour in the industry.¹ At the level of structural description there is consensus that the automobile industry has developed into an oligarchy dominated by the Big Three manufacturers (General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) since the 1920s and especially since the end of World War II. Beside high concentration and barriers to entry, the industry

structure is characterized by high cost mechanized production technologies and high levels of vertical and horizontal integration. These characteristics are often treated as determining the priorities and strategies of the manufacturers. But, as discussed in Chapter Four, structure may set limits and directions but corporate decisions and priorities also alter and create structure. Thus structure and action are interactive phenomena. When the manufacturing firms are viewed as organizations in action this is made clear. At their input boundaries manufacturers have mechanized production technologies, high equipment costs and a standardized product. They have attempted to insulate this "transformational" or technological core from environmental influences by developing strategies such as those mentioned by Thompson (1967:20-24): buffering, leveling, anticipation, and rationing. They have utilized a bureaucratic form of administration of input, integrated themselves vertically, developed reciprocity relationships with suppliers, etc. They have a high degree of control over their input boundary.²

It is at the input boundary where manufacturers face the market and uncertainty to the greatest extent. For commercial success, the mass-produced output of the industry requires a large number of standardized sales transactions at this boundary. The franchised dealer system of distribution was developed to allow a high degree of control over the sales-force. Manufacturers are able to set programs governing volume, size, style, colour, price, terms, delivery schedules, etc. However, the franchise system gives no control over the freedom of con-

sumers. This is obviously a condition of extreme uncertainty and risk for manufacturers. Assuming that automobile manufacturers are risk-averse as discussed by Galbraith -- an assumption made by Lawrence White (1971) in his study of the postwar industry -- they will be inclined to utilize certain strategies to reduce uncertainty. However, before discussing the planning process and the strategies available to manufacturers, it will be useful to examine the nature of the risks involved in selling automobiles. As has been mentioned, automobiles are composed of numerous component parts. These parts can be organized in the design process in many different ways to produce automobiles which will have different combinations of characteristics and/or different characteristics which are outstanding or significant. The same may be said of the styling characteristics and symbolic characteristics. For any particular design, various supply costs must be considered such as production costs, the length of time it takes for the design to be developed, the flexibility of the design, and the anticipated probability and speed of a response by competitors (White, 1971:171). These factors must be taken into consideration in planning automobile design because of the uncertainties which exist in the environment -- especially, (1) uncertainty about future consumer preferences and income levels, and (2) uncertainty about future designs and actions by competitors.

Planning is a necessity. In the postwar period, a new design usually took three years to go from the drawing board to production. Over that period of time many environmental circumstances could change -- especially consumer wants -- which

render the design unsaleable. The longer the development process, the more uncertainty about reception at introduction day. Shortening the lead time is possible, but instituting a "crash" program increases costs tremendously. Moreover, it increases the risk that the design may have fundamental problems which are not easily resolved. As described by White (1971:44):

The risks in automobile production are high. Autos have to be designed well in advance of actual confrontation with the consumer. A three year -- or even a two year -- design cycle means that a manufacturer can be stuck uncomfortably long with a badly designed car. Consumer tastes do and have changed, and what looks like a good design now could turn out to be a disaster two and one-half years later. Further, as a consumer durable item, automobiles are especially sensitive to levels of personal income . . . As national economic fortunes wax and wane, automobile sales expand and contract. Consumer choices among types of cars (for example, expensive or inexpensive) appear to be equally sensitive to income levels.

In this high risk environment, these fluctuations are largely unpredictable. When manufacturers enter new models they have only a basic notion of how they may do in the market; it takes the first few weeks of selling to give an indication of expected sales -- and unpredictable factors (for example, weather) can affect sales positively or negatively by as much as 50,000 units. The rewards are high for "good guesses" but are as severe for wrong guesses. Six corporations in the postwar period made wrong guesses -- Crosley, Willys, Kaiser, Hudson, Packard, and Studebaker.

In his study of the automobile industry White discusses three actions manufacturers can take to reduce uncertainty:

(1) attempts to gain an understanding of consumer needs and wants through market surveys; (2) attempts to gain more adequate estimates of costs by studying past and projected cost trends; and (3) "explicit or implicit agreements with other firms to share information or licence patents" (White, 1971: 172). Such strategies are limited in their effectiveness and risks still remain. These risks are not evenly distributed, however. Given the various supply costs mentioned earlier, some product designs will be more costly and thus more risky than others. The planning process must assess the costs and risks in deciding to enter any design into production. But in the end, the risks are still there. Journalist Brock Yates, in an article on the automobile industry, quotes a vice president of one of the automobile companies as saying: "Our market researchers can produce figures to justify anything you want, and you end up by marketing a car by the seat of your pants" (Yates, 1968:42).

Exactly what are the product characteristics and meanings that can be combined and recombined in various orders to satisfy the demands of consumers? As discussed in the last chapter, Roy Van Til has classified ten basic dimensions. These are (1) safety; (2) exclusiveness; (3) economy; (4) machismo; (5) styling; (6) functionalism; (7) ergonomics; (8) reputation; (9) technology; (10) durability. Within each of these dimensions are numerous subcategories. Note that this classification includes both physical characteristics and psychological/symbolic characteristics -- which may be considered as consumer utilities. These are the bases for the satisfactions which are

sold to consumers -- and which they demand -- in various proportions and combinations. Note that they are all real utilities or needs. Manufacturers compete against each other to provide the combination that best satisfies consumer demands. The major forms this competition have taken are styling, model changes, and model differentiation, protective imitation, advertising and other marketing strategies. Price competition is not a feature of the industry; rather it roughly follows a pattern of price leadership.³

This basically completes the picture of the automobile industry as a set of organizations in action and of the automobile as a collection of characteristics and symbols. The next section will consider the application of the pluralist/functionalist and meta-power formulations to the industry. There the respective roles of the manufacturers and consumers in the design and development of the automobile will be explicated and the research hypotheses derived.

The Automobile Industry and the Development of the Automobile: The Two Views Considered

The Pluralist/Functionalist View

From the pluralist/functionalist perspective, the design and development of the automobile, that is, the particular emphasis on the dimensions of safety, power, styling, functionalism, etc., which are consciously organized and built or placed in the automobile, is determined by one basic factor -- consumer demand. Advertising content and other marketing strategies are neutral tools which are not significant variables in shaping consumer demands. The automobile manufacturers in

facing consumer uncertainty and competitor uncertainty must consider the demands of their productive technologies and the costs of development in producing automobiles. However, these uncertainties are what keep them experimenting with new designs and new technologies, seeking productive efficiency and sales effectiveness in the market. Consumer needs are supplied and market choices dictate successful designs. Even granting that not all product dimensions are compatible, and that product design and construction involves decisions about trade-offs and compromises between dimensional strengths (Borden, 1942; Eastman, 1973; Black, 1966), it is still the case that competition and model differentiation can provide consumers an adequate range of choice and continual improvements.

This is certainly the view expounded by spokespersons for the automobile industry itself. A General Motors publication states this view in 1968:

Competition in the automobile industry is multidimensional. It encompasses all aspects of the products, how they are sold and at what prices. Product competition -- the subject of this chapter -- is the rivalry of manufacturers to serve the customers with better products made more efficiently. This competition gives the industry its dynamic quality, and results in constantly improved products with greater safety, variety, comfort and performance. Product competition in no way minimizes the importance of price competition (General Motors, 1968:10).

Other analysts saw the extensive differentiation of automobiles and fragmentation of lines within makes which came to characterize this period as a beneficial result of product competition, beneficial in the sense that the consumer was given the luxury of choice and improved products:

Similarly, a purchaser wants more than transportation from an automobile; he may also desire style, social status, comfort, and prestige. These additions to functional usefulness which "an affluent society" can afford but which a subsistence economy cannot

Product differentiation as reflected in brands makes it possible for the consumer to identify the manufacturer. Thus, it becomes vital to establish and to maintain high standards of quality which the buyer then associates with the brand. In fact, it often is necessary to improve the quality in order to differentiate it from competitive products. While some economic waste may develop as a result of creating trivial product differences, there are also benefits which flow from improved products (Backman, 1967:33).

From the industry view, the annual model change was also a result of another factor:

Intense product competition from used cars . . . has accelerated improvement in new car design and has intensified new car competition. New cars must offer a distinctly more appealing product (General Motors, 1969:26).

The annual model change not only brought new technical innovations to the market, but it also stimulated the inventive process in the industry. Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., made numerous pronouncements on the annual model change during his tenure as president of General Motors. In his book, My Years with General Motors, he argued that even though the introduction of a new model every year was a very costly process, it was a worthwhile endeavour "for the annual model change is part of the very nature of the development of the industry. Since its earliest days, long before the expression 'annual model' was used, the process of creating new models has generated the progress of the automobile" (Sloan, 1964:247). In his first book, Adven-

tures of a White Collar Man, Sloan stated that yearly models made it possible "to make available . . . as rapidly as possible, the most advanced knowledge and practice in the building of motor cars" (Sloan, 1941:177). The president of General Motors in 1954, Harlow J. Curtice, stated that the annual model change had "speeded technological progress" (Curtice, 1954:7); the corporation's annual report for 1959 said: "The requirements presented by the yearly model change spur engineers and designers to greater accomplishment. . . . By bringing out new and improved models each year, General Motors gives the public the benefit of research, engineering and styling advances as soon as they have been developed and tested" (General Motors Corporation, 1959:10-21). The other large automobile companies took much the same stance during the post World War II period.

Underlying it all is the sovereign consumer who "demands" those annual changes in some spontaneous manner. Industrial organization expert F.M. Scherer put it this way: "Through some perverse quirk of human nature the average consumer is decidedly unhappy driving around in last season's assemblage of metal stampings" (Scherer, 1970:98). The industry, according to this view, is responsive to consumer demand and competes vigorously to meet that demand in the most efficient and progressive manner.

Because corporations and their sales strategies are not considered to be very influential in the market and the decision-making process of consumers, the pluralist/functionalist perspective pays little attention to the internal dynamics of corporate structure, planning, and behaviour. Its theoretical

content is consistent with the self-analyses of the industry itself (at least those presented publicly). Some attention has been paid, as discussed above, to corporate monitoring of the environment and expansion of the task environment. These activities which involve the scanning of the environment for information relevant to problem solving and future opportunities are undertaken by the automobile manufacturers. The industry has conducted and sponsored a great deal of research, and economists and market researchers have also done a great deal of research on numerous aspects of consumer behaviour in the automobile market. The literature is vast and will not be cited here; only some of the areas studied will be mentioned. Many researchers have investigated demand elasticity with respect to income and price -- two major consumer variables important to demand. Another set of studies has examined purchase behaviour itself. Such aspects as consumer personality, consumer information-seeking, cognitive dissonance, persuasibility, and self-confidence have been studied in detail. Still another group of studies have focused on brand loyalty. Kevin Lancaster (1966a, 1966b, 1971) and his associates have conducted numerous studies testing a theory which explains/relates the price, quality and demand for automobiles by establishing quality adjusted price indexes. Their research, like all the research mentioned here assumes no interference from advertising or other sale strategies and paints (implicitly) a picture of consumer sovereignty (in the short run).

From this perspective advertising content is determined by consumer needs and wants. The industry uses motivational

and depth psychology research to help locate (but not to "create") these needs and wants. Such research provides information on the motives, meanings, and images which are important to people (Packard, 1957, 1960). These are then incorporated into both product design and advertising content in varying proportions. Figure 8.1 illustrates this process. Van Til's classification summarizes the most significant symbolism. The issue of performance themes is raised here by critics who charge that the industry exploits consumer emotions and irrationalities which are located in humanity's hidden psychological recesses, its "base" side. They argue that they should not be exploited -- especially by commercial interests, and even more especially when such exploitation results in dangerous traffic behaviour and other detrimental social and economic consequences. As noted, the industry response is that it is only responding to legitimate consumer demands. This is consistent with the pluralist/functionalist theoretical view. The argument may be stated in propositional form derived from the theory: (1) The manufacturers, in the face of uncertain demand and competition at the output boundary, will attempt to provide as wide a range of product designs as is economically feasible to appeal to the market. (2) The manufacturers will respond to the selection process of consumers who choose from the array of designs in the market those particular ones which contain the optimal collection of characteristics and symbols to satisfy their needs (which are independently formed and expressed). (3) Competition between manufacturers assures that all legitimate consumer demands will be met in a more or less

FIGURE 8.1

DIAGRAM OF THE PLURALIST/FUNCTIONALIST VIEW OF AUTOMOBILE
SALES AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OVER TIME: CONSUMER SOVEREIGNTY.

Source: Van Til:236

satisfactory manner. (4) The industry will attempt to monitor and anticipate trends and develop markets which may desire new or different product designs. (5) The manufacturers' sales and marketing strategies are not significantly influential in shaping consumer needs and perceptions. (6) The manufacturers will be limited to those markets and needs which are socially legitimate. To be less limited will cause corrective action to be initiated to eliminate this deviance. From this it may be hypothesized that with respect to hot rodding the producers will respond to hot rodding, that is, show interest in developing the images and designs associated with hot rodding and developing it as a market, only around the time it became more or less socially respectable.

The Meta-Power View

From the meta-power perspective the design of automobiles is a product of the interactions of four basic factors: (1) the nature of the production technology; (2) the interests and the priorities of the manufacturers; (3) the content of the advertising and other marketing strategies; and (4) the demands of consumers. The production technology of the automobile industry encompasses numerous aspects. One aspect is the high-cost, mechanized technologies which are employed in the actual construction of automobiles. This technology is organized on a mass production basis and is geared to producing a standardized automobile. This structure was adopted because it gives administrators great control over uncertainties in the construction process. Other aspects of production

such as styling (the "creative" department) and engineering are more difficult to control in such a tight fashion. But the nature of this structural totality determines the range and types of automobiles that can be produced and the costs of production. As noted earlier, the risks of any design depend upon several factors and some designs are more risky than others. Risk increases as fixed costs increase, as length of time from formulation to introduction increases, as flexibility (the ability to modify the design after introduction) decreases, and as the probability of counter strategies by competitors increases. Planners, being risk-averse, will favour those designs than can be predicted to bring a certain mean financial reward over those that may carry a similar mean reward but with the possibility of higher or lower rewards. It is important to remember the capitalistic context within which the planners operate. Corporate goals are set for increasing growth as measured by increased sales as described by Galbraith in Chapter Four. Advertising content, a variable singled out as important by critical theorists and other can affect consumer demands and perceptions when considered in total by structuring orientations and expected satisfactions. It also feeds back into product development. These points will be discussed shortly. Consumer demands and responses are neither false nor dictated. And since consumer responses are what actually, in the end, determines sales, they are important considerations in the planning process.

Clearly, the manufacturers are, in this ultimate sense, dependent upon consumers and their demands. The pluralist/

functionalist theory, proposes that manufacturers respond as best they can to the entire range of legitimate demands as manifested in their various strengths and dimensions with a proliferation of designs in competition with each other for consumer selection. The proposal here is that such behaviour is only part of the story. For while consumer preferences are taken into serious consideration, planners must also consider their technological imperatives and corporate goals and interests. The interaction of these various demands produces trade-offs and compromises. These involve selecting areas of preference and satisfaction which are in demand or are perceived to be developable and working with those while other areas of satisfaction will receive less attention and emphasis or none at all.

Note that the first three of the basic factors in product design are under the control of the producer. Some of the various strategies manufacturers have utilized to reduce uncertainty and risk at their input and output environments have already been mentioned. They have tight control over the production process through bureaucratic management and the organization of mass production. They have vertically integrated to ensure supplies. Yet another strategy which can be employed in high risk situations as proposed by Thompson (1967:36) involves contracting an agreement negotiated between organizations, not necessarily formal and/or legal, for the exchange of future performances. As a strategy of risk reduction, it can involve paying another firm to absorb part of the risk in a particular project as, for example, in contracting for sup-

plies or services from outside firms rather than producing them in-house. This will prove an important strategy in the later analysis. White mentioned earlier the strategy of implicit or explicit agreements between competitors to exchange information or license patents. But there is no reason to expect implicit or explicit agreements as a strategy to stop there. Indeed, the elite/class theorists argue that at the industry level, the big Three manufacturers have acted to reduce consumer freedom by establishing the structure of the industry as an oligarchy. This has enabled them to virtually eliminate all "outside" competition and to control entry into the industry. They have, it is argued from this perspective, willingly reduced and controlled competition between them, limiting it mainly to the retail market while co-operating at the manufacturing level. They have long ago stopped competing in terms of price by acting as a collective monopoly, setting prices and output at the point which maximizes return. They do not compete in qualitative technological changes but confine themselves to quantitative dimensions. And they control the rate of introduction of these quantitative innovations.⁴

The area where manufacturers do compete in the retail market is characterized by strategies designed to channel product development into those areas deemed to be the most profitable to them. The main competitive strategies are: (1) the annual model change (until recently); (2) extensive product differentiation and fragmentation; (3) protective imitation in product features; and (4) advertising. From the point of view of elite/class theorists and other analysts, these stra-

tegies reduce the efficiency of the market and undermine consumer sovereignty. Styling changes on an annual basis and model differentiation and fragmentation are costly processes (see Fisher, Griliches and Kaysen, 1962; Menge, 1962; Sherman and Hoffer, 1971; Snell, 1971, 1973; White, 1971). These policies are, it is argued, too costly and are designed to induce an artificial demand for automobiles through the creation of psychological obsolescence. Not only is this wasteful of resources, but it increases both price and sales at the social expense of excess profits for the manufacturers. The money spent on these changes diverts resources from research and development on significant aspects of qualitative engineering and design. Over the years people have criticized specific aspects of automobile engineering and technical design. Engineers, mechanics, insurance people, provincial/state highway administrators, traffic safety officials, federal government investigators, and members of the general public -- all have noted "defects" in such areas as lighting, seating, primary and secondary control design and location, visibility, brakes, weight distribution, steering, tires and wheels, springs, ventilation, maintenance and repair, etc. These difficulties have been blamed on the emphasis of styling over engineering. That is, styling considerations are more important to manufacturers than engineering considerations. Engineering must accommodate itself to the stylist's emphasis on the longer, lower, wider designs. The overall result, according to the critics, is an emphasis on "trivial" changes in appearance, interior appointments, engine size and power, etc. -- changes which have little

to do with improving the functional quality of the automobile, but which have much to do with increasing sales. Product designs which emphasize performance motives are obviously prime candidates for criticism. Designs which symbolize movement, speed and power excite those extra motives. Large engines and increasing horsepower excite particularly those hedonistic objectives discussed by Näätänen and Summala in Chapter Seven. (See, in addition to the critical literature cited in Chapter One, the history of automotive criticism by Eastman, 1973.)

Of course, these criticisms have stimulated responses from industry representatives and other economic researchers. Their arguments are in the preceeding section. Costs are disputed, efficiencies argued, benefits disagreed over, degrees of competition debated -- each side able to find data to support its case.⁵ Several economists have concluded, for example, that annual model changes, although costly, basically reflect consumer choice. Fisher, Griliches and Kaysen (1962:450) studied this issue and concluded "that there are thus grounds for believing that car owners (at the time of purchase) thought model changes worth most of the cost. The general presumption of consumer sovereignty thus implies that these model changes were worth the cost." Lawrence White (1971:210), certainly no apologist for the industry, concluded from his study of model changes: "This author believes that the market allocation, stressing model changes, probably reflects accurately consumer preferences." (See also Menge, 1962, and Root, 1972.) The issue of extra motives is explained as "what the public

wants". However, it is hard to disagree with the overall accumulation of evidence in Snell (1975) and White (1971) on certain facts and behaviours. White concluded his assessment of the performance of the automobile industry in the postwar years as follows:

The industry has earned excess profits; it has made rapid technological progress in manufacturing operations but has been slow in developing automotive technology; it has hesitated in responding positively to the questions of safety and pollution; it has been slow to respond to some of the changes in consumer tastes (White, 1971:276).

From the meta-power view, what is at issue is the exercise of relational control in the market. What the industry view, the pluralist/functionalist theory, and the economic research do not consider is the role of advertising in the process of consumer demand formation, as well as other marketing strategies such as the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns. Advertising is the third basic factor in the development of automobile design which is controlled by the manufacturers. From the meta-power perspective, advertising content -- when considered in its totality for automobiles -- is a cultural strategy which can socialize consumers and alter their perceptions of products and their preferences. It can do this by the selective emphases placed in its content, emphases which highlight only certain product features, symbolize certain experiences, meanings and gratifications, and link certain images to automobiles. Thus alternative features, experiences, images are not dealt with as strongly or are played down or not mentioned at all. Over the long term this biasing

or structuring is effective when done on a large and consistent scale in a context which provides few alternative interpretations or sources of information. Naturally the content must reflect consumer demands, but advertisers select which demands will be promoted most and least, how they will be promoted, and how much. This process feeds into consumer perceptions and feeds back into product design, creating a progressive, structured bias over time. Product characteristics and images thus reinforce each other and structure consumer needs. Consumer needs as expressed in the market reinforce those particular characteristics and images -- which happen to be those most favourable to the manufacturers. Figure 8.2 illustrates these flows of influence as they amend the pluralist/functionalist model in Figure 8.1.

This approach enables the criticisms about advertising selling on an emotional and persuasive basis to be resolved -- an issue that have been debated for a long time, and one which has been directed at automobile advertising in particular, as evidenced in Chapter Seven.

Critics of emotional appeals argue for "rational" presentation of strictly factual recitation in ads. Critics of persuasive techniques argue for the presentation of data which will inform consumers of relevant characteristics upon which to make a rational decision. Such concerns have generated a fair bit of research which has attempted to classify advertising of various sorts into the categories emotional versus rational and persuasive versus informational. Several commentators have made the point that such efforts at classification

FIGURE 8.2

DIAGRAM OF META-POWER VIEW OF AUTOMOBILE SALES AND DEVELOPMENT
PROCESS OVER TIME REPRESENTING ADVERTISING AS A KEY VARIABLE.
DEPICTED HERE ARE ONLY NEW FLOWS OF INFLUENCE NOT SHOWN IN
FIGURE 8.1.

Source: Van Til, 1975:247

are not and cannot be based on objective criteria, but depend upon the tastes of the individual (Taplin, 1963; Greyser, 1972; Sherer, 1970). Moreover, it is also noted that to criticize an advertising campaign solely because it appeals to emotion or uses persuasive techniques is not fruitful. Emotion or rationality can be used both for the "highest" and the "lowest" social goals. And it has proven so difficult to separate the informational from the persuasive that the distinction is not useful. In fact, every advertisement is both information and persuasion:

A moment's thought will show that in real life it is very difficult, it not impossible, to separate information from persuasion. The mere offer of information by person A implies a suggestion that some other person B, should pay attention to it, rather than do something else (Taplin, 1963:35).

Further, such approaches deny the validity of all the psychological utilities which may be associated with various products and would prevent them from being utilized in advertising. The real issue is not whether emotional appeals and persuasive techniques are being used, but exactly what consumer satisfactions are being sold. In the case of automobiles -- multi-dimensional products -- it is which physical and symbolic (or psychological) dimensions are being promoted and to what extent?

However, this still does not explain completely where the product content comes from. The last basic factor in determining product design is consumer demand. As noted earlier, in the pluralist/functionalist approach consumer demands are a function of income and preferences combined with such factors as personality, brand loyalty, price, etc. -- but not producer

sales strategies. In the meta-power approach, consumers are not autonomous and independent. The relational control strategies of producers have generated an informational monopoly on their side and a dependence on the consumers' side. Again, until recently the main source of information about automobiles for most consumers was automobile advertising and publicity written or generated by the manufacturers themselves and their dealer councils. Leon Mandell, in his book Driven, has observed that the American consumer press has not provided "information about automobiles: How to tell the good from the bad; prices high or prices low; warrenty thorough or warrenty sham; cars that have fulfilled owner expectations or cars that have been model-run disappointments" (Mandell, 1977:150). He continues, noting the results of this lack: "We only know that the consumer, the American car-loving, car-consuming buyer: Doesn't know how to buy a car. Doesn't know how to maintain a car. Doesn't know one warrenty from another. Doesn't know how to get his car fixed, or where" (Mandell, 1977:157). Obviously this information is not provided by industry advertising. Moreover, the mechanical complexity of the automobile and the difficulties in evaluating overall levels of quality tend to put consumers in a position where they depend upon the "reputation" of the different makes available (Edwards, 1965:240-241). And it reinforces the profitable emphases on visible model changes rather than more costly, invisible mechanical changes (see Nader, 1965/1972:184 and Eastman, 1973). However, creating informational dependencies does not provide an effective device to reduce uncertainty. Consumer demands

must still be met and they must be known.

Consumers of automobiles are not, on the whole, organized in any formal sense. There is no central mechanism which co-ordinates and communicates consumer wants to the manufacturers. And the industry spends a great deal of money on market research, direct consumer surveys, etc., to fathom those wants. There has been, however, some informal consumer organizing. Numerous groups of consumers and other persons have attempted, through both private and government means, to communicate dissatisfactions and problems to the industry -- with little effect. And then there has been the performance subculture -- the hot rodders -- a deviant group who in the 1950s were not even consumers, that is, were not purchasers of new automobiles.

All of the above mentioned strategies for risk reduction, and many more not mentioned, on the part of the manufacturers are designed to overcome resistance and/or to shape motivational antecedents. They are all quite costly to them in terms of resources, energy, and finances. Given the high uncertainty environment the industry faced in the early 1950s and the connection between the industry and hot rodders on performance motives, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the industry would incorporate hot rodding as a complementary behaviour pattern at that time -- if hot rodding could be seen to fit the industry's interests at the time. If it did fit those interests in some way, the industry collectively or on a manufacturer basis or even on a dealer basis, could be expected to reinforce hot rodding in some way or other -- fin-

ancially, technically, "lending legitimacy" to it, etc. If it was perceived as a potential market, this reinforcement could be expected to increase.

From this theoretical discussion it is now possible to derive some hypotheses about the relationship of the automobile industry to the market and the larger culture which can be compared to those derived from the pluralist/functionalist perspective. (1) The automobile industry facing uncertain demand will attempt to provide a limited range of successful designs as determined by consumer purchases and industry interests. (2) The industry will respond to the selection process of consumers but will attempt to exercise relational control with respect to their perceptions, needs and satisfactions. Manufacturers will utilize strategies of selective product design, selective advertising content, and non-price forms of competition which emphasize style and quantitative innovation. (3) Manufacturers will restrict competition to product dimension which are most favourable to their interests. (4) Manufacturers will monitor the environment, attempt to anticipate trends, and develop markets. They will try to lead them into the existing range of product designs. They will search for, incorporate, and reinforce complementary behaviour patterns where they find them. (5) The manufacturers will not necessarily be bound by the constraints of the common culture if a particular market or cultural symbol is perceived to be useful to them. From this, certain hypotheses may be proposed about the industry's relationship to hot rodding. (1) The industry will be found to have begun to incorporate hot rodding in the early 1950s when

it was still very much a deviant activity. (2) It will be incorporated because certain aspects of it will be found to mesh with industry interests. Such aspects may be predicted to be in the areas of product design relating to symbolism, styling, and technology. The reference here is to performance motives (symbolism), custom hot rods (styling), and highly developed engines, drive trains, suspensions, etc. (technology). (3) It will be incorporated because it is a relatively low cost strategy with large potential for publicity. (4) The decision-making process remains an unknown quantity. The research examining this relationship will hopefully provide some information on this process.

Directions

This chapter has examined the pluralist/functionalist and the meta-power views of the automobile industry and the development of the automobile. A number of hypotheses were derived from the applications. Those hypotheses relating to the basic operation and behaviour of the industry will be examined briefly by inspecting the data and conclusions of a study by Roy Van Til of automobile advertising content and its role in structuring demand. This study will provide valuable information on the relative emphases the various meanings and characteristics received over the postwar period. Van Til's study argues for the meta-power hypotheses. To test the hypotheses about hot rodding and the industry, the attitudes and behaviour of the industry and of the society at large must be measured to determine when the industry became interested in hot

rodding and when public attitudes toward hot rodding changed. The methodology is described in the next chapter as a content analysis of magazines representing each position. It is found that the meta-power hypothesis is supported. The findings are reported in Chapter Ten. In order to examine the hypotheses about the incorporation of hot rodding by the industry, Chapters Eleven and Twelve will present an analytical-historical discussion of the relationship between the two over the 1948-1968 period.

FOOTNOTES

1

See, for example, Banner, 1954; Brems, 1958; General Motors Corporation, 1939, 1968; Ueno and Tsurumi, 1969; Tsurumi, 1968; Burgess and Glahe, 1970; Cowling and Cubbin, 1971; Edwards, 1965; White, 1971; Chandler, 1964; Crandell, 1968; Root and Sylvester, 1971; Sylvester, 1971; Bain, 1956, 1970; Fabris, 1966; Potney, 1963; Dhrymes, 1971; Katz, 1970; Brantl, 1963; Brooks, 1959; Mann, 1962; Ayres, 1970; Lanzillotti, 1971; Snell, 1971, 1973, 1975; Root, 1972; Hoffer, et al., 1976; Boyle and Hogarty, 1975.

2

The high degree of control automobile manufacturers have developed over their input boundaries has numerous consequences for the people who work in and around this boundary. The nature and operation of mass production technology, its insulation, and its bureaucratic administration result in working conditions which are characterized by a pre-determined hierarchical organization which is formalized, specialized, routinized, and standardized. The human consequences of this organizational work-environment are almost universally said to be high levels of worker dissatisfaction, degradation, dehumanization, and alienation. Automobile workers are the most studied industrial group in the United States and most studies support these contentions. See, for example, Walker and Guest, 1952; Wilensky, 1966; Sheppard, 1969, 1977; Chinoy, 1955; Braverman, 1974; Blauner, 1964. But see the empirical rebuttal by the contributors to the volume edited by Widick, 1976 and the philosophical rebuttal by Clayre, 1974.

3

Price leadership means that one firm in an industry sets its prices with the understanding that the other firms in the industry will follow the lead. The function of price leadership is to minimize the destructive effects for the firms of a price war in which prices are cut and cut again in response to the cutting actions of competitors until some firms are driven out of business. General Motors is the price leader in the automobile industry (Edwards, 1965; White, 1971; Ayres, 1970).

4

A quantitative product innovation involves the development of a particular dimension or characteristic usually in the form of a measurable increase in the magnitude of that characteristic. These increases do not depend upon the application of new scientific concepts. For example, with respect to automobiles, quantitative innovations would include increases in such characteristics as number of engine cylinders, horsepower, piston displacement, compression ratio, wheel base, length of body, etc. A qualitative product innovation involves developments which require the application to a particular dim-

ension or characteristic of a scientific concept which (a) had not been considered before or (b) became applicable only after certain circumstantial changes had taken place (as in the case of technological advances in strengthening steel). With respect to the automobile, qualitative innovations would include such developments as high compression engines, automatic transmissions, airflow streamlining, front wheel drive, safety rim wheels, hard-top convertibles, fuel injection, etc.

Richard Fabris (1966) conducted a study of automotive innovation by American automobile manufacturers over the period 1919 to 1962. He found that the rate of introduction of qualitative innovations declined over this period and slowed especially after World War II. By 1935 approximately seventy percent of the total qualitative innovations had been introduced. For quantitative innovations the reverse pattern was found; the rate of introduction increased over the time period studied with fifty-five percent appearing after World War II. Much of the quantitative variation focused on engine characteristics such as displacement and horsepower. Fabris (1966:168) concludes that: "The number of scientific concepts that can be utilized or applied to improve the product apparently becomes increasingly less during a period of years, but the quantitative characteristics of the product can be varied unabated for the application of major technological change or merely for the appearance of newness. This is exactly what occurred in the automobile industry because the introduction of qualitative product innovations became increasingly difficult and less frequent, and the automobile firms shifted their emphasis toward varying the magnitude of the product's characteristics. In this manner, consumers would always be presented with an 'improved' product for the stimulation of interest and purchase."

Fabris also found that product innovation tended to cluster around periods of declining sales, suggesting that manufacturers controlled and utilized the introduction of innovations as sales devices.

5

Even among those who agree that the automobile industry is too concentrated, monopolistic, and insensitive to consumer demand, there is much disagreement as to which strategies would be most effective in restoring consumer sovereignty and market freedom. See the discussions of Boyle, 1975; Schiel, 1975; Wolozin, 1975.

INITIAL ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss first a significant study which examines the role of advertising content in structuring consumer perceptions and demands for automobiles in the post-war period. This is one of the few studies of its kind and its findings are important to this discussion. It will be used to assess the hypotheses related to the general behaviour of the automobile industry in the market. Next the methodology for testing the hypotheses about hot rodding and the automobile industry will be discussed.

Advertising, Product Development and Relation Control:
Roy Van Til's Study

The hypotheses about the process by which consumer demands are structured, the shaping of consumer perceptions, and the limits placed upon consumer choice have not been given much systematic research attention by sociologists. These are not easy matters to study. They involve difficult problems in research design, measurement and evaluation. A rigorous, detailed test and assessment of the contrasting sets of hypotheses about the general behaviour of the automobile manufacturers in the market is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In its stead, the evidence cited in the last chapter will be supplemented by the findings of a significant study by economist Roy Van Til.

The pluralist/functionalist hypotheses were as follows.

(1) The automobile industry in the face of uncertain demand and competition at its output boundary will attempt to provide as wide a range of product designs as is economically feasible to appeal to the market. (2) The manufacturers will respond to the selection process of consumers who choose from the array of designs in the market those particular ones which contain the optimal collection of characteristics and images to satisfy their needs. (3) Competition in the industry assumes that all legitimate consumer demands will be met. (4) The manufacturers will attempt to monitor and anticipate trends and develop markets which may desire new or different product designs. (5) The manufacturers' sales and marketing strategies are not significantly influential in the determination of consumer needs and perceptions. (6) The manufacturers will be limited to those markets and needs which are socially legitimate.

The meta-power hypotheses were as follows. (1) The industry facing uncertain demand will attempt to provide a limited range of product designs as determined by consumer purchases and industry interests. (2) The industry will respond to the selection process of consumers but will attempt to exercise relational control with respect to consumer perceptions, needs and satisfactions. Manufacturers will utilize strategies of selective product design, selective advertising content and non-price forms of competition which emphasize style and quantitative innovations. (3) Manufacturers will restrict competition to product dimensions which are most favourable to their interests. (4) Manufacturers will monitor the environment, attempt to anticipate trends, and develop markets. They will try to lead

them into the existing range of product designs. They will search for, incorporate, and reinforce complimentary behaviour patterns when they find them. (5) The manufacturers will not necessarily be bound by the constraints of the common culture or countervailing powers if a particular market or cultural image is perceived to be useful to them.

The work of Roy Van Til (1975) provides a useful basis for comparing the two positions. Although he does not utilize the concept of meta-power, his study of automobile advertising content in Life magazine over the 1949-1973 period was designed to test the pluralist/functionalist view of advertising with the view that advertising is a cultural variable which can alter and structure consumer perceptions and demands to a significant extent. His study generates information useful to this discussion. Van Til's research was conducted as a Ph.D. dissertation in economics and is very long and extremely detailed. It cannot be discussed at great length here, but will be summarized in some detail, the conclusions discussed, and relevant information delineated. With respect to the determination of the content of automobile advertising, Van Til found that the conventional wisdom view of content solely determined by levels of consumer interest (independently arrived at) in various product dimensions was not supported by his data. Rather, the content of automobile advertising was a function of the interaction between producer planning, product development and consumer wants -- but "it is also a distributed lag function of past consumer wants" (Van Til, 1975:246). Because of this any

selective bias in advertising content can bias consumer perceptions and undercut consumer independence. Of course, this analysis is at the level of the totality of the messages contained in advertising, the totality of ads.

Testing the two positions was not an easy task for Van Til. Measuring the relation between advertising content and the structure of consumer wants and perceptions is most problematic, and his argument rests in the end upon "logic and circumstantial evidence". "Though this can be construed as a weakness of the approach, the evidence clearly favours acceptance of this part of the model: Consumer wants are in part a distributed lag function of present and past advertising content" (Van Til, 1975:248). The rest of his model argues that the consumer response to the various dimensions of product design is taken by producers who select particular successful dimensions (according to their priorities and technological imperatives) for emphasis in the next selling period in both the physical product and the advertising content. Over periods of time, the repetition of this selective biasing process results in a "distorted" structure of consumer wants and perceptions. Thus, at any particular point in time, consumer demands in the market are not independent and autonomous as they may appear in the short run, but are shaped by the interests of the producers. Moreover, both the product itself and the advertising content are also shaped in this direction.

The cycle is self-perpetuating: Past advertising content determines to a great extent the range and nature of products available and the range and nature of consumer wants that will be expressed. Then the wants and

products of today do help to constrain and shape the appeals that will be successful in the current year, allowing producers to attribute neutrality to advertising and to argue that the "consumer is king". Meanwhile, current advertising is at work making future sales figures a self-fulfilling prophecy as the subtle dimensions of the ads steer consumers away from "destructive" or dangerous areas of competition (Van Til, 1975:292-293).

The trouble in assessing such a formulation is the lack of counter-factuality. That is, if the historical process outlined is what takes place, then how can researchers determine the "actual" consumer demands which would have been present if advertising was not present or biased? Counter-factual historians have tried to develop some techniques, but it is a difficult area.¹

The data Van Til used in his test were obtained by a content analysis of a sample of 750 automobile advertisements from Life magazine between 1949 and 1973. This was supplemented by referring to the discussions and research of automobile performance -- some of which has been mentioned here earlier. His data show that the automobile industry restricted competition in both advertising and product design to certain dimensions and avoided others. These dimensions were all consistently promoted if they tended to be profitable and to lead to competition which was not likely to escalate or lead to costly development processes. It is impossible to convey all the detail and depth of Van Til's analysis on the ten basic dimensions of automobile advertising, product competition, and the resulting biases and limited avenues of product development. The connections and inferences from these to the intentions of the manufacturers is not based upon any data more substantial than

that already in the public domain. However, the mass and consistency seem to put the weight on the basic acceptance of his model and his conclusions.

The automobile industry was found to be characterized by competition which avoided such physical factors as high speed crash protection, low selling price, broad warranties, inexpensive repairs, low operational costs, compact size, anti-pollution technology, verified durability. These all involved the dimensions of safety, technology, durability and selling price. Competition focused on non-escalating and psychological (symbolic) features such as prestige, snob appeal, value, total styling design, ride, vague reputation. There was also competition in such risky areas as tail fins, compactness (in the early 1960s) size (in the 1950s), warranties (middle 1960s) and horse power and automobile racing (middle 1950s and 1960s).

These involved only a few areas of differentiation, mainly "non-quantifiable or vague psychological (symbolic) appeals, artificial differentiation of automobiles, and avoidance of direct competition with other products or automakers" (Van Til, 1975:357). Such emphasis may have prevented competition in more constructive areas, Van Til argues. Moreover, advertising which communicated the following tendencies also limited industry competition: (1) stress on changes of a cosmetic nature; (2) patterns of continual up-grading; (3) "the unwillingness of the big producers to compete on many dimensions of the automobile"; and (4) "the avoidance of substantial innovations" (Van Til, 1975:357).

With respect to the advertising content itself and the

patterns of meaning Van Til found, the consistent emphasis on selected patterns was important in structuring consumer perceptions of the meaning of automobiles in directions far different from what they might have been with advertising more balanced in its content. He found that advertising for automobiles stressed, to a significant degree (1) short time horizons rather than long time horizons in its appeals (four times as often for domestic auto ads); (2) subjective rather than objective arguments (General Motors rated eighteen percent on Van Til's objectivity index compared to ninety percent for foreign manufacturers); and (3) the use of specious proxy logic (that is, an association between two features which is a non-sequitur of the "A implies B" type -- for example, "styling as a proxy for speed and performance", or "racing success as a proxy for product quality" (Van Til, 1975:227). The most significant pattern relates to the meanings of the automobile portrayed in the advertisements. The pattern was split between two "basic philosophies" of the automobile, one of which dominated the other. Van Til terms them ethic A and ethic B to avoid semantic difficulties. He describes ethic A as

one extreme way of encouraging a pattern of consumer perceptions of what a car should be. It contains the appeals to exclusiveness, machismo, styling, ergonomics, and reputation. Ethic A has little to do with product features or consumer benefits which relate to the pure transportational function. It deals generally with the more abstract dimensions of the automobile (Van Til, 1975:208).

Appeals associated with ethic A are more likely to be emotional than informational, and more often of the "other-directed" type.

The philosophy of ethic B is much more pragmatic than ethic A -- some would term it more "rational". Ethic B

contains the appeals to safety, economy, functionalism, technology, and durability. Ethic B includes the product features which answer the following basic questions: Will the buyer get there alive? Can he afford to buy and operate the car? Does the car work? Is it engineered well with up-to-date methods? Will the car last? (Van Til, 1975:208).

Each philosophy is a basically complete or total way of relating to and thinking about the automobile. Manufacturers would be expected to use them in their advertising because each philosophy has associated with it particular characteristics and meanings which can be developed in the ads. The data in Van Til's study reveal that ethic A was predominant in the graphics in American automobile advertising 81.6% to 18.4%. In the copy of the ads it was also more prevalent but to a lesser degree, 63.1% to 60.7%. It is the combination of ethic A, short time horizons, subjective arguments, and specious proxy logic which are the selected emphases of automobile advertising for American automobiles. Of course, there were variations over time in the relative strengths of the appeals, and variations by manufacturer and model, as well.

It is clear that ethic A contains the performance motives which are of interest to this study -- particularly focused in the dimension of machismo, although styling, Van Til notes, is often used to reinforce machismo appeals. Moreover, aspects of appeals to exclusiveness, ergonomics, and reputation also carry or reinforce machismo appeals. The predomin-

ance of these performance themes is documented by the criticisms discussed in Chapter Seven. The three dimensions of styling, exclusiveness and machismo together comprise 67% of all primary graphical emphasis in the sample of advertisements considered. These figures are based on 1,485 appeals in 750 ads. Machismo constituted 14.2% of the appeals in total graphics and 19.3% of the primary graphics. Styling accounted for 39.1% and 27.7% respectively; exclusiveness 13.5% and 19.3%. The machismo figure of 14.2% of total graphic appeals translates to 28% of the 750 advertisements which made some appeal to it. The number of appeals in the total and primary copy categories is much higher than the graphic appeals; of 5,187 appeals in the total copy, 14.8% were related to machismo, and 14.9% of 888 primary copy appeals were to machismo. Overall, 55.8% of the ads made a primary or secondary appeal to machismo in the copy. However, total over a twenty-five year period can be very misleading. As noted in Chapter Seven, and as confirmed by the ads, machismo was heavily emphasized in the 1960s. This tends to raise the totals. Also, focus on the totals tends to obscure the fluctuations over the time period. From a low of about 10% in 1949 machismo appeals in graphics rose to around 20% in 1954, declined to 10% by the end of 1954 and rose to 25% by 1956. Thereafter they declined to 15% and stayed around that figure until the early 1960s -- this was during the period of the AMA agreement to ban performance advertising. Then the percentages began to climb quickly rising to 40% in 1963. Until 1968 they remained high and then began to decline rapidly in the 1970s. These trends provide the basic flavour of the

macho emphasis over the period. Van Til takes the analysis to the level of companies, then to the level of individual makes, and even to the level of price class. There are interesting variations in the figures at these levels but he does not provide a longitudinal breakdown. For the purposes of this discussion the figures at those levels, even if spread over time, would provide little to the analysis.

Van Til's study strongly suggests that the automobile industry exercises relational control over the market. He argues that it is able to structure consumer demands and preferences (orientations) and to channel their satisfactions (outcomes) in directions favourable to it. Of course, other strategies beside product design and advertising are important aspects of this process. At the institutional level, demand may be structured by the industry and its allies through public policies, location decisions, etc. At this level it is the demand for mobility which is structured by social arrangements such as the separation of work and home, available highways, etc., which make the automobile a "necessity". This study has chosen to focus on the operation of the industry and its market within this context to examine the development of the meaning of the automobile with respect to performance motives. The appeals to machismo in advertising, the streamlined, speed oriented styling, the horsepower -- all these are only one part of a wide number of themes and strategies. But very significant ones. As a consumer satisfaction and an industry strategy it apparently was effective for quite some time. In the 1970s many environmental conditions changed, the performance market reached

saturation and the strategy became less effective. This discussion, as noted, will not attempt to analyze the changes and lessening of effectiveness of this strategy.

Van Til's study and the other research cited resolves, suggestively at least, the contrasting hypotheses regarding the behaviour of the automobile industry in the market in favour of the meta-power view. Now it is time to test the hypothesis about the industry's relationship with hot rodding. The methodology to be employed will be discussed in the next section.

Methodology

Because hot rodding was once considered a deviant activity, there arises the question of when the automobile industry could incorporate and utilize hot rodding, given the fact that they were aware of hot rodding at the time it was deviant. The pluralist/functionalist hypothesis is that the industry's interest in and promotion of hot rodding will be found to originate at a point in time when it has grown to considerable size and has become more or less publicly acceptable -- for the industry is bound by the common value system and can only act when public values say it is legitimate to do so. Sanctions will be applied to correct any deviation. The industry can only cater to a new and growing market, "giving the public what it wants". The meta-power hypothesis is that the industry's relationship with hot rodding will be found to originate at a time when hot rodding is still very much a deviant minority, and the nature of the relationship will be one of exploitation: because certain aspects of hot rodding coincide with the inter-

ests and structure of the industry and because of certain environmental contingencies, the industry will lend its legitimacy to hot rodding in order to help it grow and achieve legitimacy, this in spite of public opinion against hot rodding in general.

The resolution of these differing positions will require the analysis of the changes in attitudes and actions of the two major cultural segments involved in this discussion since hot rodding first became "visible": the public and the automobile industry. The attitudes of the public must be followed over this period of time to find if and when they shift from viewing hot rodding as deviant to legitimate. The attitudes and actions of the industry must be followed over this time period to find out (1) if it once viewed hot rodding as deviant and if a change in attitude occurred at roughly the same time as the change in public attitude or, (2) if it viewed hot rodding as deviant and changed its attitude at a point in time much earlier than the change in public attitude toward hot rodding.

The best sources of data on the changes in attitudes and actions required for this study are the mass media outlets² of each of the cultural segments in question. However, because of the exploratory nature of this study and time constraints, it is not possible to examine all the possible media outlets for each segment. Hence, this discussion will restrict itself to the examination of the mass circulation periodicals representative of each segment between 1948 and 1968. In the case of the automobile industry, the analysis will be restricted to one periodical which best represents it. This will be Business

Week. It is argued that Business Week is in some ways more representative of the automobile industry than a trade journal such as Automotive Industries. (1) Business Week's audience is composed of the management and executive level almost exclusively -- it is not sold on the newsstands or made generally available to the public (subscription is the only way to obtain it); further, subscriber background data is regularly obtained and updated. (2) This audience is spread widely in many different types of businesses and industries. (3) Therefore, the articles contained in the periodical will cover every type of business activity -- especially the automobile industry since so many other businesses depend upon or are in some way related to it. (4) The articles will tend to give more penetrating analyses, consider more factors, etc., than a trade journal intended for a homogeneous audience.

For the public, a mass circulation periodical will be examined in order to give the best possible representation of a somewhat amorphous population. This will be Life magazine. Of all the national magazines which attempted to be universal in their appeal, to be carriers of the mainstream popular culture, Life was the most successful over the period under examination. It maintained the highest circulation, ranging from 21.8 million in 1950 to 28.6 million in 1970. Moreover, given the similar appeal of other periodicals in this category and their similar readership profiles, there is little to gain from sampling them (Bogart, 1967). As Van Til (1975:24) says in his study: "If any magazine represented the pulse and central tendencies of the consumption-oriented America of the

last decades it was Life."

This study will employ a content analysis of the above named periodicals over the 21 year period of 1948-1968. The unit of analysis for the periodicals representative of the public and the auto industry is the article, the most conducive unit for the requirements of the research question. Articles will be included in the sample on the basis of their hot rod content.³ An article will be categorized as containing hot rod content if it specifically uses the words "hot rod" or variants thereof and/or if it mentions and/or shows pictures of drag racing, stock car racing, the Bonneville Salts Flats races, car cults, customizing, "hot" cars, etc.

Articles from Business Week and Life will be classified for analysis into the categories of favourable, neutral, and unfavourable on the basis of expressed or implied attitudes toward hot rodding. A favourable article from Life will define the hot rod and the hot rodder as culturally acceptable, it will emphasize the hot rodder's integration into society, his becoming respectable, his co-operation with agencies of authority, good deeds done by hot rod clubs; it will depict the hot rodder as a good citizen, moral, intelligent and lawful, and it will stress the good points of hot rodding such as competition, craftsmanship, etc. A favourable article from Business Week will define hot rodding and related activities as economically lucrative as investment prospects and will either not portray a cultural image of the hot rodder or present a positive one; it will thus cite data illustrating the hot rodder as coming into his own, gaining popularity, etc.; it will cite

the profitability of hot rodding, how drag strips are making money and what it takes to get involved in one; it will depict the promotional advantages of participation in and sponsorship of hot rodding events.

A negative article from Life and/or Business Week will define hot rodding and related activities as deviant and dangerous behaviour; it will associate it with hedonism, killing, and delinquency; it will depict the hot rodder as unlawful, backward, immoral, etc., partaking in such activities as street drag racing and "chicken"; it will only show pictures of terrible accidents both on the street and at hot rod events, often showing sequential photographs of car and driver flying to destruction and death or dismemberment -- thereby implying that hot rodding is dangerous and should be negatively valued. A neutral article from these two magazines will simply describe and depict hot rods and/or hot rodding events in a narrative fashion or will present both the negative attitude and a more positive view of the "hot rod problem".

The results of the content analysis are reported in the next chapter. It is found that the meta-power hypothesis is supported. In order to develop an understanding of the incorporation of hot rodding by the automobile industry in the early 1950s and continuing throughout the period of this study, an analytic history will be presented which examines the nature of the relationship between hot rodding and the industry. This analysis will examine the hypotheses that the incorporation of hot rodding will be based on structural/technological and product design considerations, as well as the priorities of the

manufacturers. It will focus at two levels: the industry level and also at the manufacturer level. The latter focus will provide insight into the decision-making process of corporations as well as the nature of the relationships between manufacturers.

The data for this analysis has been drawn from numerous sources. Trade journals and business periodicals have been searched as well as the literature on automotive history written by historians and by "auto buffs". Numerous hours have been spent in the Detroit Public Library Automotive History Collection analyzing newspaper clippings, personal files, and various enthusiast magazines. The Wayne State Library was also utilized as was the General Motors Styling Library and Research Library. At the latter various corporate documents were examined. A great deal of time was spent at the Ford Archives in Dearborn. Many corporate memoranda and other personal files were made available for study. U.S. Government Investigation Committee reports were also examined in such areas as traffic safety, dealer relationships, anti-trust laws, economic concentration, etc.

These sources were supplemented by interviews with industry personnel. General Motors Design was most co-operative in allowing access but personnel there were of little help in providing information about the decisions and actions during the period in question. As David Lewis, a noted automotive historian, has commented:

To many GM executives, history is that which happened last week. GM prides itself on looking ahead not back. Also the

corporation is always jittery about possible anti-trust action, over the years have believed it prudent to destroy "sensitive" records lest they fall into the wrong hands (Lewis, 1979:62).

Lewis also notes that Alfred Sloan's My Years with General Motors took two years to be published after he had written it because GM corporate lawyers had to edit it severely. They kept delaying publication. It was only Sloan's stern insistence that finally got it published at all.

Moreover, many of the historical interests in this discussion are "walking history". That is, it is still in the heads of those who were present at significant events but who never found the time or the inclination to record it. Add to this that in the late 1950s when the AMA agreement on racing and advertising was in effect much activity was "underground". Those still in the corporations are not willing to talk about their nefarious activities of earlier years. At General Motors the ban was never lifted. Thankfully, one ex-GM engineer wrote about some of the activities going on in GM engineering during this period (Van Valkenburgh, 1972).

FOOTNOTES

1

See, for example, the interesting work on the significance of railroads in American economic history. Robert Fogel's (1964) Railroads and American Economic Growth attempts to assess the magnitude of the stimulation the development of railroads (circa 1890) had on the economic development through the establishment of "counterfactual propositions" and their evaluation through quantitative analysis. He focuses on the social savings in the transport of agricultural goods and on the demand for American iron (1840-1860). Albert Fishlow's (1965) study of railroads and their impact on the American ante-bellum economy considers a wider range of possible influences than Fogel's study, but has as its goal the assessment of railroads in light of the way things might have been without railroads.

2

A substantial literature supports the notion that communication reflects the conditions of society to a great extent. Hence, changes in these conditions will show up in the content of the media of communication. See, for example, Lowenthal, 1948, 1961; Johns-Heine and Garth, 1949; Olson, 1976; Gerbner and Holsti, 1968; Holsti, 1969; Pool, 1959.

3

Note: because of the limited number of articles relating to hot rodding, the sample in this study is actually the population, that is, all articles relating to hot rodding in Business Week and Life.

CHAPTER 10

THE FINDINGS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

In order to gain knowledge of the attitudes of the general public and the automobile industry (and the business community in general) toward hot rodding, a content analysis of articles in representative mass circulation periodicals between 1948 and 1968 was performed. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 10.1 which shows the number of articles dealing with hot rodding during this time period classified according to the attitude exhibited toward hot rodding. From this table it is seen that Life magazine maintains negative sentiments about hot rodding until 1956 whereupon they soften to a neutral position, subsequently shifting to favorable in 1963. However, in the case of Business Week it is found that hot rodding attitudes begin and remain favorable -- even during the late forties and early fifties when Life was presenting negative images of the hot rodder. By 1963 when Life begins presenting positive images of the hot rodder, 48 percent of the articles had appeared in Business Week. Also apparent from this table is the relatively higher degree of interest in hot rodding by the entrepreneur than the public as evidenced more than twice as many articles in Business Week as in Life. The articles included in the sample population are listed in Appendices A and B.

Public Attitudes in Life

To illustrate the changing "hot rod" attitudes contained in Life over the twenty years between 1948 and 1968, some

TABLE 10.1

FREQUENCY AND EXHIBITED ATTITUDE TOWARD HOT RODDING OF ARTICLES
ARTICLES IN LIFE AND BUSINESS WEEK MAGAZINES, 1948-1968

Year	Favor- able	LIFE		Unfavor- able	BUSINESS WEEK		
		Neutral			Favor- able	Neutral	Unfavor- able
1948				1			
1949				1			
1950					1		
1951							
1952					2		
1953		1		1	2		
1954		1		1			
1955					1		
1956				1	2		
1957		1			2		
1958		1					
1959							
1960		1			1		
1961					2		
1962							
1963	1				5		
1964					3		
1965					2		
1966					2		
1967					1		
1968					1		
Total	1	5		6 = 12	27		= 27

quotations from and descriptions of the articles will be presented. To supplement this discussion several references will be made to articles contained in other periodicals. A prime example of the unfavorable attitude toward hot rodding exhibited in Life is the article entitled "The 'Hot Rod' Problem; Teenagers Organize to Experiment with Mechanized Suicide" which appeared in the November 7, 1949 issue. The article opens with several pictures of accidents and their aftermaths with the following caption: "Taken from Los Angeles Police and newspaper files these pictures document the death and injury of a dozen hard-driving youngsters in recent months. At extreme right policeman holds fistful of licenses confiscated from hot-rodders who, although they have been jailed, are at least safe." The text of the article runs in part:

. . . "Hot rod" clubs have sprung up everywhere. In the 18-25 age range the number of accidents per capita is twice normal. Insurance companies, scanning this phenomenon, have had to increase rates substantially for any car -- including the family sedan -- driven by anyone in this age group.

In Los Angeles and Dallas, where "hot rodding" is at its peak, hundreds of youngsters spend their spare time in suicidal games on wheels, some of which are re-enacted below and on page 124. In other localities they play "pedestrian polo -- just brush 'em, don't hit 'em," or "crinkle fender -- no smashes." . . . the youngsters have organized to toy with suicide.

The "suicidal games on wheels" which are pictorially described are "rotation", "drag racing", and several varieties of "chicken". Also mentioned in the article is the prevalence of street racing at night and the danger of such practices.

The last part of the article bears the caption, "The

Gents Club Re-Organizes." and certainly implies that the typical hot rod club is an organization of delinquency and death. Upon the death of his 17 year old son, Waldo Pendleton "helped to re-organize the Gents Club, a hot-rod outfit of which his son had been a member. The club now has strict safety rules, a pledge to promote safe driving, and friendly and informal meetings with the police. "Since the re-organization, not one of the 26 members has been injured, and only four have received traffic tickets."

The technique of presenting spectacular photographs and photograph sequences of hot rod accidents and mentioning nothing about other aspects of hot rodding -- thus implying the terrible dangers to both drivers and innocent onlookers of hot rodding -- is well used in Life. For example, the article entitled "A Stock Car Racer Goes Out of Control" (March 16, 1953) is merely a series of six sequential photographs of a stock car race accident with the following captions: Picture (1) "Circling track at Gardina, California, car no. 64 flips over. Driver's head comes out of window." Picture (2) "tumbling car, the driver's head still out, is caught by photographer's sequential camera," Picture (3) "for an instant the car seems to be righting itself and the driver appears safe," Picture (4) "but the tumbling continues, driver remains caught and a wheel goes scudding off," Picture (5) "and on his vehicle's second time over, the driver's head (lower left) is smashed in," Picture (6) "as another racer shirts the wrecked car and its lost wheel comes circling crazily by." Centered on the page at the bottom

in large bold print is the comment: "He was trying to take dangerous chances" with the following story line underneath:

Before he left Pennsylvania for the national stock car speed championships, the 34 year-old driver of Car 64, Harold F. Morse, had told friends he was going to play it safe. Considering his wife and five children, he said, he would try only for third or fourth place. He was going only 85 mph after finishing the 99th lap of the 200-lap race when the rear axle broke and the fatal flip-over began.

A similar article appears in the August 9, 1948 issue bearing the title: "Tragedy on the Track; Racing Around South Turn on Indiana Speedway, Racing Car Flips into Air, Cuts Leg Off Its Driver." A sequence of six photographs is shown with the following captions (note the adjectives and metaphors which are used):

. . . in a squealing, thumping crash Epperly's racer jumped off the track as if it had been catapulted. While Epperly desperately fought to get back onto the track the car skidded right up the embankment sideways (picture 2), hit the shoulder and, like a monstrous grasshopper, flipped into the air bottom side up (picture 3). As the twisting car plunged back down to earth Orvill Epperly was thrown out of his cockpit (picture 4). But as the car fell from under him the cowlings caught him in the left leg, sliced it off at the knee. Then the car, slamming its tail into the ground and flipping end over end, smacked its injured driver in mid-air (picture 5), sending him flying off the track while his severed leg fell among the debris (center picture 6).

While it is the case that Orvill Epperly managed to survive this accident, the article quickly removes any relief the reader might feel by noting:

. . . but Epperly was lucky. Six weeks before, on a nearby track, another driver had skidded while going too fast on a turn. His car smashed into a wire fence and he was sliced up so badly he was dead within two hours.

In "The Grim Death of Racing Driver Rex Mays", published in Life (November 21, 1949) a series of nine photographs show how "20,000 Californians see him (Rex Mays) hurled from his car and run over before other drivers can be flagged down." Self-explanatory is "A Doomed Driver in a Mantel of Flames" which appeared on p. 29 of the February 9, 1954 issue.

The years 1953 through 1956 may be viewed as the transition period during which the unfavourable hot rod attitudes slowly change to more neutral attitudes. It is found that the negative pictorial essays of the earlier period as described above exist together with several pictorial essays which describe or report in a factual manner several hot rod activities of a less dangerous and less spectacular nature than stock car racing, etc. The first of these "neutral" essays appeared in the September 28, 1953 issue in the department known as "Speaking of Pictures". The subheading was titled, "These Strange Shapes Set Speed Marks on Salt Flats", and the body of the text ran as follows:

The glistening salt flats of Bonneville, Utah were overrun this month by some of the oddest shapes the motor age has produced. They were some 300 hot rods brought to the flats to take part in the fifth annual Hot Rod Time Trials. The class known as "lakesters", because they were developed for racing on dried-up lake beds, were made from airplane wing and belly tanks. The "competition coupes" and "modified roadsters" had cutdown bodies and grotesquely elongated engine hoods. There was a motorcycle that looked like a torpedo. All cars, no matter what their shapes, were very fast. Several of them bettered 200 miles per hour, and before the trials were over 15 new records had been set in various classes.

Next in the July 19, 1954 Life came "The Dessert's Dune

Bugs; Hot Rodders Build Their Own Homely, Half-Pint Cars that Run on the Sand", which describes the forerunners of today's dune buggies:

Where the long belly of a stock car would catch going over peaks of sand, leaving its wheels dangling fore and aft, the desert hot rod's short 6-foot wheelbase lets it roll safely over. The driver sits over the rear axle. The tires are flabby and completely innocent of tread. But the ungainly dune bug is agile enough to scramble up soft slopes as steep as a ski jump at 40 mph. On weekends the roar of dune bugs shatters the desert silence as they play tag over the sands, combining the thrills of racing with the stomach-turning dips and turns of a roller coaster. . . . dune bugs sometimes tip over on turns but the soft sand prevents casualties.

From 1957 to 1962 a basically neutral position in terms of reporting is maintained in Life, that is, the articles made an effort to report both sides of the hot rod "problem" as this problem came to center on drag racing. The index description of the article, "The Drag Racing Rage" (April 29, 1957), has this caption: "Drag racing, the teen-age sport of stripped-down cars and souped-up engines, shifts into high gear and sets off a national controversy." The sub-heading of the article reads, "Hot Rodders Grow in Numbers but the Road to Respectability Is a Rough One." The text of the article describes the growth of drag racing, and presents the views of both hot rodders and safety groups on the sport:

Drag racing started as a postwar teen-age infatuation with souped-up cars in which speed crazy kids raced surreptitiously at 80 or 90 miles per hour over lonely roads, scaring ordinary drivers to death. Now in many places in the U.S. it has come out into the open as a respectable -- and controlled -- sport. An

event like that shown below is no longer uncommon -- a drag meet at Santa Ana, Calif., where 3,000 spectators and 328 contestants turned out for races held with the blessing of the local police. . . .

But as the sport grows so does the controversy over it. Safety groups and some police officials feel that the glorification of speed on the strips infects the teenagers with a fatal spirit of derring-do on the highways. . . .

Illegal drag racing, the bane of both police and of respectable hot rodders concerned for the good name of dragging, is prevalent in places like New Orleans which have no legal strips. But even in the Los Angeles areas which has six strips, sometimes hot rodders race illegally at night when the strips are closed [several pictures of illegal street races are presented] . . .

Until recently the controversy over drag racing has been at a local level. Some police departments made peace with hot rod clubs, found them strips and got along fine with the hot rodders and their racing. Others have had nothing to do with either. But in September of last year the International Association of Police Chiefs raised the controversy to a national level. At a convention in Chicago, the chiefs condemned hot-rod club speed competition which, they felt, inspired participants and spectators to drive recklessly on the highways. Then the National Safety Council also came out against drag racing. Recently, Scooney-Vacuum and Mobilgas, which had supported a hot-rod safety tour, bowed out and left hot-rodders to shift for themselves.

Drag supporters like N.H.R.A. President Wally Parks argue that police who have been in contact with sanctioned drag racing longest are usually its strongest supporters. One of these is Ralph Parker, police chief at Pomona, Calif. He has stated that although Pomona has grown more than a third since it opened its drag strip in 1950, the accident rate for the under-20 group there has decreased six percent. In all California it has gone up 45 percent. To this authorities of the California Highway Patrol reply that California, Holy Land of Dragging, also led the nation last year in highway deaths and injuries.

In spite of the attacks hot-rod clubs continue to gain 1,500 new members a month and Americans . . . seem destined to hear a lot

more about dragging . . . [a list of drag racing terms is presented].

The controversy sparked by the growth of drag racing is reflected in other periodicals and statements by public agencies at this time. A national survey was undertaken in 1956 by the National Safety Council which summarized its results thusly:

Traffic officials and others submitted nearly four hundred replies. Sixty percent listed existing clubs and seventy percent contained tabulatable information. The total report indicated information on about nearly two thousand clubs in nearly two hundred cities. The majority of the reports (sixty-seven percent) indicated a personal opinion in favor of hot rod club activities except where they involve competitive speed contests. They indicated that hot-rod activities related to safety should be encouraged unless they are expedient measures to gain public support for the actual goal of obtaining a drag strip for speed competition events.

On the basis of these results, the Council put forward these recommendations:

The National Safety Council opposes speed contests. Since speed violations are so often involved in traffic accidents the National Safety Council cannot condone speeding even in the name of competition.

The Council feels that public interest would be better served if the energy and enthusiasm now devoted to drag racing were channeled into more constructive activities. Economy runs, driver clinics and leadership in traffic safety programs are examples of desirable outlets for interest in automobile and driver ability.

Although clubs known by the general term "hot rod" often engage in many worthwhile activities it is apparent that the chief purpose of such organizations is promotion of racing events.

The National Safety Council therefore recommends that traffic authorities and safety organizations refrain from endorsing,

supporting, or participating in speed events (Recreation, March, 1957, p.72).

In 1957 the American Society of Planning Officials published a thirty-one-page report, Hot Rods, Car Clubs and Drag Strips, in which they opined: "All clashes of opinions on this subject can be lessened, however, if drag races are held under proper supervision at a site that holds to a minimum the chances for accident."

Recreation, a service publication affiliated with the National Recreation Association and directed to members of public and private recreation organizations, devoted a relatively large amount of space to this controversy at this time. It published an article on teen-age drivers covering several hot rod clubs in January, 1957, published the results and statement of the National Safety Council's survey in March, 1957, and in June, 1957 it ran an article entitled, "Drag Strips vs No Drag Strips; Pro and Con Discussion." In February, 1958, it published "Are Hot Rods Really 'Hot'?" and a feature on how Rockland, Maine solved its hot rod problem, as told by its police chief.

On a more national level, in the Saturday Evening Post several articles were published dealing with this controversy. One was in the September 22, 1956 issue entitled, "How Can We Take the Heat Out of the Hot Rods?" and another in the November 16, 1957 issue, "Stop Us Before We Kill Again", in which "a world-famous road-race driver calls for the abolition of this murderous sport. He tells why it has become too deadly for driver and spectator alike."

By the advent of the sixties the editors of Life had

apparently felt the dilemma resolved in favor of hot rodding and drag racing, although they could only explain the resolution on the basis of a fetish for speed. In the June 13, 1960 issue they published "Blasting Off to the Races; That Hotted-Up U.S. Craze", which described the enormous growth in popularity of not only drag racing, but all forms of automobile racing. Heading the article is a three-quarter page photograph of a dragster popping its parachute at 171 mph on a Minneapolis drag strip. Referring to dragsters such as this, the article opens:

The monsters looked like imports from Mars. They blasted off in bursts of smoke and didn't -- or couldn't -- stop until a parachute was snapped out behind. And, generally, they went madly around in circles, in a new and prodigious surge of the old U.S. craze for going fast in anything with four wheels and an engine.

And by 1963, the editors of Life proclaimed that drag racing had finally made it to the big time with an article entitled "Man, What a Drag! Bizarre Hot Rods Go Respectable" (September 20, 1963). The article devotes two and three-quarter pages to ten photographs of dragsters, altereds, and modifieds in various stages of drag racing action. The text describes the various types of machines and points to the safety and organizational aspects of the sport:

The fierce-looking creature above and the shining humanoid at right are denizens of strips of asphalt where they meet with others of their kind to compete in the now respectable and rapidly growing sport of drag racing. . . . Its [drag racing's] practice was once limited to suicidal teenagers who raced surreptitiously in fender-flapping junk piles. But today dragging is organized and out in the open. The hottest hot rodders, like the driver at right,

are outfitted in safety gear, and they tour the country's many supervised drag-strips to race for trophies and big prizes at meets which may draw up to 75,000 spectators.

However, this new found respectability was not accepted at face value by certain people. In 1962 Life's competitor, the Saturday Evening Post published an article by O.D. Shipley, the Commissioner of Traffic Safety for the State of Pennsylvania, entitled "Why Do We Tolerate Drag Strips? They Teach People to Drive Like Maniacs on Wheels." Mr. Shipley vigorously attacks both hot rodders and drag racing and attempts to bolster his argument by extensive use of hot rod accident statistics. The heart of his argument is:

A lot of nonsense has been published about the great value of "letting young fellows get the speed bug out of their systems on drag strips", and about the educational advantage of permitting teen-agers to soup up ancient clunkers until they can challenge any car on the road. . . .

Before you fall for that plausible baloney, check with a few police and traffic-safety experts. Some years ago, when hot rods and drag races on the open highways first became a menace, a number of officials did go to the trouble of setting up off-highway drag strips in the hope that youngsters could race safely and learn, with adult supervision, something about safe driving and the rules of the road. It was a happy thought, but it didn't solve the problem. . . .

But for the hot rod majority, a night or two of drag racing every week, under the eyes of police officers and community volunteers, proved pretty tame. They kept right on racing on the highways, using the "approved" drag strip to practice their lethal art. Law-enforcement officials were reluctant to admit they'd been wrong, but the majority have now soured on the plan, and most of the "approved" strips have been closed down.

But the commercial drag strip hasn't. This, to my mind, is a horrible example of

making money out of one of mankind's most unpleasant instincts. . . . I am convinced that drag strips teach the worst possible type of driving to both participants and spectators, and that the lessons learned at the drag strips are daily -- or nightly -- put into practice on the nation's streets and highways.

However, two years later the Post ran a counter to Mr. Shipley's argument by featuring a spread on drag racing as legitimate, "Sedans, Rails and Gassers" (January 4, 1964). Heading the article in large bold print is the comment: "Clutches may still fly apart occasionally, and some of the wild drivers remain, but law, order and organization have finally come to the sport of hot rodding." According to the text of the article it would appear that drag racing (now equated with hot rodding) has bloomed into a safe and legitimate sport almost overnight:

Drag racing used to be greasy kid stuff. The grease was imbedded under the fingernails of competitors. The kid stuff was irrational rebellion against society and sanity, which took such forms as thunderous hot-rod races down public highways at midnight.

But as next month's Winter Nationals at Pomona, Calif., approaches the tenor of the sport has changed.

The National Hot Rod Association, founded and directed by Wally Parks, makes major efforts to see that hot rodding is safe. . . . The sport even has its own magazine, Hot Rod, with 650,000 monthly sales. . . . Naturally, such noisy excitement still attracts a number of wild youngsters, but, the N.H.R.A. reports, the average hot rodder today is 26 years old and married.

Industry Attitudes in Business Week

It has already been noted that in the face of Life's portrayal of the negative aspects of hot rodding in the late forties and early fifties, Business Week took a favorable posi-

tion. This positive attitude can be traced directly to the growing economic lucrativeness of hot rodding. Thus in the August 12, 1950 issue of Business Week is found an article entitled "Stock Car Racing Rides High". The subheading under the title reads, "Promoters clean up as old sport takes on new life in two years. Even strict safety regulations don't keep crowds away as boom keeps climbing for third year." The financial interest in the sport is more than obvious:

Few businessmen would think that they could take a Sunday afternoon traffic jam and turn it into profits. But in effect, that's what hundreds of U.S. stock-car-racing promoters, big and small, have been doing for the past two years. . . . Meanwhile, almost every promoter is making a handsome living. The financial operation of his track runs something like this: he sees that the track meets safety specifications, puts up the purse for each meet, does the advertising (his biggest running expense), and figures on taking about 5 percent of the gate as his profit. Drivers get no salary or wages; they run only for the purse, which is spread among most of the cars in the finals . . . the sport looks good and solid. . . . says Ed Otto, who runs a circuit of 10 tracks in the East.

This article was followed in 1952 by two articles, the first linking Detroit automobile manufacturers to hot rodding. "Detroit Can Do Its Own Hot Rodding" (January 26, 1952) outlines the manufacturer's dilemma:

When it comes to building hot-rod engines, Detroit knows how to do it, and the engineers get as much kick out of it as the backyard tinkerer does. If cost were no consideration, Detroit could put souped-up engines on the road that would make the most flaming youth say, "Gee whiz". . . .

Instead of the hot rodder's goal of more power at any cost, Detroit looks for

two things: (1) more power from the same-sized engine, and (2) more miles per gallon.

The second article reveals the entrepreneur's differing perception of the hot rod phenomenon. "Hot Rodding Roars Into Big Business" (March 22, 1952) presents the image that hot rodding has come of age, that is, that the road to respectability has already been travelled:

Next week the hot rodders hope to show New Yorkers that this has become a respectable hobby -- they will stage a hot-rod show at Grand Central Palace. During the year others will be held in Hartford, Portland, Ore., Los Angeles, and elsewhere.

The main reason for this kind of display is the tremendous growth of the sport since the war; best estimates are that today there are at least 500,000 hot-rod fans in the U.S., Canada, and Hawaii. Most addicts are not in their teens, but in their twenties, although they range in age from 16 to 60.

All this has lent new respectability to an old sport. You see signs of that everywhere. For example: hot rodders get along with cops a lot better nowadays than they used to -- mainly because they observe traffic laws carefully and do their fancy driving in designated places. Furthermore, some engine developments tested out by hot rodders are being at least unofficially recognized by Detroit.

Further insight into the favorableness with which business persons view the hot rod development is presented later in the article:

Since the war, about a dozen manufacturers of special speed parts have sprung up -- most of them in and around Los Angeles -- devoted specifically to hot rodding. During 1946, they did a total business of about \$1 million. This year it's expected to run between \$45 million and \$50 million.

Hot rodding has brought about not only a new auto-parts industry; it has also created a whole new field of publications. Six years ago, there were no magazines devoted to

the hot rod hobby. Today there are about a dozen. Most startling of all is their circulation gain. . . .

Detroit Interest. The hot-rod movement has developed enough so that Detroit has begun to pay a lot more attention to it. More and more engineers from the big auto companies are showing up at hot-rod races. Oliver Billingsley, editor of Hop Up Magazine, says that the most obvious influence on Detroit so far is the dual exhaust systems that are now standard equipment on Cadillacs and optional on Hudson and Nash.

Robert D. Smith of Advance Muffler Co., points out that truck companies install dual exhaust systems to step up horsepower. Further than that, he says, the engines in the new Oldsmobiles, Cadillacs, Chryslers "are practically dry lakes products" (hot rods built for racing on the dry lakes), refined through Detroit's blueprint dept. In other words, he says, the present Cadillac is a "comfortable hot rod".¹

In 1953 it was back to stock car racing with "Stock Car Racing: 'A Smash Hit' But Will It Last?" (September 19, 1953) to check its development over the three years since the topic last was a focus in Business Week. It is found that stock car racing has continued its phenomenal growth and this year "upwards of 3 million people will watch stock car races."

This amounts to a tremendous audience, a fact that more and more people, quite apart from the promoters, are awakening to. In the last year, for instance, Detroit's automakers have been paying a great deal more attention to stock car racing than they used to -- as a way of catching customers for their cars.

The favourable attention to hot rodding on the part of Detroit increased to such an extent that in 1956 Business Week was able to report: ". . . the auto companies are coming around to the idea, hitherto repugnant to most of them, of backing entries in stock car races." And the antecedents to such a

statement are summarized:

The Corvette was brought out in 1953 for one major purpose: to refute a growing notion that Chevrolet was getting conservative and stodgy. Company officials think it succeeded, but it didn't sell in its own right. In fact, the 1955 Chevrolet's record in stock car racing did more to create a reputation for Chevrolet as a builder of "hot" cars.

Last year Chevrolet deliberately went after the stock car championships and built an advertising campaign around the results. Ford Motor Company has countered by hiring a racing consultant to its engineering staff, and indications are that Ford will supply modification kits and give its blessing to entries in stock car races. For several years, Lincoln has unofficially given factory support to entries in the Mexican road race ("Detroit's Hot Cars Are Geared to Sell", January 14, 1956).²

Following this article by two months was "What's In It For the Makers?" (March 10, 1956). This article explicitly presents Detroit's attitude toward stock car racing (and thus hot rodding):

"Going places with the young at heart."
(Chrysler-Plymouth)
"The hot one's getting hotter." (Chevrolet)
"It cools off the hot ones." (Ford)

Today's automobile advertising pitch is built on such lines. Performance, pickup, power to spare -- these are the things Detroit is selling hard.

Racing results are the best way to prove advertising claims of performance so Detroit has suddenly taken an interest -- and a part -- in the stock car races it used to shun. Half a dozen makers sent company engineers to the National Assn. for Stock Car Auto Racing meet in Daytona Beach, Fla., a couple of weeks ago.

Five or six years ago, only Hudson and Oldsmobile were interested in stock car races. Then in 1952, Lincoln put its first entries in the Mexican road race and took the first four places. Chevy went into the racing bus-

iness a year ago as the basis for its building of a "hot car" reputation. Now Ford has taken up the challenge.

At Daytona Beach, factory-backed Fords had it out with Chevrolet, with enough success to kick off last week's advertising slogan: "It cools off the hot ones." . . . Within two days, Ford had large ads out to proclaim its success in the convertible race and the acceleration tests or drag races.

The competition among the automobile manufacturers got hot and heavy. So many races and events were developed that everyone could win something about which it could shout in its sales pitches, making the whole thing somewhat meaningless. Moreover, certain moral entrepreneurs began to protest vehemently the resulting "horsepower race" and speed and performance oriented advertising. Fearing this outcry would force some type of government action, and realizing the competition impasse they were in, the Automobile Manufacturers Association took the initiative to voluntarily stop such advertising and to stop participation in racing and other events involving speed (see "Auto Industry Swears Off Ads Stressing Speed and Horsepower", June 15, 1957; "Can Detroit Sell Without Speed?" July 20, 1957). However, it appears that the manufacturers' attitude toward hot rodding did not change during this period, for within four years Business Week reported that "Detroiters Go To the Races Again" (March 4, 1961); and it is also reported that the ban on participation "never had the whole-hearted support of division vice-presidents responsible for selling cars." For example, S.E. Knudsen, general manager of Pontiac, used clandestine support of stock car racing to build a performance image as a help to move his company from sixth place in U.S. car

registrations in 1955 to third in 1961 (see "Medium Price Car that Defies Eclipse", Business Week, September 16, 1961). Similarly, Chevrolet "has been stressing performance heavily since 1959, when the Ford Division's sales topped its own. Now it is enjoying its second record sales year in a row."

Hence, it could come as little surprise that in the June 16, 1962 issue of Business Week the following news item appeared: "Ford Drops Out of Pact Curtailing Advertising Speed and Horsepower." And in 1963 Business Week announced that the "Horsepower Race Breaks Out Again" (March 9) and that "Detroit (is) Back in the Race" (May 25)³. From these articles it is learned:

"Performance sells cars", says Chevrolet general manager S.E. Knudson [note his promotion from Pontiac]. . . . Most Detroiters nodded in agreement, and the performance race is on again . . . after having been soft-pedaled since 1957.

Stress on performance was never quite abandoned, despite all the companies' subscribing to an Automobile Manufacturers Assn. resolution against the advertising of horsepower and speed. . . .

Chrysler Corp. Vice-President Robert Anderson in charge of product planning sees sound marketing reasoning for following the races. He says "We are tailoring a car for drag strip racing events to get the younger element interested in Chrysler products. We want the huge audiences at these events to see how well our cars perform."

Later in 1963, Ford Division General Manager Lee A. Iacocca told Business Week reporters that his company was going all out in 1964 to win any and all types of automobile races and hot rod events because "he is convinced a winning image will persuade a multitude of car owners to switch to Ford"

("Ford's Bid For a Better Year," September 28, 1963). And in early 1964 Frank E. Zimmerman, manager, special vehicles, Ford Division of the Ford Motor Company, described the nature of Ford's participation in "rod and custom shows" ("Ford Soups Up Its Youth Drive", January 4, 1964). The development of several varieties of Ford race-type cars under the factory backed hand of Carroll Shelby was described in "Building Fast Cars on a Shoestring", August 14, 1965).

In 1964 Business Week reported again on the business of stock car racing. Its successful development is heralded in the title of the article, "Cashing in on Speed" (February 29, 1964). Record speeds, record crowds, and record returns for investors are found to be the order of the day. The article concludes:

Speed means spectator appeal. Success at Daytona has caused a rash of new tracks to be built, and it has brought automakers, and satellite industries, on the run not only to display their wares in competition but to test on Daytona's well-publicized track. Last year, testing by such as Ford's Lincoln-Mercury Div., Pure Oil Co., DuPont, Goodyear, Firestone brought Speedway revenue from this source to \$33,000.

It is from actual racing, though, that the manufacturers get their greatest public exposure; and on it they spend millions.

From this point on, all the articles in Business Week which deal with hot rodding reflect the now wide-spread public acceptance of the hot rod sport in the sense that entering, supporting, and advertising results of hot rod events is recognized as one of the most profitable ventures an automobile manufacturer can do -- in more than one way:

Says Leo C. Beebe [head of the newly formed racing division of Ford Motor Company]: "We think racing has an important effect on sales. It generates enthusiasm for Ford products. It engenders an esprit de corps within the company, in the sales organizations and, most of all, among the customers. . . . We want people to think we are a young, vigorous company, and racing does that" ("Le Mans Adds Fuel to Ford's Future", Business Week, June 25, 1966).

A 1968 article discussing the marketing functions of styling documents the minority group function of hot rodders and Detroit's continuing respect for them:

"I won't design from market research", says GM's Mitchell [William L. Mitchell, Head of Design at General Motors]. "You've got to lead." Auto men loiter around the experimental cars at automobile shows, and keep a close watch on what the car-buff magazines say the hot rodders are wheeling through the local drive-in restaurants.

John Z. DeLorean, Pontiac's general manager, who has built his division's reputation on its appeal to a young, rather daring market segment, took his sporty Firebird to several college campuses prior to introduction two years ago, then stood back unobtrusively to listen to the students' reactions. "We get ideas from kids", he says. "In the 1950's, they were frenching their cars -- recessing the head and rear lights, putting in hood scoops. Eventually, this stuff showed up in our Grand Prix" ("How Detroit Designed the '69 Cars", Business Week, September 14, 1968).

An article which appeared in 1969 and thus is not included in the sample is described here because it further illustrates the complexities of the relationship between hot rodding and Detroit. "Hot Rodder to Hot Designer" (October 4, 1969) depicts how a former hot rodder "is leading American Motors out of its styling doldrums" by putting his "dream cars" (sporty, performance-oriented automobiles) into production:

Ever since he reached driving age in the car-happy city of Los Angeles, Dick Teague had had his imagination filled with visions of automobiles.

At the age of 16, he assembled his first jalopy out of salvaged parts. Two years later, he had his driver's license revoked for hot-rodding and was admonished by a traffic judge to "slow down and get into something else." But neither that warning nor the loss of an eye in a childhood auto accident were enough to change Teague's direction.

Instead, Richard A. Teague has ridden his automotive passion to become one of the world's leading commercial car designers. Now 45 years old and living in Detroit, he is vice-president and director of styling for American Motors Corp., and in that capacity has created some of the freshest designs to come out of the auto capital in the past few years. . . . Teague's designs . . . make good use of racing styles young drivers fancy -- hood stripes, airscoops, side exhaust rails, sharply-angled windshields, and so on.

Teague stays close to the track scene by reading all the so-called buffbooks and by attending meets sponsored by NASCAR and other groups. He also pays close attention to what the kids are driving. On his recent vacation in California, he spent time sleuthing around to see how car buffs there -- still the most turned-on lot in the country -- are customizing their rods.

Summary

The data from Life show that the big shift in public attitudes toward hot rodding takes place in the early 1960s, although some softening of the deviant and dangerous image is evident in the late fifties by articles which attempt to present both sides of the hot rod "problem". In contrast are the data from Business Week which show that the entrepreneur per-

ceived the hot rod phenomenon as achieving respectability long before the public was willing to make the same concession. The entrepreneur is found to show little concern for the issues which the public raises over hot rodding.

FOOTNOTES

1

The technological influence of hot rodding on Detroit may not be as great as Mr. Billingsley and Mr. Smith would have the reader believe. This aspect will be discussed further in this and the next chapter.

2

"Lincoln Wins" is the title of an article in Business Week, December 5, 1953, pp. 144-145, which describes the efforts of Lincoln to win the Pan-American Highway Race in Mexico and its efforts to exploit its success: "The winning Lincoln team this year was sponsored by a California dealer, but got every assistance from Ford. The Company sent a high-powered team of cameramen and publicity experts to Mexico, even chartered a transport plane to haul newsmen along the route. You can be sure that the winning Lincolns will show up in Lincoln advertising from here on."

And in 1955 Business Week reported, "Lincoln-Mercury Division of Ford, for instance, shells out between \$150,000 and \$200,000 every year to make it possible for dealers and owners to enter Lincolns in the Mexican Road Race. This year after a Chrysler "300" (a limited production model with 300 hp) took top honors at Daytona, all Chrysler Division sales in the surrounding states turned up. Before year end Chrysler will spend \$1 million in trumpeting its victories."

3

"Ask an automobile executive privately if the horsepower race is starting again and he's likely to smile wryly and reply: 'When did it ever stop?'" See "Horsepower Race Starting Again?" Printers Ink, September 27, 1963, p. 5.

CHAPTER 11

THE INCORPORATION OF HOT RODDING: HOT RODDING AND THE INDUSTRY TO THE EARLY 1950s

This chapter and the next will examine the relationship between hot rodding and the automobile industry. This chapter will examine briefly the pre-World War II years, and detail the postwar years to the early 1950s. Also discussed here will be the use and meanings of the automobile to hot rodders, as these are selectively utilized by the automobile manufacturers. The next chapter will carry the analysis through the middle and late 1950s and 1960s.

The nature of the relationship between hot rodding and the automobile industry must be understood historically in terms of the structure of the industry, its operations to reduce uncertainties in its environment, and its efforts to capture and develop markets for its product. This means tracing the interaction between these variables: (1) the nature of the production technology; (2) the interests and priorities of the producers; (3) the content of advertising; and (4) the demands of consumers. In proceeding with this analysis the environmental conditions and consumer demand structure will be outlined for each period. The responses and actions of automobile manufacturers will be examined, and the fit of hot rodding into the various interests of the industry will be detailed. Woven into this analysis will be a description of the corporate decision-making process.

The Early Years: The Automobile Industry and Hot Rodding

Hot rodding is usually viewed as encompassing all forms of automobile racing and modification. While the content of current hot rod magazines may bear this out, it was not always so. Organized and sponsored automobile racing is almost as old as the automobile itself, but hot rodding as a social form of "amateur" automobile modification and competition originated only in the late 1920s. It is only in the last twenty years or so that hot rodding has come to encompass such a wide range of professional and amateur activity. This historical distinction is quite important in examining the relationship between hot rodding and the automobile industry because early automobile manufacturers were heavily involved in automobile racing. It was racing (and the journalistic reports of racing) which (1) stimulated early automotive development, (2) brought the automobile to the attention of the public, and (3) illustrated the technological feasibility and the stimulating/sporting aspects of the automobile to the public.

According to a number of automotive historians, the automobile was not even a technological possibility in the minds of most Americans until the extensive favourable newspaper coverage of automobile races in France in 1894-1895 and the first American automobile race sponsored by the Chicago Times-Herald in 1895. Moreover, until this time in the United States, the very idea of a self-propelled road vehicle that was more efficient than horse drawn transportation was the fantasy of a few inventors who built and tested a number of experimental designs. (See for example, Anderson, 1950; Crabb,

1969; Donovan, 1965; Doolittle, 1916; Flink, 1970, 1975; McShane, 1975; Rae, 1959, 1965; Smith, 1968.) A young reporter at the Times-Herald persuaded its publisher to sponsor a race modelled on one that had been run in 1894 in France from Paris to Bordeaux. It was to run from Milwaukee to Chicago. This race was basically a publicity stunt to increase circulation, but was also intended, according to the publisher, "to promote, encourage and stimulate invention, development and perfection and general adoption of motor vehicles" (cited in Anderson, 1950:55). A purse of \$5,000 prize money was offered (\$2,000 to the winner) and \$5,000 was provided for expenses. The race received tremendous publicity in newspapers throughout the country and the response was more than anyone anticipated.¹ Other races and other types of contests followed; newspaper coverage of these events increased greatly.² These races and other events, sponsored by various business interests, stimulated the interest of both inventors and the general public and were a source of financial support for those inventors whose designs proved successful in competition.

At this time, automobiles were experimental and poorly developed vehicles. In fact, automobiles during this period were relatively undefined objects both technologically and socially.

. . . in the United States, unlike Europe at the same time, literally nothing about the automobile was firmly decided except that it should not be powered by animal strength. The majority thought of the automobile as a horseless carriage, a few as a bicycle without pedals; the source of power, the placement of the power supply, the

methods of control and steering, the manner of stopping the vehicle, all were subject of vigorous debate (Thomas, 1965:18).

Also the subject of vigorous debate, especially in newspapers, was a suitable name for these vehicles. By the end of the century the name "automobile" had become more or less publicly accepted. Automobiles had been developed and become visible to such an extent that "the idea of the automobile was an accepted fact", but "the concept of what constituted an automobile was not" (Thomas, 1965:39).

Besides racing and other promotional activities, numerous technological and social conditions had combined by the early 1900s to facilitate the growing acceptance of the idea of the automobile as a self-propelled road vehicle for independent, individual travel.³ But there was still no consensus as to the most efficient source of power or effective design. This product instability created a condition of uncertainty in the automobile industry which adversely affected both supply and demand. The automobiles produced by manufacturers around the beginning of the twentieth century were expensive, complicated and fragile. They were basically hand crafted in small numbers and were redesigned or changed every few months. Compared to horses, bicycles, trolley cars, and railroads, automobiles were not very competitive as efficient transportation. In fact, the first major industrial effort capitalized to produce automobiles met with failure because it attempted to market efficient transportation. A number of large companies were formed in the late 1890s to produce electric cars designed for light com-

mercial delivery in urban areas. These automobiles were unable to compete effectively with the existing forms of transportation in this market -- the horse and light wagon.

Other manufacturers attempted to produce for another market where transportation efficiency per se was not the most important criteria of consumer evaluation. This market was "the awakening sporting - and pleasure-car market, where fashion and rarity were more sought after than efficiency. These vehicles were designed to be consumer goods, not producer goods" (Thomas, 1965:33). Automobiles produced for this market were designed as personal passenger vehicles. As such they were basically novelty items aimed at the upper classes who could afford expensive, stimulating toys. These manufacturers enjoyed a modicum of success in this market -- but faced a low ceiling in part because of the product instability discussed earlier.

According to Robert Thomas' study of the early automobile industry, it took manufacturers roughly eight years from 1900 to 1908 to resolve this instability. This period comprises what Thomas calls the second economic stage of the automobile industry, the "era of product development", following the era of invention and experimentation in the late 1800s.

The industry during this stage in its economic development had to discover a design with qualities that would make it so desirable to consumers that they would buy automobiles in sufficient quantity. In this the automobile industry was fortunate, for the nature of the product conveyed upon its owner a mobility that was both highly desirable and obtainable in no other way. The manufacturers only had to develop a reason-

ably efficient product to create sufficient demand to allow the industry to exist (Thomas, 1965:275).

The process by which a stable, successful basic design was reached need not be delineated here. It is sufficient to note that by the end of this period, the "standard" American automobile was powered by a gasoline engine and embodied in the "French" design.⁴

It is not enough, however, to develop and produce "a reasonably efficient product" for it to sell well. That product must be promoted. Automobile manufacturers during this period, if they wanted to maintain or enlarge their market, had to increase sales to the virgin or car-less population. This required some means of establishing the legitimacy and viability of the automobile and of determining the superiority of one make over another. Thus, in the early 1900s manufacturers continued to sponsor and enter their products in racing events and various endurance contests. (For an outline of factory involvement in racing at this time, see Sinsabaugh, 1924, 1940; Borgeson, 1966; Levine, 1968; Crowell, 1968). These activities functioned not only as a test for continual mechanical and technical improvements and as a means of generating favourable publicity, but also as a means of establishing the reputation and durability of an automobile to influence new buyers entering the market. The automobiles used in these performance tests were actually those sold commercially. Race-bred improvements were thus incorporated directly into the commercial product. The automobiles people watched on the race track could be purchased from the manufacturer.

After 1908 the legitimacy, reliability and dependability of automobiles increased greatly. They became more utilitarian commodities and their market penetration increased. The industry had entered its third economic stage, the era of industry expansion, which would last until about 1918, according to Thomas (1965).

When Henry Ford introduced the Model T in 1909, a demand was created, or more correctly, a market was developed whose demand outstripped the manufacturers' productive ability to supply it. Under the conditions of an expanding market, manufacturers in this economic era concentrated on improving the product and production methods and building up a distribution network of branch offices. Production methods were given special attention for improvement, since faster, more efficient production increased output and lowered unit cost and thus permitted further reductions in price, which in turn increased demand and further stimulated production.

It [the Model T] put within reach of persons of moderate incomes, farmers, and city wage earners, an efficient transportation tool. And once that happened, demand was so immediate and insistent that mass production inevitably followed. It was the Model T that led the way to mass production, meaning the production techniques developed by the Ford Motor Company, and not mass production that gave us the Model T (Denison, 1956:168, emphasis added).

While the inevitability of the institution of mass production as a response to consumer demand is debatable, one point is indisputable:⁵ mass production itself inevitably led to further standardization of the product. As automobiles became more standardized the resemblance between the commercial

stock car and the increasingly specialized race car diminished; parts became less interchangeable, and race track experience and technical development harder to apply. Moreover, by the 1920s the market of first-time buyers was approaching saturation -- the important consumers would no longer be people purchasing their first automobile but people who already had one. The industry had entered "the era of replacement demand" which would last until about 1929. The changing structure of the market environment reduced the manufacturers' market control and increased competition between them. As a result, they not only increased their efforts to influence their environment but also redirected them. With the shift to a buyers' market they no longer needed to show the ability of their product to achieve spectacular results in terms of speed and punishment. They now aimed primarily at increasing people's dependence on the automobile and solidifying its position as a basic social need, especially through marketing techniques such as diversification, styling, styling changes, increasing driver comfort, consumer financing, etc. Consequently, the mass sponsorship of racing and racing teams by the factories during the 1900-1920 period was reduced to a few manufacturers by 1925 and, despite the efforts of the American Automobile Association to get more industry involvement, remained at this level until after World War II.

Not long after this hot rodding made its first appearance and began a period of slow growth. The automobile industry paid little attention to hot rodding during this period mainly because hot rodding was not perceived to be useful in solv-

ing its problems. The industry's main problem, selling cars to a saturated market, and the perceived solution, sell more than simply "basic transportation", gave rise to intense and costly competition within the industry. The following discussion will briefly trace the development of this competition up to World War II in order to set the context for the analysis of the 1950s.⁶

In the era of product development, most automobile manufacturers utilized the strategy of expanding output and lowering prices. Henry Ford was especially successful in the application of this strategy -- his share of this increasing market rose from 19.9 percent in 1911 to 55.6 percent in 1921. However, beginning in 1923 the market stopped expanding and remained at an average of a little under four million cars a year until after World War II. The market had finally become saturated, the initial demand for automobiles having reached the level permitted by the existing national income. By 1924 most persons who could afford a car had purchased their first one. Moreover, the automobile manufacturers had reached the state where their production potential exceeded the demand; they had the capacity to produce over six million vehicles yearly. No longer could profit margins be assured by lowering unit costs through expanded output.⁷

Marketing now became a greater challenge than production. The underlying marketing problem was no longer to sell an individual his first car but to get the man who already owned one to buy a new car. And management became a greater challenge than finance. Effective co-ordination, appraisal, and planning were essential if costs were to be kept down and the market was not to be oversold (Chandler, 1964:13).

Henry Ford refused to believe that the changes in the market were fundamental ones which had serious implications not only for him but for the automobile industry as a whole. He continued to follow his production strategy and soon found himself in trouble. From 1924 his share of the market began to fall. By 1927 competition forced him to abandon the Model T and to shut down for months in order to bring out his new product, the Model A. However, even in 1929, the year of the A, Ford managed to capture only 31.3 percent of the market and subsequent years saw this percentage decline. For the ten years between 1927 and 1937, Ford averaged an annual net loss⁸ of \$1.4 million.

Not all automobile manufacturers had followed Ford's strategy. Several entrepreneurs who had upper-class backgrounds with professional and/or business experience followed a different strategy. This was to expand by combination, that is, by the accumulation of existing assembling and marketing facilities as well as by obtaining control of producers of parts and accessories. After 1908 a number of combinations appeared. They included the United States Motor Company, the Everitt-Metzger-Flanders Company, and the General Motors Company. William Crapo Durant, the founder of General Motors, the largest and most successful of the combinations, felt that the then current annual production of 63,500 passenger cars in 1908 could be increased to 500,000. To meet this potential he moved in 1908 to combine ten automobile, three truck and ten parts-and-accessories manufacturers. In his maneuvers Durant used little cash, paying for the securities of the companies

he obtained with General Motors stock. Following industry policy, Durant relied on the returns from the sales of his cars to pay his suppliers and labour force. This lack of operating funds put General Motors and Durant in a precarious situation more than once, and eventually put General Motors into the hands of Pierre DuPont in 1921 after the post World War I recession.

DuPont, assisted by Alfred Sloan (who succeeded DuPont to the presidency in 1923) and two or three other able senior officers, transformed General Motors into an effective working organization and instituted long term business strategies and tactics. They created a decentralized administration which became the model not only for the rest of the automobile industry but also for many other industries. They instituted the practice of collecting and using statistical information as a basis for decision-making. They also adopted new marketing policies such as (1) reaching all sectors of the market -- "a car for every purse and purpose"; (2) research groups to improve parts and to improve the ease and comfort of driving; (3) a styling section to improve the lines and colour of their cars; (4) the rationalization of these improvements by their annual incorporation into new models; (5) improved dealer relations.

By 1925 General Motors had almost completely assumed its new shape and its new policies had been implemented. And as it influenced and attempted to manipulate its environment, General Motors helped to accelerate the downfall of Ford. With the market stabilizing under the particular social and economic conditions of the period, competition between manufacturers only

could increase. One manufacturer could increase its output only at the expense of another. Hence, almost as fast as Ford's output fell, General Motors' increased. General Motors did not compete against Ford on Ford's terms, i.e., by price cutting, but on the basis of nonprice factors -- styling, advertising, a strong dealer organization, consumer financing, consumer acceptance, etc. Successful competition against Ford and the increasingly oligarchic nature of the industry itself reinforced the disregard of price as the major competitive weapon in selling new cars in favour of nonprice factors.¹⁰

It has not been the intention of this discussion to explicate in any depth the development of the automobile industry prior to World War II. The aim merely has been to establish several points before more detailed examination of post World War II developments. These points are: (1) Ford Motor Company was in dire financial straights; (2) the industry itself was becoming increasingly oligarchic to the extent that by 1937, Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors (the Big Three) had almost ninety percent of the market; 21 firms existed in 1921, only 10 firms were in operation in 1947, and only 5 in 1955; (3) prices among various makes became quite uniform as competition shifted to nonprice areas; (4) the manufacturers strove to increase the dependence of people on the automobile and to solidify its position as a basic social need.

The Automobile and Hot Rodding

Automobiles as technological forms are unique. As with all technological forms, automobiles can be viewed as extensions of particular human senses and functions (Ihde, 1974, 1979; McLuhan, 1964). Ashleigh Brilliant (1969:31) has argued that the "basic appeal [of the automobile] lay in the fact that it enormously extended the powers of both human legs and human arms; in other words it was a vast magnification of the ability to move and carry." Other forms of transportation technology were similar extensions and performed a similar function. And it was not the first practical, mechanized machine developed for that service -- the first was the railroad. What is unique about the automobile, according to Brilliant (1964:32) is that

. . . it was the first capable of being used and controlled by a multitude of individuals for their own private purposes. Hitherto the individual human being had had only his own strength, the immemorial horse, mule, etc., or the very recent bicycle. In each case some creature's or group of creature's muscles had to do all the work, and this was a severe limitation upon the amount and nature of moving and carrying capable of being done. Now for the first time an entirely different and infinitely more powerful form of motivating force was applied to make the wheels go around -- the virtually irresistible powers of expanding steam, of electrical energy, and of exploding petroleum vapor. No single contrivance ever offered, before or since, to the mass public has been capable of satisfying so many individual human desires.

No other technological form of such size, power, complexity, danger is owned and operated by so many private persons.

Automobiles possess particular characteristics which provide the basis for significant human experiences and symbolism. Obviously, as transportation devices, automobiles allow people to travel from place to place more or less at the convenience of the driver. But beyond this, due to their power, ability to move at varying speeds, necessity for human control, various body designs, etc., automobiles can be very stimulating physical and aesthetic experiences. In the discussions of extra motives and machismo it was noted that automobiles stimulate "hedonistic objectives", that driving (and sometimes simply sitting in or looking at) automobiles can be an exciting, sensually pleasing experience. Travelling at high speeds and experiencing relatively strong "g-forces" also can be exciting and sensually pleasing. Moreover, speed requires efforts at control which are often interpreted as providing opportunities for "experiencing risk sensations and thrills" (Näätänen and Summala, 1976:68) and/or as reflecting individual competence and moral character. Automobiles are also communicative devices which can convey particular meanings (such as status, identity, etc.) and experiences. These characteristics make automobiles potent social objects. Unfortunately, this topic, while discussed widely, has not been well analyzed.¹¹ This deficiency can not be corrected in this discussion. In the following discussion a brief analysis of hot rodding will be presented.

Hot rodders utilize and make central to their subculture characteristics of automobiles which provide experiences which emphasize the pleasures and excitement of driving, speed, and control. They are especially concerned with the display

of group identity and individual character and masculinity as these may be illustrated through travel, racing, cruising, construction and modification of automobiles, etc. The first hot rodders were young men who reacted to the mass produced, standardized automobile of the 1920s and 1930s and the expensiveness and tightness of organized racing. They were unable to find satisfaction in the commercial production car, unable to afford the few high performance cars available, unable to participate in the structured, expensive, and exclusive sport of auto racing and touring, and unable to endure the passivity of spectatorship. Hot rodders searched for "auto individualization" and participative action and found it by building their own cars from junkers and disparate parts and then driving, testing and rebuilding them. Balsley (1950:355) outlines the hot rodder's position as formulated in the late 1940s:

The hot rodder and his circle are highly articulate in their objections to the Detroit product as an automobile, and the reason is that they have little respect for the Detroit solution of a problem in transportation, engineering, and esthetics. The hot rodder says that this production car is uneconomical, unsafe at modern road speeds, and uglier than it has any right to be. What is more, it is too costly, too heavy, and too complicated by class and status symbolism to be a good car. Designed in ignorance of the hot rodder's credo that driving should not be so effortless that one forgets one is driving until after the crash, this car appears to the hot rodder to be a sort of high-speed parlor sofa. In general, the hot rodder protests against the automobile production and merchandising which fails to give the public a sufficiently wide range of models of permit judgements of value.

Development and growth of hot rodding before World War

II was rather slow due, among other things, to the combined effects of the depression, the New Deal, the unavailability and high cost of speed parts, the unavailability of cheap cars for modification, and the unavailability of cheap high-performance cars. With the end of World War II and the rise of affluence, cheap parts and cars became more available and hot rodding began to grow. As part of the general subcultural differentiation of young American males taking place during this time, hot rodding more than any other subculture split along two lines of direction and growth. The one line was the sector which was associated with delinquency and danger, with "the subterranean traditions of youth" (Matza, 1961, 1964; Matza and Sykes, 1961; Young, 1971), with the traditions of the working class and its increasing ability to consume (Miller, 1958; Lewis, 1972). This sector developed values and motives which emphasized short run hedonistic pleasures, thrills, excitement, risk taking, the need to prove oneself, aggressive notions of masculinity, challenges to authority. The other line was the sector which associated itself with the legitimacy of sport and business, with the legitimate values of achievement and success.

Among the few sociologists who gave any serious consideration to hot rodding in the 1950s were Ruel Denney (1957) and David Reisman and Eric Larabee (Reisman, 1961; Reisman and Larabee, 1958). They tended to ignore the "subterranean" aspects of hot rodding and the negative public reaction and symbolism generated with respect to this sector. They analyzed

hot rodding as a "craftsman-like" hobby or production hobby. In a social world where leisure time and use was becoming increasingly privatized they said hot rodders were "competents" in the use of leisure (that is, able to achieve personal autonomy. Hot rodders were involved in a form of marginal differentiation in consumership in which they became involved in the creative process of building and rebuilding their cars to meet their own desires and standards. In doing so they developed their own language and culture around their new skills. It is clear that this analysis fits the notion of the market as a dual opportunity structure and of commodities as resources for individuals to utilize in constructing identities and life styles. It should be clear that the subterranean sector also fits this analysis -- it too utilized automobiles as resources in the construction of identities and lifestyles, although these differ¹² in both content and social evaluation.

While the particular values and motives of the two sectors of hot rodding are, in part, conflicting and oppositional, there is, as noted, an overlap in structure. This overlap revolves around the common concerns in each for the search for "action" (Goffman, 1967), the display of masculine character, and a group identity. However, the "legitimate" sector identified with the conformist, rationalized world of sport has had difficulty suppressing and eliminating the more volatile "subterranean" sector. Even with the achievement of a degree of social legitimacy in the 1960s the subterranean sector flourished and its symbolism and experience continued to exist in

the public sphere, contributing to the ambivalence of the legitimacy of the sporting sector. The symbolisms and experiences of the latter have come to be identified with the symbolization of wild and reckless freedom and individuality, rebellion and passion, youth and irresponsibility. The connection of these symbolisms and the performance themes developed by the automobile industry has been remarked upon and will be further analyzed in the following section and the next chapter.

The Early 1950s

The advent of World War II almost completely curtailed automobile production as the industry converted its facilities to the production of war materials. As such even old worn out cars had to be kept running since no replacements were available. Gasoline rationing was introduced not only because of shortages but also because it was a way of saving both vehicles and tires. Consequently, the average age of cars in use rose substantially. Whereas the average age had ranged from 5.7 years in 1935 to 5.5 years in 1941, in July 1946 the average age was 9.0 years, with 35 percent of the cars in use ten or more years, 59 percent five through nine years old, and only six percent under five years old. In 1941 only 17 percent of cars in use had been ten or more years old, 32 percent were five through nine years old and 51 percent were under five years old. Under these conditions, a demand for new automobiles built up to such an extent that when the war ended the automobile industry enjoyed a sellers' market the likes of which had never been seen before and probably never would again.

Four years of accumulated demand bursting the dam of wartime restrictions simply flooded the automobile market. All over the country the public poured in upon the dealers, literally screaming for cars. A decent secondhand car brought actually more than it cost. For a new car thousands of eager buyers were only too willing to slip a handsome bonus check to the local distributor or more adroitly begged to be allowed to buy all sorts of unwanted accessories and extras at fancy prices in order to assure delivery a few months sooner (Dennison, 1956:259).

Five months after the surrender of Japan the demand for passenger cars alone was estimated to be 18,000,000 units. Obviously this pent-up demand put the industry under great pressure to get back into large-scale production very quickly. Thus the manufacturers reinstituted the old presses and dies, conveyor systems, etc., and began producing their prewar models rather than taking the time and capital investment required to retool for new models. Hence, it was 1947 before any major style innovation appeared -- and this by the relatively small Studebaker Corporation. The Big Three did not introduce any major changes until the replacement demand began to fade; Ford was the first of the Big Three to bring out a "new" postwar car in 1949. Under these optimal selling conditions, the manufacturers believed, it would be foolish to waste new models on a market which was gobbling up anything and everything automotive. The time to bring out new models was when demand uncertainty became problematic and a competitive edge was needed to maintain or increase market shares; this condition would not arise until a buyers' market returned.

Production proceeded at record-breaking levels as the

forties drew to a close and the return of a buyers' market was forecast for 1950.¹³ However, a 100-day strike at Chrysler and the outbreak of the Korean conflict delayed this development for several years. The Korean conflict delayed this development for several years by stimulating "scarcity" buying by consumers who feared future shortages. Further, government controls on steel and other materials during this conflict acted to continue the short supply situation.

Following the stabilization of the Korean defense situation, the removal of government material controls after March 1953 permitted a struggle for volume leadership among the Big Three, stemming at least partly from a desire of the Ford management to outproduce and outsell Chevrolet. Ford's announced objective was to be first in sales. The result was a period of renewed and vigorous competition in the domestic passenger car market. In 1953, the industry had the capacity to produce more than enough to satisfy consumer demand at prevailing price levels, and the firms were willing to use their capacity. By the middle of 1953, the supply of new cars was greatly increased. All makes were readily available. The easy retail selling conditions ended. What had been a sellers' market became a buyers' market (Edwards, 1965:29).

The above passage is quoted at length because it mentions several factors which are important to this discussion. One of the most significant of these factors is the reluctance of the manufacturers to reduce production in the face of a buyers' market and increased demand uncertainty. Quite the contrary: their priorities were quite clear -- to increase or at least maintain their outputs and thus, to utilize all of their productive capacity. All the makers, even General Motors, considered maintenance of the market a main goal, second in

importance only to the achievement of their target rates of return on investment (see Edwards, 1965:200; White, 1971; Lanzillotti, 1958). Consequently, with the replacement market approaching saturation, the manufacturers, both as a whole and individually, faced increasing uncertainty as to the commercial success of their product and had to take steps to reduce this uncertainty. And they had to compete more vigorously against each other. The focus of this competition was nonprice factors.¹⁴

This competition was greatly intensified by the stated aim of the Ford Motor Company to overtake Chevrolet's number one market position. As noted earlier, prior to World War II the Ford Motor Company was operating in the red mainly because of Henry Ford's refusal to adapt to changing market conditions. When Henry Ford II assumed command of the organization in 1945, he immediately moved to implement the management and production model set by General Motors. He also devised a long range expansion program (totalling \$1.5 billion) in order to reach the productive capacity required to outproduce Chevrolet. In effect,¹⁵ he wanted to tackle General Motors. And the competition took the form of a struggle to produce and sell the largest volume of automobiles possible.

In anticipating the return of a buyers' market and the loss of control and increased uncertainty and competition it would bring, the automobile manufacturers realized they not only would have to develop the existing market to the fullest, but they also would have to go after and even create new markets. Various social and economic variables were scrutinized to ascer-

tain patterns or trends which could be developed and/or exploited. Among the trends noted were: (1) the number of new households -- especially those buying cars -- was increasing; (2) the number of people moving to the suburbs was increasing, hence the number of two car families; (3) the replacement market was expanding; (4) the scrappage rate was speeding up, as cars were being driven more than they used to be; (5) the car-buying population was getting younger; (6) people with middle incomes (\$4,000 to \$7,500) were the biggest purchasers of automobiles, buying two-thirds of all postwar cars and over one-half of all new cars; (7) disposable income would increase 12 percent in the next six years, and thus more families would have disposable incomes of over \$4,000 (see "A New Kind of Market", Fortune, September, 1953, p. 98). These trends were interpreted to mean a growing long-term market (at least 5 million cars per year) that would become increasingly middle class.

Among the competitive devices utilized to reduce demand uncertainty employed during this time were: (1) the revival of extravagant auto shows;¹⁶ (2) in connection with these shows, the development of so-called "Dream Cars" or cars of the future;¹⁷ (3) frequent style changes;¹⁸ (4) the introduction of certain technological innovations to increase the ease and comfort of driving, such as power steering, power brakes, automatic transmissions, etc.;¹⁹ (5) the use of "luxury", as manifested by a great deal of chrome trim, finely upholstered interiors, gimmicks like power windows, seats, antennae, and

trunk, etc.;²⁰ (6) the development of "new" engines, namely,²¹ the V-8, and the resulting "horsepower race"; (7) the develop-²² ment of "sports" cars;²³ (8) high pressure selling techniques; (9) copious amounts of advertising and promotion; (10) the development of gas turbines for research purposes which was²⁴ widely publicized to keep the automobile in the public eye.

It was under these conditions and in the context of this competitive framework that hot rodding was incorporated into the pattern of the industry's interests. Hot rodding fit into this pattern in a number of areas, the most important of which were: (1) performance evaluation;(2) the need to amortize tooling; (3) legitimation and scapegoating; (4) opening new markets; (5) publicity and symbolism; (6) low cost; (7) overall corporate image; and (8) styling.

(1) Performance Evaluation, (2) Tooling,
and (3) Legitimation and Scapegoating

One of the most important areas of performance evaluation among automobiles relates to the efficiency and reliability of the engines used to power them. Evaluations of these engines are usually based on the criteria of the amount of horsepower produced, the gas mileage given, the longevity of the engine, and the ease of maintenance. Of these criteria, horsepower is usually the main consideration. For many years most manufacturers had utilized designs based on an in-line six or in-line eight cylinder block. However, the Ford Motor Company had produced a V-8 block since 1932 and with its postwar models of 1949 began a massive advertising campaign to the effect that the V-8 was the most powerful automobile engine and

thereby was the best and most efficient engine. While it is possible to dispute these claims, the fact is that other manufacturers reacted to this situation by developing and promoting V-8 engines of their own -- to the extent that by 1953 Business Week was able to state that "The V-8 Engine Makes the Grade" (December 19, 1953, pp. 84-85).

Because the chief criterion of performance evaluation was horsepower, it is understandable that the competition between engines, and thus between makes, came to focus on the higher horsepower of one over another. One manufacturer could not tolerate the competitive edge another manufacturer could obtain by having a more powerful engine. The "horse power race" which began after World War II was, according to some observers, the result purely of this competitive dimension rather than specific motives and decisions to increase horsepower in order, for example, to stimulate hedonistic or risk taking motives in consumers. However, as will be noted in the next section, this is not totally correct. Automotive journalist Roger Huntington notes that some industry observers argue that the horsepower race was begun by Oldsmobile and Cadillac in late 1948 when they brought out the first "modern" short-stroke overhead-valve V-8 engines. However, he disagrees with this interpretation.

No, it was Chrysler Corporation that started the horsepower race in 1951 -- and they weren't really out to bother anybody at the time! Their engineers had just spent four or five years developing the most advanced V-8 design they knew how -- with a beautiful hemispherical combustion chamber, inclined overhead valves that breathed like crazy, and double

rocker shafts. Even with a small two-barrel carburetor and low compression ratio the "Firepower" developed an easy 180 hp. or 20 hp. more than the new Cadillac engine.

That did it right there. GM brass figured the top prestige car in the industry needed a top horsepower rating -- so it was a simple matter for Cadillac engineers to hop up to 190 hp. for '52 (Huntington, 1959: 41).

A similar interpretation is given in an article in Business Week:

Chrysler started the race in 1951 when it came out with an engine that was 30 hp. to 40 hp. more powerful than any other in the industry.

At first, most men in Detroit scoffed at Chrysler's move, called it a gimmick to gain back some ground that Chrysler had lost to Cadillac and Lincoln. Most automotive engineers thought that Chrysler had made a bad move. "Who wants all that horsepower?" they asked.

But the dealers who had to sell against Chrysler started to squawk. They said that they need more horsepower to keep a competitive edge. The next year, their engineers began to deliver it, and the race was on ("The Whys of the Power Race", Business Week, December 4, 1954, pp. 70-74. See also Huntington, 1959).

The importance of horsepower, combined with the expense of developing V-8 engines, entrenched the horsepower race in an almost immutable position.

A brand new engine takes at least 10 years from conception to production, according to V.G. Raviolo, assistant to the chief engineer of Ford Motor Co. He breaks time down this way: five years for development, two years for pilot line production, one year for redesign, and two years for tooling up for actual production.

Today the tooling for a high-volume production engine runs from \$50 million to \$100 million. And it is all single purpose machinery. A transfer machine that may perform 80-odd operations on a cylinder block

may cost several hundred thousand dollars, but it can be used for only one engine design. This high capital investment can't be written off on one year's production, but over 10 to 15 years. Such high equipment costs dictate Detroit's design approach of little by little.

When a new engine is built today, its basic design is conceived for the company's 1962 cars. For example, its compression ratio today may be 7.5 to 1, but the engine in 1962 may be visualized as a 12 to 1 compression ratio. So the engine bearings and crankshaft are built sturdily enough to withstand the pressures of the 1962 engine.

Each year the cylinders are bored a little more to give more power, and the cylinder head is shaved down a little less to increase the compression ratio. But basically, the engine block casting and components are the same.

This way, the salesmen have something better to sell each year, the basic tooling lives for its allotted time span, and engine development stays in line with fuel development ("Detroit Can Do Its Own Hot Rodding", Business Week, January 26, 1952, pp. 62+).

It is clear that power increases formed a fundamental part of the automobile industry's interests in the early 1950s. But many members of the public felt that it was not in their interests and they began to protest. The usually conservative American Automobile Association passed a resolution calling for automakers to "tone down the increasing emphasis on more and more horsepower and more and higher speed potentials, and devote more thought and emphasis upon ways and means of protecting the driver against his own mistakes" ("Too Much Horsepower", Time, September 21, 1953, p. 96). The same article quotes Dean A. Gales, MIT associate professor of automotive engineering as saying: "power far exceeds maneuverability of the vehicles, with the result that there is a lack of control and the accid-

ent rate goes up. . . . the auto stylists or 'dressmakers' of the industry have been in the saddle since 1930. Engineers have had to take a secondary position, and the motorist has paid with his life."²⁵

The industry continued to compete in terms of horsepower. To deal with the public protests of its position it utilized a number of rationalizations/sales-pitches. More power, it was touted, is needed to operate the many power assist devices, the automatic transmission, the air conditioning system, etc. Moreover, there is a great cumulative loss of power as it passes from the engine to the rear wheels at different speeds. For example, the fan requires little power to operate at low speeds while at 80 miles per hour it draws as much as 25 horsepower from the engine; other factors which also draw horsepower from the engine are the transmission, the drive shaft, the rear axle, and the tires. Consequently, a car rated at 200 hp. may deliver as little as 100 hp. at the rear wheels.

Then there is the argument as put forward by Roy C. Hacusler, then automotive safety engineer at Chrysler: ". . .

more powerful engines and more dependable engines . . . permit the driver to cross busy thoroughfares and blend into traffic without breaking the traffic flow or causing dangerous jam-ups, and . . . permit him to pass slow-moving vehicles without spending unnecessary time on the wrong side of the road" (cited in "The Show Is Rough -- But Auto Safety is the Point", Business Week, September 1, 1956, pp. 28-29). It is

further argued that high speeds from bigger engines are only incidental to better performance in lower driving ranges: the real objective of increasing horsepower is "not so that cars can pass faster at the speed limit, but at lower speeds when trucks and other slow vehicles obstruct traffic" (Victor G. Raviolo, Director of the Ford Engineering Research Office, cited in "The Show is Rough -- But Auto Safety is the Point, Business Week, September 1, 1956, pp. 28-29). And, then there is the argument which proved most difficult to react against: "We're only giving the public what it wants."

At this point the fit of hot rodding into the manufacturers' interests becomes evident. Technological costs for developing engines are large and require long amortization periods. Increasing horsepower as a competitive, quantitative characteristic however, is still less costly than developing an alternative propulsion system. Horsepower increases were associated (or proxied) with symbolic strategies in advertising and promotion which emphasized technological progress and improved design. Also important was the association with durability. Automobile racing was a good way to demonstrate claims of durability. Hot rod events were the main source of automotive competition available to manufacturers. Moreover, these events could be used to proclaim the "improvement of the breed" and the increasing safety of the automobile. Of course, as critics of the industry have pointed out, racing successes may have little to do with the street performance of production model automobiles. This is not to say that participation in hot rod events and other forms of racing do not locate operational pro-

blems and structural weaknesses under extreme conditions and thereby improve the breed, often times in subtle ways. It is to say that the association of racing success with product quality, as logical fact without qualification, functions more as a proxy than the literal truth. (See Van Til, 1975:226-228²⁶ on proxies and their effects on consumer perceptions.)

The third point in the industry's pattern of interests relates to the sociological function of hot rodding for the industry in this matter. It can be argued that participation in hot rod activities such as stock car racing and drag racing functioned as a legitimating device for power increases which were more or less predestined, which were built into the original plans. It is clear that engineers were designing engines with the 1960s in mind that would be producing over 300²⁷ horsepower. Moreover, the hot rod subculture also served as a scapegoat for the industry or at least as good alternative targets for various moral entrepreneurs to vent their wrath and take action upon for the increasing horsepower, speed, and accidents. Hot rodders were readily available to receive such attention by virtue of their deviant image, relatively small numbers, high visibility, and low degree of organization and power.

- (4) Opening New Markets and
- (5) Publicity and Symbolism

Another way these predilections could be legitimized would be to develop the hot rod market itself. This ties directly into the manufacturers' desire and self-felt need to open up new market potentials. The growth of the hot rod phenomenon

was taken as an indication of some aspects of the tastes of the growing teenage or youth market. This market was increasingly recognized by all industries as very important and influential for the following reasons: (1) for its own purchasing power and its effectiveness in making families spend; (2) for the role it plays in family spending and its influence in the choice of brands; (3) for its right potential as an adult market tomorrow. This last factor carried extra weight with the auto industry. Industry management believed that satisfied customers were loyal to the brand, and it strived to cultivate this loyalty. Hot rodders were important, then, not only because of their influence on family preferences and spending and their own potential as a market of young "car nuts", but also because these car nuts would continue to buy the "boss" make after they married and settled down. In addition, those on the fringes of hot rodding would also be influenced by which car was the "hottest". On top of this, hot rodders' enthusiastic and continual proclamations of their favorite's virtues provided great publicity value. And even more important than all of this was the tremendous publicity value of winning hot rod competitions as a base for advertising campaigns.

Industry personnel were aware of the symbolic meanings of the automobile and placed great stock in their emotional and psychological associations. Sales personnel and others believed that the purchase of an automobile was basically an emotional process. For example, Gene Bordinat, Head of the Lincoln-Mercury Styling Department in 1954 quoted as saying: "A man

buys a car emotionally. The buyer may think he wants a high car with lots of room to get in and out of easily. But when he finally makes up his mind to buy, he goes for the car that appeals to his emotions, his sense of color and style" (cited in "Designing a Car to Capture 1960s Market", Business Week, May 8, 1954, p. 68). Management was also aware that its interests would be served by exploiting certain symbolic and psychological utilities.

Among the hot rod subculture and its fringe of the early fifties, the most popular car, because it was the fastest, was the Ford, an objective the company strived to cultivate and maintain. This "advantage" was nullified by Chevrolet when its engineers developed a new V-8 engine which turned out to have more performance potential than the Ford V-8. Combined with a new body design in 1955 it was entered in hot rod competition.

The prime reason for Ford's popularity was the V-8 engine, admired by teenagers for its power and pep. Neither Chevrolet nor Plymouth had it in bygone years. When Chevrolet came out with a V-8 in 1955, it deliberately set out to create the image of a "hot car" to attract the young market. Ads for Chevy's factory-sponsored racing team featured these words. In 1956, they were bragging, "The hot one is even hotter" ("Catching Customers at the Critical Age", Business Week, October 26, 1957, pp. 84-87).

Ford retaliated by developing an overhead valve V-8, special high performance modification kits, and heavy duty chassis parts for racing. By mid-1956 Ford was loudly proclaiming, "It cools off the hot ones", in ads featuring its successes in stock car and drag racing. By 1957 both Ford and Chevrolet

were spending over \$3 million each for stock car and drag racing and special events. Plymouth, Oldsmobile, Mercury, and Pontiac all had less ambitious programs. Chrysler was co-operating with a wealthy independent racer. American Motors was not much involved mainly because it lacked the budget. At General Motors only Cadillac and Buick abstained completely.

The structural conditions of the production technology, the horsepower race, and the actions of the manufacturers in hot rodding are the tip of an iceberg of corporate processes which were going on at this time. Nobody knows the whole story -- or ever will -- but enough material has been gathered to piece together a basic outline. This account will rely mainly on published interviews and materials gathered by automotive journalists and historians. Archival material from this period was not available to this researcher. And interviews with key people were either unobtainable or if conducted were not particularly informative.²⁹ It is important to remember that Henry Ford II had made it a goal of the Ford Motor Company to take the number one sales position away from Chevrolet. The intense competition between the two -- of course, in selected areas -- combined with the returning buyers' market increased uncertainties and risks for the whole industry. In the early 1950s it was common knowledge that Ford was developing a new series of overhead valve V-8 engines for 1954, and that Plymouth was planning the same for 1955. At General Motors, according to Pat Chappell in her book on the development of 1955-1957 Chevrolet, decisions about the future directions of

the Chevrolet Division were being made.

In December, 1951, GM's Engineering Policy Committee made a significant decision to "turn Chevrolet around". The goal was attributed to both Harlow Curtis and Charles E. Wilson. It implied a complete alteration of the image, from one of reliable transportation to one of appeal to the youth of the country, to performance instead of dependable-but-conservative transportation (Chappell, 1977:28).

The General Motors management brought Edward Cole to Chevrolet where he became chief engineer in May, 1952. He had similar ideas about the directions in which Chevrolet should move. Cole was responsible for the development of the new V-8 engine and also had a major role in the design and styling of the 1955 Chevrolet. In fact, according to Michael Lamm, the 1955 Chevrolet was virtually his own creation.

Ed Cole set out to build an all-new car, and he did it. And although hordes of engineers and designers worked on it, it definitely wasn't a car by committee. One man shepherded the Chevy through all its many stages, from first pencil line to running automobile. And that man was Edward Nicholas Cole (Lamm, 1975a:23).

A particularly significant thing about Cole and his direction was that he was very aware of the hot rod subculture. In fact, he had been a hot rodder himself and he worked to develop hot rod themes into his designs. Automotive historian Lamm describes his efforts, based upon discussions with him:

One of Ed Cole's objectives, then, was to build a car that would appeal to the hot rodder. He'd been one himself, and in his days at Cadillac before the war he used to dust off other Cad engineers in his much modified Chevy Six. Cole mentioned to me several years ago that he specifically built hot rodability into the Chevy V-8 (Lamm, 1975b: 21).

When engineer and former race car driver Zora Arkus-Duntov joined the Chevrolet engineering research and development division in May, 1953, he saw the potential of the new V-8. According to Leo Levine he wrote a memo to the director of his department:

His memo of early December, addressed to Maurice Olley, then Chevrolet director of engineering research and development, was an outline of how to take the youth market away from Ford. The way to do it was to make use of this engine, and to make good speed equipment available for it at a reasonable price. Whether or not Duntov's memo was followed -- or whether anyone in the company is still aware of its existence -- is not known. Whatever the case, it is interesting that the actions of General Motors since that date have paralleled the course Duntov recommended (Levine, 1968:191).

In another area of Chevrolet -- actually at an outside boundary -- a further development took place. This was at the Campbell-Ewald advertising agency which handled the Chevrolet account. When Arthur B. (Barney) Clark started working at the agency in the late summer of 1954, two things impressed him most: "the first was the fact that few persons in the agency really knew or cared anything about automobiles per se, and the second was the new V-8 engine. As a longtime car buff, Barney was excited over the engine, and felt it could be raced successfully and through this medium would boost Chevy sales" (Levine, 1968:196). Together with another Campbell-Ewald ad executive, Jim Wangers, who was one of the few "car buffs" in the agency, they made a proposal to Edward Cole. He liked it and organized financial backing for an advertising campaign

and provided racing engines and even cars for particular racing people. In the fall of 1955 Cole set up a Racing Promotion Group.

According to Leo Levine, who has compiled a massive history of Ford Motor Company involvement in racing, these actions on the part of Chevrolet literally "forced" Ford into stock-car racing. Levine (1968:197) notes the reaction at Ford:

The fact that the country's largest automaker was now bucking their product with a V-8-engined model had been the first big shock for Ford. When Chevy started racing this car, it became too much to bear. Something had to be done, and the incentive came from several directions.

From the top the word came down, and by mid-summer Robert McNamara, then general manager of the Ford Division, was talking the situation over with engineers Hans Mathias, Harley Copp and Bill Burnett. It became obvious that a full-blown effort was needed. . . .

Simultaneously, pressure was coming up the line from field service managers and local dealers. The dealers had been acting on their own and with sub rosa help from the field service managers in sponsoring racing teams since at least 1951, especially in the Carolinas. But now they wanted factory support (Levine, 1968:197). And they got it.

Obviously advertising competition in performance themes increased and certain hot rod symbolisms were incorporated into its structures. Racing victories were given great amounts of national and local coverage and whole advertising campaigns were built around "hot" cars in 1955 and 1956. The youthful image was a major theme in these contexts. Also, themes relat-

ing to masculinity, rugged individualism and experiences associated with the exhilaration of acceleration and control. But these were framed within the middle class images of comfort, luxury and style. This point will be developed shortly. It was Ford and Chevrolet that were most active in this competition. Chrysler Corporation, which actually had the best automobile on the race track, was not very active in either supporting racing teams nor promoting and publicizing victories. A private individual, Carl Kiekhafer, a millionaire manufacturer of Mercury outboard engines, sponsored Chrysler cars in stock car racing. In the face of the efforts of Ford and Chevrolet, he quit after the 1956 season.

(6) Low Costs -- Contracting Risk

Despite the personal performance motives of a few individuals at various levels and locations within the manufacturing corporations, corporate managements were interested in performance and hot rodding simply as a means to sales. At this time Ford and Chevrolet (read General Motors) managements were interested primarily in the advertising and publicity they were able to generate from participation in hot rod events. They were not interested in marketing mass produced race cars. As Huntington (1961) notes, the automobile as a commercial product was locked into a mold which was not easily broken. It was an undifferentiated product intended to perform all functions and meet all desires in one package or collection of characteristics and symbols. The choice of options was limited and choice of models even more limited. The standard design

could not tolerate much "high performance". Second, the manufacturers did not have the productive facilities. Third, they were not equipped to handle the service problems of high performance cars. Fourth, and the main reason for the second and third deficiencies, they actually had comparatively little investment of time or money in "performance development" -- compared, that is, to the costs if they had had to do it all themselves.

In the late 1940s and very early 1950s it was the dealers who sponsored hot rod events and race cars. They also sponsored individual street rodders. Al Hall, the managing editor of Hot Rod magazine in discussions with this researcher has noted numerous instances of dealers in Southern California, especially Ford Dealers, in the early 1950s who gave free service and parts to local street racers who had fast cars of the appropriate make. Similar practices have been verified in Detroit, Minneapolis, Chicago, and St. Louis. The sub rosa support given by Ford field service representatives to dealers in the Carolinas was mentioned earlier.

At the industry level the manufacturers, as noted, did little of their own performance development. They bought most or all of it by ordering

a few hundred pieces of special equipment from a small private company, stamping parts numbers on them, and shipping them out to their racing teams as "export" equipment . . . It amounted to buying a performance image with a few dollars and practically no expenditure in time or engineering manpower. This practice eventually evolved into the factories actually subcontracting with outside organizations

to do their racing and performance development for them (Huntington, 1961: 64, emphasis in original).

In the case of Ford and Chevrolet, specific individuals were selected and in some cases actually set up in business by them to run their racing activities. It is not possible to detail here these operations and the boundary spanning personnel who mediated between them and the producers. But, it is clear that these strategies were risk reducing as discussed by White in Chapter Eight.

(7) Corporate Image

A similar concern for publicity combined with a desire to develop a fast-moving, up-to-date, action-oriented, that is, "youthful" corporate image brought forth a crop of so-called "sports" cars around 1952 such as the Buick Skylark, the Buick XP-300, the Ford Continental Nineteen Fifty X, the Chrysler K-310, the Packard Pan American, the Nash-Healy, etc. These cars were intended as publicity devices and prestige leaders only; some were for show only, others were limited production models priced far above the mass market. "The Corvette was brought out in 1953 for one major purpose: to refute a growing notion that Chevrolet was getting conservative and stodgy" ("Detroit's Hot Cars Are Geared to Sell", Business Week, January 14, 1956, p. 27. Also see "Detroit Goes in for Sports Cars -- Feet First", Business Week, October 18, 1952, pp. 32-33). As market conditions tightened, managements were persuaded to develop for these cars. In 1955 they introduced a series of five-seat "sports" cars (Chrysler 300B, Plymouth Fury, Studebaker

Hawk) and two-seat sports cars (Corvette and Thunderbird).

To promote these cars, they entered them in hot rod competitions.

Detroit is plowing the sports car field with new zest. No longer does it regard these off-beat models as mere prestige leaders for a conventional line or as answers to competition from sports car specialists. Detroit wants to sell these cars. It's out after every scrap of business it can get.

To sell the sports cars, the auto companies are . . . backing entries in stock car races ("Detroit's Hot Cars Are Geared to Sell", Business Week, January 14, 1956, p. 27).

(8) Styling

In their attempts at tapping new markets, the automobile manufacturers had to design their product so as to be attractive to those groups they were after. This ties directly into the problems of styling, the major marketing weapon of the industry; also the most expensive and the most risky. The uncertainties and risks involved in styling are especially confounding because it is a damned if you do and damned if you don't situation: there are risks involved in making style changes and there are risks involved in not making style changes. To minimize these risks and increase predictability, the environment was surveyed via market research to ascertain developing trends and consumer surveys to ascertain consumer likes and dislikes and future preferences. However, the information gathered in this manner was often quite unreliable (witness the many failures) and in any event was insufficient to base a manufacturer's actions.

Another means of tapping consumer likes and dislikes was to monitor the hot rod minority. This minority of consum-

ers was very special according to Ruel Denney (1957:151):

. . . if we scan the entire consumer-goods market in the period 1946-1956, the scene provides us with no other so deeply felt, widely powerful, and economically penetrating revolution in style organized by the consumers themselves. . . . With every other commodity, in every other market, changes in style have been brought about by research and promotion campaigns; and the public has had its choice of a variety of new products within a broad range or similar style. The hot rod movement is unique in the history of the market and in the history of "organized" consumers in the last twenty years.

The hot rodders were critical of the commercial automobile market and the industry's concept of the automobile; they protested the softsprung "status-car" and their lack of opportunity to purchase the type of automobile they desired. The hot rodders were forced to build their own automobiles by altering the "Detroit iron" to their own specifications.

Following Denney's argument, the hot rod minority could possibly function as pioneers in automotive consumption -- that is, as the inventors and earliest adopters of innovations and styles that would otherwise be slower in acceptance (Denny, 1957:153). As such, they would function as a trend setting minority in the process of fashion selection (Myersohn and Katz, 1957) -- although short circuiting the usual pattern of adoption of minority styles by a respectable group before they become fashionable. In the early 1950s hot rodders "modernized" their cars by lowering, chopping, channeling, sectioning, and dechroming them, by frenching the grills and head and rear lights, by adding fender skirts, hood scoops, and continental kits, by

experimenting with tail fins, by reworking interiors, by souping-
³²
 up engines, etc. At the same time, industry stylists were designing the cars of the late fifties along four major lines: (1) less chrome and more "sculptured" sides; (2) lower bodies; (3) tailfins; (4) more glass area. Many projected designs bore a striking resemblance to the "radical" customs of the hot rodders. (See "Designing a Car to Capture 1960s Market", Business Week, January 21, 1956, pp. 29-34.)

However, this correspondence does not imply a simple process of incorporation or co-optation of innovation. It is found that the first and second generation of designers and stylists had much in common with hot rodders. Many of them had actual hot rod experience, and all of them had a common passion which they shared with the hot rodder: "Their common qualification -- and one never to be underestimated in Detroit -- was a fanatic love of cars, a racer's mania for the spirit and power of a fast moving vehicle" (Mitarachi, 1955:58). This enthusiasm, of course, coloured their conception of what an automobile is and should be and how it should be achieved, as Mitarachi (1955:58-59) notes:

Rules usually have a reason, and if there is any question about the long range objectives the GM stylists who created the rules [of styling now prevalent], it is quickly answered by a survey of their personal automobile preferences. Almost all of them drive sports cars as a matter of course.

[Clair] MacKichan of Chevrolet drives his own design, the Corvette; Oldsmobile's [Art] Ross drives his show car, the Starfire. The head of Cadillac, Ed Glowacke, not only drives but races a Corvette, formerly an Austin-Healy. Ned Nickles of Buick

drives a customized Buick, but is reported to have his eye on a Mercedes-Benz. Among the other members of the Styling Section, the MG-TC outsells all comers. The stylists currently drive (subject to change) 6 MG's, 3 Jaguars (XL-120), and 5 Corvettes, a Fiat, F-88 Oldsmobile, a Porsche, Volkswagen, Austin-Healy, Nash Metropolitan, and a Model T.

A case in point is that of Harley J. Earl, who was the man responsible for getting designers on the manufacturers' payroll in the first place, and who is the creator and head of the Styling Section of General Motors. Before joining General Motors, Earl had been involved in racing and "custom" car design, and all of his designs carry this flavor: for 30 years he had conducted a "war to compress the automobile into a low, wide oblong" (Mitarachi, 1955:59). Moreover, Earl's influence on the rest of the industry is incalculable. At one time or another, the majority of the top designers have worked for Earl, and to many he was the sole mentor from whom the trade was learned (Earl, 1954; Humphrey, 1954; MacMinn, 1977).

The perception of a growing, increasingly affluent middle class market led managements to emphasize status, performance, power and luxury in selling automobiles rather than "basic transportation"; the aim was to sell not the most car for the money, but the most car for the most money that the consumer could afford. This emphasis was translated into a long-term trend to longer, lower, flashier, and more powerful automobiles by designers who had certain ideas as to what a car should be like. These ideas are found to be linked to the hot rodder's because the designers shared many of the hot

rodder's values. But the designers were limited by management's notions of the mass market and of one car to appeal to all segments of this market. Working within these limitations, they attempted to create a car whose form, if not content, was the sporty car. Designing family sedans when they would rather be creating something more lively, like the hot rodders were, was frustrating (see Atcheson, 1963; Barker and Harding, 1970). These frustrations were vented in fantasy and doodling. Harley Earl took these fantasies and turned them into the Dream Cars presented at auto shows, in effect creating the industry's own minority cars. The Dream Cars were a radical change from the family sedan and were portrayed as the embodiment of the future; hence radical change was equated to improvement by implication. However,

. . . the stylists know that change will never be too radical -- it would upset the continuity of products, alienate old friends, and cost too much to boot. The change they can control is a formalistic one -- a difference of expression within a very established concept of what an automobile should be Thus the flights of fantasy they indulge in have a very low ceiling. They rarely get as high as exploring new concepts of transportation. The stylists feel they have no choice but to pursue the phantom of a form they love -- the sports car, or a reasonably practical facsimile thereof.

In this pursuit, they have proven to their own satisfaction that form can be an adequate substitute for function in the mind of the public (Mitarachi, 1955:59).

The official line on the function of the Dream Cars was that they were experiments into consumer tastes: give the public a glimpse of what the future could hold in store for them

if they wanted it, and if they did want it, give it to them. However, from another angle these cars can be seen as a means of structuring public perceptions and tastes in directions preferred by designers:

. . . in point of fact, the Motorama Dream Cars are designed long after the production models for the next year or two have been planned and approved, so they often reflect the designs they are supposed to forecast. The Dream Car has proved to be less of an experiment in consumer taste than a tool in consumer conditioning: convince the consumer that the future lies in the direction the designer would prefer to be travelling, and before long he'll be travelling in that direction too. There is little doubt that for the makers of the dream, the Dream Car is a motivating force for both the public and the automobile (Mitarachi, 1955:59).

The designers, in "working the system" to meet their own ends, worked to develop a strong symbolic meaning of the automobile. Now the growth of drag racing, stock car racing, etc., and the religious reverence with which the automobile was regarded in these circles told industry administrators and decision-makers that there was more to these phenomena than merely a youth market or a style-setting minority. And given the history of this "yearning for a virile, responsive, hot automobile that must be tamed" (Hough and Frostick, 1967:176), the motives and needs which such an automobile satisfies must run very deep in the human psyche. The policymakers were not exactly sure what these motives and needs were, but they were influenced and "sold" by stylists who worked their desires into their designs within the limitations predicated by managements' perception of other motives and needs to be exploited.

Emphasis on power, speed, and sex became dominant motifs of the industry's designs and sales pitches during this period.

As long as hot rodding continued to grow it served to reinforce the rightness of the technostucture's aims and the correctness of the administration's decisions. And in moving to exploit whatever motives and desires were involved by participating in hot rod events, by building advertising campaigns and total images around results, and by developing the hot rod (youth) market itself, the industry moved to ensure the continued growth of hot rodding. Moreover, the hot rodders helped to legitimate the designed-in power increases required by tooling costs and nonprice competition while at the same time taking much of the blame for the negative aspects of power and speed which were becoming public issues.

FOOTNOTES

1

The announcement of the race received national newspaper coverage and built up a great deal of excitement. Newspapers began to publish articles on motor car development throughout the world. The Times-Herald held a contest with a prize of \$500 to coin a proper generic name for the motor vehicle. (The winner was "motocycle" -- a name which did not receive wide acceptance by the public.)

The race itself proved to be fraught with difficulties and disappointments. More entries were received than anticipated: eighty-nine inventors submitted intentions of entering a vehicle in the race. But most of them did not have a working vehicle constructed at the time they entered. And they were unable to construct one over the four month period to the actual race date (November 2, 1895). Only four vehicles showed up on race day -- and only two of these were able to continue running. The race was postponed to a later date (Thanksgiving). But only six vehicles were present for the race. For accounts of the race and its difficulties, see Anderson, 1950; Crabb, 1969; Partridge, 1952.

2

"The history of the American automobile super-spectacle dates from the Chicago Times-Herald contest of 1895. All of the different types of automobile exhibitions were to grow out of that event -- road races, speedway bowls, high speed demonstrations, endurance tests, reliability runs, hill-climbing contests, trans-continental tours, automobile shows, and the mammoth displays at the World Fairs" (Anderson, 1950:135).

3

It is impossible to discuss in any detail here the many technological and social developments which contributed to the acceptance and diffusion of automobiles in the United States. Among the most important factors were: (1) the great growth in urban populations and resulting increase in street traffic; (2) changes in the design and definition of streets; (3) changes in regulatory attitudes to street use; (4) the trend to suburbanization; (5) increasing problems with horses as power sources; (6) the development of paving technology, and its increased application; (7) the redefinition of mechanical vehicles in favourable terms based upon urban middle class experience with trolleys and bicycles -- and the ultimate linking of automobiles with middle class progressivism and urban reform movements as a symbol of technological and social progress; (8) the lack of federal regulation of the automobile industry combined with federal/state/local support in highway construction.

Although there is a vast literature and the social history and development of the automobile, this literature is not very systematic or analytical. As recently as 1974 Gary Tobin (1974a:49) in a review of several scholarly books on

the automobile could say without fear of contradiction: "The automobile became one of the most powerful forces shaping American society as it helped carry the nation into the twentieth century. Yet the social history of the automobile's integration into American culture and the changes that resulted from the mass use of cars have been largely unexplored." It is only recently, in fact, that any real scholarly attention has been devoted to this topic. Historian James Flink (1975:3) has made this point in his book The Car Culture. "Professional historians have devoted relatively little attention to the American automobile revolution. . . . This lack of scholarly interest has meant that most automotive history has been written by and for the automobile buff. We are indebted to him for much of what we know about the history of automobile racing and the mechanical evolution of the modern motorcar. But for the general reader as well as the scholar, the automobile buff's approach to automotive history leaves much to be desired. Invariably beginning with a statement about the author's long and passionate love affair with the car, such books are often uncritical, esoteric, and antiquarian."

Besides the historical references cited in the text earlier in this section, see also the following selected references: Adams, 1938; Allen, 1952; Amory, 1952; Brownell, 1972; Burby, 1971; Cleveland and Williams, 1951; Flink, 1972; Melder, 1960; Molene, 1971; Mueller, 1928; Rae, 1971; Thomas, 1965. A number of recent Ph.D. dissertations in history have examined aspects of this topic. Brilliant (1964) details the Social Effects of the Automobile in Southern California During the Nineteen-Twenties. Berger (1972) documents The Social Impact of the Automobile on Rural America, 1893-1929. Eastman (1973) collects much of the public and private criticism of automobile design and styling and plots the development of automotive safety organizations and their relationship to the industry. McShane (1975) examines the problems of urban transportation in American cities in the nineteenth century, some of the changes which facilitated the diffusion of the automobile in cities, and the manner in which the automobile was able to provide or was perceived to provide solutions to those problems over the 1870-1910 period.

The important role of bicycles and the bicycle industry in the late 1800s as legal and social runner of interference and conditioning experience for the introduction of automobiles is not always given proper attention. More appreciated has been the technological and organizational contributions to automotive development stemming from the bicycle industry. See the following excellent works on the history of bicycles and their contributions: Aronson, 1968; Dunham, 1956; Harmond, 1971-1972; Mason, 1957; Rubenstein, 1977; Smith, 1972; Tobin, 1974b.

4

For various reasons not relevant here, it was in France that the first large scale construction and sales of

automobiles took place (Doolittle, 1916; Laux, 1976; Pound, 1934). By the early 1890s the source of power and basic design had been stabilized thus allowing the early manufacturers to concentrate upon improving their products. The gasoline engine was chosen as the power source in a multi-cylinder form. The engine was located in the front and was connected to a multi-gear transmission which in turn was connected by a drive line to a differential unit and the rear wheels. This drive "train" was all fastened to a central pressed-steel frame which also formed the foundation for the body. Such a design was based on the idea that automobiles were "road locomotives" in contrast to the early American notion of automobiles as carriages without horses (Rae, 1959:26-27).

It was the expensive imported French automobiles that rich Americans favoured at the turn of the century. Eventually, American manufacturers copied this design and it began to filter down through various price ranges until it became the standard American design (Thomas, 1965).

5

The emphasis on the "inevitability" of mass production in the above quotation by Denison reveals the liberal interpretation of the historical development of corporate capitalism. Mass production technologies as the "inevitable" result of consumer demand implies that manufacturers naturally seek the most "efficient" and "rational" production methods, that there is only one most efficient and rational method, and that the institution of this method makes the market (and society) efficient and rational. Those of a revisionist or elite/class orientation would argue that there was nothing inevitable about mass production technologies as a response to consumer demand. Moreover, they would argue that the efficiency and rationality of mass production is relative to the capitalist social/cultural context and capitalist goals. From this perspective, mass production was a deliberate strategy instituted by manufacturers to reduce uncertainty at their input boundaries (that is, to control the labour process) and to maximize profits. Its efficiency is relative to these goals. When other goals are considered, mass production can be seen as an inefficient and irrational strategy (Chinoy, 1955; Aronowitz, 1973; Marx and Engles, 1959; Child, 1969a, 1969b; Braverman, 1974).

6

Of course, this analysis must be selective and limited to presenting main features and trends. For fuller and more detailed accounts of the history of the automobile industry, see Ayres, 1921; Banner, 1954; Burns, 1936; Chamberlain, 1962; Chandler, 1962, 1964, 1967, 1969; Cochran and Miller, 1961; Denison, 1956; Donovan, 1965; Epstein, 1928; Katz, 1970; Kennedy, 1941; Lanzillotti, 1971; Potney, 1963; Rae, 1959; Richardson and Leech, 1940; Seltzer, 1928; Thomas, 1965, 1969; Wilson, 1976.

7

Numerous analysts predicted the saturation of the

market by 1926, the development of the replacement market and excess plant capacity (for example, Ayres, 1921). However, these analysts failed to consider the powerful influence of purposeful obsolescence in creating and stimulating demand. They also failed to note the development of the export market around 1930. For recent re-analyses of market saturation in the late 1920s, see Mercer and Morgan, 1972; George and Oksanen, 1973.

8

For full accounts of the history of the Ford Motor Company and its creator, Henry Ford, see, Bennett, 1951; Booton, 1969; Chandler, 1964; Ford, 1922; Lewis, 1976; Nevins and Hill, 1954, 1957, 1963; Sorenson, 1956; Thomas, 1969; Wik, 1972.

9

For the available history of General Motors Corporation see Beasley, 1947; Chandler, 1964; Chandler and Salisbury, 1971; Curtis, 1954; Drucker, 1946; General Motors, 1960; Gusten, 1973; Mann, 1962; Pound, 1934; Rae, 1958; Sloan, 1941, 1965; Rae, 1958; Wolf, 1962.

10

The competition between firms was very stiff during this period. The emphasis on nonprice competition, especially the annual model change, and vertical integration, the increasing use of assembly plants increased the minimum size necessary for producer survival. Many firms were unable to maintain the necessary efficiencies in such a competitive environment and went bankrupt. See Banner, 1954; Epstein, 1928; Katz, 1970; Seltzer, 1928; Thomas, 1965.

11

For all of its importance, it is curious that so little systematic or well developed work has been done on the texture and significance of automotive experience and the many meanings which have been attached to this experience. This does not mean that the literature is small in volume. On the contrary, the volume is large -- but it either briefly skims the surface or elaborates only one aspect. For a sampling, see Black, 1966; Blake, 1974; Bogart, 1976; Botkin, 1970; Buel, 1973; Dettlebach, 1976; Dodd, 1973; Finch and Smith, 1970; Fishwick, 1970; Hayakawa, 1962a, 1962b; Hoffman, 1966; Keats, 1958; Larabee, 1955, 1960; MacDonald, 1964; McLuhan, 1951, 1964; Nospitz, 1965; Pactolus, 1970; Rosenbaum, 1972; Sanderson, 1969; Schneider, 1971; Silk, 1976; Stone, 1972. Several anthologies on the experience and meaning of automobiles have been compiled by various editors. See Baker and Van Osdol, 1972; Jewell, 1965; Malone and Roberts, 1971; Sanford, 1977.

On the special relationship between adolescents and automobiles, see Bauea, 1955; Goldberg, 1969; Holtz, 1975; Klein, 1972; McFarland and Moore, 1961; Nääätänen and Summala, 1965; Weiland, 1955.

On hot rods, see Balsley, 1950; Boyle, 1961, 1963; Denney, 1957; Neavles and Winokur, 1957; Reisman, 1961; Reisman and Larabee, 1958; Wolfe, 1965. On motorcycles, see Gutkin, 1973; Sagnier, 1974; Stone, 1966; Willis, 1972, 1975, 1978.

On symbolic aspects of driving, see Blake, 1974; Dannefer, 1976; Finch and Smith, 1970; Hoffman, 1966; Jewett and Lawrence, 1976; Klein, 1972; Naatanen and Summala, 1976; Parry, 1968; Roberts, et al., 1966.

This author (Listiak, 1978) has developed a preliminary analysis of the automobile-human relationship and its manifestation in racing in terms of the quality of this relationship and its social interpretation. It cannot be presented here.

12

The utilization of commodities as personal resources by purchasers or other users is termed "appropriation" by analysts at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. Users of particular commodities can appropriate the standard designs, uses, meanings, and experiences attached to commodities and creatively reconstruct them to embody and communicate types and ranges of design, use, meaning, and experience which they choose to develop in constructing their own lifestyles. Clarke (1975) and Clarke, et al. (1975) discuss this process with respect to the postwar youth subcultures in England. Willis (1972, 1975, 1978) analyzes the appropriation of motorcycles by young men in a discussion which provides a model for the analysis of automobiles and hot rodders. This analysis cannot be developed here --but see Listiak (1978).

13

See "How Long Will the Car Boom Last?" Business Week, May 7, 1949, pp. 10-11; "End of the Auto Boom", Business Week, October 28, 1950, p. 21; "Autos Face Make-Do Days", Business Week, January 20, 1951, p. 70. See also Banner, 1954; Edwards, 1965; Katz, 1970; Smith, 1968; White, 1971.

14

See "Auto Sales: It's No Boom", Business Week, June 14, 1952, pp. 31-32; "Car Makers Gird for Battle", Business Week, September 19, 1953, pp. 27-28; "Auto Competition: How Hot Can It Get?" Business Week, April 24, 1954, pp. 20-22.

15

See William B. Harris, "Ford's Fight for First", Fortune, September, 1954, pp. 195-198+; "Top Goal of Ford's New Management: To Outsell Chevrolet", Business Week, June 13, 1953, pp. 92-96. Among the reasons cited for this drive to overtake Chevrolet are: (1) the desire of Henry Ford II to regain Ford's overwhelming position of 30 years ago under his grandfather; (2) the desire to use the Number One position in sales as an asset in the selling of stock in order to gain the necessary funds for expansion.

16

"GM Meets Return of Competition with Big Show", Business Week, January 22, 1949, pp. 65-68; "Motorama at the Waldorf; General Motors Revives an Old Custom", Business Week, January 24, 1953, pp. 32-34; "Auto Shows Back", Business Week, February 20, 1954, p. 32; "Bonanza Auto Show in Houston", Business Week, January 16, 1955, p. 41.

17

"General Motors' Car of the Future: Le Sabre", Business Week, December 20, 1950, pp. 22-23; "Sabre Is the Car of the 1960s", Life, January 1, 1951, pp. 60-61; "Ford Shows His Dream Car", Business Week, June 19, 1952, p. 25; "Ford's Latest Has Two Tops; Mercury's Dream Gets Tryout", Business Week, February 20, 1954, p. 32.

18

"Auto Designers Are Getting Ready for Competition", Business Week, August 30, 1952, pp. 27-28; "Designing a Car to Capture 1960s Market", Business Week, May 8, 1954, pp. 62-66; "Chevrolet Story: Styling", Business Week, October 30, 1954, pp. 44-46; "What Car Designers Are Planning", Business Week, January 21, 1956, pp. 56+.

19

"Automatic Drives: Now There Are Five", Business Week, April 30, 1949, pp. 31-32; "Now Its Power Steering; Hydra-Glide", Business Week, December 9, 1950, p. 21; "GM Stock Cars to Offer Air Conditioner in '53", Business Week, July 19, 1952, p. 32.

20

"Car Makers Stack Their Chips on Luxury", Business Week, February 23, 1952, pp. 157-158+; "Designing a Car to Capture 1960s Market", Business Week, May 8, 1954, pp. 62-64; "What Car Designers Are Planning", Business Week, January 21, 1956, p. 56+.

21

"New Auto Engines in Works", Business Week, April 22, 1950, p. 20; "Detroit Can Do Its Own Hot Rodding", Business Week, January 26, 1952, p. 62+; "More Horsepower for Chrysler", Business Week, November 8, 1952, p. 34; "V-Eight Engines Make the Grade", Business Week, December 19, 1953, pp. 84+; "The Whys of the Power Race", Business Week, December 4, 1954, pp. 70+.

22

"Egg That Hatched a Sports Car", Business Week, December 8, 1951, pp. 180-182; "Detroit Goes in for Sports Cars -- Feet First", Business Week, October 18, 1952, pp. 32-33; "Detroit's Hot Cars Are Geared to Sell", Business Week, January 14, 1956, p. 27.

The manufacturers' struggle for sales leadership, essentially a striving for volume, and their desire to maintain profit margins led them to set the price of their cars in advance on the basis of a predetermined volume. If that volume was not projected somewhat high, their prices would be high, and dealers would have trouble selling their cars. Once the volume was determined, manufacturers tried to make it a reality. Hence, the factory put "pressure" on the dealer to sell as many cars as possible. And due to the nature of the franchise agreements between dealers and manufacturers, dealers were in effect forced to buy all the cars the factory wanted them to -- and at their price -- and then to retail them as best they could. With the changed market conditions, many dealers were forced into all sorts of maneuvers just to get rid of these cars, no matter what.

Thus, dealers are found giving oversized trade-in allowances and/or cutting prices (both of which reduce the dealers' profit margin), running loud, full-page newspaper ads, telephone soliciting, ringing door-bells, staging sales "blitzes" at which "no reasonable offer" is refused, offering prizes, etc. See, for e.g., "Autos: The Dump and Discount Blues", Business Week, October 3, 1953, p. 169; "Forty-Eight Cars in 48 Hours: Bally-Hoo Whoops Up Sales", Business Week, October 10, 1953, p. 58; "Razzle-Dazzle Motors: Dealer's Sales Promotion", Business Week, November 7, 1953, p. 50; "Auto Dealer: Old, Tired and Baffled; Razzle-Dazzle Selling Makes Hull-Dobbs Biggest Ford Dealer", Business Week, May 22, 1954, pp. 44+.

Overloaded franchise dealers also resorted to the "bootlegging" of new cars to nonfranchised "supermarket" dealers, that is, selling excess new cars to a used car dealer in another territory at near wholesale prices. This practice was both illegal and unethical. See "No. 1 Worry: Car Bootlegging", Business Week, February 18, 1950, pp. 48-50; "War on Auto Bootlegging", Business Week, March 13, 1954, p. 52; "Dealers Find It Rough", Business Week, February 12, 1955, pp. 30-31; "Auto Dealers in a Jam", Business Week, February 19, 1956, p. 56; "Supermarkets: Dealers in Surplus Cars Go Big Time", Business Week, October 1, 1955, pp. 104-106+.

Dealers found little response to their plight and to their complaints by the manufacturers. They began to take action on their own -- even taking the manufacturers to court. See "Dealers Take the Offensive; Put Pressure on Manufacturers More Liberal Franchise Terms", Business Week, June 17, 1950, pp. 32-33; "Auto Dealers Sound a Warning", Business Week, January 16, 1954, p. 28; "Auto Makers in Court; Legality of Exclusive Franchising of Dealers", Business Week, March 19, 1955, p. 68; "Revolt in the Auto World", Business Week, September 10, 1955, p. 52.

Only after this action did the manufacturers react: "Detroit Bids for Dealer Peace", Business Week, December 17, 1955, pp. 30-31; "Auto Men Butter Up Their Dealers", Business Week, February 4, 1956, p. 29; "Striving Off a Dealer Revolt", Business Week, July 7, 1956, pp. 55-56+.

For studies on automobile franchise agreements and manufacturer-dealer relationships, see, among others, Chambers, 1958; Hewitt, 1956; Pashigan, 1961; Bury, 1973; Brownlee, 1966. Several authors have argued that these relationships are structurally loaded in favour of the manufacturers and cause dealers to violate ethical and legal norms in their sales efforts. For example, Leonard and Weber, 1970; Farberman, 1975. Several studies have examined the legal and political aspects of these relationships. See Macaulay, 1966; Palamountain, 1955; Croll, 1969.

24

"Next: A Gas-Turbine Powered Auto? XP-21 Firebird", Business Week, January 16, 1954, p. 30; "What to Do Until Turbine Comes", Business Week, October 22, 1955, pp. 83; "Parts Makers Prepare for Turbine", Business Week, May 19, 1956, pp. 64+.

25

This protest was expressed in many newspaper editorials and magazine articles. For e.g., see "Horsepower vs Horsesense; Pro and Con Discussion", Scholastic, September 24, 1952, pp. 9-11; J.K. Knudsen, "We've Gone Horsepower Crazy", Changing Times, May, 1953, pp. 19-20; "Too Much Horsepower?" Time, September 21, 1953, p. 96; "Horsepower Race Condemned by Research Group", Science Digest, October, 1953, p. 26; R. Moses, "Turn Back the Killer Speed", New York Times Magazine, January 4, 1953, pp. 11+; "Don't Spare the Horses", Colliers, January 8, 1954, pp. 110+; G. Koetner, "High Horsepower -- Does It Mean Life or Death?" Look, January 26, 1954, pp. 68+; E. Jaderquist, "Horsepower Race", Atlantic, June 1954, pp. 56-58; "Now Is the Time to Round Up Horsepower", Farm Journal, March 1955, p. 176; W.J. Morgan, "Stock Car Racing Is Dangerous", New Statesman, May 14, 1955, pp. 680-681; R. Morley, "Speed, the Killer", Newsweek, June 27, 1955, p. 96; "Horsepower Race", Time, October 24, 1955, p. 94.

26

Regarding the hot rodder's claims of great technological influence on the automobile industry, the question of the origins of such developments as high compression engines, dual and tripple carburetion, dual exhaust systems, etc. is a complex and difficult one. On the one hand, the industry was talking about developments such as these immediately after World War II: "New Engines", Business Week, June 14, 1947, p. 52; "Compression Ratio Going Up?" Business Week, November 8, 1947, p. 62; "Ols Steps Up Compression", Business Week, April 17, 1948, p. 80. Further, the industry was experimenting with new engine designs; "Radical engines aren't new to Detroit. Auto makers keep large research staffs busy designing, building, and testing radical powerplants that bear no resemblance to those under the hoods of late models. New ideas do get into production engines, but it has to be an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process. There are two big reasons: (1) it takes years to make sure that a new idea will give the same results in the hands of the customers as in the laboratory and on the proving grounds; (2) investment in special production

machinery and equipment is too high to make frequent changes" ("Detroit Can Do Its Own Hot Rodding", Business Week, January 26, 1952, pp. 62+).

On the other hand, many of the industry's designers, stylists, and engineers at this time were actually hot rodders or had backgrounds in hot rodding. See the discussion later in this section. Moreover, hot rod racing and other types of racing did make important contributions to automotive development. See Donovan, 1965; MacPherson, 1960; and especially Van Valkenberg, 1972:Chap. 10.

27

See "The Whys of the Power Race", Business Week, December 4, 1954, pp. 70-74; "Designing a Car to Capture 1960's Market", Business Week, May 8, 1954, pp. 62-64; "What Car Designers Are Planning", Business Week, January 21, 1956, pp. 29-32.

28

By the late 1950s there would be 16 million to 17 million teen-agers, of which at least 5.5 million would be driving. In addition, the post war baby boom would be coming of driving age in the sixties -- there would be a 53 percent increase in the 13 to 19 age group from 1955 to 1965 (whereas the total population would increase only 15 percent). This is the group which would come to have a great deal of power over the increasing personal and disposable incomes. See "Catching Customers at the Critical Age", Business Week, October 26, 1957, pp. 84-87.

29

A number of persons (four) who were directly involved in the actions and decisions taken during this time were in fact interviewed -- after much difficulty in tracking them down and/or arranging an interview. However, they were not inclined to discuss in any detail the decisions or the criteria upon which they were made at that time. Much of this reticence evidently stemmed from past experience with academic and other researchers, either at first hand or through stories they had heard. Evidently a number of researchers had not bothered to show their written work to the individuals concerned and/or misquoted, slanted or criticized them. Also two were still employed by the corporation and because some of their early activities were not approved by company policy, they were reluctant to discuss them. For obvious reasons no names will be given.

30

The Chrysler 300 is a case in point. According to the reports of Bill Carroll (1961a, 1961b, 1961c) the car was intended as an image builder for Chrysler and was a publicity vehicle more than anything else, although profitability figured in the calculations as well. Carroll cites Bob Rodger, then chief engineer of Chrysler Division as saying that "the biggest problem in selling corporation management on the 300 project

was getting key people to drive the car. 'We weren't concerned with building a lot of these just because horsepower and performance were tops', says Bob. 'We wanted the 300 performance image around the entire Chrysler line.' It took a month to convince company brass that a 'hot' hardtop could create a product image and be profitable" (Carroll, 1961b:61-62. See also Williams, 1974; Howley, 1979b).

31

There are many similarities and overlaps between "sports" cars (that is, foreign sports cars) and hot rods, and between the particular cults which have grown up around them. Most discussions treat sports cars as one aspect of hot rodding. This discussion does not. There are important differences between both the cars and the cults. See Bond, 1954; Donovan, 1965; Hough, 1964; Purdy, 1960; Yates and Yates, 1954. The greatest distinctions, for the purposes of this discussion, are the usually stock condition of the sports car as compared to the hot rod, and the sports car's legitimacy, that is, the lack of negative public reaction to the sports car and its cult. The variance in legitimacy between hot rodding and sports car cults, as forms of marginal differentiation in consumership at this time, appears to depend upon two basic factors: (1) the class and status of the members, and (2) the degree of involvement with the automobile as machine. The ranks of the sports car cult were drawn from mainly the middle and upper classes whereas the hot rodders were, on the whole, lower middle class in origin. Moreover, while both cults were critical of the American car and both advocated "involved" driving, only the hot rodder became fully involved with his machine in a creative process of building and rebuilding to suit his desires. The sports car fan was a purist who remained fairly distant from his car in this sense, utilizing it more as a "special kind of suburbanite status symbol," according to Botkin (1970:48). This distance and his class background were the source of the legitimacy of the car driver; the hot rodder's creative involvement and rebuilding was equated with delinquency as an attack on established authority, and their unconventional results were perceived as dangerous. The point to be made here is that the automobile industry's attempts to tap and build this market (the sports car market) are tied to their attempts to develop the youth and hot rod markets and also to play on the motives and the needs satisfied by a responsible performance-oriented automobile.

On the public recognition of the foreign sports car cult, see "MG Midget Craze", Life, January 19, 1949, pp. 53-54; "Sports Cars", Life, September, 22, 1952, pp. 88-93, and discussion October 13, 1952, p. 20; "Sports Car Set Rides Again", Colliers, April 4, 1953, pp. 68-73; R. Butterfield, "Crazy Over Sports Cars", Saturday Evening Post, November 7, 1953, pp. 34-35+; C.W. Norton, "Accent on Living; Sports Cars", Atlantic June, 1954, pp. 86-87; "Sportsman; Sports Car", New Yorker, October 22, 1955, pp. 35-37; "Sports with Cars; Sports Car Cult", New York Times Magazine, August 11, 1957, pp. 15-16+.

32

See, for e.g., Bob McCall, "Trend in Custom Design", Motor Trend, September, 1953, pp. 40-44; James Potter and George Barris, "How Cars Are Customized", Motor Life, June, 1956, pp. 24-29.

CHAPTER 12

THE INCORPORATION OF HOT RODDING: THE LATE 1950s AND 1960s

This chapter continues the analytical history begun in the last chapter. It traces the relationship between hot rodding and the automobile industry through the recession of the late 1950s, the recovery in the early 1960s and the growth of the late 1960s.

The Late 1950s

The automobile industry had estimated the new car market of the middle and late fifties to be around 5 million units per year. The unexpected sales explosion of 1955 occasioned industry planners to re-evaluate the industry's "growth factors" and suddenly 8 million units per year looked reasonable to expect (see "8 Million Cars", Business Week, October 8, 1955, p. 27; Gilbert Burck and Sanford S. Parker, "The Biggest Car Market Yet", Fortune, November, 1956, pp. 109+). The tremendous success of 1955 was attributed to the new designs and mechanical features introduced simultaneously by all manufacturers (only Buick, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac did not introduce new models). Industry moguls were now firmly convinced not only of their ability to arouse the consumer with well styled and promoted automobiles but also of their ability to keep the consumer coming back for more with "new" models (Dyckman, 1962). In fact, it appears that they felt that they had the public "hooked" on its machines for a long time to come; that they could work the public in the same way that a pusher controls his junkies:

The auto industry . . . is selling not just transportation, but a package of physical and psychological satisfactions. And its genius for periodically arousing the passion of the American consumer for a new model shows not the slightest sign of declining. And that is why, in the face of fierce competition from other consumer goods, the industry so confidently -- and plausibly -- expects the American consumer to keep on devoting a large and ever growing percentage of his growing income to passenger automobiles (Gilbert Burck and Sanford S. Parker, "The Biggest Car Market Yet", Fortune, November, 1956, p. 280).

However, the car-buying public did not respond to the industry's manipulations like a junkie on a pusher's string. It bought only 5.8 million automobiles in 1956 and 5.7 million in the recession year of 1957 -- far from the expected 8 million. Yet the industry's confidence remained unshaken: "Detroit rationalized that it had overbuilt in 1955, would soon recover its former pace. What was needed was change every year, rather than the three-year cycle developed in the Twenties by GM ("Detroit Enters New Competitive Era With its 1960 Models", Business Week, August 9, 1959, p. 72). With recovery slated for 1958 and extensive model changes to insure good results, the manufacturers were solidly optimistic as they entered the 1958 model year -- in fact: "Detroit is more optimistic now than it has been since mid-1955. And with good reasons: Never since 1955 have the auto makers been so excited about their new products, so convinced their cars are in tune with changed and changing consumer tastes." ("Giant Questions Plague Detroit", Business Week, November 9, 1957, p. 81). But 1958 turned out to be a real disaster. Total sales fell to 4.3 million, the lowest level since World War II ended. Sales

improved somewhat in 1959, but at 5.4 million were still far below the 1955 expectations. And if a shrinking auto market were not bad enough, the Big Three found their market penetration shrinking as well: General Motors fell from 50.8 percent of the market in 1955 to 42.1 percent in 1959; Ford went from 30.4 percent in 1957 to 28.1 percent in 1959; Chrysler dropped from a 1957 figure of 18.3 percent to 11.3 percent in 1959, a level not seen since before the war. The industry's confidence and optimism were replaced by confusion, uncertainty, and hesitation as 1959 and the sixties approached.¹

It is clear that such factors as the growth of the "mature" consumer and the general recession which began in mid 1957 and continued through 1959 and which was intensified by Sputnik I contributed to the poor performance of the auto industry at this time.² However, some fundamental factors lay in the auto industry itself. As the concept of relational control is neither monocausal nor phrased at the individual level of analysis, it is able to comprehend the often unintended consequences or secondary outcomes which a power structure creates or sets in motion as a result of its own actions. No power strategy is effective for all times and all circumstances; "no solution lasts forever" (Whitt, 1979:97). At the institutional level, the automobile manufacturers along with highway construction, oil, and associated industries were acting in such ways as to promote legislation and public policies favourable to their interests and blocking the development of effective alternative systems of transportation (Buel, 1973; Leavitt, 1970; Mowbray, 1969; Whitt, 1975, 1979; Burby, 1971; Snell, 1975).

These efforts, whose analysis is beyond the scope of this discussion, were still relatively effective. Secondary outcomes would not develop threatening proportions at this level until environmental conditions had become increasingly difficult and costly-- and Ralph Nader began the institutionalization of muck-raking and consumer issues. At the corporate level is where many of the difficulties in this period can be located. Particularly in the manufacturers' conception of the automobile as an all purpose vehicle and the three to four year lead-times required to institute style changes or to bring a new car to market.³

Much of the automobile industry's troubles in the late fifties can be traced to the decisions made in 1954-1955 about 1957-1958 designs. As mentioned earlier, the symbolic nature of the automobile and the nature of the competition in the industry led to the emphasis of nonprice factors such as style, horsepower and performance, luxury, etc. Such emphasis was well received by the nouveau rich mentality of the growing middle-class market in the booming economy of the early fifties, a market which looked as if it would grow forever. Consequently, the makes in the middle-price bracket (\$2,000 - \$4,000) came to take about half of the total sales. Within this bracket, General Motors' Buick, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac had 60 percent of the total. Ford and Chrysler wanted to fill their competitive gaps by increasing their respective shares of this lucrative market.⁴

In the postwar years the Ford Motor Company had concentrated its main efforts to gain a powerful place in the in-

dustry with the low-price Ford. Consequently, the image of the Ford line was set by the Ford. The Mercury, Ford's only entry in the middle-price range, suffered as a result -- people thought of the Mercury (and even the Lincoln) as a bigger Ford where they would never think of the Buick or the Pontiac as a bigger Chevrolet. Further, Ford owners did not graduate upward in the company line because the Mercury's image was, according to Riesman and Larrabee (1958:274), "more suitable for the flaming youth trade than for reliably rising bourgeois."

By 1953 Ford had increased its productive capacity enough to start planning its strategy to gain first place in the industry. Noting the shape of the market and the success of General Motors' middle-price makes, it was decided at this time to produce a full line of bigger and higher priced Fords. In 1955 the Ford Fairlane was introduced into the middle-price range. Also in 1955, on the basis of extensive research and the continued success of the middle-price makes, it was decided to bring a new and separate line of medium-priced cars to market for 1958, the Edsel. Further steps were taken at this time to penetrate the middle-price market: the Thunderbird would be expanded into a four-seater for 1958; the complete Mercury line would be completely restyled for 1957 and broadened with a big luxurious Park Lane model for 1958; the whole Ford line would be restyled for 1959.

Chrysler's tactics were predicated on somewhat different premises than Ford's. Whereas Ford was in a solid position and aiming for the number one sales spot, Chrysler was in bad shape as the buyer's market returned in 1953, even though it

had three cars in the middle-price range to Ford's one. Chrysler had a number of problems as reflected in its declining market penetration which fell from 26 percent in 1952 to about 13 percent in 1954.⁵ It had an ingrown management. It had a poorly organized sales force. It had the highest manufacturing costs of the Big Three, mainly because it had no large volume model necessary for low costs as Ford and Chevrolet did. To get around this problem many parts were to be made interchangeable on all models by designing all bodies for all major lines more or less identically. As a result, the 1957 Plymouth (low-price) would emerge to be as large as Dodges and some Chryslers.

On top of this, Chrysler's stylists had resisted the trend to longer-wider-lower designs. In the early fifties Chrysler's executives were mainly engineers who attempted to realize their practical interests in automobiles which were solidly engineered and compact, that is, more "functional" than their competitors'. More than any other factor Chrysler's styling was blamed for its decline and a crash program to overhaul it was undertaken aiming for 1955; its models were to be lengthened as much as 16 inches and lowered as much as 3 inches and were to be billed as "The Forward Look". And to keep the market stimulated, another style change was scheduled for 1957 and then again in 1960.

The 1955 Ford Fairlane "forced" Chevrolet to turn its Bel-Air into a super deluxe model which, with the right options, would place well into the middle-price range. Buick and Olds-

mobile were restyled for 1957 and their range was broadened by offering models in almost the lowest price range occupied by Chevrolet, Ford, and Plymouth.

When the dust of the 1957 sales race had settled, Ford had outsold Chevrolet for the first time since the 1930's. Ford sold 37,000 more cars than Chevrolet after losing by more than 190,000 in 1956. Ford's total share of the market increased from 28.4 percent to 30.4 percent. Chrysler also enjoyed increased market penetration. It went from 15 percent in 1956 to 20 percent in 1957, a gain of 5 percent. These successes came mainly at the expense of General Motors whose market share fell 6 percent from 50.8 percent in 1955 and 1956 to 44.8 percent in 1957. The hardest hit at General Motors were the middle-priced makes, Buick, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac. Buick's share of the market fell from 10.3 percent in 1955 to 6.6 percent in 1957; Oldsmobile went from 8.2 percent in 1955 to 6.2 percent in 1957; Pontiac dropped from its 1955 share of 7.4 percent to 5.3 percent in 1957.

Now General Motors began to feel the crunch. For 1958 management pushed Chevrolet into full competition by putting a former Dream Car, the "Impala", into production as the top of the line model selling at over \$3,000. Buick and Oldsmobile received major style changes and Pontiac was completely restyled. For 1959 General Motors planned to restyle its complete line -- including Chevrolet and Pontiac -- and to drop its normal three year cycle of style changeovers in favour of a two year pattern, in a strong affirmation of the belief in the power of styling and planned obsolescence. To help reduce the

tremendous costs entailed by such a plan, the interchangeability among its various makes was increased by standardizing one basic body shell as Chrysler had earlier. The "A" body (Chevrolet and Pontiac) was to be dropped and the "B" body (Buick, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac) would become the basic body for the complete General Motors line.

With both Ford and General Motors sporting all-new bodies for 1959, total sales climbed to 5.4 million, an improvement over 1958 but still far from the manufacturers' early expectations. Yet, in spite of the increase, the Big Three continued to lose part of their market penetration. The responsibility for this loss lay not with their low-priced or high-priced makes, which managed to maintain or even increase their market shares, but with the middle-priced makes. The shares of the middle-priced lines fell from over 40 percent in 1955 to 30 percent in 1957 to 25 percent in 1960; Buick dropped down to a mere 4 percent in 1959, Oldsmobile to less than 6 percent, Mercury to 2.6 percent from 5.2 percent in 1955, and Chrysler's Desoto was taken off the market in 1960. Other long-established names in the middle-priced range also fell by the wayside, namely, Hudson, Nash, and Packard. And the Edsel, introduced in late 1957, fared so poorly that it was scrapped at the end of 1959.⁶ The decline in penetration of the Big Three was matched by the increased penetration of the foreign manufacturers and to a lesser extent the American independent manufacturers. Foreign cars went from less than one percent of the market to 3.5 percent in 1957 to over 10 percent in 1959; American Motors climbed from less than 2 per-

cent in 1955 to 4 percent in 1958 and to 6 percent in 1959 (Brantl, 1963).

The manufacturers' maneuvers in the late 1950's were in line with their 1954-1955 perception of the future market and their concept of the automobile as "an all purpose vehicle which could be fitted to an amorphous predominantly middle-class market by the use of optional equipment" (Edwards, 1965: 134. See also "Optional Extras: Detroit's Way of Making Cars Fit Many Tastes", Business Week, April 6, 1957, pp. 113+). Their maneuvers also followed the orderly progression of style change which they thought so important. The resulting intrusion of the traditional low-priced volume leaders (Chevrolet, Ford, and Plymouth) into the price ranges of the traditional middle-priced group and vice versa, plus the standardization of body shells led to what Eric Larrabee (1958, 1960) calls the "homogenization" of the American automobile. Automobiles had been

reduced from a family of products satisfying many tastes and needs to an inbred group of first cousins aping each other. With the acceptance of the full-line policy of basic-to-deluxe models in each division, homogenization is complete; there is some cream in every quart and fewer visible ways to tell Grade A from Grade C. . . Not content to reach just a slice of the mass middle-class market, each major producer engages in all-out competition to "cover" all the features any other might offer. So car personalities have blurred and distinctions have dwindled as all design is shaped around a hypothetical median point. Inevitably, this has produced the "big package", not only in outline but in detail; more power, more length, more chrome, and more money ("This Way to the New American 'Small Car'?" Industrial Design, February, 1959, pp. 78-79).

In following this process the industry planners locked onto the image of success that seemed to work so well with the customers of the early fifties: not only did they come to believe in the goodness of bigness but they closed their minds to any other values. And in doing so the industry "defied the rule of differentiation: it reduced the purchase of a new car from a choice among options to a minimum necessity" ("This Way to the New American 'Small Car'?" Industrial Design,⁸ February, 1959, p. 80). The status symbolism and the nouveau riche mentality were no longer as operational; the consumer's

once exclusive love affair with Detroit and its products had ended in the great fling of 1955. . . .

What had really happened was: (1) A sudden disaffection with the price of cars in relation to the new demands being placed on the consumer's purse. (2) The first inkling from abroad that you don't have to pay \$2,500 - \$3,500 to get basic transportation, which many suburbanites came to realize was what they really needed.

It was no longer smart -- certainly not economical -- to tie up money or future earning (in installment credit) for autos whose functional qualities, such as inside roominess and easy handling in traffic, were declining with each new model ("Detroit Enters New Competitive Era With Its 1960 Models", Business Week, August 8, 1959, p. 62).

The industry had become stranded on a price and style plateau from which it could not easily remove itself at a time when the economy was receding and the market was differentiating into "a conglomerate of mass, segmented markets, each with its own needs, income levels, family characteristics and each with money to spend on a product if it is tailored to its needs" ("Detroit Enters New Competitive Era With Its 1960 Models", Business Week, August 8, 1959, pp. 72-73).

These trends, plus the growing demand for second cars, had been noted by industry observers as far back as 1954. But for various reasons, the policymakers did not want to change the direction of the industry just then.⁹ By 1957, however, it was apparent that the Big Three were moving away from a sizeable number of car buyers, as evidenced by the growing foreign car market, the success of American Motors' Rambler, and the increasing public criticism of the Big Three's products.¹⁰ The administrators told the designers to start planning the "small" or "compact" car which they wanted to have ready to market by 1960.¹¹ Yet, neither the administrators nor the designers knew much about the market at which they were aiming. In fact, they were riddled with misinformation and contradictory findings.¹² Further, the \$200 million investment required to bring a compact to market meant that a volume of at least 300,000 units had to be sold just to break even; this meant that the small car market had to be expanded far beyond its present size. The industry was in quite a state of confusion. An unnamed auto company official, when queried if his firm would be introducing a compact car, was quoted as declaring, "I can't say that. It's just not a sure thing yet. If we build one, it won't be in response to public demand -- it'll be a case of panic" (cited in Melder, 1960:480).

Under such uncertain and problematic conditions as existed in the late fifties, it is not surprising that the automobile manufacturers began to grasp at anything which would promote and stimulate the sale of automobiles. Motivational research was instituted on a large-scale by the auto makers.¹³

Teams of researchers were hired to find the effects of the sounds and smells of the car upon the buyer, to make sure that the car had the proper sounding door slam, etc. And, naturally, the symbolic nature of the automobile continued to be developed and exploited in design and advertising. Automobiles and the advertisements supposed to sell them more than ever came to spread the "Cadillac Syndrome", play upon aggressive impulses, challenge masculinity, hint at vicarious violence, symbolize freedom and individuality, and to stimulate unconscious sexual desires.¹⁴

In the meantime, with the assistance of the industry,¹⁵ hot rodding was growing and becoming more prosperous. However, because of certain developments the manufacturers faced the consequences of their activities in hot rodding. The participation of manufacturers in hot rodding events, and the consequent trumpeting of victories in mass advertising in the middle-fifties had increased to such an extent that many felt a point of absurdity had been reached. With their help contests had become so numerous and diversified that nearly every manufacturer could dominate a particular class or event; nearly every manufacturer won something it could boast about in its advertising. Victory began to carry a hollow ring. Added to this, public concern about highway safety and particularly the relation of the "horsepower race" and performance advertising to accidents had increased to such a degree¹⁶ that in late 1956 a subcommittee from the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee was formed to get answers to such questions. This investigation put the manufacturers on the spot to explain

why so much horsepower was necessary and why so much emphasis on speed and performance was required to sell cars (see "The Show Is Rough -- But Auto Safety Is the Point", Business Week, September 1, 1956, pp. 28-29).

Shortly after these hearings the Automobile Manufacturers Association, a peak trade association which included the representatives from the Big Three, passed a resolution declaring that the industry would involuntarily stop factory participation in organized racing and stop using the results in advertising campaigns. Passed unanimously at its meeting of June 6, 1957, the resolution read:

Whereas, the Automobile Manufacturers Association believes that the automobile manufacturers should encourage owners and drivers to evaluate passenger cars in terms of useful power and the ability to provide safe, reliable and comfortable transportation, rather than in terms of capacity for speed.

Now therefore, this board unanimously recommends to the member companies engaged in the manufacture and sale of passenger cars and station wagons that they:

(1) Not participate or engage in any public contest, competitive event or test of passenger cars involving or suggesting racing or speed, including acceleration tests, or encourage or furnish financial, engineering, manufacturing, advertising or public relations assistance, or supply "pace cars" or "official cars", in connection with any such contest, event, or test, directly or indirectly.

(2) Not participate or engage in, or encourage or assist employees, dealers or others to engage in, the advertising or publicizing of: (a) any race or speed contest, test or competitive event involving or suggesting speed, whether public or private, involving passenger cars, or the results thereof; or (b) the actual or comparative capabilities of passenger cars for speed, or the specific engine size,

torque, horsepower or ability to accelerate or perform, in any context that suggests speed.

On the surface, such action was an attempt to defuse the public issue and was in part motivated by the fear of government legislation which would interfere with the industry's autonomy. Moreover, given the escalation of competition in racing and advertising to what many observers believed were points of diminishing returns, it appears obvious to these outsiders that this agreement was a collusive and relatively costless action -- in fact, a cost saving action, considering the estimated \$3 million Ford and Chevrolet were each spending on such activities. For their efforts, national sales figures did not seem to show much in the way of results. However, research in the Ford Motor Company Archives supplemented by the more extensive research of Leo Levine in Ford and by the insider's story of former Chevrolet engineer Paul Van Valkenburgh reveals a more complex and complicated picture. It is all the more interesting because the AMA agreement was not well adhered to and was finally overthrown by Ford and Chrysler.

The idea for the resolution was first proposed to the AMA by then GM president Harlow Curtice in February, 1957. Certainly a factor in its proposal -- and ultimate acceptance -- was the criticism by the public and the heads of various states directed to performance themes and campaigns. Much support for the proposal came from the top level engineers. However, as Levine (1968:225) points out, their support was motivated no less out of concern for public welfare than by concern for their own reputations and positions. For participa-

pation in hot rod events and racing programs were public exhibitions of engineering prowess. When cars broke down, as they inevitable did under the severe stresses and strains of racing -- responsibility could be attributed to the engineers, especially the chief engineers. The public was now evaluating production automobiles in settings which reflected directly upon them. "It had to be reprehensible to the management engineers, and when they found a willing ally in such organizations as the AAMVA and the National Safety Council, they were quick to take advantage of it" (Levine, 1968:225).

This management attitude was not necessarily shared by the engineering technostucture and this created the conditions which would prove problematic later. According to Levine (1968:225-226):

On the lower levels there were young men straining every nerve to improve their products to the point where they would be better than those of the competition, men who had suddenly discovered a whole new avenue of engineering endeavour, and who realized how important it was -- not only to a racing program, but to making the series production vehicle that much better for the consumer. On the upper levels there were some persons who just didn't want to be bothered -- or be shown up in a contest they had always been able to lay off on the sales department.

At Ford Motor Company there was some opposition expressed within the corporation. When the proposal was being discussed before its tabling at the AMA, several persons voiced their concerns and their reasons. Some of these were contained in a report to A.A. Kucher, the vice president of engineering staff, by James O. Wright, assistant general manager of Ford Division, written in early April, 1957. Wright argued

that the proposal that "performance advertising may be abandoned for 1958 and subsequent years probably springs from a feeling that Ford's 1958 engine program will continue to keep it in a position of supremacy in stock car racing." He went on to argue for keeping the racing program alive in order to ensure that this position will be maintained "since we have every reason to believe that if we should lessen our efforts, other manufacturers will quickly increase their already sizeable interests in this field to the detriment of our sales and dealer morale." Another set of reasons was presented in a memorandum written on May 8, 1957, to Robert McNamara, then general manager of the Ford Division, by C.R. Beacham, general sales manager of the Ford Division.

We would like to recommend the Ford Division continue to participate. . . . Racing will not stop as a result of any AMA resolution; and because of the peculiarities of the Ford and Chevrolet products, the Ford car -- unless in the hands of capable mechanics with adequate equipment and parts, and driven by the best drivers -- cannot outperform the Chevrolet. . . . Because of this, an individual or a dealer cannot devote the money necessary to assure a winning Ford. . . . We believe General Motors recognizes these facts and is using the AMA as a guise for drawing us away from our objective, knowing full well that they will achieve superiority purely on the basis of having a car more easily adaptable to racing than the Ford.

At Ford, management prevailed aided by the fact that Ford was a recent member of the AMA and top management "did not want to go against the majority feeling of a club in which it was a new member" (Levine, 1968:226). At General Motors and Chrysler there was by no means a consensus within their

ranks on this issue, either, as will be discussed shortly.

People at Ford thought that the General Motors management was trying to take advantage of the situation. Whether this was the case or not, it is apparent that General Motors, and Chevrolet in particular, had less to lose under the resolution. "Chevrolet had stolen a march on everyone by using racing as a new and exciting medium through which to introduce its V-8," says Levine (1968:232). It was that and more, as the preceding analysis suggests. As C.R. Beachman noted above, the Chevrolet V-8 was better engineered in terms of its hot rodability than anything Ford had. And the Chevrolet promotion had struck first and made its point in a relative short period of time. It follows that with those goals achieved, the racing support was no longer necessary; "from now on, private persons who went racing would purchase Chevy products before all else and thus further enhance the performance reputation of the make" (Levine, 1968:232). This is an interesting hypothesis, but there is virtually no way to determine if such thinking was behind the actions of GM management. But it was prevalent in the minds of a number of people at Ford and Chrysler. And, as will be shown, it influenced greatly the interpretation of subsequent events.

These events stem from the conflict noted above between management and the technostructure and the way this conflict worked itself out in the corporate structures. Within large corporations, most divisions have a good deal of freedom from the "front office"; similarly for departments within divisions. This autonomy allows for a degree of interpretation of

policy as well as for independent action (within limits). When the managements imposed the AMA resolution upon their divisions there was a lot of interpreting. This was reinforced by the actual wording of the resolution itself. It was not an enforced contract between producers, although it was explicit and iron-clad as to what activities were not allowed. But it was only a "recommendation". As Paul Van Valkenburgh (1972:43) put it: "Every manufacturer was absolutely free to do exactly what it chose anyhow, because the resolution had all the implied power -- and unenforcability -- of a United Nations censure. However, the top executives at GM and Ford had agreed, and they immediately began to disassemble their racing operations." Only the top executives did not do the disassembly themselves -- they gave a policy directive to the division heads who passed it on to those people who were in charge of the programs. Here is where the trouble began. The terms of the resolution specified no racing or advertising, but short of that, as noted, it was wide open. Ford management took the resolution seriously and interpreted it literally. They were quite clear and strict in making sure it was implemented correctly. At General Motors, however, the situation was different. In the following discussion, the activities at General Motors will be described first and then those at Ford. Many of the details are not available, and of those that are, only a select few will be presented to provide a sufficient outline.

The conflict between the technostructure and management at General Motors worked itself out in a very interesting way. For reasons which remain obscure, GM management chose not to be

literal in its interpretation and implementation of the AMA resolution. Of course, racing programs were ordered stopped. After the ban the Chevrolet Division was never officially represented at hot rod and other races, never built a complete, running racing car, paid a driver to race their cars, claimed credit for race victories, or promoted them in advertising. Nevertheless, numerous activities and developments took place at Chevrolet and other GM divisions which were highly questionable under the terms of the resolution -- and did more than raise eyebrows outside the corporation. Paul Van Valkenburgh, a former engineer at Chevrolet Engineering, has compiled a detailed account of the activities at Chevrolet in the postwar period to 1970. According to him:

General Motors never consciously broke the AMA decision not to participate in "speed events". Even Chevrolet never overtly decided to go racing. But in an organization as big as General Motors, powerful individuals can conceal a large number of nebulous activities. Especially if these activities are privately admired by anyone who happens to stumble across them. Therefore, the reason Chevrolet began looking a little suspicious was not that a racing organization was formed, but because individuals -- high, middle, and low placed -- were interested in racing, for any number of personal reasons. You will find the same interest in any corporation, but at Chevrolet, the people had the means to get involved (Van Valkenburgh, 1972:75).

These "nebulous" and "suspicious" activities, which will be discussed in a moment, obviously could not be performed in the open but could not be totally concealed either. Eventually, management would come across them. At Chevrolet they were tolerated, within limits. Van Valkenburgh's description of this process

will be quoted:

As more and more upper echelon people realized what was going on down deep in the company, justification appeared as it was needed. The continuation of any activity was always based upon the relative value of man-hours versus demonstrable results. And because of the comparatively low costs -- compared to what Ford, Ferrari, Porsche, Lotus and others were investing in competition -- it didn't take much to convince the people with the purse-strings that they were getting a lot for their dollars. As far as the corporation hierarchy was concerned . . . a few people had made a relatively arbitrary, inconsequential decision, and since they felt it had no great influence on the Corporation one way or another, it simply was not worth internal policing. There were other problems far greater than that of a few inside people who were racing fanatics (Van Valkenburgh, 1972:75).

But there were limits. As Van Valkenburgh describes the situation, it became a game of insiders versus outsiders with the insiders hording information and covering their activities as best they could. Going too far meant the end of the action, but with no policy guidelines no one knew how far was too far.

Among the activities during this period Van Valkenburgh describes are the following: (1) In 1958 the new head of GM Styling, Bill Mitchell, decided to build his own sports car, justified as a styling exercise, and raced the car under his personal sponsorship. (2) The development of the Q-car or CERV (Chevrolet Engineering Research Vehicle). (3) The development work on the Corvette Stingray which involved racing tests and supplying equipment and technical assistance to specific private racers. (4) Performance engine development. (5) The continual development of high performance parts, justified as necessary for the Corvette and heavy duty automotive applications (police

cars, etc.). The tooling costs for these parts were amortized by making the parts available in all other Chevrolet products.

They weren't necessary on the everyday sedan, but they were available for those who needed them, for whatever reason. Chevrolet couldn't keep them from anyone who wanted to race. Everyone had equal access to all the pieces too, since the list was distributed to every Chevrolet dealer from coast-to-coast (Van Valkenburgh, 1972:44, emphases in original).

(6) The publication just before the resolution of a booklet entitled 1957 Chevrolet Stock Car Competition Guide, available at Chevrolet dealers in 1957. This booklet described how to modify the Chevrolet for racing in explicit detail.

At the Pontiac Motor Division, Semon E. (Bunkie) Knudsen, the new General Manager, instituted a change-the-image policy which aimed at establishing "a performance image by dominance of stock car racing" (Levine, 1968:241). Beginning in June, 1957, Pontiac engineers were staging high speed tests at their proving grounds. Outside suppliers were contracted to develop high performance parts. Pontiac dealers began to sponsor racing teams and to advertise victories. The business press noted these developments:

Suddenly Pontiac dealers began entering cars in stock car races -- and winning. The auto industry has a ban on factory participation in racing, but Pontiac officially didn't have to lift a finger to benefit. The performance of the cars was lavishly praised in auto fan magazines which was more effective than any direct efforts Pontiac Division could make ("Medium-Priced Car that Defies Eclipse", Business Week, September 16, 1961, p. 63 emphasis added).

At Pontiac and Chevrolet another strategy employed was to juggle the advertised horsepower and shipping weight figures. These

figures were the factors that determined a particular model's stock car class in drag racing. The effect was to get a promising model into certain promising classes. Sometimes just an extra five pounds on the published weight, or just cutting the horsepower rating by five would put a model into a lower class where it would be virtually unbeatable.

At Ford, where the AMA resolution was taken seriously by management, the main activity was the disposition of the assets of the racing teams. A number of the organizations set up by or in conjunction with the Ford racing program were more or less given the parts and equipment on hand to carry on racing as private concerns. The activities at General Motors did not go unnoticed at Ford, however. In January, 1958, Robert McNamara had "had enough of the rumors and ordered an investigation. The confidential report, which covers inquiries and interviews made during January, 1958, is a thick and detailed affair, which better than any other collection of documents illustrates the situation at the time" (Levine, 1968:241). This researcher was unable to gain access to this report, although it is briefly covered by Levine. Some of its information was presented above. Other information will not be presented as the situation is quite clear. One thing, though, is important to note. It was found that some people believed that Ford was not living up to the agreement. This opinion was based upon the scale of the activities and amount of equipment of the now private operations of certain organizations -- which led to the conclusion that Ford had to be behind them.

McNamara responded to this report by ordering actions within Ford which directed that any type of support of racing be stopped. The only concrete evidence against General Motors was that Chevrolet had kept a number of racing parts in their catalog. According to Levine (1968:243), "The young Turks in the corporation wanted Ford to include similar stuff in its catalog offerings . . ." But McNamara wrote to Chevrolet about the matter. Over a year later, the parts still remained in the Chevrolet catalog. The attitudes of Ford management began to change. This was reinforced by the sales slump of 1958 and the defeat by Chevrolet in the sales race -- after having beaten Chevrolet in 1957. Their actions will be discussed shortly.

It is clear that the automobile manufacturers continued to exploit, incorporate and develop hot rodding throughout the late 1950s and into the 1960s. The industry-wide ban on participation in hot rod events moved such activity to a more clandestine level within the corporations. In fact, it actually had the effect of boosting hot rodding. In the middle 1950s the manufacturers were supporting a relatively few racing teams and organizations. They were not interested in building race-type cars for mass production -- the physical design of the automobile, its symbolic definition in terms of middle class images, and the nature of production technologies would not allow it. However, with technological developments in production and the AMA ban on racing, one strategy which developed was, in effect, to let the amateurs do the racing and generate the publicity for the companies. Since it was not feasible to

build and sell complete race cars to such a small market, the solution was to increase the amount of performance equipment available as regular optional equipment off the assembly line or at the parts department. Consequently, the performance differential between commercial and race-only cars began to decline greatly as high performance engines and heavy duty auxiliary parts became optional equipment available to anyone who checked off the right box on the order form. Witness the "optional" engines which were developed under the anti-performance agreement: Chevrolet, 409 cubic inches, 425 horsepower (with two 4-barrel aluminum carburetors and a special solid-lifter camshaft); Pontiac, 421 cubic inches, 370 horsepower; Ford and Mercury, 427 cubic inches, 425 horsepower; Plymouth, 426 cubic inches, 425 horsepower; Dodge, 426 cubic inches, 415 horsepower; Chrysler, 413 cubic inches, 390 horsepower.

By increasing the performance available to hot rodders both the excitement of involvement and spectator appeal was increased. By removing the manufacturers from the scene, the way was open for many other entrepreneurs to get on the bandwagon. The slack was more than taken up by automotive-related companies -- many of which could be considered to be part of the automobile industry itself, such as manufacturers of spark plugs, shock absorbers, tires, etc. Not to mention oil and gasoline companies. For example, in 1961 Autolite, a relative late comer to hot rodding, spent \$1.7 million on automobile race support; it also sponsored a TV movie entitled The Racer, which cost \$2.25 million. Other non-automotive corporations, such as soft drink manufacturers, joined in. The effect of this diver-

sification was to increase the volume of money flowing into and out of hot rodding, advertising and promotion, and numbers of people who came into contact with hot rodding. It was around this time that hot rodding became respectable.

The 1960s

For the automobile industry to have a high sales year there must be a high interest in cars. That is, according to industry analysts, people must talk about cars more than anything else. In the early years of the 1960s people were not talking about cars:

Now they're talking about jobs and how the Kennedy Administration is doing. When the economy starts to come back, maybe enthusiasm for cars will come back. But the auto people aren't counting on it.

It is apparent that making cars smaller was only a temporary remedy for sales weakness -- and only a limited one. . . .

There is no common denominator in today's market ("Detroit's Sales Lures for 1962", Business Week, February 25, 1961, pp. 29-30.

On top of this, the industry had no certain knowledge or beliefs about the tastes of the new car buyer:

The Big Three are sure of just two facts: the public is going to continue to use automobiles, and as the population grows the market must expand. But having little confidence that the shape of the future markets can be predicted with any accuracy, they are setting out to make cars to probe for business in every segment (William B. Harris, "Detroit Shoots the Works", Fortune, June, 1959, p. 248).

The early years of the sixties were viewed as experimental; the manufacturers flooded the market with a bewildering array of full size and compact cars designed in the late fifties, and then "waited", to see what trends would develop.

Waiting for trends to develop is not exactly the correct description of the industry's actions at this time. General Motors, for example, attempted to influence not only the car-buying public but the whole economy as well. An article in Business Week describes and interprets the situation with crystal clarity:

General Motors Corp., the world's biggest manufacturing company, this week trotted out its biggest guns to buck a recession state of mind.

It opened a new version of its Motorama -- that elaborate and decorative product display last shown in 1958 -- and its chief executive officer announced that "the economy should be in a strong position to expand in 1961."

GM's actions are unabashedly contrived to give stability to a wishy washy economy and to spark up 1961 auto sales that are looking good only on paper.

GM executives seriously believe that the Motorama stirs up excitement about automobiles -- and dealers are telling Business Week there's not enough excitement about cars. Further, the executives believe that their company's activities in the national economy are important enough to have a ripple effect on business confidence.

That's why Chmn. Frederick G. Donner told a New York gathering of the country's most important and influential businessmen that GM next year is investing \$1½ billion in its worldwide operations ("GM Bucks Buyer Resistance", Business Week, November 5, 1960, p. 20).

The Big Three were also going after the only consumer areas where there was interest and enthusiasm in cars, the hot rodders and to a more limited extent, the sports car set.¹⁸ Hot rods and sports cars were defined as exciting and fun to drive, youthful, masculine, etc. The compact cars introduced by the manufacturers were not as bulky or as expensive as full-size

cars. As such, they were much easier to "hot rod" -- that is, it would take less of an increase in horsepower to boost the performance of a compact than a full-size car. Six months after they were introduced the compacts were beefed up for hot rod racing:

It had to happen sooner or later
Corvair, Valiant and Falcon are offering
more horsepower for a specific purpose
-- stock car racing.

The automakers, true to the 1957 resolution of the AMA, are not promoting and publicizing the increased power in the compacts. But the extra "go" is available to any individual.

The Big Three apparently are bowing to pressure from promotion-oriented dealers and race car bugs who want just a little more pep than the next guy.

Just in time for the NASCAR compact car races at Daytona. . . . ("Compacts in Race to Boost Horsepower", Automotive Industries, February 1, 1960. p. 23).

At the same time, the manufacturers, especially Chevrolet and Pontiac, continued their clandestine participation in hot rod events and developed hot street engines and performance options. As 1961 began and the market remained unenthusiastic and unknown, other manufacturers became more open about following the success trail of Chevrolet and Pontiac; their representatives showed up noticeably at places where there was automotive enthusiasm, such as stock car races:

On the weekend of the big race at Daytona Beach last Sunday, there were two General Motors aircraft on the ramp of the airport.

Vacationing in Daytona on the same weekend were GM's vice-president for styling, William L. Mitchell; Chevrolet chief engineering Harry F. Barr; Chevrolet's sports car expert Zora Arkus-Duntov; Plymouth's police car specialist and former racing great, Romney Householder; GM's

Robert F. McLean, in charge of automobile design research; and a bevy of public relations men and lesser engineers from Pontiac, Buick, Ford, and Chrysler. . . . Pontiacs took the first three places . . . ("Detroiters Go To The Races Again", Business Week, March 4, 1961, pp. 24-25).

Given these areas of automotive enthusiasm and the support given them by the manufacturers, it is not surprising that a trend they found developing was an interest in "sporty" cars. When Chevrolet introduced the Corvair Monza (102 horsepower, bucket seats, and four-on-the-floor) lagging Corvair sales boomed; Monza models accounted for 60 percent of all Corvair sales in 1961. Reinforcing this trend and also indicating a growing preference for more expensive styles, luxury, and accessories, was the success of the high-priced, high-performance makes (Thunderbird, Corvette, Chrysler 300, Studebaker, Gran Turismo Hawk) in 1959, 1960, and 1961.¹⁹

The producers moved at this time to blanket this high-priced high-performance market by 1963 with several brand new cars and several new models. Studebaker would bring out the fibre-glass Avanti; Buick was to introduce the Riviera sports coupe; Oldsmobile would market the Starfire; Pontiac would produce the Grand Prix; and the Corvette would be completely restyled. The market for these cars, even though it was growing, would have to be stimulated quite a bit to satisfy the makers' expected sales: "Their sales hopes hang on developing a market at least half again as large as studies indicate. So the competition should be fierce" ("Sounding the T-Bird Market", Business Week, September 29, 1962, p. 26).

Now performance was a market, or rather, several markets. And some changes were coming with respect to the AMA anti-performance resolution. Back in 1959, Ford management, as mentioned in the previous section, was getting perturbed about the actions of Chevrolet and Pontiac in particular. They tried to work out some arrangement to stop such actions at GM.

The pile of evidence pointing toward Chevrolet's and Pontiac's violations of at least the spirit of the AMA agreement was difficult for Ford to accept. Company officials felt they had entered into the agreement in good faith and had kept watch to ensure that its actions would be as good as its word. Now, with the facts of the matter increasingly apparent, in the spring of the year top-level negotiations were started with General Motors, first verbally, and then through a letter on April 27 (Levine, 1968:253).

Levine reveals what was in this letter.

The letter outlined what had happened, offered suggestions as to what could be done about it, and offered a more workable agreement. The letter added that Ford was now going to make available the same type of high performance parts offered by Chevrolet and Pontiac, as this action was considered mandatory if Ford were to stay alive in the marketplace. On a long-range basis, the letter concluded, Ford was still anxious to work out a more satisfactory agreement (Levine, 1968:253).

General Motors did not respond -- no one knows why. From this point on, Ford was on its way back to racing. The first efforts in this direction were limited and unorganized. A group of three engineers had been put together in 1958 to work undercover at developing the performance capabilities of the Ford engine and to build some race cars. They formed the basis for the "limited re-entry", as it was called in internal company memos,

thought to be sufficient to accomplish the goals. The performance equipment they developed was to be listed in the catalogues and sold over the counter.

By 1960 it was apparent that this was insufficient. When Lee Iacocca was installed as General Manager of the Ford Division, he acted quickly. The first thing he wanted to do to turn things around was to create an image for Ford products. After a series of meetings, it was decided to develop an image based on the idea of "total performance" and product development which reflected this theme. As Leo Levine (1968:258) describes it:

General Motors had a virtual lock on the auto industry, its cars appealed to a broad spectrum of the population -- and the only way to get back in a contending (much less superior) position was to build better ones and let people know they were better. Iacocca decided to do it by creating excitement. ("When you don't have anything the quickest way to generate something is excitement. Earlier it had really built up inside of me that we were going to go racing on all fronts. . . . I wasn't as interested in stock cars per se as I was on all fronts -- a more sophisticated approach.")

Halfway through 1962 "Ford Drops Out of Pact Curtailing Advertising of Speed and Horsepower" (Business Week, June 16, 1962, p. 40) and Chrysler followed suit. ²⁰ Within the next few years Ford was spending over \$20 million a year on its racing activities and participating actively in rod and custom shows across the country. Chrysler was spending over \$3 million a year on racing and developed two powerful engines specifically ²¹ for stock car and drag racing events. General Motors did not follow Ford and Chrysler's lead but in fact reinforced the 1957 ²² AMA resolution with a new performance ban in the winter of 1962.

At the drag races the manufacturers began a competition to dominate the Super Stock (S/S) class (standard-size cars with the largest engine options available). To this end, in mid-1961 Pontiac introduced a special limited-production 1962 model with an aluminum front end (to improve the front/rear weight ratio) powered by a 421 cubic inch, 405 horsepower Super Duty engine with dual four barrel carburetion. This was followed by a more expensive and radical 1963 car with 420 horsepower and such weight saving devices as a "swiss cheese" frame (holes drilled into the frame to remove the metal), aluminum headers, single street exhaust pipe and muffler system, aluminum bellhousing, and sealer and undercoating deleted. The battery was repositioned to the trunk for better traction.

Chevrolet expanded its 348 cubic inch, 350 horsepower engine to 409 cubic inches and 409 horsepower for the 1962 racing season and followed Pontiac's lead in 1963 with an all aluminum body combined with a "mystery" 427 cubic inch powerhouse. Ford kept in competition by boring and stroking its big engine from 390 cubic inches to 406 and then to 427 from 1961 to 1963 and by using fibre-glass body panels to maintain competitive racing weight.

Dodge and Plymouth raced their 413 cubic inch, 410 horsepower engines in 1962 and sported 426 cubic inches and 425 horsepower in 1963. In 1962 Dodge introduced a compact-size Lancer with a 413 cubic inch engine swapped into it. This car was built for the A/Factory Experimental (A/FX) class. It so completely dominated this popular class that strong retaliatory measures were shortly forthcoming from other manufacturers. The

intensity of the competition led to such innovations as altered wheelbases, blown fuel engines, front seat-only interiors, wild paint jobs, etc. These cars were so inexpensive and so strange-looking that they came to be called "funny cars". Limited to the hands of a few professional drivers, their super performance and the continuing "improvements" from the factories transformed this class into a premier spectator attraction and the drivers into star personalities. (See Engle, 1968 on the evolution of the funny car.)

The competition became very intense. But it was a benign competition which attracted attention, and more importantly, attracted the attention of the young buyers -- the youth market: "It is the youth market that most attracts auto salesmen. Detroit is designing sporty cars, emphasizing convertibles and talking up the performance the young set admires" (Auto Sales Drive to Higher Peaks", Business Week, April 27, 1963, p. 31). Hot rodding itself had become legitimate and had turned into a more or less viable market. The "soft spot" the industry had been supporting all these years had become a market in and for itself. More than that, hot rodding was a key to the still growing youth market which would dominate the car-buying scene until the end of the decade. From a 1963 vantage point the top of the line automobiles of 1965 and beyond would be designed and defined significantly in terms of sport and performance.

The 1962 designs were set back in 1958 and 1959, and the Big Three moved toward the hot rod and youth market by introducing new sporty models (high-performance engines, bucket seats, four-speed transmissions with floor shifter) and new features

in mid-season as optional sports models. Plymouth introduced its Sports Fury, Ford its Falcon Sports Futura, Fairlane Sports Coupe, and Galaxie 500XL, Mercury its Monterey S-55 and Meteor S-33, and Chevrolet its Corvair Monza Spyder (see "The New 1962½ Models", Business Week, February 24, 1962, pp. 30-31). In 1963 Chevrolet brought out its Impala Super Sport, and all manufacturers put their main emphasis on these sporty optional models.

Now these models were based mainly on standard sized cars. This automatically made them fairly expensive to the "youth", the more so when the special options which made the car a hot rod were tacked on. On top of this was the necessity of engines of over 400 cubic inches in displacement and over 400 horsepower to move these machines at currently acceptable hot rod speeds. New, more efficient engines were in the works but they would not be able to produce that much more power than those currently in use. Moreover, public concern and criticism and management fears also would keep horsepower ratings from rising much higher. Advertised tops was 425 hp -- although actual output was much higher in some cases. Thus, the industry had lost one of its main features and had not even hit the hot rod market directly yet. It would have its full-bred sports designs out in 1965, but it would not be able to boast horsepower any higher than the 1963 figures.

The way out of this dilemma was paved when General Motors enlarged its compact cars to 115 inch wheelbases. These larger compacts could accomodate larger engines than the early compacts; an engine of over 300 cubic inches but less than 400 cubic inches in these compacts could give comparable or better

performance than the over 400 cubic inch engines in a standard size car. This fact would allow the manufacturers to hit the hot rod market and still have something left over for the late sixties; these 300-400 cubic inch engines could be "developed" for several years, then the new engines could be introduced at slightly larger displacements and developed from there.

Further, these cars, being compacts, would be cheaper to buy both initially and loaded with performance options. To further reduce costs at both the manufacturing and consumer ends, these cars were produced as specific models with most everything already standard equipment. This allowed the use of designed-in identification features (status symbols) and performance equipment (such as hood scoops, dual exhausts, etc., also status symbols), which in turn would greatly facilitated the promotion of these vehicles.

Interestingly, the first official Super Car was introduced by General Motors Pontiac Division in 1964 -- the Pontiac Tempest GT0. Other integrated packages based on the GM 115 inch wheelbase chassis soon followed: the Oldsmobile Cutlass 4-4-2 (400 cubic inches, 4 barrel carburetor, twin exhaust), the Buick Skylark Grand Sport, and the Chevelle SS 396, (Super Sport 396 cubic inches). Ford was caught short by the first generation of super cars. Its compact had not been designed to take an engine of over 300 cubic inches and it was not until 1966 that Ford could resign its Fairlane and Comets to accept a 390 cubic inch engine and call them GT's. Chrysler was in much the same situation as Ford; its official entry into the Super Car game was not until late 1966 with its 440 cubic inch,

375 horsepower Plymouth Belvedere GTX's and Dodge Coronet R/T's. Part of the problem at Ford and Chrysler was that they were so involved in their racing programs that they neglected to put their performance development onto the street. The reinforced performance ban at General Motors helped get GM performance on the street. Among the reasons for this action cited by observers and persons interviewed were: (1) GM was warned that such competition and advertising might bring government action against the industry as a whole, one of the threats which moved all the manufacturers to endorse the 1957 AMA anti-performance resolution; (2) GM could afford to stay out of the competition because it already commanded 55 percent of the total domestic market; (3) GM was afraid of being broken up by antitrust officials who had been looking for a long time for ways to accomplish this task; (4) GM did not want to "crowd" the field as happened in 1956 and 1957 when everybody was winning something. According to Jim Wangers, who at that time was an account executive with Pontiac's advertising agency, McManus, John and Adams Inc., "The corporate edict simply flat-landed on all the divisions, announcing once again they were pulling out of racing, and this time they were serious. It didn't mean go under the table. It meant get out!" (cited in Gunnell, 1979:39). Pontiac was given six weeks to sever all connections with their professional racing teams. Chevrolet had to abandon development of its "mystery" 427 cubic inch engine and racing tie-ins.

Jim Wangers, mentioned earlier as an important figure in promoting Chevrolet involvement in stock car racing in 1955, was also instrumental in Pontiac activities. In the late 1950s

he developed a system of using dealers to funnel performance equipment from the factory to stock car racers. And he was instrumental in getting the GTO to the market. The GTO started out in a purely personal, non-market way as a one-off automobile built especially for John DeLorean, the general manager of Pontiac. He organized a group of people to research the idea of modifying the Tempest model by putting the large 389 cubic inch Pontiac engine into it and adding the braking and suspension system from the large Pontiac models. Only one was intended to be built. According to DeLorean: "The GTO was really a car that I built for myself originally, and I took a standard Tempest and sort of blocked it out, and put a bigger engine in it. And I just built it for my own personal use, and it was such a fun car to drive that we decided to go ahead and sell some" (cited in Gunnell, 1970:41).

It was not that simple, however. General Motors management in its 1962 performance ban had ruled that no intermediate-sized car could be built for sale with an engine over 330 cubic inches in size. DeLorean and Wangers figured out a way to get around this policy. This was to make the 389 cubic inch engine and the package that went with it, a factory option which they called the GTO (for Gran Turismo Omolгато). It was Wangers who sold the idea to Pontiac management and got it past GM corporate management. Wangers has said: "the car literally snuck out. They [Pontiac management] agreed that they would put them on the order forms, and allow dealers to order what they thought would be a very limited number. But at least they got it out, and it became available, and dealers were able to

order it before the corporation became aware of it. And Pete (Estes) approved that. He turned his head the other way and let them do it" (cited in Gunnell, 1979:42). Wangers also sold the car to the market. His advertising campaign utilized hot rod themes directly and effectively. He named the car Tiger. He launched a national Win a "GeeT0-Tiger" Contest in conjunction with Hurst Performance Products. The basis for this contest was to count the number of times the word "tiger" was sung in the song GeeT0-Tiger by the Tigers, and stating in twenty-five words or less, "Why I would like to own the original GeeTo-Tiger." Wangers wrote the song. It sold over a million copies. That year 32,450 GT0S were sold. Wangers believes twice as many could have been sold if they could have been produced more readily. Shortly thereafter eight other companies were in this market with eleven other cars.

Ford and Chrysler took a little longer than other GM divisions to get involved. As mentioned earlier, their compact cars were not designed to take a large engine and their racing programs concentrated performance development to race cars and advertising not so much on the production models. When the middle-priced cars were squeezed in the late fifties and the compacts were ready for introduction in the very early sixties, they both got almost completely out of the middle-price range and concentrated on the lower-priced segments of the market with economy-type compacts and middle-priced cars at sharply reduced prices. General Motors, on the other hand, refused to follow this formula for it had three divisions in the middle-price range. It wanted to move with the trend to compacts but

at the least sacrifice to Buick, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac. The Corvair was a partial answer -- a completely different type of car. The complete answer was the Buick, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac compacts which were not meant to be "basic transportation", but were meant to be small Buicks, Oldsmobiles, and Pontiacs. The aim was not only to recapture former owners but to give the persons "who always wanted an Oldsmobile" or Buick or Pontiac a chance to own one; and maybe he would eventually trade up in the Time (see "For Car Shoppers, Bewilderment in All Price Classes", Business Week, October 22, 1960, pp. 54-55+). "GM's strategy, in essence, was to give the public what it wanted (i.e., smaller, cheaper, more economical cars) while at the same time trying to lead the buyers back to the standard-sized, middle-priced market, where GM still possessed so much competitive strength" (Richard Austin Smith, "Detroit Is Flying by the Seat of Its Pants", Fortune, January, 1961, p. 189).

The upshot of the situation was that Ford and Chrysler left their compacts as "basic transportation" and concentrated their performance efforts on their standard-size cars in 1963 and 1964, while General Motors attempted to bolster its middle-priced divisions by upgrading its compacts in 1964.

While Ford was taking a back seat to General Motors on the street and in the development of the Super Car in 1962, 1963, and 1964, it was readying for market a car that would do more to influence the hot rod, sports car, and youth markets and set future trends than any other single car in history, the Mustang. In 1962 Ford was preparing the Mustang directly for the sports car market as a two-seater of limited dimensions

(see "Ford Unveils an Experimental Development: Two-Seater Sports Car, the Mustang", Business Week, October 6, 1962, p. 36). However, as Ford executives surveyed market conditions they decided to send the Mustang back to the drawing board to be redesigned as a four-seat sporty car with a low price tag (see "Careful Breeding of a Mustang", Sales Management, January 1, 1965, pp. 30-33). No other manufacturer was willing to market such a car. Hence when the Mustang was introduced in 1964 and was an immediate smash success, it had the market virtually to itself for two years until the other manufacturers could tool up similar cars.

Since the Mustang shared many component parts with the Falcon, including the front end, it was not designed to accommodate an engine of over 300 cubic inches. Yet, because it had no direct competition and because it was small and light, it did not really require much more than its 289 cubic inch, 271 horsepower optional engine to keep up with most of the standard-size high performance cars on the road. However, when the other manufacturers began to market their sporty four-seaters in 1967, the performance competition began in earnest. The "Pony Cars", as these cars came to be called, developed into integrated Super Car packages. The 1967 Mustang was restyled to accept a 390 cubic inch, 335 horsepower engine and was called the Mustang GT 390 in order to meet the challenge from the Chevrolet Camaro SS 396, the Pontiac Firebird 400 H0, the Mercury Cougar XR-7, etc.

The automobile industry did not pursue this path to the hot rodders and the youth without opposition however. Con-

cern about automotive safety and rising horsepower and speed had not stopped with the Congressional hearings in 1957. People like Daniel P. Moynihan (1959, 1962) and Ralph Nader (1959, 1963) were stirring things up with reports on how the industry was not developing safer cars as they thought it should have been doing. Nader's Unsafe at Any Speed (1965) along with several other books (for e.g., Kearney, 1966; O'Connell and Meyers, 1966) and much newspaper editorializing damned the industry for its performance orientation and its minimal lip-service to safety. In 1966 another Congressional hearing on automobile and highway safety and other related automotive matters began. The industry became defensive and credibility gaps opened between it and the "outside". The government passed legislation concerning certain safety features which were to become standard equipment on all new cars in the near future. Insurance companies began raising their rates on young drivers and high performance cars. It is not possible to detail all the developments and the industry's reactions to them at this time (see, for example, Ayers, 1970). It is sufficient here merely to note that the industry's commitments were already down for the late 1960s and were not likely to be changed for some time, whatever the opposition. But this time, unlike the 1950s, opposition to automotive interests was more organized and drew more support both from the public and from politicians. The era of automotive politics was beginning in earnest.

Summary

This chapter and the last have examined the relationship between the automobile industry and hot rodding over sever-

al short run periods covering roughly 21 years. This relationship has been viewed through the variables hypothesized to be significant in determining the definition of the automobile: (1) consumer responses; (2) the priorities of the manufacturers; (3) product technology; (4) the nature of the non-price competition in the industry.

At the industry level of analysis, the automobile manufacturers are seen to act in such ways as to reduce uncertainty in their environments in order to achieve their collective goals of corporate growth and increased automobile sales. Their technological structures and priorities led them to select certain consumer preferences and the social meanings associated with them for development and promotion through advertising and product design. Consumer choices were limited to the range of alternatives chosen by the manufacturers and presented in the market. The choices they made were then reinforced and developed further. The growth of hot rodding as a complementary behaviour pattern in the form of a critical albeit deviant subculture in the early 1950s provided the manufacturers access to important meanings and experiences which meshed with some of their interests and structure. Faced with increased demand uncertainty, manufacturers reacted by increasing their involvement with hot rod activities, promotion of symbolic aspects, and presentation of product designs. Even in the face of increasing public opposition, the industry incorporated and subsequently influenced and stimulated the growth of hot rodding. Ultimately, this action helped hot rodding to overcome much of its negative status by enabling it to become more organized and

to redefine itself as a sport. This incorporation enabled the industry to influence wide areas of its environment and even "lead" that environment to changes profitable to it. This is not to say that the industry had completely encroached on consumer autonomy. (Although for a while in 1955-1956-1957 the manufacturers thought they had consumers "on the string".) The strategies of incorporation of symbols and designs associated with hot rodding were merely part of a bundle of strategies aimed at a perceived mass market in the 1950s and the 1960s. While there was a lot of publicity and advertising generated and some effectiveness as measured by sales and profit (although this is not well determined), consumer preferences continued to be elusive and undefined as the industry's inconsistent performance in the late 1950s and early 1960s indicates. Environmental conditions beyond industry control were responsible in part, but also responsible were the manufacturers' own policies and designs -- which had pursued middle price, middle class avenues and increased product sizes and prices.

The complementarity of hot rodding was analyzed to be in terms of: (1) performance evaluation; (2) amortization of tooling; (3) legitimation and scapegoating; (4) opening new markets; (5) publicity and symbolism; (6) low cost; (7) corporate image promotion; (8) styling.

Throughout the period under examination here horsepower increases and new gasoline V-8 engines were legitimized and symbolized using hot rod themes. Hot rod events provided publicity and material for claims of progress, durability and quality. Hot rodding provided selected symbolism for advertising campaigns.

In the 1950s the symbolisms relating to masculinity, rugged individualism, youth, freedom, and experiences associated with exhilaration, excitement were incorporated into the manufacturers' perception of the market and its needs. Thus the themes were employed in middle class settings and images where they were more or less expressed within the controlled middle class images of comfort, luxury, progress, and gratification. As hot rodding grew these symbols and experiences were employed more and more on their own. This was also a means of tapping the youth market. Styling and product design followed similar trends. Automobiles went from all-in-one packages to differentiated packages of symbolism and characteristics -- with the Super Cars **receiving special emphasis.**

The increasing public opposition and protest against performance promotion by the manufacturers had the effect of pushing their participation in hot rodding "underground", so to speak. And as a result, more performance went into the street and onto the hands of amateurs through option lists and parts catalogues, and high performance engines. In the 1960s, the end result was the Super Car.

At the corporate level of analysis some light has been shed on the decision-making processes which took place within the various corporations. It was shown that in the early 1950s, the Chevrolet V-8 was being prepared by Edward Cole, in particular, who had hot rod performance and potential in mind. Cole was a hot rodder in the pre-war days and eventually became president of General Motors in 1967. Zora Arkus Duntov another enthusiast engineer and Cole appear to have had similar ideas

about the Chevy V-8 and how to "beat" Ford with it. Yet the involvement with stock car racing at the Chevrolet factory level appears to have been more a response at the division level to demand from a few racers which escalated into things nobody planned. Two advertising men, both hot rodders in the past, picked up on Chevrolet wins at the race track. They began the "Hot One" advertising campaigns. This more or less "forced" Ford into responding in kind. All financed by the advertising budget.

By 1957 competition had become relatively expensive (but it was still sales money not development money) and non-productive. The AMA agreement appeared to alleviate this situation -- but it was no collusive agreement, except on the surface. It favoured GM, was sponsored and raised by GM. Some people at Ford did not like it. Companies began to wonder if the others were cheating and began to do some themselves. In 1962 the agreement was overthrown. All throughout this period racing activities and hot rod participation were low priority items in the corporate structures of the Big Three. Nevertheless, they were effective straties within the context.

Even after 1962, the corporate racing activities and promotions were often disorganized and characterized by conflicts of interest. At GM everything performance oriented had to be "hidden" from the head office. Sympathetic division heads would turn their eyes so as not to see -- or do a little maneuvering themselves as with the GT0.

With respect to styling, the great influence of Harley Earl was mentioned; also mentioned was the fact that quite a number of the first and second generation designers were en-

thusiasts of one kind or another. They could not help but be influenced by and also influence the performance subculture.

In conclusion, this discussion has analyzed the incorporation of hot rodding by the automobile industry at two levels, the industry and the manufacturer. The sociological analysis at the industry level reveals the structural and behavioural links between the two and the functions of hot rodding for the industry. The manufacturer level analysis reveals the disorganized and almost haphazard way certain aspects of the incorporation took place -- especially with respect to engineering and racing. It is a story, in many respects, of individuals selling ideas and projects to committees and/or acting on his own initiative to realize particular interests within the corporate structures. These corporate structures and the goal of selling more cars dominated all the actions and decisions taken over this period.

FOOTNOTES

1

See, for example, "Needed, a New Revolution in Detroit", Business Week, February 22, 1958, p. 72; "Detroit Collides With the Consumer", Tide, March 14, 1958, pp. 40-43; "A Car Comes to Market Maybe Too Big and Two Years Too Late", Business Week, September 13, 1958, pp. 32-34; "Detroit Waits for Big Decisions", Business Week, December 13, 1958, pp. 23-24; "Detroit Makes About Face on Design", Business Week, February 28, 1959, pp. 24-25; "Detroit Shoots the Works", Fortune, June, 1959, pp. 100+.

2

See "The Challenge of the Mature Consumer", Business Week, December 10, 1960, p. 81; "Needed, a New Revolution in Detroit", Business Week, February 22, 1958, pp. 172; "Detroit Enters New Competitive Era With Its 1960 Models", Business Week, August 8, 1959, pp. 60-62+; "Detroit Makes an About-Face on Design", Business Week, February 28, 1959, pp. 24-25. See also Edwards, 1965; Rae, 1965, Riesman and Larrabee, 1958.

3

A "crash program" could shorten this to about two years. The long lead-time is "a compound of many things; the physical work of tooling and constructing the car is the least of it. The rest of the time results from management cautiousness and tinkering (fear of being too much like competition in detail and not enough like competition in general), engineering and testing far beyond what any customer would expect (or believe), and preparations for tooling that take both time and money (but not so much money as management claims publicly), ("A Car Comes to Market, Maybe Too Big and Two Years Too Late", Business Week, September 13, 1958, p. 32).

4

Besides tapping what appeared to be the market of the next few years, the middle-price makes with their higher prices gave substantially higher return to the makers than the low-priced sellers.

5

See William B. Harris, "Chrysler Takes the Bumps", Fortune, April 1954, pp. 127-130ff; William B. Harris, "Chrysler's Private Depression", Fortune, June, 1958 pp. 124-132+; Packard 1957:1-12; Keats, 1958:28.

6

See "A Car Comes to Market, Maybe Too Big and Two Years Too Late", Business Week, September 13, 1958, pp. 32-34; "Detroit Enters New Competitive Era With Its 1960 Models", Business Week, August 8, 1959, pp. 60-62+; "The Edsel Dies, and Ford Regroups Survivors", Business Week, November 28, 1959, pp. 26-28; "Whatever Happened to the Edsel", U.S. News & World Report, May, 1969, p. 16. See also Brooks, 1959; Larrabee, 1957, 1958; Deutsch, 1976.

7

The industry believed that radical change was upsetting and would not be well received by the public; change had to be gradual to be effective. See Mitarachi, 1955, and also "Designing a Car to Capture 1960's Market", Business Week, May 8, 1954, pp. 62-64+.

8

When a status symbol becomes easily available to many people, its prestige value declines. To remain a profitable commodity it must functionally differentiate itself to meet the many diverse needs and desires of its buyers. For example, sewing machines, refrigerators, ranges, televisions, etc., once were status symbols designed in only one style. As they became more and more of a minimum necessity, they had to differentiate in order to maintain or increase their markets. That is, they had to diversify their sizes, types, and prices as well as make basic improvements. "Apparently innovation and differentiation always have a market justification, if they really satisfy a growing awareness of individual preference" ("This Way to the New American 'Small Car'?" Industrial Design, February, 1959, p. 79. See also Packard, 1957, 1960.)

9

Among the reasons industry moguls were reluctant to move in the direction of more functional differentiation were: (1) they felt they had a good thing going and were reluctant to upset a smooth-sailing ship; (2) the trends were still too recent to risk the huge investment commitment required; (3) they were leery of the risk inherent in early product leadership; (4) they had seen other automotive failures -- such as the Austin American, the Henry J., the Willys, and the Crosley; (5) the domestic manufacturers had their own foreign subsidiaries which they could import to compete with other small-car imports. The self-complacency of the industry is reflected in the following quotation from a Special Report in Business Week: "... Detroit was the focus of a happy prosperity. Trainloads of executives each week rode the crack New York Central-Detroit commuting between Detroit, the production capital, and New York, the financial and propaganda capital. Gaily and confidently they enjoyed their enviable success. All you needed to know about the auto industry and where it was going could be heard in the Detroit clubs or on the overnight-Detroit. The brilliance of the industry's success blotted out any shadows of change, especially since change had become so unfamiliar" ("Detroit Enters New Competitive Era With its 1960 Models", Business Week, August 8, 1959, pp. 62-64+).

10

See "Place for Small Foreign Cars", Business Week, January 19, 1957, p. 34; "Clouding Detroit's 1958 Dream", Business Week, May 4, 1957, p. 50; "Volkswagen is Still Racing to Catch Up with Demand", Business Week, July 6, 1957, p. 93; "Fiat Stacks Its Chips on Small Car Market", Business Week, July 27, 1957, pp. 108-110+.

For examples of the increasing criticism of the U.S. built automobile, see "New Cars Called Symbol of Male Sex," Science Digest, September 1957, p. 33; M.L. Green, "Ego Cars; Waste on Wheels", American Mercury, December, 1958, pp. 20-23; see also Keats, 1958; Larrabee, 1957, 1958; Riesman and Larrabee, 1958; Hayakawa, 1962a, 1962b.

11

"A Place for Small Foreign Cars", Business Week, January 26, 1957; "Detroit Thaws a Bit to Small Cars", Business Week, October 5, 1957, p. 52; "Why AMC Can Gamble on Its Small Car", Business Week, January 11, 1958, pp. 78-79+; "That U.S. Built Small Car", Business Week, March 28, 1958, p. 27; "Will Success Spoil the Imported Car Market?", Business Week, April 12, 1958, pp. 30-31; "Small Cars Coming by 1960", Business Week, May 31, 1958, pp. 15-16; "What Smaller Cars Are Coming", Business Week, January 17, 1959, pp. 29-31; "Detroit Makes an About-Face on Design", Business Week, May 23, 1959, p. 36. See also the following articles in other business periodicals: H.R. Neal, "Are Small Cars Here to Stay?" Iron Age, April 17, 1958, p. 78+; "Detroit Still Asks Will Small Cars Play?" Steel, August 25, 1958, pp. 61-62; "Small Car Threat and Its Weakness; You Can't Ignore 500,000 Customers", Printers Ink, April 25, 1958, pp. 43-49+.

12

See "Why AMC Can Gamble on Its Small Car", Business Week, January 11, 1958, pp. 78-79; "Who Owns the Small Cars", Business Week, May 23, 1959, p. 36; William B. Harris, "The Trouble in Detroit", Fortune, March 1958, pp. 100-105.

13

See "What Do Car Buyers Want? Motivational Research Might Help Prevent Costly Errors in Car Styling." Steel, April 28, 1958, pp. 69-70; "Auto Industry Research; Can It Help Detroit Bounce Back?" Printers Ink, August 9, 1958, pp. 52-53; "Psychological Engineering; Detroit's Future Approach to Automobile Design?" Printers Ink, November 1, 1958, pp. 65-66. See also Larrabee, 1957, 1958; Packard, 1957.

14

For example, "Detroit . . . not only [put] a dream girl in every advertisement of a dreamboat, but also [built] deliberate sexual symbols into automobile designs in the expectation that the car's outward shape would precisely represent the customer's sexual peculiarity. It is not sheer accident, for example, that most manufacturers put penial geegaws on the hoods of their cars, or that Cadillac's stylists speak of the "bosoms" on their bumpers, or that Buick came up with its gamous ring pierced by a flying phallus, or that Madison Avenue was quick to applaud the Edsel for its 'vaginal look', or that so many Detroit stylists lavish so much attention on the rear end of automobiles" (Keats, 1958:70-71).

This is only part of the story -- but it is the most important part for this discussion. The rest of the story is that the automobile and its sales pitches also had to be geared to less sensational and less gaudy types of desires, that is,

to women, who researchers pictured as dull, repressed, and unimaginative. The problem for the industry thus was: "How do you market something that is a symbol of speed, sex, wealth, and power to Pop when it must also appear unimaginative, unspontaneous, routine and unexciting for Mom?" (Keats, 1958:76). The industry's answer was to build Mom's and anybody else's, desires into the same car, that is, to throw as many desires and needs into the design of the car as it could, but not in any integrated sense. Keats (1958:79) puts it nicely in a satirical way: "As a Detroit designer, you go on and on, putting curlicue on curlicue, adding dream to dream, adding the fragment of one illusion to the fragment of another and you spend enough money to operate a state university to imitate the sound of a slammed door. When you're all through you discover that you've transformed a rolling shoebox into a combination of the Blue Grotto and the Crystal Palace, wherein is placed a psychiatrist's couch that has enough procrustean potential to suit any psyche, no matter how warped . . . Whatever it is you have made cannot be called a motor car. . . What you have made defied description, for the simple reason that it is not designed to be any one thing, but an agglomeration of constituent elements of unrelated dreams. Following directions, you have created a device to sell to a not-too-bright population sick with the Cadillac Syndrome, and you depend on your advertising and sales department to spread and deepen the disease."

15

Witness the splash Robert Petersen made when it was realized he had made a fortune from hot rodding. See "Hot Rod Publisher", Newsweek, May 6, 1957, p. 76; "Since Hot Rod Zoomed in '48, Petersen's Built-Seven-Book Entry", Advertising Age, April 24, 1958, pp. 38-39; "Publisher Pete Petersen: He found the Male Teenage Market (Specialist in Hot Rodding)", Printers Ink, August 8, 1958, pp. 41-43; "The New Millionaires: Robert Petersen", The Wall Street Journal, July 22, 1960; "Driving Down a New Road", Business Week, October 10, 1964.

16

For example, see W.J. Morgan, "Stock Car Racing Is Dangerous", New Statesman, May 14, 1955, pp. 680-681; L. Lafore and R.W. Lafore, "Slaughter by Sports Car", Harper's, June, 1956, pp. 53-59; "How Can We Take the Heat Out of Hot Rods?" Saturday Evening Post, September 22, 1956, p. 10; R.W. Westwood, "Heedless Horsepower", Nature, June, 1957, p. 287; "New Cars Called Symbols of Male Sex", Science Digest, September, 1957, p. 38; "Putting the Brakes on Horsepower", Senior School, September 13, 1957, p. 8-10; E. Hutton, "Is 'Car Craziess' a Menace to Our Teenagers?" MacLean's Magazine, June 6, 1959, pp. 13-15, 58-60; M.L. Green, "Ego Cars Waste on Wheels", American Mercury, December, 1958, pp. 20-25. See also Keats, 1958, Hayakawa, 1962a, 1962b.

17

See "More Cars than Ever Before", Business Week, December 12, 1959, p. 34+; "Ford's New Comet: Still more Variety",

Business Week, February 6, 1960, pp. 84-86; "For Car Shoppers, Bewilderment in All Price Classes", Business Week, October 22, 1960; pp. 54-55; "Big Question: What Will Sell?" Business Week, December 10, 1960, pp. 47-48+.

18

The sports car minority had grown to such an extent that it received quite a bit of attention from the media in 1959 and 1960. See "Sports Cars, Fast and Fancy", Newsweek, March 23, 1959, p. 100; B. Wickersham, "Rage for Sports Cars", Look, August 4, 1959, pp. 71-74; B. Hooper, "Farthest-Gone Motorists; Sports Car Owners", Life, March 28, 1960, pp. 101-102.

19

These trends to sporty, performance-oriented cars, more accessories, and top-of-the-line models were reinforced by the indication of the industry's "growth factors". (1) The used car market was very strong. (2) Credit was easily available. (3) The auto scrappage rate was high. (4) Both the number of households and the percentage that owned cars were growing rapidly. (5) So also were the number of multi-car families. (6) Personal and disposable incomes were rising while the percentage spent on autos was declining somewhat. (7) And, most important, the post-war baby boom was in its teens ready to start driving: the 20-29 age bracket would continue to grow from 21 million in 1960 to over 30 million in 1970.

20

These decisions were reinforced by the facts that as 1962 progressed Chevrolet was outselling Ford (winding up 600,000 units ahead of Ford), Chrysler's market share was dwindling rapidly (falling to 8.3 percent by the end of the year), and General Motors' market share was climbing rapidly (to 56.4 percent).

21

Robert L. Brown, "Derring-Do in Detroit", Sales Management, April 17, 1964, p. 29.

On Ford's activities, see, among others, Howley, 1979a; Shelby and Bently, 1965; "Ford Touts Results at Daytona Race in New Ad Drive", Advertising Age, March 11, 1963, p. 12; "Detroit back in Race", Business Week, May 25, 1963, pp. 96-97+; "Racing? It's Just Backdrop for Ads Stressing Durability Ford Explains", Advertising Age, July 22, 1963, pp. 3+; "Ford's Racing Plans", Automotive Industries, October 15, 1963, p. 39; "Ford Soups Up Its Youth Drive", Business Week, January 4, 1964, pp. 32-34; "Shelby's New Cobra", Automotive Industries, February 1, 1963, p. 20; "Eight Ford Engines at Indianapolis Race", Automotive Industries, March 15, 1964, pp. 71-72; "Ford's New GT Racer", Automotive Industries, May 11, 1964, p. 22.

On Chrysler's activities, see Engel, 1967. Also see "Plymouth Ads Again to Tell Raceway Tests", Advertising Age, January 28, 1963, p. 10; "Chrysler Parades Bigness, Power", Iron Age, August 22, 1963, p. 47; "Chrysler Produces Two Powerful Engines for Stock Car and Drag Racing Events", Automotive Industries, February 15, 1964, pp. 37-38; "Plymouth Sweeps 500,

Petty Sets Record With New Engine", Automotive Industries, March 1, 1964, pp. 21-22; "Top Three Finish at Daytona Gives Plymouth New (And Fast) Copy Line; Division Places Page in Detroit Press Four Hours After Race", Advertising Age, March 2, 1964, p. 2.

22

See "Pros and Cons of Horsepower Controversy", Printers Ink, March 29, 1963, pp. 8-9; "Racing Splits Industry", Automotive Industries, March 15, 1964, p. 72. See also, H.W. Barclay, "Chevy Engines Sweep Nassau Races", Automotive Industries, January 1, 1964, pp. 19-22.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has addressed the sociological debate over the nature of corporate power and the market for consumer goods in modern societies. It has developed two theoretical positions with respect to: (1) the nature of power and its exercise; (2) the nature of corporate behaviour; and (3) the nature of the market and consumption in modern society. This was not an easy task. A major handicap in this effort is the lack of "theories", that is, formalized and routinized propositional systems with predictive power, in the field. The two predominant theoretical orientations involved in this debate are not developed in this form, but rather are found in the literature in the form of what Austin Turk calls "theorizing". That is, they are formulated and organized as "more and less intelligible and logical arguments, analyses, invocations, and allusions" (1976:283). Turk also notes that the process of "extracting theories from theorizing" is "difficult and admittedly hazardous" because theorizing involves individual interpretation which varies with interest, political preferences, methodological ability, philosophical biases. In this process, the concern is "to generate the best scientific formulations we can, by using, distorting, amending, supplementing, and sometimes ignoring particular contributions" (Turk, 1976:284). The effort to systematize and reduce the pluralist/functionalist and elite/class frameworks and apply them to the automobile industry and its market involved all of these.

In the effort to critically test the hypotheses derived

from this exercise it became clear that the two frameworks are not necessarily comparable in a strict sense, but that there is a basic ground for comparison and thus critical testing. At the abstract level both are concerned with similar issues about the market and corporate power. Both appeal to empirical evidence -- sometimes even the same evidence -- although they tend to use different methodologies and some different philosophical assumptions. Both tend to include normative and transcendental concerns but maintain norms of scientific inquiry. Thus, there is grounds for attempting a critical test. Their methodological and philosophical differences are embodied in their description of power and its exercise. Both positions tend to use a concept of power based on Weber or Dahl, but their descriptions of corporate power differ markedly. The elite/class description, upon scrutiny, turns out to be at variance with this common conception in emphasizing structural and cultural relationships and their construction. A sociological conception of power (as meta-power) and culture adequate to this description was developed to enable the elite/class theorizing to be reduced to more systematic form.

The two frameworks were then applied to a case study of the automobile industry and its market. Hypotheses regarding the general relationship between the industry and consumers of automobiles were derived with respect to the interaction between the industry, consumers and the larger culture and the development of the definition of the automobile. These were tested through secondary sources. A further set of hypotheses was derived with respect to the determination of one particular

controversial aspect of this definition -- automotive performance. This involved testing industry attitudes and actions to hot rodding over the period from 1948 to 1968.

The methodology employed in these tests was necessarily historical and flexible. Data on the attitudes and actions involved in the relationships in question here were gathered by content analysis and from numerous primary and secondary sources. However, despite an intensive and prolonged research effort, the data are not always able to pin-point or provide needed information and connections. Inferences must sometimes be made about specific actions or relationships. Moreover, given the lack of counter-factuals, the central argument itself must in large measure be circumstantial. However, the weight of the evidence and its consistency tend to provide confidence in the results of the test.

This discussion will now turn to those results. Following this examination, the effects of the incorporation of hot rodding will be discussed. Next the meta-power of the industry will be discussed in a broader context. Finally the theoretical conclusions will be presented.

The Results

The results of the critical test performed on the two frameworks gave consistent support to the meta-power hypotheses over the pluralist/functionalist hypotheses. They indicate that the American automobile manufacturers, as a collective, have structured and shaped the market. They accomplished this by virtue of their success at: (1) promising gratifica-

tions, experiences, life styles associations, and other utilities in their advertisements, and providing certain satisfactions and gratifications through the product itself (outcomes); (2) controlling and manipulating advertising content and other sources of consumer information, which not only shaped consumer wants and perceptions but hindered the rational social articulation of dissatisfactions (orientation); (3) limiting consumer choices and action in the market by producing only certain ranges or collections of characteristics in their products (interaction situation). This relational control is not complete or total by any means. Consumer response was found to be a most important variable, but the findings also indicate that producers were able to shape motivational antecedents and overcome resistance to a certain extent. The expression of criticism from a number of quarters against the promotion of performance values as well as the expression of a range of other dissatisfactions indicates this. As does the unpredictable fluctuations of consumer demand in response to other environmental influences. Thus, the automobile manufacturers face continual uncertainty in their environment -- which tends to vary over time.

The definition of the automobile, its shape, was found to be determined by (1) consumer response, (2) product technology, (3) producer priorities, and (4) producer sales strategies such as advertising and product development. It was hypothesized that one further producer strategy would be the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns in the environment. Under the uncertain conditions of a returning buyers' market in the

1950s the manufacturers were found to have incorporated hot rodding. They utilized it in relation to their technological structure and costs and their promotional efforts. The findings indicate that this incorporation was not a straight forward process. At the level of the manufacturer there was no unanimous planning decision to develop hot rodding and incorporate its useful aspects. Especially in the early 1950s, it crept in from the output boundary (dealers). At the same time it was inside the technostucture and management as a minority of engineers advertising executives, stylists, managers, etc. They worked within the limits and goals of the corporation to turn their interests into automobile sales.

The incorporation of hot rodding was simply one strategy among many utilized by the manufacturers. It was not even an especially significant one to top management in the 1950s. It certainly drew relatively little corporate resources and energy in the 1950s, but this was its strength. In the 1960s hot rodding became very important -- partly as a result of the incorporation of hot rodding in the 1950s.

The Industry's Influence on Hot Rodding

Automobile manufacturers are seen to be interested in and promoting certain hot rod activities long before hot rodding had attained public respectability. Because hot rodding meshed with the industry's interests certain individuals and groups perceived it as legitimate when it began to be a money-making proposition and then acted to support and develop the young "sport" in spite of the normative order.

This support was in the form of putting up prize money, sponsoring events, sponsoring both individual racers and teams, publicizing and advertising these events thereby associating them with the industry's great status, and adopting and/or developing certain innovations made by the hot rodders. With this backing, the promoters of hot rod events were able to publicize their events more widely and to offer larger purses and better facilities for both the racers and the spectators, which in turn helped to attract many more racers and spectators. Further, more money meant that more individuals and/or teams could participate full time in these events, thus helping the development of professionalism and circuits for the professionals to travel during the racing season. These developments led to the establishment of "big name" or star drivers. Star drivers were able to attract national spectator followings thus stimulating the growth of a large spectatorship. The innovations developed by hot rodders and incorporated into "Detroit iron" helped to reduce the social distance between the hot rodder and the public; they also provided a basis for the claim that hot rodders performed a public service by acting as a testing and proving ground for the manufacturers:

We wonder whether you appreciate the very real contribution that the hot rod industry, for it is an industry, has made to automotive transportation. The automotive industry has the equivalent of a million dollar experimental laboratory in the hot rod industry from which they can get valuable technical information free of any expense or risk of reputation. Hot Rod, September, 1949:4).

The lending of legitimacy by the industry gave hot rod-

ders committed to the "cause" of spreading the word of the movement's respectability an added incentive to believe in their righteousness and in the wrongness of their persecution. It also added much force to the presentation of their case -- witness this editorial from Hot Rod (October, 1948:4):

We believe that hot rod timing and racing are worthwhile and constructive activities. Some publications have suggested that the worthiness of such activities no longer contributed to the progress of the automobile and its component parts. In sharp contrast to this is evidence of paid subscriptions to Hot Rod Magazine, ordered by some of the nation's biggest automotive manufacturers. Obviously these people think the amateur and semi-professional auto building group is not to be overlooked when styling their future models. So, who's to judge the hot rods . . . the progress-minded or the headline-happy? We think the final word will be accepted from the progressive group.

Further, as the industry developed and/or incorporated hot rod ideas regarding design and performance, it changed the nature of the sport. In the late 1940s most hot rods were based on pre-War cars as post-War automobiles were not only expensive but virtually unavailable because of the pent-up public demand. Even pre-War cars were expensive to buy relative to the hot rodder's budget, and the desired modifications were quite extensive. Also expensive were the speed equipment, tools, accessories, etc. required to "build" a hot rod from a wreck. Add the fact that hot rodding was stigmatized by the public and it was not surprising to find that many hot rodders sought out other local hot rodders to form a club in order to pool labour, knowledge, and resources, to gain working and parking space, and to gain protection and moral support.

As the 1950s started and post-War cars and parts became more easily available to the hot rodder, a new base line was set from which the hot rodder could create and innovate. With new engines and more power potential, actual performance on both street and strip increased. With new body designs, new areas of stylistic experimentation were explored as were the techniques required to develop them. In fact, it was this new technological base which increased individualization and stratification within hot rodding not only in terms of degree of involvement (low to high; with the beginning of a new category of involvement, that of professional), but also in terms of area of preference (performance-oriented versus the new category of custom-orientation).

In the middle and late 1950s as post-War cars and parts became increasingly available and hot rodders became increasingly affluent, the trends to stratification and individualization continued. Regarding the former, with more cars and parts available, the stratification categories of type of car and type of engine arose. Regarding the latter, the trend to individualization continued to such an extent that the clubs which once were the bulwark of the sport began a rapid decline. The growth and increasing professionalization of internal communications (via national magazines) and of national organizations (e.g., the N.H.R.A.) both aggravated and compensated for their loss to some extent, but the intermediary function of the clubs was lost. Of all the factors it was the post-War car that was most responsible. The designs, performance, and initial expense of

the post-War cars and parts restricted the average hot rodder to limited parameters; extensive modifications or complete rebuilds required more equipment and expertise than most clubs had, i.e., required professional services. The number of hot rodgers who could afford to pay for such services and the number of professionals involved in such activities grew rapidly at this time. Moreover, affluent hot rodgers could afford to pay professionals to perform even the "minor" modifications they desired; why should they get their hands dirty?

The Detroit cars of the late 1950s provided the base for some important developments in hot rodding. The manufacturers had reacted to the AMA ban on hot rod participation by making more performance available to the amateur enthusiast. The high-performance engines made available were swapped into earlier cars, which were smaller, lighter and more available. Performance on both the street and the strip improved. The excitement of involvement increased for both participant and spectator. The AMA ban brought more promotion and financing from other entrepreneurs eager to get on the bandwagon. More sponsorship meant increasing individualization and professionalization, especially of organized racing of all types.

By the early 1960s the trend to late model stock production cars as street rods was fully developed. Enough performance V-8's were available at reasonable prices and stock car performance at drag races was enough to stimulate attention in making the street cars faster; the result was street machines

which performed as well or better than race-only cars. The competitive participation of the manufacturers in drag racing where they developed the Super/Stocks and then the crowd-pleasing Funny Cars, and in stock car racing where they pushed speeds up and thus spectator appeal up, certainly was a major factor in the large audiences which these events began to attract in the late 1960s.

The advent of the "sports" models of the early 1960s and then of the Super Cars had great effects on hot rodding, both organized and unorganized. Organized hot rodding, especially drag racing, enjoyed a boom because entry into the hot rod ranks could now be purchased in one neat package. The stock car classes at drag races swelled with the participation of amateurs who just wanted to "run" their cars as well as professionals or semi-professionals who raced to make money. A Pure/Stock category had to be established for those who wished to compete but did not want to make even minor modifications to their cars. At the street level, these cars just about killed the interest in customizing. Their clean, sleek lines, hood scoops, mag wheels, special tires, etc., were standard equipment. In effect, they were already customized. To restyle them or modify the stylistic lines of the stock production cars required a "radical" approach -- expensive and not very streetable. Moreover, the custom interest had undergone rationalization and professionalization; Custom cars had become the province of the Rod and Custom Shows.

But perhaps the greatest benefactor of the Super Cars was "unorganized" hot rodding, especially street racing. So much

muscle in unadulterated form could be put to good use at a "stop-light challenge". The new and powerful engines which provided all this muscle were swapped into the cars of the mid-1950s, the light 1955-1957 Chevrolet, for example. Along with the engine came suspension modifications (the hi-boy) and body modifications (cut wheel-wells to fit large tires). Street hot rodders would congregate at drive-in restaurants where challenges would be issued and from which the combatants and a gallery of spectators would move to a deserted strip of highway or expressway to have it out. Street racing clubs were formed, and many racers were semi-professionalized, racing only for large sums of money. (See "Gaining Respect on Woodward Avenue", Esquire, September, 1969:112-114; "Brotherhood: Street Racing in Los Angeles", Newsweek, September 15, 1969:51). So widespread did street racing become that in many localities police and community sanctions were strengthened and more strictly enforced to curb the "problem".

In these ways the automobile industry has helped hot rodding grow and develop and in the process has changed the concept of the hot rod and the hot rodder, the nature of the hot rodders' relationship to their hot rods, and the very nature of the sport. The symbolic and sensual youthful hedonism and masculine rebellion remained associated with it over the years. Not only did organized hot rodding grow but so did the "unorganized" street racers. The rebel image was enshrined and promoted by movies (The Wild Ones) and books, etc. The automobile manufacturers capitalized on these symbolic associations but

minimized the rebellion. The middle class setting and symbolism in which it was placed and dominated by, it can be argued, helped to spread the more respectable image -- that is, the youthful hedonism and masculinity but minus the rebellion.

Providing the automotive base from which hot rodders created their own expressions and life styles and then incorporating certain aspects of these creations, the industry helped to transform hot rodding from a deviant activity to a craftsman-like hobby, in Riesman's terms, into a major spectator sport and occupational category. In the process, some of those aspects of hot rodding which were responsible for the origin and early growth of hot rodding came to be minimized in the organized sport. The spontaneous sociability, leisure competence, the critical-creative spirit which defined many of the early hot rodders was professionalized and standardized and replaced with consumership and taste-exchanging. Replaced, but not eliminated, for spontaneity and autonomy can still be found in organized hot rodding to some extent but it is in the "unorganized" aspects of hot rodding that these aspects are most developed.

Throughout the 1960s complaints were lodged by amateur hot rodders that the little guy was being squeezed out by the professionals and the increasing costs. Many hot rodders refused to go to sanctioned drag races because of this and raced on the streets instead. The increasingly spectacular nature of drag racing, stock car racing, customizing, even street racing, reduced the role of amateur and grass-roots competition. With the 1970s and less sponsorship and less power and performance,

amateurism appears to be on the increase. Moreover, it also appears that cars are being replaced by all types of other vehicles as performance objects. These consequences, following the logic of meta-power, are the secondary outcomes or unintended consequences, in large measure, of the incorporation.

Also considered secondary outcomes, in part due to the incorporation and the full fledged promotion of hot rodding in the 1960s, is the development of the anti-performance and anti-car attitudes and actions which crystallized around Ralph Nader.

The Automobile Industry and Meta-Power

The relational control exercised by the automobile industry, with its emphasis on ethic A philosophy and product designs which embody it, has structured consumer demands and perceptions of automobiles. Choices were limited to only a select range of combinations of product characteristics and available alternatives were generally down-graded and inconvenient. Competitive strategies reinforced this pattern. With respect to the promotion of automotive performance and extra motives, many people perceived such actions to have serious negative consequences in the transportation system and in society. Certainly not everyone -- in fact only a small minority -- bought the most powerful engines and performance options. But the behaviour modelling of advertising and other cultural productions of these driving and philosophical themes was argued to affect wide segments of the population. The hedonistic and sensual gratifications provided by automobiles, especially high-performance automobiles, and its symbolization as action-seeking, masc-

uline, sexy, etc. all appeal to the emotional weak side of humanity. They are particularly hard to resist in certain segments of the population -- young men, for example. The lifestyles they create for themselves centering around automobiles and their expressive uses are a troublesome and costly social problem, according to some observers.

The manufacturers were aware of the criticism directed to them. Until 1957 they responded to them in one way by arguing that they were not responsible -- it was drivers who caused accidents, not automobiles. This blaming the driver was the standard response to safety criticisms, second only to "we just give the public what it wants". Collectively and individually, the manufacturers and their personnel acted in many ways to develop and support the driver responsibility approach to automotive performance and traffic safety, with its main emphases on driver training and education. Such efforts "in the name of safety" were obviously functional in a number of ways. These efforts and their history are beyond consideration here (see Eastman, 1973) but they clearly reveal the structure of the industry's interests and another set of strategies which structure the automotive performance and traffic safety issues.

Another set of actions also suggest themselves as significant from the meta-power view. These are the actions of research and development on safety and related dimensions of the automobile by the manufacturers. What kind of action was taken to promote and advertise safety, to design safety in auto-

mobiles? The manufacturers have provided answers to these questions -- but they will not be examined here. There is disagreement as to the significance of their answers. General Motors has one interpretation, Ralph Nader another. Nevertheless, their actions can be seen within the framework of meta-power and assessed in that light.

This analysis has been focused at the industry level of analysis. At this level little attention was paid to the larger institutional context in which the industry operates. It is at the institutional level that corporate goals and motivations are basically determined and alliances/conflicts with other industries or the government are acted out. At this level too, the automobile industry can be said to exercise relational control. Again, there are a number of issues and strategies. This discussion will only mention the relational control that is exercised to structure the institutional interaction system in such ways as to facilitate social needs for and dependencies on the automobile, that is, to manage the demand for mobility. This can be done, for example by separating the work-place and the dwelling-place in such ways that automobiles will be the only satisfactory means of transportation, influencing public policy to favour the needs of automobiles, not developing alternative forms of transportation, etc.

Overall, then, the definition of the automobile involved much more than the incorporation of hot rodding and strategies aimed purely at the consumer in the market. But there is little doubt that the incorporation of hot rodding was a sig-

nificant determinant of the specific definition of the automobile. However, no definition of the automobile lasts forever. No strategy no matter how successful will keep on being successful. In the case of performance, the success period was about twenty-five years from the end of World War Two. Changing environmental conditions, many of them the secondary outcomes of the promotion of automobiles as private transportation and of the definition of the automobile in predominantly non-transportation terms, created new problems for consumers, the industry and society. With respect to the industry and its success at maintaining its position, it is interesting how many things seemed to happen at once in the middle and late 1960s which had major effects on the actions of the industry in the 1970s. A number of issues had been stirring in the environment for some time, gathering in intensity over the years. Yet the collective impact of the industry's actions had kept them relatively inarticulate, or deflected them, or structured them more or less in its favour. Ralph Nader punctured the power reputation of the industry and established an effective encroachment upon the industry's autonomy and relative power.¹ It seems reasonable to hypothesize that this changed perceptions was an important factor in the precipitation of grievances and dissatisfactions which were aimed during this period. And the manner in which they were interpreted and developed and structured followed lines which were not in what the industry's top management perceived to be its best interests. Rather they followed in the critical orientation being created by Nader. But that is another history.

Theoretical Discussion

The support found in this study for the meta-power hypotheses suggests the greater predictive power of its framework. The discussion in this chapter suggests its empirical usefulness as a partial model of the market behaviour of consumers and producers. It is not a complete view, but it is sociological to an extent that the pluralist/functionalist framework is not. Although it was tested in a situation where resistance was manifest, its definition of power as relational control does not require this assumption. Because it is sensitive to the social and cultural context or interaction system within which individual and group interaction takes place, it is able to be operationalized at different levels of structural analysis. It is capable of comprehending collective actions in power terms if responsibility for the actions can be established. These emphases mean that this perspective does not take the existing order for granted or at face value -- it examines how the order was created and who profits from it.

As formulated in its reduced form here, it assumes that the demands expressed in the market are not necessarily "legitimate" in the sense of being an expression of purely consumer wants, needs, and perceptions. It posits that corporate structures and strategies will interact with consumer needs. Over time this interaction will skew in directions which favour the interests of producers. In oligopolistic market structures this skewing will be marked. The manipulation of cultural variables and the incorporation of complementary behaviour patterns

as two strategies utilized by corporate producers to reduce risk in their environment in their efforts to determine profitable content or definition for their products. Several hypotheses are suggested regarding the fragmentation of consumer needs in these cultural manipulations of product definition -- but they were not tested in this study.

With slight modifications for changes in levels of analysis and the specific problem to which it is applied, this meta-power model can provide a useful device for the analysis and prediction of significant corporate and market problems. As formulated it does not contain any unnecessary normative component. It requires the analyst to focus upon naturalistic descriptions, explanations, and predictions which are based upon empirical observations -- although it could be subsumed into normative systems (it lies implicit in the elite/class theorizing, especially the Marxist class view). Applied to this problem area, an empirical and theoretical elaboration of this model can help move sociological theorizing beyond the longstanding controversy between the two predominant traditions and down to some serious theory.

FOOTNOTES

1

See Crenson (1971) for a discussion of the concept of power reputation and the way such a reputation combined with inaction on the part of a power center can be an important part of non-decision making. Crenson analyzes the development of air pollution as a public issue in various cities with large steel industries.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ARTICLES FROM BUSINESS WEEK

	Date			Page
1950	Aug.	12	Stock Car Racing Rides High	23
1952	Jan.	26	Detroit Can Do Its Own Hot Rodding	62+
	Mar.	22	Hot Rodding Roars Into Big Business	46-48+
1953	Sept.	19	Stock Car Racing: A Smash Hit But Will It Last	66
	Dec.	5	Lincoln Wins	144+
1955	Mar.	12	More Handicaps: Mobilgas Economy Runs	148+
1956	Jan.	14	Detroit's Hot Cars Are Geared to Sell	27
	Mar.	10	What's in it for the Makers?	46-48+
1957	July	20	Can Detroit Sell Without Speed?	51
	Oct.	26	Customers at the Most Critical Age	84+
1960	Sept.	17	Making Autos Vie With Planes	32-33
1961	Mar.	4	Detroiters Go To the Races Again; Daytona Beach, Fla.	24-25
	Sept.	16	Medium-price Car That Defies Eclipse	62-64+
1963	Jan.	12	In Monaco Ford Bets on Sport; Monte Carlo Rallys	32+33
	Feb.	2	Best of Class in Monte Carlo Rallys	32
	Mar.	9	Horsepower Race Breaks Out Again	30+31
	May	25	Detroit Back in Race	96+97+
	Sept.	28	Ford's Bid for a Better Year	47+
1964	Jan.	4	Ford Soups Up Its Youth Drive	32+34
	Feb.	29	Cashing in on Speed; Daytona 500	30+31
	Oct.	10	Driving Down a New Road	143+144+
1965	May	22	Building Fast Cars on a Shoestring	66+68+
	Aug.	14	Goodyear Gets Back on the Race Track	144+146
1966	Mar.	12	The Auto Executive: He Has to Run Faster Just to Keep Up	96+
	Jan.	25	LeMans Fuel to Ford's Future	34+36
1967	Nov.	25	Pacer From Ford's British Stable	98+
1968	Sept.	14	How Detroit Designed the '69 Cars	115+

APPENDIX B
ARTICLES FROM LIFE

Date			Page
1948	Aug.	9 Tragedy on the Track; Winchester, Ind., Auto Races	24-25
1949	Nov.	7 Hot Rod Problems; Teenagers Organize to Experiment with Mechanized Suicide	122-124+
	Nov.	21 Grim Death of Racing Driver Rex Mays	40-41
1953	Mar.	16 Stock Car Racer Goes Out of Control	71-72
	Sept.	28 Speaking of Pictures: Racing Cars at Salt Flats	16-18
1954	Feb.	8 Doomed Driver in a Mantel of Flames	29
	July	19 Desert's Dune Bugs: Yuma Hot Rodders	53-54
1956	Mar.	19 Cars Do Duplicate Flips: Grand National Race, Daytona Beach	22-24
1957	April	29 The Drag Racing Rage	131-138+
1958	June	9 Strip Act By Home Built Cars; Stock Car Race, Langehorne, Pa.	16-17
1960	June	10 Blasting Off to the Races	60
1963	Sept.	20 Man What a Drag	115-116+

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