

Applicability of Educational Reconstruction Theory

In Present Day Curriculum

Planning

By

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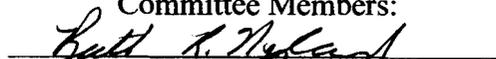
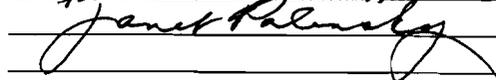
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ABSTRACT

There are four competing curriculum theories that have dominated the United States' curricular landscape in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The four competing curriculum theories are the child study movement or developmentalists, liberal educators or humanists, the scientific management movement or social efficiencists, and the Educational Reconstructionists. The theory that has historically been given the least widespread acceptance and/or implementation is the theory of Social Meliorism or Social Reconstruction or Educational Reconstruction. Although these terms differ, the fundamental philosophy behind the terms remains consistent, and will herein be called Educational Reconstruction. The purpose of this study is to reconsider the applicability and efficacy of Educational Reconstruction as a viable curriculum theory for present day curriculum construction.

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## Introduction: Chapter I

There are four competing curriculum theories that have dominated the United States' curricular landscape in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The four competing curriculum theories are the child study movement or developmentalists, liberal educators or humanists, the scientific management movement or social efficiencists and the Educational Reconstructionists. The theory that has historically been given the least widespread acceptance and/or implementation is the last; that is, the theory variously called Social Meliorism (Kliebard) or Social Reconstruction (Schiro) or Educational Reconstruction (Brameld). Although these terms differ, the fundamental philosophy behind them remains consistent, and will herein be called Educational Reconstruction.

Broadly agreed upon, the four dominant curriculum theories that have guided education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be defined in the following manner.

### *The Child Study Curriculum or Developmentalist Curriculum*

The child study curriculum or developmentalist curriculum is a curriculum that should allow for child's natural order of development. G. Stanley Hall, one of child-study's most vociferous proponents, argued that "the function of the school was not to impose civilization upon the child, a course of action not only futile, but harmful; rather, the school should, as far as possible, stay out of the child's way... (Kliebard, 1995, p. 40). Among the developmentalists was the idea that schools thwarted the child's basic need for activity by treating children as passive receptacles and that presenting them with a program of studies ran contrary to their natural tendencies. Hall wrote

First...The idea of an education according to nature derived much of its potency from its scientific connotations.... Education according to the immutable laws of nature would provide a valid basis for the course of study; but education according to nature also

referred to country life and the virtue of growing up in rustic settings....Secondly, beneath Hall's reverence for life in the country lay an almost mystical concern for health....Finally...child-study derived much of its credibility from claiming that what the child already knew could become the basis for determining what to teach...(Kliebard,1995, p. 55)

This progressive notion asserts that education should be life itself, not a preparation for living, and that learning should be directly related to the interests of the child; furthermore, the teacher's role in developmental/child study classrooms should be to advise rather than to direct (Kneller, 1971).

#### *The Humanist or Mental Discipline Curriculum*

The humanist or mental discipline curriculum is often referred to as the colonial curriculum in which "Guardians" of ancient tradition are tied to the power of reason and the finest elements of Western cultural heritage. It was held that "humanistic subjects (with some additions and modifications) had the power to improve the ability to think....The great defenders of humanism...were never able to reconcile their doctrine to the fact of mass public education....by restricting the doctrine of humanism to that which they took to be distinctly human in origin, such as literature, humanists set up an unwarranted opposition between humanistic studies and sciences, an unnecessary dualism between the doctrines of humanism and naturalism which Dewey, for example, tried to dispel" (Kliebard, 1992, pp. 20, 21).

Humanists sought to reinterpret and preserve "revered" traditions and values in a rapidly changing society (Doctoral students at Boston College under the direction of Associate Professor Dr. Otherine Neisler, n.d., <http://www2.bc.edu/~evansec/curriculum/index.html>).

### *The Social Efficiency Movement or Scientific Management Curriculum*

The emphasis of the primary curricular theory known as the social efficiency movement or essentialists or scientific management believed programs of study must prepare individuals for the adult role they will play in society. To go beyond teaching knowledge required to perform that role successfully was wasteful. Social utility is the supreme criterion against which the value of school studies was measured.

Additionally, the social efficiency advocates believed that the purpose of education is to bring students to desired terminal behaviors as determined by the curriculum developer. A primary objective of the social efficiency advocate is social control, who believes a student's education must be to meet the need of the majority, regardless of the intention of the individual. The curriculum developer is a behavior engineer, and teaching is a process of shaping a learner's behavior through reward and punishment (Dr. Otherine Neisler, Boston College, n. d.).

### *The Educational Reconstruction Curriculum*

The Educational Reconstruction curriculum or philosophy as defined by George F. Kneller (1971) portrays Educational Reconstruction, as delineated by two of its most vehement proponents, George S. Counts and Theodore Brughard Hurt Brameld, in the following terms

1. Education must commit itself here and now to the creation of a new social order that will fulfill the basic values of our culture and at the same time harmonize with the underlying social and economic forces of the modern world.
2. The new society must be a genuine democracy, whose major institutions and resources are controlled by the people themselves.
3. The child, the school, and education itself are conditioned inexorably by social and cultural forces.

4. The teacher must convince his pupils of the validity and urgency of the Reconstructionist solution, but he must do so with scrupulous regard for democratic procedures.

5. The means and ends of education must be completely re-fashioned to meet the demands of the present cultural crisis and to accord with the findings of the behavioral sciences.

These five tenets of Educational Reconstruction are repeated in various forms throughout the literature. For example, Brameld also held that Educational Reconstruction can be understood to mean both “going to the root” and “looking to the future” (Bussler, 1997, p. 91). Kliebard (1995) defines Educational Reconstruction stating that schools are a major force for social change and social justice. Schools are the vehicles to create a new social vision.

What these four theories or philosophies have in common is that each claims to be the most socially responsible. Sheldon Berman (1997, p. 135) observes

What all studies reveal is that institutional structures—whether in the workplace, family, classroom, or school—that give young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making about meaningful issues can have an impact on their sense of responsibility, their ability to take a collective perspective, their pro-social behavior, their understanding of democratic values and processes, and their personal and political efficacy. There is much more to be learned about the relationship between decision making and actual social and political participation, but these studies demonstrate that participatory and democratic school culture makes a significant difference in some of the key building blocks of social responsibility.

Although each of the four theories claim to fulfill this definition of social responsibility, only Educational Reconstruction anticipates potential points of crises and plans to mitigate them or meet their challenge. Each particular school of theory had risen to the fore in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and although its literature is rich, diverse, and its proponents dedicated to a better America, Educational Reconstruction was subject to the most vehement rejection. John Franklin Bobbitt, a leader in the social efficiency movement, called it communistic (Kliebard, 1995, p. 170), another efficientist, David Snedden, called it “subversive of civic decency” (as cited in Kliebard, p. 171). Myron Lieberman (1993) harangues against the Civil Rights legislation that guarantees equal educational opportunity for all, specifically denigrating issues and opportunities the Educational Reconstructionist would strongly support. These issues include the opportunity for bilingual education, the freedom to *not* be tracked, to not be subject to standardized, prejudicial tests, and the acceptance of racial and gender equity in educational opportunity. Lieberman cites these examples as corrupting American education, whereas the Educational Reconstructionist celebrates these expansions of opportunity. Other than a short-lived accepted textbook series by Educational Reconstruction progenitor Harold Rugg, the movement was resisted by teachers and administrators alike (Kliebard, 1995).

From the Progressives, Rugg accepted the interdisciplinary approach. Rugg believed that all curriculum was social studies curriculum and thus, that all lessons could be approached through the social studies. He also agreed with the Progressive focus on the scientific method to solve problems that reflected the larger society. Rather than the school reflecting a microcosm of society, however, Rugg and the Reconstructionists believed that students should immerse themselves in real-world problems, including working in their communities to find and present solutions that would improve their lives and the lives of their fellow citizens. Rugg’s allegiance

to the Reconstructionists was unequivocal, and he saw social regeneration as a worldwide concern (Kliebard, 1995). Moreover, the social studies texts prepared by Rugg and his co-authors contained material on minority groups, including African Americans and women, as well as an understanding that we inhabit a larger, interdependent world. That makes historical sense, if we consider Rugg's experiences in our minority-and immigrant-packed cities, such as Chicago and New York, as well as the political debates over America's role in the world, including the U.S. refusal to join the League of Nations, the worldwide Depression, and the two world wars, that occurred during his lifetime:

Rather than have teachers attempt the almost impossible task of “correlating” history, geography, civics, economics and sociology (taught as separate subjects), we postulate that more effective outcomes will be secured by weaving together lesson by lesson the facts, movements, conditions, principles and social, economic and political “laws” that depend upon one another *and that can be fully comprehended only when they are woven together.* (Rugg, 1921, p. 128)

Although Rugg emphasized curriculum integration within the social studies, many thought the Educational Reconstruction movement and the progressive movement generally, to be, as one reporter commented, “outwardly...distinctly pink” (Kliebard, 1995, p. 171). The comment is an allusion to the Communist takeover of Russia by the Bolsheviks. Educational Reconstruction “tended to provoke critical reaction from all segments of the political spectrum. Conservatives see Reconstructionism as far too radical. For many liberals it appears as a threat to bourgeois values, and insufficiently radical for some on the far left, orthodox Marxists in particular” (Stanley, 1992, p. 45). Furthermore, Stanley (1992, p. 57) cites C. A. Bowers regarding the four major problems concerning Educational Reconstruction:

First, it promoted an “ubiquitous sense of mission” which frequently tended to obscure the need for a more critical analysis of important issues. Second, it was naively utopian in its faith that education could solve all social ills. Third, it uncritically assumed that all men [sic] really seek the good life, and fail only out of ignorance or false consciousness. Finally, the Reconstructionists lacked a realistic view of the teacher’s actual role in our society...teachers have never had the power or inclination to carry out anything like the Reconstructionist program.

Teachers *do* have the inclination and *shall* gather the power to promote attitudes and behaviors and studies that will meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the challenges of a Reconstructionist curriculum.

The Educational Reconstruction movement was a victim of the historic context in which it found itself: The Russian Revolution, Modernism, The Great Depression, World War II, McCarthyism, The Cold War, and The Space Race all impacted education, the four dominant curriculum theories, and Educational Reconstruction in particular. The formal beginning of Educational Reconstruction is acknowledged as being the publication of *The Twenty-Sixth Yearbook* by the National Society for the Study of Education, prepared under the direction of Harold Rugg, and including the contribution of George S. Counts in 1926 (Kliebard, 1995). In the newly christened 21<sup>st</sup> century, curriculum has moved decidedly *further* away from the visions of the Educational Reconstructionists. According to Apple (2000) the four groups presently elbowing onto the country’s curriculum scene all fall into the scientific management/ social efficiency camp. They are neo-liberals, neo-conservatives, authoritarian populists, and new managerialists. This “new hegemonic bloc” represents, respectively, the

dominant economic and political elites intent on modernizing the economy and the institutions connected to it, [maintaining] that markets will solve all of 'our' social problems, since private is necessarily good and public is necessarily bad...economic and cultural conservatives who want a return to 'high standards,' discipline, 'real' knowledge, fueled by a nostalgic and quite romanticized vision of the past...are powerful in education and in other areas of politics and social and cultural policy [who] see themselves as disenfranchised by the 'secular humanism' that supposedly now pervades public schooling....the expanded use of the techniques of accountability, efficiency, and management that are their own cultural capital [and look to] managerial 'solutions' to educational dilemmas. (p.xxv)

The possibility of a different and more equitable society and culture being produced through education can occur "only in the shared belief and insistence that there are practical alternatives that the balance of forces and chances begin to alter. Once the inevitabilities are challenged, we can begin gathering our resources for a journey of hope" (Williams, 1983, p. 268, 269; as cited in Apple, 2003, p. 18). According to Henry A. Giroux (1988), teachers as transformative intellectuals are the central resource in this journey of hope. Rather than acquiescing to the "tendency to reduce teachers to the status of specialized technicians" and the further "proletarianization of teacher work" teachers, moreso than other personages within a community, are "transformative intellectuals [who] take seriously the need to give students an active voice in their learning experiences" (p. 122, 127). The journey of hope, however, is a challenging prospect given many education students' attitude toward their discipline.

The deskilling and anti-intellectualism of the teaching profession from the elementary classroom to the halls of the university has been well documented. Alan A. Block (2004) has written

Our students have been taught to desire only to be told what to do. Our faculty desire only to be told what to do. In so many classrooms, teaching is only about methods: the pedagogy of the how-to. Students demand of me: "Please, just tell me how to do this and I will do it. I will do it well. Just please, please don't trouble me with ideas." Methods proliferate. Methods classes proliferate. Teaching has been transformed into a set of directions not unlike those I cannot follow when putting together my children's toys... Teaching is almost never a conversation about studying, but a set of instructions and objectives about the mandated content of study; teaching is not about learning but about achieving, not about healing but about administering and assessing. (p. 164)

The correlation between this development, accelerated at the century's turn and the rise of standards assessment, the standards movement, and the standardization of the curriculum is widely evident. Plainly said, the social efficiency movement promotes the deskilling and uninvolvement of teachers. Giroux (1988) argues that teachers must be given opportunity to conceptualize, design, and plan curricula and be allowed to fulfill the processes of implementation and execution of said curricula, Giroux writes

It is important to stress that teachers must take active responsibility for raising serious questions about what they teach, how they are to teach, and what the larger goals are for which they are striving. This means that they must take a responsible role in shaping the purposes and conditions of schooling. Such a task is impossible within a division of labor

in which teachers have little influence over the ideological and economic conditions of their work. (p. 126)

Giroux is asserting that teachers and future teachers must be actively engaged on an intellectual level as well as a physical level, not dispassionate and passive, as is the trend which Block decries and Giroux laments. Deskillling and standardization came from without the educational establishment, from the forces of social efficiency including business, the new managerialists, and the authoritarian populists (as defined by Apple), yet with the educational establishment's complicity, making a travesty of any remaining local control ethic as federal and state standards dominate American classroom curriculum. William F. Pinar (2004) states that teachers must enable

...students to employ academic knowledge (and popular culture, increasingly via the media and the internet) to understand their own self-formation within society and the world.... Such understanding is both individual and social, "local" and "global," historical and futural (terms with blurred boundaries, as each is embedded in the other). Its contextualization in the ongoing self-formation of students in anticipation of their participation in the public sphere not yet formed requires that we teachers communicate the social, ethical, and political potential of what in the current curricular regime sometimes seems rather "ivory-tower" indeed. Curriculum theory is, then, about discovering and articulating, for oneself and with others, the educational significance of the school subjects for self and society in the ever-changing historical moment. (p. 16)

Unmistakingly, the integration of the personal with the communal is elemental to those concerned with the curriculum theory of Educational Reconstruction. The social efficientist model implemented more than any particular "theory" in the present (according to Apple, Kohn,

Meier, et al.) advocates self-promotion orientation, greed emphases, and the clinging to a nostalgic past that never existed. This reflects the political realities of the present, as Michael Apple aptly observes (2003), "Formal schooling by and large is organized and controlled by the government. This means that by its very nature the entire schooling process...is by definition political" (p. 1) and the apotheosis of politicality is manifest in the legislation called No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Meier and Wood (2004) state that NCLB "demand[s] higher standards and more testing...look[ing] for ways to turn education over to the marketplace where it will be beyond the reach of democratic control" (p. 90). Herein lies the ideological crux of the education environment in the first quarter of this century: Educational Reconstructionists are not willing to abandon the social democratic educational contract that was so slowly, and often painfully, constructed over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ideologically, the disconnect being experienced in the present is the emphasis politically on cultural transmission as opposed to what is labeled as radical, that being Educational Reconstruction. Educational Reconstructionists are not prepared to abandon the economic productivity and social invention, class, race, and gender movements toward equal opportunity, and educational access to the disabled in exchange for an assessment driven, standardized, and exclusionary curriculum. Educational Reconstructionists, in this new century, refuse to abandon the true values that have spoken so well for America in the past; values such as belief in the honor of work, building strong communities, fostering effective government, and encouraging free and fair markets. Educational Reconstructionists declare that 2005 is not the time to throw up hands in disgust at mounting conservative, anti-progressive power and thinking that undermines the bedrock American values of liberty, community, and shared responsibility. Individualism has its place, for as Dewey (1916) states, society should develop to its fullest potential, but not at the expense of individual opportunity. Educational Reconstructionists being

future oriented, look to predict the obstacles to societal advancement, progress, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and construct a curriculum that addresses these obstacles.

Without much imagination, and with an eye perusing the new release shelves of local libraries, it is not difficult to settle on three issues/problems/topics that will require addressing in the 21st century: conversion to a non-oil based economy; conversion from an industrial society to a post-industrial, high tech information based economy; and climatic change, one element of which is global warming. Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb* (1968) and more recently *One With Ninevah* (2005) stated on a Wisconsin Public Radio interview (February 18, 2005, 3-4 P.M.) that the two issues most pressing society are 1) the “tens of thousands” of nuclear warheads still pointing at the United States and Russia as a carry over from Cold War days mentality; and 2) the inevitability of a world wide disease pandemic. Certainly his concerns are realistic and probable; however, Ehrlich’s concerns, since 1945, have always been a possibility, and I do not mean to minimize them with suggestion that the educational community has little to contribute to the conversation. I *am* suggesting that it is incumbent upon the educational community to prepare society’s future leaders for a social world where all citizens (world citizens) realize a modicum living standard. In the United States, as I write, the present political and socio-economic trend is to divide wealth and social perspective into camps of Haves and Have-Nots. It is difficult to agree that civilized society will remain long content with such an arrangement. Dewey (1916, 1944) states that education must be “concerned in making experiences more communicable in breaking down the barriers of social stratification which make individuals impervious to the interests of others....educational purpose should mean cultivation of power to join freely and fully in shared or common activities” (p. 120,121,123). Many would argue that if societal concerns, which will undergo precipitous alteration in this

century, are not understood at a level which addresses the living quality of all residents, all classes, all cultures, American society will not prevail as originally envisioned.

In the fall 2004 *American Educational Research Journal* Special Issue on Accountability and Equity the editors preface the issue with a reflection on the state of American schools 50 years post-Brown decision.<sup>1</sup>

...the promise of equality symbolized by the Brown decision has yet to be realized.

School segregation and the unequal opportunities that accompany it persist. Close to 90% of White students attend all-White schools, while students of color attend predominantly minority schools....schools attended by minority children in metropolitan areas have vastly fewer resources than those in White suburban areas. These disparities are dramatically highlighted in evidence presented for recent court cases on unequal school funding in New York State and California. Meanwhile, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) ...mandates test-based accountability procedures coupled with sanctions that fall especially hard on minority and integrated schools, asking for much less progress from affluent suburban schools....NCLB and kindred accountability efforts encourage a return to the “separate but equal” model that was the focus of the Brown decision 50 years ago. (p. 497-498)

Moreover, the editors illustrate how the pressure to raise standardized scores skewed the implementation of gender reform in ways that undermined effective teaching and the goals of gender equity, in ways not limited to students. They ask “Are we Creating Separate and Unequal

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<sup>1</sup> This is the *Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case wherein NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall argued on behalf of seven year old Linda Brown, illustrating that segregation imposed serious social and psychological handicaps on black children. Because education encompasses the full development of children as human beings, segregated education could never be fair even if facilities were equal and excellent. The Supreme Court agreed, and the “separate but equal” doctrine was declared null and void. This occurred in 1954.

Tracks of Teachers?” and conclude that we *are* creating unequal tracks of teachers, which reinforces existing educational inequities. Add to this the trend toward school vouchers, federalization and centralization, and one may conclude that the educational community is becoming increasingly undemocratic. In the article “Are We Creating Separate and Unequal Tracks of Teachers? The Effects of State Policy, Local Conditions, and Teacher Characteristics on New Teacher Socialization” (2004) the authors

...explore the possibility that state educational policies, involving accountability and instructional reform, and local district and school conditions interact with teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds to shape two tracks of new teachers, tracks that reinforce existing educational inequities.... This method of reproducing inequity is less obvious than student tracking but all the more troubling. The reason is that teachers, the trusted purveyors of education, embody and enact curricular and pedagogical inequities. (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, p. 557, 594)

This study concluded that under current socializing forces, new teachers become participants in the reproduction of inequities. Two classes of teachers for two classes of students and communities emerge (Achinstein, et al., 2004).

The central problem is that present curriculum development in the United States is not addressing the social dislocation and degeneration that is/will occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the economy becomes non-oil and high technology based, and climatic conditions become increasingly erratic. With social program funding slashed and tax responsibility for society’s most well off retracted, further class stratification will become more readily evident. The Social Efficientists have established hegemony over curricular development and assessment, (Apple, 2001, 2002; Kohn, 1999) resulting in students void of the critical thinking abilities that the

unrelenting future socio-economic and public works/programs and conditions require. Kohn's chapter titles spell out the present curricular conundrum succinctly, from *The Schools Our Children Deserve*:

Part one: Tougher Standards Versus Better Education.

2. Getting Motivation Wrong: The costs of overemphasizing achievement.
3. Getting teaching and Learning Wrong: Traditional education and its victims.
4. Getting Evaluation Wrong: The case against standardized testing.
5. Getting School Reform Wrong: The arrogance of top-down coercion.
6. Getting Improvement Wrong: Confusing harder with better. (1999, Table of contents)

These titles confuse tougher standards *as* better education, and illustrate the present tendency to view curricular theory and practice as means to achieve certain ends, or education as product. Moreover, these titles emphasize the cultural transmission ideology as well as a new managerial approach to administering. If Kohn's premise is accurate, if present practices are getting the essential elements of education wrong, then the status quo requires change for the ongoing betterment and integrative future of the United States. After being elected to the Board of Education in the Mt. Abraham Union High School in Lincoln, Vermont, Roger Shattuck, (*The New York Review of Books*, 2005) experiencing much consternation attempting to ascertain curricular direction, concluded that "my school and its district have no ascertainable curriculum and no effective curriculum document. Various sources continue to provide topics to be taught – individual teachers, lesson plans, habit, informal instruction, tradition, inertia. Even without the guidance of curriculum, education goes on. Teachers teach. Students learn. They may even study. Budgets are voted in. The caravan passes" (p. 66). I suggest that Shattuck's experience is

duplicated in districts throughout the United States. The efficiency advocates have superseded the other curricular concentrations. Shattuck is concerned with curriculum because, as Neil Postman elaborates in his work *The End of Education*, that if schools exist without purpose (end #1), schooling will eventually terminate (end #2). The ambiguity of the word “end” in the title is deliberate (1995).

It is my purpose to establish both the applicability and *necessity* of the theory of Educational Reconstruction to current and future curriculum design throughout education, elementary through university. Teachers will become knowledgeable of Educational Reconstruction and implement its tenets into the curriculum. By establishing Educational Reconstruction as the primary curricular emphasis throughout education in the United States, we shall create a foundation for teachers and students to integrate personal motivations into a communal, societal framework, where “democracy, diversity, and social justice” are preserved. More democracy not less. Brameld (1974) intimates that information becomes obsolete overnight and that there is a real possibility that our most beloved values and even the foundations of our knowledge will be overturned. Educational Reconstruction anticipates and plans for upheaval, thus mitigating negative outcomes. Brameld (1974) discussed “participation in communicating, planning, agreeing, and acting” as follows

If people...cannot learn by such participation as to how to confront each other, how to engage in creative dialogue, how to resolve conflicts, how to respect disagreements, how to translate general commonalities into specific actions of testable workability, then I should say that the hope of world order as a human order is very bleak indeed. (p. 67)

In contrast to Brameld's above statement, "The essence of hope is characteristic of Reconstructionists....Hope appears to be basic to Reconstructionists; some would argue that one cannot be considered a Reconstructionist without having hope" (Bussler, 1997, p. 70).

Nel Noddings (1995) expressed the goals of Educational Reconstruction well when she wrote "Much of the school curriculum should be organized around themes of care: caring for self, caring for intimate others, caring for strangers and global others, caring for plants, animals, and the natural environment, caring for the human-made environment and caring for ideas" (p. 180).

The rationale for this pursuit is compound. The fundamental difference between Educational Reconstruction and other curricular philosophies is that the former expects, anticipates, and supports structural societal changes in order to promote and achieve a social well being that is rooted in equality and justice (Thomas, 1997). It is a transformational and transmissional philosophy. John Dewey's colleague, John L. Childs (1959) wrote

Education for John Dewey, was neither a luxury nor a mere adornment; it was rather a life necessity. It is through education, he perceived, that each child achieves...distinctively human attributes, and it is also through education that a society perpetuates and deliberately modifies its way of living. (as cited by Bussler, 1997, p. 59)

Childs' use of the terms "perpetuates" and "modifies" indicates this view of a twofold role for education: transmission and transformation (as cited by Bussler, 1997, p. 59)

Educational Reconstruction subsumes the humanist curriculum, and to an obvious degree, the child-study advocates, (one would not teach reading skills prior to the student recognizing the alphabet) for teaching often must be built on previous learning. Every era has its own societal challenges; for example, the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the beginning of a shift from the agrarian to the industrial, from the rural to the urban, and "At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

[soon after 1910] more people worked in manufacturing than in farming” (Thomas, 1997, p. 35). History is replete with the many deep and profound changes that American society experienced as a result of this shift: centralization of food sources and the arts, tenements, assembly lines, the mixing of previously separated ethnic groups and cultures, technological changes and the increasing speed of life, to mention but a spattering. It is my argument that American society has been and is now experiencing a parallel and as profound a shift at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The shift is being revealed in reliance on the computer and accompanying technology, prominence of the World Trade Organization, similar world bodies, and accompanying treaties, irreversible environmental and economic conditions to name a specific few. From these general alterations there are myriad emerging societal conditions, for example, online education. From online education the spin-off social changes can be imagined; for instance, a need for fewer schools and teachers, thus affecting public expenditures and the make-up of colleges of education, individual-interested rather than community-interested based education, still further specialization and automation oriented social interactions.

Theodore Brameld (1965) wrote, “A crisis is always characterized by danger and promise” (p. 20) and, one could argue, the imminent future requires the view that Educational Reconstruction envisions. According to Darrol Bussler (1997) “Reconstructionists’ belief that society is in a state of crisis may lead one to believe that they have a negative, pessimistic perspective. In actuality, Reconstructionists are as positive as they appear to sound negative. While Educational Reconstruction may be called a philosophy of crisis, it may also be termed a philosophy of hope” (p. 69).

The objectives discussed in this paper are direct. They are intended to establish the applicability and necessity of Educational Reconstruction to present day curriculum planning,

and to establish that the present curricular pursuits, if continued, will be found devoid of any socially redeeming value. Educational policies and practices too often provide teachers and pupils with images of the good life, "necessary" beliefs and orientations, and "American values" through the inculcation of attitudes, norms, values, and forms of knowledge that are included or excluded as well as a pattern of apathetic noninvolvement for many students. In short, educational institutions (and many other influences, of course) have been useful in reproducing forms of consciousness that help maintain social inequalities and forms of hegemony that support the status quo. In summarizing empirical research on "the model classroom," Sirotnik (1983) concludes, "We are implicitly teaching dependence upon authority, linear thinking, social apathy, passive involvement, and hands-off learning," all in a "virtually affectless environment" (p. 29). The qualities and values we really want for our children and our schools require definition. It must be said here that many teachers struggle every day to challenge and alter the dominant, conventional messages of school and society and to overturn the beliefs and actions sanctioned there as they work to bring democratic values and social justice concerns to bear on classroom interactions and activities. Critical perspectives on education and society, in short, can significantly alter what we take to be normal and necessary in K-12 classrooms.

As Landon E. Beyer (2001) has written, progressive critical theories focus on the social dimensions and consequences of educational practice, the ideological meanings of texts and experiences, the power relations in schools and other institutions, and the need to integrate theory and practice in new ways. Such attention is vitally important when, for example, we ask to what extent schools serve all children equally well, who benefits when they do not, and what we ought to do about that state of affairs. Critical theory also acknowledges the valueladenness of forms of analysis. In making connections between the day-to-day realities of teaching, teacher education,

and larger social structures and values that are too often ignored or denied, theorists working in this tradition seek to lay bare the ways in which classrooms contribute to the reinforcement of forms of social stability that are especially injurious for students who are marginalized. Critical theorists also explore ways in which teachers and researchers may develop activities and modes of interaction that work for social justice and toward social change (Apple & Beane, 1995; Beyer, 1996; as cited in Beyer, 2001). A philosophy of Educational Reconstruction is a holistic perspective (Bussler, 1997) including the elements of nonviolence, justice, world community, radicalism/futurism/utopianism, the individual and community, change and its demands, peace, and thought tested truth. "Humankind must take responsibility in directing change through action without violence through the interdependence of means and ends (p. 111), both locally and globally. A philosophy of Educational Reconstruction approaches learning processes with respect to human dignity and respect for all living entities.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

Educational Reconstruction has a rich and diverse history. Angela Raffel (1997) and Chara Haessler Bohan (2003) note its antecedents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the nascent years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the works of John Dewey, George S. Counts, Harold Rugg, and in the work of the Committee of Ten (1892) and the Committee of Seven (1896). These committees are referred to as the “precursors” to “Progressivism” and that the final reports of both

...shed light on an early progressive spirit...[that] explicitly stated that that females and children of foreigners, those without political power, should receive the same benefit of social education as the males...Such recommendations reveal egalitarian...ideas of citizenship [and is] evident in its commitment to providing the best curriculum and teaching methods to all students...(Bohan, 2003, p. 93)

Although this spirit has existed in various forms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, essentially, this democratic approach to education has been maintained up to the present. Educational Reconstruction has not only existed in the United States since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but has been manifest on a worldwide scale, and according to Bohan, providing “educational opportunities to all students essentially differentiated the United States from most other countries” (p.75). The emphasis of Educational Reconstruction on education as an empowerment tool wherein oppressed people, becoming literate and understanding social injustices being perpetrated against them, become able to change their circumstances. The emphasis on cooperative deliberation and building consensus has been a constant in the theorists of Educational Reconstruction. Furthermore, Raffel (1997) quotes Frank Andrew Stone summarizing Educational Reconstruction’s historical tenets adroitly:

Educational Reconstruction is a philosophy based on examining cultural premises and implementing conflict and social change theory. It has been advocated by notable educators, among them Theodore Brameld, who sought desirable social development and progress through exploring alternatives for the future with teenagers and their teachers.

(p. 7)

The present curricular emphases with its rhetorical flourishes toward measurement, standards, and the raising of achievement levels for all students are failing in these very areas being stressed. Theodore R.Sizer (2004) has maintained that although present curricular emphases claim to be research based, they are nevertheless narrow, concluding that what constitutes education is limited to those entities within education that are measurable. He declares that research on broader, community -based themes are not being addressed in education today, these include “the social reasons for dropouts, the weakness of social capital in regions with apparently ‘low-performing’ schools, the misdesign [and ill repair] of many schools, the evidence of growing inequities among population groups and communities, the impact of now ubiquitous media on the basic learning of children and adolescents” (Meier & Wood, ed., p. xxi).

Educational Reconstructionists seek to address these disparities and contemporary technological concerns, not by mere acceptance but through a thorough and deliberate discussion and dissection.

Brameld (1965) illustrates the degree to which all areas of culture are touched by education: science, economics, human relations, the arts, religion, and politics. The idea of education as change agent is central to Brameld and Educational Reconstructionists generally. Indeed, there exists a historical precedent for such a belief. “Immanuel Kant believed the schools in any society should have the academic freedom to cultivate the perfections of humanity with a

new order. In early American development, Thomas Jefferson saw education as the means to improving the conditions of human life...[and] is the source for both the continuation and modification of culture” (Bussler, 1997, p. 58). Acknowledging the history of Educational Reconstruction, firstly, I shall establish the historical antecedents and foundations of thought that convert the term Educational Reconstruction into an idea that is tangible, while remaining cognizant that the tenets of Educational Reconstruction run counter to the present societal norms concerning education. Secondly, I will demonstrate why Educational Reconstruction must replace the present curricular power structure. Thirdly, I shall discuss how Educational Reconstruction has been implemented as school curriculum, and how it might be implemented in the future. Belief in a close relationship between school and community, personal empowerment and self-direction as a necessity for community to be possible, and the notion “that individuals and society should be partners in an enterprise wherein one aids the other” (Ozman, p. 149), or to use Brameld’s term, “social self-realization,” which provides a foundation for “a continual championing for common humanity in society” (Bussler, 1997, p. 86). This foundation is a requirement if the United States and the world “intends to go forward to meet the new age and to proceed as rationally as possible to the realization of all possibilities for the enrichment and refinement of human life” (Counts, 1934, p. 4).

### *Topic One: Foundations*

Educational Reconstruction is founded in the belief in democracy. Fundamental to this belief is an emphasis on education as a transformative force within society, not merely a transmissional agent. The antecedent to Educational Reconstruction and the primacy of democracy within Educational Reconstruction can be found in John Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (1916, 1944). Dewey associates one’s personal freedom to excel to the welfare of the

greater community, in direct contrast to the social efficiency curriculum, which is a major tenet of Educational Reconstruction. Dewey writes

Regarding freedom, the important thing to bear in mind is that it designates a mental attitude rather than an external unconstraint of movements, but that this quality of mind cannot develop without a fair leeway of movements in exploration, experimentation, application, etc. A society based on custom will utilize individual variations only up to a limit of conformity with usage; uniformity is the chief ideal within each class. A progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth. Hence a democratic society must, in consistency with its ideal, allow for intellectual freedom and the play of diverse gifts and interests in its educational measures. (p. 305)

Dewey's view is that successful education requires inclusion of diverse segments of community and society, as well as diverse outlooks toward life and living. A democratic society must make available to its constituents a means to become fully realized, to become "self-actualized," to contribute to the societal whole. In terms of curricular theory, Educational Reconstruction is the only curricular house where this can become a reality. Dewey elaborates

The reconstruction of philosophy, of education, and of social ideals and methods go hand in hand. If there is especial need of educational reconstruction at the present time, if this need makes urgent a reconsideration of the basic ideas of traditional philosophic systems, it is because of the thoroughgoing change in social life accompanying the advance of science, the industrial revolution, and the development of democracy. Such practical changes cannot take place without demanding an educational reformation to meet them, and without leading men to ask what ideas and ideals are implicit in these social changes,

and what revisions they require of the ideas and ideals which are inherited from older and unlike cultures....Since education is the process through which the needed transformation may be accomplished and not remain a mere hypothesis as to what is desirable, we reach a justification of the statement that philosophy is the theory of education as a deliberately conducted practice. (p. 331/2)

Poignant words as pertinent nearly one hundred years after they were written. If education is a “deliberately conducted practice” then a curricular framework is necessary to bring about the transformation of society. Dewey (1916, 1944) said “To formulate the significance of an experience a man must take into conscious account the experiences of others. He must try to find a standpoint which includes the experience of others as well as his own” (p. 227). Of the four dominant curriculum theories as previously designated, only Educational Reconstruction attempts to integrate all individuals into the community, and the curricular studies of the school into the needs and challenges of community. Although the other three primary theories make cursory attempts to rid the community of injustices while bringing each student into full fruition, as defined, and as delineated by Apple’s “new hegemonic bloc,” only Educational Reconstruction melds the dualism of individual and society.

Dewey (1916, 1944), as a forebear to the Educational Reconstruction philosophical framework, elaborates: “The scheme of a curriculum must take into account of the adaptation of studies to the needs of the existing community life; it must select with the intention of improving the life we live in common so that the future shall be better than the past:..” (p. 191). Educational Reconstruction includes a planned, deliberate social emphasis, as compared to the other theories that presuppose that societal progress will occur through the education of individuals, divorced from any societal perspective or objective. John Dewey spelled out the

necessity of social integrated perspectives within the curricular framework that proved as a foundation to Educational Reconstruction.

In another Dewey work (1920) Dewey acknowledges Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626), English philosopher, statesman, and essayist, as putting “before our mind the larger features of a new spirit which was at work in causing intellectual reconstruction. They may suggest the social and historical forces out of which the new spirit was born” (p. 29). The “new spirit” to which Dewey refers, I suggest, is manifest in Educational Reconstruction. Dewey continues to discuss Bacon’s view toward academia in his time, and connects Bacon’s premises to the Educational Reconstruction movement that had yet to be defined [*The Twenty-Sixth Yearbook* (1926)]. The best known aphorism of Bacon is that “Knowledge is Power.” Dewey writes concerning Bacon

In his most extensive discussion he [Bacon] classified the learning of his day under three heads, delicate, fantastic and contentious. Under delicate learning, he included the literary learning which...contributed not to power but to ornament and decoration. It was ostentatious and luxurious. By fantastic learning he meant the quasi-magical science that was rife all over Europe in the sixteenth century – wild developments of alchemy, astrology, etc....For our purposes, however, contentious learning is most important....It is called contentious both because of the logical method used and the end to which it was put....it aimed at power, but power over other men in the interest of some class or sect or person, not power over natural forces in the common interest of us all....To Bacon, the old logic even at its best was a logic for teaching the already known could be learned, and teaching meant indoctrination, discipling [sic]. (p. 29, 30, 31)

After Bacon, *Democracy and Education*, and the aforementioned *The Twenty-Sixth Yearbook*<sup>2</sup> (1926), the central Educational Reconstruction document is George S. Counts' *Dare the School Build A New Social Order?* (1932). In this amalgamation of three given speeches, Counts calls on classroom teachers to carry the Reconstruction torch, disregarding the administrator/industrial education complex as irrelevant, he says

Under certain conditions education may be as beneficent and as powerful as we are wont to think. But if it is to be so, teachers must abandon much of their easy optimism, subject the concept of education to the most rigorous scrutiny, and be prepared to deal much more fundamentally, realistically, and positively with the American social situation than has been their habit in the past. (p. 2)

Counts importunes teachers to meet the Educational Reconstruction challenge and become fully engaged. The first speech, "Dare Progressive Education be Progressive?" was given to the Progressive Education Association in Baltimore. The speech could aptly be labeled as a challenge to the Association's members, for Counts was critical of "Progressives [that] are romantic sentimentalists who should not be trusted to write our educational theories or programs because they do not move outside of their comfort." Counts states on the opening page that schools should be leading society, not merely reacting by the forces that "are transforming the rest of the social order" (p.3), and he accuses the Progressive Educational Association of being content with motion without direction, as well as proceeding without an applicable theory of social welfare, "unless it be that of anarchy or extreme individualism" (p. 7). Furthermore,

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<sup>2</sup> Because Harold O. Rugg was selected to chair the committee that compiled *The Twenty-Sixth Yearbook* (Two Volumes), Kliebard (1995) declared "The inclusion of Counts and Rugg among the stars of the curriculum world invited to contribute to the two volumes marked the emergence of yet another force in the drive for curriculum reform, a force reflecting the social concern beginning to gain momentum..." (p. 156).

Counts does not hesitate to make potentially incendiary statements such as “perhaps one of the greatest tragedies of contemporary society lies in the fact that the child is becoming increasingly isolated from the serious activities of adults [a critique Deborah Meier will echo]...[and is] the product of a society that is moved by no great commanding ideals and is consequently victimized by the most terrible form of human madness – the struggle for private gain” (p. 17). Although speaking in the 1920s/30s Counts’ view toward culture, race, and class was one of inclusivity for all, and the assertion can be made that this is a vacancy in our schools in the present educational power structure. Throughout the “pamphlet” Counts accosts numerous educational “fallacies” and briefly explains his take on these fallacies. For example, “There is the fallacy that the school should be impartial in its emphases, that no bias should be given instruction....My thesis is that complete impartiality is utterly impossible, that the school must shape attitudes, develop tastes, and even impose ideas” (p. 19).

Counts demands that teachers challenge and lead, which is a much more uncomfortable position to tout given the precariousness of teachers’ positions in today’s tight budget world. *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* addresses the many contradictions within American society, and being published in 1932, in the midst of The Great Depression, it is inevitable that one might question the roots of such a calamity, and the role of education within the larger socio-economic/political milieu. Furthermore, Counts reflects the democratic ideal of Dewey, as stated by George L. Gutek (1970)

...Counts found the democratic ideal expressed in several areas, such as in the creation of the free public school, the upward extension of education opportunity...Emphasizing the dignity and worth of the individual, equality of educational opportunity open to all by reason of talents, efforts, and character....Counts asserted that equality of condition

produced economic, social, and political equality. Derived from these egalitarian moorings, the American educational system in both premise and genesis served the democratic heritage. (p. 90)

The democratic heritage of Educational Reconstruction cannot be overemphasized, for this heritage is one of its tenets which separates it from the other curriculum theories.

Counts acknowledged his debt to Dewey and Charles A. Beard, who, he said, made vigorous movements toward Educational Reconstruction which “increasingly gave attention to the role of community and culture in educational process and the importance of relating school and all educational agencies to social life” (p. 72). The connection between social betterment through the applied effort of the individual is a conscious emphasis of Educational Reconstruction. According to Gutek (1970), Counts close association with Beard was influential on Counts’ involvement in the technological and modern social problems of the day. Specifically, Beard was an American historian in the “new history” school that emphasized interpreting the past through the lens of individual experience, as opposed to objective analysis.

Another early influence on the foundations of Educational Reconstruction is the African-American scholar and founder of the N.A.A.C.P, W.E.B. DuBois. As a central figure as a forebear of Educational Reconstruction Andrew Frank Stone (1997) states that “DuBois’ work anticipates Educational reconstruction” (p. 24) and that his book *The Souls of Black Folk* was “an electrifying manifesto, mobilizing a people for bitter prolonged struggle to win a place in history” (p. 25). As the creator and editor of *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “DuBois gave us a model of someone implementing the philosophical principles that were later known as Educational Reconstruction. The careers of many other Reconstructionists have followed in his footsteps” (p. 25). More than any other

curriculum theory, Educational Reconstruction, since its conception, has always been a movement of inclusion, moving beyond class, race, or socio-economic status. Furthermore, as Stone points out, Educational Reconstruction is relevant in both rural and urban settings, for Theodore Brameld and Myles Horton carried out their initial Educational Reconstruction experiments in rural Minnesota and Tennessee, respectively. Horton, founder of the Highlander Folk School (1932 – 1962), a school for adults in Tennessee, established two central elements at the core of adult education for social change as envisioned by Horton and practiced at Highlander. According to Heaney (1995) these two core elements are described as

First, such an education must be grounded in the real and realizable struggle of people for democratic control over their lives. Education for change is always education with people, building upon what reinforces the experiences, goals, and concerns of those who participate. Second, it never simply reaffirms present experience, goals, and concerns, but [is] always challenging participants to move forward, to experience in new ways [that] requires political clarity about the vision upon which the program is based... (p. 3)

From its conception, Educational Reconstruction has pursued a global perspective. Even in times pre-internet and insta-communication, Educational Reconstruction maintained a global relativism. This is significant in that the idea of a global village is seemingly very late 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet the need for global thinking, according to Kilpatrick (1926) held that “Nothing less than world-mindedness can suffice - the ability to see social problems on the scale on which they exist” (as cited in Bussler, 1997, p. 77). The Educational Reconstruction desire for world community is consistent with the Reconstructionists’ view of democracy, which looks forward to an eventual unity of mankind. Theodore Brameld (1956) states

To expose the conflict between the demands of traditional national sovereignty and the need for responsible international order, and to commit ourselves unequivocally to world government and world citizenship, is not only one of our highest educational obligations; it is the most urgent of those obligations. (p. 171)

Not only has Educational Reconstruction predicted the desegregation of schools, it foresaw the necessity of “thinking globally, acting locally.” Indeed, as Frank Andrew Stone (1997) illustrates in a chapter entitled “Agents of Social Change,” Educational Reconstruction has “international roots” (p. 22). Stone elucidates how Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi “carried out reconstruction in South Africa and India before the philosophy was well developed in the United States. A collection of Gandhi’s articles about the Wardha Scheme for reforming the schools in 1937 is titled *Educational Reconstruction*.” The republic of Turkey’s Village Institute movement of the 1930s/40s led “rural teenagers, boys and girls, became literate and articulate. They learned about modern technology, joined the mainstream of their country, and became politically conscious.... Paulo Freire initiated his program of conscientization and functional literacy” in Brazil as a method for developing adult basic literacy skills “as instruments of socio-economic empowerment...Freire advocates Educational Reconstruction. His work embodies the Reconstructionist agenda of catalyzing needed social changes through educational processes” (Stone, 1997, p. 23). Educational Reconstruction is an international phenomenon, and although implemented in various nations, is not nationalistic.

Educational Reconstruction is a vehicle for the advancement of the ideals of democracy, specifically its aspirations to equity and justice for all citizens. Therefore, as made evident in *Pedagogies of Resistance* (Crocco, Munro, & Weiler, 1999) “The conflict between the public rhetoric of democracy and the unjust realities of the social order motivated them [Educational

Reconstructionists] to employ their educations for social change. Like other progressive educators they enlisted others in their activism, thus creating forms of grassroots power that resisted hierarchy and centralization and promulgated a vision of education linked to social reform” (p. 75). Marion Wright, echoing George S. Counts, “saw educational sociology as a field involved in a ‘moral enterprise’ in which scholars served ‘a prophetic function’ (Crocco, Munro, & Weiler, 1999, p. 65).

One may consider the American Progressive Education movement at this crux, and how Educational Reconstruction relates, or doesn’t, to this movement. Ida B. Wells and Jane Addams state in the chapter “Political Activism as Teaching” in *Pedagogies of Resistance* that

Despite the dominant assumption that women progressives merely carried out the ideas of male progressive reformers, these women extended progressive thought to include issues of gender, race, and ethnicity in ways that dominant ideologies did not. In addressing issues of race relations (in particular lynching, prejudice, and segregation) and gender (in particular women’s education, suffrage, and discrimination), Addams and Wells broadened the very definitions of Progressive Education. Although admittedly prescribed within the dominant race, gender, and class ideologies of the time, these women sought creative ways to work across institutional boundaries to provide sites in which people of various classes, races, and ethnicities could come together to learn from each other. (p. 43)

Audaciously, George S. Counts rebuked Progressive Education as being less than progressive. He asserts that although the American Progressive Education movement worked toward some of the objectives of Educational Reconstruction, it fell pathetically short. Counts illustrates this succinctly in *Dare the Schools Build A New Social Order?* when he writes that

If Progressive Education is to be genuinely progressive, it must emancipate itself from the influence of this class, face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all of its stark reality, establish an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny, and become less frightened than it is today at the bogies of imposition and indoctrination. (p. 7)

Not only is Counts critical of so-called progressive education, he is highly critical of the child study/ developmentalist approach to education, stating: “An education that does not strive to promote the fullest and most thorough understanding of the world is not worthy of the name” (p. 9). Counts then makes a statement that digs to the heart of the present approach to curriculum, George S. Counts says that “there must be no deliberate distortion or suppression of facts to support any theory or point of view...universal truth and the introduction into theory and practice of education of an element of obscurantism” (p. 9-10). Counts is expressing skepticism of education with less than altruistic intentions. Additionally, Counts declares that the American Progressive Education movement, by the 1920s, had become

...domesticated. It had become a mild approach for reforming curriculum and instructional methodology in the schools. But this philosophy of education didn't address the social issues of the day, such as the lack of basic civil rights for people of color...The public schools conformed to racial segregation and did little to prepare students to engage in social planning or devise strategies for bringing about change. (Stone, 1997, p. 26)

The dichotomy between The American Progressive Education movement and Educational Reconstruction is clear and severe, for it was Educational Reconstruction that attempted to

address these issues. This was the “socio-economic ground from which today’s Educational Reconstruction grew” (Stone, 1997, p. 26).

Progressive education certainly intimates forward movement, and perhaps newer methods and approaches, but Counts drew the line when he stated “that a critical factor must play an important role in any adequate educational program, at least in any such program fashioned for the modern world. An education that does not strive to promote the fullest and most thorough understanding of the world is not worthy of the name” (1932, p. 9). Furthermore, a passage from Noam Chomsky (2000), states that one of “Dewey’s central themes” was “that the ultimate aim of production is not production of goods but the production of free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality” (p. 38). Schools remain “undemocratic not only in terms of their governance structures, but also as sites that reproduce the dominant ideology, which in turn discourages independent and critical thinking” (Chomsky, 2000, p. 45).

In sum, critical theorists have pointed to social-political ramifications of classroom activities and the educational policies that are consistent with them. The most important of the areas, as indicated by Beyer (2001), that have been scrutinized include

1. How the values embedded in the hidden curriculum affect students' self-perceptions and their possible futures;
2. The texts, tests, and standards that compose the overt curriculum, whose interests are represented in the curriculum and whose are not;
3. The kinds of cultural values and structures of power that dominate in schools and classrooms and what their effects are, especially in terms of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and disability issues;

4. The forms of assessment that occur in classrooms and how they affect students and teachers;  
and
5. The aims or purposes of schooling and how they are related to moral questions, political influences, ideological frameworks, and social possibilities.

The Educational Reconstruction position on society, culture, and education is mainly derived from the work of George S. Counts, Harold O. Rugg, and Theodore B. H. Brameld. These three authors provide a representative sample of Educational Reconstruction thought. All three focused on what they saw as a state of crisis. It should be noted that these three represent a triad of aspect concerning Educational Reconstruction, and not a monolithic view. Educational Reconstruction has been and is an evolving approach to education curriculum, non-dogmatic, but rather reflective and responsive to society, culture, and education [Society of Educational Reconstruction's *Introducing Educational Reconstruction: The Philosophy and Practice of Transforming Society through Education* (1997), Stanley's *Curriculum for Utopia* (1992)]. Harold Rugg, for example, stressed that the "root cause of the problems of the 1930s was economic" (p. 12), and that "those groups who controlled our economic system also controlled our government policy" (p. 13). Moreover, Rugg and the Reconstructionists believed that students should immerse themselves in real-world problems, including working in their communities to find and present solutions that would improve their lives and the lives of their fellow citizens (1939). Counts identified "with some form of socialism [and] was perceived as radical by many American educators who feared that socialism represented a loss of democratic freedoms" (p. 14). Counts *did* want to curtail the democratic freedom of exploitation. Brameld is considered the most radical of the three, "critical of more 'liberal' advocates of reform (including Rugg and Counts)" (Stanley, 1992, p.16). "Class struggle" Brameld (1936) wrote, "should be

understood as one important component of the educational reform process” (p. 8). Brameld (1971) identified six major cultural contradictions that influenced both education and society as a whole, they are

- 1). Self-interest versus social interest;
- 2). Equality versus inequality;
- 3). Planlessness versus planning;
- 4). Nationalism versus internationalism;
- 5). Absolutism versus experimentalism;
- 6). Man-against-himself versus man-for-himself [sic].

According to Stanley (1992), “This conflict incorporates a summary of the previous five conflicts in the sense that inequality, self-interest, planlessness, nationalism, and absolutism are dehumanizing and degrading of the human character, thereby turning humans against themselves. Conversely, the opposite values such as equality and social interest represent the best in human thinking. Thus, we are in a struggle to establish those values best suited to improve the human condition” (p. 19).

Generally, those who advocate Educational Reconstruction agree that firstly, schooling must be implemented toward cultural, social, and educational reform, and that these elements are consistently in an ongoing state of crisis. Second, Educational Reconstruction proponents recognize that education should be a primary entity to bring about social transformation, and that critical thinking ability is essential for social transformation to occur. Third, “both conservative and liberal educators see the school as a principal agency for social change and improvement, although they generally differ regarding goals and methods” (Stanley, 1992, p. 90). Educational Reconstruction can proceed in the present precisely because it has a rich and differentiated

history. Educational Reconstruction is an idea able to adapt to the times and predicaments in which the present cultural, social, and educational realms find themselves.

The philosophical basis for Educational Reconstruction thought is well summarized by analyst Deborah B. McKay (2001). McKay breaks Educational Reconstruction into eight distinct elements, and although titled in Brameld's name, represents the thought of Counts, Rugg and Dewey as well. The eight elements of Educational Reconstruction as delineated by McKay are:

*Theory of value.* What knowledge and skills are worth learning? What are the goals of education? Theodore Brameld believed that the goal of education was to employ schools as agents for social change. He is one of the primary founders of the educational philosophy Educational Reconstruction, which emphasized addressing social questions and a quest to create a better society and worldwide democracy. The knowledge and skills that are worth learning include science, economics, mathematics, human relations, arts, religion and politics as these areas can teach people to reason. Education as power means education competent and strong enough to enable us, the majority of people, to decide what kind of a world we want and how to achieve that kind of world (Brameld, 1965, p. 9). Only the power of education is capable of controlling the other powers that man has gained and will use either for his annihilation or for his transformation (Brameld, 1965, p. 1).

*Theory of knowledge.* What is knowledge? How is it different from belief? Knowledge is virtue and our civilization will fail if power and virtue are not balanced. It is different from belief since Brameld believed that people could be taught to reason. With education as the core and creation of culture, the world can save itself from destruction by choosing to reason accordingly.

*Theory of human nature.* What is a human being? How does it differ from other species? What are the limits of human potential? Human beings have become emotionally ill as the mores

and values of society have changed and a loss of equilibrium has occurred. Man has the ability to build a better society, however, through bringing this issue of values into a clearer focus. Human beings have the ability to analyze critically what is wrong with the values that we have been holding and then to decide about the values that we should be holding. It is ultimately man's decision whether the power that is acquired be used for good or evil purposes since man does have the capacity to destroy itself.

*Theory of learning.* What is learning? How are skills and knowledge acquired? Learning is acquired through a cultural context. Students learn through participation in a democratic process, which includes a problem-based context and cooperative investigation. For example, as students discover and learn history and the context of the past and present cultural and societal environments and analyze the data, then students are able to make better decisions to affect the greater good of mankind. Skills and knowledge are acquired as continual interaction between community and school occurs. This is the number one aim of Educational Reconstruction as radical ideology, to find solutions to correct societal ills, and to do so through the interaction of the individual with societal institutions.

*Theory of transmission .* Who should teach? By what methods? What will the curriculum be? Teachers should help young people learn how the scientific method applies, not just to physics, chemistry or biology, but to the whole of life, including personal and social life (Brameld, 1965, p. 53). In addition, teachers should help students to understand themselves as well as their relationship to others. Teaching, however, should not be limited to teachers. In the Floodwood Project students met two or three times each week with the instructor acting as chairman to exchange information and questions, listen to guest experts and plan the schedule ahead. The methods of instruction should include: group research, reports, analysis of current

issues, reading, guest speakers, small group discussion, field trips, essay writing, students reformulating ideas and providing strategies for implementation. Curriculum should be designed around contemporary social life rather than academic disciplines and should be whatever is going to help a culture to evolve, change, and problem solve.

*Theory of society.* What is society? What institutions are involved in the education process? Education as power means that we, the teachers, the students and the parents, are the only ones who should control education-control it for our own good ends and by our own good means (Brameld, p. 8). He believed in a commitment to building a new culture in which the common people would emerge as the leaders of society. In addition to these stakeholders, there are other institutions that should be involved in the educational process. In the Floodwood Project [discussed in Topic Three] this is clearly seen: A wide range of pamphlets and books from more than 40 organizations were collected for classroom use. They included publications issued by the National Association of Manufacturers, the Cooperative League, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and federal New Deal Agencies.

*Theory of opportunity.* Who is to be educated? Education is the right and responsibility of each person. The average student must be educated to the limits of his ability-above all, his ability both to understand and serve the prevailing power struggle on his own level. We see our fundamental goals as a world civilization and an educational system which in all ways support human dignity for all races, castes, and classes; self-realization; and the fullest vocational, civic, and social cooperative and service (Brameld, 1965).

*Theory of consensus.* Why do people disagree? How is Consensus achieved? Whose opinion takes precedence? American philosophers have disagreed with one another a great deal in the area of consensus since different ideals have different meaning for different people. The

bottom line, though, is that each and every human being has the right to have their basic needs satisfied and to have the opportunity for self-actualization. Brameld (1965) contended that social consensus is the basis of meaningful social action. The individual must find ways to satisfy personal needs through social consensus. Ultimately, the good of mankind must take precedence.

The length and breadth of the foundations of Educational Reconstruction are solidly established. It incorporates Progressive Education beyond tepid progressivism, for Educational Reconstruction is a theory immersed in praxis. It has been shown that Educational Reconstruction is the only truly democratic approach to curriculum creation. Educational Reconstruction is the only truly holistic approach to curriculum creation. Educational Reconstruction is the only truly integrative approach to curriculum creation, involving students, teachers, parents, and community; moreover, Educational Reconstruction integrates multiple disciplines, multiple cultures, and multiple possibilities. Dewey (1925) best summarizes the foundation of Educational Reconstruction

...social institutions as they exist can be bettered only through the deliberative interventions of those who free their minds from the standards of the order which obtains. The underlying fact was the perception of the possibility of change, a change for the better, in social organization....Social conditions were altered so that there were both need and opportunity for inventive and planning activities, initiated by innovating thought, and carried to conclusion only as the initiating mind secured the sympathetic assent of other individuals. (p. 218)

*Topic Two: Domination*

Although the historical significance and relevancy has been established, this does not necessarily indicate the *need* for Educational Reconstruction. Given the challenges to be faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the status quo should be cognizant of, and planning for, such eventualities as previously remarked upon (i.e. non-oil based economy, post-industrialism, climactic change, among others). The educational community is an integral part of preparation for this new future. Educational leadership as connected to this new future is essential for a successful transition. If it be granted that education is an art concerned with the transformation of life as we find it into life as we would like it, then no educational leadership is possible unless accompanied by a realistic understanding of the forces underlying contemporary society and by the definite projection of goals for a future better arrangement of American economic, institutional, and cultural life.

To exercise educational leadership can only mean to define the issues of contemporary life and to initiate persistently and consistently clear-cut movements, in the school and out, calculated to achieve the goals of a good life. Unrealistically, the present educational leadership structure has faced the basic facts of existing social conflict, social disparities, and maladjustment through more rigorous standards, school vouchers, and by opening the public schools to the free market. Add to this the notion that present curricular pursuits leave students in a state of learning termination, dissatisfied, and empty of wonder and void of desire for continued educational engagement, and we are left with an individualistic, competitive school power structure. It is suggested that these approaches are not preparing our society for the challenges of this century. Schools remain undemocratic not only in terms of their governance structures, but also as sites that reproduce the dominant ideology, which in turn discourages independent and critical thinking (Chomsky, 2004). Given the undemocratic nature of schools,

how can education stimulate critical thinking in terms of students' creativity, curiosity, and needs. Furthermore, Chomsky reflects that historically and in the present, schools remain institutions for indoctrination and for imposing obedience. He says "Far from creating independent thinkers, schools play an institutional role in a system of control and coercion" (p. 16). One might argue that schools have always been thus and that this "control and coercion" is necessary for the proper discipline of our youth. Education author Alfie Kohn (*Punished by Rewards* [1993], *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* [1996], et al.) has written that there are essentially two possibilities when it comes to school governance and administering: the support model and the demand model. The former beginning "with the premise that the role of teachers, administrators, parents, public officials, and the community at large is to help students act on their desire to make sense of the world... Students are not just expected to take responsibility for their own learning but are actively assisted in doing so"; the latter is "imposed on teachers and students. The methods and metaphors borrowed from the corporate world, with much talk of results, performance, accountability, and incentives. Children described as 'workers'... Schools represent an 'investment'" (1999, p. 93). This is evidence that the end product orientation or factorization of present day education dehumanizes and disassociates the student from the community, the exact opposite of the intention of Educational Reconstruction.

Deborah Meier echoes Kohn's and Counts' sentiment in her work *In Schools We Trust* (2002) as she establishes that students and youth generally are separated from the adult world, and that teachers become defensive and isolationist and mistrustful of parents as well as mistrustful of their teaching colleagues and administration. Meier suggests that this perpetuation of lack-of-trust creates a poison, toxic school atmosphere, each person guarding the turf they regard as his or her own. Meier argues this is the present condition of our schools, along with the

notion that students are disconnected from the adult world, ingraining mistrust. Meier connects the accountability and standards movements as adjuncts to this mistrust that presently permeates our schools, and she acknowledges why these approaches are so attractive, she examines

The popular new drive to hold schools and school reform accountable to test scores has many appeals. It's built around the idea that the villain is mostly low expectations and a failure of will power. Both are...less onerous to tackle than poverty, for example...No more excuses. The more objective the standards, the more distant and scientific the results; the more universal the population tested, then the more nonnegotiable the consequences, and the less room for argument, excuses, flexibility, bias, and compromise. In a society in which adults often feel helpless to control their students or their children, even to know them, this approach has additional blessings. It appears to avoid the issue of trusting anyone: one's kids, their teachers, their schools -- or oneself. It is, we are told, also more like the merciless but efficient marketplace -- with test scores standing in for the bottom line. And for this reason it appeals to those who have the most reason to distrust our schools... (Meier, 2002, p. 120)

This distrust has been transmogrified into an era of "accountability," manifest in standardized testing and the No Child Left Behind education act. Privatization and performance pay for teachers are part of the stratagem of the new accountability, as is a descending order of public liability. This stratagem begins with governors, on down to district administrators, principals, teachers, and ultimately ending at the students' doorstep: All get measured, and publicly lauded or shamed (Meier, 2002). This notion of trust and mistrust bring two other elements of the educational gestalt into purview; that is, psychological aspects of education and spiritual aspects of education. Philip Wexler (2000) elaborates

The educational field is constituted contradictorily by sensually repressive performance cognitivism that denies realization of the fully lived being of students. It is outside the schooled universe of discourse there to talk of an education-for-being. [This includes] the reawakening imagination, the coming to sensorial nature, and the reintegration of self, community, and cosmos. (p. 94)

Education-for-being perhaps sounds too abstract to relate this type of education to present-day curriculum construction, but Educational Reconstruction is all about creating an education-for-being in our youth. Incorporating the psychological and spiritual aspects of education with the social, cultural, and educational, Educational Reconstruction works to endeavor our youth in an education-for-being. Alan A. Block (2004) ventures into the realm of spirituality when he writes

Study, like prayer, is a stance we assume in the world. Study, like prayer, is a way of being – it is an ethics. When we learn, as when we pray, we acknowledge in public our sense of wonder and awe. Wonder, as Abraham Joshua Heschel teaches me, is a radical amazement; wonder is a state of maladjustment to words and notions, the recognition of their fluidity....In prayer and in study, we acknowledge how little we know, and we stand in awe at the complexities of our lives that we only, in part, can realize. (p. 2)

Standardized testing and content-only based curriculum does not address this necessary sense of wonder. If anything, present curricular pursuits, if ascertainable, truncates one's sense of wonder because wonder has no market value. Block (2004) quotes Heschel writing

“The beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wisdom is awe.” Prayer is an expression of awe; prayer sacralizes the mundane. So, too, does study. When we pray and when we study, we take a stance in awe and humility, and we actively acknowledge that

“our lives take place under horizons that range beyond the span of an individual life, or even the life of a generation, a nation, or an era.” (p. 3)

These are the elements of curriculum that are intangible yet a necessity if we seek an education-for-being, which only Educational Reconstruction addresses when compared to the humanists, developmentalists, and efficientists.

Alan A. Block (2004) reflects on another aspect of immeasurable education when he states that “If one is to truly learn, then that learning must somehow be understood as an enhancement to existence” (p. 31). It can be contended that one realizes when “enhancement” has or is occurring, but that it cannot be tested or measured. This runs counter to current curricular trends. Herbert M. Kliebard illustrates “The Contemporary Revival” of school standardization (1992, p. 132) stating that “the first great drive toward standardization, predetermination, and fragmentation in the school curriculum came about in the aftermath of the first industrial revolution, so the renewal of those curriculum tendencies has come about in the aftermath of the second one – what is sometimes called the electronic or technological revolution.” Kliebard (1992) elaborates on this “fragmentation” of present day curriculum construction, and holds that presently that which cannot be measured is without worth. He writes

In education, as in industry, the standardization of the product also means the standardization of work. Educational activity which may have an organic wholeness and vital meaning takes on significance only in terms of its contribution to the efficient manufacture of the finished product... As in industry, the price of worship at the altar of efficiency is the alienation of the worker from his or her work – where the continuity and wholeness of the enterprise are destroyed for those who engage in it. Here, then, is one

great threat that the production metaphor governing modern curriculum theory poses for education.

The bureaucratic model, along with its behavioristic and technological refinements, threatens to destroy, in the name of efficiency, the satisfaction that one may find in intellectual activity. (p. 130)

Educational Reconstruction approaches curriculum without setting a termination point, and acknowledges that one's education, in and out of school, is never ending. The final exam is not the end of learning, and often it is the truly immeasurable and intangible that represents learning, as Block cites Dewey: "'The aim of education,' Dewey argued, 'is to enable individuals to continue their education – or that the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth.' The aim of learning is to enhance our capacities to live our lives with greater levels of satisfaction and reward" (Block, 2004, p. 31).

Deborah Meier, as did Kliebard, comments on the present day resurgence of standardization, she says that the emphasis on standardized testing *is* the reform, rather than being *for* reform (2002). Additionally, Meier agrees

The idea of holding schools accountable to test scores has its attractions, fits aspects of the national mood, and adheres to a long-standing American tradition of turning to standardized testing as the answers to our ills. But the trouble is, as we keep learning generation after generation, it contradicts what we know about how human beings learn and what tests can and cannot do. That a standardized one-size-fits-all test could be invented and imposed by the state, that teachers could unashamedly teach to such a test, that all kids could theoretically succeed at this test, and that it could be true to any form of serious intellectual and/or technical psychometric standards is just plain undoable. And

the idea that such an instrument should define our necessarily varied and at times conflicting definitions of being well educated is, worse still, undesirable. (p. 121)

Michael W. Apple (2000) attempts to disseminate the reasons for the success of what he calls The New Right in education circles in the present, and what Robert B. Reich (2004), former Secretary of Labor under President Clinton, calls the Radcons. Apple suggests that one of the major aims of the “rightist restoration” is to “struggle not in one but many different arenas at the same time, not only in the economic sphere but in education and elsewhere as well. This aim is grounded in the realization that economic dominance must be coupled to ‘political, moral, and intellectual leadership’ if a group wants to be truly dominant...to restructure a social formation” (p. 21). Apple (p. 89) explains the development of Radcon hegemony over public education and how, incrementally, it has led “toward reductive, mechanistic, and industrial accountability systems tighter control over the curriculum and pedagogy, the deskilling of teachers, an increasingly close relationship between economic rationality and educational means and ends”. Examples of these developments include the making of the captive audience concerning Channel One in classrooms, the dominance of a few states’ curricular prejudices over all textbook creation and choice in the United States, and the proletarianization of the teaching profession. It is the latter I address in more detail.

Apple (2003) explores the effort within industry to streamline the assembly-line production means to maximize profits and minimize waste, inefficiency, while simultaneously exerting greater control in the working (and domestic) lives of employees:

...complicated jobs were rigorously examined by management experts. Each element that went into doing the job was broken down into its simplest components....All planning was to be done by management, not workers. The consequences of this have been

profound, but two of them are especially important...the separation of conception from execution [and] deskilling... (p. 115, 116)

Pointing at these two developments, Apple explains how the gains that teachers have made in regard to control of curriculum and classrooms were hard won. In terms of elementary education, dominated by women teachers, wrestled control over their classrooms was often a gender power play as much as it had to do with actual curricula. The present practice of breaking curricula into “atomistic elements” morphs the teacher into more of a manager than an executor of lessons, taking classroom control out of the hands of the teacher and into the hands of “someone outside the immediate situation” (Apple, p. 116). The whole process becomes lost to the teacher who is too “busy” attending to accountability and standardized procedures.

Apple (2003) collaborates with other educators in exploring the democratic educational process from a worldwide perspective; for example, Polynesia, South Korea, Scandinavia. Take the last, where the transfer of control was exported to the societies, localities where the schools actually were – decentralization. The opposite of what was occurring in the United States during this period, the 1980s and ‘90s. But perhaps not unlike the lip service the state of Wisconsin pays toward the chimera of local control, collaborator Petter Aasen suggests that this move in Scandinavia was a method to legitimize the power that really remained centralized, despite the ostentation suggesting otherwise. In the chapter “Educating the State, Democratizing Knowledge: The Citizen School Project in Porto Alegre, Brazil,” Apple begins with a stark explanation of the work being accomplished in Brazil, a somewhat contrarian view in that it includes the voices of society’s most disenfranchised:

Education must hold our dominant institutions in education...up to rigorous questioning, and at the same time, this questioning must deeply involve those who benefit least from

the ways these institutions now function. Both conditions are necessary, since the first without the second is simply insufficient to the task of creating a critically democratic education. (p.193)

Educational Reconstruction returns to the necessity of schools as a venue for democracy over and over, valuing the contributions of all classes and persons of color and creeds within a society equally, with an understanding that the integration of diverse persons add to a more critically engaged and intellectually honest citizenry. Kohn (1999) points out that despite the often denounced new fangled, non-traditional methods in education that are dumbing-down their (parents, corporate interests, political administrators) children, Kohn cites, among others, a study by John Goodlad who

...conducted what is still regarded as one of the most comprehensive study of American classrooms, visiting more than a thousand in all. He found virtually nothing but traditional instruction all over the country: the overwhelming majority of classrooms were “almost entirely teacher dominated with respect to seating, grouping, content, materials, use of space, time utilization, and learning activities.” Moreover, “teachers out-talked the entire class of students by a ratio of three to one,” and when students did get to talk, it was usually to give a factual answer to a teacher’s question. Since then, very little has changed. (p. 7)

Not only have classrooms remained teacher-centered and the balance of knowledge power remained in the administrative structure, Kohn is emphatic when he writes that the recent and present “focus on results turns out to be remarkably simplistic, particularly when one considers the psychological issues involved” (p. 21).

According to Kohn (1999), the importance of end product consistently supercedes the importance of process. Furthermore,

*A preoccupation with achievement is not only different from, but often detrimental to, a focus on learning...the Tougher Standards movement favors Old-school teaching...this movement is wedded to standardized testing...[and] usually consists of imposing specific requirements and trying to coerce improvement by specifying exactly what must be taught and learned – that is, by mandating a particular kind of education....weaving its way through many of these ideas is an implicit assumption about what it means to improve, about the nature of “rigor,” or “challenge.” That assumption can be summarized in three words: harder is better. This reductive (and really rather silly), premise is the basis for judging teachers, textbooks, and tests; it lurks behind complaints about “dumbing down” education and strident calls to “raise the bar.” Its first cousin is the idea that if something isn’t working very well -- say, requiring students to do homework of dubious value -- then insisting on more of the same will surely solve the problem. (p. 21, 22)*

Kohn also compares looking up information, rote facts, out of an encyclopedia in his youth to today’s students doing the same only from the internet; he asks, “what’s the difference?” The focus is end product oriented, memorization, with very little learning getting accomplished.

Carr and Harris (2001) argue, as if in response to Kohn, that standards are the coordinating link and constant that ties the disparate elements of the curriculum together into a comprehensible whole. They maintain

Standards must be put into practice at all levels of the system before they can make a significant difference for students. Standards are especially important in the classroom,

which is where they ultimately effect the most change. National, state, and local standards are important resources for teachers and administrators take true ownership of them....The school board should formally adopt a plan that puts this standards-based assessment system into policy....A critical first step is to evaluate the current status of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in relation to the standards. (pp. 1 – 5)

The standards movement has indeed been adopted at all levels of the educational curriculum grid, and although the standards based curriculum has its proponents, there exists a large portion of the educational community that remains doubtful as to the intent, purpose, and meaning of what standardized test results mean. Furthermore, with the passage of the No Child left Behind Act, it is evident that what once was the Standards Movement is now the Standards “Standard” dominating curricula through out the United States. One can argue that the dominance of the politically right wing is now complete within educational circles, but there does exist a backlash to this development.

Standards and accountability proponents also decry the labor organizations of teachers, citing their existence as a threat to their quantitative approach to all things educational. The present curricular power structure is often denigrated as “extremist,” as Brimelow (2003) maintains. He argues that through their control of the government educational monopoly, teachers through their unions are the major source of the gross deficiencies and inequities in the present school system. Also, according to Brimelow, real educational reform requires introducing competition through vouchers and other means and eliminating the legal privileges that are the major source of the unions’ enormous political and economic power. He faults teachers for assimilating negative results in a positive fashion, and for faultfinding in others and administrative organizations. Brimelow cites a 2000 Program for International Students

Assessment organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as stating “that the United States should direct more help to its lowest-performing students” which is a sentiment in which teachers and Educational Reconstructionists would agree, but Brimelow continues

...in fact, directing “more help” to the “lowest-performing students” has been the Educrat policy since the urban riots of the 1960s. In the mid-1990s, nearly three-quarters of all federal spending on elementary and secondary education went to the disadvantaged and the handicapped...state and local expenditures aimed at the gifted and talented amounted to two cents – that’s 2 pennies, not 2 percent – out of every \$100 spent....The taxpayers’ role is to cough up. (pp. 20, 21)

Echoing these themes, Diane Ravitch (2000) claims that the reforms in education as elements of Progressivism are largely to blame for the ills within education presently, and suggests that the Standards Movement is a change of direction much needed in American education. Ravitch not only makes a case for standards but also clearly pitches her argument against purportedly non-academic curricula and in favor of academic curricula. Ravitch reduces Progressivism in education to a “century long effort to diminish the intellectual of the schools” (p. 459).

Wraga (2000) in turn cites Ravitch as “leaving the reader with an inaccurate reconstruction of the past that is heavily freighted with the priorities of the present” and that her argument is “largely in quantity of detail rather than in quality of explanation” (p. 38). Moreover, Wraga wonders disconcertedly at Ravitch’s statement at the close of *Left Back* (2000), the book wherein she spends 400 plus pages in derision of all things sounding of “progressivism”, that progressivism has actually “made valuable and complementary contributions to American education” (pp. 462,463). Although one of the standards movement’s most vocal cheerleaders,

Wraga concludes, Ravitch's book is rife with omission and inconsistent in message, yet Ravitch is one of the most public and oft cited experts on what the educational world requires vis a vis the new hegemonic bloc as delineated by Apple (as described in p. 9, 10 in this document).

Robert B. Reich (2004) explores the inter-relatedness between the needs and wants of students and the expectations of those whose power is endemic in the present power structure. Reich maintains that the status quo policies impact education in non-direct ways, exclude, and inhibit the learning of the most disenfranchised in our society. Concerning abstinence only education and marriage education/ counseling (\$1.5 billion spent in 2004), Reich writes that getting married is not going to lift the disenfranchised from their impoverished state:

Government campaigns to promote marriage aren't the answer. The best way to improve the odds that children won't be impoverished is to help women – and men – get better-paying jobs. That means, at the least, access to good schools and job training....liberals have been fighting for adequate school budgets, fewer kids per classroom, well-trained and well-paid teachers (talented women and men won't go into teaching solely for the personal satisfaction; they need to be adequately paid) and community colleges with enough resources to provide job skills to all who need them. Yet school budgets are being slashed, funds for job training are being cut, and community colleges are turning away many poor students. (p. 66)

To suggest that education can exist detached from social and political realities (in the present as in the past) is to hide one's head in the proverbial sand. Nationally, the funding for the No Child Left Behind Act has been eviscerated. Continuing in the political mode, and as evidence of how the present administration merely pays lip service to its so-called education initiatives, Representative George Miller (California), the senior Democrat on the House Education and

Workforce Committee requested a GAO (General Accounting Office) “investigation of how states are implementing NCLB’s supplemental educational service provisions” (April 26, 2005). This provision is instrumental in reaching the NCLB stated goal of eliminating the achievement gap among low-income and minority children. Representative Miller illustrates how the stated goals and the needed funds to achieve the goals are worlds apart. Representative Miller issued the following chart on June 30, 2005. The left column of the chart shows the amount schools need to fully pay for the requirements of NCLB, like a high quality teacher in every classroom. The center column shows the amount schools actually received, and the final column indicates the amount that students were shortchanged (amounts in billions):

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Table 1

*Funding for No Child Left Behind Act*

| Year | Need | Received | Amount Shortchanged |
|------|------|----------|---------------------|
| 2002 | 26.4 | 22.2     | 4.2                 |
| 2003 | 29.2 | 23.8     | 5.4                 |
| 2004 | 32   | 24.5     | 7.5                 |
| 2005 | 34.3 | 24.5     | 9.8                 |
| 2006 | 36.9 | 23.7     | 13.2                |

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The shortfall to date is 40.2 billion dollars. The National Education Association and numerous states (e.g. Utah, Vermont) have official complaints pending concerning the lack of reception of these promised monies, and on August 22, 2005, the state of Connecticut filed a suit against the federal government explicitly because of the lack of funding for mandated testing.

Present political will and curricular pursuits, along with ingrained traditionalism and teacher centered classrooms, standardized high stakes testing and detachment of the curriculum from the cultural, social, educational, psychological, and spiritual aspects of students' lives point to the ongoing failing of present curricular pursuits and the necessity of an Educational Reconstructive approach to curriculum in the challenging 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Topic III: Re-creation*

Educational Reconstruction has a rich and diverse historical foundation, and present curricular pursuits are either nonexistent, as Shattuck illustrates, or dominated by the efficiency school of curriculum, dominated by self-interest, standardization, and disconnected from the social, cultural, educational, psychological, and spiritual realms of education. Educational Reconstruction, variously applied, has proven successful in the past and shall in the future. Educational Reconstruction's acknowledged successes suggest how the elements of Educational Reconstruction might be developed and implemented in the near future.

The Indiana University at Bloomington has developed Reconstructionist teacher education programs as well as an elementary program. Democracy, Diversity, and Social Justice (DDSJ) (described in detail below) is a new elementary education program based on commitments to inquiry projects and frames of mind; democratic communities, ideas, and practices; critical reflection on experiences and actions; and a comprehensive understanding of social justice. "Theory Into Practice" is a revised elementary education program that focuses on the need to help prospective teachers instruct students with diverse backgrounds, cultures, and learning abilities. An emphasis on the necessity of continued professional development is also central. "Praxis: A Program for Innovative Education" is a revised elementary education program, similar in many ways to "Theory Into Practice." "Teaching All Learners" is a new

combined elementary education--special education program based on Educational Reconstruction practices (Beyer, 2001). Educational Reconstruction can be applied to most educational milieus and circumstances: elementary education to teacher education.

The Program for Democracy, Diversity, and Social Justice is part of an effort to rethink teacher education and design new programs, the ideas under-girding this elementary education program have been developed over several years:

The initial conversation with elementary education faculty and students resulted in a group of about 15 people who declared they wanted to build a new program from the ground up (i.e., to create new courses, new expectations, and a new set of values). When the group first met to discuss the possibilities for a new elementary education program, it was not at all clear how much the participants had in common in terms of a cohesive direction. Although there were a number of people who had an understanding of critical theory (either in terms of its theoretical/historical underpinnings or in its implications for specific subject areas) and shared its perspectives, there were certainly differences in emphasis. For example, some had a rather broad vision for critical theory throughout a program, some had a keen interest in critical literacy, and some were committed to diversity and related social issues, and so on. Agreed upon are the central ideas communicated by the three concepts that constitute the title, especially democratic ideas and practices. It is that mutual commitment to democratic practices (in conversations as well as in programmatic initiatives) that held the group together. (Beyer, 2001, p. 5)

These programs are juxtaposed and opposed to programs that may focus on more particular domains or issues; for example, the importance of racial diversity, issues of gender, nonnative English speakers, and cultural perspectives. DDSJ has created a more comprehensive

normative and critical framework. That framework has the potential to integrate issues of class, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and so on, so that students may see how these issues are connected and how the forms of inequality represented may build on each other. Many courses in DDSJ also focus on moral and political issues related to teaching, curriculum, inquiry assignments, and so on (Beyer, 2001).

Educational Reconstruction precepts apply to urban education efforts. A major element in urban education, or in a new urban renewal approach is the phenomena of service learning. As Kahne and Westheimer (1996) explain:

Service learning can improve the community and invigorate the classroom, providing rich educational experiences for students at all levels of schooling. Service learning makes students active participants in projects that aim to respond to the needs of the community while furthering the academic goals of students....Service learning activities seek to promote students' self-esteem, to develop higher-order thinking skills, to make use of multiple abilities, and to provide authentic learning experiences. (p. 593)

Kahne and Westheimer (1966) describe two types of service learning projects. One emphasizes the necessity of compassion for those in need, promotes students sense of charity, develops their sense of altruism, and inculcates a sense of civic pride. Students in such projects may visit the elderly, visit hospitals, collect and distribute clothes and products to the needy within their own concentric circles. Although these projects are useful, they do not require critical or systematic analysis of problems nor do they attempt to evoke ant lasting change. The second form of service learning adds the elements of Educational Reconstruction, which in addition to developing compassion also emphasizes change, and the ability to contribute positive changes in their

localities. The students in these projects are guided in developing the capability to assess critically and respond collectively to actual social problems (Davis, 1999).

According to Haskvitz (1996) the second type of service learning project is transformative and yields both community improvement and improves students' academic performance; moreover, the service learning approach that focuses on change promotes the ideal that citizenship in a democratic society requires more than compassion and kindness. Service learning that focuses on change requires students to engage in complex social endeavors and to work to analyze, plan, create, evaluate, criticize, and change public institutions and programs (Davis, 1999). Urban students and teachers must share in the belief in what they are endeavoring, that their efforts do make a difference. Teachers must believe in the concept of Educational Reconstruction and be able to help their students relate academic and personal goals to world, national, and local purposes. Students use their interests to help work out solutions to societal problems studied in class. Teachers emphasize group learning experiences and cooperation. The spirit of mutual objectives and cooperation with the community and its resources requires projects that demand interdependence and consensus. Davis (1999) cites the successful implementation of such an urban educational experience from Harriet Tubman High School in Atlantic City, orchestrated by teacher Ms. Kristel James. In Davis' report it is pointed out that Ms. James' students suffer from many of the detriments and problems that can be associated with poverty. These students appear to be unmotivated, apathetic, susceptible to negative influences, carry low grades and the possibility that some will drop out of school. As an Educational Reconstructionist, Ms. James guided the class in analyzing the problem, making an action plan, implementing the plan, and evaluating the results. The students decided to grapple with the downtroddenness of their immediate surrounding – improve their school.

These students, according to Davis (1999), analyzed statistics from the school board, reviewed other schools, read newspaper articles on schools and school funding, sought information from the principal, parent – teacher association, other students, teachers, and parents concerning what each might suggest to improve Harriet Tubman High School. Ms. James' students then assessed their findings and concluded that their school needed the following: improved bathrooms, brighter lights, cleaner rooms, more concerned teachers, more security patrols, new furniture and computers, and myriad other upgrades. They wrote letters and made phone calls to their councilman, state senator, and governor requesting special funding for their project. These students then organized teams to paint classrooms on the weekends and enlisted help from teachers, parents, relatives, and friends. They began a school campaign to keep the building clean and circulated a newsletter on the project. They recruited adults to act as mentors and tutors and solicited prizes as incentives for students to improve attendance, boost academic achievement, and keep the school building clean. According to Davis

At the end of the school year, Ms. James and the students evaluated their social reconstructionist efforts and found that they had, indeed, been able to change their school environment....they had become motivated, developed civic pride, raised their self-esteem, and heightened their sense of self-efficacy. School attendance had greatly improved and no one had dropped out. The students had also practiced higher-order thinking skills, and their grades improved. The students ended the school year knowing that they could make a difference. (1999, n. p.)

This scenario contains Educational Reconstruction implications for teachers and highlights three salient features of an Educational Reconstruction program for urban students. According to Davis

First, the teacher was knowledgeable about and an advocate for service learning and social reconstructionism. Second, the teacher understood and cared about the problems and issues that confronted her urban students. Third, the teacher [Ms. Kristel James] had the skills and abilities needed to guide her students through analyzing a problem, developing an action plan, implementing the plan, and evaluating the results. (1999, n. p.)

The Educational Reconstruction teacher is cognizant of the precepts of Educational Reconstruction and how it differs from the other theories of curriculum. The Educational Reconstruction teacher is not a passive observer but digs in and gets his or her hands dirty in the project, right along with the students. The concept of guided practice proves most applicable to the Educational Reconstruction teacher. Educational Reconstruction is applicable in elementary school rooms, urban settings, and in teacher education. According to J. D. McNeil (1996), these experiences

...must fulfill three criteria – they must be real, require action, and teach values.... First, students must focus on an aspect of the community which they believe they can change and to which they will devote their efforts. Second, students must act on an issue or problem, not merely study it. Responsible action may include working with community groups, informing people about social problems, and taking a stand on controversial issues. Third, students must form a coherent system of values. A learning experience must offer an opportunity for students to use a sense of right and wrong, desirable and undesirable. (p. 37)

As McNeil states, “a coherent system of values” is an ultimate objective of Educational Reconstruction.

As a nation, the United States has deemed that communities striving for inclusive education attempt to structure a school environment in which the needs of every student are accommodated and success is fostered for all. Regardless of the type or intensity of his or her perceived educational, physical, or psychological challenges, each child is valued, and school personnel, students, and family members work together to develop and support caring learning communities that nurture friendships and commitments among the members (Thousand, Udvari-Solner, 1996).

Inclusive education is a process of operating a classroom or school as a supportive community and, thus, is qualitatively different from integration or mainstreaming efforts of the past, which attempted to "fit" a particular category of students (e.g., students with severe disabilities) into a standardized educational mainstream in which uniformity and conformity were valued over personalized learning. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, passed in 1975, "imposed strict obligations upon participating states to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities" (LaMorte, 1996, p. 153). The majority opinion in the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was issued by Justice Rehnquist, he wrote:

The determination of when handicapped children are receiving sufficient educational benefits to satisfy the requirements of the Act presents a more difficult problem. The Act requires participating States to educate a wide spectrum of handicapped children, from the marginally hearing impaired to the profoundly retarded...The Act requires States to educate handicapped children with non-handicapped children whenever possible....a State is required to provide a handicapped child with a "free appropriate public education"...providing personalized instruction with sufficient support services to permit

the child to benefit educationally from instruction...so ordered. (La Morte, 1996, p.158, 159)

Educational Reconstruction has a prominent role in “inclusive” education. An Educational Reconstruction approach to education for students with Exceptional Education Needs might include... “instructing students how to learn, to adapt in new situations, and to interact effectively with others to gain needed information must be at the center of EEN students’ needs” (Thousand, Udvari-Solner, 1996, n. p.) According to Brameld (1956) a Reconstructivist perspective may be useful in promoting this reconnection of the relationships among society, culture, curriculum, and instructional practices. Simply stated, Reconstructionism is a critique of contemporary culture and, thus, encourages us to reinvent what can be and should be done to realize a more humane society (Thousand, Udvari-Solner, 1996). Educational Reconstruction, being the foremost democratic of curricular approaches, creates opportunities for all students, including the disabled.

In “La Escuela Fratney: A Journey Toward Democracy” Bob Peterson describes how a coalition of teachers, parents, and students in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, created a two-way bilingual, multicultural, whole language school governed by a site-based council. The Fratney School served 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The student population was diverse: 65% Hispanic, 20% African American, 13% white, the remainder being Asian or Native American. Nearly 70% of students qualify for and receive free lunches. The school did serve those with exceptional education needs and learning disabilities. Peterson goes on to describe the difficulties the activist coalition had in establishing Fratney:

At each new leg in our journey, we have encountered significant problems that reflect how our society, despite its democratic rhetoric, is in many ways undemocratic. Among

the problems: a central office wedded to autocratic methods of leadership, a school system structured to inhibit collaborative practices, parents and teachers tied to the authoritarian habits of their own schooling, students conditioned by a mass-media culture that values individual consumption over the common good, and a socioeconomic system that places little value on urban schools and the families served by them. (1995, p. 60)

Peterson parcels the lessons learned from the Fratney project, citing the words of Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” Scheduled for demolition, the coalition was able, through dedication and commitment to local school control and a shared vision of what education looked like, preserved the building and developed an Educational Reconstruction curriculum for Fratney. The lessons learned, according to Peterson, were

Lesson 1: Grass-roots movements can produce real change; lesson 2: multiracial unity is essential to successful school reform; lesson 3; build in time to reflect and learn: lesson 4: genuine parent involvement is critical; lesson 5; structures that foster change must be institutionalized; lesson 6: successful school reform is part of a larger societal change efforts. (1995, p. 58-82)

Returning to Theodore Brameld, one of Brameld’s early projects, “Design For America,” conducted at the senior high school in Floodwood, Minnesota, in 1944, was designed to demonstrate how young people could democratically consider the dimensions of postwar United States’ society (Thomas, 1999). “The Floodwood story is not upheld as best practice; rather, it provides a lived experience that can be considered by current advocates for democratic education for its advances and limitations” (p. 4). Floodwood High School was considered a community

school and was directly involved in contributing services to the society and educating young people through practical activities.

For three months, students critically examined the state of American society, identified basic human needs, and considered how these needs could be met through social planning. Thus, they designed a future through analyses in economics, politics, science, the arts, education, and human relations. A student planning committee, elected by participants, was empowered to modify the course agenda. Student groups met to develop proposals for reform, presented these proposals to the total class, returned proposals to the committee for revision, and submitted final recommendations for action. (p. 4)

The Floodwood Project was noted as successful to the students who took part in the project. One student was influenced so much by the Project, he decided to go into education as a career. Part of the problem was that the faculty was not trained prior to this project; nevertheless, the Floodwood Project made a great contribution to education, putting theory into practice. The Floodwood Project was implemented locally, yet contained a world perspective. This is a constant in Educational Reconstruction thought; non-provincial yet locally aware, the perspective of a worldview necessitates expanded thought and critical thinking.

Reconstructionists believe that learning also takes place outside the classroom, and students should get out into society as much as possible where they can both learn and apply learning (Ozman & Craver, 1990). They favor a world curriculum with emphasis on truth, brotherhood, and justice instead of one that favors *only* local ideas. Brameld advocated a wheel curriculum. The core program may be viewed as the hub of the wheel, the central theme of the school's program. The spokes represent related studies, such as discussion groups, field experiences, content and skill studies, and vocational studies. The hub and the spokes support each other,

while the rim of the wheel serves as in a synthesizing and unifying capacity (Ozman & Craver, 1990).

Other successful stories of Educational Reconstruction include Deborah Meier's *The Power of Their Ideas* and the Central Park East School of New York; *The State and the Politics of Knowledge* by Michael W. Apple, which cites the democratization of education in places where it had been previously not, such as South Korea and Porto Alegre, Brazil, et al.; and Educational Reconstruction as an approach to reach and impact the lives of adult learners (the euphemistic non-traditional students meaning older) in "When Adult Education Stood for Democracy" (Heaney, 1995). An element of education and Educational Reconstruction in particular not addressed in the other curriculum theories yet essential to establishing a thorough immersion in the many faceted aspects of Educational Reconstruction is the concept, as established by Block (2004), of "desire." Block has written that "if subject matter alone is our focus, it is not a fulfilled life but the successful test that will assess our children's learning; if subject matter alone is our focus, it is error and not eros we seek" (p. 60). Block continues

Exchange in the classroom should be not only a material matter of delivery of measurable standards and objectives, but must be an erotic concern as well. Education should satisfy a desire to know, and it should offer means to make knowing possible. [Curricular theorist Joseph] Schwab wrote: "Eros, the energy of wanting, is as much the energy source in the pursuit of truth as it is in the motion toward pleasure, friendship, fame, or power....the ends of liberal education involve Eros. For the end includes not only knowledge gained but knowledge desired and knowledge sought" (1978, 291). Students must acquire something real for the real desire they bring to the classroom. (p. 70, 71)

The essence of Educational Reconstruction, as demonstrated throughout this paper, is the concept that Educational Reconstruction addresses the desire of students, and not a certain segment of the student population, but all students. Educational Reconstruction endeavors to meet students' needs and desires and to do so in an involved, democratic fashion. Desire and democracy do not figure into the other three acknowledged curricular schools of thought; only Educational Reconstruction addresses these organic qualities necessary for a thorough, critical education.

### Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

People who engage in Educational Reconstructionist action attempt to practice democracy (Apple & Beane, 1995); that is, they critically evaluate inequities and instances of discrimination or bias and identify strategies for change. By engaging in a meta-analysis of existing conditions and establishing visions that reflect a value and belief system, personal commitment to change is enhanced. In this way an Educational Reconstructionist orientation holds promise for accelerating educational and curriculum reform by embedding the reformation in the day-to-day discourse of teachers and students (Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Reconstructionism promotes the belief that by transforming curriculum and instructional approaches, schools can affect a more democratic, just, and compassionate world -- in essence, the underlying goals of inclusive education. To truly reconstruct the way curriculum and instruction are conceptualized, teachers, parents, and administrators must have analogous theoretical foundations upon which to base reformation (Thousand & Udvari-Solner, 1996).

Conceptualizing curriculum and instruction from an Educational Reconstructionist vantage point intersects productively with inclusive education; that is, Educational Reconstruction fosters the idea that all people are always learning and the process cannot be stopped (Poplin & Stone, 1992). In this sense, "inclusive" education means not only those students with exceptional education needs, defined as learning disabled or handicapped in some regard, but all students no matter their socio-economic class, their cultural heritage, or their past academic performance. It is acknowledged that all students enter with different knowledge that is influenced by background, experiences, and cultural practice. Educational Reconstructionist teachers take into account these factors and ensure that new information is related in meaningful ways to the learners' existing knowledge (Thousand & Udvari-Solner, 1996). Although we may

read this as being an obvious element of a socially responsible educational policy, one wonders if the educational landscape is nurturing the immature of society into full maturity as responsible citizens in a democratic social order.

George S. Counts (1934) has written that education is by no means an exclusively intellectual matter:

[Education] is not merely, or perhaps even primarily, a process of acquiring facts and becoming familiar with ideas. The major object of education since the beginning of time has been the induction of the immature individual with the life of the group. This involves not only the development of intellectual powers, but also the formation of character, the acquisition of habits, attitudes, and dispositions suited to a given set of living conditions, a given level of culture, and a given body of ideals and aspirations. (p. 536)

As has been asserted, Educational Reconstruction, of the central four curricular theories, best strives to obtain the attributes as written by Counts. Additionally, Counts (1932) has explained

A society fashioned in harmony with the American democratic condition would combat all forces tending to produce social distinctions and classes. Repress every form of privilege and economic parasitism; manifest a tender regard for the weak, the ignorant, and the unfortunate...glory in every triumph of man in his [sic] timeless urge to express himself and to make the world more habitable; exalt human labor of hand and brain as the as the creator of all wealth and culture; provide adequate material and spiritual rewards for every kind of socially useful work; strive for genuine equality of opportunity among all races, sects, and occupations....(p. 37, 38)

Counts' social and educational goals are firmly rooted in the philosophy of "the teachings of Jesus, the writings of Marx, the thoughts of Locke, Jefferson, and Madison, as well as the mind of Dewey...Not surprisingly, we also see similarities and differences with the classical liberalism of Enlightenment thought" (Stone, 1999, p. 3). Again, the link between Educational Reconstruction and its historical roots in democracy and fairness are further established. Counts (1971) writes in his autobiography that we should "give to our children a vision of the possibilities which lie ahead and endeavor to enlist their loyalties and enthusiasms in the realization of the vision" (p. 37). Counts strongly believed in the public school and in teachers in bringing this vision to fruition.

Summarily, it has been established throughout the literature that Educational Reconstruction, apart from the other three dominant theories of curriculum in American education, is the only approach that encompasses the other three theories (social efficiency, humanistic, developmental).

In review of the dominant literature one can only conclude that pursuit of Educational Reconstruction is the lone academic and educational approach that incorporates the means for acquiring the greater good for the most people. The recommendation can be made that Educational Reconstruction is the answer for inclusion within a public school framework, for only this theory argues that it is possible for us to gain insights into the contexts of our lives. In describing ourselves as contextual beings, we are able to begin to understand the setting we are born into and how it has affected and shaped us. We gain insights into our contextuality through our interactions with other people. It has been established that as we begin to understand this sense of context in our lives we begin to develop the ability to offer fresh, unique perspectives. We will discover that not only do we develop a sense of self because of the relationships we

have, but we all become aware of that sense of self and how our social context has affected the way we view the world through our relationships with others. Other people help us become aware of our own embeddedness within a culture, a social milieu. It has been established that we find our ability to improve our awareness as knowers is enhanced if we are able to experience sustaining, caring relationships. This is applicable in both the micro-context of the general educational community as well as society as a whole.

In elaborating on the principal qualities that should be found in a program of general education for American democracy, William H. Kilpatrick (1938, p. 11-13) found the following qualities are among the most important:

I. Well Founded Philosophically. The program must have integrity that can only come with a clear philosophical perspective. Its central objective must be built in terms of 1) a defensible conception of the nature and growth of the individual; and 2) an analysis of contemporary social life, its primary problems and needs....There can be little hope for significant general education until the individual can get competent assistance in forging a conception of his own nature and that of his world and in developing some insight into his [sic] own possibilities and opportunities as a member of his community.

II. Contemporary. General education must directly confront the life of today if it to be influential in remolding that life....*Today's education cannot be an imitation of yesterday's education. It must be centered upon the improvement of life in the present.*

III. Democratic and Experimental. Prescription of general education purely on faith must be replaced by the method of experimentation guided by scientific criticism and participation of the group in the formulation of goals and education policies. *To honor the experience of individuals and groups in the determination of their needs and in building*

*suitable educational programs is the only way effectively to correlate education and social life in a democracy....*

IV. Realistic. In the current social scene perhaps the most significant fact for the building of educational procedures is the play of diverse and often conflicting group or class “interests.”...*the only safeguard against these differentiated interests becoming separate and defeating the main purpose of general education lies in their being recognized and dealt with in association with other interests, so that interrelationships and a basis of common action may develop....*

V. Universal. The democratic ideal implies that general education – not just education in particular areas – should be made available in fact to everyone, as a birthright and as a right of citizenship, from birth throughout life. This is a necessary requirement of a healthy society....

VI. Life-long in Perspective. The fundamental equipment of an individual to live effectively consists of a vast and intricate complex of attitudes, understandings, and habituation (general education), on the one hand, and numerous more particularized competencies, on the other hand....general education must be built as a life-time task....Long-view plans have been laid for the mastery of skills and particular competencies, while the quest for insight, understanding, emotional adjustment, or philosophical orientation has been reserved for a relatively short period.

VII. Hospitable to Occupational Considerations....It is not what the schools do or fail to do that brings occupational interests, motives, and perplexities to the fore in adolescent years and sometimes earlier...Nearly everyone would agree that it has been a laudable purpose on many educators to restrain occupational studies as a means of preventing

narrowness of vision... This procedure is futile and psychologically wrong, however, when major educational and social forces of the community are working in the opposite direction. If narrowness is to be prevented it will only be done by permitting the student to face these occupational questions when they arise and by leading him to deal with them in the larger framework of well conceived education for life.... Intelligent choice of an occupation and an opportunity to begin preparation for it when interest becomes alive are important elements in general education.

VIII. Evaluated Pragmatically. If judged in terms of its ministry to the conception of the good life implicit in a society aspiring to democracy, it will be judged most appropriately to its nature. It will then be as good as the life of the community of which it is a part.... Many will decry what appears to them as the inefficiency of widespread freedom for educational experimentation. *For a democracy the experimental determination of values in education, as in other aspects of social life, is the only fully efficient method.*

It should be noted that Kilpatrick not only supports and is a proponent of Educational Reconstruction, but that he weaves these ideas into the daily routine of the classroom, of general education. These are the principal qualities that “should be” found in programs of American democratic education. Let it be observed that Kilpatrick, as does Dewey, Counts, Brameld, and Rugg advocate the principals as described above as the essentials to education generally and as the primary components of Educational Reconstruction.

In 1965 the United States Commissioner of Education established what became known as Committee E whose assignment it was to ascertain what long-range objectives should receive attention in education between 1965 and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Committee drafted the following statement:

We see our fundamental goal as a world civilization and an educational system which in all ways support human dignity for all races, castes, and classes; self-realization; and the fullest vocational, civic, and social cooperation and service. In achieving this fundamental goal, there must be understanding of and commitment to the proposition that education is a primary instrument of social change and social welfare. (Brameld, 1965, p. 103)

Among the ubiquitous mission statements and declarations of trustworthy intention in which the educational community finds itself neck deep and surrounded, this statement recognizes that each individual is deserving of access to the means of utmost fulfillment; it equally recognizes that individuals are social beings who attain fulfillment in maximum cooperation with and in service to other social beings. Educational reconstruction is the only curricular framework that can legitimately make such a claim. The dominant values embraced in the term *Human Dignity* ties together world civilization and education as co-partners in behalf of those values. Brameld (1965) concluded that “the goals now demanded of education can no longer be expressed in traditional formulations” and that “A ‘time of trouble’ is also a ‘time of opportunity’ – opportunity to express fresh, bold objectives that can arouse our profession into concerted, adventurous, farsighted policies and programs” (p. 105). Echoing Brameld’s optimism for the future of education in the framework of Educational Reconstruction is Dennis Carlson (2002) who has written, while acknowledging the hegemonic bloc as established by Apple (p. 7 & 8, this document), that “progressivism has begun to resurface as a marker of democratic left cultural politics...and cultural progressives have begun to bring their politics with them as

teachers and public intellectuals working in schools, colleges...Progressivism...challenges the current reform discourse in both secondary and higher education” (p. 21).

If we are moving “Toward a New Progressivism” as Carlson suggests, “the very idea of progress, upon which progressivism has been so dependent, is increasingly suspect and can no longer have an assured meaning” (p. 21). Assuredly, progress has often been linked to centralized educational bureaucracy, which is in itself undemocratic. Our present academic/educational institutions are built upon a foundation of myth, Carlson (2002) observes,

Democracy cannot be sustained from a position of detachment, by a people who are no longer attuned to the world around them or engaged in real struggles going on in the world, in which real human bodies are on the line, real people are being discriminated against, real battles are being waged in local communities over commitments to human freedom and equity. (p. 178)

It has been established that an Educational Reconstruction curriculum is maintained and predicated upon the “realness” to which Carlson refers. Knowledge is necessarily actionable, and exists on a level beyond personal gain and greed, although personal growth, on the other hand, is a necessity for societal growth to betterment. “Education...must be based on an ethic greater than cumulative acquisition” Alan A. Block (2004, p. 82) has written. Indeed, education pursues truth. If this is so, can one familiar with the current emphasis on standardization and high stakes testing truly validate these pursuits as legitimate? Alan A. Block (2004) has written

Wonder, as Abraham Joshua Heschel teaches me, is a radical amazement; wonder is a state of maladjustment to words and notions, the recognition of their fluidity. Wonder arises in the awareness of the world’s glory, which always exceeds our comprehension and our grasp. To our sense of wonder we respond with awe, and when we stand in awe,

we can acknowledge that even in the smallest particle there is meaning that we can never fully understand. In prayer and in study, we acknowledge how little we know, and we then stand in awe at the complexities of our lives that we only, in part, can realize. (p. 2)

In acknowledging our humbleness in the light of overwhelming pursuits of the intellect we can free ourselves from dogmatic paroxysms of totalitarianism, which to more or less degrees, define the curriculum theories other than Educational Reconstructionism. It has been established that of the four dominant curriculum theories, only Educational Reconstruction is genuinely transformative, and transformation is necessary for American society to evolve in a manner where a greater good is within reach of all of a society's citizenry. To repeat what Kilpatrick (1938) has written, "*Today's education cannot be an imitation of yesterday's education. It must be centered upon the improvement of life in the present*" (p. 11). Moreover, we gain strength in recognizing our limitations, as Block (2004), has shown

We are constantly aware of our partial view; hence, we are always open to alternatives and new knowledge....To assume that learning occurs solely within the mind of the individual apart from that individual's being-in-the-world is to falsify the very notion of learning and to negate the humanity of the student. (p. 180, 191)

Present curricular practices, one may argue, grind the humanity out of students, reducing them often to inanimate receptacles. The engaged educator knows this intrinsically and finds it anathema. Educational Reconstruction theory allows the inanimate receptacles to sprout senses and problem solving critical thinking skills, to engage at a personal and communal level, to accept "Study, like prayer [as] a way of being" (Block, p. 2), allowing the student to hear smell, taste feel, and become filled with "radical amazement."

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