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## Principles for Education of The Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists: A Yardstick of Democracy

Laurie Gertrude Hill

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THE PRINCIPLES FOR EDUCATION OF THE SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONISTS  
AND CRITICAL THEORISTS: A YARDSTICK OF DEMOCRACY

by

LAURIE GERTRUDE COUNTS HILL

(Under the Direction of William M. Reynolds)

ABSTRACT

This work is a theoretical and historical study of democracy as it relates to democratic educational practices and explores the implications that democratic reform in education has the potential to diminish inequity and social injustice in society. The study presents an intense review of the development of democracy from Plato to the present day. The progressive principles for democracy of the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists form the theoretical framework for the dissertation and a 'Yardstick of Democracy' is developed that draws upon the tenets of John Dewey, George S. Counts, Jane Addams, Paulo Freire, and Michael Apple.

Included in the study is a concentrated review of standards-based education, testing, and the charter school movement in America. A comparison to the 'Yardstick' provides evidence that many of the programs of contemporary American education are in conflict with basic progressive democratic principles.

INDEX WORDS: Democracy, Yardstick, Social Reconstructionists, Critical Theorists, John Dewey, Jane Addams, George S. Counts, Paulo Freire, Michael Apple, Standards, Testing, Charter Schools

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by

LAURIE GERTRUDE COUNTS HILL

Bachelor of Science, Georgia Southern College, 1971

Master of Education, Georgia Southern College, 1983

Education Specialist, Georgia Southern University, 1991

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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by

LAURIE GERTRUDE COUNTS HILL

Major Professor: Dr. William M.  
Reynolds

Committee: Dr. John A. Weaver  
Dr. Marla Morris  
Dr. Kemp Mabry

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## DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother and father, Mary Katharine Sneed Counts and George Douglas Counts, Jr., who lovingly provided me with strong wings to fly and a safe and solid rock upon which to land.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the skilled supervision and genuine support of Dr. William Reynolds, my committee chair and the director of my dissertation, who has offered me the freedom that I wished for on one hand and the scaffolding that I needed on the other. Dr. Reynolds' genuine concern and efforts on behalf of social justice inspired my interests in democratic education and helped to motivate my vision for this work. Studying under Dr. Reynolds opened my eyes wider than they have ever been opened before, whetted both my despairs and my hopes for democratic education, and ignited in me a critical consciousness that was not part of my persona before.

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of my life; they are the twinkle in my eye and I know that they are happy that this particular 'wild hair' of their mother's is accomplished. For my husband, Gerald, my appreciation is without measure, for his support has been the most steady and genuine of all: he has unselfishly sacrificed and picked up the slack, he has endured three years of my reclusive behavior, and he has been the sounding board for my frustrations. Gerald has been my staunchest encourager for the completion of my doctoral degree and I am very grateful to him.

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“The democratic promise of equal educational opportunity, half fulfilled, is worse than a promise broken. It is an ideal betrayed.”

Mortimer Adler, 1982

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND

One of the basic promises that Americans tend to believe about our democracy is that we all will have the same opportunities for learning and for success. The introductory video about Georgia’s new Performance Standards on the Georgia Department of Education website makes these statements:

Public education has always been the cornerstone of American society. It is what has set our society apart from the rest of the world and has contributed in large part to our nation’s success. Our Founding Fathers knew that the success of our nation would always be connected to our public schools and their vision lives on today. An excellent public education system is still a child’s ticket to the American dream and every child regardless of race, background, or gender should have access to it (Georgia Department of Education, 2005).

Is America’s education system coming through on the perceived promise that every child has access to the same excellent education? Is the American educational system still a child’s ticket to the American dream? Was it ever? Exploring answers to these questions and the issues that surround the questions is not an insignificant or diminutive matter. If providing equitable educational opportunities for all students is an important aspect of democracy, it is worth our while to study and analyze this matter in great depth.

Growing up in a rural American community and participating in its educational system, I learned, like my classmates, that our country was a democratic one. I learned that America provided an opportunity for all of its citizens to participate in the processes of government and I learned that personal freedoms, opportunity, and equality girded with responsibility were the foundations for our way of life. In spite of the fact that I grew up in a segregated society, went to school with only white children, took classes that placed the proclaimed 'brightest' into special groups, was allowed to associate only with other children of my race and social status, and received more opportunities for quality learning experiences than the majority of our community's children, I learned that our 'democratic' way of doing things was the ideal. Further, I was taught that in America's democracy, which guaranteed opportunity and freedom, any child could become anything that he or she chose. I looked away from the discrepancy between the concept that I perceived as democracy and the fact that many of the students in my school lived in poverty and were likely to become dropouts with little hope that any of these promises would come true for them. I did not see a problem with the fact that I received more attention, support, and opportunity than many others. I did not even proclaim many objections when I was given little choice and little voice in my own learning.

As a young teacher, it was not apparent to me until much later that I was perpetuating with my own students the same unjust system that I had experienced as a child. After all, our system is a democratic one. If we had problems in our schools or in our society, we had addressed them and made adequate progress. We had successfully integrated schools in the south, or so I chose to believe, and provided free lunch programs, remedial education, and a host of other programs that I supposed insured that

we were fulfilling the promises of democracy for all of our citizens. The widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', the disparity in wealth and power, and all of the other differences between the racial and class groups in America were rarely if ever discussed in our faculty meetings, staff development trainings, or in the faculty lounges. In addition and since our way of life in America is a democratic one, I assumed that as an educator, my personal academic freedom was insured. I barely noticed that through the years, there were more and more prescribed curriculums, more and more testing, more and more placement of students into programs that predestined them into certain roles and classes, and more and more regulations about the processes of education within our schools.

#### The Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies

It was not until I became a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University that I heard the word 'reconceptualization' used in reference to education and curriculum. Thinking about this fact is surprising to me now. It was not long before I realized the importance of this term in the studies that I would be pursuing. I did not enter the program as a novice educator. Even so, the 'reconceptualization' of the curriculum field had never been discussed in any course, any school workshop, or professional meeting that I had ever attended. To be honest, I suppose that I thought the doctoral program I was entering would teach me how to create, develop, implement, and evaluate curriculum. I believed my courses would not only entail curriculum theory, but would provide an array of curriculum development models and probably include a study of instructional strategies and teaching methods. During the last two years, I did have one or two courses that came close to meeting those expectations. The doctoral core courses,

however, took me in a different direction: a direction I learned was known as the ‘reconceptualization’ of curriculum studies.

Instead of providing packages of curriculum models, strategies, and specific plans that could simply be learned and taken into my school and into its classrooms for implementation, the curriculum studies program has provided much broader insight and understanding of curriculum. Instead of giving answers, this insight has raised questions, more questions than I had ever thought to ask before. It was true that at the conclusion of my core courses, I had no collection of math curriculum plans, eighth grade social studies plans, or any other types of curriculum plans or guides to take to my school district. Instead, I think that I had something more valuable than that: a desire to understand curriculum and a new appreciation for the value and usefulness of the understanding of curriculum as it relates to the broad field of education. I have learned that even while I was involved in traditional roles in my school settings, there has been a true ‘reconceptualization’ going on and that many educators, like me, were barely aware of it.

In contrast to the reconceptualization, the traditional world of educational philosophy, curriculum theory, and practice that I have long lived with found much of its basis and foundation in the doctrines of social efficiency and with the behaviorists. In the midst of social change and struggles, the doctrine of social efficiency brought order and social stability and focused on efficiently teaching in schools those activities that one would need to know how to perform as an adult. Since it was inefficient to teach someone more than what they would need in order to perform social or vocational roles in society, much of the emphasis was diverted away from the traditional classical and humanist curriculum. Instead of a curriculum that would be useless or irrelevant to adult

roles, the focus of the social efficiency philosophy was to devise a curriculum that was aligned to usefulness and economic efficiency (Kliebard, 1995).

The social efficiency proponents partnered with experimental psychology to become the dominant players in the schools that I attended and in the schools I have worked. Edward Thorndike promoted an “experimental science of psychology” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996, p. 91) and advocated that education should be scientific, like the physical and social sciences. Thorndike believed that education is a “form of human engineering” (Thorndike in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996, p. 91). Behavior was seen as patterns of stimuli and responses; our responses to particular stimuli are our learnings. Thorndike pioneered the quantification of learning and provided ways to study and measure teaching and learning. Also, because he considered the human mind a machine and behavioral instrument, Thorndike devised methods of mental measurement that have been developed in remarkably sophisticated ways and used to determine intelligence, mental progress, and potential for success.

The early twentieth century ideas of Frederick W. Taylor served to ensconce the power of the social efficiency thinkers. Schools were seen in some of the same ways as factories; specialized and routine labor produced efficient results. According to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1996), “...curriculum became the assembly line by which economically and socially useful citizens would be produced” (p. 95). Taylor’s most widely known book, *Principles of Scientific Management*, published in 1911, incorporated the notions of task analysis and production goals; schools, like factories, were seen as assembly lines in which “economically and socially useful citizens” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1996, p. 95) are produced.

Other prominent behaviorists and proponents of the social efficiency way of thinking were Franklin Bobbitt, author of *The Curriculum*, published in 1918, and Werrett Charters who authored *Curriculum Construction* in 1923. Emphasizing subject matter planned by the teacher, listing the objectives and learning activities, and verifying the learning of the objectives through evaluations were key aspects of their works (Kliebard, 1995). Thorndike's, Taylor's, Bobbitt's, and Charters' influences have been obvious and have endured to this day in schools. Just as dominant an influence even today has been that of Ralph W. Tyler. Many thousands of undergraduate and graduate students in education programs have been saturated with tenets from *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, published in 1949. I will probably be able to recall Tyler's four curricular questions long after I retire from education: What educational purposes should the school endeavor to accomplish? What educational experiences can be provided that can assist in attaining these purposes? How can these experiences be organized? How can we determine if the purposes have been attained? As most education students can attest, objectives, curriculum design, scope and sequence, and evaluation have been educational 'through-lines' for all of our careers.

Tyler's ideas and arguments are based on scientific procedures and on the tenets of behaviorism, for behavioral objectives have been given the greatest emphasis. The Tyler model is simple, easily understood, and educators of various backgrounds and philosophies have found it easy to implement. It has been used as the basis for ideas of many curricularists who have tweaked and revised it. The ease with which Tyler's model can be adapted to almost any school situation may be one of the reasons it has become such a powerful, dominating practice in American schools.

The principle positions of many influential educators, including Taylor, Bobbitt, Charters, and Tyler, helped to thrust American education into the clutches of the behavioral camp and to keep it there for decades. To be sure, there have been meliorating influences that have been intertwined within the curriculum practices (like those of Dewey, Counts, Kilpatrick, Maslow, Rogers, and others) but in my experience, the behavioral advocates have exerted the greatest influence. Teachers have learned and practiced many of its basics: decide on the objectives, materials and processes to be used, use rewards, withhold reinforcements, use punishments, provide feedback, provide practice and drill, use sequential approaches, model behaviors, and test, assess, and evaluate to see if objectives have been met.

Through the years, I have been trained in various curricular, instructional and classroom management models including William Glasser's model, Mastery Learning, Learning-Focused Schools, Madeline Hunter's model, and others too numerous to even remember; usually all of them just run together in my mind. All of these programs incorporated to varying degrees the same behavioral principles and they generally emphasized curriculum development, implementation, and certain strategies. The behavioral influence on education has been one of developing, controlling, implementing, reproducing, and managing. Furthermore, for the most part, it has placed too little attention on emotion, diversity of culture and viewpoints, social reform and justice, and on the search for meaning and understanding. I believe that these shortcomings have contributed to the current reconceptualization of the curriculum field.

Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1996) noted that the reconceptualization took off in the 1970's. Pinar, along with other colleagues and students, has been credited

with nurturing the process. Pinar (2004) described the state of education as a “nightmare that is the present” (p. xii) and argued that gender and racial anxieties in the 1950’s and 1960’s were contributing factors to the recent array of school reforms. He believes that one troubling aspect of society as a whole has been a significant anti-intellectualism move within the United States; the field of education has “remained underdeveloped intellectually” (Pinar, 2004, p. 9). Pinar described our current moment in time: “The school has become a skill and knowledge factory (or corporation)” (p. 3). Pinar pointed out that traditional curriculum programs have lacked sustenance in educational history and theory and therefore have prevented teachers from understanding their present situations. I, for one, can attest to the relative absence of history and theory from my educational coursework until, of course, my doctoral program. Pinar (2004) proposed “the method of *currere*- the infinitive form of curriculum” (p. 4) as an autobiographical method to remember our pasts, imagine our futures, and to better understand our presents. *Currere* challenges educators “to begin with the individual experience and then make broader connections” (Slattery, 1995, p. 58).

When I reflect upon the writings, works, and views of John Dewey, Soren Kierkegaard, George S. Counts, William Kilpatrick, Jane Addams, Abraham Maslow, Carol Rogers, Paulo Freire, and many others, I realize that they were voices, some earlier than others, for reconceptualization, for the move away from the scientific, mechanical, unthinking, behavioral model of curriculum development. Their voices were voices of curricular freedom, understanding, diversity, change, and meaning. The works of James B. MacDonald and Dwayne E. Huebner have been credited with the groundwork for the reconceptualization particularly in the 1960’s and 1970’s. It was Huebner who advocated

“curriculum as praxis, i.e. curriculum as involving thought and action, a foreign language before Reconceptualization but the ‘daily tongue’ afterward” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996, p. 213). Huebner emphasized the necessity for respecting the rights of the young who are participants in our world, the rights of students to acquire the knowledge and skills that increase individual power, and the rights of all individuals to participate in the designing of the institutions, including schools that are parts of their lives. MacDonald’s works were critical of the mainstream of curriculum theory and moved toward the use of autobiographical and political discussions. For MacDonald, the history of curriculum practices is an important foundation for curricularists’ work; this is exciting work that searches for ways individuals can live together. The curriculum work of MacDonald and Huebner and of others involved in the burgeoning reconceptualization of the field was not traditional, stagnant, and inert; it showed a field that is ongoing, mobile, constructive, and imaginative (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996).

Within the works and ideas of the Reconceptualists of the curriculum field, I have found some insight into the rigidity and lack of identity that for years, I felt tied me to impersonal roadmaps of curriculum, and instruction. The heaviness of the behavioralists’ prescribed curriculums, objectives, rote lesson plans, and assessments has been personally lightened in spite of the fact that their curriculums are still ensconced in the public school system. Reconceptual notions are scattered throughout my thinking now and bring a degree of hope even as I work within the programs and restrictions of *No Child Left Behind*. Like the Reconceptualists, freedom, conversation, growth, analysis, human experience, and difference have more revered places in my educational philosophy and practices.

Some of the themes in the works of Dennis Carlson, Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Greg Dimitriadis, Paul Willis, Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, and others are similar to the themes in the earlier works of John Dewey, George S. Counts, and Jane Addams. For me, all of their works have supported the development of my new attitudes and what I think has become a more reconceptualized understanding of curriculum. They have also clarified my nebulous worries about an educational system that has been controlled and dominated by bureaucratic and corporate interests. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, they have raised my awareness of the injustices and inequities that I myself have participated in. The reconceptualization forms an important backdrop for my work; its impact is significant as I study issues of curriculum and the educational directions of our schools and their relationships to democracy and social justice.

#### Methodology and Limitations

My dissertation is a theoretical and historical study of democracy as it relates to democratic educational practices. Of great interest to me are the issues of democracy, social justice, and educational equity. Because democracy as an aspect of school reform holds both historical and political implications, this study is qualitative in nature and conducted from primarily a historical and political framework. As Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1996) explain, political theorists see our society as filled with “poverty, homelessness, racism and political oppression...they do regard the schools as participating in this general system of injustice and suffering” (p. 244). We may be falling quite short of the goal of democratic education in America and I explore the concerns that our educational system may be in need of democratic reform.

The political issues surrounding our democracy are deeply permeated in our schools and in the curricular and educational programs that have been created, some of which may not have been democratic. Chapter Three is an extensive reading and investigation into the development and meaning of democracy and provides the background necessary for more insightful analysis and understanding of the diversity of democratic views. Chapter Four focuses on the principles for democracy of the Social Reconstructionists and the Critical Theorists. All of these issues are examined through an extensive reading and analysis of historical and political texts and by incorporating the personal experiences of a thirty-year career in education. Using this analysis and the insight gained from the studies, I develop a measurement tool, a ‘democratic yardstick’ by which to help determine if contemporary educational programs are democratic. Aspects of educational programs and practices of today’s schools are investigated and analyzed in Chapters Five and Six, particularly the testing and ‘new’ curricular programs that are now the dominating forces in education as well as the school choice and charter school movement that is a growing phenomenon of the American school system. These programs and aspects of American education are measured against the standards of the ‘democratic yardstick’ in order to draw conclusions about the status of democracy in our schools.

There are limitations of this dissertation. One of the limitations is the fact that despite the great efforts to include an array of views and practices, many visions of democracy for American education as well as some current educational programs and practices have not been included. The scope of the issues of democratic education is exceptionally broad and it was necessary to place some limits on the readings and

analysis in order to make the dissertation humanly manageable. Because this study is qualitative and includes no quantitative data collection, its findings are fundamentally interpretive and analytical, based upon the study of the writings and experiences of those views and practices that were selected as well as the experiences and reflections of my own years in education.

#### A Place in the Field of Curriculum Studies

Even though I am a veteran educator, I am developing a new place for myself in the field of curriculum studies. According to the summations of many people, my first thirty years in education have been diverse and successful ones: I have been involved in several teaching positions including all of the middle grades, have served as a high school counselor for over fifteen years, and have recently assumed a new role as an instructional supervisor. I feel confident that I have affected the lives of many of my community's youth in positive ways; I cannot go anywhere without one of my old students approaching me to talk about life and to 'catch me up.' Even though I always assumed that I was doing at least an adequate job as an educator, there were lingering apprehensions and concerns not only about aspects of my own education and my own practices, but also about aspects of the educational system in which I was participating.

Education has always been an important entity in my life; I was reared in a family that put great emphasis on education, not because of the economic gains that it might bring but because it was valuable in and of itself. At an early age, academic achievement became a priority and I always knew that I would attend college; the children in my family were not allowed to imagine that there might be alternatives. As an example of my family's emphasis on education, I was often told the story of how my grandparents

managed to provide higher educations for their children. My grandfather, a Presbyterian minister with few financial resources, asked for assignments to churches in college towns during the years that his children were college age; that way, they could live at home and attend classes. Several of his children, including my mother, received advanced degrees and completed careers in education. My parents communicated to me that though sacrifice and hardship might be necessary, an education was worth whatever was needed to secure it; education was not a selfish endeavor but something to be pursued for a lifetime and an entity that could support us in serving others and in reaching beyond our own lives. I know that I have passed on my family's priority on education to both my oldest son, an attorney, and my youngest son, a law student. Furthermore, I have communicated to countless of my students that their educations are life-long undertakings. Education can not only provide career and professional opportunities but more importantly, will help provide the understandings, insight, and problem solving abilities upon which to draw for a lifetime.

As I developed the attitudes that made my own education a priority, I experienced an elementary and secondary education in a rural South Georgia community. During my grade school years, I exerted great efforts attempting to 'achieve' at a level that would keep me in the most advanced and privileged academic 'groups.' These groups were the clusters of students possessing social privilege and perceived 'power' in my community. Occasionally, there would be an incident that would cause me to stop and wonder if something about the whole system was not quite 'right.' Certainly, it was a fact that the 'lower' groups, usually defined as those from impoverished backgrounds, even though they were sometimes in the same classrooms, were ignored, marginalized, and provided

different and inferior opportunities. This became evident to me early on; even in the elementary years, there were doubts in my mind about the equity of our educations. During my high school years, the school system was forced to merge the segregated schools of our community; black students and white students, for the first time, attended schools together. The turmoil that this brought to the community will likely never be forgotten: there were angry words, angry meetings, and angry people. Even after those first years of school integration and after all students of all races attended the same schools, the disparity of the quality of education and of opportunity never disappeared. New ways and new programs were connived and constructed to differentiate the educations of the young people. Perhaps in selfishness, perhaps in fear, or perhaps in ignorance, those in positions of power devised ways to create a curriculum that reflected their 'chosen' knowledge; furthermore, they established a system that reserved the highest levels of such knowledge for groups of their own choosing.

During my youth in this rural Georgia community, I learned about democracy and was told that our country and its institutions were 'democratic.' I attended segregated schools; within the segregations based upon race were other segregations of economic and social differences that influenced the educational programs and opportunities of the students. Year after year, all of these 'segregations,' both in the schools and in the society of the community, provided the various categories or classes of children different prospects for their futures. Those few from middle and upper middle class backgrounds were typically promoted and destined to attain higher educations and some level of the 'American dream.' Most of the others were not.

Later as a teacher in the same community that I was reared, I taught what I was told to teach in a middle school that classified each grade into eight distinct 'groups' with every student knowing that Group One was the most powerful, brightest, and privileged group and Group Eight was the poorest, dullest, and most hopeless group. A few years passed, and when I became the teacher of the middle school gifted program, I began developing a Gifted Program to cultivate the critical thinking skills of students who scored high on standardized tests and to provide them high quality enrichment experiences, including 'high' cultural events and travel experiences. My courses for gifted certification had taught me that I should have 'tunnel' vision: I should concentrate only on the gifted students I was teaching and not worry about anyone else. Besides, the issues of inequity in our schools and community had been meliorated by integration, remediation, and other social programs. Gina Doolittle's article in *Science Fiction Curriculum, Cyborg Teachers and Youth Cultures* (2004) spoke of how easily teachers can be assimilated into practices that are far removed from their truer philosophies and beliefs. I think that for many of my teaching years, I was 'assimilated.'

My years as a high school counselor were like years of observing a long game of musical chairs. Many students 'marched' to the music of prescribed, irrelevant coursework, mandated curriculums and examinations, 'high level' programs for some and 'low level' programs for others, and a system that perpetuated the interests of those already privileged. It was already assumed by teachers, administrators, and students that there would be a 'limited' number of students who would complete graduation requirements. Every year, we defended the game with talk of the high standards that were being maintained. Every year, the number of graduation 'chairs' dwindled. For the

students, the goal of the game of musical chairs was to secure one of the limited chairs at their high school graduations. One by one, students were beaten out, squeezed out, or dropped out of the game. If one failed a test, he was out of the game; if another stayed home to take care of younger siblings or to work in the fields, he lost his chair; if yet another failed to play the game by the school's rules, he was squeezed out of the game entirely. Losing their 'chairs' had far reaching results for these students. They were typically doomed to lives of poverty; America's democratic tradition and heritage became relatively meaningless to them.

In 2003, I entered the Doctoral Program in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University. Reflecting upon the multitude of reading assignments and the discussions in my classes, I am aware that I have been altered. The views and concerns that I discounted or ignored for most of my career have been provided a venue for further investigation. I was intrigued by Mary Doll's version of Buddha's three kinds of people: people like letters carved in rock, people like letters written in the sand, and people who are like letters in running water (Doll, 2000). In earlier times, I have been like the rigid absolutists carved in rock. At other times, I have made intermittent progress like the second group: those who develop small cracks to allow some movement but are still rocky. Finally, with new tools of questioning and understanding, I can see the possibilities of being like letters in running water. I am becoming more fluid, less aligned with any particular dogma, and freer to discover what and who I am as an educator and more determined to strive for educational systems that will provide these same discoveries for more people.

Joel Spring in *The American School* (2001), Herbert Kliebard in *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* (1995), and Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman in *Understanding Curriculum* (1996) have all presented histories of the American educational system that have guided me to greater understandings of what my career evolved from as well as insight into some of the more recent educational and curricular programs that I have witnessed and experienced. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1996) explain: "To begin to understand curriculum comprehensively, it is essential to portray its development historically" (p. 69). Spring (2001) also emphasizes our understanding of our educational history: "One's knowledges, images, and emotions regarding the past have an impact on future actions" (p. 2). Improved knowledge of the history of American education and curriculum has made me a more intelligent practitioner. I have learned to question, to probe, to scrutinize, to speak, and to act. The democratic traditions of the nation would be well served if the American curriculum provided opportunities for all students to learn these same skills: questioning, scrutinizing, probing, speaking, and acting. I have come to understand that schools have been the battlegrounds for conflicts about issues of both cultural and economic domination in America; the struggle for the curriculum has been a focal point on the battleground.

I am no longer maintaining a position of neutrality and silence on issues of equity in curriculum. The mandated curriculum, the mandated testing, and the mandated standards of recent national reform programs further solidify the inequities that were already present in the American curriculum and the curriculum programs continue to be dominated by the cultural and economic powers of America and continue to hoard the

greatest benefits for those in power. I appreciate Paulo Freire's statement that: "No one can be in the world, with the world, and with others and maintain a posture of neutrality" (Freire, 1998, p. 73). Instead of accepting and participating in curricular practices blindly, I will question, study, and discuss. William Reynolds' words now hold a prominent position in my professional life: "We in education must know, or at least begin to discuss, why we are doing what we are doing in our schools and in our classrooms" (Reynolds, 2003, p. 21-23). I hope that I can be active in his call for more participatory democracy in education. In spite of the current constraints, inequities, and problems in education today, I will remember the optimism and encouragement of these words: "...our work can free life from what imprisons it. Every work has that possibility, however temporary, to find a way through the cracks, to point to a line of flight" (Reynolds, 2003, p. 97).

Like the pragmatic positions of Dewey and Counts, I believe that education is not a fixed and absolute entity; an educational system in a democracy should be an open, equitable, and adaptable one, one that promotes questioning, scrutiny, problem solving, and respect for diverse backgrounds and multiple points of view. Education can be a tremendous force for democracy and for social reform in America and in the world. My new role working in curriculum and instruction provides me plenty of opportunities to scrutinize situations and programs, listen to many views, ask many questions, adapt and change, endorse equity and diversity, 'find a way through the cracks' ( Reynolds, 2003, p. 97), and even perhaps move others to reflect in new ways and to question some of our educational practices. At this moment, these are among the professional tasks in curriculum that I see for myself, subject to change of course.

In my study of democracy and the educational practices that promote democracy, the views of the reconceptualization of curriculum are relevant. My interests in issues of social justice, my questions about the equity and wisdom of school practices that are based on rules and mandates, and my concerns about the necessity for more freedom and student involvement in schools and learning have been flamed by my recent experiences with what was for me, newly discovered reconceptualist ideas. I have identified aspects of the Social Reconstructionists' and the Critical Theorists' principles and perspectives as ones that best suit me now after thirty years in education. Now that I have moved from the role of teacher to counselor to doctoral candidate and curriculum supervisor, I see myself as a participant in the questioning, dialogue, and scrutiny of the kinds of practices and programs that are part of today's public schools. Because of an improved level of awareness and greater consciousness of curriculum theory and history, I believe that I can be a more effective agent of movement toward democratic transformation in our schools.

#### Theoretical Framework

The Social Reconstructionist-based framework of my dissertation includes the tenets and principles of George S. Counts, John Dewey, and Jane Addams and incorporates the later views and works of Critical Theorists Paulo Freire and Michael Apple. The study will encompass their perspectives on democracy and education and will use their tenets and arguments as a yardstick by which to help determine the state of democracy in our schools today. Decades ago, Counts, one of the founders of the Social Reconstructionist movement, proposed that schools and educators have a responsibility for helping to build a new social order. In a democratic society, schools help to shape attitudes and ideas and they can promote the principles of democracy. Counts called

upon teachers to take a stake in the responsibilities for snuffing inequities and inequalities and for shaping a more democratic nation. Part of this responsibility is searching for and participating in educational reform movements that promote democratic and social reform (Counts, 1932).

In addition to the study of Counts, I will analyze John Dewey and Jane Addams' beliefs about the importance of democratic principles in education. Dewey advocated that the goals of education should focus upon preparing our youth to be full and active participants in a democracy. He warned against a society in which we stratify citizens into separate classes and argued that intellectual opportunity must be made available to everyone on equal terms (Dewey, 1916). Our democratic government, according to Jane Addams, in spite of the mistakes and inadequacies of the American people, remains the most significant American contribution to the world.

Paulo Freire's works on democracy will also be a part of the foundation of my study and particularly Freire's arguments for the importance of dialogue in education and for education to be a humanizing, collaborative, and open process where students and teachers work together to solve problems. Paulo Freire stressed the importance of nurturing hope and possibility and he commented on the hopelessness of futures that perpetuate past and present conditions: "...there is no genuine hope in those who intend to make the future repeat their present, or in those who see the future as something predetermined" (Freire, 1985, p. 58). A more recent viewpoint in my study will be that of Michael Apple who believes that the educational system in America helps to reproduce an unequal society. His arguments give additional weight to concerns about the precarious state of democracy in our schools and society. Apple argues that our

schools are institutions where the types of knowledge taught cast students to fit into a power system of dominant and subordinate order (Apple, 1990).

#### Purpose and Social Justification

This study first presents an intense review of the development of democracy and the tenets of a number of men and women whose lives and ideas have relevance to democracy. A unique contribution of this study is its focus upon the progressive principles of the Social Reconstructionists and those of the Critical Theorists. Another distinctive contribution is the development of a ‘yardstick’ of democratic principles that draws from the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists. The educational curricular practices and programs of today’s schools are compared to the ‘Yardstick of Democracy’; conclusions are drawn with regard to how current educational programs coincide with or refute those Social Reconstructionist and Critical principles that are vital for democratic education. Today, America’s educational landscape and the mandated curricular programs of *No Child Left Behind* make such studies of democracy in education both pertinent and indispensable. William Pinar (2004) elaborated on that landscape of present American education and claimed that “The school has become a skill and knowledge factory (or corporation)” (p. 3). He goes on to say:

...the classroom-has become so unpleasant for so many, not a few teachers have retreated into the (apparent) safety of their own subjectivities. But in so doing, they have abdicated their professional authority and ethical responsibility for the curriculum they teach. They have been forced to abdicate this authority by the bureaucratic protocols that presumably hold them ‘accountable’ but which, in fact, render them unable to teach (p. 3-4).

How does this current state of American education stack up against the ‘Social Reconstructionist-Critical Yardstick of Democracy’? The answers are the highlight of this dissertation.

In *The Last Refuge* (2004), David Orr comments: “...democracy at home is in tatters” (p. 2). Is democracy in a condition of demise in America and in American schools? This guiding question forms the framework for my inquiry; this dissertation is a historical and theoretical inquiry into the state of democracy in American education.

Educators have not focused enough attention upon the status of democracy in the American educational system. Furthermore, a serious discussion on the state of democracy in our schools has infrequently found its way into the arguments of parents, community leaders, lawmakers, policy-makers, or other groups of citizens. Too few efforts have scrutinized our educational practices and our institutions in careful and thoughtful ways and many Americans, educators and policy-makers included, have not studied or discussed the principles of democracy at anything other than superficial levels. This complacency and lack of attention has led to little resistance when issues of inequity, control, and unequal opportunity and participation have become intertwined into educational practices and policies. A deficiency of thoughtful consideration and awareness may have contributed to the undermining of those democratic ways that we want to believe are ours as Americans.

Most would agree that even a preliminary review of the history of public education in America reveals growth and reform. Our schools are a major way in which ideas are managed and in which cultural, social, and economic values are transmitted to our citizens. From colonial days when education was for only a few, we have become a

nation that claims to provide educational opportunity for all. Each era of our history has contained its own unique challenges and struggles. Today, like eras of the past, we face both specific and general challenges as educators in our democracy - a democracy that in some ways may not be democratic.

This dissertation is an attempt to bring one of the struggles that we as educators of America's youth are wrestling into the center of discussion: the struggle of America's schools to promote democracy and to become more democratic. The major objective of the dissertation is to examine the standing of democracy in American education and to bring the issues of democracy into the dialogues for reform. The study is designed and targeted toward educators, parents, policy-makers, and all citizens as an investigation into questions that hold important implications for the futures of our students and our nation.

I trust that reforming and redefining education and curriculum in democratic ways is possible. With awareness and dialogue, and by resisting those policies and practices that are troublesome, there is hope that we can make progress in the struggle for democratic educational practices and reform. As we move forward into an era permeated by the mandates of *No Child Left Behind*, thoughtful study of the broad issues of democracy may serve the important purpose of questioning and meliorating some of the policies and practices that may conflict with democratic ideals.

Many citizens of the United States concur that American schools should succeed in meeting a dual standard: schools should be democratic and they should promote democracy. There are certainly many purposes and goals of American education, but one of the most important is to nurture individual growth and participation in a democratic society. One of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, in spite of the fact that he lived

and participated in the times of power for white, male, property-owners, believed that the basic goal of American education was to help prepare citizens to exercise their rights to be self-governed. From my high school and undergraduate American history classes, I recall the conflicting ideas of Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton as our young nation put the Constitution into action. Hamilton advocated that the aristocrats should participate in our democracy; Jefferson called for participation by commoners as well. Throughout American history, different versions of this old argument between Jefferson and Hamilton have been debated. Even today, the same debate forms the foundation for many of our struggles. In the early nineteenth century, Jefferson understood that a struggle was developing between the working class and the upper class. The aristocrats, according to Jefferson, feared the working class and sought to keep power away from them. True democrats, Jefferson believed, identify with the working class, have confidence in them and their worthiness in contributing to the public interest. Jefferson saw the beginnings of the corporate structures that have been identified with capitalism. He was concerned about the state of America's democratic experiment and that these early but powerful corporations had the potential to undermine our democracy and our freedoms (Chomsky, 1994).

Some have argued that an educated citizenry is necessary in a democracy and that democracy cannot survive without education (O'Hair, McLaughlin, and Reitzug, 2000). This argument should be studied in a deeper and more comprehensive way. Garrison (2003) argued that what is being missed in most discussions of education and democracy "is not how education is necessary for democracy, but how democracy is necessary for education" (p. 525-525). He explained that since education is the process by which

individuals and society learn and develop, most would agree that education is necessary for democracy. Just as essential since choices and actions are the experiences through which we learn, democracy is necessary for education. Education is a process of empowerment and “a society-or a classroom-becomes more educative as it becomes more democratic and more democratic as it becomes more educative” (Garrison, 2003, p. 528). Lawrence (2004) echoed the views of Garrison when he said that democracy depends upon its educated citizenry and that it is our job as educators to “provide schools that not only teach democracy but *are* democracies” (p.1).

Beane and Apple (1995) in *Democratic Schools* commented that democracy is the central tenet of our society and political relations, the concept by which we measure the wisdom of social policies, our anchor when our political practices wander off course, and the benchmark we use to measure the progress of other countries. Even so, the term ‘democracy’ is full of ambiguities. Just as important as understanding that democracy is a form of government that involves the consent of the governed and equality of opportunity is the understanding of those conditions upon which a democracy depends. Among these vital conditions are the open flow of ideas, faith in both individual and collective abilities of people to solve problems, concern for the welfare of others and for the common good, concern for the rights of individuals and minorities, and an understanding that democracy is an idealized set of values that must guide our life as a people. Extending these conditions through education are the central concerns of democratic schools.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A Menagerie of Concerns on the Status of Democracy in American Education

Much has been written on the state of democracy in the landscape of education in America today and on the closely related issues of power, equity, opportunity, and social justice. The following literature review includes various perspectives and concerns that address the status of democracy in today's educational arena.

In *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* (1982), Mortimer Adler made clear his idea that a democratic society must provide not only the same quantity but also the same quality of education:

...a democratic society must provide equal educational opportunity not only by giving to all its children the same quantity of public education- the same number of years in school- but also by making sure to give all of them, all with no exceptions, the same quality of education (p. 4).

Regrettably, according to Adler, America's schools have failed to do this. We have set different goals for different children, provided widely varying types and quality of educational programs. Adler called our failures "an abominable discrimination" (Adler, 1982, p. 15). The broad opportunities of schooling should be the same for the whole student population, but in the current multi-track program in place in most schools, the learning and experiences are far from the same for all students. Adler warned that with regard to the democratic promise of equal educational opportunity, the promise "half fulfilled is worse than a promise broken" (Adler, 1982, p. 5). This unfulfilled promise can doom our nation's free and democratic identity. Because they are in direct

opposition to the democratic ideals that we should strive to move closer to, Adler called for American educators and policy makers to recognize and abandon the practices that provide curricular and social advantages to some and disadvantage to others.

An early twentieth century educational sociologist, Ross Finney, proposed a very different view on democracy and educational practices. Finney did not hide his support for the differentiation of curriculum that provided different academic preparations and different socialization groups in the American schools. Finney's assertions included a recommendation for insuring our democracy, a recommendation that advocated that intellectual dependence of the masses is necessary and desirable for democracy:

...but if leadership by the intelligent is ever to be achieved, followship by the dull and ignorant must somehow be assured...the safety of democracy is not to be sought, therefore, in the intellectual independence of the masses but in their intellectual dependence (Finney in Lucas, 1999, p. 4).

In Finney's view, schools are insuring democracy when they provide different curricular programs to students based upon their perceived intellectual and social standings.

From the opposite perspective, Michael Apple expressed his grave concerns that the educational system in America helps to reproduce an unequal society and his arguments give additional food for thought to those who worry about the precarious state of democracy in our schools and society. Apple argued that our schools are institutions where the types of knowledge taught mold students to fit into a power system of dominant and subordinate order (Apple, 1990). Apple explained that many educators believe that curriculum should be differentiated to prepare students of different intelligences and abilities for a variety of adult roles, roles that result in unequal social

position, power, and privilege. According to these educators, two of the purposes of education are education for leadership and education for follower-ship. Apple pointed out that this view “in fact still dominates the thinking of contemporary curriculum theorists” (Apple, 1990, p. 75). Almost every public high school across the nation provides different programs and curriculum to different groups of students and outlines various graduation requirements for the different diploma types. In addition, universities continue to set criteria concerning which curricular programs are acceptable for admission. Apple stressed that there are great social and economic implications of providing these different programs, which vary greatly in quality and value, to different groups of students.

In one of his recent works, *The State and the Politics of Knowledge* (2003), Apple explained that because schooling is both ordered and regulated by the government, our educational systems will consistently be in the midst of fundamental battles over the meaning of democracy; these battles include struggles over defining legitimate authority and accepted culture and struggles over who will benefit most substantially from the programs and policies of the government. Apple studied the educational systems of numerous countries and noted that “different educational and social visions compete for dominance” (p. 2). A major concern raised by Apple is that marketization and regulatory states have promoted the move toward “pedagogic similarity and ‘traditional’ academic curricula and teaching, the ability of dominant groups to exert leadership in the struggle over this and the accompanying shifts in common sense” (p. 2), and Apple calls for this situation to be confronted “honestly and self-critically” (p. 2) and for concerned educators and citizens to act collectively. Because education can play a role in helping to

mobilize oppressed peoples to challenge those who dominate, the cultural struggles going on in schools are significant in contesting the authority of that political and social dominance. Apple provided several international examples of how nations with more autonomous educational systems had developed further democratic political actions, processes, and programs. Apple argued his concerns further by his emphasis that we cannot limit attention to the politics inside our schools and system of schooling, but that it is important “to focus on how the state regulates not just school knowledge but knowledge in the larger spheres of social life as well” (Apple, 2003, p. 9); the state often has produced skewed statistics and ‘official’ knowledge that legitimize policies and programs that unfairly and undemocratically benefit the dominant power groups.

There are educational practices in the United States that formulate some of Apple’s greatest apprehensions with regard to equity and democracy. He addressed the “new conservative accord” (Apple, 2003, p. 122) and the element of ‘neoconservatism’ that see schools as “transforming agents for real knowledge, basic skills, morality, Western traditions, high culture, and a national identity” (p. 123), all entities that have promoted the interests of those in power and marginalized others. The marketization of American schools as part of what many have called the ‘restructuring’ of schools has appealed to citizens’ beliefs in competition as a major way to improve education as well as to transfer financial resources away from the public sector of education and into the private sector. The new conservative accord, Apple said, has led to the creation of school programs of choice like voucher plans and tax credits that make schools part of a market economy and to the movement nationally and in each state to raise standards and mandate curricular and achievement goals and knowledge. The conservative accord has directed

the attack on curriculum for its 'anti-family' prejudice, its lack of patriotism, and its "supposed neglect of the knowledge and values of the 'Western tradition' and of 'real knowledge'" (p. 124), and has also served as the impetus to "make the perceived needs of business and industry into the primary goals of the schools" (p. 124). Apple maintained that these practices and tendencies present opposition to the standard of democratic education.

Oakes (1985) argued that many scholars have expressed their concerns that schools reproduce and perpetuate the power of dominant groups. She cites Michael Young's studies that have concluded that some groups of people have more power in society because of the kinds of knowledge that is available to them and not to others. Oakes explains Young's view:

Those already in power maintain this unequal distribution of power by their control of the ways in which institutions transmit knowledge. High-level knowledge as defined by these powerful groups is distributed disproportionately to those from privileged backgrounds (Young in Oakes, 1985, p. 199).

Oakes conducted extensive studies into the practice of tracking students into different curricular programs and argued that the curriculum systems in place in most American schools discriminate in favor of certain groups of children.

Sandra Harding's views supported the strong correlation between power and knowledge. In *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (1998), she wrote "...knowledge and power are intimately linked...whoever already owns 'nature' and has access to it, whoever has the capital and knowledge...-these are the peoples to whom the benefits of contemporary scientific and

technological change largely will accrue” (p. 21). Whether they are related to agriculture, medicine, manufacturing, or to the environment, Harding argued that the benefits and opportunities of scientific change and ‘progress’ favor those who are already privileged. The costs, on the other hand, are born by the “already poorest, racial, and ethnic minorities, women, and Third World peoples” (p. 60). In America’s schools, our curriculum has been structured around one culture’s “tunnel of time” (p. 23); we teach that those of European descent have a monopoly on meaningful history. The ‘tunnels’ of other cultures have been discounted.

Educators usually fail to take into account the reality that marginalized people have little opportunity to share the prosperity that more powerful groups carefully safeguard. Harding explained the consequences of these practices: “...in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or some other such politics...the activities or lives...of those at the top both organize and set limits on what persons...can understand about themselves and the world around them” (Harding, 1998, p. 150). The needs, desires, and experiences of those with little power and knowledge have been devalued not only in global politics or in the world of technology, but in our local schools as well. As Harding suggested, “Each group’s social situation enables and sets limits on what it can know” (p. 151). If teachers and educational leaders value the principles of equity and democracy, they will steer clear of the popular inclination to claim that there is a single valid science for everyone. This attitude of one valid science may actually impede the proliferation of democracy and can be used as “a force for maintaining inequality and obstructing democratic tendencies, and for obstructing the growth of knowledge” (p. 168).

In their works on women educators, Crocco, Munro, and Weiler (1999) expressed their concerns for “a society whose ideals of equality and opportunity are defined by a competitive and individualistic ethos that justifies a few as winners and many others as losers” (p. 121). Much of their writing focused on the inequities and marginalizing of women, even strong and capable women who were denied opportunities while working to promote educational opportunities for others. American society, including American schools, has been dominated and controlled by men: “To the extent that education has been silent about women’s history, it has been responsible for normalizing and transmitting a legacy that supports the patriarchal impulse to subjugate women” (p. 13). Women have not received the same educational and career opportunities as men and women have even been denied a view of their own history: “Women’s condition in Western culture is worsened by the inability to gain accurate knowledge of their past, a direct result of masculinized forms of education” (p. 13).

In his discussion of power, Hillman (1995) states that the “economy determines who is included and who is marginalized, distributing the rewards and punishment of wealth and poverty, advantage and disadvantage” (p. 4). Hillman explained, “...power rules the roost. It is the invisible demon that gives rise to our motivations and choices” (p. 2). As Hillman contended, power comes in all shapes and guises: “Power does not appear nakedly, but wears the disguises of authority, control, prestige, influence, and fame” (p. 2). Those in power struggle to maintain their power and their economic advantages, a process that perpetuates the powerlessness of many others.

Louis Weiss wrote about the enormous implications of social class upon the lives of American citizens in *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working*

*Class* (2004). Her writing was directed to those who have concerns about economic position and opportunity and the ways that the global economy is redefining and marginalizing the working class of our country. According to Weiss, “Class...organizes the social, cultural, and material world in exceptionally profound ways” (p. 13). The present restructured economy has become more global, more focused on and intertwined in technology, and more service oriented and has encouraged even more discrepancy between the classes. There are more marked pockets of wealth on one hand and on the other hand, there are lower wages, less opportunity for advancement, and less security for most workers; the gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ is wider than ever. Weiss contended that our system of schooling has had an impact on the identity of what we think of as the working class: “Academics have done a great deal, whether consciously or not, to center the working class as white and male” (p. 4).

In her studies, Weiss found an “emerging contradictory code of respect toward school knowledge” (p. 23) that earlier studies had not uncovered in white working class males. Almost all of the students in the study placed some value on education. She also found staunchly patriarchal notions of family roles that placed women in subordinate positions. Weiss detected intensely racist beliefs: she observed “deeply entrenched racism among white youth” (p. 44). Racism is still a huge problem for young and old alike; the anguish that is caused and the barriers that are constructed by its practice in schools, in communities, and in families, are monumental. The somber consequences of racial inequity and subordination are apparent in a variety of circumstances and the twists and turns of racism are insidious.

In the high school that Weiss observed, there was a “strong system of academic tracking in place” (p. 53). Academic tracking is prevalent in high schools throughout America and the proportion of students in Weiss’ study in college preparatory or honors courses “varied by the social class (and race) of students served” (p. 53). School practices and differing curriculum opportunities play into the perpetuation of social and economic class distinctions. As Weiss found, tracking divides students into different learning groups and affords them vastly different curricula, learning opportunities, and possibilities for economic and social advancement.

Michel Foucault (1995) discussed the great “normalizing power” (p. 304) of our network of institutions, including schools. The system of classification and tracking in schools may be deemed a tool of normalization. In his 1965 work, Foucault explained his belief that the wealthy have sought to perpetuate a system that retains a lower functioning, powerless, and poorer class of people:

...this role of poverty was necessary, too, because it made wealth possible.

Because they labor and consume little, those who are in need permit a nation to enrich itself, to set a high value on its fields, its colonies, and its mines, to manufacture products which will be sold the world over; in short, a people would be poor which had no paupers (Foucault, 1965, p. 229-230).

In Foucault’s views, powerful people deem that they are powerful only by maintaining the continuance of a powerless class.

David Orr in *The Last Refuge* (2004) presented serious concerns about the state of our democracy:

“...democracy at home is in tatters” (p. 2).

“...the few are in control” (p. 2).

“The democratic processes that are supposed to connect the public will to government policy are broken” (p. 2).

“Ours is the most muddled age ever” (p. 75).

Despite this poor state of affairs, Orr presented the hope that we can “get our own house in order which is first and foremost the political task of rebuilding our country’s democratic foundations and the atrophied habits of citizenship” (p.6). Orr asserted that the times we live in are times of both danger and opportunity. Much is at stake in American democracy, and serious environmental issues intertwine with the issues of equity and democracy to present great challenges to both adults and the young in America.

The editors of *Promises to Keep: Cultural Studies, Democratic Education, and Public Life* (2003), Dennis Carlson and Greg Dimitriadis, raised worrisome questions about the so-called promises of democratic education in the current age. We face a future possibility in which “education and programming have become one in the same, indistinguishable aspects of the production of docile citizens” (p. 3). Public education has become entangled with the process of reproducing inequalities with regard to class, race, and gender. Under a deluge of influences from popular culture and media, America’s system of schooling is becoming irrelevant to our young people. Because democracy is much more than the process of self-government, education in a democracy can happen anywhere or with any citizens whenever citizens engage in discussions of public concerns. Democratic societies are “learning societies” (p. 5) and we can reflect, question, and debate; this builds possibilities for reconstructing ourselves and

reconstructing more democratic communities. Carlson and Dimitriadis explained that democracy is a “moving target” (p. 7) and they called for reinventing a democracy that eliminates the exclusionary practices that can keep whole groups of citizens from their full rights as citizens. They advocated a kind of democratic progressivism, a continued effort to reinvent, move forward, and re-envision. As a part of the promise of democracy, they called for the opening up of more opportunities in our schools for students and teachers to practice freedom, control their own teaching and learning, and build relationships with others from the basis of equity and respect.

In one chapter of Dimitriadis and Carlson’s edited work, John Weaver and Toby Daspit discussed their concerns about democracy. According to Weaver and Daspit:

A democracy flourishes best when the will of the people are honored, no matter how much they may clash with corporations, political barons, or academics. For a democracy to exist, the wills of people must be respected rather than dismissed, ignored, or condemned out of hand ... Where we think academics have failed democratic ideals is in not giving popular cultures and tastes serious and sustained attention. For a democracy to develop, intellectuals have to treat popular culture with the utmost respect and seriousness (Weaver and Daspit in Dimitriadis and Carlson, 2003, p. 138).

Weaver and Daspit proposed the argument that academics have trivialized or denounced popular culture and this has denigrated democracy. To support the argument, they analyze the works of Plato, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer. For example, they discussed the “correspondence theory of reality” (p. 139) in Plato’s *Republic* and three aspects of this theory: first, “the masses” (p. 139) cannot comprehend real art, thus they

are drawn to popular culture; second, the non-intellectuals who create popular culture play with the poor tastes of “the masses” (p. 139); third, “the masses” (p. 139) do not possess the intellect to tell the difference between reality and popular culture.

Throughout the chapter, the authors made the argument that “academics, in direct conflict with democratic ideas, have dismissed the overall potential of the majority of people to act as thinking individuals who are able to make informed decisions about their tastes, lifestyles, political situations, and economic standing” (Weaver and Dasgupta in Dimitriadis and Carlson, 2003, p. 149). The much more democratic alternative to such a view is for academics and all others to have faith that people are discerning and competent and to show respect and appreciation for their diverse tastes, values, and points of view. This is a task that requires becoming “a part of people’s lives” (p. 149), so that we can understand their values. The authors made this point about this alternative approach to academic work and popular culture: “without these shifts, there is no hope for an alternative approach to academic work, and even worse, there is no promise to keep, because there will be no democracy to build from, only the illusion of democracy” (p. 149).

Henry Giroux (2000) raised other issues relevant to democratic principles and our schools. He argued that those who advance a market ideology and an expansion of corporate culture into our schools are invading public schooling. Instead of viewing education as a function that promotes citizenship, those advocates of corporate culture view education as a capitalist venture in which the basic form of citizenship for students is consumerism. Public education is becoming “a private good destined to expand the profits of investors, educate students as consumers, and train young people for the low-

paying jobs of the new global marketplace” (Giroux, 2000, p. 85). The corporate model of teaching veers from democratic principles; its top down and mandated teaching practices lock our students into roles as consumers of information. Giroux (2000) stated:

Schools are being transformed into commercial rather than public spheres as students of marketers whose agenda has nothing to do with critical learning...Civic courage- upholding the most basic non-commercial principles of democracy- as a defining principle of society is devalued...when public education becomes a venue for making a profit...education reneges on its responsibilities for creating a democracy of citizens by shifting its focus to producing a democracy of consumers (p. 98).

As those involved in public education, Giroux called for a serious challenge to this corporate encroachment upon our schools, especially if democracy is to return as the foundation for our educational systems. Giroux (2000) appealed to educators to organize and create coalitions of enough power to result in legislation that limits corporate influence in our schools. Teachers need to look for alternative educational models that reverse the corporatization of our schools and “expand the scope of freedom, justice, and democracy” (Giroux, 2000, p. 102). Educators represent the conscience of our society, and teachers must initiate vigorous dialogue and come together to defend and promote public education as an entity whose most important role is to educate youth for active citizenship. According to Giroux, America must “resurrect a noble tradition...in which education is affirmed as a political process that encourages people to identify themselves as more than consuming subjects and democracy as more than a spectacle of market culture” (Giroux, 2000, p. 105).

The kind of “complicated conversation” that William Pinar (2004, p. 9) advocated between students, teachers, and the subject matter is relevant to the discussion of democracy and requires the academic “freedom to devise the courses we teach, the means by which we teach them, and the means by which we assess students’ study of them” (p. 9). Furthermore, Pinar stated, “We must fight for that freedom” (p. 9). Pinar indicated that American education is involved in programs that have worked against this kind of conversation. He argued that it is past time to refute politicians, policy makers, administrators, and all others who “misunderstand the education of the public as a business” (p. 11). Pinar pled for educators to become mobilized and to spread the news that what is really at stake in education is “an education in which creativity and individuality, not test-taking skills, are primary” (p. 11). “Without reclaiming our academic –intellectual freedom- we cannot teach. Without intellectual freedom, education ends; students are indoctrinated, forced to learn what the test-makers declare to be important” (p. 11). Pinar (2004) described the state of education as a “nightmare that is the present” (p. xii).

Nel Noddings (1999) made these comments concerning her view that the propagation of national educational programs of specified curricula and accountability can handicap efforts to renew democracy:

Today’s school reform efforts aim almost exclusively at increasing the academic achievement of students...But they often fall short in promoting the discourse that lies at the heart of education in a liberal democracy: What experience do students need in order to become engaged participants in democratic life? How can education develop the capacity for making well informed choices?” (p. 579).

According to Noddings, choice has too often gone by the wayside in the wake of both national and state programs that mandate curriculum and delineate accountability processes. Noddings calls for students, teachers, and parents to seek choices once again: “Instead of closing down debate with prescribed objectives for all students, a democratic society would do better to make responsible choice available within its public school system” (Noddings, 1999, p. 581). As Noddings explained, in a true democracy, we not only promote choice, we promote inquiry, critical thinking, and personal autonomy. When we do these things, our students are more involved in and feel more in control of their own educations. In schools that promote democracy, we worry less about achievement as measured by tests and more about students’ understandings and the relevance of education to the futures of young people.

Davis (2003) explained his view of the issue of management control in our national educational agendas and its negative impact upon democratic principles in education: “Increasingly observable in the affairs of schooling is the language of management control” (p. 1) and this, he says, has resulted in the diminishment of democratic educational practices. Today’s accountability systems require conformity of teachers to follow a prescribed curriculum that has been determined by managers and policy-makers. In so doing, according to Davis, creativity, academic freedom, and the possibility of teaching for understanding have been snuffed out of the schools.

Peters (1996) articulated a concern that he claimed is held by many public school teachers who are in the midst of the educational programs of today: Our schools have constructed students’ individualities through an array of practices like exams and surveillances. The policies that mandate high stakes tests and examinations have a direct

and destructive effect upon the practice of democracy. Peters contended that democracy is being undermined by policies that force students to pass standardized tests.

Similar to the concerns voiced by Peters, Garrison (2003) made this comment about our current results driven philosophy: “In failing to recognize the necessity of democracy for education, the mission of our public schools has become ever more focused on narrowly conceived results” (p. 526). He added that our current curriculum is “official, taught, learned, and tested” (p. 527). Garrison argued that in a democracy, education should be much more: the curriculum should promote freedom, empowerment, and understanding.

Joel Spring articulated his concerns regarding democracy and education in *Political Agendas for Education* (1997). He stated, “I fear that national and state academic standards and tests will place a stranglehold on free thought” (p. 117). He also cautioned against the evangelical notions and aggressive behaviors of the conservative right because this movement could, in Spring’s words, “make U.S. public schools the instruments of intellectual totalitarianism” (p. 117). Spring criticized the influx of government control in education and on the curriculum and he criticized both Democrats and Republicans for their silence on the undemocratic and unequal funding of schools.

Spring explained:

Without equal funding of schools, academic standards and high stakes tests will widen the gap between the rich and the poor...The United States will become a mandarin society with tight controls over the ideas to which students are exposed in school. The poor will be taught to love the very system of academic standards

and tests that condemns them to a life of low-paying and meaningless work (p. 118).

In *Leaving Safe Harbors: Toward a New Progressivism in American Education and Public Life* (2002), Dennis Carlson wrote to a “border crossing audience - educators of all sorts...who are committed to the advancement of the democratic imagination...and those who believe that education as we know it must be transformed rather than reformed” (p. vii-viii). Safe harbors are comfortable places where people of the dominant culture anchor themselves in positions of privilege and where marginalized people stay put on the sidelines. In order to realize much fuller possibilities, both groups must venture out from these harbors and become more courageous and progressive. Carlson explained: “Progressive education...must be reconstructive. They (educators) must call upon people to ‘think’ the world in new ways, to leave the comfort and safety of what they think they know to be true about the world, to imagine what could be, to act and relate in new ways” (p. 2). Carlson maintained that one way to find new visions and narratives of democracy is to analyze the patriarchal, class-driven, and Eurocentric popular culture of today, a culture that is “increasingly commodified and commercialized...and literally surrounds us from the time we wake up each morning” (p. 5). One of Carlson’s central arguments was that popular culture should be a vital part of all schools’ curricula. A basic skill that teachers must develop and teach their students is literacy in popular culture and how to critically understand and deconstruct the often hidden agendas within current curricula and educational programs.

Carlson referred to many troubling aspects of America’s schools and expressed particular concern with the emphasis on accountability and the use of standardized

achievement tests. “The effect of standardized proficiency testing on the nation’s poorest and most disadvantaged youth has been dramatic. These youth tend to be dramatically undereducated ...and lack the ‘cultural capital’- the middle class language skills –that are rewarded in the exams” (Carlson, 2002, p. 53). He described high school graduations as sad occasions for the large numbers of students that are removed from graduation lines because they did not pass prescribed exit exams. Carlson made the point that a second chance for dropouts is a myth; they are almost always destined for poverty and lives of struggle.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Sid Pandey said, “We are living in a dangerous situation unprecedented in history” (Pandey in Trueit, Doll, Wang, and Pinar, 2003, p. 257). Pandey argued that all Americans should be very concerned about the terrible scourge of war and advocate educational programs that developed an understanding of the organization of peace. One way that an educational system may equip students to live intelligently and democratically in this multicultural and global world is by including study and appreciation of the cultures and peoples of the world and the changing world power patterns. Instead of practices and curricula that could encourage true appreciation and respect for all cultures, educators too often have simply engaged students in superficial activities and discussions of the dinner menus of other peoples. It is even more important for all citizens to be ever resistant to the schools’ tendencies toward mono-cultural approaches to teaching and learning.

Democracy in education takes on more serious meaning for many Americans since the attacks on the Twin Towers. More than ever before, democracy demands that our students and all citizens develop an understanding of all the global processes especially

those that are the sources of inequalities and marginalization of entire groups of people. One of Paul Willis' recommendations concerning the educational use of critical ethnographies is relevant to this conversation. Willis maintained that we should find ways to show to our students the "commonality of separated cultures, drawing together a cultural membership in to an awareness of a wider social membership indicating interests in common" (Willis in Dolby and Dimitriadis, 2004, p. 194).

Rizvi (2003) proclaimed that the values of reason, compassion, and respect for all are vital to a democracy; he expressed his concerns that the deficiency of these values has contributed to the lowered status of true democracy in this country and around the world. Rizvi argued that if we really want to help spread democracy in the Middle East or in other parts of the world, Americans should focus on openness and connectiveness in our own schools. Educators and all citizens must learn to listen to others and must learn that our responsibilities include our local communities and extend far beyond as well. Instead of mandated curriculum and test results, we would be better served by developing both local and global intelligences among our young citizens. Young people must learn to see others through the others' eyes and to build connections across the demarcations of fear and distrust.

William Reynolds (2003), in *Curriculum: A River Runs Through It*, expressed his concerns that participatory democracy is not an aspect of most American educational systems. A true democracy, Reynolds argued, should be participatory in nature, not simply representative. When teachers, students, policy makers, and the whole community share in and truly participate in the major decisions, democracy is working. Unfortunately, most educators do not work in situations that allow for this kind of

participation; decisions are most often made in a “hierarchical fashion” (p. 23) and “Teachers are immersed in a non-democratic milieu in which following the dictates of outside agencies with little or no representation is the status quo” (p. 23). Teachers have become comfortable with this kind of situation.

In his experience at Sugar Creek, Wisconsin, Reynolds worked with the school district on its school improvement plan and the development of the mission statement, and these tasks were accomplished in a participatory manner involving teachers, administrators, board members, and community citizens. Some of the important ground-rules for this kind of participation included these points: the equality of each group’s opportunity to participate, encouragement of argumentation, openness to different points of view, and the necessity of dialogue and interaction to develop relationships. “It is necessary in this time of increasing standardization, top-down control, bureaucratization, and a ‘more is better’ ideology to develop in schools and communities participatory democracies” (Reynolds, 2003, p. 30). Reynolds, despite his concerns for the lack of participatory democratic practices in most systems, expressed hope that teachers and others can develop a political efficacy and be able to network and spread these democratic tendencies to many others in public school settings.

Carl Glickman, Professor of Social Foundations at the University of Georgia Emeritus and Chair of the League of Professional Schools, spoke of the particular situation in Georgia’s public schools: Georgia has one of the highest drop out rates in America and has neglected addressing one of the nation’s biggest achievement gaps between the wealthy and the poor, between the children of middle and upper class Georgians and those children from low-income families. Glickman explained:

We have a distastefully large academic achievement gap among wealthy and poor students and among white middle to upper income students and low-income students, both white and of color. So even if we can sugar coat the optimistic news of rising test scores, these results camouflage the educational abandonment of many of our young (Glickman, 2005, p. 7.)

Inequity in education, Glickman emphasized, is a big problem for a democracy. We fall short of the democratic purpose of educating “all Georgia students to become informed, equal, and independent citizens willing to participate with other citizens to improve their neighborhood, state, region, country, and world” (p. 7). Real democracies must have educated citizenries and according to Glickman, if children are to be truly educated as opposed to indoctrinated, their learning must take place “in a democratic environment” (p. 8). Glickman pointed to the inequitable funding of public schools in Georgia, the current mandated testing and accountability from the legislatures, and a pre-determined curriculum that prevents the democratic participation of teachers and students in active, challenging, and meaningful learning. Glickman acknowledged that students cannot be educated “for democracy unless their learning is guided by democratic principles...” (p. 8). These are some of those democratic principles that Glickman proposed as vital to this democratic process:

Students having escalating degrees of choice, both as individuals and as groups...Students actively working with problems, ideas, materials, and people as they learn skills and content...Students being held to high degrees of excellence in both their academic objectives learned and their contributions made to a larger community” (p. 8).

## Summary

This *Literature Review* has presented a menagerie of views and concerns from various scholars over the current state of democracy and equity in our nation's educational system. Thoughtful citizens must continue to analyze and address the important issues of equity and social justice in American education and to examine with scrutiny whether the practices and programs of the schools are ones that promote the principles of democracy. Such study and scrutiny can impact in a positive way the directions of educational agendas and make it more likely that as the twenty-first century unfolds, the schools of the nation advance democratic tenets that offer a greater possibility of benefiting all of its citizens.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE DEVELOPMENT AND MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

Is democracy a form of government? Is it a way of life? Is it a goal? Is it an ideal? Just what it is and how it developed in the scheme of human history is the initial focus of this chapter. Another question that has persisted for many centuries is whether democracy is the most desirable form of government. Certainly Plato and John Locke held different views on this question as did Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. These differing viewpoints continue into modern times and in the debates of modern philosophers. The chapter is an inquiry into these differing aspects and views of democracy that have generated discussion and controversy over a period of many eras. These diverse visions of democracy provide vital background in the debates that will continue to impact the practices of American education in both the present and the future.

#### Plato and Early Democracy

The word 'democracy' comes from the Greek word 'demos' which means 'people' and the word 'kratos' which means 'rule.' Democracy began developing in ancient Greece around six hundred B.C. The citizens of Athens had developed one of the most advanced systems of government in the world, one they called 'demokratia.' Democracy in Athens and some of the other Greek city-states had democratic governments. Democracy in ancient Greece was a direct democracy, not a representative one. Every male citizen served permanently in the 'ekklesia,' the assembly of the people. The 'ekklesia' passed the laws and debated and decided on policies that were binding on the whole community. All male citizens could participate in the debates and vote. Each vote was equal and the majority ruled. A small council of five hundred citizens prepared

the agenda for the 'ekklesia.' Courts interpreted and applied the mandates of the 'ekklesia'; large juries that varied in size from two hundred to twenty-five hundred members made the court rulings (Dersin, 1997).

Because all male citizens participated directly in the 'ekklesia,' many argue that this Greek system was closer to a true democracy than any other in history. A notable discrepancy is the fact that over fifty per cent of the population was women and slaves. Neither group held citizenship status and thus neither had the right to vote or participate in the decision-making process. Nonetheless, the Greek idea of democratic rule by the people was an experiment that other civilizations later adopted as aspects of their governments (Dersin, 1997).

Plato's views of democracy were developed during his early life and career in ancient Greece but have had an impact on discussions and events concerning democracy ever since. Plato was born in about the year 428 B.C. into an important and politically active family in Athens; he died in Athens around 347 B.C. at the age of eighty-one. Plato's original intentions for a career in Athenian politics were diverted several times but he gave them up entirely when the new democratic factions in Athens tried and executed Socrates, an old family friend and teacher that the young Plato much admired. The event of Socrates' execution forever impacted Plato's views on democracy; he criticized democracy, especially the town meeting variety, as an extreme and dangerous entity. After traveling to Megara and Syracuse where he was deported and almost sold into slavery, Plato finally returned to Athens to establish a school for research. Convinced of an unchanging system of reality, the importance of mathematics, and of the

correlation between knowledge and virtue, Plato's school, the Academy, was the first university and continued in Athens after his death to the year A.D. 529 (Barrow, 1976).

Probably the most famous of Plato's works is *The Republic* (n.d.) which was written as a dialogue and explored issues of a just state, an ideal state, and just individuals. In *The Republic*, Plato spoke through Socrates, and his ideal state divided humans depending upon their intelligence, courage, and strengths. Those who possessed great intelligence, virtue, and courage, the Guardians, were suited to run the state and those who possessed a somewhat lesser degree of intelligence, courage, and strength, the warriors, were suited to defensive and policing professions. People who were not bright, strong, and brave were suitable for the professions like farming and building; these Plato called the producers for they were best used for productive work and formed the vast majority of society. According to Plato, the three groups or classes in society should remain distinct, separate, and unchanging: "...there are three distinct classes, any meddling of one with another, or the change of one into another, is the greatest harm to the state" (Plato, translated by Jowett, 1968, p. 177).

Plato called the ideal state an aristocracy, derived from 'aristo' meaning 'best' and 'kratein' meaning 'to rule.' Plato explained that an 'oligarchy' comes into being when the warrior class takes power and are tempted by the desire for wealth and a few of them become rich. An 'oligarchy,' the rule of a few, dissipates when the poor decide to take advantage of their great numbers and overthrow the rich. This results in the rule of the people, a democracy. In Plato's timeline, democracies become chaotic because of the conflicts over the people's desire for possessions. In the midst of the chaos, people call for law and order and this leaves an opening for yet another kind of government, tyranny.

Tyrants are subject to unlimited desire and possess particular personalities that make it impossible for them to be satisfied with what they have; tyrants will always want more.

Thus, according to Plato, democracy is a form of government that is destined for tyranny. Plato explained in *The Republic*: "...then democracy comes into being after the poor have conquered their opponents, slaughtering some and banishing some, while to the remainder they give an equal share of freedom and power" (Plato, n.d., translated by Jowett, p. 371). He continued, "...my friend, in what manner does tyranny arise? That it has a democratic origin is evident" (p. 379). Plato is consistently critical of democracy and of what he called "the disregard which she shows of all of the fine principles which were solemnly laid down at the foundation of the city" (p. 373). In a mocking way, Plato called democracy "a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike" (p. 373). Plato's distrust of democracy is evident throughout *The Republic*. He did not believe that men are created as equals and that they should be provided equal opportunities for education, power, or for anything else. Just as evident as Plato's criticism of democracy was his praise of aristocracy – the rule of wise and educated philosophers.

Certainly the direct democracy of ancient Greece differed from the more representative democracies that have developed since then. The ancient Romans during the time of the Roman Empire experimented with democracy, but never practiced it as fully as the Athenians. The Romans taught that political power is born from the consent of the people. The complex character of the Roman constitution brought together powerful consuls who were in some ways similar to monarchs, an aristocratic senate, and included certain liberties and democratic powers for the masses. The Roman

constitution, according to Strauss and Cropsey (1968) “prevented an undue concentration of power and provided a system of checks and balances” (p. 139). The Roman statesman Cicero taught that men possess certain natural rights that are to be respected by governments. Referring to the Roman government, Cicero believed that “the magistrates have enough power, the counsels of the eminent citizens enough influence, and the people enough liberty” (Cicero in Strauss and Cropsey, 1968, p. 139). The Roman empire, in reality, was actually an aristocracy and the real power was in the hands of the Senate where the “element of wisdom or counsel is assigned the decisive role” (Strauss and Cropsey, 1968, p. 139).

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages encompassed the years 400 A. D. to about 1500 A. D. Christianity spread through much of the Western world and taught the equality of men before God; Christian teachings that no state can demand absolute loyalty helped to lay some of the framework for the foundation of constitutional government. During the Middle Ages, the feudal system developed: in this system, people pledged their loyalty and services to others but those individuals possessed rights that the others had to recognize. Feudal courts, developed to protect these rights, were the forerunners of king councils, representative assemblies, and modern parliaments.

The Renaissance and the Reformation provided cultural and philosophical change that began spreading throughout Europe during the 1300’s, 1400’s, and 1500’s. These movements brought new dimensions of individual thought, freedom, and independence that had an impact on political developments and encouraged the development of democratic governments. Martin Luther and others like John Calvin opposed monarchies and argued that the power of rulers on earth is derived from the consent of the people.

Following the famous forced signing of the Magna Carta in England by King John in 1215 A.D., democracy developed very gradually over a period of several hundred years. In 1628, Parliament passed the Petition of Right giving itself more powers and guaranteeing its regular meeting. Chaos, power struggles, and revolution came and went for several decades until the Revolution of 1688, sometimes referred to as the Glorious Revolution, established the supremacy of the British Parliament (Muhlberger, 1998).

John Locke

John Locke's contributions to the Revolution of 1688 and to the progress toward democracy was great for he was known as the 'father' of the revolution that resulted in Parliament asking William and Mary to take the British throne as limited monarchs bound by constitutional constraints and by the power of Parliament. Locke was born in a small town near Bristol in 1632 to parents who supported the 'rightful elected Parliament' (Squadrita, 1979, p. 14). Many of the religious, political, and economic issues of the age were regularly discussed in his home. Locke was educated at Oxford and after his graduation continued at Oxford, first as a teacher, writer, and lecturer and then as a medical student though he never completed the medical degree. He has been identified as a philosopher, but his most passionate interests were in the realm of politics (Yolton, 1977). At Oxford, his friendship with Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury who was allegedly involved in plots against King Charles II, caused suspicion to fall upon Locke; fearing for his life, Locke lived in Holland from 1683 until 1689 and after the Glorious Revolution. In 1690, still concerned about his safety, he published anonymously his *Two Treatises of Government* and continued with activities in support of a British representative government (Cope, 1999).

In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke attacked commonly held political arguments of the time especially the notions of hereditary political legitimacy and divine right of absolute monarchy. Locke's cautious and thoughtful arguments championed two positions that were uncommonly argued during his time: "Every man is born with a double right: First, a right of freedom to his person...secondly, a right...to inherit...his father's goods" (Locke, 1960, originally published in 1690, p. 441). Another revolutionary argument of Locke's was that "...no government can have a right to obedience from a people who have not freely consented to it" (Locke, 1960, pp. 441-442). Locke explained that governments come in many forms and that there are many ways to set up a society, but all of them are limited. His general constraint was that "the power of the society, or legislative constituted by them, can never be suppos'd to extend farther than the common good..." (Locke, 1960, p. 398).

Locke's explanations of how revolution can be justified had far-reaching implications; these arguments formed the early foundations for revolutionary thinking in the American colonies and in many other parts of the world as well. For Locke, there were rules for revolution. He laid out conditions in which citizens can claim that their contract with the government in power is void and may go about establishing a different government. A major purpose of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* was to justify the Glorious Revolution. He argued that an unjust government may be overturned from within and that though revolution is not justified in all situations, "both the legislative and executive branches of government may exceed their power and may consequently be overthrown by the people" (Squadrito, 1979, p. 117). Locke's idea of just government included the principle that governments were established for protection of individuals'

properties, lives, and rights; natural law guarantees people certain rights that a state can not take away. Just governments are consented to by a people: “For no government can have a right to obedience from a people who have not freely consented to it; which they can never be supposed to do ‘til ... they are put in a full state of liberty to choose their own government or governors” (Locke, 1960, pp. 441-442). In addition, Locke believed that government was a social contract whose goal is the common good; individuals have no right to disturb a government simply because it would serve one’s individual interests (Locke, 1960).

The writings and views of John Locke were influential in the smoldering embers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century revolutionary movements of Britain, the American colonies, and France, and in other revolutionary activities around the world since. Locke’s concepts of natural rights, government as a social contract and as a representative and protective entity, and the limitations of government paved the way for the establishment of American and other modern democracies.

### John Stuart Mill

Another Englishman, John Stuart Mill, made significant contributions to the development of democratic thought. Mill was born in 1806 in Yorkshire, England, and was provided an unusually early and extensive education by his father. Mill worked with the East India Company for thirty-five years, a company that controlled large parts of India; this position allowed Mill time for his truer interests in writing and philosophy. After his retirement, Mill served one term in the House of Commons where he worked to broaden suffrage through loosening property restrictions and was a strong advocate for women’s suffrage. During his tenure in Parliament, Mill was considered a radical

because of his support for women's equality, compulsory education for all children, and public ownership of natural resources (Guttek, 2001).

Probably Mill's most famous work was *On Liberty*, originally published in 1859. In *On Liberty*, he avowed the principles of individual liberty and freedom of expression. Known for his liberalism and utilitarianism, Mill believed that governments should be judged based upon their "utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interest of man as a progressive being" (Mill, 1986, originally published in 1859, p. 224). According to Guttek (2001), "Mill's liberalism emphasized personal freedom and the free expression of ideas as individual rights and as a necessity for human progress" (p. 142). Mill wrote that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others... In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute (Mill, 1986, originally published in 1859, p. 13).

Mill argued that societies need good critical thinkers, those who can challenge the status quo. Mill always argued for freedom of thought and discussion and believed that in free societies, people could and should express different and even unpopular ideas in an environment of openness. In *On Liberty* (1986), Mill gives this warning against the limitation of free expression: "We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavoring to stifle is a false opinion, and if we are sure, stifling it would be an evil still" (p. 229).

Mill supported representative government as the form of government most likely to provide an environment conducive to human happiness and to social progress. In Strauss and Cropsey's *The History of Political Philosophy* (1968), Mill is characterized as a philosopher who believed that the functions of government were skilled activities

that required skilled people to complete. Mill also held that skilled representatives of the people should carry out the functions of government but that the ultimate controlling power in a democracy must be in the people themselves. Reminiscent of Plato's views, one of Mill's fears was of an uncontrolled democracy; one danger to liberty that democracies are prone to is the danger of the tyranny of the majority. Mills writes "There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence; and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against despotism" (Mill, 1986, p. 7). Mill was always fearful of limitations on individual freedoms of thought and warned frequently in his writings of the dangers of imposing mass public opinions on the minority.

Mill was also concerned about the future possibility of representative entities like the British Parliament or the U. S. Congress to be influenced by special interest groups rather than by the individual persons who made up the society; this concern may have been a premonition of the special interests' power in the current age. Education was another persistent concern of Mill's; he believed that a free society calls for an educated citizenry and he called for civic education for all citizens. Such an education, according to Mill, would allow people to learn to think for themselves. The academic freedom of teachers and the freedom to choose and to question by students were important freedoms for Mill and he argued for schools where teachers were encouraged to teach freely and where both male and female students were encouraged to learn freely and to express ideas in an atmosphere of inquiry and acceptance (Mill, 1986, originally published in 1859).

## Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson, one of those most active in the American Revolutionary era and in the first decades of American constitutional government, based many of the arguments of the Declaration of Independence upon the principles set forth by John Locke almost ninety years earlier. Born in 1743 in Virginia to Peter and Jan Randolph Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson was educated in the classical languages and inspired by the Enlightenment's emphasis on the power of reason to govern human behavior. Jefferson graduated from the College of William and Mary and was admitted to the Virginia Bar; he pursued a legal career until he became a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769. Later he became a member of the Continental Congress and was appointed to a committee to draft a declaration of independence from Great Britain. Jefferson continued his political involvement through the Revolutionary War and during the eras of the Second Continental Congress and the first decades of America's new government, serving as Virginia Governor, Secretary of State, Vice President of the United States, and two terms as President of the United States (Wiltse, 1960).

Jefferson possessed great faith in the ability to rule by reason and he was vehemently opposed to all forms of tyranny. Jefferson explained his faith in the good sense of the masses of mankind: "I cannot act as if all men were unfaithful because some are so... The mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights" (Jefferson in Wiltse, 1960, p. 84). Like John Locke, Jefferson argued that governments derive their authority from the consent of those governed. His guiding principle was to place as few restrictions as possible on both the people and the states. Though Jefferson was an aristocrat by birth, "he yet denied all but the natural aristocracy of talent, and based his

state on the equality of men” (Wiltse, 1960, p. 40). Jefferson, more than most others of his day, promoted egalitarian principles as integral parts of a just society; he espoused and synthesized the liberal views of the time: “To unequal privileges among members of the same society the spirit of our nation is, with one accord, adverse” (Jefferson in Pangle, 1988, p. 102). Though Thomas Jefferson clearly advocated for equality and proposed several measures that would place limits on the practice of slavery, there was a clear gap between his politics and social philosophy of equality and his own entanglement as a slave-owner.

Jefferson understood that environment and circumstances were crucial to a person’s social development and denied that any one group was inferior to other groups. In speaking of the native American Indians, he explained that the causes of the differences that some claimed made the Indians inferior were “not in a difference of nature but of circumstance” (Jefferson in Davis, 1996, p. 50). Jefferson’s belief that circumstances were so important to the fulfillment of human potential led to Jefferson’s great emphasis on education. He held that democracy was necessary for liberty but also that education was central to democracy.

As the trials and challenges of a young America unfolded, Jefferson found himself in the midst of a philosophical duel with Alexander Hamilton, another influential political figure of the burgeoning nation. The difference in the views of Jefferson and Hamilton served as the basis for the first political parties of America and their differences continued through American history into the present day.

## Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton's background differed from Jefferson's as much as his political views did. Hamilton was born in 1775 in the West Indian Island of Nevis. Abandoned by his father, Hamilton's mother struggled to raise her children and relied on friends and relatives for financial support. She died before Hamilton's teenage years. Friends recognized Hamilton's intelligence in spite of his lack of proper schooling and encouraged him to read and write and to take a job as a mercantile clerk. Hamilton's formal education began when a Presbyterian group read an article that he had written for a St. Croix newspaper; they decided to sponsor the underprivileged fifteen year old's college education at King's University (now Columbia University) near New York City (Flexner, 1978).

It was in New York that Hamilton excelled academically and was thrust into the arguments and events leading to the American Revolution. Hamilton's talents as a brilliant military strategist and his talents as an astute businessman soon led to his establishment as an important military leader of the Continental Army and as a political leader in the events that led to the creation and ratification of the United States Constitution. At the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Hamilton became the spokesperson for a strong national government and his arguments published in *The Federalist* were strong influences in getting the Constitution adopted (Ronemus, 2005).

Jefferson was in France during the reorganization of American government and the ratification of the U. S. Constitution and when he returned, he agreed to George Washington's request that he serve the new government as Secretary of State. George Washington had appointed Alexander Hamilton as the Secretary of the Treasury and it

was during these formative years of the new republic that the differing philosophies of Hamilton and Jefferson became apparent. Jefferson had supported the Constitution but thought that its main attribute was its system of checks and balances; it was his perpetual fear that a strong central government could infringe on the rights of individuals. Jefferson was afraid that the Constitution's "centralization of power would rob the common man of his liberty" (Wiltse, 1960, p. 99). Hamilton, on the other hand, combined his skepticism of democracy with his genuine belief that "no government could endure which did not identify its interests with the interests of property and wealth" (Wiltse, 1960, p. 99).

The controversy and disagreement between Hamilton and Jefferson has one of its foundations in the ageless dispute between liberty and authority. Hamilton's emphasis was on stability and order and according to him, this necessitated a strong and powerful government built on the interests of propertied and wealthy citizens. Davis (1996) explained: "A strong and powerful government run by a few suitable men would be essential to building the empire that Hamilton envisioned" (p. 101). Jefferson's emphasis and ideal was founded on equality and freedom.

The views of the two men may be a bit ironic since Jefferson's background was aristocratic and Hamilton's was a background of poverty. Hamilton rose to prominence and status from a destitute early life. Hamilton's views of mankind were more pessimistic than those of Jefferson for he believed that most people operated out of self-interest and were motivated from desire for wealth and power. Furthermore, according to Hamilton, the public good "could be known only by the enlightened few" (Davis, 1996,

p. 102). Hamilton called for an energetic government; in *The Federalist Papers*, he wrote:

Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential...to the steady administration of the laws, to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations... to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambitions of faction, and of anarchy (Hamilton in Davis, 1996, p. 101).

Considering Hamilton in relationship to Jefferson brings to mind arguments that started much earlier, even as early as Plato's day, and arguments that have continued into America's current age. During their lives, the two men struggled over the issues of democracy and government, and the relationship between democracy and government and society. In spite of the fact that Jefferson won a more notable place in both the history books and in the hearts of Americans, Hamilton's visions of America as a world power, his emphasis on a strong national government, his support of powerful governmental interventions, and his entrustment of power and privilege to those of property and wealth were prophetic visions. The course of American history has more closely followed these Hamiltonian visions. The Jefferson-Hamilton differences of the early years of American Constitutional government set the tone for eras of struggle and debate in America's political and social principles and practices. The philosophies of the two men have remained in perpetual contention in ideological disputes that involve democracy, equality, and governmental power (Finseth, n.d.).

## From Jefferson and Hamilton to the Twentieth Century

A study of American democracy since the days of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton to the present day is a long journey but a journey that includes many variations of the two men's views. The first half of the nineteenth century brought extended suffrage and provided for the popular election of governors and presidential electors. The election of Andrew Jackson was the culmination of the increased participation in matters of government by common, non-aristocratic citizens, those Jackson termed "the real people, the bone and sinew of the country" (Davis, 1996, p. 147). Educational opportunities continued their expansion and Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton led the nineteenth century campaign for women's rights and suffrage (Davis, 1996).

Alexis de Tocqueville, a nineteenth century French aristocrat who studied and wrote about American democracy, painted a picture of American democracy for the world. According to Tocqueville, equality was the dominant characteristic of American life in the mid-nineteenth century. He wrote of equal fortunes and equal opportunities and of the absence of great differences of wealth, education, power, and social status. Tocqueville's skewed picture of America helped to create the myth of the 'American dream' and in spite of its flagrant inaccuracies, his account of America promoted an image of the land of opportunity where humble beginnings were no obstacle to social and economic advancement (Davis, 1996). These images of America as a land of equality and opportunity served as part of the justification for the widespread development of industrial capitalism that was taking place in the country during the late nineteenth

century; because all Americans had opportunities to succeed, those who did not succeed had only themselves to blame.

The issue that was most glaring and problematic in the discussions of democracy, equality, and liberty in America was the issue of slavery. From William Lloyd Garrison's proclamations that racial equality was essential to democracy to Abraham Lincoln's affirmation in the Gettysburg Address of equality in the center of American political tradition, the final demise of slavery after the Civil War was only a new beginning of the ongoing struggle for equal rights and democratic opportunities for all citizens (Davis, 1996). By the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the characteristics of modern America were in place: large industry, densely populated urban areas, and large corporations. Corporations and businesses exerted much political and economic control in the nation; the disparities of wealth and social status grew wider than ever as control of the nation's economy fell deeper into the hands of corporate and industrial owners and executives. Many of the principles and views of Charles Darwin were used to promote and to justify racial and ethnic inequalities (Davis, 1996).

Helen Hefferman

In the years after women gained voting rights in 1920, Helen Hefferman used her work in education as a platform to promote democracy and equality for all and to advance the social reforms of the Progressives. Hefferman was born in 1896 in Massachusetts but attended school in Nevada, graduated from a teacher training program at the University of Nevada, and taught for several years in Nevada, Utah, and Idaho before moving to California. Once in California, she received a Bachelors degree from the University of California at Berkeley and was hired as a school supervisor in King's

County where she helped to implement progressive principles of rural school reform. She soon became the director of elementary education for the California Department of Education and became a well-known educational leader throughout California and the nation for her advocacy for child centered progressive education. Hefferman's educational principles were deeply aligned with her beliefs about democracy. In one of her speeches, she explained her views on democracy and education:

And what is a democracy? A democracy is not merely a system of government. It is not in itself a condition of society. Democracy is expecting great things of common people...the public schools are somehow going to help us realize these great things for all of our people. When equal opportunity, an equal chance for all the children of all the people shall be realized, then democracy will be firmly established (Hefferman, 1929, from untitled speech notes in Crocco, Munro, & Weiler, 1999, p. 88).

As Hefferman advanced her ideas of democracy through her work in education, she did so with infrequent references to gender and to the male dominated aspects of American society. During the years of the Great Depression, Hefferman became more focused than ever on societal and educational inequalities and was sharply critical of America's economic system. She continued to promote educational opportunities for all children, especially those in poverty, and to argue for states' responsibilities to provide educational, health, and family services. Her work inevitably led to criticism from conservative politicians and businessmen.

During the first months of World War II, Hefferman worked at the United States Office of Education as a field representative but she soon returned to California where

she directed California's childcare centers for war workers. During the war, Hefferman's dedication to defending and promoting democratic education grew stronger than ever. She argued that teachers have their most enormous influence on children when they lead children to learn the ways of democratic living. Democratic teachers encourage choice-making, discussion, responsibility for actions, and respect for others. Hefferman believed that these were vital activities and attitudes of free people in a democracy (Crocco, Munro, & Weiler, 1999).

Hefferman joined General McArthur in Tokyo, Japan, in 1946 as an elementary school officer in the work of rebuilding Japan's educational system after World War II. When she returned to California in 1948, Hefferman came into increased conflict with conservatives who disapproved of her progressive initiatives. As the California Department of Education was reorganized, Hefferman's position and influence were reduced; her frustration increased because she perceived a move away from democracy and most of her views conflicted with those of the new state leaders. Hefferman continued to stress democratic principles, criticized the emphasis on testing and standardized curriculum, opposed classes and funding for the gifted, and argued that Head Start and daycare programs should be part of the public school systems. Hefferman retired in 1965 and died in 1987. Once nationally prominent, her influence dwindled after World War II, and her views of democracy, educational equity, and social reform are rarely mentioned in educational circles today. Despite her current almost forgotten status, Hefferman was a significant influence during the first half of the twentieth century. She was a staunch advocate for building a more democratic nation and

promoted public education as the vital tool for that task (Crocco, Munro, and Weiler, 1999).

## Leo Strauss

As Americans have moved through one war after another, the Civil Rights movements, the feminist's struggles, and other times of turbulence, the country has continued its march toward enormous corporate, military, and governmental influence. One figure generally seen as providing heavy influence in recent American political thought is Leo Strauss. Strauss's views have both seeped into and become integral philosophies of many who are in positions of national leadership today. Over the last several decades, "Strauss's influence has steadily grown" (Pangle, 1989, p. vii).

Leo Strauss was born a Jew in Germany in 1899, the son of a Jewish businessman, Hugo Strauss. He was a student at the Gymnasium Philippinum and he received his doctorate degree from the University of Hamburg in 1921. When he was forced to flee Germany after the Nazi's took control in 1933, Strauss moved to England and taught at Cambridge University. A few years later in 1938, he immigrated to the United States and accepted a position at Columbia University teaching political science and philosophy. In 1944, Strauss received United States citizenship and between the years 1948 and 1968 served a long tenure as a professor of political philosophy at the University of Chicago where he taught and gained prominence among his students (Steinberg, 2003). After his twenty-year tenure in Chicago, Strauss taught in colleges in Maryland and California from 1968 until his death in 1973 (Postel, 2003).

Strauss was a prolific writer during his life; he published his first works while still in Germany and continued his writing until the year of his death. He became known for

his criticisms of modern liberalism and for his admiration of classical political philosophers like Plato. Strauss believed that modern liberalism's emphasis on individual liberty was particularly flawed because such emphasis ignored more important life goals, particularly the ones stressed in classical philosophy, virtue and excellence. Coinciding with his beliefs about individual liberty were Strauss's criticisms of democracy, at least of the traditional American version of democracy. Strauss explained how democracy evolved and what he perceived as the problem with democracy:

Democracy comes into being when the poor, having become aware of their superiority to the rich and perhaps being led by some drones who act as traitors to their class and possess the skills which ordinarily only members of a ruling class possess, make themselves at an opportune moment masters of the city by defeating the rich...Democracy itself is characterized by freedom, which includes the right to say and do whatever one wishes: everyone can follow the way of life which pleases him most. Hence democracy is the regime which fosters the greatest variety...democracy is not designed for inducing the non-philosophers to attempt to become as good as they possibly can, for the end of democracy is not virtue but freedom, i.e., the freedom to live either nobly or basely according to one's liking (Strauss and Cropsey, 1968, pp. 36-37).

Strauss reminded his students and his readers that the classical philosophers, in their preferred hierarchy of desirable governments, placed democracy lower than oligarchy, a government ruled by the few. Speaking of Socrates' views as expressed through Plato, Strauss and Cropsey stated: "Therefore he assigns to democracy a rank even lower than to oligarchy, since oligarchy requires some kind of restraint whereas

democracy ... abhors every kind of restraint” (Strauss and Cropsey, 1968, p. 37). In *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: Essays and Lectures by Leo Strauss* (1989), edited by Pangle, Strauss argued for goals of human virtue and human excellence, as did the classical philosophers and for the classical ideal of a citizenry who has great respect for the greatness of statesmen. According to Strauss’ own essay in Pangle’s (1989) edited work, “...good men are those who are willing, and able, to prefer the common interest to their private interest and to the objects of their passions ... who being able to discern what is the noble or right thing to do, do it because it is noble and right” (p. 55). Strauss revived discussion of Plato’s argument that good and virtuous leaders may not be able to be completely truthful with the citizenry at large and still achieve the necessary goals of society. He also placed great emphasis upon order and constant, consistent leadership by those most capable of leading. Strauss stated, “The paramount requirement of society is stability, as distinguished from progress” (p. 236). Just as some citizens are more fit than others for leadership in government, Strauss claimed that “it may also happen that one nation has a greater natural fitness for political excellence than others” (p. 57).

Controversy has emerged over the teachings and writings of Leo Strauss especially in recent years, and many criticize his views of democracy and claim that his teachings form the foundation for the political ideology of the ‘neo-conservative’ aspects of current American political regimes. According to Shadia Drury, author of *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (1999), Strauss “values religion as a source of order and stability in society. He believed that religion provides the majority of people with the comfort they need to bear their harsh existence” (p. 12) and Drury claims that this priority for

religion is part of the coalition between the neo-conservatives in the Reagan, Clinton, and two Bush administrations and the religious right. In an interview with Danny Postel of *Information Clearing House*, Drury accused Strauss of disregard for the notions of liberty and human equality:

The ancient philosophers whom Strauss most cherished believed that the unwashed masses were not fit for either truth or liberty, and that giving them these sublime treasures would be like throwing pearls before swine. In contrast to modern political thinkers, the ancients denied that there is any natural right to liberty. Human beings are born neither free nor equal. The natural human condition, they held, is not one of freedom, but of subordination – and in Strauss’s estimation they were right in thinking so (Drury in Postel, 2003, pp. 2-3).

Much of Strauss’s teaching is designed to convince his students, some who hold positions in the present administration, that they are the natural ruling elite as well as the persecuted. Because of this persecution, these wise leaders who are moral and trustworthy, must be cautious and hold a moral justification to lie not only to avoid persecution but to be able to make the decisions that only they know are best for the nation (Drury, 1999).

In Drury’s view, Strauss was convinced that humans’ wickedness can only be restrained by being strongly governed; the necessary strong government can be established only when people are united and people can only be united against other peoples of other nations. So external threats are an important part of this scenario, and if there are no actual threats, Straussians believe that it is fine to create them (Drury, 1999). This Straussian view is aligned, according to many critics, with the decisions of recent

administrations to involve America in wars and conflicts, perpetually, all over the world; it is also aligned with the nationalistic practices of establishing an American empire and with the perceived need to establish 'American-type' governments in other parts of the world.

Guy Caron, another critic, stated that Strauss is generally considered the first neo-conservative; he summarized the views of the neo-conservatives by explaining their willingness to use America's unrivaled power to promote its values around the world. Since modern threats to the U.S. cannot be contained, we must therefore prevent them; this can be done through pre-emptive military strikes and wars. Caron went on to explain the widespread impact of Strauss and to name influential Straussian students or disciples who have position and power in the American of recent years: Albert Wohlstetter, senior policy analyst with the RAND Corporation and a key figure in nuclear-warfare strategy and American foreign policy, Alan Bloom, influential author and professor, and Paul Wolfowitz, current Deputy Secretary of Defense. Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, and many others in influential leadership or advisory positions in the power circles of Washington are among those alleged to have ties to Strauss or to Straussian principles (Caron, 2005).

Anne Norton in *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (2004) claimed to have special insight into the views of Leo Strauss for she was a student at the University of Chicago of Joseph Cropsey who was one of Strauss's students. She concurred with other critics who align Strauss with the neo-conservative viewpoints and those in Washington now in control of American political decision-making and explained that neo-conservatives want a strong state, one that puts its strength to use. While they

empower corporations with tax cuts, Norton made these statements about neo-conservatives:

Neo-conservatives reject the vulgarity of mass culture... they, though not always religious themselves, ally themselves with religion... they encourage family values and the praise of older forms of family life, where women occupy themselves with children, cooking, and the church...they see in war and the preparation for war the restoration of private virtue and public spirit....Above all...neo-conservatism calls for a revival of patriotism, a strong military, and an expansionist foreign policy” (pp. 178-179)

With regard to their views on democracy, Norton (2004) asserted that the Straussians believe America would benefit from a more authoritarian form of democracy that includes the establishment of a stronger police force, more intelligence both at home and abroad, and much expanded powers of surveillance. They call for expanded power for the President and their expansionist foreign policy has as its goal the establishment of a “new world order” (Norton, 2004, p. 179) established through force. Their economic programs appeal in rhetoric to the concerns of small businesses, small property owners, and ordinary working people but in actuality, the economic advantages are provided to the wealthiest people and corporations (Norton, 2004). These and others’ concerns reveal some of the dramatic differences between the Straussian concept of democracy and those democratic ideas of Jefferson, Locke, and others.

Wendy Brown

Wendy Brown is another who offers different perspectives on democracy in the postmodern age. Brown, a professor of Political Science at the University of California at Berkeley, received her doctorate in Political Philosophy from Princeton University in 1983. She has become known for analyses of political systems and for her critical interrogations of power and how it is formed in contemporary liberal democracies. Brown has written a number of books including *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995), *Politics Out of History* (2001), and an edited work *Left Legalism/Left Critique* (2002).

In spite of the expansion of ostensible democracy across the globe in places like the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and South Africa, Brown suggested in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (1995) that “Western intellectuals and political activists have grown disoriented about the meaning and practice of political freedom” (p. 4). In recent years, according to Brown, democracy has come to mean being protected from the excesses of power. Brown insisted that true democracy requires sharing power, not regulation by power. Though being protected from excesses is not a mission to be scoffed at, she argued that realizing a substantive democracy will “continue to require a desire for political freedom” (p. 4). One of the democratic questions raised by Brown is this: “...might the realization of substantive democracy continue to require a desire for political freedom, a longing to share in power rather than be protected from its excesses, to generate futures together rather than navigate or survive them?” (1995, p. 4).

Many of the present-day political discussions on democracy have skirted the issue of democratizing power. Instead, Brown maintained, the visions of many political activists who claim to be concerned with democracy have been concentrated on securing rights and freedoms for various burdened and disfavored groups of people. This kind of work is a part of democracy but Brown was diligent in pointing out that authentic democracy requires the actual sharing of the power, not just being protected from inequitable practices of power. She explained:

Indeed, much of the progressive political agenda in recent years has been concerned with distributing goods and especially with pressuring the states to buttress the rights and increase the entitlements of the socially vulnerable or disadvantaged: people of color, homosexuals, women, endangered animal species, threatened wetlands, ancient forests, the sick, and the homeless. Without disputing the importance of such projects ...the dream of democracy – that humans might govern themselves by governing together – is difficult to discern in the proliferation of such claims of rights, protections, regulations, and entitlements (Brown, 1995, p. 5).

Brown's call was that injury should not become the foundation for democracy in American life. That type of foundation for democracy results in the desire for freedom dissolving into a moralizing type of politics; it promotes hostilities and resentments. Brown continued to promote a different focus for democracy, one that explored the distribution of power among all of the people and the possibility that the people jointly can perform the tasks of governing.

In *Politics Out of History* (2001), Brown explained that a basic premise of modern times, that notion that we are making progress toward the ideals of democracy, is in a state of collapse. The most fundamental of the political tenets since the Enlightenment is “the thesis that humanity is making steady, if uneven and ambivalent, progress toward greater freedom, equality, prosperity, rationality, or peace” (Brown, 2001, p. 6). Brown pointed out that today, it is rare that a “thinker, political leader, or ordinary citizen ... invokes the premise of progress” (p. 6). There has been a “general unraveling of American promise” (p. 7) and Americans have been looking at their pasts as eras more attuned to equality, morality, prosperity, freedom, and happiness. Americans fondly recall eras of the past, the perceived better times of morality, prosperity, and intact families. The fact that liberal democracies have “lost the thread of progress in history” (p. 7) has promoted the bewilderment and confusion of the American people: “That intellectuals and politicians are now gazing backward to glimpse better times suggests an important destabilization of the presumption of progress” (p. 7).

Brown (2001) asserted that the American political landscape has changed from one in which the “universal rights of man were the unquestioned premise of social justice and social change” (p. 9) to a different one in which the universality of those rights and the “relationship of rights to freedom have been widely challenged” (p. 9). Because of exclusions along the lines of gender, race, and social class, the equality that was promised by the earlier proponents of democracy has been depicted in a new light: the promises have been “severely compromised by the character of a (white, bourgeois, male, heterosexual) hegemonic subject” (p. 9). This exposure further deteriorates the foundations based on progress upon which liberal democracies depend. The foundation

of progress is in a “destabilized or broken form” (p. 14) and “nothing has taken the place” (p. 14) of the broken narratives. In this scenario, Americans and citizens around the world must find ways to “conjure an emancipatory future within a liberalism out of history” (p 14).

In the complex issues of today’s politics, Brown argued that democracy can be made stronger and more viable by considering and providing some degree of credence to critiques of democracy. Brown explained the tendency to dismiss criticism:

Liberal democracy rarely submits its cardinal values of mass equality and tolerance to interrogation without dismissing such challenges as antidemocratic; nor does it seriously engage critiques of its tendency to subordinate all elements of life to market domination and widely accessible contemporary technologies and cultural productions (p. 136).

Resistance to the government and critiques of the government are actually ways to uphold principles of democracy. These critiques and resistance provide necessary nourishment for democracy: “resistance to the state ... becomes a means of sustaining democracy” (p. 137). Critical assessments and challenges augment our political consciousness and this consciousness can serve as a mobilization for activating history and for moving forward toward an enhanced democracy. Political consciousness, in Brown’s words, “offers modest new possibilities for the practice of freedom” (p. 173).

Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida was born in Algeria in 1930 to a French Jewish family; his parents named him after Jackie Coogan, an American child actor. He began his university study of philosophy in France in 1950 and made his first trip to America in

1957; after that trip, he continued to be linked to America until his death in 2004. Derrida studied at the elite École Normale Supérieure; one of his teachers was Michael Foucault. Derrida was a lecturer and a teacher in several European universities and many knew him as the father of 'deconstruction.' For many years, he was director of the School of Advanced Studies in Social Science in Paris. A world traveler, Derrida held several distinguished positions in American universities and from 1986 until his death he served as part-time Professor of the Humanities at the University of California at Irvine (Caputo, 2004). He authored a number of books; among them are *Speech and Phenomena* in 1973, *Of Grammatology* in 1976, *The Post Card* in 1987, *Politics of Friendship* in 1997, *Without Alibi* in 2002, and *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* in 2004. Derrida's deconstruction "seeks to examine the unconscious politics and intentions behind any given text" (Eagleton, 2003, p. 32) and holds that terms that appear to be opposite may actually be in agreement; meanings are not final and constant.

Like he does other concepts, Derrida deconstructs the term 'democracy.' At the least, democracy has historically meant equality; however, Derrida points out that there is contradiction in democracy for it calls for both equality and singularity. Derrida discussed democracy in the context of friendship; friendship involves some of the same concepts: equality and reciprocity. Derrida spoke of a democracy that might have no ties to any nation state. When democracy is not associated with a nation state or a regime, it becomes a possibility for any kind of human experience where there is justice, equity, and respect. For Derrida, democracy was a promise and he spoke of democracy to come. This democracy was not a futuristic and remote democracy, but one that can be had now

by those who see democracy not as tied to nations and citizenships but as a promise or vision for equality (Derrida, 1997).

As Borradori recorded in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (2003), Derrida and Habermas understood that people now live in a more challenging world, especially in light of the threats of terrorism that are real and ever present. Terrorism is a haunting phenomenon: "...the specter of global terrorism haunts our sense of the future because it kills the promise upon which a positive relation with our present depends. In all its horror, 9/11 has left us waiting for the worst" (Borradori, 2003, p. 21). In their conversations with Borradori, both Derrida and Habermas expressed the growing importance of democracy as a basis for our global positions and responsibilities. The world's problems are large and to many people, the problems seem hopelessly large. Nevertheless, Borradori explained the optimism that Habermas holds for democracy: "...Habermas's thought has been centered on the idea that democracy, and the public struggle for its best form, is the key to solving apparently insurmountable problems. Democracy...is both the means and the end of individual and social emancipation" (p.45). Derrida, too, was a believer in democracy and he credited some of the recent democratization in the world to the dramatic increase in global television and media coverage. Derrida acknowledged that today "...there is, in fact, and from every quarter, an absolute 'evil' whose threat, whose shadow, is spreading" (Derrida in Borradori, 2003, p. 99). Even at moments when democracy has been under attack, Derrida argued that democracy can destroy part of itself. There is indeed something about democracy that puts itself at risk. When personal liberties are restricted in the name of democracy, as they have been in the name of protecting Americans from

terrorists and in the name of preserving democracy, democracy actually is at risk from itself more than at risk from its enemies.

Despite its contradictions, ambivalences, and even the risks it presents to itself, democracy is a hopeful entity for Derrida, and he stated that this hopefulness involved a “democracy to come” (p. 120). Democracy is what is strived for; it exists as a promise, but it is a vital aspect of our ethical positions as individuals and groups of individuals attempt to exist together in perilous times.

Maxine Greene

Maxine Greene is a professor of philosophy and education at Teachers College, Columbia University and her themes of freedom, identity, biography, and democracy have become the hallmarks of much of her life’s work. Greene graduated from Barnard College in 1938 and received her doctorate from New York University in 1955. Before her tenure at Teachers College, she taught at Brooklyn College, Montclair State College, and New York University. *Landscapes of Learning* (1978), *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988), and *The Passions of Pluralism* (1993) are among her most widely read works.

Greene, in her teaching and writings, promoted critical awareness, social commitment, and self-understanding as important aspects of freedom and democracy. She continues to challenge educators to reflect on their lives and to develop truer understandings of where they are in their own times and spaces. Greene’s call was for a new consciousness of the possibility that teachers might work to make themselves better people and their communities better places for all to live. Greene consistently drew upon Dewey’s belief that democracy was a social entity and involved the lived experiences of

people associating and living together in communities. Greene (1978) explained her viewpoint:

The more fully engaged we are, the more we can look through others' eyes, the more richly individual we become. The activities that compose learning not only engage us in our own quests for answers and for meanings; they also serve to initiate us... into the human community, in its largest and richest sense. Teachers who are alienated, passive, and unquestioning cannot make such initiations possible...I am interested in trying to awaken educators to a realization that transformations are conceivable, that learning is stimulated by a sense of future possibility and by a sense of what might be (pp. 3-4).

Greene pointed out that in America, "We know what it is to feel dominated and constrained. We have to struggle for our emancipation" (1978, p. 18). Educators are called upon to enable students to "encounter curriculum as possibility" (p. 18). In addition, "we must all choose ourselves as learners open to the profiles of a world we can never fully know, willing to live 'in the presence of reality'"(p. 20). Democracy, in Greene's arguments, has not been an actuality in America, but it has been and continues to be a possibility. She pointed out that in recent decades, citizens have become more aware of the limitations for equal opportunity, of promises that have been broken, and of the great numbers of inequities and injustices that exist in the American system of meritocracy. In this meritocratic system, Greene asserted:

... equality of opportunity signifies an equal chance for the more fortunate to leave the less fortunate behind ... Disadvantages, deficits and inequalities due to birth and endowment are not only undeserved; they call for redress. In a just

society, social and economic inequalities would be so arranged as to benefit the least advantaged, to improve their long-term expectations and the quality of their lives (p. 65).

Teachers, Greene claimed, can make a difference in the struggle for emancipation and for democracy as they assert themselves, move toward their own freedom, and overcome their alienations. In *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988), Greene explained her hope to “bring together the need for wide-awakeness with the hunger for community” (p. 23). As teachers work in their communities, Greene asked them to teach students and others the concept that the social reality of American society is a constructed reality; when students and communities understand that this constructed reality can be modified by insight and effort, teachers become liberating influences. Schultz (1994) summarized Greene’s views on true freedom: “... freedom is an achievement which frequently involves resisting the world as it is and daring to pursue the projects of our interests and to transcend, to overcome, opposition to them” (p. 5).

Greene’s life works have consistently encouraged teachers and students to seek the achievement of freedom. Instead of accepting the social contexts of their lives without challenge, citizens of all ages can be led to greater awareness and encouraged to participate with others in active, reforming, and liberating decision-making processes. Democracy becomes closer as people learn to critically interpret their own realities and work toward their pursuits with a sense of justice for both themselves and for others (Greene, 1978).

## Summary

Chapter Three is not only an endeavor to trace part of the development of democratic thought and practice, but also an effort to gather together a collection of diverse democratic visions and to include perspectives of the challenges and possibilities of democracy. This historical foundation provides educators with vital insight as they strive to promote a more genuinely democratic world.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND CRITICAL THEORY

This chapter is a study of the history and major tenets of the Social Reconstructionists and of the Critical Theorists. Social Reconstructionism is a branch of Progressivism which was derived from Pragmatism. Critical Theory, whose principles in many ways are parallel to those of Social Reconstructionism, was derived from philosophies of economic control and class struggle. Several important contributors from Social Reconstructionism and Critical Theory are included in the chapter and their views, particularly as they relate to democracy and education, are examined. Finally, the chapter concludes with the development of a 'Democratic Yardstick,' drawn from the democratic benchmarks that Social Reconstructionism and Critical Theory proclaim. The 'Democratic Yardstick' is designed as a standard by which to compare current educational practices; the purpose of such a comparison is to assess how present-day practices and programs match up to the democratic standards of the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists. The 'Democratic Yardstick' may also function as a set of democratic goals that are worthy of consideration as new programs and policies for America's schools are conceived and formulated.

#### Pragmatism: The Foundation for the Progressives and Social Reconstructionists

Pragmatism is a twentieth century philosophy and diverged from older philosophies that stressed absolute truth. For pragmatists, truth is relative and changing; it is derived from human experiences. Pragmatism developed during the early decades of the twentieth century at a time when society was rapidly changing: great technological

advances were taking place, the frontier experiences had inspired new visions of possibility and exploration, and a larger population of diverse peoples brought more social and educational challenges than ever before (Gutek, 1997).

William James, one of those who formulated Pragmatism, attempted to explain the basics of the budding pragmatist way of thinking in a series of lectures in 1906. These lectures were published in *Pragmatism* (1906) and one of the lectures was titled 'What Pragmatism Means' (James, 1906, in Reed and Johnson, 2000). James began by describing a dispute between people who had opposing viewpoints, had taken sides on an issue, and were each convinced of the 'rightness' of their positions. James explained that obstinate viewpoints are senseless; both parties might be legitimately 'right' depending upon their perceptions and experiences. The pragmatic method, James said, is "primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable" (p. 81). He explained his pragmatist view on philosophy: "The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants in our life, if this world formula or that world formula be the true one" (p. 83).

Pragmatism was very different from the earlier philosophies, and James (1906) described some of these differences when he gave details of how a pragmatist operates: A pragmatist "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency...from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power" (pp. 83-84). James made the point that pragmatism is a method only, not an agenda for any particular result or dogma. Pragmatists do not find final solutions; the pragmatic method is ongoing and a philosophy that always calls for more work as realities change. In the pragmatic view,

theories become instruments; they are not answers. In James' words, "Pragmatism unstiffens all our theories" (p. 84).

For pragmatists, knowledge is a process in which reality is always in a state of flux. People learn when they engage in solving problems and their dependence on universal truths is unwise. Human beings develop generalizations during their interactions with others and with the environment, but these generalizations are tentative and are subject to more testing and more scrutiny. Pragmatic teaching methods are not as concerned with teaching students what to think as they are with teaching students to critically think; again, the method is much more important than a particular subject matter. Pragmatism encourages the method of testing and verifying ideas, a method that became known as experimental inquiry. The emphasis is on experiences, activities, and problem solving. The curriculum of schools should be founded in the students' experiences, interests, and preparations for real life. Students should be encouraged to use scientific methods and to use scrutiny, experimentation, and verification as methods to help solve problems. Mastering multitudes of facts is not the point; learning to solve problems is the point (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004).

Pragmatism divorces itself from the whole notion that there is one unchangeable and concrete truth that everyone must or should accept. The traditional conservative and classical views about 'rightness' and 'wrongness', 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable', 'worthy' and 'unworthy' are challenged. For pragmatists, what is 'true' is relative and depends upon one's perspectives. In American, much about our society (politically, socially, economically, and educationally) has been based upon the perspectives of white males of European descent. Their values, interests, and truths have been addressed in the

institutions, including our schools, of America and the perspectives of others have been marginalized or dismissed. The pragmatist principle that incorporates and validates many perspectives and many truths, all subject to change, is an inherently democratic principle.

Pragmatism formed the philosophical foundation for the Progressive education movement, especially as it developed after 1919. The Progressives held that social reforms and improvements were both needed and possible and that education should provide freedom and be guided by the students' interests, lives, and experiences. Education should move away from identifying essential skills and subjects for mastery and move toward encouraging learning by solving problems that are relevant to the students and that advance social change. A related movement in the first half of the twentieth century, the Social Reconstructionism movement, also claimed a pragmatic philosophical foundation and originated primarily from the socially oriented proponents who were part of the Progressive movement. The Social Reconstructionists believed that educators' work should initiate programs and practices that can lead to reform in society. Social Reconstructionism focused on the discrepancies between wealth and poverty in society, the social and economic reforms needed, and the possibilities of schools who, with the help of other cultural agencies, could become agents of reconstruction and reform in society (Guttek, 1997).

### Social Reconstructionism

The proponents of Social Reconstructionism encouraged educators to use the school to create social reform; they stressed that teachers and all educators should develop policies and practices that are directed toward creating a new and restructured society. Social Reconstructionism was rooted in the social reform wing of the early

twentieth century Progressive educators and especially in the pragmatic and social ideas of John Dewey and Jane Addams whose ideas of social reconstruction were further developed and expanded by George S. Counts.

Social Reconstructionists believed that the current society was in trouble because it was not willing to revision and reconstruct institutions in order to meet the challenges of a changing world. It is valuable to examine and study the past, but never as a scheme to preserve the present discrepancies in society. Social Reconstructionists proposed examining heritage critically, committedly working for social reform, envisioning and planning a course for cultural reform, and acting upon the reforming and restructuring plans and visions. Much about social reconstruction was based in the pragmatic notions of using inquiry, questioning, and experimentation to solve problems and to bring reform. The Social Reconstructionists had a particular vision of the social reform that they believed was both possible and desired (Gutek, 1997).

Three of the Social Reconstructionists whose theoretical tenets help to build my dissertation are John Dewey, Jane Addams, and George S. Counts.

John Dewey

Born in Vermont in 1859, John Dewey was one of America's most significant educators and philosophers and his ideas have had a lasting impact in educational philosophy. Dewey was the son of Archibald Sprague Dewey and Lucina Artemisia Rich Dewey. Archibald Dewey managed a grocery business in the small Vermont town of Burlington. Small town life and the town meeting version of participatory democracy were important parts of Dewey's childhood. Dewey received a traditional education in the public schools of Burlington and upon his graduation from high school he entered the

University of Vermont in 1875 where he studied classical subjects like Latin, Greek, literature, and rhetoric. After his graduation in 1879, he taught high school Latin, algebra, and science for two years in Pennsylvania and then returned to Vermont as a teacher at Lake View Seminary and enrolled in the masters program at the University of Vermont. Dewey received his Masters degree in 1881; the year after, he entered the doctoral program at John Hopkins University and received his doctorate in philosophy in 1884 (Gutek, 2001).

As Dewey's interest in public education increased, he took faculty positions at the University of Michigan and several years later, in 1894, accepted a position as chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago. During his years in Chicago, he built his philosophy of education and both envisioned and practiced the tenets of his philosophy in his work as director of his famous Laboratory School. Dewey's Laboratory School in Chicago was a sort of testing ground for his growing commitment to the importance of lived experience and his commitment to the principles of democracy. The school functioned between the years 1896 and 1904 and enrolled students from six to sixteen years old; a major aspect of the school was that the children learn actively and collaboratively by solving real problems. While in Chicago, his interest in democracy and social justice was given an additional avenue for expression: Dewey was also active in the work of Jane Addams' Hull House. After ten years in Chicago, Dewey took a philosophy professorship at Columbia University where he remained until his retirement. While at Columbia, Dewey associated with several prominent progressive educators: George S. Counts, William H. Kilpatrick, and Harold Rugg, and was known and admired both nationally and internationally as a

professor, writer, and a lecturer. Even after retirement in 1930, he was a remarkably active writer and he remained active and vocal in educational, social, and political issues until his death in 1952 (Westbrook, 1993).

As a pragmatist, Dewey believed that philosophy and ideas should be used to help solve humans' real problems and he concentrated much of his work on the problems in education. His ideas are far-reaching and complex. It is important to note that Dewey's ideas began in his childhood in a peaceful New England town where he experienced the sharing of dialogue and the community's active participation in solving problems. His work was influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and by those who subsequently applied its principles of Social Darwinism; Dewey stressed that life requires interaction with the environment and believed that by applying social intelligence and cooperation, people can solve problems that increase the opportunities to support life. Known as an experimentalist, Dewey placed great importance on human experience. For him, experience was seen as interaction between an organism and the environment. Our pools of experiences are powerful, and humans rely on these pools for solutions whenever confronted with problems. Knowing is tentative and experimental; humans build their intelligence in social ways as they share experiences and deal with problems. For Dewey, people learn to validate their ideas when the ideas are tested and experiences and when the consequences of the actions are analyzed and evaluated. These methods of experiencing, testing, and assessing should also be used in dealing with concerns of morality, ethics, and problems in society (Gutek, 1997).

Dewey's faith in human capacities, his faith in human nature, and his faith in the great power of cooperative experiences served as the foundation for his beliefs about

democracy. Instead of the view that intelligence is reserved for a small group of superiors who therefore have both ability and right to control others, Dewey proclaimed that “Belief in equality is an element of the democratic credo” (Dewey in Boydston, 1987, p. 219). Dewey did not pretend to argue that all people have equal intellectual endowments; Dewey’s point was that “each one is equally an individual and entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range” (p. 220). It is the most important business of the family and the school to directly influence the development of both attitudes and dispositions; that this business be conducted in democratic manners is crucial to the future of democratic life. Dewey warned that the scheme of democracy had disintegrated in nations where democracy was only a political entity. Democracy is secure only when it becomes “part of the bone and blood of the people in daily conduct of its life” (p. 224).

In 1937, Dewey explained that “democracy is radical” (Dewey in Boydston, 1987, p. 296) because it had never been realized and would necessitate great changes in existing social, economic, and cultural institutions. These radical changes to achieve democracy can only be put in place by democratic means. Dewey argued that humans live in association with others and that democracy, a way of life, is the only true medium by which individuals could achieve full development:

Democracy also means voluntary choice, based on an intelligence that is the outcome of free association and communication with others. It means a way of living together in which mutual and free consultation rule instead of force, and in which cooperation instead of brutal competition is the law of life; a social order in which all the forces that make for friendship, beauty, and knowledge are

cherished in order that each individual may become what he and he alone, is capable of becoming (Dewey in Boydston, 1997, p. 417).

In *My Pedagogic Creed*, published in 1897, Dewey stated many of his beliefs about education, schools, subject matter, and educational methods, and argued for the school's importance as an impetus for social progress. In this work, Dewey maintained:

The only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself...he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity...and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs" (Dewey, 1897, in Reed & Johnson, 2000, p. 93).

Throughout the work, Dewey emphasized that humans are primarily social creatures and that schools are social institutions. He argued that schools must represent real life and "education which does not occur through forms of life, forms that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality, and tends to cramp and deaden" (p. 95). The curriculum of the schools should be grounded and based upon the social lives of the children: "The social life of the child is the basis of concentration ... in all his training or growth ... the true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history ... but the child's own social activities" (p. 96). When the curriculum does not relate to the students' lives within their communities and when it is not tied to the present social situations of the students, Dewey contended that education has failed. Speaking of education, Dewey explained:

It conceives school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The

value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparations. As a result they do not become part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative (p. 95).

Dewey stated explicitly that the teacher's role is not to impose ideas or habits; instead the teacher is "a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences" (p. 96). Examinations, according to Dewey, are only useful if they show how the child can be of service, and where he can receive help.

One of Dewey's most fundamental tenets is stated clearly in *My Pedagogic Creed*: "Education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform" (Dewey, 1897, in Reed and Johnson, 2000, p. 99). Through education, society can develop and reform its purposes and can move in different directions. Great responsibility is thus placed in the hands of schools and teachers for reshaping and restructuring society: "The teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life" (p. 100). Dewey emphasized the key impact of teachers: "Every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth" (p. 100).

*Democracy and Education* (1916) is perhaps Dewey's most widely known and read work. In this large work, Dewey explained his ideas about a democratic society and applied the ideas to education. Dewey argued that the quality of education varies but that democratic education is most valuable and meaningful. A democratic education is not necessarily related to any particular government but instead, to the democratic processes

of an experimenting society and to the degree of cooperative and shared experiences: “Democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experiences” (Dewey, 1916, p. 87). Dewey called for a widening of the circles of shared interests and concerns and explained that it takes concerted and consistent efforts to extend this sharing to a broader community. For Dewey, class delineation and inequitable opportunities doom a democracy: “Obviously a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal, must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms” (pp. 87-88). A democracy is a mobile society and is “full of channels for the distribution of change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability” (p. 88). Dewey defined two criteria by which the democratic nature of a society can be determined: the extent to which the interests of the society are shared by all its members and the extent of the free interaction of the members. In Dewey’s words:

A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916, p. 99).

Dewey’s convictions about democracy and democratic education led him to question the training of students for vocations as a major emphasis in schools; he believed this type of education actually fostered class delineation and gave undemocratic advantage to the dominant classes. Instead of preparing students for occupations, he

argued that “the education process is its own end” (Dewey, 1916, p. 310) and he voiced these concerns about vocational education: “Education would then become an instrument for perpetuating unchanged the existing industrial order of society, instead of operating as a means of its transformation” (p. 316). For Dewey, educating in a democracy was meaningful, relevant, social, and experienced in the present. All children could benefit from such an education which has the potential to both restructure and transform society.

Dewey carefully laid out specific recommendations for democratic education in *Democracy and Education* (1916) with regard to curriculum, methodology, and general school practices. The most valid educational methods, according to Dewey, involved experiencing the subject matter. Experience “is not a combination of mind and world, subject and object, method and subject matter, but is a single continuous interaction of a great diversity (literally countless in number) of energies” (Dewey, 1916, p. 167). He explained that there is no one fixed method that should be followed and he blasted inflexible, prescriptive, and pre-determined teaching methods and directives: “Nothing has brought pedagogical theory into greater disrepute than the belief that it is identified with handing out to teachers recipes and models to be followed in teaching”(p. 170).

Dewey also called for open-mindedness in education, for an “attitude of mind which actively welcomes suggestions and relevant information from all sides” (Dewey, 1916, p. 175). The major enemies of open-minded attitudes are the “exorbitant desire for uniformity and for prompt external results” (p. 175). Educators have become devoted to rigid methods mainly because they “promise speedy, accurately measurable, correct results” (p. 175). The “zeal for answers” (p. 175) explained much of the unfortunate adherence to rigid methods and prescribed curriculums. Education, Dewey stressed,

should encourage the kind of open-mindedness and diversity of method and operation that does not impose “intellectual blinders upon pupils” (p. 175). Dewey’s argument was always that educational experiences should not be deemed merely preparatory for the future; instead, education must be meaningful to the present and real life of the pupil:

It would be better to have fewer facts and truths in instruction ... if a smaller number of situations could be intellectually worked out to the point where conviction meant something real – some identification of the self with the type of conduct demanded by facts and foresight of results (p. 178).

Dewey advocated for curriculum and methods that originated from the life experience of the student and developed from there. Because students’ lives and situations are different, their interests and educational needs might be different; therefore, Dewey believed that both curriculum and methods were best individualized. Certainly the same curriculum would not be suitable for all children.

Dewey was a profuse writer all of his life and besides *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), *The School and Society* (1900), and *Democracy and Education* (1916), his other works included *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), *Education and Politics* (1922), *Experience and Education* (1938), *Education Today* (1940), and a host of others. In *Education Today* (1940), Dewey summarized his commitment to democracy and his view on the school’s role in a democracy with these words:

Our public school system was founded in the name of equality of opportunity for all, independent of birth, economic status, race, creed, or color. The school cannot by itself alone create or embody this idea. But the least it can do is to create individuals who understand the concrete meaning of the ideas with their

minds, who cherish it warmly in their hearts and who are equipped to battle in its behalf in their actions (Dewey, 1940, p. 358).

Dewey's contributions to democratic thought and his impact upon education in the twentieth century have been widely hailed. Certainly he has done a great service in disavowing rigidity and inflexibility and in promoting education as a vital contributor to democratic social reform. In spite of his fame and position of respect, Dewey's tenets never gained a secure foothold in the educational policies of America and over the decades of the second half of the twentieth century, many contend that educational policy has drifted farther and farther away from Dewey's visions.

#### Jane Addams

Like Dewey, Jane Addams made a place for herself during the decades of Progressivism and became committed to democracy and social reform. As Addams searched for and located a purpose and an ethic for her life, she clung "only to the desire to live in a really living world" and refused "to be content with a shadowy intellectual or aesthetic reflection of it" (Addams, 1937, p. 64). Addams once jotted in a notebook as she struggled with finding a direction for her life: "Weary of myself and sick of asking-what I am and what I ought to be" (Addams in McGreevy, 2002, p. 17). The direction and focus that she finally found resulted in an amazing life and in remarkable accomplishments for a woman of any era, but the fruits of her life were especially remarkable for a woman of the days before women had opportunities for leadership and before they could even vote. Addams' story is much deeper than a story of an affluent lady who decided to become a 'do-gooder' or a community 'volunteer.' The story of

Jane Addams is the story of a woman making genuine differences in the lives of others, especially others who hailed from different social classes, races, or cultures.

Addams' ethics became intermixed with her belief that humans should have some level of responsibility for other humans. She believed that all humans possess some natural inclination for loving and sympathizing with others but Addams believed that there was a more complex and important imperative than simply to feel sympathy. Those who truly incorporate a vision of responsibility and compassion make the choice to experience others in diverse social conditions, even when those others are in great anguish and suffering. The major purposes of such choices are to both learn from and care for them. According to Addams, to avoid the actual experiences of others breaks down the democratic spirit and contradicts our natural inclinations (Addams, 1937).

In *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902), Addams warned against living our lives tucked away from people of different heritages and cultures; to do that is shirking responsibility and limiting our ethics:

We have learned as common knowledge that much of the insensibility and hardness of the world is due to the lack of imagination which prevents a realization of the experiences of other people. Already there is a conviction that we are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life. We know instinctively that if we grow contemptuous of other fellows and consciously limit our intercourse to certain kinds of people whom we have previously decided to respect, we not only tremendously circumscribe our range of life, but limit the scope of our ethics (Addams, 1902, p. 10).

Addams advocated on behalf of others whose social and cultural backgrounds were not acceptable in the eyes of many; her respect and acceptance of groups of people that had been shunned or cast aside were strong motivators in her life.

Born in Cedarville, Illinois, in 1860, Jane Addams was the eighth of nine children that were born to John and Sarah Addams. Her mother died in childbirth when Jane was two years old and several years later, her father remarried. John Addams owned a saw mill and a grist mill and was a state legislator, a friend of Abraham Lincoln, and one of the most respected and beloved men of his rural community. Her father's influence upon her was profound and Jane wrote that "I centered upon him all that careful imitation which a little girl ordinarily gives to her mother's ways and habits" (Addams, 1937, p. 11). Only five years old when Lincoln was killed, Jane Addams devoted a whole chapter of *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1937) to his influence upon her life. She states that she never heard the name 'Lincoln' without experiencing a sense of awe. Addams always held firm in her belief that in spite of the brokenness of our citizens, our struggles through slavery, reconstruction, social inequities, and cultural strife, our democracy is still our most precious possession as a people. Her words establish her devotion to both Lincoln and to democracy:

Is it not Abraham Lincoln who has cleared the title to our democracy? He made plain, once and for all, that democratic government, associated as it is with all the mistakes and shortcomings of the common people, still remains the most viable contribution America has made to the moral life of the world (Addams, 1937, p. 42).

Addams' early years of education were spent at the village school in Cedarville. When she was seventeen, her father sent her to Rockford Seminary, a small boarding school that was in the process of completing the steps necessary to confer college degrees. Addams took pride in her rigorous studies there and four years later, she graduated first in her class of seventeen women and was among the first to receive the new college's Bachelor of Arts degree. Having resisted the pressure to enter a religious profession, Addams had debated about a career and had thought that she would pursue a career as a physician. The summer of her graduation brought the sudden death of her father, a devastating blow to the twenty-one year old Addams. Without great aptitude for science, Addams strived to make up the difference by her hard work and spent several months studying for the medical school examinations. She passed and was admitted to Women's Medical School of Philadelphia but though she performed well academically, she did not complete the first year (Meigs, 1970).

In the years following her college graduation and her father's death, Addams struggled to formulate a plan for her life that satisfied her hazy longings and undefined aspirations to become actively involved in the lives of other people and to address the issues of poverty and marginalization. She explained: "...it required eight years - from the time I left Rockford in the summer of 1881 until Hull-House was opened in 1889 to formulate my convictions even in the least satisfactory manner, much less reduce them to a plan of action" (Addams, 1937, p. 64). Her short-lived career as a medical student, her frail health caused by her recurring childhood spinal problems, her travels to Europe and firsthand experiences there with the struggles and social issues of the poor and the disenfranchised all were part of the path that allowed her to formulate a position and a

purpose for her work. Addams calls these years of searching and learning “the snare of preparation” (Addams, 1937, p. 88). Before she returned to Illinois from her second trip to Europe, she had conceptualized a plan to establish a community settlement house in Chicago, similar to one she had witnessed in London. She was ready for action and commented that she was certain that she had found the place and the way to direct her efforts: “I had confidence that although life itself might contain many difficulties, the period of mere passive receptivity had come to an end, and I had at last finished with the everlasting ‘preparation for life’ however ill-prepared I might be” (Addams, 1937, p. 88).

Addams’ simple plan was to rent a house that would serve as a provider of educational and social support for an array of children and adults and to recruit other enthusiastic and activist-minded women like herself to staff the activities of the community settlement house. Addams believed that both the staff and the community of people being served in the programs could benefit and “learn from life itself” (Addams, 1937, p. 85). Her dream was directed as much to help those who sought an avenue for their desires to serve the needs of others as to those in dire social or economic straights that they would serve. In *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909), Addams spoke of the many women who had asked her to help them “make a connection...between their dreams of social usefulness and their actual living” (Addams, 1909, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, p. 160).

To explain that Addams’ plan for a settlement house led to an institution that would eventually serve many thousands of people and become well known around the world would be too simple a summary. From the first days of Hull-House, Addams sought to achieve the mission that was stated in the charter: “To provide a center for a

higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises, and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago” (Addams, 1937, p. 112). There were lessons to be learned, disappointments and blunders, but Addams was unwavering in her determination to sustain and to grow her work. It might seem that there was little she could do for small children whose mothers left them alone while they worked in factories, for half grown boys who loitered in the streets, or for a multitude of factory workers both very young and very old locked in a harsh industrial system. Her belief was that even doing a “little might serve to make those toiling lives somewhat less appallingly dreary” (Meigs, 1970, p. 52).

When Hull-House opened, a few curious people began to drop in. Usually Jane Addams was the one welcoming them at the door and she made it apparent to everyone that she was interested in what each visitor had to say. One of the first services that Hull-House provided was to serve as a place for small children to stay while their mothers worked. Before long, there were so many children that a permanent day nursery was set up and finally, an adjoining building was donated to Hull-House to be used as the Children’s Building. The childcare service continued to expand to include a kindergarten. As more volunteers and community donations came in, the plight of the ‘street boys’ was addressed and space was made for their after-school recreation, games, and study. Volunteers helped the community’s boys, who became known as the ‘Young Heroes Club,’ with reading and other school coursework. Courses were offered at night for adults that ranged from courses on childbirth and childcare to courses on home and community sanitation to courses on the dangers of narcotics to courses on art appreciation. Discussion groups were formed that allowed participants to talk about

their problems in a supportive environment. Chaperoned Saturday night dances were organized and support groups were held for working women and men to discuss their plight of poor wages and bad working conditions. More space and resources were donated for an apartment complex for girls and women trapped in industrial jobs, abusive relationships, or other difficulties. These women lived cooperatively and worked in the expanding assortment of volunteer activities at Hull-House: dramatics, art classes, clubs, tutoring, sports activities, cooking classes, and others. By the very first Christmas, the clientele being served could not be accommodated in one Christmas party; a Christmas Day party was held for the young people and a New Year's Day party was held for the adults and older people (Meigs, 1970).

During the years that Addams lived and worked at Hull-House, the social and educational services continued to grow and she found additional ways to direct her efforts. She became a political activist seeking ways to impact legislation that could reform child labor laws, improve the factory and the housing conditions, and make needed changes in the city's sanitation regulations. She worked to establish stronger and more effective labor unions and drew the great disapproval of political leaders both for her involvement in strike organization and for her public stance opposing America's involvement in World War I. Addams was appointed to the Chicago Board of Education, worked for women's suffrage through the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and was an active member of the Progressive Party whose agenda supported women's suffrage and labor movements (Meigs, 1970).

Amazingly, Addams focused on the 'little' that she could do; that 'little' erupted in ways that no one could have imagined. By the second year, there were two thousand

visitors or participants every week at Hull-House and eventually, more than two thousand people were part of the activities each day. Within five years of its beginning, the Hull-House complex included an art gallery, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a book bindery, a music school, an art studio, a circulating library, an employment bureau, and a labor museum (Haberman, 1972). Scholars from many universities and leaders from many nations came to observe and learn from Hull-House. Addams always thought of Hull-House as a “living dynamic educational process” (Lundblad, 1995, p. 663). She believed that education was a mutual process and often commented that she learned more from the people of the neighborhood than they learned from her. Much like the ideas that John Dewey advocated, Addams knew that education rested more on the relationships between students and teachers in real life activities than on a process of transmitting knowledge untested by experience (Lundblad, 1995).

Because of her experiences with the education of so many needy people at Hull House, Addams developed a strong belief that democratic education was upheld when it takes place in meaningful and social activities: “... it is true of people who have been allowed to remain undeveloped and whose faculties are inert and sterile ... cannot take their learning heavily. It has to be diffused in a social atmosphere, information must be held in solution, in a medium of fellowship and good will” (Addams, 1937, p. 427). All people, even those to whom education has been withheld previously, benefit and prosper from exposure to literature, history, science, and the arts. Speaking of the uneducated and impoverished person, Addams condemned those who believed that it was “absurd to educate him ... to disturb his content” (p. 428). Addams work was “a protest against a restricted view of education” (p. 428). Addams never restricted the educations of her

Hull House constituents to any particular curriculum. Though the people of Hull House were taught life skills, they were also educated in areas of curriculum “which cultivated men have come to consider reasonable and goodly” (p. 452) and Addams insisted that these ‘cultivated’ curriculums “belong as well to that great body of people who, because of toilsome and underpaid labor, are unable to procure them for themselves” (p. 452). Intellectual advancement, Addams claimed, should not be difficult to access because of one’s economic standing. She called for “free mobility through all elements of society if we would have our democracy endure” (p. 452); her vision was of a democratic society in which all people regardless of socio-economic status, race, gender, or cultural background, would have opportunities to develop individual interests and talents.

Many of Addams progressive views echo those of John Dewey. She was a strong advocate for child-centered education and for a more egalitarian society spurred on by egalitarian educational opportunities. She believed in active education that was relevant to actual life problems and needs, and her Hull House educational programs did this. In addition, the programs provided educationally enriching programs to the dissimilar people of the community; this, according to Addams, is vital to a society whose goal is democracy. There was little wonder that John Dewey admired the work of Addams and became involved in the work of Hull House. Besides her devotion to democracy and social reform, Addams was the embodiment of many of Dewey’s educational ideas: making education relevant to the real lives and problems of the community and providing opportunities for people to learn by doing. She placed great emphasis on students being actively engaged in their learning and showed little patience for educational systems that did little other than stress reading, writing, and irrelevant learning. Addams called for a

relevant curriculum, one that was connected to living and one that added significance to the students' lives (Addams, 1902).

Children, laborers, women, the elderly, immigrants, and racial minorities were among the marginalized and troubled groups of people that Addams cared and worked for. Addams did not find the path to her lifework easily; like most people, she struggled through ambivalences, depression, trials, and disappointments before determining a proper direction. Her work as an organizer, educator, and social reformer began as an unfocused dream and developed from a modest and simple plan of individual efforts on behalf of people from varied walks of life into great collaborative contributions to humankind. In 1931, her efforts were recognized when she became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (Lundblad, 1995). Addams' optimism for the future and her ardor and passion for action on behalf of others, particularly our youth, and the power inherent in such action, is summarized in the last words she wrote in *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909):

We may either smother the divine fire of youth or we may feed it. We may either stand stupidly staring as it sinks into a murky fire of crime and flares into the intermittent blaze of folly or we may tend it into a lambent flame with power to make clean and bright our dingy city streets (p. 162).

Many of Addam's works and words can provide models for educational and social efforts many decades later. At the turn of the twentieth century, she wrote these words and they are still appropriate for us today: "We are learning that a standard of social ethics is attained...by mixing in the thronged and common road where all must

turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens" (Addams, 1902, p. 6).

### George S. Counts

George S. Counts was another pragmatist whose advocacy was for democracy and for educators' roles in bringing about social reform. Counts was born in Baldwin City, Kansas, in 1889 and his boyhood was spent on his parents' farm clearing land, planting and harvesting, and tending the livestock. His childhood days that were spent working with his family on the farm to promote the family's welfare were an important influence on his philosophy. Other influences were the turbulent times of his youth in Kansas, times of political and social change; women's suffrage, temperance, Populism, and Progressivism were part of Counts' youth. Growing up in Kansas during the turn of the century, Counts lived in an era of sweeping change; change would become a central theme in his life (Keenan, 2003).

After graduating from Baker University in his hometown, Counts was a high school teacher for one year and then a high school principal in Peabody, Kansas. In 1913, he began his graduate studies at the University of Chicago and was awarded the doctor of philosophy degree with specialization in education and social science (Gutek, 1997). Counts became personally acquainted with John Dewey and identified with Dewey's pragmatic and progressive ideas. Between 1916 and 1926, Counts taught at Harris Teachers College in St. Louis, the University of Washington, Yale University, and the University of Chicago (Keenan, 2003).

In 1927, Counts accepted a teaching position at Teachers College, Columbia University, and remained there for twenty-eight years until his retirement. He became

one of a group of respected and renowned educators to formulate the social and philosophical ideas that helped to shape American education in the first half of the twentieth century. Two of Counts' colleagues included William H. Kilpatrick and Harold Rugg. Even after his retirement, Counts was a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Northwestern University, the University of Colorado, and Michigan State University. Throughout his years in education, Counts studied American culture and educational systems. In addition, he studied comparative education, particularly the study of Soviet culture and educational systems. Counts made two trips to the Soviet Union and did not withdraw his praise and interest in the Soviet system until the 1930's when Soviet totalitarianism became undeniable (Keenan, 2003).

During his career, Counts visited seventeen nations and developed an international view of education. He served on Douglas MacArthur's commission to reconstruct Japanese education and held leadership roles in the Progressive Education Association and the National Education Association. Counts supported and worked for teacher unionization and served as President of the American Federation of Teachers; under his leadership, communist influence was eliminated from the organization. A political activist, Counts served as President of the American Labor Party and worked to develop the Liberal Party of New York. In 1952, he ran unsuccessfully as a Liberal Party candidate for United States Senator (Gutek, 1984).

Besides his activity in politics, Counts was a respected scholar and prolific writer. One of his best-known works and challenges to American education was *Dare the School Build a new Social Order?* (1932) originally presented as speeches. One of the fundamental principles of this work was that schools, like many other institutions,

function in ways that maintain social and economic class divisions. An educational movement must have an orientation, and the trouble with American education, Counts declared was that “it has elaborated no theory of social welfare” (p. 5). Counts urged Progressives to develop an unambiguous goal toward social reform and to distance themselves from the middle and upper middle class constituents whose interests were beginning to dominate the movement. Counts painted a clear picture of what he believed that the goal of the Progressives should be:

If Progressive education is to be truly 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 that it is today of the bogies of imposition and indoctrination (Counts, 1932, p. 7).

Counts was critical of the “narrow orthodoxies” (Counts, 1932, p. 8) which distort our lives and he made it clear that he believed that education must strive toward a full understanding of the world: “...there must be no deliberate distortion or suppression of facts to support any theory of point of view” (Counts, 1932, p. 9). Counts strongly contended that the modern times would continue to be troubling times and times of great change. He believed that in order for societies to flourish, it would be absolutely imperative that we “be bound by no deep loyalties, hold all conclusions and values tentatively, and be ready on a moment’s notice to make even fundamental shifts in outlook and philosophy” (Counts, 1932, p. 23).

Counts warned that Americans should take care to keep apathy at bay: “If America should lose her honest devotion to democracy or if she should lose her revolutionary temper, she would no longer be America” (Counts, 1932, p. 37). Counts called for fundamental changes and reform in American’s economic system and argued that there should be great effort and collaboration to diminish the privilege and prejudices of “powerful classes” (Counts, 1932, p. 47). The task of this difficult job of social reform is one that Counts calls for teachers to take upon themselves: “The times are literally crying for a new vision of American destiny. The teaching profession, or at least its progressive elements, should grasp the opportunity which the fates have placed in their hands” (Counts, 1932, p. 50). Counts acknowledged that objections would be raised to teachers embracing such social responsibilities, but he presented this argument: “If we are content to remain where all is safe and quiet and serene, we shall dedicate ourselves, as teachers have commonly done in the past, to a role of futility, if not of positive social reaction” (p. 51).

In *Education and the Promise of America* (1946), Counts wrote at the end of World War II, a time when American and world democracy had barely escaped obliteration. According to Counts, challenges to democratic principles will continue to plague humanity and totalitarian forces will find openings whenever “ordinary people lose faith in their institutions, experience a deep sense of insecurity and frustration, feel uncertain, anxious, and fearful about the future” (Counts, 1946, p. 7). He argued further that only by working to establish “economic stability and political liberty can our democracy hope to endure” (p. 15). Economic disparities and bitter, distinguished class, religious, and race relations can erode the democracy that Americans claim to revere.

Americans have great faith in the possibilities of education and Counts had words of praise for those who worked through America's history to establish "a single educational system for all people" (Counts, 1946, p. 18). He called attention, however, to America's rather naive attitude with regard to education; our educational system has "by no means fully equalized educational opportunities" (p. 18). Counts called citizens to be mindful that "education can serve any cause, that it can serve either tyranny or freedom, that it can even serve to foster ignorance and rivet on a people the chains of bondage" (p. 19).

Counts was adamant that America possesses a wonderful democratic heritage, one that was made greater by the fact that the nation was built, in spite of difficulties, fears, and prejudices, from so many diverse races and peoples and that most of those people were common people who had often been denied opportunities in other societies: "Here in America this common man proceeded to storm the citadels of power in society" (Counts, 1946, p. 43). The greatest achievement of these people, Counts said, was the constitutional government that was established. Even in 1946, Counts understood that America had become an industrialized society and powerful corporate interests had become the most powerful influences: "The organized economic group bent on the promotion of the interests of its members, is one of the most obvious features of our society today" (p. 65). In clear terms, Counts stated that America's democracy, if it is to endure as a democracy, must find a way to reverse the trend of economic and political disparity. Counts stated, "Our democracy must find a way of uniting economic stability with political liberty" (p. 67). With the resources and energies in American productivity,

Counts proclaimed that there was no possible justification for “poverty and economic insecurity in industrial America” (p.69).

A major ethical responsibility of a democratic society is the “affirmation of the worth and dignity of the individual” (Counts, 1946, p. 112) and in practical terms this means that our youth must be extended educational opportunities to achieve maturity and to reach the highest standards of their capabilities. While Counts acknowledged and celebrated individual differences, he also advocated for the social welfare of the group. Counts presented a strong argument that education must fearlessly attempt to make the activities of learning more meaningful and serviceable to diverse peoples. At the same time, educators must take care that all students, no matter what their backgrounds or cultural heritage, receive equitable educational experiences. He claimed that there was no place in a truly democratic society for intellectual snobbery (Chapman & Counts, 1924). Even though educational programs should strive to bring up the young in the practice of equality, Counts saw much evidence that the “principle of equality in American today...is in grave peril” (Counts, 1946, p. 124). Major causes of this peril in America are because of the concentration of wealth among a few and because of prejudice, contempt, and discrimination toward racial, religious, and cultural minorities. The schools can be important examples of equality and democracy and can help to instill a respect for cooperative efforts, diverse beliefs and backgrounds, and democratic processes. In our schools, rights, privileges, and duties should be equally discharged and enjoyed. The examples of equality set by the teachers and the schools are fundamental to the procreation of democracy (Counts, 1946). Counts maintained:

The giving of marks, the making of promotions, the awarding of honors, the election of officers of children's organizations, and the selection of individuals to represent class or school in athletic, scientific, literary, and artistic activities should always be conducted on the basis of fairness and merit ... The example set by the school and the teacher is far more important than precept (p. 125).

Counts' views on the social nature of education are akin to those of Dewey and Addams; he contended that young students should receive training in "cooperative undertakings, in organizational work, and in social planning so that they may learn how to conduct all of the associated activities intelligently and in a democratic manner" (Counts, 1946, p. 128). An educational activity, Counts stated, should be relevant to real life and should "leave behind it, in the form of habits, skills, knowledges, procedures, and ideals, powers which ... will be employed by the individual in important activities of his life" (Chapman & Counts, 1924, p. 378). Learning in schools should free the learner from the school setting in which it originates so that the learning of skills, information, and ideals is applicable.

Counts believed that both the relevance of the content and the expanding magnitude of curriculum deserved close scrutiny. Even in his day, Counts found that "there is a common idea among those who frame the curriculum ... that provided a subject can be demonstrated to be of value to the proposed learner, perforce, a place must be found for it in the curriculum. This is fundamentally wrong" (Chapman & Counts, 1924, p. 370). Most subject matters and curricular activities can be argued to have value, but Counts urged that a different guiding question be asked when deciding curricular issues: "The question that should be asked is: For the group of individuals involved, has

the particular activity under consideration sufficient value to justify its inclusion in preference to other possible activities which it will displace?" (p. 371).

In Counts' experiences, he saw enormous expansion of the development and use of tests and measurement tools and he acknowledged that tests have usefulness when used judiciously in the realm of education: tests can help analyze the processes of learning and discern individual and group progress; they can improve school records and reporting methods, they can establish standards of achievement and can enable comparisons; and they can help to investigate the effectiveness of curriculum procedures. However, Counts was concerned about what he perceived as "obvious hazards" (Chapman & Counts, 1924, p. 569) of the relatively new instruments. Counts explained his concerns:

If certain narrow limited objectives are set up and instruments of precision devised to measure their attainment, then the activities which lead to these objectives may be unduly stressed at the expense of other more important activities ... to measure the product and present practices of a wrongly conceived educational system, and thereby to derive certain objectives and standards of achievement, is obviously a vicious circle and a procedure which leads to false aims and false standards. Uniformity of procedure and uniformity of product, quite apart from the desirability of such uniformity, may easily be an unfortunate outcome of the present standardized tests ... With its bias toward uniformity, the movement for the educational measurement of school products must be continually scrutinized (p. 570).

Counts' fear of the excesses and the abuses that were possible from the misuse and overuse of standardized tests and his concern that tests can become a stranglehold upon the curriculum were exceptionally prophetic.

With regard to the general aims of education, Counts explained his position in *Social Foundations of Education* (1934):

A fact never to be forgotten is that education, taken in its entirety, is by no means an exclusively intellectual matter...The major object of education since the beginning of time has been the induction of the immature individual into the life of the group" (p. 536).

Education's truest goal does not involve the mastery of subject matter; instead it is "making the learner independent of the teacher...The ability to direct oneself and manage one's life in relations with others is the ultimate test of the education of the free man" (Counts, 1946, p. 118). Counts emphasized over and over again that none of the tasks can be accomplished by the school alone. This work can only be achieved by unified efforts of our families, neighborhoods, and wider communities (Counts, 1946). It is important for Americans to enlarge their concepts of education to include many of the other agencies that have broad influences on the young. The communities and schools must work together to promote the social and cultural reform and improvement that are needed and possible.

Counts contended that teachers and American schools have not lived up to the potentials that are possible for them: "The profession today is performing far below its possibilities" (Counts, 1946, p. 105). Teachers possess the potential to make huge contributions in fulfilling the three main tasks of education. The "rearing of the young in

the habits and dispositions, the attitudes and loyalties of orderly and democratic procedures” (p. 153) is the first task. The development of a critical understanding of democracy and of America’s history, including the times of greatness and shame, events of achievement and failure, victories and defeats, is the second task. Counts was very concerned about the terrible scourge of war and advocated educational programs that developed an understanding of the organization of peace. Education should equip students to live intelligently in the ever-shrinking world by including study of the cultures and peoples of the world and the changing world power patterns. The third task is to ensure widespread enlightenment and understanding of the workings of government and of society. This awareness and understanding produces judicious and analytical thinkers who possess the insight necessary to work for the improvements needed in American democracy.

The tasks that Counts outlined obviously place great challenges, faith, and responsibilities with teachers and teacher training institutions (Counts, 1946). Teachers must do much more than follow a set of rules and techniques or simply master a specialty and understand the nature of the learning process. Counts argued that teachers must possess a deep understanding of our developing civilization. Stone (1999) explains Counts’ arguments for teacher colleges to be centers of liberal learning and places for the study of American culture with historic and world connections. These institutions should produce vigorous, enlightened, and public-spirited leaders. Counts’ idea was that teachers become more than merely community participants; teachers should be the leaders of their communities. To help provide this kind of leadership, teacher education programs must not focus on narrow educational methodologies but upon the kind of

liberal education that can provide the academic depth, breadth, and consciousness that teachers need (Stone, 1999).

Academic freedom was another of the issues that was important to Counts. He believed that teachers have the right to encourage discussion of controversial issues among their students and to encourage students to search for truth. Students at every level have the right to search for truth and to publicize their findings without interference. Counts stated that maintaining intellectual freedom in schools is both more difficult and more important now than in earlier eras. Even though academic freedom is not a freedom that is guaranteed by our Constitution, Counts asserted that it was a basic and necessary condition for practicing an academic profession in a free society (Counts, 1954).

The voice of George S. Counts spoke loudly and clearly of the promises of democracy and of social reform. His ideas were often unpopular among powerful groups and his unashamed propensity to ‘step on toes’ often resulted in Counts being referred to as an extremist. Though many of his ideas mirrored those of Dewey, Counts reputation as a radical was probably one of the major hindrances that prevented him from ever achieving the prominence that Dewey did.

Summary of Dewey, Addams, and Counts

Many claim that John Dewey, Jane Addams, and George S. Counts were among the greatest scholars and thinkers of the last century. They gave educators solid ideas and specific practices to incorporate into their professions and lives. Americans can be encouraged by their great faith in democracy and in the American heritage and by their fervency to protect and perpetuate this legacy. In addition to the enormous responsibility they placed with schools and teachers, these responsibilities must be shared by all of

society, including families, churches, the media, and other agencies of our communities, nation, and world.

Even though Dewey, Addams, and Counts did most of their teaching and writing decades ago, their insight and their abilities to target the issues of our schools and our world today is impressive. Each possessed a remarkable understanding of humans and our interactions in society and each emphasized that education should be relevant to student's lives and interests and much more than the teaching and learning of prescribed subject matter. True education involves life experiences and becoming proficient at solving problems; true education involves change and fluidity. Dewey, Addams, and Counts were not hesitant to verbalize the great weaknesses and issues that they believed must be addressed, especially the economic and social inequities that continue to trouble American society and the need to distance ourselves from absolutes and narrow points of view. All three saw discrimination, prejudice, and unequal educational opportunities as a great detriment to democracy. They placed great significance upon teaching history not just for history's sake, but for the insight that allows students to become more astute citizens. The trusts that these three educators have placed in the hands of teachers to move students forward in the acquisition of traits that propagate democratic practices and that change and shape societies indicate their great optimism and hope for our world.

### Critical Theory

Though Critical Theory and Social Reconstructionism have similar overtones, their histories are different. Social Reconstructionism was born from the ideas of the Pragmatists and Progressives, and Critical Theorists find their historical roots in the ideas of class struggle and the control of economic power that were touted by philosophers and

writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some refer to Critical Theory as a school of Western Marxism, studying and interpreting some aspects of Marxist theory in approaches that had not been widely considered before. Never aligned with Communism or totalitarianism, Critical Theorists directed attention to the state and mass culture in ways that typically had not been done by earlier interpretations of Marxism. Referring to Critical Theorists, David Held (1980) made this comment: “Critical of both capitalism and Soviet socialism, their writings pointed to the possibility – a possibility often sought after today – of an alternative path for social development” (p. 14). It is not the intention of this section of the dissertation to endorse or promote Marxism in any way. Instead, the intent is to explore some Critical Theorist interpretations of class struggle, reproduction theory, societal inequities, and to promote the critical awareness that is necessary to diminish the perpetual subordination of peoples as well as economic and social injustices.

Critical Theory is associated with the Frankfurt School begun in 1923 by a group of philosophers who studied and brought together various “aspects of the work of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Lukacs, and Freud” (Held, 1980, p. 16). Philosopher and sociologist Max Horkheimer was an important figure in the Frankfurt School as was Jurgen Habermas. The influence of the school has been evident in the ideas of many educational leaders and curricular theorists in the United States and other nations (Held, 1980). The societal turmoil of the 1960’s with the resulting analysis of issues such as race, social class, and sex have played a role in the development of Critical Theory. Critical Theorists ask the critical question of “who – what class – controls educational institutions and processes and establishes educational goals and priorities...they contend

that the crucial educational issues rest on the power of one group to control another and to hold it in subordination” (Gutek, 1997, p. 323). Those in power, according to Critical Theorists, decide upon and force certain views of knowledge, curriculum, and teaching upon others who possess little political or economic power. Critical Theory is “self-reflective in its nature and value driven. The ultimate goal of the Critical Theory is to transform our present society into a just, rational, humane, and reconciled society” (Jensen, 1997, p. 1).

In contemporary society, those who hold power have been capitalists and in the United States, generally white males of European descent. Those with little power in America have traditionally been women, African Americans, Native Americans, and other minority ethnicities but also include unskilled and underpaid workers and laborers. Critical Theorists believe that schools are one social institution used by dominant classes to reproduce the circumstances that maintain their power; if the disempowered become aware of their conditions, they can overthrow the powerful groups that prevent them from sharing the wealth and power. Raising the awareness level of subordinate peoples has become an important aspect of contemporary postmodern Critical Theory. Current conservative political programs that have been brought to fruition by the Reagan and two Bush administrations and the educational agendas that they have endorsed are seen by Critical Theorists as ways to maintain the power of the dominant classes. Thus, education is in the forefront of social struggle, and Critical Theorists wish to reform schools to become institutions that encourage critical analysis, awareness, morality, and political and economic responsibilities. Schools have become political institutions that both impose and legitimize inequality and inequity partly through an undercover ‘hidden’

curriculum. A more equitable, democratic curriculum would validate all cultures and would encourage open, critical analysis of social, economic, and political issues. Similar to the Social Reconstructionists, Critical Theorists call for teachers to take on socially reforming roles. Instead of regurgitating the social and political heritage of the dominant classes, teachers can become true intellectuals and reformers; they can strive to transform and reconceptualize the curriculum in democratic ways that empower both teachers and students from all backgrounds (Gutek, 1997).

Today's field of Critical Theory proponents is a wide and active one. The views and works of two contemporary Critical Theorists, Paulo Freire and Michael Apple, are examined in this dissertation though the views of several others were included in earlier chapters. Freire's and Apple's works incorporate many tenets and schools of thought that have been related to Critical Theory. One of these is the idea of *hegemony* which persuades all of society that the prevailing ideology and system is natural and normal, thus protecting the status of the dominant power-holders. Another is the position of *poststructuralism*, a denial of world orderliness with emphasis on the importance of difference and on deconstruction. Deconstruction seeks to analyze and dismantle systems or practices that endeavor to order the world. These orderly or hierarchical systems are the ones that have brought dominance to some and suppression to others (Sim & Van Loon, 2001). Critical Theorists are most definitely in the midst of the postmodern era.

Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire's life spanned the years between 1921 and 1997 and his concern for democracy and for the oppressed made him an important influence on educational thinking in the last half of the twentieth century. He was born in Brazil and the poverty

and hunger that he experienced during the Great Depression and world economic crisis would help to formulate his lifelong concern for the poor. Freire spent his youth living among the poor and gained insight and understanding of lives of poverty and of the impact of socioeconomics upon education. Freire studied law, philosophy, and the psychology of language at the University of Recife, but left the field of law soon after his graduation to become a teacher. He was appointed and served in both Brazilian government educational positions and in university positions and was even imprisoned for seventy days in 1964 as the result of a military coup in Brazil. Afterwards, he worked in Chile for five years where he published his first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, in 1967. After a visiting professorship at Harvard, his most famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was published in England and Spain in 1970 and in Brazil in 1974. Freire moved to Geneva, Switzerland in 1971 to work for the World Council of Churches as an educational advisor. He moved back to Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1980 and worked in the Workers' Party adult literacy projects teaching reading to peasants, fishermen, and laborers; he was soon appointed Sao Paulo's Secretary of Education (Timpson, 1988). Freire authored a number of additional works including *Pedagogy in Process* in 1978, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation* in 1985, *Pedagogy of Hope* and *Letters to Christina* both in 1995, and *Pedagogy of Freedom* and *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, both published in 1998 after Freire's death.

One of Freire's major arguments was the importance of dialogue in the process of education. Typically, teachers deposit expert knowledge into the empty intellectual accounts of students; Freire called this process 'banking.' The narrative nature of most education, with the teacher as the major narrator, results in students memorizing whatever

has been narrated: Freire is critical of this kind of mechanical education that compels students to serve as containers that will be filled up by the teaching. Freire explained:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education (Freire, 1997, originally published in 1970, p. 53).

In the banking process of education, students are “alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic...but unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher” (Freire, 1997, p. 53). Knowingly and sometimes unknowingly, education has been characterized by banking: Teachers have taught, known, thought, talked, chosen, and acted and students have known nothing, been taught, listened, complied, and adapted. This banking serves to dehumanize and presents a multitude of problems for it assumes that people are manageable and compliant. As students store up their ‘deposits’ they are less capable of developing “the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (p. 54). Students become more and more passive as they become used to the views deposited upon them. This banking type of education is often practiced in the name of paternal and benevolent actions towards marginal persons who do not fit into perceived acceptable schemes. According to Freire, it serves the interests of the oppressors, for it minimizes the creative and critical faculties and results in submissive attitudes. (Freire, 1997, originally published in 1970)

Dehumanization, according to Freire, is a distortion that “occurs within history” (Freire, 1997, p. 26) and it is natural for those who are dehumanized or oppressed to

struggle to regain their humanity. During the struggle, Freire explained this paradox:

the oppressed ... tend themselves to become oppressors ... their ideal is to be men; but for them to be men is to be oppressors ... it is a rare peasant who, once ‘promoted’ to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself” (Freire, 1997, p. 27).

Those who are oppressed have adopted the guidelines and consciousness of their oppressors and are fearful of freedom which must be pursued responsibly and consistently. Freire argued that in order for oppressed peoples to participate in a pedagogy that leads to freedom and humanization, they must develop awareness and an understanding that they actually have been hosts of the oppressors. The struggles begin when people achieve the awareness. Both the leadership of the struggles and the participants of the struggles must establish dialogue. Dialogue is an instrument of a more humanizing pedagogy and is more than deepening understanding; it is also an important part of the praxis and process of making differences in the world. Humanizing educators must merge their efforts with cooperative efforts of the students; together, teachers and students should participate in critical thinking and they should pursue humanization together. Humanizing teachers trust people and trust the creative powers of their students. To achieve a more humanizing education, teachers “must be partners of the students in their relationships with them” (Freire, 1997, p. 56).

In schools, Freire explained that an educational encounter should be a problem posing one that is based upon open dialogue between students and teachers. Problem

posing education breaks the vertical relationships between students and teachers; through dialogue “the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (Freire, 1997, p. 61). The role of the teacher in problem posing education is not to provide answers but to promote critical thinking; students and teachers jointly teach while being taught. Since students bring important knowledge to the table, educators should learn from students, just as students learn (Kane, 2003). In Freire’s words, “They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (Freire, 1997, p. 61). Freire reminded all educators that “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the construction of knowledge” (Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 1998, p. 30) and he explained that a teacher who possesses a democratic vision cannot help but insist upon the “critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner” (Freire, 1998, p. 33).

Much like Dewey, Addams, and Counts, Freire maintained that students should be confronted with problems “relating themselves in the world and with the world” (Freire, 1997, p. 62); this obliges students to be challenged and to react to the challenges. As education moves away from an attitude of domination, the kind of education that promotes the practice of freedom incorporates the notions that man is not “abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world” (Freire, 1997, p. 62). Freire stressed that asking questions rather than finding answers is authentic education: “An education which consists in asking questions is ... the only education which is creative and capable of stimulating people’s capacity to experience surprise, to respond to their surprise and solve their real fundamental existential problems” (Freire in Freire & Macedo, 1998, p. 228). Freire asserted that in present-day capitalism, the fewer questions that are asked,

the more efficient production rates become: workers “know little beyond the routine task assigned to them by mass production ... thus in the name of efficiency and productivity what we are seeing is the bureaucratization of workers’ minds, consciousness and creative capacity” (p. 229). Freire bemoans the fact that students are exposed to the same kind of routine practices and bureaucratization in their schools.

Freire’s ideas are seeped in democratic tenets and he called for schools to be places to bring together and practice democratic dispositions such as listening to others, both tolerating and respecting others, questioning, criticizing, and debating: “No one constructs a serious democracy...without previously and simultaneously working for these democratic preferences and these ethical demands” (Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, 1998, p. 66-67). To practice democratic dispositions is to open up and disband the “denial of democracy, of freedoms, and of the rights of those who are different” (p. 67). If educators believe in democracy, they must not just say it, they must practice it, but this is difficult: “It is not what I say that says I am a democrat, that I am not racist or machista, but what I do. What I say must not be contradicted by what I do” (p. 67). Educators, to promote democracy, must do things, and must avoid cynicism and excusing themselves from the responsibility for democracy. “As educators, we are politicians; we engage in politics when we educate. And if we dream about democracy, let us fight, day and night, for a school in which we can talk to and with the learners so that, hearing them, we can be heard by them as well” (p. 68). Freire never lost sight that the world, as it exists, is the result of people’s actions and its future will be built by other actions. History is ongoing and ever-changing and Freire’s legacy was that there is hope that oppression and dehumanization in the world can be transformed.

Michael Apple

During the last two decades, contemporary Critical Theorists have written multitudes of works that examine the issues of who controls and benefits from educational institutions of today and ways to move to a more just, humane, respectful, and equitable society. Among these are Henry Giroux, David Purpel, Dennis Carlson, Greg Dimitriadis, Peter McLaren, and Michael Apple. Michael Apple addresses a fundamental question for educators and curricularists. In addition to analyzing curricular questions in terms of *what* knowledge is of most worth, Apple calls for educators to address a fundamental question of power: *Whose* knowledge is of most worth? His Neo-Marxist views are evident as he emphasizes not only economic but also cultural views of class determination.

Michael Apple received his doctoral degree in Curriculum Studies from Columbia University in 1970. He is a professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and focuses much of his work on both the problems and the possibilities of educational policy in a time of political conservatism as well as the relationships between culture and power. Among his works are *Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education* published in 1986, *Ideology and Curriculum* published in 1990, *Education and Power* published in 1995, *Educating the 'Right' Way: Standards, God, and Inequality* published in 2001, *The State and the Politics of Education* published in 2003, and others.

One of the themes in Apple's work is that schooling in the United States today is not a neutral entity but functions to serve the interests of the dominant classes and is part of a system that sustains economic and cultural reproduction. Schools play an important

role in the perpetuation of hegemony in society and Apple consistently explores how the methods of distribution of knowledge are linked to inequality and deter democracy. Apple explains: “This reproductive process is a ‘logical necessity’ for the continued maintenance of an unequal social order. The economic and cultural unbalance follows naturally” (Apple, 1990, p. 40). The school is a viable force and serves to give legitimacy and credence to the social practices and economic and ideological principles that are espoused (Apple, 1990).

For Apple, the ‘hidden’ curriculum in the schools that serves the interests of the powerful is actually not hidden but historically is “instead the overt function of schools” (Apple, 1990, p. 49). This hidden curriculum reinforces basic economic and societal rules. Apple makes his belief clear that schools supposedly share the teaching of valuable and transforming knowledge with all students but they actually guarantee that only a small number of students are readied for admission to higher level institutions. To go beyond reproduction, Apple urges educators to become more politically committed and to remove their shrouds of neutrality to become action-oriented. He explains: “The continuing struggle for democratic and economic rights by workers, the poor, women, Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, and others serves as a potent reminder of the possibility and actuality of concrete action” (Apple, 1990, p. 160).

In *Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education* (1988), and in other works as well, Apple espouses his concerns for the control that has permeated America’s classrooms. When *A Nation at Risk* issued the accounts of a failing American education system in 1983, the fault for America’s decline in world competitiveness was placed squarely on the schools’ shoulders. The report initiated an

emphasis on government control of education and on the need for a national curriculum and national standards. There were increased national efforts to improve achievement and strong emphasis on more challenging coursework and the so-called back to basics methods of teaching. The *Goals 2000* initiative of President Bush in 1989 specifically included development of national academic standards as well as new national achievement tests to be used for evaluation (Farahmandpur, 2004). Apple points out that these national programs and initiatives were not always unaligned with capitalistic motives and business corporation's powerful economic forces often drove the curricular decisions. Texts, that have established much of what has been taught and learned, have provided definitions of "legitimate culture to pass on. The text-book in the United States is now increasingly systems managed" (Apple, 1988, pp. 81-82).

Though American education has long been seen as the vehicle of social mobility and the means to achieve a 'better' life, Apple argues that this is not the case: "Instead, current evidence seems to indicate that there has been little consistent loosening of the ties between origins and attainments through schools" (Apple, 1995, p. 38). Apple asserts that knowledge is a form of capital and there are important connections between "school knowledge, the reproduction of the division of labor and the accumulation process" (Apple, 1995, p. 43). Schools both distribute and produce knowledge. The production of technical knowledge shows how schools maintain the division between manual and mental labor: school curricular and guidance programs place identified high producing students on the mental side and others on the manual side. As Apple explains, "The fact that the culture, language, and values of dominant groups are employed in the initial teaching in these schools helps produce the fact that the children of the poor and

ethnic minorities will be found on the manual side of this dichotomy” (Apple, 1995, p. 46).

Corporate control and the acquisition of certain types of knowledge set limits on “the kinds of knowledge and people selected as legitimate within the schools of capitalist societies” (Apple, 1995, p. 47). The state plays an important role in capital accumulation, the allocation of certain knowledge, and in the reproduction of classes of people. The emphasis on competency based education, national testing programs, career education, and community and technical colleges are evidence of the “sometimes subtle and sometimes quite overt role of state intervention into schooling to maximize efficient production of both the agents and the knowledge required by an unequal economy” (Apple, 1995, p. 50).

From the beginning of one of Apple’s most current books, *The State and The Politics of Knowledge* (2003), his words proclaim that schooling is both organized and controlled by government and that because of their political nature, schools find themselves in the middle of the debates on the true meaning of democracy and on who benefits from government’s policies. He explains that the government not only regulates school knowledge but knowledge in other arenas as well; government reports often skew statistical information to favor conservative views that would turn education over to the in convincing Americans that schools can be improved by healthy competition. High standards, as measured by tests, and school choice give parents the chance to decide on the ‘best’ schools for their children and these ideas are an important part of *No Child Left Behind*. Apple states that these agendas will take the nation not closer but further away from democratic educational principles. If educators and politicians reposition

themselves so that they can see institutions' policies and practices from the viewpoints of those who have the least power, new meanings can be understood: many of the current 'reforms' (charter schools, mandated testing, vouchers) leave the most needy and disadvantaged farther behind than ever before. Today's policies call for educators to ask the wrong questions: questions about how scores can improve, how more facts can be acquired, how students can procure jobs that pay well. These questions have led to more testing, more memorization, less understanding, more teaching to the tests, and less ability to address the real and changing problems of the world. These educational rightist policies bring unintended results and have the possibility to dismantle public education in America (Apple, *Educating the Right Way*, 2001).

In spite of the troubles and threats to public education, Apple's works signal that there are seeds of hope for more democratic possibilities. He believes that the ongoing critique and serious analysis of the issues of power, reproduction, hegemony, and their relationships to economic, cultural, and social justice issues make the possibility for democracy more viable. Also, according to Apple (1988), hopes for democracy increase when people are "grounded in a sense of history" (p. 177). Understanding one's history is necessary to see the present more clearly. Educators and others should scrutinize and discuss the historical movements and influences of American education and students should study and debate the political, social, economic aspects of American history and culture.

In *Democratic Schools* (1995), Apple and Beane included a chapter titled: 'What Is a Democratic School?' As the authors answered the question, democracy in education was characterized by these phrases:

... democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making ... young people and teachers engage in collaborative planning, reaching decisions that respond to the concerns, aspirations, and interests of both ... democratic schools see themselves as participants in communities of learning ... these communities are diverse ... diversity is prized, not viewed as a problem ... differences enrich the community and the range of views ... the community has a sense of shared purpose ... democratic schools persistently emphasize structural equity ... those in democratic schools seek to assure that the school includes no institutional barriers to young people ... [Educators] see themselves as part of the larger community, they seek to extend democracy there, not only for the young but for all people ... democratic educators seek not simply to lessen the harshness of social inequities in school, but to change the conditions that create them ... Educators in a democratic society have an obligation to help young people seek out a range of ideas and to voice their own ... In a democratic curriculum, young people learn to be 'critical readers' of their society ... they are encouraged to ask questions ... a democratic curriculum includes not only what adults think is important, but also the questions and concerns that young people have about themselves and their world ... a democratic curriculum invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of 'meaning makers' ... a democratic curriculum seeks to help students become knowledgeable and skilled in many ways including those required by the gatekeepers of socioeconomic access ... our task is to reconstruct dominant knowledge and employ it to help,

not hinder, those who are least privileged in this society ... adults, too, including professional educators, have the right to experience the democratic way of life in schools ... teachers have a right to have their voices heard in creating the curriculum (Apple & Beane, 1995, pp. 9-19).

Creating democratic schools and curriculums will certainly generate conflict and tension for the idea of democratic schools “has fallen on hard times” (p. 3). Educators are called to rouse from the “stupor” (p. 4) of the last two decades and recall that democratic public schools are necessary to a democratic society. The case for democratic public schools, Apple and Beane asserted, is ‘cold’ and needs to be heated up again.

One of the first tasks for educators in this cause is to educate themselves and to be cognizant of “the unequal realities of this society” (Apple, 1988, p. 179). In seeking democratic possibilities, Apple explains that organized action is oftentimes necessary. Finding and participating in coalitions with others is one step, whether the coalitions are unions, educational groups, feminist organizations, or other groups that strive toward social justice. Educators are called to become involved in more scholarly studies and to become critical examiners of social, economic, political and educational policies. In addition, in the quest toward democracy, ongoing dialogue, debate, and communication with other educators are crucial (Apple, 1995).

#### Relating Social Reconstructionism and Critical Theory to the Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies

Many of the ideas that inspired and became part of the Reconceptualization of curriculum have strong links to the curricular principles of the Social Reconstructionists and the Critical Theorists. Beginning in the 1970's, the Reconceptualization was spurred

by the growing concern that schools were sites where structured, prescribed curricular practices were diminishing the possibilities for imagination, creativity, and gratification. In response, more humanistic influences in education began to be heard, ones that called for curriculums that were more accommodating, more innovative, more open, and more moored in cooperative work; these became some of the influences and voices of the Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies. An important part of the Reconceptualization also involved the questioning of views that narrowly defined what the curriculum would or should be.

The Reconceptualization included a fundamental shift away from the idea that curricularists' work is to develop particular curriculums toward the idea that curricularists' work is to understand curriculums; both theoretical and practical understandings are important. The Reconceptualists promoted the understanding of curriculum as an emergent and creative process that considered curriculum in political, historical, and autobiographical realms (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman, 1996). The Reconceptualization called for more freedom and more interpretation; within the Reconceptualization were voices of disagreement and voices of diversity and creativity. Difference became the norm, not the exception. In the Reconceptualization, the long proclaimed curricular principles of behaviorism and social efficiency were shoved to the side in favor of much broader and deeper understandings and interpretations.

Obviously, the ideas of the Reconceptualization that have permeated the curriculum studies world have not been brought into the mainstream of practice in America's schools. Those who have created the curricular policies and many public school educators seemingly have little awareness that there has been such a

Reconceptualization movement. *A Nation at Risk* began an era in the 1980's of demand for so-called back to basics education, high academic standards, and more carefully and narrowly defined curricular programs that has mutated through the last twenty years and has become the backdrop for the current mandated curriculum and accountability programs. The ideas basic to the Reconceptualization and those entrenched and required in the public schools of today seem to be oceans apart.

Perhaps the stage was set for a Reconceptualization in curriculum studies in the first place because many of the progressive tenets of John Dewey, George S. Counts, and Jane Addams had been obscured by the schools' adherence to Tyler's curricular concepts of specific objectives, design, implementation, and evaluation as well as the tendency to define the curriculum of American schools by the needs of the economy. Certainly, many of the ideas evident in the work of the Social Reconstructionists have been revisited and revitalized by the Reconceptualization. In addition, many of the Critical Theorists of today, including Apple, Freire, Giroux, and many others have been active participants in the Reconceptualization.

What Dewey and Counts tried to proclaim was a new way of thinking about and organizing curriculum. They maintained that curriculum should be conceived as a social and relevant entity, relevant to the lives of the students. Like the ideas of the Reconceptualists, the ideas the Social Reconstructionists sought a deeper understanding of curriculum as a politically active entity. The Critical Theorists have consistently advanced this understanding as well; curriculum has an active relationship with the political subjects of poverty, racism, injustice, and class struggle. Michael Apple and other Critical Theorists have often referred to the role of hegemony in the maintenance

and reproduction of a political, economic, and social status quo. Dewey, Counts, and Addams envisioned the curriculum as a political influence that had the power to bring about change and reform and to become meaningful in the lives of all those impacted.

The Reconceptualists understand that curriculum can be understood on a much higher level by studying it in context with history. Both the Social Reconstructionists' and Critical Theorists' views echo this emphasis on historical understanding. Historical understanding helps illuminate unclear realities of the present day in a way that may diminish hegemonies of control and in ways that can promote more equitable opportunities for societies of diverse populations. The Reconceptualists and the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists distance themselves from controls, barriers, and restrictions that perpetuate inequities.

The Reconceptualists' emphasis that curriculum is emergent, creative, and cooperative are akin to the principles of Dewey, Addams, Counts, Freire, and Apple. Their progressive and critical ideas are in sharp contrast to curriculum as stagnant, objective, and absolute; curriculum cannot be meaningful unless it is created from the minds and the lives of the learners and unless it changes and emerges as situations and lives change and emerge. In harmony with the Reconceptualization, the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists maintain that teachers and students should cooperate in defining a curriculum that is relevant to the present lives of the learners. Curriculum is never an isolated entity that is handed down from state or national committee rooms. It evolves from collaboration and cooperation; it evolves from the community; it evolves from the multiplicities and autobiographies of the learners. Like

the Reconceptualists' voices, the Social Reconstructionists' and Critical Theorists' voices were voices of dissent, un-silenced voices for freedom and diversity.

### The YARDSTICK of Democracy

The 'Yardstick of Democracy' is a set of guidelines for democratic educational practices that is drawn from the tenets and the attitudes of the Social Reconstructionists and the Critical Theorists. These basic traits and features of democratic education, the yardstick's tenets, can become democratic standards utilized by teachers and educators who wish to evaluate the state of American educational practices of the present day.

It is the fervent hope of the author that this 'Yardstick' can be beneficial as educational and curricular policies and practices for the students of America are generated and revised. Though these tenets may have been developed as the 'ideal' standards for education, it is important to keep in mind that the 'ideal' of democratic education is an entity that must be strived for purposefully; it must be enlarged, extended, and advanced. Dewey explained that this 'ideal' may be remote but that it is crucial that we work toward it: "The ideal may seem remote of execution, but the democratic ideal of education is a farcical yet tragic delusion except as the ideal more and more dominates our public system of education" (Dewey, 1916, p. 98). Michael Apple and James A. Beane echoed Dewey's thoughts about working towards democratic ideals: democratic education does not exist in an 'ideal' that is easily defined and easily attained, and the whole notion of democratic education is constantly beset with resistance from those who "benefit from the inequities of schools and those who are more interested in efficiency and hierarchical power than in the difficult work of transforming schools from the bottom up" (Apple & Beane, 1995, p. 12). In spite of the frustrations and controversies,

democratic schools are real possibilities; educators for democracy build democratic experiences in the schools “through their continual efforts at making a difference” (Apple & Beane, 1995, p. 13).

The first fundamental tenet of the democratic yardstick of the Critical Theorists and Social Reconstructionists is that schools provide equal opportunity for all students. There are no barriers, institutional or curricular, to learning or to access to knowledge, including the knowledge deemed most precious and worthy of pursuing. Michael Apple was one of those who regularly warned that inequitable distributions of knowledge deter democracy. All students in democratic schools are regarded as worthy and are encouraged and enabled to develop the highest standards of their individual talents and capacities.

The second tenet is that democratic schools both allow for and encourage differences of opinion and diverse points of view. Diversity, multiplicity of all sorts, and open-mindedness are entities that are valued and appreciated. There is no distortion or suppression of facts that would promote any particular political or social point of view. George S. Counts made clear that narrow and rigid points of view that do not embrace diversity are not positions that move democracy forward.

The curriculum of democratic schools is derived from the lives and experiences of the students and not from predetermined guidelines or scripts. Therefore, the curriculum provides ample opportunities for choice and a high degree of relevance. Prescribed and rigid curriculums handed out as directives to teachers, according to John Dewey’s views, nullify much of the democratizing potential of education.

Democratic schools promote shared interests and social relationships. That education is primarily a social process is a fundamental precept; a major goal is to help develop individuals who can function successfully and serve cooperatively within society. Jane Addams and John Dewey were among those who envisioned education as a social entity; Addams said that education should be “diffused in a social atmosphere ... in a medium of good will and fellowship” (Addams, 1937, p. 427). Education is not simply an intellectual matter; the social functions of education are even more imperative.

As the yardstick lengthens, another principle is that democratic schools endorse change. Knowledge is not seen as final, absolute, and fixed but instead is perceived as tentative, emerging, and ongoing. The curriculum is a work in progress, ever changing, and never stagnant. To be forces for democratic progress, George S. Counts affirmed, requires that educators not be content to “remain where all is safe and quiet and serene” (Counts, 1932, p. 47); educators are called to be movers and shakers, advancing change.

Another vital Social Reconstructionist and Critical Theorist component of democratic education is that schools teach students to think critically. Problem solving, testing ideas, and verifying and revising ideas are the preferred educational methods. Freire (1998) avowed that teachers who possess democratic visions help to develop and affirm the “critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner” (p. 33). School practices that support students learning to think for themselves, learning to shed ‘blindness’, learning that they each possess capacity for greater critical awareness and for developing and trying solutions are vital components of democratic schools.

Assessments and testing are used cautiously in democratic schools; assessments do not become hindrances for student opportunities and progress and do not become tools

for the uniformity of the curriculum and for uniform standards for all. Dewey made it clear that democratic schools do not focus on test scores or on the acquisition of facts. Therefore, democratic schools make use of tests infrequently; the curriculums of democratic schools are not determined by the tests.

Democratic schools promote learning experiences based upon open and dynamic dialogue between teachers and students. In democratic education, teachers and students learn from each other. Teachers do not serve simply as transferors of knowledge but as creators of the possibilities for the building of knowledge. Democratic schools and democratic teachers serve to develop the autonomy of the learner and help students become independent, life-long learners. As Paulo Freire explained, teachers and students partner in a 'humanizing' education together.

As the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists avow, democratic schools are important instruments for social reform and for the democratic progress of societies. George S. Counts believed that education helps to uncover and diminish inequities of wealth and power and helps to eliminate discriminations, prejudices, and injustices in society. Democratic schools possess transforming potentials that can work to diminish these social inequities and injustices.

Another important tenet of the democratic yardstick is that democratic education upholds learning that is important for the present lives of the students, for today, and not just for the future. Education helps students solve today's real problems. Jane Addams at Hull House and John Dewey at his Chicago School put this important precept of their educational philosophies into practice in their programs to address the existing issues that affected the lives of the students and people that they served.

A crucial tenet of the yardstick is that democratic schools provide avenues for social mobility and help to overcome the permanency of current social and economic statuses, positions, and classes. Democratic schools seek to disband the restriction of knowledge and opportunities that serve the cause of reproducing cultural and economic disparity. Michael Apple consistently calls for schools to shed themselves of practices that reproduce inequities; educators and other citizens are beckoned to resist these systems that nourish such economic and social procreation.

A sense of service to others and to the community is promoted by democratic schools. Education does not occur in a vacuum; democratic community connectedness is encouraged as is student service to their communities and to the needs of others. Responsibility both for the individual and for the common good of the community is cultivated. Addams' life exemplified her declaration that Americans attain a high ethical standard when they work and mix "in the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another and at least see the size of one another's burdens" (Addams, 1902, p. 6).

In democratic schools, teachers possess an important role not only in providing educational opportunities within their classrooms and schools, but in their real potential as leaders for social change within the communities. The teachers of democratic schools become social activists and reformers, proponents to help reverse economic and political inequities and social injustices. George Counts called for teachers to act upon what he believed were their true potentials to become the leaders and democratic reformers for society.

Democratic schools operate as democracies themselves. The views of all stakeholders are considered in the development of the operational policies and in the curricular decisions of the school; the various aspects of the school's programs are conducted democratically. Democracy is not simply a subject that is studied and analyzed in these schools; instead, it is a way of life. Dewey held firm to the belief that progress toward democracy can never be achieved when it is simply a political idea or entity; it must become "part of the bone and blood of the people in daily conduct of its life" (Dewey in Boydston, 1987, p. 224). In democratic schools, students perform many of the roles that they will live out as citizens in a democracy.

A goal of democratic schools is to raise the awareness levels of all cultures, ethnicities, classes, and other groups of people to the inequities of an 'ordered' world and to both hidden and unhidden barriers to sharing of power, wealth, and privilege. Michael Apple asserted that unveiling and exposing the hegemonies of domination and control was an important feature of the democratic process.

In democratic schools, the state does not regulate, standardize, and dictate knowledge. Furthermore, state educational policies and curricular programs are not determined by corporate powers and economists whose goal is financial gain and capitalistic efficiency for both the economy and the corporations. Hindrances to democratic education, in Apple's view, are the dominating and mounting control of government in all matters of education and the ever inflating influence of corporations and business interests. Democratic educators resist these exacerbating intrusions.

Critical Theorists and Social Reconstructionists hold that democratic schools are grounded and scaffolded by an understanding of history. These schools encourage

historical awareness, historical scrutiny, and historical questioning for all learners. This awareness and study provides the insight necessary for democratic progress. One of George S. Counts' principles for fostering democracy was that the curriculum of schools should include critical analysis of history and promote insight and critical interpretations of past and present events and situations; democracy flourishes best in an understanding of history.

The 'Yardstick of Democracy' is not intended to be an all inclusive instrument, and simply includes a uniquely selected collection of the major tenets of democratic education of the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists. The collection, in its simplicity of form and organization and in its compactness, may promote usefulness and functionality for educators, policy-makers, and other stakeholders who seek democratic educational standards by which to critique present-day school programs, policies, and practices and who seek ideals and goals for which to strive.

## CHAPTER 5

### TESTING AND STANDARDS

Many of those who critically examine the current state of American education have concerns about where the system stands with regard to democratic principles. America has always struggled with the concept of democracy; anything other than a periphery glance at American society indicates that there are issues of equity and democracy that continue to plague us and many would loudly argue that the issues are mounting. If educators and other citizens believe that it is possible to reform and redefine education and curriculum in democratic ways, they must study and analyze policies and practices that may be troublesome. The issues of testing and examining as well as the curricular standards connected to the testing that are becoming mandates of almost every American school system are issues that have permeated schools like never before. Critical study and analysis of these issues is a vital part of the needed incessant struggle and discussion toward democratic reform.

‘It’s time for the test’ are words that once sent chills down the spines of America’s school children. In this era of high stakes testing, accountability, and annual yearly progress, the same words can result in students, teachers, and other educators breaking out in cold sweats. Most would agree that ‘tests’ and ‘standards’ have a grip on the American educational system that has been unmatched in our history and that *No Child Left Behind* has further cemented that grip.

## Standards-Based Education

Curriculum standards have come to have special meaning in American education, for almost every state is involved in the process of creating new standards or revising old ones that might somehow raise the achievement levels of students' performance on standardized tests. Spending just a few minutes on almost any state education department's website will produce a rich yield of information about K-12 academic standards; these standards detail what the students of that state should know and be able to do and what the teachers of the state should teach. Many educators have felt overwhelmed by the standards; the states also have tools to measure the progress toward the standards and most often, those tools are standardized tests. The results of the tests are used to reward schools, teachers, and students for their progress toward achieving the standards or to punish them for their lack of progress. Today, how well or how poorly students perform is linked to academic and financial sanctions. Many states, like Georgia, require students to show proficiency of the standards on state assessments as a requirement for grade-level promotion as well as for graduation from high school.

The origins of the standards movement in American education may be hard to pinpoint but many believe that it began in earnest with *A Nation at Risk*, the document that in 1984 reported the poor state of achievement of American students and proposed that many more strenuous academic basics should be necessary for high school graduation. Others assert that the origins actually go back to the 'minimum competency' movement that both sparked and dimmed in the 1970's. In the 1990's, the first President Bush and the fifty governors compiled national goals of education for the purpose of improving American students' standing in comparison to Asian and European students'

achievement. While this *Goals 2000* initiative was being born, professional associations in various subject areas, beginning with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, began developing and publishing national standards for specific content areas: mathematics, science, reading, languages, and physical education (Sherman, 2001). Many states used these standards as models to develop their own state's standards; today, most states have academic standards in at least the content areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

When George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton were in office, both Presidents advocated for national academic standards that would provide a rigid common curriculum for all American public school students. Their idea was to provide consistent content and a common assessment system for the whole nation. The standards and testing movements of recent decades have thrown fuel onto the debates between those proponents of Progressive ideals and those who call for a standards-driven 'back to basics' education for American school children.

Both President George H. W. Bush's and President Bill Clinton's proposals for national standards and national assessments were defeated by Congress. The current President George W. Bush, even though his first term Congress was a friendlier one, did not pursue the same goal. His alternate proposal involved a different strategy: each of the fifty states must devise standards and each of the fifty states must devise corresponding examinations to determine if the children of the state attained proficiency of those standards. President Bush sent the *No Child Left Behind* plan to Congress in 2001 and thus began our present-day educational vocabulary: standards-based education, accountability, annual measurable objectives, and adequate yearly progress (AYP).

In a policy letter dated July 22, 2002, to all state Superintendents of Education and state Boards of Education, then United States Secretary of Education Rod Paige explained the expectations:

*The No Child Left Behind Act* significantly raises expectations for states, local educational agencies and schools in that all students are expected to meet or exceed state standards in reading and in math within twelve years ...

Accountability is central to the success of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLBA). States need to set high standards for improving academic achievement in order to improve the quality of education for all students. Under NCLBA, each state established a definition of “adequate yearly progress” to use each year to determine the achievement of each school district and school ... Under the NCLBA, schools are held accountable for the achievement of all students ...

Ensuring that schools are held accountable for all students’ meeting state standards represents the core of the bipartisan Act’s goal of ensuring that no child is left behind (Paige, 2002, Key Policy Letter, U.S. Department of Education).

The new standards and the assessments that go with them have thrown American education into a new era, one that differs dramatically from the educational principles that progressive educators attempted to spread during the first half of the twentieth century. In previous chapters, the progressive side of the educational continuum made clear its endorsement of student and teacher autonomy, creativity, intellectual curiosity, and diverse and changing curricular programs that are created from the needs and interests of the students and their communities as the foundation for meaningful education. The advocates of standards-based curriculum advocate something different:

curriculum should be standardized and mandated; teachers teach the mandated standards and students learn them. This insures for all, allegedly, a basic level of skill and eliminates the discrepancies in the types of curricular programs that students experience.

Those who support national standards do not believe that the state curricular standards that have become part of *No Child Left Behind* go nearly far enough in assuring that all students receive the same content and that they achieve proficiency. Many remain firm in their advocacy of a nationally mandated curriculum for American schools; they are critical of President Bush's idea of the fifty states and their fifty sets of standards: "... the evidence is growing that this approach has not improved student achievement. Americans must recognize that we need national standards, national tests and a national curriculum" (Ravitch, 2005, p. 1).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), part of the Department of Education, assesses student achievement of the standards determined by the U.S. Department of Education, and provides national data about the trends of student achievement in meeting these standards. Congress established NAEP in 1969 out of a desire for a reliable system of measurement for the educational attainment of students across the country. Since the usage of standardized tests has escalated dramatically in the United States and since state assessments are now required to measure standard mastery and achievement, the NAEP testing is used as a test to verify the results of the state assessments: "Although not explicitly stated in the law, the NAEP has become the *de facto* benchmark for measuring the comparative rigor of state assessments" (*School Matters*, The NAEP and State Assessments, 2005, p. 1).

NAEP gathers its data by administering national tests to samples of students in each state. Recently, NAEP reported disappointing national results from the testing of fourth and eighth graders in the spring of 2005: Only thirty-five per cent of the nation's fourth graders and twenty-eight per cent of eighth graders achieved proficiency of the standards in mathematics. A mere thirty per cent of fourth graders and twenty-nine per cent of eighth graders achieved proficiency in reading. NAEP results for Georgia showed even poorer performance: thirty per cent of Georgia's fourth graders and twenty-three per cent of its eighth graders were proficient in mathematics. In reading, twenty-six per cent of Georgia's fourth graders were proficient and twenty-five per cent of its eighth graders were proficient. This national and state overall data is bleak enough but a look at the data on black students in Georgia (and other states) presented more bad news. Of Georgia's black students, only twelve per cent of fourth graders and eight per cent of eighth graders were proficient in mathematics. Reading scores for black Georgians were similar: merely twelve per cent were deemed proficient in fourth grade and ten per cent were proficient in eighth grade. Georgia's poor students, those eligible for free and reduced price school lunches, posted similar results (*National Assessment of Educational Progress*, 2005, U. S. Department of Education).

This NAEP test data have provided no encouragement to those who had hoped to see NAEP evidence of improved student achievement: the data showed very small national gains from the last NAEP testing two years ago in mathematics and revealed a slight decline from the last testing in reading; furthermore, the data suggested worsening performance as students spend more time in schools and widening achievement gaps in several important categories. Furthermore, the data have heated up the cries for national

standards because of the huge disparities between what recent state assessments claim to be student proficiency levels and what the NAEP data shows. Georgia's main assessments for elementary and middle school students, the Georgia Criterion Referenced Comprehensive Tests, have shown proficiency in reading of about eighty-five per cent and proficiency in mathematics of about eighty per cent of Georgia's students for the last two years (*School Matters*, Georgia Public Schools, 2005). These results are in stark contrast to the data for Georgia provided by NAEP; most other states' data show the same kinds of wide discrepancies.

There may be a multitude of reasons why there is such a discrepancy in student performance on the state assessments when compared to the NAEP assessments. Obviously, the tests are different and the differences in results have been the source of much criticism of the testing in general but especially of the state tests. Since the tests' results are not even in the same ballpark, a number of possible factors and reasons for the discrepancies have been discussed: the tests may have reliability and validity problems, they may not be measuring the same standards, their definitions of proficiency may be different, the exams have different purposes, and the list goes on.

At any rate, the results leave the public in a state of confusion; some believe that tests and their reports of standard proficiency that are poles apart are completely useless. Other critics have complained that the *No Child Left Behind Act* that allows each state to create its own standards and tests is inadequate because state educational leaders have lowered the criteria of education in order to inaccurately assure the public that the schools in the state are making progress. Ravitch (2005) argues for a rigorous nationally mandated curriculum and believes that national standards and tests rather than state ones

will promote both student achievement and the accurate reporting about that achievement. According to Ravitch, “Almost all states report that ... incredibly large proportions of their students meet high standards. Yet the scores on the federal test ... were far lower. Basically, the states have embraced low standards and grade inflation” (Ravitch, 2005, p. 1). In “Johnny Can Read in Some States,” an article published in *Education Next*, Peterson and Hess (2005) made these comments:

... some states have decided to be a whole lot more generous than others in determining whether students are proficient at math and reading. While NCLB required all states to have accountability systems in place, it did not say specifically how much students should know at the end of fourth or any other grade (p. 1).

The authors explained that though some states have indeed set demanding standards for their students, those states are now the ones said to need improvement because their assessments and standards have not been watered down as much as other states’ standards. The fear is that as time passes, more and more states will “be tempted to race to the bottom, lowering expectations to ever lower levels so that fewer schools are identified as failing, even when no gains are being made” (Peterson & Hess, 2005, p. 1).

With the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year in Georgia’s public schools has come a much different curriculum for students to learn and teachers to teach. In the place of the old Quality Core Curriculum are the standards of the new Georgia Performance Standards. Georgia’s teachers have been frantically ‘unpacking’ the new standards prior to teaching them. Several years ago, an audit of Georgia’s curriculum was conducted by Phi Delta Kappa that found problems with the Quality Core Curriculum: it lacked the

depth necessary for real learning, it would take twenty-three years, not twelve, to cover the topics, and it did not meet national standards. After the audit, the state Board of Education approved the plan to completely revamp the state's curriculum. The new curriculum boasts standards that are fewer in number but greater in depth than the old curriculum, according to Georgia's Department of Education. The new Georgia Performance Standards in mathematics, language arts and reading, science, and social studies are being rolled into Georgia's public schools in phases. For example, in 2005-2006, Georgia's middle schools have fully implemented the new standards in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade language arts, sixth grade math, and sixth and seventh grade science; the new standards in other areas will be implemented within the next two years (Raudonis, 2005, p. 4).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the present-day annual measure of student achievement in states, school districts, and individual schools. Each public school aspires to meet the qualifications and standards to be able to 'meet AYP' for all of its 'subgroups' of students (that include ethnic subgroups, socio-economic subgroups, students with disabilities subgroups, and limited English proficient subgroups) and to get off and stay off of the 'needs improvement' lists. The criteria for meeting AYP are established by the states and include a percentage of each subgroup that must score as standard proficient on the state assessments as well as the overall percentage of students who are proficient. In addition, the criteria for meeting AYP must include participation and graduation rates. Meeting AYP has become similar to chasing a bullet; these percentages to meet AYP must increase regularly between now and the year 2014 so that by that year, one hundred per cent of each states' students will be proficient. There are

all sorts of complex rules about computing a school's proficiency rates: 'confidence intervals,' multi-year averaging,' and 'safe harbor' are all creations of unique ways that schools might meet AYP even if their proficiency performance in the subgroups does not meet the predetermined percentage rates. There are sanctions for not making AYP and these sanctions are progressive each additional year that a school does not meet the criteria for AYP. These are a few of the school or district level consequences for not meeting AYP for two or more years: the right of school choice must be provided to students and parents (students may transfer to better performing schools), supplemental instructional services must be provided to students, a state-approved school improvement plan as well as a corrective action plan must be implemented, and finally a school or school district might be forced to implement a 'restructuring' plan (*Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about AYP*, 2005, Georgia Department of Education).

For sure there have been swarms of praise both philosophically and practically for the standards-based educational programs. A principle that serves as an anchor for the standards movement is that all children can learn at high levels. Proponents of educational standards point out that in the past, minority and disadvantaged children were left to a 'dumbed-down' curriculum and that there was no program in place to insure a high quality curriculum for all children. Standards-based education touts the notions of equality and equity: ideally it encompasses all groups of children who participate in high quality learning programs, enjoy the same resources, and work for the same goals. Eliminating the achievement gaps between groups of children so that none are 'left behind' is a laudable goal but there are other compliments for standards-based education as well. Many point out that it brings a needed merger of the expectations for students

and the content presented by teachers: “There will be more alignment between what is expected and what is being taught. This improves the chances that all students will be learning the same material and hopefully will take ... the guesswork out of the planning process” (Raudonis, 2005, p. 9).

There may have been praise for standards, but there is no doubt that there have been many loud critics as well; teachers, administrators, and parents have been among the most vocal. Standards and testing, in the words of some, must “be used as a stethoscope, not a sledgehammer” (Sherman, 2001, p. 3). Indeed, teachers, administrators, students, and parents have been placed, in many opinions, on a hot seat of standards. Some of the complaints have been that there has been too little teacher training in how to implement and use the standards, too little time to do so, and too few financial resources attached to the standards that bear such serious consequences for students, parents, teachers, and schools. As students have been bombarded with tests that supposedly have been aligned to the standards, there is criticism that the alignment has not been worked out; students are being tested over standards that have not been adequately included in their studies. With little or inadequate exposure to standards-based curricular programs, students have been “hit with make or break tests ... such tests can carry huge consequences ... In the view of many experts, the cart (assessment and accountability) has gotten way out ahead of the horse (standards-based instruction)” (Sherman, 2001, p. 2).

The standards movement in American education has become increasingly beleaguered by conflict and controversy. There have been news reports of teachers and principals who cheated to show proficiency; supposedly the pressure and stress heaped upon them ‘caused’ this deliberate dishonesty. Parents have cried out that their children

have been demoted and dehumanized to the status of simple test scores. Teachers tell story after story of the disabling stress that frequently overcomes students during the preparation for and administration of these tests, not to mention the stress levels of the educators themselves. 'Teaching to the test,' a practice long considered a 'no-no' in educational circles, is an integral part of standards-based programs, and teachers spend much time predicting the standards that will likely be tested most heavily on the state assessments and gathering diagnostic information to help predict those students who will not pass and those who might pass with concentrated efforts. Of course, more of the teachers' efforts then likely go to those students who show the most likely possibilities for passing. In addition, many complaints have been lifted concerning the time teachers use to prepare and instruct students in 'test-taking' strategies, time that is being lost to other kinds of learning experiences.

It is certain that the proponents of standards-based instruction in America have come face to face with a blitzkrieg of concern and criticism. Over and over again, as educators wade through the issues of standards, they are also scuffling over the issues of testing, assessments, and examinations. The two are interminably intermixed. In many ways, the debates about standards are debates about testing.

#### The History of the Examination

Tests and examinations have a long history; they have survived many eras and today the practice is more ensconced than during any other era. Obviously, many throughout history have felt a need to evaluate student achievement. Methods to evaluate achievement were most likely first used by the Sui emperors in China between 589 and 613 A. D. The emperors tested applicants for their suitability for government positions

based upon the answers to written questions about the Confucian heritage. The Greek and Judeo-Hebraic methods of assessment were different from those of the Chinese; they stressed assessing abilities based upon conversation and argumentation. Interviews have continued to be used as assessments in determining admission to competitive European universities and many American universities still employ this method as part of the admission process. Prussia, taking a cue from the written exams of the Chinese, may have been the first European country to use written tests to select public officials. Another recorded instance of testing was in 1444 A.D. in Europe when town officials detailed a varying salary range for the town's teacher based upon students' results on an exam. As more exams were used to assess abilities to enter the professions, schools began administering tests to help prepare students for their professional exams (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996).

The testing movement that became evident in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in America came on the shirrtails of the social efficiency movement. Social efficiency sprang up during times of booming population growth and rapidly expanding school systems. Tests were deemed to be objective and cost efficient ways to justify performance to taxpayers and to defend the dollar amounts needed to build and operate more and bigger schools (Rothman, 1995). One of the pioneers in the growth of testing in American was Joseph M. Rice who is known as the inventor of the comparative test in America (Noll, Scannell, & Noll, 1972). During the late nineteenth century, Rice devised tests in spelling, writing, and arithmetic, surveyed over a hundred thousand students, and published his findings in a journal that was read widely (Rothman, 1995).

Sir Frances Galton (1822-1911) was another individual who set the stage for early testing movements. Galton was an Englishman who was influenced by Charles Darwin's theories and he spent much time exploring the relationship between intelligence and heredity. He concluded that mental traits are inherited, much the same as eye color. Because Galton did not believe that schooling was a key factor of intelligence, he held that the only way to improve human societies was to develop breeds of people who were genetically superior to the current generations (Rothman, 1995). Galton proposed a program that supported the development of genetically superior people; the program gained support and was known as the eugenics movement. Even in the United States, the eugenic ideas grew in popularity during the early years of the twentieth century and provided validation to groups and individuals who believed that heredity was more influential than environmental factors. It was inevitable that many eugenic principles be used as a scientific basis for racist ideas and for advocating that some races and groups are genetically superior or inferior to others. Members of the American Eugenics Society held leadership positions in national education agencies and one of its prominent members was Edward Thorndike (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996).

Galton was a strong advocate for quantification and measurement. His adherence to beliefs that intelligence and other traits were inherited led him to begin experimenting with ways to measure intelligence in order that high intelligence persons of child bearing age could be identified and recruited for procreation of superior humans. Galton consistently sought out new ways to "measure the relative worth or peoples" (Gould, 1981, p. 76). In 1884, he established a laboratory in London where skulls and bodies were measured to determine intelligence: "... for threepence, people moved through his

assembly line of tests and measures, and received his assessment at the end” (Gould, 1981, p. 76). Many people considered Galton’s skull measurement techniques serious and valid methods to determine one’s intelligence and many influential Englishmen visited his laboratory (Gould, 1981).

Greatly influenced by Galton, James M. Cattell (1860-1944) moved to England and set up a center in Cambridge where he studied individual differences. After a brief time, Cattell moved to the United States and in 1888, he became a professor of psychology at Columbia University where he pursued his studies. Cattell created the term ‘mental tests’ and struggled to develop a test that could be used with the general public. He devised ten ‘mental’ tests that included such tasks as measuring the strength of a person’s hand squeeze, the ability to repeat letters, and the ability to judge ten seconds of time. Though interest in Cattell’s tests waned as interest in Alfred Binet’s work increased, he set the stage for Binet and others who would become known for their tests (Association of Christian Era, *Long Detailed History of the IQ Test*, n.d.).

Alfred Binet (1857-1911) was the director of the psychology laboratory at the Sorbonne and became interested in the measurement of intelligence. During his early work, he adhered to the accepted methods of the time for doing so: measuring skulls. For several years, Binet proceeded with this method but found discrepancies; often both the smallest and largest skulls belonged to the poorest and least capable pupils. Binet finally dismissed craniometry, the method for measuring skulls and intelligence largely espoused in the nineteenth century, as biased and invalid (Gould, 1981). In the ensuing years, Binet changed techniques and decided to develop sets of tasks that could assess intelligence. He experimented with these tasks and mental tests on his own two

daughters and published articles on his findings about intelligence, an entity that he believed was multifaceted. Binet and Theodore Simon were commissioned by the French government to develop a test to diagnose children with mental handicaps. In 1905, they developed their first intelligence test. The test was later revised and expanded to include administrations for both children and adults; Binet often argued that it was best used on healthy and motivated individuals from typical French cultural backgrounds. Binet compiled tasks that normal children could handle at each age and determined how many years an individual's mental age was above or below this average. His idea that a person's 'mental age' could be measured became popular and was expanded by others (iVillage, 2005).

Because of the significance of Binet's work and of the huge impact that intelligence tests have brought to bear, Gould (1981) pointed out that Binet, even in the early years of mental tests, was concerned about the potential for misusing the tests that he compiled and he insisted upon these important guidelines:

... The scores are a practical device; they do not buttress any theory of intellect. They do not define anything innate or permanent ... The scale is a rough, empirical guide for identifying mildly retarded and learning-disabled children who need special help. It is not a device for ranking normal children ... Whatever the cause of difficulty in children identified for help, emphasis shall be placed upon improvement through special training. Low scores shall not be used to mark children as innately incapable (Gould, 1981, p. 155).

According to Gould (1981), if Binet's guidelines had been followed for the use of the tests, "we would have been spared a major misuse of science in our century" (p. 155).

Henry Herbert Goddard (1866-1957) earned a doctorate in psychology and became director of The Training School for the Feebleminded in Vineland, New Jersey, in the late 1880's. Goddard developed his own version of Binet's test and used it to evaluate both handicapped and normal children (Spring, 2001). Contrary to Binet's guidelines, Goddard identified intelligence as an inherited single entity and he used the scores on mental tests to "recognize limits, segregate, and curtail breeding to prevent further deterioration of an endangered American stock, threatened by immigration from without and by prolific reproduction of its feeble-minded within" (Gould, 1981, p. 159). Goddard proposed that the problems of industrial and urban America could be solved by identifying people of low intelligence and separating them from the rest of society and by limiting their reproduction. He claimed to have discovered that the cause of feeble-mindedness was a single gene; the simple and obvious cure was "don't allow native morons to breed and keep foreign ones out" (Gould, 1981, p. 165). Over a period of time, Goddard focused his attention on immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. After testing thousands of immigrants, he warned against opening America's doors to feeble-minded people, those Goddard believed possessed low intelligences, and he particularly cautioned against accepting Eastern Europeans into America (Spring, 2001). According to test results, Goddard found that four fifths of the Jews, Hungarians, Italians, and Russians were feeble-minded; besides ignoring any accusations of racial and ethnic prejudice, he paid little attention to the cultural and language differences that had major impacts on test performance. Later in his life, Goddard recanted some of his early assertions about intelligence and even acknowledged that feeble-minded people do not usually need to be institutionalized. Despite the renunciation, his eugenic ideas, his

ranking of the degrees of mental deficiencies, and his strong advocacy for identifying and eliminating those not deemed 'intelligent' remain his major legacies (Gould, 1981).

The famous army intelligence test was developed at Goddard's Vineland Institute by a group of psychologists in 1917. Among those in the group was Robert Yerkes (1876-1956) who advocated the administration of intelligence tests to all military recruits. Yerkes' proposal changed the use of tests in America. The proposed testing would be done with groups of people rather than with individuals; military testing would become the forerunner of group testing. The purpose of the military testing was not only to identify those persons who were mentally defective but to identify those with great potential. Yerkes, with the help of Lewis Terman and David Wechsler, developed the Army Alpha Test that could be administered to large groups and took only twenty-five minutes to administer. Another test, the Army Beta Test, was developed for the large numbers of recruits who could not read. Both the Alpha and Beta Tests produced a mental age. In 1918, the army authorized testing for all new recruits and before the end of the year almost two million had been tested. When World War I ended, the government cheaply provided many thousands of unused test booklets to colleges and other schools (Spring, 2001).

Like numbers of others in the movement of test development, Yerkes believed in eugenics and his analyses of test results in the years following World War I produced several controversial findings and ramifications:

The average mental age of white American adults stood just above the edge of morosity at a shocking and meager thirteen ... The new figure became a rallying point for eugenicists who predicted doom ... caused by the unconstrained

breeding of the poor and feeble-minded, the spread of Negro blood ... and the immigrating dregs of southern and eastern Europe ... European immigrants can be graded by their country of origin. The average man of many nations is a moron. The darker peoples of southern Europe and the Slavs of eastern Europe are less intelligent than the fair peoples of western and northern Europe ... The Negro lies at the bottom of the scale with an average mental age of 10.4 (Gould, 1981, p. 196-197).

Obviously, the Army tests and Yerkes' analysis of their results became the kingpins of cultural and ethnic prejudices and inequities.

Edward Thorndike (1874-1949) was a student of William James at Harvard University and became known as the father of educational psychology. Thorndike understood teaching to be a science that was concerned with controlling human behavior. Fundamental to his ideas for society was the use of tests and measurements. Thorndike believed that in an ideal society, individuals are tested and selected scientifically for their roles based upon those test results. Efficiency would be the result of such a scheme of classifying people through tests and matching their abilities with the needs of society. Like others, Thorndike believed that intelligence was primarily determined by nature or heredity and that it could be measured. According to Thorndike, people with higher mental abilities were those who could form a large number of mental connections. Since intelligence was genetically determined, Thorndike's views pointed to the assertion that different races possessed varying degrees of intelligence. He studied the array of intelligence, aptitude, achievement, and personality tests that were rapidly being

developed in the first decades of the 1900's and provided detailed discussions of their statistical and correlation methods (Spring, 2001).

Lewis Terman (1877-1956) was one of the psychologists who developed the army intelligence test in 1917. Terman became interested in revising the Binet test to make it more suitable for American children. In 1916, he introduced the Stanford Revision of the Binet Simon Scale that became widely used throughout America and the standard by which other intelligence tests were evaluated. Terman has been credited with developing the intelligence quotient (IQ) scale that became the common standard for identifying degrees of intelligence. Like other test proponents, he also argued that intelligence levels differed among racial groups and believed that nature played a much more important role than nurture in mental development. In other words, schooling has a less significant effect on mental development than native intelligence. Terman and others in the mental measurements movement emphasized racial and class differences in intelligence but “discounted the role of the school in doing anything about these differences” (Spring, 2001, p. 302). Terman is credited with the widespread popularization of the intelligence tests: “...Terman wished to test everybody, for he hoped to establish a gradation of innate ability that could sort all children into their proper stations in life” (Gould, 1981, p. 176).

The Alpha and Beta Tests used by the army and the dozens of other tests that were developed in their wake resulted in widespread use of tests in schools. The era of the test giant had begun and soon, the testing industry became a powerful one. Schools sought out and used intelligence tests to rank and sort their students based on their abilities. Achievement tests were commonly used to judge school effectiveness and

teacher performance. In 1929, the University of Iowa developed the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the first statewide student tests that produced achievement information on a number of subjects from the elementary grades through high school. The tests, particularly the ITBS, were shortly used by many other states and today they remain among the most commonly used achievement tests in America. During the 1950's, the Iowa program devised electronic scoring machines that could read answer sheets and produce scores much more quickly and more cost efficiently than could be done by hand. Thus was assured the testing movement's continual and phenomenal growth (Rothman, 1995).

Beginning in the 1960's, tests were increasingly used to determine if students were eligible for special programs like remedial classes and special education. The 'management by objective' theory became more and more popular among school leaders. The main 'objective', increasing student achievement, led dozens of state legislatures to pass laws that held schools responsible for doing just that. In 1966, a report, officially titled *Equality of Educational Opportunity* but better known as the *Coleman Report*, compared not only the distribution of resources and opportunities of children of various racial backgrounds, but also the achievement outcomes of the groups. 'Management by objective' and the *Coleman Report* both showed the shift in focus to results in education, and this shift was given its wings by the fingertip availability of test scores. After the *Coleman Report*, policy makers and the public concluded that inadequacies in American's schools should be dealt with by market competition and other structural changes. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has continued to

provide cumulative achievement data on America's youth since its establishment in 1969 (Ravitch, 2002).

Certainly, an understanding of the history of testing is helpful to those who desire to be informed educators in the midst of the testing that is so ingrained in our curricular programs today. The discernment and insight that are enhanced by an awareness and appreciation of the history of the examination can be valuable tools in campaigns for bona fide democratic school reforms.

Testing and Standards Magnified: A Nation at Risk, Goals 2000, and No Child Left Behind

The 1970's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports on the achievement of American school children, as well as other reports, generally showed poor results. Educators and others were concerned about the bad showing but when it was publicized that Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) combined verbal and math scores had dropped eighty-one points between 1963 and 1977, many Americans were convinced that the public schools were in a serious and dangerous decline. Reports were widespread about high school graduates who were poorly prepared to do college work and poorly prepared to enter the workforce; their basic academic skills were sorely lacking. There were more calls for 'back to basics' approaches and more demands that there be some assurance that students who graduate from high school have mastered basic academic skills. As a result of these demands, the majority of states adopted required tests for high school students; all students had to pass these minimum competency tests in order to qualify for a high school diploma. Georgia's Basic Skills Test was one of those state tests (Rothman, 1995).

The call for more testing only escalated when President Reagan's Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, commissioned *A Nation at Risk*. This report, produced by the National Commission on Excellence in Education and published by the U. S. Department of Education, claimed that America was losing its edge in competing with other nations, particularly Japan and Germany. The report blamed the poor academic performance of American public schools for the problem. According to The National Council on Excellence in Education (1983):

Our Nation is at risk. Our once preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world ... the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people (p. 1).

The report goes on to warn that "history is not kind to idlers" (p. 1) and "If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in the world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all" (p. 1). Numerous indicators of America's peril were included in the report: results of nineteen tests placed Americans lower than other industrialized nations, thirteen per cent of all seventeen year olds and up to forty per cent of minority youth were reported to be illiterate, standardized tests showed American students' scores were lower than when Sputnik was launched in the 1950's, SAT scores were down significantly, and the list went on and on.

*A Nation at Risk* proposed an array of recommendations that would alleviate America's risk. The report called for state and local governments to demand stringent

academic requirements for high school graduates that included more English, science, math, social studies, foreign language, and computer courses and higher academic standards and expectations for all students. The report urged “schools, colleges, and universities to adopt more rigorous and measurable standards” (p. 5) and stated that “Standardized tests of achievement (not to be confused with aptitude tests) should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another” (p.5). The result of *A Nation at Risk* was a clamor of school reform activities with most states adopting school improvement initiatives that included statewide testing programs. Almost every state had implemented a state test program by 1990 (Rothman, 1995).

When President George H.W. Bush was elected in 1988, he unveiled his plans for reaching national educational goals by the year 2000, goals that the *Nation at Risk* report had earlier warned were necessary if U. S. companies were to be competitive in the world marketplace. Bush’s plan proposed the creation of model schools and national standards. It also gave incentives for parent choice and called for voluntary national achievement tests. A notable aspect of the model schools program was that it was dominated and controlled by large businesses and corporations. Corporate executives, not educators, controlled the program’s policies and the ties between public schools and businesses were strengthened: education was more and more aligned to the needs of the corporate world. Bush’s national testing plan called for tests for fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades that would measure students by international standards.

Bill Clinton, elected President in 1992, had chaired the governors group that had devised *Goals 2000* and he supported Bush’s education plans. The plans were brought to fruition when Clinton signed the *Goals 2000 Educate America Act* in 1994. The times of

the administrations of Reagan, Bush, and Clinton were boons to those who proposed a close kinship between the goals of schools and the needs of businesses; these times focused on setting school agendas that would serve “the needs of human capital” (Spring, 2001, p. 434).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the culmination of President George W. Bush’s education reform plan and was signed into law on January 8, 2002. It is one of the most comprehensive school reform legislation packages of the last century and greatly expands the role of the federal government in education, particularly the role that claims to guarantee the quality of education for all children. *No Child Left Behind* emphasizes the improvement of achievement test scores for poor and minority students and focuses on measures of accountability for schools. The legislation magnifies the role of standardized testing; it requires that all third through eighth grade students be tested every year in reading and math. Every state must develop challenging academic standards and set annual progress objectives. All children must be tested and states must develop or select their own tests. The results of the tests will be made public; schools will receive annual report cards so that everyone can see their progress or lack thereof. The test results must be disaggregated according to race, ethnicity, sex, limited English proficiency, and disability so that the progress of all groups of children can be analyzed. As explained earlier, based upon the test scores, schools must show ‘adequate yearly progress’ (AYP) toward the state’s objectives; the objectives are predefined: all students must reach the state’s established target proficiency by the year 2014. Most educators fear the corrective actions that follow schools’ not making AYP; schools not making the mark for five consecutive years can be reopened as charter schools, re-staffed with new personnel, or

taken over by the state. Under *No Child Left Behind*, all states receiving Title I funds must assure that teachers are highly qualified to teach their respective subjects. The idea of reform through school choice is also an important aspect of the act. Schools that do not perform well may lose students to other districts or to charter schools; NCLB allows parents to transfer their children to high performing or charter schools via tuition transfer payments between schools and districts.

There has been much discussion and debate about the impact of *No Child Left Behind*. Advocates point that it is a common sense way to set high academic standards and improve academic achievement of all students by holding schools accountable. Critics claim that its emphasis on standardized testing is both a shortsighted and frequently ineffective and inadequate way to assess that students are making academic progress. The enormity of the current and ever-expanding testing bandwagon is described by Alphonse Kohn (2000): “Standardized testing has swelled and mutated, like a creature in one of those old horror movies, to the point that it now threatens to swallow our schools whole” (p. 1).

Never before have so many tests been given to so many children so often. This past fall, in a meeting of the administrators of my middle school, we blocked off a full eight weeks of the school year for testing. In the high school I just left, it was even worse. In no other era have so many tests played such prominent roles. According to the Georgia Department of Education (2005), the following tests are mandated for Georgia’s youth: Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests, End-of Course Tests, Georgia High School Graduation Tests, Georgia Kindergarten Assessments, Georgia Writing Assessments, National Assessment of Educational Progress Tests, and norm-referenced

tests like The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (*About Testing*, Georgia Department of Education, 2005). Gone are the days when tests were given mainly to decide if children needed particular help; today, test scores make the front page news and are used as a major criterion for judging and for either validating or invalidating teachers, students, and schools. Furthermore, the scores are used to determine if students receive high school diplomas and to allocate educational funding to schools. Tests have become an integral part of the ways that the policy makers of national legislation can impose their desired programs and agendas upon American schools.

American students, even very young students, are exposed to standardized tests in a way that is infrequently matched by other countries: “Short-answer questions...presented in formats that can be scored quickly and objectively represent a typically American style of testing [that] is quite different from traditions in other countries where more complex problem solving is the norm on ... examinations” (Schoen, Fey, Hirsch, & Coxford, 1999, p. 446). American children are frequently ‘examined’ at the early age of five or six. Many argue that the twenty-first century American student is tested more frequently and with more serious consequences than ever before; using my thirty years in education as a gauge, this concern is legitimate. In my observations, as there have been more concerns about the poor performance of our schools, there have been demands for more and more tests. Many citizens have accepted the enormous cloud of tests that have become fixed over our schools with surprisingly few protests. I watched a television comedy re-run recently about a family who became involved in determining IQ scores for each family member. The lead character had manipulated his score to be the family’s highest score and the character commented that

numbers do not lie. Though it was just a funny television show, the story reminded me of how easily Americans tend to accept ‘numbers’ as objective and infallible measures and how easily these numbers are to manipulate depending upon what results are desired.

#### Testing and Standards: The Relationship to Democracy

Suffice it to say that as we begin the twenty-first century, standards and standardized testing have a strong foothold in all of America’s public schools. There have been too few discussions and reflections about the impact of the gargantuan, enveloping net of testing practices upon our society – a society that many Americans claim should be more equitable and democratic. The philosophical foundations and actual practices of the testing movement beginning even before the early days of the last century should be analyzed with regard to democratic principles. Educators and all citizens should critically examine the theories and practices of testing from a historical and political viewpoint and study their relationships to democratic principles. This kind of insight and understanding may promote a better-informed citizenry and a more equitable and democratic society.

Even a periphery review of the beginning of the twentieth century and Galton’s eugenics movement raises serious questions about the educational ‘reforms’ that undergirded the early testing programs. Most Americans are unaware of this aspect of the history of testing; even educators are unfamiliar with the term ‘eugenics’ that was Galton’s proposed plan to control reproduction and scientifically improve the human race. In Stoskopf’s words, “What Galton saw as a new branch of scientific inquiry became a dogmatic prescription in the ranking and ordering of human worth” (Stoskopf, 1999, p. 1). Even though it has been removed from most accounts in America’s history

books, eugenics is a part of “an unexamined legacy that shadows today’s standards and testing movement” (Stoskepf, 1999, p.1). Perhaps surprisingly, this movement captivated America’s top educational researchers and policy makers and seeped into the teacher education programs, curriculum development programs, and school organizations. Stoskepf (1999) pointed out that “It also provided the guiding ideology behind the first IQ tests. Those tests were used to track students into separate and unequal education courses ... Eugenic ideas about the intellectual worth of students penetrated deeply into the fabric of American education” (p. 1). Many influential educators were associated with eugenic ideas or programs; as noted, some of these included Edward Thorndike, Henry H. Goddard, and Lewis Terman. In Lewis Terman’s books that were used for decades in teacher training programs, he made it clear that certain races, ethnicities, and classes possessed inferior intellectual abilities; their test scores proved this fact. These inferiors should be segregated into educational programs that are concrete and practical: Tests, according to Terman, whose numbers do not ‘lie,’ should be used to identify those suited for various vocational programs (Stoskepf, 1999).

Concerning Edward Thorndike’s social vision that used tests and measurements to classify humans and to match their talents to the needs of society, Joel Spring (2001) stated, “Thorndike’s social ideals had important implications for the meaning of democracy and equality of opportunity” (p. 248). A major contention of Thorndike’s was that intelligence was hereditary; he concluded that racial differences exist with regard to intelligence and he argued that these views were validated by tests. These kinds of views presented a major departure from the promise of democratic and equal opportunity that American’s public school system claimed to provide. Thorndike’s beliefs that education

was primarily concerned with controlling human behavior perpetuated classrooms that were conducive to his “stimulus-response, drill, reward, and measurement methods” (Spring, 2001, p. 249). These classrooms dominated many of American’s schools for decades and the remnants hang on even today in spite of the fact that they contradicted the classroom environments advanced by the progressive educators. There was little akin to the Progressive ideas of democracy about Thorndike’s principles of schooling. For him, democracy was not the issue; control, scientific methods, and efficiency were the issues.

Certainly, delving into the history of the eugenics movement and the subsequent standards and testing programs in American education brings shudders to educators concerned about democracy and equality. This historic basis for testing clearly conflicts in a monumental way with principles of democracy. Some critics of today’s standards and testing surge have likened the current testing programs to those proposed by the eugenics proponents; performing well on the tests is strongly correlated to higher income levels and to dominant racial and cultural backgrounds. For educators and citizens truly concerned with promoting democratic school reform, a thorough awareness and study of eugenics kindles important critical wariness.

Hoover and Shook (2003) cited numerous concerns about current accountability practices and issues of democracy. They pointed to studies that show that many proficiency tests “correlate with SES [socio-economic status] to such a high degree as to virtually mask any and all actual academic achievement claimed to be measured by these tests” (p. 81). The lowest performing schools are the schools with the highest poverty rates: “The tests that drive the school report card rankings and categorizations are

actually tests of cultural capital and knowledge constructed within the micro-culture of the students' lived experiences" (Hoover & Shook, 2003, p. 81). Michael Apple asked questions that are relevant to this discussion: "*Whose* knowledge is of most worth?" (Apple, 1990, p. vii) and "Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? Why is it organized and taught in this way?" (p. 7). In *The State and the Politics of Knowledge* (2003), Apple continued his questions about America's political schooling process: "How is it paid for, what goals it seeks to attain, and how these goals will be measured, who has power over it, what textbooks are approved, who does well in schools and who does not ... the educational system will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy..." (p. 1).

Though many argue the point well that the proficiency tests that have overwhelmed our schools are not valid representations of what children actually know because of their economic and class bias, there is an even more pervasive problem. These tests, according to other critics, are not valid because they do not necessarily reveal understanding nor do they necessarily reveal the lack of understanding. Right or wrong multiple-choice answers do not indicate whether children can apply math concepts to real life problems not do they indicate whether children have mastered other kinds of problem solving skills. Hoover and Shook (2003) affirmed this limitation: "The important point here for democratic education is that reform-based policy uses these tests to make the claim that a student's test results accurately denote the student's intellectual ability and worth; they no not and cannot be shown to do this" (p. 83). The authors argued that tests can only be part of the evidence, "usually meager at best" (p. 84) of what children might actually know.

Another issue of democracy that is called to question by tests is the concern that tests can deny students of opportunities. Certainly the opportunity to graduate is denied for many students based on their performances on tests even though the tests cannot be proved to validly assess what students really know and what they can really do. The great majority of those students denied these opportunities are those who already live in poverty; this denial of opportunity assures that they will stay there. Henry Giroux in *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (2004), was one who spoke of the recent onslaught of lost opportunities and undemocratic exclusions that have been brought about by *No Child Left Behind* and its emphasis on high stakes testing. Since “Raising test scores is now the major goal of educational reformers and principals” (p. 98), schools are more pressured than ever to “push underachieving students out or to do nothing to prevent them from leaving school” (p. 98). Giroux cited several school districts who have felt the enormous pressure to meet testing goals; school districts have adopted these kinds of exclusionary practices to get rid of students who would not be strong test-performers and who would have negative impacts on the districts’ test results.

Students have been denied another opportunity: the opportunity for wide and meaningful educational experiences that they have a part in choosing; teachers push aside creative, relevant, student-focused activities in their frenzy to teach the ‘standards’ that will be on the tests. In addition to denying students opportunities, teachers have been denied opportunities, too. They have virtually been ‘de-professionalized’ and held captive to teach the mandated curriculum standards. At a leadership training for the new Georgia Performance Standards that I attended this past summer, the Georgia Department

of Education reminded Georgia's school administrators that teachers can no longer be allowed to choose to teach units that the teachers or students believe would be good learning experiences; administrators must make sure that all teachers are teaching *only* the prescribed Georgia Performance Standards. The lost opportunities for both students and teachers are important to the discussions of whether test and standard mandates promote democracy.

John Dewey believed that people living in a democracy should develop a "healthy skepticism" (Anderson and Major, 2001, p. 105). Unquestioning attitudes are detrimental to the principles of democracy. Schools that promote obedience and rote, ritualistic behaviors do little to develop educated citizens for a democracy. A democratic society calls for students who are unafraid to question authority and who are independent thinkers; for Dewey, informed dissent was a behavior that should be valued and encouraged. James Sosnoski (1993) made these troubling comments about examinations, comments that may warn that exams are detrimental to the Deweyan principle: "Exams normalize; difference is unexaminable. The more one examines exams, the less they seem to accomplish what they were designed to do – make critics – and the more it looks like their secondary effects – making docile citizens – keep us in business" (Sosnoski in Messer-Davidow, Shumway, & Sylvan, Eds., 1993, p. 325).

Counts in *The American Road to Culture* (1930) had these words to say about testing: "... the feverish and uncritical fashioning of tests ... has undoubtedly served to fasten upon schools an archaic program of instruction and a false theory of the nature of learning" (p. 147-148). Dewey explained his beliefs about testing: "Traditional schools set great store by tests and measurements ... at all events, quality of activity and of

consequence is more important ... than any quantitative element (Dewey, 1928, in Kliebard, p. 165). Dewey was denouncing the school reforms brought by the social efficiency advocates and their focus on testing and measurements. According to Kliebard, Dewey made it clear that he hoped the Progressive Education Association would not “associate itself with reforms that emphasize achievement standards, precise measurement, and the collection of data while ignoring the social impact of education” (Kliebard, 1995, p. 165).

Counts explained that education can serve any number of purposes and called for Americans to design educational systems and practices that uphold democracy. In his words, “education has served every purpose and doctrine contrived by man. If it is to serve the cause of human freedom, it must be explicitly designed for that purpose” (Counts in Purpel, 1989, p. 151). Even today and *especially* today, Counts’ words may serve as a challenge for educators and all democracy-loving Americans to deliberately and perpetually work toward reformed educational programs and practices that might better serve the cause of freedom.

## CHAPTER 6

### SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT

School choice in American education is a relatively new phenomenon and is a broad expression that involves several programs. The foundations for school choice are based upon the idea that competition and free market principles can be applied in a positive way to education. Providing choices to parents and students for their educations brings the element of free market competition into the scenario of American education. This, according to the supporters, will improve the quality of schools in general and will provide parents and students with options for their schooling. Vouchers, tax incentives, and charter schools are all aspects of school choice programs. This chapter provides basic information and a review of some of the contested issues of the voucher plans but focuses more heavily on the charter schools movement that has spread its wings during the last decade.

Since the focus of this dissertation is democracy in education, this question will be in the background of the chapter's contents: Are the school choice and charter school programs reforms that promote democracy and equity in American education? It is evident that opinions vary widely with regard to the answer. Mortimer Adler (1982) said that we should strive to be "an educationally classless society" (p. 5). The political issues surrounding our democracy are deeply permeated in our educational system and Americans do have a responsibility to promote democratic reforms that can provide high quality and equitable educational programs for all children. Part of this responsibility is searching for and participating in educational reform movements that promote democratic

and social reform. Whether or not charter schools qualify as these kinds of reforms is one of the focal points of this chapter.

#### Friedman's Ideas for School Choice

Dr. Milton Friedman won the Nobel Prize for Economic Science in 1976 and his long career includes serving as Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University since 1977. In 1955, the Nobel laureate wrote an article, "The Role of Government in Education" in which he discussed the need to separate the government financing of education from the government's administration of the schools; such a change would, he claimed, lead to great improvement in America's schools. Friedman proposed that tax dollars should follow the child and that this would give parents the opportunity to choose schools that would best accommodate their children's needs. In the article, Friedman asserted:

Government, preferably local government units, would give each child, through his parents, a specified sum to be used solely in paying for his general education; the parents would be free to spend this sum at a school of their own choice, provided it met certain minimum standards laid down by the appropriate governmental unit. Such schools would be conducted under a variety of auspices: by private enterprises operated for profit, nonprofit institutions established by private endowment, religious bodies, and some even by governmental units (Friedman, 1955, p. 17)

Friedman believed that his idea would increase the variety of schooling institutions and especially the competition among them. The result would be greatly widened and higher quality educational opportunities available to American students.

Friedman claimed that his plan and the whole school choice idea is an old one and does not conflict with the principles of America's Founding Fathers; the schools of the early American republic were parent supported and privately run and were not government controlled. In actuality, "the heart of school choice lies in the pre-common school principle that made a clear distinction between the government financing of education and the government operation of schools" (Enlow, 2005, p. 6).

In the fifty years since Friedman's article, the debates over school choice have raged. Supporters contend that the free market competition of the movement will improve schools' and students' achievement. If all schools have to compete for the same funding, it only stands to reason that they will be motivated to be effective. Other supporters argue that instead of remaining trapped in mismanaged or ineffective schools, students and parents deserve and need choices for their educations. Those who argue against school choice believe that school choice will take funds away from the public school system in general and especially from the schools that need public funds the most. Numerous critics claim that certain aspects of school choice may be in violation of the First Amendment, particularly the tax-funded vouchers for religious schools. Giroux (2004) is only one of the critics who equated the market ideology that Friedman proposed for America's schools to neoliberalism's current pervasiveness in national policy. Neoliberalism, according to Giroux, is a "virulent and brutal form of market capitalism" (2004, p. xiii) that "wages an incessant attack on democracy, public goods, and noncommodified values" (p. xiii). Milton Friedman is one of the "market fundamentalists" (p. 49) that Giroux named; neoliberalism's market based policies, Giroux contended, "empties the public treasury, privatizes formerly public services,

limits the vocabulary and imagery available to recognize anti-democratic forms of power, and reinforces narrow models of individual agency” (2004, p. 49).

There are several components of school choice. Friedman specifically described a voucher system in which parents can receive a certain amount of funding to be used in the school of their choice, public or private on behalf of their children. Other components of school choice involve tax credits in which parents can claim a tax credit or tax deduction off their state income taxes for approved educational expenses including books, computers, tutors, and sometimes tuition and transportation. Tax credits are often dollar-for-dollar refunds for approved expenses and tax deductions normally amount to only a percentage of a refund for approved expenses. Regulations vary but typically, the states that offer tax credits and tax deductions as part of a school choice program have maximum restrictions on the amounts that parents can claim. Charter schools, public schools that are free from some of the policies and regulations of other public schools, are another component of school choice; charter schools are the aspect of school choice that has become more widespread than any other.

School vouchers have been the most controversial component of school choice; voucher plans have received both outcries of support and of protest. Until recently, most voucher plans have been voted down in state referendums. Some public opinion polls indicated that the general American public has little interest in voucher proposals but other reports indicate the interest is growing steadily. Though twenty states have introduced voucher bills, only two states have passed the bills into law. However, various other types of school choice incentives have been passed in twelve states (Devany, 2005). The greatest victory to date for school vouchers occurred on December

22, 2005, when the United States House of Representatives gave its approval to a Department of Defense appropriations bill that included the largest school choice bill in American history: Almost four hundred thousand school children who were displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are eligible to receive federal funds that may be used for the public or private schools of their choosing. The legislation would provide about six thousand dollars of tuition reimbursement for each regular education child and seventy-five hundred dollars for special education children; the funds are to be disbursed through the state and local governments.

The recent Congressional action has drawn deep criticism from opponents including the National Education Association (NEA). NEA President Reg Weaver issued this statement concerning the passage of the bill in a NEA news release: “We have witnessed this week the worst assault on public education in American history, with record-setting cuts to student aid, cuts to the so-called ‘No Child Left Behind’ Act, and the first taxpayer-funded, nationwide voucher program in the guise of hurricane relief” (NEA News Release, December 23, 2005, p. 1). Weaver accused Congress of irresponsible actions that will injure public education in America; this is a time when greater commitment to public education is needed and the cuts in funding for NCLB programs combined with this voucher program funding make Congress’s action “a devastating blow to public education” (p. 2).

Critics of vouchers state that vouchers are contrary to one of the ideals upon which America was founded: the separation of church and state. The opponents argue that because voucher payments are made out of tax monies and can be used in private schools, many that are religious in nature, they are in conflict with the First Amendment

of the Constitution. Another problem, the critics state, is that voucher plans send the message that America is giving up on public education. Public education is for all children no matter what their religions or academic or socio-economic statuses, and public education is the backbone of American democracy. According to many arguments, vouchers will do little to allow poor children to attend private schools because the voucher amount typically covers a small percentage of the private school tuition; voucher programs “offer nothing of value to families who cannot come up with the rest of the money to cover the tuition costs” (Anti-Defamation League, 2005, p. 2). Moving tax monies into private schools that are allowed much more leeway with regard to discriminatory practices will thus undermine the goal of providing universal public education to all.

The National Education Association (NEA) makes these points in its case against vouchers. First, instead of using the ‘threat’ of competition to public schools for not performing, more efforts and funds should be put into our public schools to improve them. Secondly, voucher systems would support racial, ethnic, economic, and religious stratification in our society; vouchers do not enable low-income children to have more choices. Since about eighty-five per cent of private schools are religious, vouchers can easily become a way to evade the Constitutional ban on providing public monies for religious practices and instruction. The NEA argues that from the beginning, voucher plans were an “elitist strategy ... about subsidizing tuition for students in private schools, not expanding opportunities for low-income children” (National Education Association, 2005, p. 2.).

The supporters, led by The Friedman Foundation and The Alliance for School Choice, point to evidence that they say proves that vouchers are working: Research of students involved in voucher plans, according to their reports, showed increases in achievement and in graduation rates. In addition, they argue that no constitutionality issues are violated by the voucher plans. Proponents also claim that there is evidence that in voucher localities, all schools are improving; this proves that competition is good for education (Devany, 2005). The research on vouchers' successes and failures is new and in the early stages of scrutiny and interpretation but if more locales implement voucher programs, there can be little doubt that the controversies and disagreements over vouchers are just getting started.

#### Charter Schools: Definitions and Policies

The last fourteen years have brought both the birth and spread of charter schools across America. Supporters claim that charter schools were sprouted from the seeds of concern from many groups: those who were discontent with the state of American schools, those who desired to provide a higher quality of education to disadvantaged children, those who saw the value of competition and accountability as key to improving all public schools, those who were searching for ways to remove schools from bureaucratic restrictions and the burdens of regulations, and those who believe school decisions can best be managed by those closest to the school. It is remarkable that it was only 1991 when the first charter school legislation was passed and that today, forty states and the District of Columbia have legislation that provides a framework for more than three thousand charter schools in America.

The experiment of charter schools that the nation is currently witnessing has brought both strong advocacy and strong opposition from various groups of people including educational leaders, government officials, teachers, politicians, parents, and the business world. It seems everyone has an opinion about charter schools, especially in communities that have seen the implementation of such schools. However, the charter schools movement is such a recent educational reform that much of the public, including many educators themselves, have not developed a clear understanding of this growing phenomenon. It has been difficult to gather and study enough data over the movement's short lifespan to make analytical judgments or to evaluate the successes and failures of the young charter schools.

Since Minnesota opened the first charter schools in the early 1990's, school choice has become an educational buzzword and in many localities, charter schools have become a focus of debate. Discussions of the charter school issue and its impacts have multiplied and few educational issues have created more controversy. According to Hassel (1999), "The emergence and spread of charter schools in the U.S. was one of the most significant developments in public education in the 1990's" (p. 1). Both advocates and critics of charter schools agree with this significance.

The Charter Schools Program (CSP) was authorized in 1994 as an amendment to *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965. In 1998, the program was amended by the *Charter School Expansion Act* and again amended in 2001 by the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. The primary purpose of the Charter Schools Program is to increase the availability of charter schools across the nation by providing financial assistance for designing, implementing, planning, and evaluating charter schools (*NCLB*,

Charter Schools Program, Title V Part B, July, 2004, Non-Regulatory Guidance, U. S. Department of Education).

Since state charter school laws are a state prerogative, individual states establish their own state charter school laws. However, if charter schools are eligible to receive Charter Schools Program funds, they must meet the requirements of the definition of a charter school that is specified in Section 5210 (1) of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. In that document, the term charter school is defined as a public school that:

In accordance with a specific State statute authorizing the granting of charters to school, is exempt from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools, but not from any rules relating to the other requirements ... Is created by a developer as a public school, or is adapted by a developer from an existing public school, and is operated under public supervision and direction ... Is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations, and is not affiliated with a sectarian school or religious institution ... Does not charge tuition ... Is a school to which parents choose to send their children, and that admits students on the basis of a lottery, if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated ... Operates in accordance with State law ... Has a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency in the State that includes a description of how student performance will be measured in charter schools pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering

agency and the charter school (*NCLB*, Charter Schools Program, Title V Part B, July, 2004, Non-Regulatory Guidance, U. S. Department of Education, pp. 6-7).

Even with this carefully worded definition provided by the U. S. Department of Education, there has frequently been confusion concerning the meaning of the term ‘charter school’. Lockwood (2004) stated that some people believe that charter schools “are private schools or some type of private-public hybrid” (p. 6) and that this belief may somehow be under-girded by advocates who promote the idea that charters may offer students something they can not receive in traditional public schools. Adding to the confusion is the fact that some people incorrectly interpret the process of getting into a charter school as similar to the admission process of private schools. Joe Nathan (1996) sought to provide a clearer definition of charter schools that might reduce the confusion. Nathan explained:

Charter schools are public schools, financed by the same per pupil funds that traditional public schools receive ... They are held accountable for achieving educational results ... They receive waivers that exempt them from many of the restrictions and bureaucratic rules that shape traditional public schools (p. 1).

Nathan (1996), considered a prominent supporter of charter schools in America, argued that the charter school movement has brought these important ideas into a focused identity for public education:

Choice among public schools for families and their children, entrepreneurial opportunities for educators and parents to create the kinds of schools they believe make the most sense, explicit responsibility for improved achievement ... and carefully designed competition in public education (p. 1).

Along with others, Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) acknowledged that many outside the charter movement are unclear about what a charter school is. They offered their own definition: a charter school is an “independent public school of choice, freed from the rules but accountable for the results” (p. 14). They explained that charter schools are actually a new species of school, one that possesses some similarities to both traditional public and private schools but critical differences as well. Like public schools, charter schools are open to all who want to attend them, are paid for by tax dollars and are accountable to an authoritative public entity, a state or local school board for example, and to those who both learn and teach in it. Unlike most public schools, they can be created by almost anyone, are exempt from many state and local regulations, are chosen by the students and their families, are staffed by those who choose to work there, and are liable to be closed if they do not produce the desired results. Charter schools are similar in some ways to private schools because they are independent in the sense that they have the freedom to produce the results that they choose. They also have wide control over their own curriculum and instruction, budget, staffing, calendar and schedule, and organization. Charter schools are schools of choice, similar in this way as well to private schools.

Charter schools are created by the acceptance of a contract between a group or agency that sponsors the school and a public charter-granting agency, normally a local school district, a university, a state department of education, or another alternative depending on the guidelines of the state’s charter school guidelines. This contract is known as the charter and is a legal document; the school operates under the terms of the charter for a defined period of time, usually from three to five years. The charter gives

the school control over its operation and frees the school from regulations that other public schools follow (Lockwood, 2004). However, the charter school is held accountable and monitored by the charter-granting agency for achieving the goals that must be specified in the charter regarding improving student performance. Most charter schools are newly created schools or public schools that convert to charter schools but some states allow private schools to convert to charter schools (*The State of Charter School: Fourth Year Report*, U. S. Department of Education, 2000).

Most educators concede that charter schools are a new kind of institution. Charter schools decide how to spend their money, whom to hire, what books and supplies to buy, and what emphasis to put on technology, reading, math, and everything else. They generally are not required to follow the same regulations that apply to other public schools. Charter schools are exempt from rules governing the use of time during the day, teacher selection, and many other rules. No child is forced to attend a charter school; the children enroll by their own families' choices and the schools conduct admission lotteries if there are more applicants than spaces. In some ways, charter schools are similar to specialty public schools, but in one way they are truly different from all other public schools and this uniqueness has to do with a charter school's accountability. Their accountability relationships with government, parents, teachers, and community supporters make for this uniqueness (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002). Many believe that having to meet performance goals as well as having to satisfy many groups of people in order to survive provides both opportunity and challenge for American's charter schools.

## The History and Growth of the Charter Schools Movement in America

The first charter school was not established in the United States until 1991, a mere fifteen years ago. A year after Minnesota opened the first charter school, California followed suit. Six more states were added the next year and today, all but ten states have established charter statutes. Within the forty states and District of Columbia that now have charter legislation in place, over 3000 charter schools are operating in the United States during the 2005-2006 school year. California is operating well over five hundred charter schools, the most in the nation, and Arizona is second with almost five hundred charter schools in operation this year. Florida, Texas, and Michigan are not far behind (*State by State Numbers*, U. S. Charter Schools, 2005).

Of the forty-one charter laws, a report by The Center of Educational Reform (2004) asserted that there are twenty-six strong state laws and fifteen weak laws. They define weak laws as ones that constrict operations, impose administrative or policy burdens, and restrict creativity in favor of compliance to rules. Strong charter laws are defined as those that do not limit the number of charter schools, permit a number of agencies in addition to local school boards to grant charters, encourage new start-up charter schools rather than conversion charter schools, provide automatic waivers from most or all state education laws and regulations, and guarantee that one hundred percent of per pupil funds follow the students that attend the charter schools.

One of the first times the phrase ‘charter’ with reference to an educational idea was used was when longtime President of the American Federation of Teachers Albert Shanker gave a speech to the National Press Club in 1988. Shanker urged Americans to establish a different model of schooling and to rethink age-old assumptions. He believed

rethinking was necessary to reach the up to eighty percent of students who he said were failing in some way under the current system. Shanker envisioned a model of schooling that would “enable any school or any group of teachers ... within a school to develop a proposal for how they could better educate youngsters and then give them a ‘charter’ to implement that proposal” (Shanker in Finn, Manno, and Vanourek, 2000, p. 18). Shanker explained that using the charter concept, no one would participate involuntarily. At his urging, the American Federation of Teachers endorsed the charter school idea at its 1988 convention.

Shanker had read education author Ray Budde’s *Education by Charter*. In this work, Budde proposed that teams of teachers develop educational charters. These charters would be plans for schools that they would present to their local boards for endorsement; once endorsed, the teacher team would control a budget and be involved in selecting staff and setting up a school (Hassel, 1999). Budde explained that the intent of the proposal for charter schools was “not simply produce a few new and hopefully better schools” but instead it was to create the dynamics that would cause the “main-line system to change so as to improve education for all students” (Budde, 1996, p. 72). He believed that charter schools could have a positive effect on the rest of the educational system. The possibility of losing students and money to charter schools could provide an impetus for this positive change.

After the publication of Budde’s idea, Ember Reichgott Junge, a Minnesota state senator, pushed the idea in her state and in 1991, Minnesota enacted the first charter law (Finn, Manno, and Vanourek, 2000). Others instrumental in the movement to establish charter legislation in Minnesota were Joe Nathan and Ted Kolderie who have since

served as charter consultants all over the nation. When the Minnesota charter law was finally passed, the state's modest support for charter schools was not nearly what had been hoped for by the proponents. The number of charter schools was limited to eight and the legislation restricted the approval agencies to local school boards only. In spite of the initial restrictions, the Minnesota legislature soon increased the number of charter schools allowed and modified the approval process. The charter school concept spread through the nation and currently, forty states and the District of Columbia provide processes for their operation (*State by State Numbers*, U. S. Charter Schools, 2005). Nathan (1996) explained: "The charter idea is a seed that is spreading, changing the schooling and lives of thousands of youngsters" (p. 71).

Though the first charter schools began in Minnesota in 1991, those who study the movement understand that its historic roots began years earlier. The last decade's setting was ripe for the emergence of charter schools, but that setting had been developing for decades. Good and Braden (2000) traced reform efforts throughout the history of American education and asserted that "it is important to acknowledge that the productivity of American schools has been the subject of continual argument, reform and on occasion, experimentation" (p. 28). The two historians argued that past reform efforts like those of Dewey and Progressivism, the new math and science of the Sputnik days, individual and humanistic educational reforms, reform proposals of *A Nation at Risk*, and the national goals and programs of *Goals 2000* all combined to provide a setting that was ready for the advent of the charter school movement.

Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) further explained that five important developments in American education set the stage for the charter idea: a shift in

emphasis from schools' inputs to outputs, setting higher standards for all, the excellence movement, new school designs, and choice and competition. The nation has shifted away from the idea that educational quality is judged in terms of inputs like pupil expenditures, class sizes, teacher salaries, and the other resources that go into schools. There is more emphasis on school practices that produce the most effective student outcomes.

The Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 and subsequent educational programs and reforms have emphasized that high standards and equal opportunity should be available for all. There has also been more acceptance of the notion that one educational model cannot fit everyone and new types of schools have become part of the American educational landscape: accelerated schools, Edison schools, magnet schools, various types of alternative schools, and others. After Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman proposed in the 1950's that competition and a marketplace of choices would create a more effective public school system, others have echoed his views (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000).

According to Lockwood (2004), the development of a huge American bureaucracy of schooling and a yearning for a past era of schooling has contributed to the development of the charter school idea in America. She explained that recent reformers looked to charter schools to carry a "wave of education reform into the future -rejecting the bureaucracy and standardization that they perceive as a frustration to other education reformers ... they embraced earlier values and norms that had been rejected one hundred years earlier as inefficient and insufficient" (p. 23). Lockwood stated that the charter school combination of "public dollars, private values, and alternatives within the

mainstream public educational system” (p. 50-51) contributed to make charter schools a reform that has attracted many supporters.

Hadderman (1998) stated that much of the impetus for the charter movement was rooted in the educational reforms of the 1980’s and 1990’s that included implementation in many districts of school based management, school restructuring, mandates to improve instruction, and school choice initiatives. Politicians and educators have seen charter schools as a more viable alternative than a voucher system and their support has contributed to the expansion of charter schools across America. Hadderman explained that there are many who are “dissatisfied with educational quality and school district bureaucracies” (p. 1). This disillusionment with public school districts along with the belief that charter schools can be a workable political compromise in lieu of vouchers have been important reasons for the popularity of the movement. According to Callison (2003), the charter school movement is a middle ground position and it fits well with the public’s attitude favoring improving public schools rather than funding alternative systems of education.

#### The Controversies Surrounding Charter Schools

Many people have strong opinions about the state of American public schools. As one would expect, great debate surrounds the phenomena of the American charter schools movement. Criticisms and oppositions have come from many sources and have served to raise a host of issues and questions for scrutiny, study, and consideration.

One of the most prevalent concerns raised about charter schools is the warning by some critics that choice creates new problems or makes old problems worse. The argument is that choice can exacerbate inequalities. It is based on the premise that the

best and most concerned parents will remove their children from traditional public schools and place them in charter schools. This could result in further sorting of students and families by race and social class and would further erode the American democratic notion of a common school experience for all (O'Neil, October, 1996).

Nathan (1996) countered this concern. He said that we have a pervasively inequitable public school system in which the wealthy have always had choices that low and moderate income families have not shared. The defenders of the traditional public systems are defending a giant informal choice system based on wealth and residence. According to Nathan (1996), "charter schools offer a much fairer approach to school choice" (p. 74). In the words of another charter schools proponent, "Charter schools give choice to those who previously lacked it (Lorenzen, 2002, p. 3).

In *Ten Problems with Charter Schools*, Kuehn (1996) argued that charter schools create two-tiered education: one tier for the children of parents whose participation leads to a high quality level of education and another tier for everyone else. He further contended that charter schools encourage social fragmentation. Kuehn stated that in spite of the argument that the competition of charter schools will promote reform and improvement in traditional public schools, charter schools end up serving special interests and simply divert needed money and attention away from improving all schools. In addition, if neighborhood schools are converted to charter schools, the neighborhood schools may not be available to those of the neighborhood. Kuehn was also concerned that charter schools recruit students likely to perform well and that charter schools will find ways to exclude students who do not do well academically because such students are seen as impediments.

Some similar points from opponents of charter schools are summarized by Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) who are well known as charter school supporters in their list of the ten most serious allegations against charter schools; the authors also provided comments in defense of each allegation. The allegations and comments included these points: First, charter schools steal students and funds from traditional public schools. Charter moneys are usually subtracted from the districts' funds. The authors pointed out that the moneys should follow children to the schools their families choose and that public money is not an entitlement to the school system but is intended for the education of particular students. Another allegation is that charter schools are too risky; America should not be experimenting with children's lives and with tax money. It is often cited that some charter schools even employ uncertified teachers. On the other side, proponents state that the risk is reduced when charter schools have vigilant sponsors, adequate and visible public information about the schools, and solid academic basic curricula like that required of other schools in the state and measured regularly by assessments.

Another allegation discussed by Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) is the one that charter schools are not really accountable. Effective accountability systems for charter schools are infrequent but according to the authors, most proponents of charter schools agree that only with strong accountability systems in place and functioning can charter schools grow and perform well. Another point of contention is the allegation that except for the attention they get, charter schools are not very different from traditional public schools; the authors contended that because there are so many different models of charter schools, the degree of innovation and difference from traditional schools varies

greatly. However, at least in the context of intent, the charter schools initiatives create innovative and different schools. Another major criticism has been that charter schools are elitist in nature and use screening mechanisms to recruit and enroll the most successful students while leaving the neediest students in regular public schools. The authors commented that in actuality, about the same percentages of charter school students are eligible for federal lunch programs, are disabled, and have limited English proficiency as those enrolled in traditional schools. Charter schools, the authors claimed, actually serve a greater percentage of minorities than traditional public schools.

The authors (2000) continued their discussion of the list of concerns: Charter schools do not serve disabled or students appropriately either because they disregard statutes, have inadequate staff or resources, or deter these students from enrolling. However, Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) commented that studies have shown that charter schools serve about the same percentages of disabled students and that many charter schools actually target students with disabilities. They explained that charter schools, like regular schools, may not have the staff or resources to meet all disabilities, so parents of disabled students should assess their school choices carefully, as should parents of non-disabled students. Another allegation is the one that charter schools break up and segregate American society and promote divisiveness, but the authors noted that the process of obtaining a charter has some preventive measures built in: charter schools must admit anyone who applies or if there are too many applicants, use a random selection process that cannot discriminate with regard to race, ethnicity, or religion. A heatedly debated point is that charter schools invite corporations and individuals to attempt to gain profits from public education. The greatest concerns involve the charter

schools who are designed or operated by corporate for-profit firms. The proponents of charter schools meet these concerns with the argument that private textbook firms, computer marketers, construction companies, and many others have always made profits from public education. The greatest safeguard against profiteering is that no one can make a profit for long from a poorly managed and poorly performing school. The authors commented that the only way for a company to sustain its profits is to provide effective education.

Many, according to Finn, Manno, and Vanourek (2000) oppose charter schools because they believe that charters are precursors for a voucher system. Though both charters and vouchers bring choice and competition into education, some charter advocates support vouchers and others oppose vouchers. The greatest distinction between charters and vouchers is that students with vouchers may use them to attend private or church schools and charter schools are public schools. As such, proponents claim that all who choose charter schools may attend and they are accountable to public authorities. Another point that critics have made is the point that there are not enough charter schools; it would be too hard to replicate enough of them to lead to fundamental change and reform. The authors noted that charter schools may remain a modest reform movement or they may expand in number and scope; charter schools are one of many educational reforms and there will be opportunities to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of charter schools with other approaches that seek to improve education (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000, pp. 151-168).

Hill, Lake, and Celio (2002) explained that the root of the disagreement over charter schools is accountability. Charter schools attract parents and students by making

proposals and promises about children's experiences and learning. If the school does not meet the expectations, the families can go to other schools. In addition, teachers cannot be assigned to charter schools unless they choose the assignment, and since no school can deliver its programs without good teachers, charter schools must provide conditions that will attract and maintain good teachers. Another issue is that charter schools are many times under-funded and must pay for their own facilities; therefore, they often rely on voluntary contributions of both money and services and must convince community members and potential donors that the school is effective. Charter schools are held accountable to the governing agency that grants the charter; if they do not fulfill their charter agreements and goals, their charter may not be renewed. The authors summarized the problems of accountability for charter schools and the disagreement in this way:

Accountability is the focus of controversy about charter schools. Some people think that needing to satisfy parents, teachers, and donors as well as government is good for schools and can make them both more effective and more responsive. Others think the need to respond to parents, teachers, and donors as well as government makes charter schools unaccountable and thus, if not completely private, not fully public either (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2002, p. 5).

Stacy Smith (2001) provided a summary of the national debate about charter schools: the proponents stress "choice, autonomy, innovation, and accountability" (p. 19); the opponents are concerned about the impact on the existing system with the loss of students and money, the mixing of public education with the principles of competition, capitalism and the free market, the perceived charter similarities to privatization, and the attention being diverted away from other reforms. In just a few years of life, the charter

schools movement has become one of the most hotly debated topics of education. While charter schools may still be poorly understood by a great number of Americans, many aspects of the movement have become topics for serious debate and discussion. As the charter school movement evolves, the discussions and scrutiny must continue.

### Charter Schools in Georgia

On April 19, 1993, Georgia's original charter school law went into effect. That first law allowed only for conversion charter schools; only existing public schools could convert to charter schools and these conversion schools could receive charters that would have to be renewed every one to three years. In addition, a school could convert to a charter school only if two thirds of both teachers and parents agreed to the conversion and the approval of both the state and local boards of education was required. Georgia's original charter law has been amended four times: in 1995, 1998, 2000, and 2002.

Today, the law provides that private individuals and organizations can operate charter schools with the following exclusions: home study programs, religious schools, private for-profit schools or other private schools not operated by the State of Georgia, and existing private schools. A simple majority of teachers is all that is required currently to convert an existing public school to a charter school. When charter petitioners are denied their charter by the local boards of education, they may now apply directly to the state board and the local boards must provide written explanations for the denial of the petitions. Charters remain in effect for a minimum of three and a maximum of five years before renewal is necessary. Instead of blanket exemptions from policies, procedures, and provisions of Georgia's school laws, charter schools must identify specific provisions

to be waived and explain how the waiver will improve achievement of students (*State Report on Georgia's Charter Schools*, 2004, Georgia Department of Education).

There can be four types of charter schools in Georgia: conversion charter schools, start-up charter schools whose petitions have been brought forth by private individuals and organizations, Local Educational Agency (LEA) start-up charter schools that are created when the LEA's submitted petition is approved by the local school board, and state-operated charter schools that are operated by the state board and created when petitions are first denied by the local board but approved when resubmitted to the state board. Conversions, start-ups, and LEA start-ups all operate under the control of the local boards (*State Report on Georgia's Charter Schools*, 2004, Georgia Department of Education).

Georgia's first three charter schools were conversion charters that began operating in 1995; since that time, about sixty charter schools have become active in the state though a number have been non-renewed over the years. There are thirty-eight active charter schools during the 2005-2006 school term and more of them are start-ups than conversions. Since 1995, the number of charter schools operating steadily increased each year until the peak year of 2002 when thirty-nine charter schools were active in the state. In a 2005 report of charter petitioners published by the Georgia Department of Education, thirty-nine petitions for charters have been denied by local boards of education (*Charter Petitioners*, 2005, Georgia Department of Education). Three charter schools in the state operate as state charters; after denial of their petitions at the local board level, the state board of education has granted them charters. Bulloch County's Charter Conservatory of Liberal Arts and Technology was the first to receive such state approval followed by

approved state charters in Carroll County and Coweta County. The preponderance of the state's current thirty-eight charter schools are located in the northern half of the state. Almost three fourths of Georgia's charter schools serve elementary students or a combination of elementary, middle, or high school students. Just over twenty per cent of the charter schools serve high school students only (*State Report of Georgia's Charter Schools*, 2004, Georgia Department of Education).

Demographic data on the students attending charter schools in Georgia was reported in the *Georgia Charter Schools Program Annual Report* (2004). The report indicated that charter school gender composition is closely similar to that of the state as a whole; Georgia's charter schools serve a slightly higher percentage of minority students than the state's traditional public schools. Traditional schools serve slightly more low socio-economic students than charter schools though none of these differences were significantly large.

Academic data of Georgia's charter schools has been compared to the state's data as a whole. Because of the small number of charter schools and the relatively few years of data on them, the academic data reported is an initial attempt to analyze the limited comparisons that are available to date. The state of Georgia has published 2004 reports and data on its Department of Education website but has yet to make the 2005 data available. In composite data from all grade levels in 2004, charter schools showed a slightly greater gain, one percent greater, than Georgia's overall data in the percent of students passing the reading and language arts Criterion Reference Competency Tests and a six percent gain, double the state gain of three percent in mathematics. However, on the Georgia High School Graduation Tests, charters showed a three to five percent

drop over the state percentage in students passing the various parts of the test. This data would indicate that charter schools in Georgia appear to be improving student achievement on the CRCT at a greater rate than the state as a whole but that the state is doing better on the GHSGT. The fact that many charter high schools enroll at risk students who already are further behind academically may need to be factored in to these statistics. Georgia acknowledges the many limitations of the achievement data on charter schools and the state report indicated that the studies of independent evaluators in 2005 will soon be available. Eighty-four percent, slightly more than the state average, of charter schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (Georgia Charter Schools Program Annual Report, 2004, Georgia Department of Education).

In the lengthy 2004 *Status Report on Georgia's Charter Schools*, the Georgia Department of Education stated that the goals most often emphasized by the state's charter schools were student achievement and parent involvement; almost all of Georgia's charter schools identified strong parental involvement as an important aspect of the school. The parents of charter students perceive parent participation and volunteer activities are much greater than at traditional public schools. About three fourths of the parents surveyed reported that they had decided to send their children to charter schools after negative experiences in traditional schools and they saw charters as positive alternatives. Georgia's charter parents also reported that the charter school's ability to individualize classroom instruction to children's needs and to use specialized instructional formats such as art, technology, and character education allowed the schools to do a better job with both academic and social goals for its students. The flexibility of the student assessment process was also cited by parents as a positive; individualized

learning plans and assessment of students and the use of learning portfolios in almost three fourths of Georgia's charter schools were noted as reasons for parent approval. In a news release on February 14, 2005 that was based on a survey by researcher Lewis C. Solmon, State Superintendent Cox reported that the great majority of charter parents are extremely pleased with their schools and give Georgia charters higher ratings than parents of charter students in other states. Over eighty-five percent of the surveyed parents planned to reenroll their children in their charter schools (*Georgia Charter Schools Get a Big Thumbs Up*, February 14, 2005, Georgia Department of Education).

Finn, Hassel, and Speakman in *Charter School Funding: Inequity's Next Frontier* (2004), an article and report published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, described interesting inequities in the funding of charter schools across the nation. They reported what they claimed to be "the fiscal gap by which U. S. charter schools are being starved of needed funds in almost every community and state" (p. v). In Georgia, charter schools received about thirty-one percent less funding per student than other district schools; this amounted to \$2,281 less per pupil. Several reasons were cited for the disparities. First, Georgia's statutes limit the charter schools' access to local funds and allow local districts to allocate funds at their discretion. Since the state's Quality Basic Education (QBE) Foundation Program funds schools systems based on the numbers of students in particular programs, some charter schools' innovative programs like their schedules or specialized curriculum do not fit the QBE specifications and therefore may receive little or no funds. In addition, the state's charter schools are not recognized as Local Educational Agencies; this makes them dependent upon the sponsoring districts for QBE funds and unable to apply for many state and federal funding programs without assistance

from the local districts. Another contributor to the differences in funding between charters and other public schools is that Georgia's charters typically serve slightly fewer Title I, low income, and students with disabilities, all groups of students who typically generate more funding. Funding for facilities of Georgia's charter schools is also sorely lacking: though local districts may elect to include charter schools in the five-year facilities plans, only one district in the state has done so (Finn, Hassel, & Speakman, 2004).

Though Georgia's charter program has shown steady growth, Georgia does not rank as one of the states with the largest and most rapidly growing charter systems. Most of the infrequent reports on the achievement status of the nation's charter schools as a whole have reflected mixed achievement results; many analysts believe the individual state-reported results and the cumulative national results should be interpreted with great caution. All of the data must be studied within the constraints of the acknowledged limitations for gathering data from various states who report it in different ways, with different frequencies, and with different agendas in mind. Diana Schemo (2004) reported in *The New York Times* the results of the first national comparison of achievement test scores between children in charter schools and traditional schools. The report, released without fanfare by the U.S. Department of Education, showed charter school fourth graders functioning about half a year behind students in regular public schools in both reading and mathematics (Schemo, 2004). With charter schools serving so many fewer students than traditional public schools and many charter schools operating as special needs schools, it is difficult and probably unwise to make specific comparisons of test

results. To have genuinely meaningful comparisons, more time and more careful and unbiased analysis will be necessary.

### Democracy and Charter Schools

“We are undisputedly in an era of school choice” (p. 77) according to Kathleen Abowitz in her chapter of Dimitriadis’ and Carlson’s *Promises to Keep* (2003). Many progressive educators have been alarmed by this era of growing choice, an era they fear signals an end to the idea of universal public education in America and the diminishment of an already unsteady foundation for democratic educational principles. Joel Spring (2001) stated that “Choice, privatization, charter schools, and multicultural education put the final nail in the coffin of the common school” (p. 434); he argued that the idea of choice opposes the common school principle of all children receiving a common education including common cultural and political values.

Certainly charter schools and school choice have served to make the traditional differences between public and private schools blurrier; the perceived notion that charter schools take America’s educational system closer to private control is one of the points of contention. A major issue is the old question of balancing public and private interests in education; this issue is one that has been around since compulsory American education became mandated. Two of the vital interests in the argument are those of individual or private interests and those of public or common interests. Balancing these interests has always presented special challenges for Americans. As people of a proclaimed democracy who commonly give credence to the importance of perpetuating democratic ideals like freedom and equality, Americans generally recognize that some form of common schooling will promote the interests of all citizens and will help them become

better citizens. America's pluralistic society has complicated this idea and the private interests of families with regard to individual preferences have long been protected in the United States. Since 1925 when the U. S. Supreme Court overturned an Oregon law that required all children to attend public schools, private educational choices of families have been held up. A question that Stacey Smith (2001) asked that pinpoints these issues is : "In a pluralistic democracy such as our own, what kinds of educational structures and practices balance private and public interests in a manner that is equally in the interests of all?"(p. 3).

Smith claimed that her book, *The Democratic Potential of Charter Schools* (2001), is aptly named for charter schools do present a potential "alternative educational structure for balancing public and private interests in education" (p. 5). Too often, Smith stated, critics of charter schools have simply reacted to the proponents' emphasis upon privatization and market competition as anti-democratic and have only envisioned public education within its present structures. Smith's argument is that people on both sides of the debate would be better served to investigate some of the possibilities and potentials of charter school reform to balance both public and private educational interests. It may be valuable to go beyond the debates between those who tout "a model of privatized market relationships as a panacea for public education" (p. 21) and those who defend "existing structures as if the status quo is *ipso facto* preferable to radical organizational change" (p. 21) for both sides downplay their own weaknesses for representing educational and democratic progress. Smith argued that the era of charter schools provides both possible good and danger as Americans search for different ways to fulfill obligations for public education; emphasis is placed upon "the democratizing aspects of expanded and

equalized choice, inclusive decision making, and localized accountability” (p. 32) as some of the positive aspects of charter schools that should not be overlooked. These are only potential advantages, Smith cautioned, and should guide the discussions of ways to “maximize the potential goods while minimizing the potential dangers of charter school communities” (p. 32).

In the early 1990’s, educational historian David Tyack discussed the burgeoning debates about educational choices and their relationship to democracy: “There are many choices to be made about choice and no one correct answer” (Tyack, 1992, p. 15). He called for attention concerning school choice to be focused upon issues of democratic participation and equity. One of his major worries with choice options was that a market free-for-all might promote a competition among parents and schools for admission to what could become ‘elite’ schools; this process could serve as a sorting machine to kick poor and minority parents out of equitable opportunities for their children’s schooling. Tyack’s concerns about choice programs led him to conclude that if education is to be democratic and equitable, choice plans should be limited to public schools; the options of charter schools remained open as a democratizing possibility in the realm of school choice while voucher and tax incentives that divert public resources to private schools do not (Tyack, 1992).

Michael Apple in *The State and the Politics of Knowledge* (2003) called attention to what he described as the contradictory nature of conservatives’ advocacy for programs of school choice like voucher or charter programs. The school choice aspects of efforts to restructure education are connected to the movements to raise standards and to mandate student competencies and educator competencies through set curricular and

testing programs. The choice efforts are also connected to the pressures to make the needs and goals of America's business and industrial powers into the goals of American's schools. According to Apple, the restructuring efforts that promote deregulation, marketization, and consumer choice focus attention upon "fundamental educational dilemmas or contradictions such as the tensions between utility and culture, between control and autonomy, between homogeneity and plurality, between efficiency and equality and ...between economic demands and preparation for democratic traditions ..." (p. 125). Apple's consistent call is that since America does not provide all of its citizens "a level playing field politically, culturally, or economically" (p. 15), it is important for citizens to "think contextually", "think about the specific relations of power at each level", "think about multiple relations of power", "think historically", "don't assume that education is simply a passive actor", "pay attention to social movements", and "get your hands dirty" by working collectively and detailing evidence that can create substantive and lasting democratic reform (p. 221-222). As the "different traditions of critical social and cultural analysis rub against each other" (p. 225), Americans can become more aware of the ways that education is an active force in democratic social transformations. Applying these analytical tactics to the emergence of choice programs like charter schools can be one way to resist inequities and many of the challenges to a more democratic educational system.

Joel Spring in *Political Agendas for Education* (1997) remarked about what he called the neoconservative belief, "infected by Austrian economics" (p. 32), that "traditional governmental programs should be privatized or controlled by the workings of a free market" (p. 32) on one hand and that "government should play an active role in

protecting public morality and the quality of schooling through government censorship and academic standards” (p. 32) on the other hand. Spring stated that Washington’s think tanks led by Diane Ravitch, Chester Finn, and Denis Doyle have marketed school choice by financing research that has been designed to favor conservative programs and by implementing a public relations blitz to influence politicians and the general public. In his 2001 book, *The American School: 1642 – 2000*, Spring stated that school choice plans received support both from those who believed schools controlled by competition have less bureaucratic constraints and from some liberals who believed that public schools have failed low income students and that choice programs offered poor students opportunities to attend better schools. Spring articulated his concerns, however, that charter schools are becoming spin-offs of privatization supporters: “Charter school legislation enables the development of privatized schools” (p. 437). Spring noted that various states and localities have awarded private contracts to companies to operate and manage their public schools. Since 1994, the Edison Project has contracted with school districts in Kansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Texas, Michigan, Florida, Ohio, and Massachusetts to run public charter schools for a profit. Minnesota hired Public Strategies Group to run its Minneapolis schools, Education Alternatives was contracted in Hartford, Connecticut, Educational Alternatives was hired in Dade County, Florida, and the Walt Disney Company contracted with Osceola County, Florida, and Stetson University to build and operate a state of the art school named ‘Celebration.’ Spring explained that these examples could be the beginning of much more widespread business involvement in managing public schools.

In recent Presidential elections, both major parties' platforms included choice or charter school agendas. The Democrats have advocated choice within the public school restraints, particularly charter schools, both as tools for providing opportunities for marginalized and at risk students and as a program to increase student achievement. President Bush has followed the positions of previous Republicans and supported choice that involved the public sector and charter schools as well as vouchers and other incentives that can involve private schools. One of Bush's major educational focuses has been a push for the creation of more charter schools and of legislation that provides funds for new start-up charter schools, programs that the Republicans claim will address the concerns of promoting academic achievement as well as the democratic concerns for reducing the instances of unequal opportunities of American students (Spring, 2001).

Aronowitz and Giroux in *Education Still Under Siege (1993)* steadfastly criticized conservative school choice programs as part of the "rightest assault on all aspects of the public sphere" (p. 201) and the "retreat from democracy" (p. 200). The authors contended that some right wing educators and politicians sing the praises of competition and choice but rarely address how "money and power, where unevenly distributed, influence whether people have the means or the capacity to make or act on choices that inform their daily lives" (p. 202). Ignored by the choice program advocates is the basic issue that democracy and citizenship can not be addressed within the restrictions of choice programs or the marketplace. "Choice and the market are not the sole conditions of freedom ... no understanding of community, citizenship, or public culture is possible without a shared conception of social justice" (p. 202); according to Aronowitz and Giroux, this principle of social justice is missing from school reforms of choice and

market competition. In one of his more recent works, Giroux (2004) argued that "... the laws of the market take precedence over the laws of the state as guardians of the public good" (p. 48). His overriding concern was the ways that today's market fundamentalism has eroded democratic principles and overtaken and changed the lives of Americans. Giroux proclaimed the message of Edward Said that in order to combat these threats to democracy, students, teachers, and others "had important roles to play in arousing and educating the public to think and act as active citizens in an inclusive, democratic society" (p. 155).

The status of the democratic value of charter schools would appear to be in question. Mixed reviews and opinions have been lifted up all over America. The concerns about the conservative political agendas of privatization and the giving up of some of the responsibilities for educating American children to the free market that nowadays is beginning to even include school management by business and corporate groups are mammoth issues that cannot much longer be ignored by mainstream educators. In some localities, charter schools claim to be institutions that foster opportunities for poor and disenfranchised children who have been left in the corners of society until now to have their choices and voices heard and to receive better educations. Most charter schools report heavy parent and community involvement in the schools and maintain that there is greater shared and democratic decision making. Some charter schools, since they are freed from some of the rules and policies of other schools, proclaim that they are in much better positions to teach children a curriculum that is meaningful and relevant and to teach in ways that are better suited to children's individual needs and learning styles. Truly the democratic concerns of the critics and the

proclamations of the advocates deserve the attention of all Americans as the saga of charter schools unfolds in the pages of history. At the moment, the jury on the potential democratic contributions or undemocratic dangers of charter schools is probably still out.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

For those who believe that promoting democratic principles is an important goal of education, a consideration and comparison of the tenets of the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists to the programs, policies, and curriculum of the twenty-first century is perhaps an even more useful activity than in earlier times. National and state policies and practices have turned schools into places that are permeated with regulations and dictates, places whose curriculum has become prescriptive and ‘brought from afar’, places whose accountability systems and testing programs have students’ and educators’ backs to the wall, and places where there is the ever-mounting influence of corporate interests and the infiltration of market ideology into the public education arena. In addition and in spite of democratic rhetoric otherwise, American education has typically failed to be an effective social force to loosen the ropes of cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic stratifications that continue to tie so many children to lives that are more of the same. In many ways, the programs and policies of American education frequently still serve to perpetuate the inequities of society.

Democratic education is obviously much more than learning about a political system of government and decision-making. Democratic education and its consequences take place not just in schools but in the lives of people of all ages and at all times and in all areas of society. Its educational system is a crucial aspect of a democratic society and it remains, as it always was, a major tool of society that can take democracy and social justice into the living rooms, street-corners, workplaces, boardrooms, and legislatures; democratic education has the potential to infuse its principles and benefits into both

individual lives and into society as a whole. Thus the whole issue of how educators and citizens can develop and provide a system of education that is both democratic and one that promotes democracy for society becomes a looming and massive responsibility and charge.

This issue that focuses on the importance of education as a major contributor to democratic possibilities for our world is central to what the Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists avowed could be benefits of self-reflective and self-critical questioning, dialogue, and debate. John Dewey, Jane Addams, George S. Counts, Michael Apple, Paulo Freire, and others have argued that democratic societies are progressive, emerging, and are intentionally self-critical, self-analytical, and engage in open dialogue and discussion about democratic possibilities and directions. Critical consciousness and reflection about the aspects of education and society that steer our society away from those possibilities and directions are a necessary part of moving forward, of progressing, and of reforming for democracy.

The development of tools that can provide a basis and foundation for this self-analysis and critical consciousness are valuable and necessary for this progressive and reforming process. The 'Yardstick of Democracy' provided in this study can be such a tool of comparison and discussion and can be utilized by teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other citizens as a framework for the dialogue that is critical in these times of standards, mandates, examinations, infiltrating market and corporate interests, and regulations. Such tools and consciousness may become impetuses for progressing toward more democratic prospects of the nation and world.

Comparing many of the programs, policies, and trends of contemporary times in American public education to the democratic tenets of the Social Reconstructionist and Critical Theorist ‘Yardstick of Democracy’ exposes areas of concern and needed discussion. One of those tenets is that democratic schools provide equal opportunity for all students and they dismantle barriers of all types to learning and to access of knowledge. Schools today, just as they have in the past, still provide different programs and different curriculums to various groups of children; the determinations of programs and opportunities for various groups of children are still, to a large extent, influenced by the socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds of the children involved. The last five years of *No Child Left Behind* and its goal to ‘leave no child behind’ have not alleviated the entrenched schemes that do not encourage equitable access to the knowledge that is deemed most worthy and desirable.

Democratic schools, as the ‘Yardstick’ points out, encourage diversity, multiple points of view, debate, open-mindedness, and multiplicity of all kinds. The programs and curriculums of American schools have always been most closely aligned with the principles and philosophies of Western European thought and there have been few or insignificant attempts to broaden the horizons of the curricular programs. Furthermore, the requirements for specified curriculums and the ‘gun in the head’ mandates leave little room for diversity and discussion of varying points of view in today’s classrooms. Open-mindedness and diversity, in an era of standards and testing, can easily become a forgotten entity.

Another tenet of the ‘Yardstick of Democracy’ is that the curricular programs originate from the lives and experiences of students instead of from predetermined and

imposed mandates. Obviously, the fixed and ‘standardized’ curriculums that are currently being set forth for all teachers and all students by state department of educations conflict with this tenet. The democratic opportunities for choice and for curricular relevance to the real lives of the students are diminished by the enveloping curricular dictates. When teachers teach only what they are ‘allowed’ to teach, it follows that more and more children have opportunities to learn only what they are told to learn; this is contradictory to an important progressive principle for education. Some of the deregulation of curricular standards that are allowed for many charter schools and the possibilities that the charter school’s teachers, students, and parents have voices in their curricular development may be one of their most democratizing potentials.

Democratic education, according to the ‘Yardstick’, is important to the present lives of students and focuses on the real and present issues of their lives; democratic education does not reserve itself for usefulness only in the future. An obstacle to this principle is the current emphasis of education as an entity that serves the purposes of the free market and shapes students to fit the needs of the economic system of the nation and world. Most of today’s school curriculums highlight the preparation of students for future jobs and vocations; this emphasis can serve the needs of the economy and may train students for jobs and careers but it does not address the present-day needs of the students’ lives, an important tenet for making education meaningful and for teaching problem-solving in current and relevant situations.

Tied to the previous tenet of the ‘Yardstick of Democracy’ is the tenet that democratic education is primarily a social process and its vital goal is to help students learn to function cooperatively and successfully in society. Education is so much more

than a compilation of facts and book knowledge; it is important to incorporate curriculums that allow for the social development of the children and young people, something that is more infrequently done when the efforts of educators are narrowly fixed upon making Adequate Yearly Progress. The current emphasis on the acquisition of facts and the premise that education is primarily an intellectual process and must be filled with programs to promote the achievement of 'standards' has resulted in less and less thought and time for the social relationships and interactions that may be much more important for democratic progress.

Another democratic tenet deals with the importance of change and of the notion that knowledge is not fixed and unquestionable. Knowledge is always in a state of emergence, clarification, and progress. The rigidity of the standards movements has been a hindrance to this tenet. There is emphasis on one particular 'set' of knowledge as the only set of knowledge; these sets of standards and knowledge have been developed by 'unseen and unknown' persons presumably in distant state capitols. Directives state that there must be no deviation in teaching from this set of standards; certainly this can be inconsistent with the progressive precept that 'knowledge' is to be questioned and can and should be in a constant state of change and progress.

Important to the 'Yardstick of Democracy' is the principle that democratic schools teach children to think critically. Democracy is promoted when students learn to question and learn to scrutinize rather than blindly accepting ideas. Testing out ideas, validating and corroborating ideas, revising or rejecting ideas are all fundamental skills for citizens of a democracy. In recent years, there has been rhetoric and even some implementation of educational programs that promote this type of skill for critical

awareness. More curriculums that incorporate these vital skills must be put into operation in the nation's schools; the students in this era of high stakes testing and curricular mandates have had too little opportunity to practice this skill.

The next principle of the 'Yardstick' is one that flies in the face of current American educational practices: democratic schools use assessments and testing cautiously. Democratic schools do not allow tests to become hindrances for student opportunities and assessments are not used to promote curriculum uniformity and uniform standards that are applied to all. Most would agree that the principles of the Social Reconstructionists and the Critical Theorists are in direct opposition to the cloud of tests and assessments that hover over almost every school in America. Under *No Child Left Behind* and the dictates of the resulting state policies, tests dominate the landscape of American education. They have been used in the ways that the 'Yardstick' cautions against: as hindrances as they restrict promotions, graduations, and opportunities and as a basis for developing and determining uniform curriculums and programs of schools. Schools scurry to implement the curriculums that allegedly have been aligned to the tests and might thus present the most positive showing on the tests. At all costs, educators and students seek to prevent the unfavorable penalties and consequences of not performing to the achievement goals, goals that have been imposed upon them and that will be measured and determined exclusively by the tests. This seemingly insatiable appetite for testing and more testing has taken American education further and further away from the practices that can advance democracy.

One of the 'Yardstick's tenets is that democratic schools promote open dialogue between teachers and students; both teachers and their students are involved in a process

in which they learn from each other. A teacher's job is not transfer knowledge from the teacher's mind to the mind of the student; the teacher's more democratic responsibility is to serve as a facilitator who promotes the independence of the student and allows the student to become a self-sufficient and lifelong learner. In democratic schools, students and teachers are partners in education. How well schools are doing with this principle obviously varies tremendously from school to school and from classroom to classroom. Certainly, as a whole, the standards-based movement does little to promote such a democratic and humanizing relationship. Since their hands are tied by fewer mandates and regulations, the school choice and charter school proponents may be in better positions to provide students and teachers the environment most conducive to the implementation of these types of democratic and educational partnerships between teachers and students.

The socially reforming potential is the foundation for another of the Yardstick's principles: democratic schools are instruments for social reform and for democratic progress. This social change and progress takes place when students become discriminating critical thinkers, able to recognize and resist injustices and prejudices and when they take their realizations and resistances with them into the larger society. This function of schools is an essential aspect of the democratizing aspect of education. As schools help students become astute citizens and raise their awareness of societal problems and inequities, they become potentials for transforming society in democratic ways; the contemporary state and national educational programs have detracted from these potentials.

The next 'Yardstick' tenet is connected to the previous tenet concerning social reform: Democratic schools provide for and support social mobility. Democratic schools serve as important life-changing institutions that disband the permanency of social and economic positions and classes. The evidence so far points to the infrequency in which students in marginalized positions take their educations into society and actually make this social and economic progress. Even though the claims of the so-called 'American dream' of social and economic mobility are still professed, the reality is that it is still difficult to break these barriers. In most American schools, some groups of children continue to be placed in curricular programs and tracks that 'predestine' them for particular social and economic stations in life; family economic and cultural backgrounds continue to be either advantages or disadvantages as students manipulate through their years of education. In addition, the tendency to train students to fit the perceived economic needs of the corporate world too often is a stumbling block for the potential of education to serve as a vehicle of social and economic mobility.

Democratic schools also promote service to others and to the entire community; the responsibilities of students reach far beyond their individual lives and democratic schools promote this sense of social responsibility for others and for the common good. The kinds of models that Dewey and Addams provided in their careers have been pseudo-simulated by some schools by the incorporation of this tenet in student projects and extracurricular activities; more and more schools, both K-12 schools and universities, are offering opportunities to students to learn to be social servants. Still, the efforts and social learning cannot be maximized when most students' and educators' time and attention must be focused on the imposed standards and achieving acceptable test scores;

the standards-based programs make it difficult to allow for provision of these social service responsibilities within the regular curriculum. In the character education programs that many charter schools have adopted, this social responsibility tenet of the 'Yardstick' may have a better chance of receiving the attention that is needed.

The 'Yardstick' calls teachers to another important role: in democratic schools, teachers become the leaders for social change within the community. The Social Reconstructionists and Critical Theorists maintained that teachers have great potential to become the leaders for social reform in their communities; unfortunately, teachers typically have not lived up to their transforming potentials. Teachers have not come together to work collectively and powerfully for democratic causes that might help reverse economic, social, and political injustices. Legislators and policy-makers have often ignored educator groups and interests in favor of powerful corporate interests; one example is the recent vote by Congress to provide a voucher program for hurricane victims that completely snubbed the objections of the National Association of Education. Another example that affects everyone is that the political decisions to impose national and state programs of standards and assessments have been made by politicians who have slighted the concerns of teachers and marginalized their contributions in the policy-making process. The 'Democratic Yardstick' calls for teachers to become much more involved and vocal, both individually and collectively, as forces for extending democratic principles throughout society. Teachers' voices have the democratizing potential to become both louder and more influential.

As the 'Yardstick' stipulates, democratic schools are democracies themselves. Democratic practices must become part of the daily lives of citizens in order to truly

secure democracy in society; putting the practice of democracy into play in the schools is a fundamental way that this security can be built. Too rarely are democratic practices incorporated into the educational institutions and policy-making of the nation's schools. Too few opportunities for participation are granted to all of the stakeholders: in much decision-making, student and parents are frequently overlooked by the teachers, teachers are too often disregarded by the administrators, and teachers' and administrators' input has not been heeded by the legislators and policy-makers. Until all stake-holders are provided the encouragement and avenues to more actively participate in the development of policies and curricular decisions, starting with the students' needs and participation and spreading from there, this principle of the 'Yardstick' will remain unfulfilled.

In democratic schools, hegemonies of undemocratic control and of domination are exposed; such schools attempt to uncover the programs and policies that hide the incorporated barriers of schools and other institutions to the sharing of power, privilege, and economic rewards. The Critical Theorists point to the ways that students and citizens learn to accept inequities and injustices as part of the 'way things are' in the world; democratic schools help to divulge the hegemonies. This awareness makes the system of inequity more vulnerable and more likely to be fractured. Schools of the twenty-first century, especially because of the stranglehold of dictates, have not shattered these hegemonies; pressure upon educators and students to adhere to curricular programs that have been handed down and the sanctions that occur when they do not have become encumbrances to this principle and promise an unlikely venue for the exposure that is needed.

An additional integral tenet of the 'Democratic Yardstick' is that in democratic schools, the state does not regulate and dictate knowledge, nor does it attempt to standardize and homogenize the curriculum. In addition, democratic education does not allow corporate powers and their capitalistic goals for financial gain to determine curricular programs and set educational policy. American educational practices are currently distancing themselves from this principle. As previously noted, the fifty states have hurried to implement standard curriculums and standard decrees that every public school must bend to; with the push and advocacy for a nationally mandated curriculum and national tests of accountability, the situation could easily become even worse. Furthermore, business and corporate marketers have become major players in educational policy and curriculum: today, the textbook and testing industries are major manipulators upon curricular programs and decisions, the schools and their students are saturated with the influences of the corporate world, corporations have now established a foothold in the management of American schools, and the law-makers who formulate educational policy are more closely connected to corporate and business interests than ever before. Certainly, this democratic principle has become more remote.

The final principle of the 'Yardstick of Democracy' addresses the important foundation of historical understanding for students of democratic schools who become active and contributing citizens in the years to come. Democratic schools ensure for students a historical insight and awareness that promote questioning and scrutiny; for democratic schools, it is vital that students critically study and analyze history, both past and present events and situations, those that are historical events of greatness and of shame. The status of this kind of historical inquiry and analysis in American education is

questionable and the degree of implementation may vary widely from school to school. Certainly, such historical critical understanding is not incorporated in the mandated standards for Georgia schools. Furthermore, teachers continue to be discouraged from ‘rocking the boat’ of commonly accepted interpretations of history; they must adhere to the standards and the accompanying textbook interpretations anyway. In the contemporary educational arena, the kind of study and dialogue called for by this tenet of the ‘Yardstick’, the kind that leads to clearer and more critical historical understandings is pushed to the sidelines while everyone focuses more heavily on meeting the criteria for Adequate Yearly Progress.

As the ‘Yardstick of Democracy’ is used as the starting point for a dialogue and analysis of the democratic status of American education, there can be seen only occasional rays of light for democratic progress. Most of public education remains under a cloud, a cloud that in many ways is becoming darker and more ominous. Despite the darkness, consideration and awareness of the tenets of the Social Reconstructionists and the Critical Theorists can become directions and possibilities that have the potential of breaking through some of those dark clouds and of bringing forth the true democratic potential of education. Democratic progress in education is the momentum for democratic progress and reform in the nation and in the world as a whole.

If educators actually incorporate the ideas of the ‘Yardstick’, they will be revising and even revolutionizing the entrenched aspects of a traditional society that prevents the full sharing of opportunity for wealth and for power. Dewey, Counts, Addams, Freire, and Apple have all explained, in various words and in various ways, that democratizing means reaching out with more open arms to incorporate and integrate people to partake

and involve themselves with the society. It means including all groups, women, various ethnic and cultural groups, all socio-economic groups, groups from multitudes of religions and backgrounds, and peoples of all fathomable differences. Explicitly, it also means sharing in the economic benefits of the society, and this, as many have maintained, is the greatest resistance and the one that may always be the toughest to topple. The twenty-first century is an era where more and more people have shed more and more prejudices and where seemingly, more and more people and groups are enlightened with regard to the importance and value of diversity and respect for that diversity. Politicians are more cautious of words or deeds that are exclusionary and discriminatory, businessmen make more efforts to lay down policy that allegedly protects workers from unfair and discriminatory practices, religious leaders more often preach the merits of equality and respect for all groups, and educators are certainly more careful that their decisions and programs are not construed to be based upon prejudices or bias. All of the words and efforts are rather meaningless entities unless and until there can be a widening of the circle of those who share economic dominance, a widening that can begin to include all of those other groups. Democratizing includes and incorporates practices that serve to expand and extend the benefits to everyone, including the economic benefits.

From the Progressives, educators learn that when institutions are entrenched with programs and practices that are barriers, whether the barriers are seen or unseen, of the full sharing of the society's benefits, the vision of democracy does not become clearer. America's school system and its educators carry the brunt of the responsibility for removing all kinds of barriers. These burdens and these responsibilities are huge ones for teachers and for all educators, but the potentials of their contributions are massive, too.

Counts and Dewey both proclaimed the necessity of teachers' active roles in creating a system of schooling that is a democratizing one; to do so teachers must make certain that it is clear in their minds what kind of society they want to advance. Crucial to this whole democratizing process is a greater alertness and consciousness of the arrays of barriers and obstructions and clearer visions for the society that is the goal.

One of the most unused or underdeveloped potentials of educators to advance democracy is their potential to become agents of powerful political and policy transformation. No one can deny the impact that individual efforts can often make to promote opportunity for large numbers of sometimes disenfranchised students and to disband the obstacles that are incorporated in America's educational schools and programs. George S. Counts asked teachers to come together to build a new social order. Collectively, educators can impact the policies and mandates that have been handed to them by the authors of *No Child Left Behind* and by the federal and state legislatures. Collectively, educators' influence for democracy can broaden and expand in ways that could indeed be heard in the policy-rooms and in the legislative chambers where it seems most current educational decisions have been made. Individual efforts must become more cooperative efforts; the visions for democracy must be shared and spread throughout the hallways and lunchrooms and workrooms of the schools. Combining efforts, developing collaborative plans of resistance, and working together to promote joint visions for education are among the tasks that educators concerned with democracy can undertake. The 'Yardstick of Democracy' and its principles from many decades ago can be an apparatus or device that can play a role in this modern undertaking.

In contemporary America, there are many who would turn their backs on the premises that have been promoted in this ‘Democratic Yardstick’. Certainly, there have been widely diverse views on democracy, on what it is, and how it should be incorporated. Many have argued beginning with the arguments of Plato and continuing throughout Western and American history that democracy presents a certain element of danger and turmoil for society; there are serious threats to national security and stability that must always be weighed against the benefits of individual freedoms and democratic social reforms and these threats cannot be scoffed at. Even Dewey and most of the other Progressives were aware of the need for the orderliness of society and pressed for democratic reforms that did not induce societal disorder and promote chaos. Because of the very nature of democracy, the outcomes of democratic reform are not certain and can never be predetermined; sometimes, different results than those expected are obtained. Thus democratic reformers are called to connect themselves to the pragmatic understanding that reality is always in a state of flux; absolute and predetermined results are never possible for any of our causes and our efforts. Our societies and the outcomes of our efforts and reforms will always be uncertain and emergent.

It is unlikely and probably even undesirable that democracy will ever be ‘final’. It is an entity and an idea and a way of life that is simply worth working toward and a great part of this work can and must originate in the schools. In the wake of standards-based curriculum implementations, accountability and testing mandates, charter school laws or other school choice programs, and all of the other educational programs and practices that will come in the future, educators do possess the potentials to become democratic influences. Faith in this potential has motivated the writing of this

dissertation. As enlightened reformers and workers for democracy, each of us can navigate the perpetually rocky roads. As we do, we can make the miniscule democratic cracks in the rocks become much larger fractures.

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