

## School Reform as a Catalyst for Sustainable and Engaged Communities in the United States: Theoretical Analysis for Regenerative Strategies

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### ABSTRACT

School reform, as well as, sustainability has become a rallying cry for groups both globally and locally because it involves issues that touch all of us. The paper applies a qualitative methodology comprised of a theoretical analysis and examination of social sustainability, from the point of view of two pioneering writers on the subject, namely, Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford and within the lens of current planning approaches; New Urbanism and Smart Growth. In order to answer key research questions, several key obstacles to social sustainability are explored, as well as, relevant top-down and bottom-up paradigms, namely, structural functionalism, conflict theory and critical theory, along with their views, strengths and weaknesses. Policies on education reform often embody within their core assumptions values and constructions of deservedness, which are often consolidated at the level of policy design and distilled from key assumptions of these three dominant theoretical paradigms. They are often presented as the product of consensus, though in reality they are the result of conflict and dominance of one paradigm over the others, often the one whose proponents have consolidated political power and framed the debate to reflect the issues from their particular perspective. This has serious implications for present and future school reform as a critical measure of socially engaged and sustainable communities.

**Keywords:** School reform, social sustainability, social conflict, culture, social allocation, social integration, social mobility, stratification, elitism, critical analysis, late capitalism, ethnographies, equal opportunity, educational equity, resource accessibility, value transmission, policy design, policy transparency, engagement, institutional accountability, urban-regeneration, vitality, new urbanism, smart growth.

### INTRODUCTION

Sustainability as a concept is both a process and a goal depending on how it is applied, and on the desired objectives for its application. It could mean different things to different people, as its malleability for usage as a strategy or as a tactic, is often demonstrated whenever a debate on the subject arises between people, representing differing ideologies and conflicting interests. Campbell and Fainstein<sup>1</sup> 2003, in their compilation Readings in Planning Theory reiterate this view on sustainability, in which they say “The remarkable consensus for the idea is encouraging but also reason for skepticism, since sustainability can mean many things to many people without requiring commitment to any specific policies.” (421)

School reform, as well as, sustainability has become a rallying cry for groups both globally and locally because it involves issues that touch

all of us. In the case of educational equity, recent media-covered corruption and university admission scandals exposed an endemic problem of academic corruption and unfair access to educational opportunities. While global environmental degradation highlighted the issue of sustainability, in its various components, in a manner that is unprecedented in human history. Sustainability is most contentious, perhaps, when it is applied to the urban context because an urban setting is where the majority of the world’s population lives today, as many prominent writers on the subject have pointed out (see studies by Kalamaros<sup>2</sup> 2006; Lockwood<sup>3</sup> 2006; and Rose<sup>4</sup> 2006). Of all the components of sustainability, whether environmental, political, economic or ethical, it is, perhaps, the social component of sustainability that has had both the longest

historical roots and is by far the most contentious. Equitable access to quality education and equal access to opportunities for social mobility is at the core of social sustainability. This presents a challenge to all parties involved in the decision making process that effects a community's well being, equity, vitality, and economic development, effective management of its resources, and its political standing and ties to other communities. It has implications that can be immediately experienced by current residents of a community as well as effects that may impact future generations of that community. The challenge is to ensure both an endorsement of socially sustainable principles as well as an implementation of those principles in practice for the community's current and future generations.

### **METHODS AND GOALS**

The goal of this paper is to introduce and explore several socially sustainable approaches for implementing equitable educational planning and policy strategies in the United States aimed at school reform. The paper applies a qualitative methodology comprised of a theoretical analysis and examination of social sustainability, from the point of view of two pioneering writers on the subject, namely, Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford and within the lens of current approaches on the subject, like New Urbanism and Smart Growth. The theoretical analysis highlights several key obstacles and seeks to answer several key questions, which are explored in three parts; examining relevant top-down and bottom-up paradigms, their perspective views, their strengths and weaknesses, and their implications for present and future school reform as a critical measure of socially engaged and sustainable communities.

### **PROBLEM DEFINITION**

In answering the question of what makes a community socially engaged and sustainable, this paper selects one definition of social sustainability and engagement from numerous others available on the subject along with a brief review of the elements of social sustainability and engagement, from the point of view of two pioneering writers on the subject, namely, Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford (Part One). The paper then answers the question of how would Jane Jacobs's 1961, work fit into the creation of socially sustainable and engaged communities

by presenting the similarities between Jacobs's strategy at the time of her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* for creating such communities, and current approaches like New Urbanism and Smart Growth which are vying for dominance in the ongoing debate on this subject today (Part Two). The paper then answers the question of what obstacles are evident from her work in creating these types of neighborhoods by briefly examining the three main obstacles that Jacobs points to in her work; planning practices, the socio-political climate and the economic methods of production (Part Three). Finally, the paper concludes with a theoretical analysis of school reform, as a viable catalyst for achieving socially sustainable and engaged communities in the United States.

The first part of this theoretical analysis examines a top-down analytical approach of society by exploring Structural-functionalism's view on the socializing role of public schools as an agency in an organic social system of integral parts. This paradigm was initially advanced by Emile Durkheim<sup>6</sup> 1893/1997, as Functionalism and later expanded to Structural-functionalism by Davis and Moore<sup>7</sup> 1994, and others. The second part will examine social conflict theory, which is the polar opposite of Structural-functionalism in that it presents a bottom-up approach to social enquiry beginning at the level of the individual and building up to the level of society through an analysis of the role of conflict in a class struggle for equity. The strengths and weaknesses of conflict theory is examined as originally posited by Karl Marx<sup>8</sup> 1843/1975, and its later treatment by Bowles and Gintis<sup>9</sup> 1976, The third part will examine Horkheimer<sup>10</sup> 1895/1973, and his critical theory as it transcends previous critiques by Marx and Freud into the role of the state in advanced capitalism and its implications for public policies on education and school reform. The paper then concludes with a review of school reform examples advanced by a perspective view of each of the three paradigms, their strengths and weaknesses, and its implications for present and future school reform as a critical measure of socially engaged and sustainable communities.

### **Part One: What Makes a Community Socially Engaged and Sustainable?**

Two key issues define the socially constructed view of sustainable and engaged communities; social equity and justice. The space in which the

conflict between social groups and in turn the social values that embody that struggle is assumed for the purposes of this paper to be the community, locally delineated rather than globally. This paper posits a definition of social sustainability and engagement that is relevant to the social values articulated by Lewis and Jacobs and central to their respective visions of a socially sustainable community. Social sustainability is defined in this respect by Robert Paehlke<sup>11</sup> 1994, as “a set of social priorities and articulates how society values the economy, the environment, and equity.” (360)

This definition gives a central role to social values that are both an expression of that society’s diversity and character as well as an expression of its historical roots. As such it addresses the priority by which such a society applies its values to the equitable distribution of its environmental, political and economical resources, among its members for both current and future generations. It also posits that good social conditions emanating from good social values are not only necessary for a community to sustain itself socially but also paramount to achieving social justice and equity.

### **Part Two: How Would Jane Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, Work Fit into the Creation of Socially Engaged and Sustainable Communities?**

Lewis Mumford is the first of the two writers whose vision of the city as a socially sustainable organism delineates the definition of a socially sustainable and engaged community that was presented earlier. Mumford<sup>12</sup> 1937, vision of the city is presented in his article, *What is a City?* Published in *Architectural Record* where he says “The city is a related collection of primary groups and purposive associations; the first, like family and neighborhood, are common to all communities, while the second are especially characteristic of city life.” (p. 94)

Mumford<sup>12</sup> 1937, connects the social activities performed by city residents to economic activities that are supplied by organizations which play a supporting role to that of social activities. Here Mumford point out “the essential social means are the social division of labor, which serves not merely the economic life but the cultural processes.” (p.94) Mumford<sup>12</sup> 1937, articulates a vision of the city as a stage for social activities in which the very residents play leading roles from scripts they supply themselves out of their life experiences and as Mumford puts it “the personalities of the

citizens themselves become many-faceted; they reflect their specialized interests, their intensively trained aptitudes, their finer discriminations and selections.” (p. 94)

Mumford’s vision of the city as “a theater” is characterized by the vitality of its personal and group activities, it is not one devoid of tension or conflicts, a vision similar to Jane Jacobs in this respect, but where everything plays a role in the social dramas where social activities are primary and performed by private groups and giving form to the city as an organic entity. Mumford<sup>12</sup> 1937, describes the city thus “one may describe the city, in its social aspect, as a special framework directed toward the creation of differentiated opportunities for a common life and a significant collective drama.” (94) The author further describes the special link between personal and interpersonal relations in such a community by saying “here lies the possibility of personal disintegration; and here lies the need for reintegration through wider participation in a concrete and visible collective whole.” (p. 94)

Mumford sums up his vision of a socially sustainable and engaged community in which all the parts, social, economic and aesthetic play a vital and dramatic role towards forming an interdependent holistic collective by saying “the city in its complete sense, then is a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity.” (p. 94)

While the author celebrates the growth of this organic and socially sustainable community he, nevertheless, stipulates the need to set limits to its size. Mumford defines the size of such a community in relation to its social functions wherein he says “what is more important is to express size always as a function of the social relationships to be served.” (p. 95) As long as the community’s social relationships remain vital then Mumford sees no need to limit its size on the bases of other unrelated factors, but when that vitality begins to dissipate then optimal size, by his definition, would have been reached. This crucial point, Mumford reminds us, helps such a community to achieve effective social relationships, as he says “limitations on size, density, and area are absolutely necessary to effective social intercourse.” (p. 95)

Jane Jacobs is the second of the two writers whose vision of the city as a socially sustainable organism delineates this paper’s definition of a

socially sustainable and engaged community. Jacobs was a journalist and editor from Pennsylvania, who traveled and wrote extensively on social issues. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, articulates a vision of a socially sustainable community that is cultivated from personal observations of everyday street level social interactions and culminates in a set of values and principles that she saw as a better alternative to the sterile and stratified cities that planners of her time had created.

In essence Jacobs was searching for a qualitative (ethnographies) rather than a quantitative methodology to cultivate data about the city in which the particular details of city life become the generators of data and of the new principles for a socially sustainable community. The elements of design for such a community, according to Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, are essential to creating good social conditions. These elements stem from the principles that she believes govern the level of complexity which a vital community needs to be socially viable. Jacobs articulates the main principle of her vision, wherein she says “this ubiquitous principle is the need of cities for a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant manual support, both economically and socially.” (p. 14)

Jacobs sees the economic means of sustaining the city as secondary to the social interactions that generate the form of the city emanating from the particular to the general. Jacobs’s views diversity as essential to her vision, the outcome for the community is better with more diversity. She views density in the same light wherein density leads to complexity and complexity is at the heart of all vital social interactions that makes a community socially sustainable. Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, informs us “the components of this diversity can differ enormously, but they must supplement each other in certain concrete ways.” (p. 14)

Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, calls for a set of design elements that are in context to their surroundings and whose character gives form to the physical design of these “shelters” of social activities. She advocates wider sidewalks that promote social interactions and allows children to grow and interact in an informal and safe environment under the watchful eyes of community members, “eyes on the street,” of people from all walks of life and all lifestyles including the

homeless and the disadvantaged. Jacobs describes this notion as she says “people’s love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere.” (p. 37)

Jacobs also calls for smaller streets and a controlled role for the automobile in which cars destructive roles in segregating the social fabric of society may be curbed. Jacobs also advocates for a new role for neighborhood parks where the character of such parks emanates from the character of the communities they serve. Such communities, she stipulates, must be allowed to celebrate their own character or function, a notion similar to Mumford, in which a diversity of activities, economic, social, residential can take place in a mixture of uses. She also abhorred what she characterized as border vacuums that in her opinion only serve to separate and stratify communities. She stresses that there should be more parks of smaller sizes which she calls “pocket parks.”

Where she differs from Mumford in her vision for a socially sustainable community is in her limitation on the size of a community. While Mumford<sup>12</sup> 1937, lets size become a function of the social role of a community, Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, stipulates a geographic size limit of one mile by one mile as the outer limit of her ideal community.

Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, came with a vision that has been recreated and incorporated in two significant urban movements or schools of thought in our own time, namely, New Urbanism and Smart Growth. While New Urbanism which expresses a physically designed and bounded sustainable community expresses the vision of planners, architects and designers, Smart Growth is the result of collaborations among policy makers, lawyers and politicians. Both movements incorporate many of Jacobs’s elements of design as well as her emphasis on the particular informed by hand-on observations of every day city life. Both movements, however, also have their critics, as Jacobs’s own work was the target of criticism of planners and designers of her time.

### **Part Three: What Obstacles are Evident from her Work in Creating these Types of Neighborhoods?**

Jacobs<sup>5</sup> 1961, points to three main obstacles to her vision of a socially sustainable community. The first obstacle is one of existing methods and principles based on these methods that planners

of her time were enamored of and which Jacobs views as the main culprit behind sterile and disintegrating communities. History supports her in this claim, as planners have more often than not abandoned their objectives of social justice, environmental protection and economic efficiency and their role as social mediators to become mere tools in the hands of political aspirants and powerful special interest groups. This technically bound and socially inept role of planners has been discontinued in our time, not universally but academically and in most practices that are informed by sounder theoretical principles than those in existence at the disciplines infancy and around the time of Jacobs's own observations.

The second obstacle to her vision is the socio-political climate which even in our time wherein social equity and justice are protected and enforced through legislation, informal discrimination and segregation is still in evidence in all walks of life. While pluralism and progressive policies for social equity and justice help to counter such destructive sentiments in our present day society, Jacobs's vision of a complex, vital and non stratified society is yet to become a reality.

The third obstacle to her vision is that of the economic methods of production. Essentially, her vision requires a just and equitable means of producing and distributing resources for both current residents of a community and for its future generations of residents. Although we have come a long way from her time, in terms of greening our environments and passing legislation for its protection, industries are still reluctant to alter their methods of production in fundamental ways that would be better for the environment and concurrently make such products affordable for everyone. Industries and economic interests, instead, use their powerful influence in our political system to legitimize their entrenched and destructive methods of production and distribution by in the name of economic progress and stability. Although there has been some advances made in some industries in terms of greening their practices, the majority of industries are still overly reliant on fossil fuels and antiquated methods of production as well as an over reliance on the automobile and its accompanying networks of highways and byways for distribution. Additionally, whenever a product is deemed environmentally sustainable, it is also immediately marketed at a higher cost that removes it from the

reach of the majority of citizens and further entrenches existing inequity in society at large.

## **A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL REFORM**

School reform is often heralded as a rallying platform from which activists, educators and policy makers can address the endemic inequity of resource access and value ascriptions that plague an educational system that is long overdue for an overhaul. This reform, as this paper seeks to elucidate, is sorely needed, both substantively and procedurally, to achieve viable progress in the quest for socially sustainable and engaged communities in the United States. Although, equal opportunity to educational resources and educational equity for all segments of society is often the goal of education legislation, this however, is not reflected in reality, as would be increasingly apparent to anyone who delves into the convoluted and highly contentious state of education in the United States.

While the existing poor quality of education is a concern for the entire school-age population, its impact is even more devastating for the so called 'low performers' who are often minorities and specifically those students who are African-American or Hispanic. Again, the majority of educators, policy makers and activists are often in agreement that the needs of such students should be a priority but they fail to reach consensus on effective methods to accomplish such goals. The issues surrounding the debate on school reform are often viewed from a variety of theoretical lenses whose overriding paradigms guide the descriptive and prescriptive conclusions and outcomes adopted by increasingly polarized camps of opponents and proponents.

The debate on school reform is both highly political and highly contentious as the value ascriptions and methodologies advanced by each camp often clash with each other and sometimes within the seemingly unified camps themselves. It is the concern of this paper to examine and present an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of three dominant paradigms whose configurations and key assumptions helped to shape the debate on school reform and frame its major arguments, within the desired outcome for sociably engaged community realization, as expressed by federal, state and municipal legislature in the United States.

### Part One: Structural-Functionalism

Structural-functional theories as conceived by Durkheim<sup>6</sup> 1893/1997, posit a model in which three principles are paramount; structure and culture which form the basic foundation of society and posits agency as the actuator of control for the smooth operation of such a society. Durkheim<sup>6</sup> 1893/1997, in his book *The Division of Labor in Society* explains his idea of 'social solidarity' in the main hypothesis of his book by saying "divisions of labor normally function to provide the 'order, harmony, and social solidarity' that society needs." (p. 63)

The main thesis of structural functionalism is that it views society as a cohesive organism in which the survival of the whole organism is accomplished by its interdependent parts, and the importance of the well being of the whole of society outweighs that of any individual within it. Such a society is composed of both structure and function. Structures, such as education, actuate stability for such a society in which differentiated functions through the 'division of labor' provide it with 'smooth operation'. Structures, like public schools, have an important stabilizing function for society at large in that they promote social norms and socialize students to perform and accept their role within the 'division of labor' in society.

Davis and Moore<sup>7</sup> 1994, expand the structural functional thesis by explaining the relationship between stratification and the social order that Durkheim's 'division of labor' is based on. The authors explain this functional requirement by saying "as a functioning mechanism a society must somehow distribute its members in social positions and induce them to perform the duties of these positions." (p. 39) The authors point out that their explanation of stratification as a functional aspect of society rests on the premise that it is an inquiry on the 'system of positions' rather than the particular individuals who fill these positions, as they explain "it is one thing to ask why different positions carry different degrees of prestige and quite another to ask how certain individuals get into those positions." (p. 39)

Davis and Moore<sup>7</sup> 1994, also expound on social inequality and the reasons for its presence in all societies. They link the phenomena to their view of stratification and posit an explanation of the tools needed to control it, as they say "social inequality is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies insure that the most

important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons." (p. 40)

This explanation ties in with the functional agency role of public schools in structural functionalism. Public schools actuate the social integration of students to form a national identity through a meritocratic process of social allocation. In such a process, each student is free to reach full potential as a contributing member of society, to fill the assigned role within society at large, through the student's own effort or merit, in an equitable system that rewards students who exhibit the appropriate behaviors expected of them by their teachers. Students who acquire the behaviors and skills most needed in society are awarded the highest honors that society can bestow on its members. Various mechanisms of control and regulation which ensure the stability of society also serve to weed out the non conforming members of society through either punishment or marginalization, while at the same time confirming the status and rewarding positions for those members who conform and excel. Schools allocate students to jobs within the hierarchy defined by the 'division of labor' in society by sorting them on the basis of achievement, through a graduated scale of performance administered by objective measures of performance, like tests, grades, degrees and merit awards. Structural functionalists explain this method of sorting through an ideology of achievement by merit, in which social mobility is actuated by agencies like public schools that make it possible for students to improve their performance through additional effort, and likewise for workers who desire to improve their social standing in society at large.

### Part Two: Social Conflict Theory

Conflict lies at the heart of social conflict theory and it is blamed by its early advocate Marx<sup>8</sup> 1843/1975, and its later theorists, Bowles and Gintis<sup>9</sup> 1976, for all social change and strife. As was noted earlier, structural functionalists blame the non-conformist individual for harming the stability of society, and the non-conformist is also viewed as a failure for not striving for improvement in performance. Conflict theorists, by contrast, blame societal structures and hierarchy for harming the well being of individuals and for causing conflict between the haves and have-nots through dominance, discrimination and the inequitable division of resources and opportunities. Conflict theorists

also are extremely skeptical of the system of meritocracy and value ascription to patriotism that are advocated by structural functionalists for society's well being. Marx<sup>8</sup> 1843/1975 would explain that those controlling the resources of society would never voluntarily share these resources or share control with the rest of society. Instead they promote the illusion of shared control to the masses through 'mechanisms of control'. Later authors like Bowles and Gintis<sup>9</sup> 1976, explore those 'mechanisms of control' further and ask the following question "Under what conditions will individuals accept the pattern of social relationships that frame their lives?" (p. 127). They conclude that the most effective way for the powerful to instill the belief in these 'mechanism of control' in the powerless, is to institute them throughout society at a very young age. Bowles and Gintis<sup>9</sup> 1976, thus explain "explicit mechanisms constituted to maintain and extend the dominant patterns of power and privilege. We call the sum total of these mechanisms and their actions the reproduction process." (p. 126)

According to Bowles and Gintis<sup>9</sup> 1976, these mechanisms are inherently linked and instituted in society by various agencies like public schools to reproduce consciousness in the powerless masses. Public schools maintain the status quo for the powerful by instituting a system of education based on conformity and unquestionable adherence to rules and obedience to authority. Bowles and Gintis explain this role by pointing out that "education works primarily through the institutional relations to which students are subjected. Thus schooling fosters and rewards the development of certain capacities and the expression of certain needs, while thwarting and penalizing others." (p. 129). The authors link this system of education to value ascriptions at the level of the individual and to the 'division of labor' for society at large as they conclude "through these institutional relationships, the educational system tailors the self-concepts, aspirations, and social class identification of individuals to the requirements of the social division of labor." (p. 129)

### **Part Three: Critical Theory**

The term critical theory is attributed to the German philosopher Horkheimer<sup>10</sup> 1895/1973, of the Frankfurt school of social theory. His work builds on, and is inspired by, the previous

critiques of Marx and Freud. While Marx<sup>8</sup> 1843/1975, defined critical theory as "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age" (p. 209) Horkheimer extended the previous definition of critical theory to offer what Steven Dandaneau<sup>13</sup> 2001, explains as "a self-conscious and generalized approach to social theory that would transcend its particular origins in Marx, Freud and others." (p. 231)

As we can see from the above, critical theory's scope extends beyond that of social conflict theory as it seeks to give a vital role to "values" in its analysis of the achievement ideology promoted by structural-functionalists. It does so by positing a historical analysis of value ascriptions in education through various eras of U.S. history. It also critiques conflict as an ideological struggle not merely between classes but as a result of state adoption of the dominant ideology of that era and its economic, political and social mechanisms of intervention to secure the outcome for that ideology.

This treatment is brought to bear on the role of the state in public education as it exerts its control by dominating the school reform debate and controlling the framework by dictating what constitutes legitimate values and advancing its own measures of school performance and accountability, all within the context of late capitalism. The role of public officials as agents of state intervention is illustrated by the various mandates on school reform that characterize election campaign promises of elected officials, like president Bush. It also explains the dominance of technological fixes for what is essentially a value-laden educational system which requires a debate on what constitutes relevant values in a pluralistic society. Thus, we often see that the competition between schools is driven by the lure of technological endowments to "deserving" schools rather than on the basis of effective knowledge transmission and meaningful discourse on relevant value ascriptions. Dandaneau<sup>13</sup> 2001, summarizes the scope of critical theorists as he says "in agreement with Marx, critical theorists view capitalism as an irrational, contradictory, oppressive, albeit dynamic and productive, economic system." (p.227) Dandaneau points out the contradictory nature of capitalism, as comprehended by critical theorists, in that it is both dehumanizing and the source of social crisis, as well as the source of progress, materially and technologically. He goes on to say that because of this characteristic of late capitalism, critical

theorists needed to advance their analysis “beyond Marx’s primary analytical focus on the internal dynamics of the capitalist economic system per se to include analyses of the political and cultural processes increasingly essential in the sustained and legitimate reproduction of 20<sup>th</sup>-century capitalist society.” (p. 228)

## **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Structural functionalism, conflict theory and critical theory can be viewed as occupying different positions on a theoretical scale that has the humanist tradition at one polar end and the systemic/elitist tradition at the other pole. Within this view both conflict theory and critical theory can be judged as humanist perspectives of society because they are substantively concerned with equity and the individual. In the case of critical theory, this concern is expressed procedurally as well, with its emphasis on value transmission and the importance of historical context. Critical theory, however, may occupy a relatively farther position from the humanist pole, as compared to conflict theory, because its method of inquiry is inherently analytical, which subjects its conclusions to generalizations. Structural functionalism occupies a prominent position within the systemic/elitist perspective because both its methods of inquiry and its substantive theory are inherently hierarchal. While structural functionalists place the blame for the failure of minority students on the students own lack of effort and initiative conflict theorist would place the blame on the schools and their teachers and administrators as perpetuating a system of inequality and conformity through mechanisms of control. Critical theorists would go further and explain how value transmission and its utility throughout the history of education are used by the elite to keep the masses subjugated.

Structural functionalist often promote their methods of education as equitable and color-blind and cite programs ranging from language to the arts and music as level playing fields for all students. Conflict theorist would expose such programs as biased from inception to favor those native English speakers at the expense of immigrant populations. They would also argue that quantifiable measures of performance also favor the normative values of the elite over those of the working class and the disadvantaged.

While performance and accountability are the terms most often used by politicians and policy

makers to gauge and control educational policy agendas, little is done to identify and eliminate degenerate policies that institute racism in the school system and divide the constituents and their school-age children into “categories of deservedness” as Lina Newton<sup>14</sup> 2005, points out in *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*. These social constructions which are often posited as societal norms by elitist policy analysts and policy makers reflecting a politically powerful majority stance, substantively deepens the level of inequity within the school system. Such policies on education reform often embody within their core assumptions values and constructions of deservedness borrowed from immigration policies which in themselves, as Newton<sup>14</sup> 2005, points out “in addition to reflecting the prevailing values of politicians and their constituents, these debates produce recognizable, recurrent depictions of groups- depictions that politicians manipulated and juxtaposed to support the final design of the IIRAIRA.” (p. 164)

Such values are often consolidated at the level of policy design and are distilled from key assumptions of such dominant theoretical paradigms as the three discussed in this paper. They are often presented as the product of consensus, though in reality they are the result of conflict and dominance of one paradigm over the others, often the one whose proponents have consolidated political power and framed the debate to reflect the issues from their particular perspective, such is the state of the debate on school reform in its present manifestation.

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