Curriculum Theory
We typically think of theory as a generalization that explains or predicts phenomena.

- Law-like statement
- Curriculum is not a theory in that regard
- Curriculum theory explores the relationship between concepts such as children, schools, knowledge, etc.
Components of a Curriculum Theory

- Why should we teach this rather than that?
- Who should have access to what knowledge?
- What rules should govern the teaching of what has been selected?
- How should the various parts of the curriculum be interrelated in order to create a coherent whole?
Exemplars of Curriculum Theory

- Traditionalists
- Conceptual-empiricists
- Reconceptualists
Traditionalists

- Accept the schools and society as it is
- Concerned with working with teachers and schools to improve teaching and learning
- See the curriculum as comprised of the traditional academic subjects
They advocate a technical procedure for curriculum development

- Diagnosis of need
- Formulation of objectives
- Selection and organization of content
- Selection and organization of learning experience
- Evaluation
Conceptual-empiricists

- Less likely than traditionalists to work closely with teachers
- Bring the content of psychology, anthropology, philosophy, etc. to the practice of curriculum work
- Man a Course of Study
- New Social Studies
Reconceptualists

- Curriculum is a politically charged arena
- Challenge traditionalists and conceptual-empiricists because of their conservative political and educational viewpoints
- See the school as an instrument of social control
- Social and educational critics
Some reconceptualists (Michael Apple) emphasize the politically conservative and anti-democratic nature of the school and its curriculum and seek a more democratic school and social order.
Some reconceptualists see the school and the curriculum as alienating and anti-human and seek a school and a curriculum where students can seek meaning and establish their own sense of identity.