EDS/Sociology 126: The Sociology of Education  Spring 2010
Take Home Final  Bud Mehan
This exam is due on June 8th at 3:00 PM in CH 113—the room where our class meets. Please plan to stay and listen to student presentations. DO NOT TURN EXAMS IN TO EDS or SOCIOLOGY. When we grade your answers, we will look for the analytic power of your argument and how well you document the evidence that supports your position. Incorporate information from lectures, discussions, films shown in class, and readings. If you turn in a self-addressed stamped envelope, we'll return your final in the mail. Otherwise, put a "Buckley waiver form" on the cover of your exam. Please put your name and Reflection Group # on your papers.

Two goals of education in US public schools are educational equity and educational excellence. Educational equity refers to the goal of providing all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, SES, religion, disabbling condition, or sexual orientation, an equal educational opportunity. Educational excellence refers to the goal of enabling all students to learn to the upper limits of their potential.

Part #1. (80 points) (800-1000 words)

Choose a reform initiative—or combination of initiatives— from the list below that you believe has the greatest potential for achieving the goals of educational excellence and educational equity. With specific reference to readings, films shown in class, discussions, and lectures, describe the reform and explain why you take the position you adopt. In your description and explanation, focus specifically on the features and characteristics of the reform, and what specific problems the reform aims to redress. Make sure that in your explanation, you construct a reasoned argument in defense of your chosen reform. It will also be important to incorporate (and reference) relevant counter-points.

Reform Initiatives
1. setting high standards for all students and holding educators accountable for student achievement via a high-stakes testing regimen
2. modifying the high school curriculum to include critical pedagogy and multicultural approaches
3. privatizing education via vouchers
4. rejuvenating public schools via charters
5. sending kids to private religious schools
6. rejuvenating public schools by instilling a new sense of democracy

Part #2. (80 points) (800-1000 words) For Part 2, describe the theoretical assumptions supporting the reform initiative you describe in Part #1. This will require you to place the reform you selected in the wider theoretical and historical context that we have discussed in the course. Include the authors who contribute to this position. You may find it helpful to draw the theoretical assumptions from the following list:

1. the reform initiative prepares students especially well to enter the contest mobility system
2. the reform initiative incorporates curriculum that teaches US school children essential facts
3. the reform initiative incorporates curriculum that celebrates the accomplishments of ethnic minorities and women
4. the reform initiative incorporates curriculum that offers critical perspective on US history
5. the reform initiative is based on a business model and market principles
6. the reform initiative is based on the "universal development hypothesis" and scaffolding