Social Foundations in Exile:
How Dare the School Build a New Social Order

By Brian W. Dotts

> Education is society in process of becoming. Education is humanity on its knees, confessing the inadequacy of what has been. Education is humanity's effective aspiration for a world nearer every heart's desire. Education is the germ of transformation within the shell of the old, the unfolding and growth of the new, its flowering and its decline.
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> —Goodwin Watson, *The Social Frontier*

> The ideals of education, whether men are taught to teach or to plow, to weave or to write must not be allowed to sink to sordid utilitarianism. Education must keep broad ideals before it, and never forget that it is dealing with Souls and not with Dollars.
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> —W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro Artisan*

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What is Education?
The Problem of Turning Answers into Questions

In the first paragraphs of *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey differentiates "between living and inanimate things." The latter, such as a stone, he argues, may

be acted upon in such a way as to fragment its shape from without or, if the stone's "resistance is greater than the force" exerted upon it, the stone "remains outwardly unchanged." On the other hand, "while living things may easily be crushed by superior force, it none the less tries to turn the energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence." Dewey utilized this metaphor to distinguish between two types of learning: "conservative," that which reproduces the status quo through cultural transmission and socialization (the stone that is acted upon), and "progressive," wherein living things grow out of the conditions that gave them life by consciously directing "the energies which act upon [them] into means of [their] own existence," for the purposes of experiencing "growth" and broadening "potentialities" (1944, p. 1, p. 41). These two purposes of education, often perceived as dichotomous, have existed since the Sophists' appeared in ancient Greece.[1] At bottom, they represent two diametrically opposed purposes of education: to control or to liberate.

Dewey recognized this primordial schism during his own time. In 1934, he quoted Roger Baldwin, a founder and executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, who pointed out that teachers and students were being manipulated and objectified by external forces in order to maintain categorical support for existing social arrangements: "The public schools have been handed over to" reactionary groups, according to Baldwin, that were "militant defenders of the status quo," including the "the Daughters of the American Revolution, the American Legion, the Fundamentalists, the Ku Klux Klan, and the War Department" (Dewey, 2011, p. 27). Dewey also criticized the implementation of "compulsory patriotic rites," required Bible reading in schools, and teaching a doctrinaire knowledge of the Constitution. "Three [American] states," he disparaged, made it "a crime" to teach "evolution," and several more required "loyalty oaths" among "students as a condition of graduation." He was appalled by the fact that teachers unions and tenure were under attack, all of which represented an atmosphere that he described as "militant" and formulaic. Unlike the inanimate rock that is objectified and acted upon in Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, teachers and students he believed must act within their given milieu "to translate the desired ideal over into the conduct [and] detail of the school in administration…and subject matter," so that schools could "consciously" reconstruct "society" (Dewey, 2011, p. 27, p. 29). Dewey and other social reconstructionists were attempting to penetrate America's long cultural resistance to intellectualism. They were defending and trying to validate what they believed was the essence of authentic education, inquiry stripped from, but not aloof to, its cultural, social, political, and economic veneers. Their attempts to critique existing institutions were characteristically met with contempt because critique threatened to fracture the existing socio-political system and rupture a deeply woven social fabric fashioned by and deeply laced with a conservative exceptionalism. Intellectuals were and often continue to be depicted as gadflies, troublemakers or agitators in order to discredit their work. In the words of Harold Rosenberg, "the intellectual is one who turns answers into questions," often shifting the steady ground that we stand upon (Hofstadter, 1970, p. 30). Those who

derive financial benefits or power from existing institutional arrangements or those whose cultural identity is deeply interlaced in and mutually reinforced by a nation's dominant culture, tend to be threatened by change and transformation. During social, economic, religious, scientific, or political crises, competing conceptions of the good life emerge, and these ideas are perceived as threats to the existing social order or as an opportunity for progress by others. Due to its potential power in defining a nation's moral compass, the purposes of formal education and schooling become significant among a number of competing groups that struggle to define and thereby institutionalize their insular worldviews. In a word, public schooling is necessarily politicized. While natural science is often politicized, most of us expect physicists, biologists, geneticists, chemists, and astronomers to critique physical phenomena and to investigate paradigmatic anomalies, there is no reason to expect anything less from social scientists, and this is what social foundations scholars do, broadly speaking.

Writing in the midst of social and economic crisis, Harold Rugg made the following observation in 1941: "The current attack on modern education is not the first of its kind. It is true that this present one is nation-wide, more virulent, and promises to last longer and to set back the work of the schools more than any previous one…These [attacks]…coincide fairly closely with the ups and downs of the curves of social hysteria and conflict." A social progressive and professor at Columbia's Teachers College, Rugg outlined a number of recurring attacks on public education by conservative groups during the early twentieth century including "the Red Scare of 1919-1921," followed by the attack on "New Historians," progressive influences in government, and "liberal- and red-baiting" organized by "Hearst newspapers in 1934-1935." These attacks, according to Rugg, were reactionary onslaughts "initiated by professional publicity men and patrioteers," who perceived progressive change—the development of unions and workers' rights, the production of critical histories in higher education, and freethinking social reforms that advocated a "New Statecraft in government" and with it broad educational reforms—as threatening the status quo (Rugg, 2011, pp. 251-257). The notion that schooling should be apolitical or neutral in the midst of such politicization is a perplexing dichotomy, indeed. The common school movement was rooted in and has consistently been shaped by politics. Yet, when politics or ideology noticeably sneaks into the curriculum, controversy often erupts. Piety is exposed to examination, and dare we question the answers that provide us with "stability"? As Immanuel, Kant declared in 1794 regarding his understanding of the Enlightenment, "*Sapere aude*!" or "Dare to know!" (Kant, 1963, p. 3).

Social Foundations: America's School of Critical Theory and the Development of Social Intelligence

Germany witnessed the establishment of The Frankfurt Institute of Social Research in 1923 whose broad purpose included the development of a critical theory

dedicated to moving academia beyond so-called objective methodologies that merely described and explained social, historical, economic, and cultural phenomena. Critical theorists viewed the traditional academic approach, according to David Ingram, as a means "to control or influence the behavior of others" (Ingram, 1990, p. xix). Subjecting human beings to positivist or behaviorist research methods, critical theorists believed, not only impeded a holistic understanding of human nature, it also disregarded or diminished opportunities to improve human existence. Mired in and constricted by insularly research methods, the academician adjudicates his social phenomena with observational acuteness, but he restricts from his scientific conclusions any normative considerations because he has been taught to believe that such judgments are either too ideological or irrational. What is really meant by this accusation is that normative judgments are often messy and controversial, and they often lead to developing questions to widely accepted answers. Knowledge so narrowly defined in academia became a form of methodism that revealed a nearly impenetrable evangelical quality, a self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing ideology that became reified in virtually all levels of educational inquiry in academia (Dotts, 2013). Many twentieth-century social scientists generally, and behaviorists specifically, bled from their methodologies and research conclusions any discussion of or engagement with normative critique in order to maintain so-called objectivity and neutrality. Put differently, by attempting to maintain detachment, academia avoids, in fact, shuns, engaging in normative deliberations about the unequal distribution of political and economic power, inequitable social arrangements, institutional forms of discrimination, social and political conflict, the ideological and political nature of schooling, essentially preserving the *status quo* by treating these phenomena as anomalies of accepted systems rather than as symptomatic of deeper structural problems rooted historically in our cacophonous social fabric. "Education…conceived solely as method," according to Counts, "points nowhere and can arrive nowhere. It is a disembodied spirit" and "it is not education" (Counts, 1934, p. 534).

Franz L. Neumann, a member of the Frankfurt School, began a discussion of the role of the social scientist or intellectual as "the critical conscience of society," and because "conscience is…inconvenient, particularly in politics…he is always ostracized" (Neumann, 1953, p. 4). A critical theorist, whether of the Frankfurt School or of the Social Reconstructionist type, on the other hand, repeatedly challenged the notion that method was ideologically neutral. "Growth must have direction," Counts asserted in his 1934 publication of *The Social Foundations of Education*, but its corollary must not be perfunctorily determined. "Education," in the broadest sense of the term, "is by no means an exclusively intellectual matter," he added (1934, p. 536). Counts and others viewed education, if used in its fullest and most natural sense, as an infinite process of acclimatization realized through conscious social reconstruction.

According to Deborah Britzman, quoted by Jerilyn Kelle, "the context of teaching is political, it is an ideological context that privileges the interests, values, and practices necessary to maintain the status quo." Teaching is by no means "innocent

of ideology," she declares. Rather, the context of education tends to preserve "the institutional values of compliance to authority, social conformity, efficiency, standardization, competition, and the objectification of knowledge." (Kelle, 1996, pp. 66-67). This objectification of students, according to Paulo Freire, is achieved in part by an "education…suffering from narration sickness," a "sonority of words" that have lost "their transform[ative] power" by making the student a "spectator" and "not [a] re-creator" (Freire, 2011, p. 71, p. 75). Objectifying students determines their futures or at least confines their opportunities. Critical theorists and social reconstructionists, on the other hand, who have long conceded the ideological nature of teaching, believe that "humanity consists of potentials that ought to be realized," and that this commitment "depends on human agency," according to Ingram (Ingram, 1990, p. xx). With roots in German Idealism, critical theorists seek to interpret and transform society by fracturing the assumption that social, economic, and political institutions developed naturally and objectively. In addition, critical theorists rejected the epistemological assumptions made by others; namely, that absolute truths existed or that they could be discovered. The original Frankfurt School theorists included Max Horkheimer, Friedrich Pollock, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Georg Lukács, and Leo Lowenthal, among others, who were dedicated to ideology critique and the long-term goal of reconstructing society in order to "ensure a true, free, and just life" emancipated from "authoritarian and bureaucratic politics" (Held, 1980, pp. 15-16). Clearly a normative (and ideological) enterprise, critical theorists utilized their interdisciplinary expertise in history, philosophy, political science, sociology, economics, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism "to lay the foundation for an exploration…of questions concerning the conditions which make possible the reproduction and transformation of society, the meaning of culture, and the relation between the individual, society and nature" (Held, 1980, p. 16). Critical theorists largely devoted their energies to interpreting political, social, and economic institutions, and it was not until the like-minded social reconstructionists emerged in the United States that schooling and education, also important key and relatively new social institutions responsible for educating the masses, would be analyzed similarly.

A decade after the inception of critical theory in Germany and amidst the Great Depression, America witnessed the emergence of its own Frankfurt School, identified as a social reconstructionist movement that found a home in social foundations programs in various academic institutions including its first department in Columbia University's Teachers College. While a formal collaboration between the Institute in Germany and America's social reconstructionists does not appear to have existed, membership overlapped both organizations including prominent American faculty, such as Charles Beard, Margaret Mead, Robert M. Hutchins, and W. F. Ogburn (Jay, 1996, p. 114; Wheatland, 2009, p. 44, p. 66, p. 222). Furthermore, in 1933, the University in Exile was established at the New School for Social Research in New York City providing a safe haven for Germany's Frankfurt School scholars fleeing Nazi Germany. In fact, it was during the 1930s that social reconstruction-

ists and members of the Frankfurt School found a comfortable home at Columbia University, as well as the latter also taking up residency in the New School, both "in the center of the capitalist world" (Jay, 1996, p. 39). Not unlike their brethren across the Atlantic, America's social reconstructionists developed what the Frankfurt School identified as ideology critique, which is peppered throughout their journals, *The Social Frontier* (1934-1939) and *Frontiers of Democracy* (1939-1943).

Conceptualizing the past and the future from the precipice of the Great Depression, "political reaction [and] cultural regimentation," and the reality of rapid social changes taking place, George Counts concluded that Americans "must choose among the diverse roads now opening before them…whether the great tradition of democracy is to pass away with the individualistic economy to which it has been linked historically or…to undergo the transformation necessary for survival in an age of close economic interdependence" (Counts, 2011, p. 20). Cautioning against "evasion" or indifference to the changes taking place, Counts outlined the social reconstructionists' broader agenda in the group's 1934 inaugural publication of *The Social Frontier*. Declaring "absolute objectivity and detachment" as impracticable in human affairs, educators were "a positive creative force in American society" that could serve as "a mighty instrument of…collective action." First and foremost, according to Counts, educators serve a unique capacity to critique the status quo with the aim of improving "human existence" and "the democratic ideal" (Counts, 2011, pp. 20-21). Critique, reflection, and action, often referred to as praxis, are intrinsically educational, going far beyond the mere transmission of a culture, which is why its virtuosity in the eyes of its practitioners is often viewed as threatening to established authority. But because it is inherently educational, Counts, Dewey, Kilpatrick, and others justifiably situated this academic discipline in teacher preparation institutions and specifically in social foundations programs where they believed the field could be supported, cultivated, and germinate in succeeding generations of teachers an appreciation of and commitment to praxis. Second, Counts framed this pursuit as an attempt to affirm and actualize for everyone the moral claims put forth in the *Declaration of Independence*; namely, "that 'all men are created equal' and are entitled to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'" Critiques have often illustrated the hypocrisy between the ideals expressed in Founding documents and American practices, and their fuller realization has rarely taken place without disturbing the status quo. Populist movements, emancipation of slaves, women's rights, workers' rights, the Civil Rights Movement, among others, have all served as important educative, and often extra-constitutional, moments that illustrate this hypocrisy. Third, social reconstructionists were devoted to ideology critique. "Every important educational event, institution, theory, and program" will be subject to "critical review," according to Counts, in order to fulfill the final goal of social reconstructionists: identifying and positively remedying the root causes of social injustice. For Counts and other social reconstructionists, education (as opposed to training) should not be static; that it is a fundamental and existential aspect of a broader culture's "process of evolution," and what is unique about edu-

cation is its ability to rise above, beyond, or perhaps, to broaden the horizons of what otherwise appear to be an objective reality operating behind the backs of its inhabitants. Social reconstruction, as the name suggests, had "no desire to promote a restricted and technical professionalism," according to Counts. To rely merely on the administration of existing institutions, like their Frankfurt School brethren cautioned, would simply and gratuitously perpetuate the status quo. Rather, social reconstructionists adopted a sociopolitical "role" for "education in advancing the welfare and interests of the great masses of the people who do the work of society –those who labor on farms and ships and in the mines, shops, and factories of the world" (Counts, 2011, pp. 20-21). Humanity was not expected to serve the interests of capitalism or of politics; rather, social reconstructionists sought to invert this relationship to ensure that institutions would serve the interests of all. Unlike their Frankfurt School brethren, America's social reconstructionists were determined to look beyond higher education's role in preparing philosophers, political theorists, psychologists, historians, and sociologists by attempting to cultivate a specialized field that drew from all these disciplines in order to edify professional teachers' *social intelligence* with regard to how institutionalized schooling, captured by certain interest groups, tended to reinforce, evangelize, or perpetuate a given social order.[2] While the social reconstructionists were often painted by their critics as "High Marxists," radicals, revolutionaries or communists, they repudiated a predetermined "blue print" for training teachers. They did not support training teachers to be revolutionaries, but they did reject "the notion that educators, like factory hands…merely…follow blue prints made by" interest groups, according to George A. Coe (1935, p. 26). Likewise, Counts objected to the "entrenchment" of a privileged "minority" supported by "law and custom, holding title to the social means of production" (Counts, 1934, p. 513). *The Social Frontier*'s editors criticized the fact, for example, that "the typical board of education," was unrepresentative and undemocratic, disproportionately made up of "merchants" and "lawyers," as well as "physicians" and "bankers…manufacturers" and "business executives," making it "practically impossible for the school to serve as an agency for the transformation of society." Likewise, the editors concluded, "the very existence of progressive education depends on the radical democratization of the board of education" (Editors, 1935, p. 4).

John Dewey claimed that the single most important and unifying theme framing education should be democracy. Dewey and his colleagues attempted to rectify the individualistic, competitive, and self-interested ethos penetrating the public sphere by emphasizing the multiple benefits of collectivism and cooperation, which required acknowledging our interdependence for democracy to be meaningful. Public life (including public schools) was being eclipsed by an instrumental mentality that once was limited to the market and market relationships. "The line between economy and government," Counts concluded, "is becoming increasingly difficult to discern" (Counts, 1934, p. 421). Nowhere was this more noticeable to Counts and others than in the nation's public schools. Acknowledging its underdevelopment,

Dewey asserted, "the democratic ideal…is not filled in, either in society at large or in its significance for education," (Dewey, 2011, p. 221) but that the purposes of schooling should unite in this single and essential commitment. Indeed, Dewey realized the hypocrisy of developing a fixed definition of democracy, particularly since he understood democracy as a social practice, a means of becoming, rather than a predefined ideal to be irrevocably reached. He viewed education and schooling as the ideal setting for democracy's gestation. "The school," Dewey asserted (1935), "must have some social orientation" and "the place of intelligence looms as the central issue" (p. 9). In other words, intellect required developing a social intelligence, a mental agility able to critique society's problems. Schools should provide spaces for critique of society, not with the intention of being subversive or revolutionary, but to draw out from each child his or her ability to transcend the ideological veneers—those preconceived ideas, beliefs, and customs that they absorb outside the school. Each classroom should facilitate the possibilities for what psychologists refer to as gestalt effects. Scientific revolutions may be the result of such an effect in the natural sciences, and if one has faith in education and knowledge, there is no practical reason to reject their value in any field. But in order to realize the benefits of a gestalt switch, one must make the leap of faith to look at the world differently, to understand new perspectives, and to consider alternatives. "An education that does not strive to promote the fullest and most thorough understanding of society and social institutions," according to Counts, "is not worthy of the name" (Counts, 1934, p. 537). We are selling ourselves short, if we utilize schools as merely dispensers of select information. If we expect genuine education to occur teachers could not be "neutral" and "aloof" on the one hand, nor could they be "'purely intellectual,'" on the other hand, Dewey protested. Teachers should not exhibit a "mechanical…attitude toward social conflict" (Dewey, 1935, p. 9). To do so, would be to deny the vivacity of education's possibilities. According to Hofstadter's review of Dewey's theory, "If a democratic society is truly to serve all its members, it must devise schools in which, at the germinal point in childhood, these members will be able to cultivate their capacities and, instead of simply reproducing the qualities of the larger society, will learn how to improve them" (Hofstadter, 1970, pp. 362-363). A democratic way of life could best be achieved by rooting democratic practices in the social character of schools, to envelope the multiple perspectives democracy permits, and this fact required teachers to become familiar with the social foundations of their field, to develop in them what the social reconstructionists repeatedly refer to as "social intelligence." Indeed, the expectation that public "schools should consciously be partners in the construction of a changed society," as John Dewey asserted in 1934, illustrated a radical idea and perhaps an unrealizable expectation given the fact that government schools served conservative purposes (Dewey, 2011, p. 29, pp. 221-222). On the other hand, Kliebard argues that Dewey's agenda, often perceived more radically than intended, "was much more closely tied to the ability of the schools to teach independent thinking and to the ability of students to analyze social problems than it was to an organized effort

designed to redress specific social evils" (Kliebard, 1995, p. 170). Dewey did not expect the school to upend society; rather, as institutions that touched virtually all youth, he saw schooling as the most effective means of propagating the habits of critical thinking, cooperative learning, and ascertaining how to solve problems so that students could, once they became adults, carry on this same activity democratically in their attempts to improve society. Dewey viewed change as an inevitable consequence of a developing complex society, but he expected change to occur through slow accretion rather than through radical revolution. Similarly, Jesse Newlon, Director of the Division of Foundations of Education at Teachers College, asserted in 1940 that the department's goals did not include stirring up revolution. Rather, he believed that "teachers should denounce…methods and…doctrines that point in the direction of dictatorship –whether the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or the dictatorship of the 'élite,'" as all "these doctrines are poison to our way of life." What Newlon did expect, however, was to purge from teacher education the commonly accepted "myth of neutrality." This is a rational conclusion to make if one's goal is committed to realizing democratic practices and progressive change. If America considered itself a "democracy" above all else, then why should the economy, a mere instrument of private production and exchange, dictate democracy's boundaries? Viewing democracy as the archetype and capitalism obsequiously as an ancillary subsystem, Newlon advocated the "pragmatic" and democratic approach in teacher education. "The political education of all members of the profession is," he declared, "a first essential" (Newlon, 1940, pp. 23-24). Elsewhere, Newlon asserted that democratic education requires that we "neither accept the free enterprise system uncritically nor entirely condemn it on preconceived or doctrinaire grounds." Rather, we should inquire, "'How does this system work today?' Does it minister adequately to the actual needs of the American people?" In all likelihood, according to Newlon, the answers to these questions "will be neither the total acceptance nor the total rejection of the 'private enterprise' system," and that improvements could always be made upon sincere reflection and analysis (Newlon, 1941, p. 210). This expectation was generally accepted in the natural sciences, and social reconstructionists held similar expectations for teacher education.

The idea of generational sovereignty and breaking free from outdated ideas and practices was nothing new. It was an idea advocated by individuals like Aristotle, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and even the more conservative Edmund Burke, but when Dewey made his educational philosophy known, it had the potential of filtering down into classrooms. The whole history of education illustrates the threatening nature of knowledge when its purposes reach beyond reproduction of the status quo. The attack on social reconstructionism during the first half of the twentieth century illustrated the typical reactionary response to this educational challenge. Responding to what was perceived by critics as "treason," the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Legion developed a full counter attack against the social reconstructionists' pursuit of inquiry (Kliebard, 1995, p. 177; Spring, 2008, p. 299).

The Editors of *The Social Frontier* in 1935 condemned the overwhelming corporate influence in the schools: "Business men and financiers…have begun to consider the function of the school" to inculcate "blatant patriotism, blind loyalty, optimistic crowing about the 'bright' side of things," and "practicality." The editors objected to the present state of education, and they responded by asking, "What shall the elementary school, high school, and college say about all this? Shall they deny it and futilely seek to nurture youth on cold facts and empty ideals?" The editors called on teachers to "sow the seeds" of social change and not to agonize over the potential "whirlwind" caused by their actions (Editors, 2011, pp. 99–100). Witnessing the capture of public education by interest groups and corporate America, the Social Reconstructionists sought to highlight the fact that schooling, like other public and political institutions, was being infiltrated by special interests intent on utilizing this social institution as a venue to indoctrinate masses of children. Not unlike contemporary attempts to privatize public schools, Social Reconstructionists witnessed the growing business influence in schools, introducing the notion that "capital" was beginning to "command goods well beyond its markets," as Lewis Hyde astutely noticed more recently (Hyde, 2010, p. 222). In their final issue of *Frontiers of Democracy* the Editors quoted William Kirkpatrick who asserted that, "a medium" was necessary "for the development of a constructive social consciousness among educational workers." Moreover, in light of their decades-long mission, they quoted Sidney Hook, who demurred, "Among the most poignant tragedies of history are those in which men cried 'impossible' too soon" (Editors, 1943, p. 100).

Not only did George Counts, Harold Rugg, and John Dewey, among others, endorse a comprehensive and controversial political agenda for social foundations within their social reconstructionist vision, debates also focused on the objectives for including social foundations courses in teacher preparation institutes. Should curricula be exclusively devoted to professional education, liberal education, scientific research or a combination of all three, for example? (Cohen, 1999, p. 11). Historically, social foundations programs and faculty have weathered a relentless ebb and flow of debates that endure today. Social foundations and social foundations faculty face surmountable challenges in not only justifying their liberal arts and humanities content, but also in rationalizing their value in teacher preparation institutions that are increasingly being transformed to meet the neoliberal agenda. This agenda is hostile to the liberal arts and humanities and therefore to social foundations programs that link these academic disciplines to teacher preparation programs.

Dan Butin recognized "the near total ascendancy of an instrumentalist conceptualization of teaching and learning in educational policymaking." Social foundations of education, he concluded, "no longer has relevance either because it is no longer needed to prepare highly qualified teachers or (perhaps even worse) because it can supposedly be done more efficiently and effectively in other ways." Excluding a discussion of educational foundations in all but one of several policy documents he reviewed, the impression is that social foundations coursework "provides no quantifiable value-added to teacher preparation (which in turn seems

to provide very little value-added to student learning)," making social foundations of education appear "irrelevant." Moreover, Butin concluded, it appears that the authors of the policy documents he reviewed have obliquely resolved that "social foundations of education material can be more efficiently covered in other educational coursework through more direct instruction. In either case, social foundations scholars and the social foundations field [have] become inconsequential" (Butin, 2005, pp. 293-294). The key descriptor in Butin's analysis is "instrumental," which elucidates the contemporary positioning of public education within a utilitarian, efficiency-situated, goal-oriented, and outcome- (output) based neoliberal ethos. By reframing our debates about public education and the purposes of schooling, at whatever level, within a free-market ideological discourse, we delegitimize academic disciplines that are not perceived as having tangible and direct impacts on students' standardized assessments on the one hand, and we privilege curricula that is otherwise perceived as having more immediate and functional relevance in meeting neoliberal expectations. In 2008, Pope and Stemhagen (2008) declared similarly that, "those who wish to standardize not only educational outcomes but seemingly all aspects of education, including the skills and selves of those who teach, tend not to see the worth of reflective or broad-based foundational thinking in teacher preparation programs and schools of education in general" (p. 248).

According to Kerr, Mandzuk, and Raptis (2011) the problems experienced by social foundations of education programs and faculty are not unique to the United States. Focusing primarily on Canada, they concluded in a recent study that "faculties of education across North America are increasingly characterized by unquestioned ideologies, often leaving prospective teachers with the erroneous impression that there is one 'right way' to teach" (Kerr, Mandzuk, & Raptis, 2011, p. 120). Similarly, and perhaps of greater concern is the fact that the "criterion of efficiency necessarily leads to a violation of equity," according to Braverman 1982, pp. 398-399). In other words, an emphasis on efficiency in education appears to be an odd goal for an institution (or a relationship) devoted to learning, creativity, and imagination. In the name of efficiency, schooling has been standardized, routinized, and assimilatory. Part of this resulted from the commitment to providing schooling for a mass population, but Americanization previously, and *No Child Left Behind* today, make educational experiences merely a form of indoctrination, rote memorization, and systematization. Students who do not or cannot adapt to this process of information production (a cookie-cutter system) will often experience greater incongruities, more hurdles to academic achievement, and fewer opportunities. As Charles Beard demurred, "ideology…surrounds political institutions" and "runs against the notion that social inventiveness is an essential quality of the good citizen." Rather, "it sanctions the transmission of achievements already accomplished and attempts to stamp them as stereotypes good for all time" (Beard, 1932, p. 112).

"Democracy," Dewey wrote, "is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" that integrates citizens regardless of their "class, race, and national territory which [otherwise] kept

men from perceiving the full import of their activity." By enlarging the variety of perspectives each of us can envisage, Dewey's conception of democracy as educative reveals the existential meaning that he gave to both and why he believed that democracy, more than economics, religious beliefs, and social customs, serves as the archetype of public life. That is, by enlarging the variety of perspectives that we publicly take into account and deliberate upon, we set in motion a greater potential for "fully and adequately" realizing what each of us "is capable of becoming…in all the offices of life" (Dewey, 1944, p. 87, p. 358). According to Sheldon Wolin, Dewey was critical of many of the Enlightenment philosophers, including John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill, whose economic theories undermined their simultaneous support for the liberalization of politics. In other words, their support for a free market cultivated "a business culture that thwarted the democratic potential of" institutions. They fused the act of seeking self-interests in the economic realm with political and civic virtue in the public realm. This "reduction of politics to interest," according to Wolin, "has cast a powerful shadow on modern politics" (Wolin, 2004, p. 251, pp. 512–513). In 1971, John Rawls similarly reflected upon the rationalities that distinguished a liberal market with liberal democracy by asserting, "The theory of competitive markets [is] not moved by the desire to act justly," and to realize "just…arrangements." Rather, these "normally require…the use of sanctions" in order to "stabilize" conflict resulting from "persons who oppose one another as indifferent if not hostile powers." The atomistic and self-interested nature of "private society," including the competitive market that is intended to channel and give life to these principles, reminds us that "private society is not held together by a public conviction that its basic arrangements are just and good in themselves, but by the calculations of everyone…pursu[ing] their personal ends." (Rawls, 1971, pp. 521-522) However, unlike Dewey, who viewed democracy as an existential activity, Rawls's liberalism prioritizes "the role of administration," according to Wolin, over participatory democracy. Conceptualizing the state as an arbiter of competing interests not only results in the encapsulation of politics within market ideology, it reduces the citizen and civic virtue to market man. Wolin concludes, for example, that "The demos has been hammered into resignation, into fearful acceptance of the economy as the basic reality of its existence, so huge, so sensitive, so ramifying in its consequences that no group, party, or political actors dare alter its fundamental structure" (Wolin, 2004, p. 536, p. 578). The permeation of the market's influence in areas that were once considered to be public responsibilities, including schooling, has been so extensive as to relegate civil society to a pliable condition that can be molded to serve the former's demands and interests. Contributing to the eclipse of the public and civic realm is the fact that the language of economics, which has been so prevalent in our contemporary national discourse, appears neutral in the same way that positivism has positioned the social sciences. In other words, the laws of supply and demand, inflation and interest rates, changes in employment and unemployment are given as natural developments (i.e., laws) and therefore, void of ideology. Indeed, this is inaccurate, but contemporary ideologies of neoliberalism and

libertarianism often portray market processes and outcomes as the natural outgrowth of an "invisible hand" produced by the uninhibited interest-seeking individuals who compose society. These ideologies are therefore presented as innocuous and free from racist, classist, and sexist ideologies because their outcomes are depicted as the natural, which represents nothing more than the sum of society's organic parts enjoying their liberty and pursuing their own self-interest.

Richard Hofstadter asserted more recently about America's anti-intellectualism and "the Great Inquisition of the 1950s," it is true "that the [Reactionary] needs his Communists badly, and is pathetically reluctant to give them up." Why does the Reactionary need his "Communists"? According to Hofstadter, attacking intellectuals is a way "to discharge resentments and frustrations, to punish, to satisfy enmities whose roots lay elsewhere." The underlying cause of this attack on intellectuals had more to do with "a long-standing revolt against modernity," and change (Hofstadter, 1970, pp. 41-42). The "irony," he went on to claim, "is that Americans now suffer as much from the victory as from the defeat of their aspirations," which he explains below:

> What is it that has taken root in the world, if it is not the spirit of American activism, the belief that life can be made better, that colonial peoples can free themselves as the Americans did, that poverty and oppression do not have to be endured, that backward countries can become industrialized and enjoy a high standard of living, that the pursuit of happiness is everybody's business? The very colonial countries that belligerently reject our leadership try to follow our example…But this emulation has become tinted with ideologies we do not recognize and has brought consequences we never anticipated. The American example of activism has been imitated; what we call the American way of life has not" (Hofstadter, 1970, p. 44).

When education stops reproducing the status quo, when the above ironies are brought to life, examined, and critiqued, when we self-reflect and become self-critical, when we attempt to produce change and social improvement, when the work of powerful and vested interests is challenged by new knowledge, this is when intellectuals and education become threatening. "Reformers of science like Galileo, Descartes, and their successors," Dewey reminded his readers, "carried analogous methods into ascertaining the facts about nature." Their "interest in discovery took the place of an interest in systematizing and 'proving' received beliefs" (Dewey 1944, pp. 294-295).

If Dewey or Rugg were alive today, they could add countless other attacks on education in the United States that parallel many of those they witnessed prior to World War II. Reactionaries have criticized the emergence of multiculturalism and ethnic studies since the 1960s, the inclusion of critical histories, such as those engendered by Howard Zinn, James Loewen, and other scholars, they have criticized a humanistic emphasis in public school curricula, the teaching of evolution in science classes, and today, our commitment to public education is undergoing a widespread political attack as neoliberals and neoconservatives continue their work to privatize public schools at all levels. Like Rugg's description above, reactionary

and cyclical assaults on higher education generally and social foundations programs specifically have become predictable occurrences in the United States and now throughout much of North America (Kerr, Mandzuk, & Raptis, 2011). Especially since the Progressive Era, the "intellectual" has often been painted by the Right as an "ideologist," according to Hofstadter, as if giving the appearance of objectivity was non-ideological, and perhaps this phenomenon was inevitable with the rise of ideology critique, which was increasingly "identified with the idea of political and moral protest" (Hofstadter, 1970, p. 38). Indeed, it was near the turn of the twentieth century when we witnessed a dramatic shift occurring in higher education, specifically related to disciplines that were engaged in critical theory—when educational institutions moved beyond explanatory research methods and included normative critiques of social, political, and economic institutions. The aim for critical theorists and social reconstructionists alike includes the altering of educational (and other) institutions in ways that those institutions themselves normally prohibit because they have been captured by powerful groups that have a vested interest in utilizing the school as a mechanism to maintain the status quo. George Counts demurred in 1934 that, "In both the cities and the universities…authority" had "passed into the hands of business men," likewise resulting in "education" reflecting "a business enterprise." Like other social, political, and economic institutions in society, Counts concluded that public school curricula would reflect the demands of a "sect…party…class [or] special interest…in proportion to its [political] strength," as each of these forces "strive…to incorporate its viewpoint into the curriculum" (Counts, 1934, p. 256, p. 270, p. 272). What developed, and what continues to be a center of conflict today over the issue of education, is a struggle over these two polarizing purposes of formal schooling. The first purpose is generally described as the transmission and indoctrination of the values, customs, ideologies, beliefs, and rituals, circumscribed by the current generation's most powerful interest groups who have succeeded in extracting from consideration the principles and cultural ideals of less powerful groups. The second purpose of education, often perceived as too radical or dangerous, is the view that education should serve as a means of critique and social reconstruction in order to improve society. "Without action," according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "thought can never ripen into truth," was a quote used by Harold Rugg in his appeal to "thinking men" in 1935 (Rugg, 2011, p. 94).

Plus Ça Change, Plus C'est La Même Chose

While reading *The Social Frontier* and *Frontiers of Democracy*, one is easily reminded of the old French cliché, "the more things change the more they stay the same." As mentioned above, much of what was taking place during the Progressive Era and the Social Reconstructionists' battle to remake schooling into an institution for positive change, parallels similar conflicts taking place today. However, what is new today is the attempt over the past 40 years to relegate public schools and universities to market caprice thereby removing public commitments to and local and state governance and public accountability over education. This deeply entrenched

privatization movement is having dire consequences for education generally and social foundations of education programs specifically throughout the United States. Liberal arts and humanities are being devalued in a neoliberal environment that increasingly controls grant funding, the creation of corporate-like administrative structures, and the shift of higher education to market orientations (Hyslop-Margison & Leonard, 2012). Colleges and departments of education are experiencing similar pressures to shift their professional commitments and resources in response to this neoliberal agenda generally, and the utilitarian demands of federal policies like *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*. We have quickly moved from a centralized and top-down approach to public education embodied in laws like NCLB in 2002, to a post-NCLB environment that is compelling changes in higher education reverberating from the bottom-up. In other words, teacher preparation programs are becoming less relevant with regard to their professional leadership and innovative guidance roles in k-12 schools as the latter increasingly have to commit more time and resources toward meeting the narrower functional requirements of NCLB, particularly when not doing so can result in punitive sanctions. "The redefinition of educational issues as economic issues removes the need for those knowledgeable in education to be meaningful members of the decision-making process," according to Daniel B. Saunders (2010, p. 59). With students increasingly seeing themselves as consumers, they have become "less focused on learning, challenging themselves and their beliefs," less likely "to explor[e] different areas of knowledge, and more interested in obtaining the credential that will enable them to achieve the economic success they desire" (Saunders, 2010, pp. 63-64). Likewise, we are witnessing a gradual inversion whereby colleges and schools of education are restructuring their institutions in order to accommodate the excessive federal regulatory requirements that NCLB and *Race to the Top* impose on schools, teachers, students, and administrators. An atmosphere has pervaded all levels of education with utilitarian aims and disciplinarian methods intended to garner specifically rigid outcomes. The social efficiency model of education has now taken on a novel twist –no longer are policy makers and business leaders demanding that schools meet the needs of training a skilled workforce. Now they are diligently attempting to privatize public education in order to guarantee its raison d'être as a direct instrument of the market. The economy, rather than democracy, is becoming the new archetype.

Education's Neoliberal Leviathan

In 1932, George Counts protested the fact that democracy had been incorrectly "identified with political forms and functions." It was inaccurate, for example, to refer to "the federal constitution…popular elections…or the practice of universal suffrage" with democracy. He was not opposed to these institutions; he often referred to them in celebratory ways. However, like Dewey, he declared that, "The most genuine expression of democracy" was "a sentiment…respectful to the moral equality of men." It was, as he put it, "an aspiration towards a society in which this

sentiment will find complete fulfillment" (Counts, 1932, pp. 40–41). Writing in the midst of the Great Depression, he viewed the system of capitalism as antithetical to the democratic ideal. Capitalism is a form "of industrial feudalism," he asserted, because it infects and subverts democracy if left insufficiently and improperly regulated. It is "cruel and inhuman…wasteful and inefficient," and "it has exploited our natural resources." Capitalism "has plunged the great nations of the earth into a succession of wars ever more devastating and catastrophic in character," as well as wrecking economic havoc by "depriv[ing]…millions of men…the means of livelihood" (Counts, 1932, p. 45, pp. 47-48).

What is often overlooked today and what tends to be lost in the extant literature on privatization is the extent to which the business community has historically shaped public schooling since the end of the nineteenth century, and they rarely if ever point to the number of problems that have been engendered as a result of this influence. For instance, philanthropists and northern industrialists were extremely influential in maintaining segregated education in the South following the Civil War, and at the turn of the twentieth century, administrative progressives were successful in transferring many of the techniques of production and efficiency to their consolidation of urban schools districts. In fact, the school reforms during the first half-of the twentieth century paralleled business practices to such an extent that it has long been referred to by educational historians as the age of scientific management and social efficiency, while students have increasingly been referred to as human capital (Kliebard, 1995; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

As part of the broader libertarian assault on government today, neoconservative and neoliberal groups are assailing public schools from within *and* from without. They are attempting to siphon students from public schools into private religious institutions with vouchers and educational tax credits and into charter schools that are operated by private Educational Management Organizations (EMOs). Hence, what we are witnessing today is a transition from an older relationship wherein private interests merely competed to exert influence in the public schools to a relationship that is obscuring the very nature of public education. Public education, in other words, is being eclipsed by private market forces. Founded in 1973, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is one of the largest and most effective organizations working behind the scenes to privatize a variety of public functions including schools. Its broadly stated goals include the advancement of a neoliberal agenda, and its membership includes state and federal legislators and businesspersons who share these commitments and facilitate the passage of their model legislation. According to its website, ALEC highlights its founding principles as "a *nonpartisan* (my emphasis) membership association for conservative state lawmakers who share…a common belief in limited government, free markets, federalism, and individual liberty." (http://www.alec.org/about-alec/history/). Moving beyond the status of an interest group attempting to influence school policies and curricula from without, organizations like ALEC, along with a network of neoliberal philanthropies and private educational companies, are gradually insti-

tutionalizing, and therefore, solidifying, their influence from within, supplanting or reconstructing, if you will, a number of political institutions, including schools, in order to expand and freeze a neoliberal hegemony. This movement is already affecting colleges of education throughout the country and providing yet another attack on social foundations programs.

Citing Alex Molnar's work, Saltman concludes that "educational privatization almost always involves not only the upward redistribution of wealth but the redistribution of control over schooling." (Saltman, 2000, p. 11) Unable to abolish the public schools, many of the newer privatization schemes are finding value in operating educational management organizations with little or no risk and with guaranteed sources of funding. "In terms of public-school governance," according to Kumashiro, traditional public "neighborhood schools are increasingly required to become more centralized in their governance, more monitored in their performance on standardized tests," dependent on smaller budgets, "and even more regulated in their curriculum and instruction," while "charter schools" enjoy relatively "more autonomy and flexibility in how they operate and account for allocated resources" (Kumashiro, 2012, p. 42).

Kumashiro has distinguished newer forms of philanthropy as a form of speculation. In other words, "Unlike traditional philanthropy, which sought to...'give back' to society, venture philanthropy parallels venture capitalism with the goal of investing capital in ways that earn more" (Kumashiro, 2012, pp. 69–70). In addition, "venture philanthropy…operates under different incorporation laws" that provide tax shelter[s] for…financial investments," and venture "philanthropists…are now getting significantly involved in goal setting, decision making, and evaluating progress and outcomes to ensure that their priorities are met." Clearly, this direct legislative involvement "allows them to more directly and substantially impact public policy, particularly in a climate where their financial aid is so desperately needed" (Kumashiro, 2012, pp. 69-70). Moreover, Kumashiro has illustrated that a number of venture philanthropists exist including the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the former John M. Olin Foundation, the Scaife Family Foundations, and the Smith Richardson Foundation. Newer foundations include the Charles Koch Foundation, among others. According to Kumashiro, these "conservative foundations…target funding to organizations like ALEC that aggressively lobby…state legislatures and Congress," and they "engage effectively in media campaigns" in order to increase support for model legislation. The fact that many state legislators are also members of ALEC only increases the chances for success. This "conservative movement has emerged," according to Kumashiro, "as an interconnected web of organizations with aligned missions and coordinated strategies, often facilitated by shared board members" of larger "Philanthropy" and "Business Roundtables" (Kumashiro, 2012, pp. 65-67).

Conclusion: Speculation and the Means of Educational Production

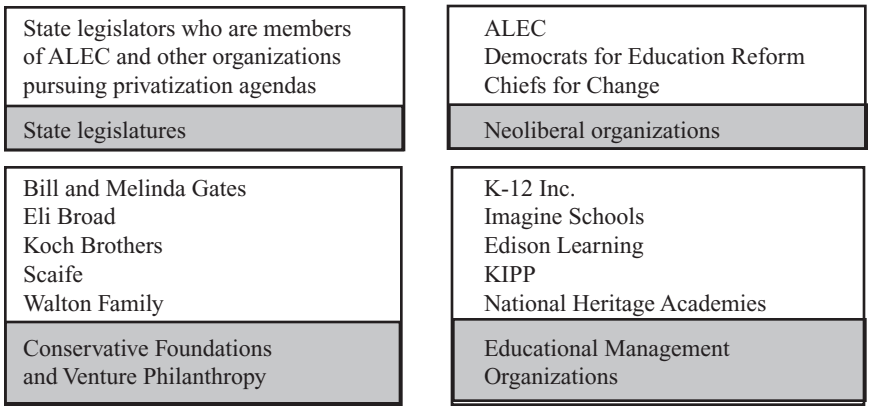
We are witnessing something akin to the old "iron triangle" that used to serve as a political metaphor describing the interconnectedness between congressional committees, executive agencies, and interest groups. I have come to think of the new relationship described above as privatization "squared," wherein the following four interconnected groups, as shown in Figure 1, work in tandem in order to change the landscape of public education.

Many conservative foundations involved in venture philanthropy provide funds to neoliberal organizations involved in legislative advocacy at all levels of government, but particularly at the state level with regard to education policy. State legislators are often members of groups like ALEC and therefore share many of their goals. Entrepreneurs seeking to make profits (or fees) have created a number of educational management organizations that are funded with state tax dollars. Legislatures friendly to such groups and the goals they are pursuing have facilitated the implementation of neoliberal policies. This has resulted in institutionalizing the intricate web of relationships I have identified below in the figure titled "privatization squared." By creating an institutional structure that facilitates the relationship between neoliberal groups, legislators that serve as members of these groups, for-profit and "non-profit" educational organizations, and conservative philanthropists who are increasingly funding privatization schemes, we are witnessing the creation of an educational industrial complex that is affecting every level of public education. Social foundations programs are as vulnerable as they have ever been in this new environment. Teacher preparation institutes are increasingly feeling the effects

Figure 1

Privatization Squared

This Figure represents a selection of the four major groups networked in the current privatization movement.



of laws like *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* since their student have to account for the utilitarian and standard-based reforms. What was (and continues to be) a top-down imposition of standardization and accountability, reinforced by punitive sanctions, is now percolating up into teacher preparation institutes as the latter are having to respond in ways that prepare future teachers for the neoliberal paradigm. "Within the universities," according to Hofstadter, "business schools were often non-intellectual and at times anti-intellectual centers dedicated to a rigidly conservative set of ideas." Similarly, Hofstadter quotes a response given by a mid-western business school upon the suggestion "that it offer a course on the problems of trade unionism," as follows: "'We don't want our students to pay any attention to anything that might raise questions about management or business policy in their minds.'" The irony, Hofstadter asserts, is that this "vocational" and "anti-intellectual" focus is actually atypical among "top business executives" who often "speak of the importance of liberal education, broad training, and imaginative statecraft in the business world" (Hofstadter, 1970, p. 263). With similar irony, the contemporary privatization movement is manipulating public education at all levels toward utilitarian purposes and circumscribing a larger focus on the development of critical thinking skills and the cultivation of creativity, abilities that are increasingly valued by top executives in the globalized economy. Imagine if we were to stop reifying our economic system and reconstruct education and teacher preparation institutions in ways that are compatible with the social reconstructionists' agenda. Pick up a typical social foundations survey text and you are likely to discover a discussion related to education in a global society that makes the following or similar conclusions: "the main forces that define globalization in education today" include "increasing diversity, increasing complexity, the premium on collaboration, the need to take multiple perspectives on problems, and the premium on moving across language and cultural boundaries" (Suárez-Orozco, 2005, p. 211). Likewise, Dolby and Rahman (2008) have illustrated the importance of social foundations fields of inquiry and "trajectories" (p. 686) that have significantly contributed to global education research. These issues require deep consideration and the critique of existing institutions, reconstructing how we view ourselves and the global community. I conclude with a quote from the editors of *The Social Frontier*, who challenged their readers in 1935 by asserting,

> Dare the university say that it has no research department? Dare researchers say that there are regions into which they will not peer? Dare intelligent men and women say that what research has established as truth shall be cast aside if it goes contrary to the authority of established institutions? How long can established institutions withstand toppling traditions? And what shall the elementary school, high school, and college say about all this? Shall they deny it and futilely seek to nurture youth on cold facts and empty labels? Veritably, teachers must sow the seed and society must learn not to fear the whirlwind (Editors, 2011, p. 100).

Herein lay the contemporary challenge facing education generally and social foundations programs specifically.

Notes

[1] See Jaeger, W. (1967). *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 300.

[2] William H. Kilpatrick published an article in *The Social Frontier* in 1936 entitled "Freedom to Develop Social Intelligence." In Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., (Ed.), *The Social Frontier: A Critical Reader*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 164-167.

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