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**Postmodern Studies in Educational Foundations**

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This chapter looks at postmodern studies in educational foundations.<sup>1</sup> Rather than attempting to define postmodernism, we present a necessarily guilty reading of the reception of the “post” in education and then turn to our primary interest, a rendering of the ways that the “post” is moving across the traditional and emergent areas of foundational studies.

As such, this is a “small narrative,” to use a Lyotardian term, a local story of how the post is playing out in one small area of the academy. More generally, efforts to accommodate/incorporate the “post” across the university have not been easy. Often accused of taking over, postmodernism is “all too readily associated with ‘irrationalism,’ ‘quietism,’ and perhaps even ‘evil’” (Cahill and Hansen, 2003, p. 2). The popular media has taken up the controversy, now named the “culture wars” and the “science wars” (Ross, 1996; Mooney, 2005), and critics both within and without the academy worry that the “fashionable nonsense” (Sokal and Bricmont, 1998) of postmodernism is seducing students away from rationality and into relativism and nihilism.

Christopher Norris (1996) rails much about the ends of postmodernism as the leveling of value distinctions by an ultra-relativist orthodoxy and the collapse of truth claims in the face of epistemological skepticism. While he makes distinctions between good deconstruction (Derrida) and bad postmodernism/poststructuralism (Baudrillard, Rorty, Foucault, and, especially Lyotard), his primary interest is in the disastrous effects of anti-foundationalist arguments on the truth-seeking enterprise from the likes of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Barthes, etc.

In the case of education, in the pages of the Educational Researcher alone, McLaren and Farahmandpur (2000) warn against “the decline of class politics,” textualism, “toothless liberalism and airbrushed insurgency,” nihilism, localism and relativism, all wrapped up in “a facile form of culturalism” that paralyzes progressive politics. Conostas (1998) offers a typology of the postmodern noteworthy for its use of the very logic that the "post" sets out to undo (St. Pierre, 2000; Pillow, 2000). Howe contrasts "postmodernists" and "transformationists" and worries about "paradigm cliques" (1998, p. 20).

Yet the work of what Michael Peters terms “first-generation poststructuralists” (2004, p. 8) has cross-fertilized a wide range of fields that makes the “post” a lively contemporary presence. In Spivak’s terms, the first phase of the argument of poststructuralism was from difference, the “making indeterminate” (1999, p. 426). This first phase of the European development of poststructuralism is now, “in its third or fourth generation,” spreading out across areas, including education and no longer “largely a French affair” as it is developed and applied, increasingly, around the world (Peters, 2004, p. 30).

This is in spite of what some term a “post-post theory” movement captured in such book titles as life.after.theory (Payne and Schad, 2003), After Theory (Docherty, 1996), Beyond Poststructuralism (Harris, 1996) and Post-Theory (McQuillan et al, 1999). Schad, for example, writes that “the moment of ‘high’ theory appears to have passed” including “Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kristevan feminism, Althusserian Marxism, Derridean deconstruction and Foucauldian history” (2003, p. ix). This death is attributed to many things including the excesses of “careless readers of Nietzsche everywhere” (p. 79), and a “hopeless skeptical impasse” (p. 113) quite unprepared to deal with the shifting terrain of right-wing political and neo-Christian movements. Such a death of poststructural theory is held to be hastened by neo-liberal audit

culture and its demand for transparent and quantifiable value. Such theory is, Schad writes, “busy declining in a university ‘near you’” (p. ix).

In short, discussion concerning the “post” ranges across recent post-post talk as well as long-running cautions and warnings, on the one hand, and endorsements on the other. Harold Bloom (1975) has famously argued that all readings are misreadings, given the weight of perspective on what we see and how we see it. This chapter adapts Bloom’s thesis to read the space of such discussion concerning the “post” at the site of educational foundations as symptomatic of the anxieties attendant upon the collapse of foundations and the troubling of progressivist versions of knowledge. In order to make the project doable, we concentrate on the reception of Derrida as a “part-for-whole” or synecdoche for the heterogeneous “post” of postmodernism, including deconstruction.

At the risk of a proper reading, we focus on three gestures of thought at work in the reception of the “post” in education in what might be said to lead to a mistaken identity. The three gestures of thought are: 1) charges of nihilism/textualism, 2) conflating ideology critique and deconstruction, and 3) compelling understanding too quickly in terms of the uses of deconstruction. We then focus on three “social foundations subdisciplines” to explore “if and when” the “postmodern turn” has occurred in foundational studies (Gottlieb, 2000, note 1, p. 171). The first subdiscipline, history of education, is chosen from the traditional disciplinary areas that include, as well, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and economics of education. The second, comparative education, comes from the traditional interdisciplinary areas that includes, as well, educational policy studies. The final case is an emerging interdisciplinary site, the cultural studies/foundational studies intersection. In each, we focus on these three areas as a means to track how the post is moving across the larger field of educational foundations.

### **Nihilism/nothing outside the text**

Derrida's "there is nothing outside the text" from *Of Grammatology* (1976, pp. 226-27) is, according to John Caputo, "one of the most thoroughly misrepresented utterances in contemporary philosophy" (1997a, p. 78). Rather than some scandal of "'linguisticism'" (Derrida, in Caputo 1997a, p. 104), Derrida means by this that there are no cultural practices that are not defined by frameworks that are "caught up in conflicting networks of power, violence, and domination" (Baker 1995, p. 129). Derrida says "I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language. . . it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language'. . . If deconstruction *really* consisted in saying that everything happens in books, it wouldn't deserve *five* minutes of anybody's attention" (quoted in Baker 1995, p 16).

Rather than an occlusion of "the real," the deconstructive claim is that there is nothing that is not caught in a network of differences and references that give a textual structure to what we can know of the world. There is a "thereness" that includes the frames, horizons of intelligibility, and socio-political presuppositions of the necessary, irreducible and inescapable epistemic and archival violence that constitute Derridean textuality. This is about the loss of transcendental signifiers and the situating of reference within the differential systems from which making meaning is possible. To quote Derrida, "'Deconstruction starts with the deconstruction of logocentrism, and thus to want to confine it to linguistic phenomena is the most suspect of operations'" (in Brunette and Wills, 1994, p. 15).

Working the failure of the oppositions that assure concepts, deconstruction remains in excess of traditional political agendas. The speculative force of this excess works toward establishing new relational structures with "a greater emphasis on ethics and its relationship to

the political” (Spivak 1999, p. 426). "One needs another language besides that of political liberation," Derrida says (in Kearney, 1984, p. 122). In deconstruction, the terms of political struggle shift from class as a subject of history to the cultural constitution of subjectivity via the workings of disciplinary power. Here the complexity of subject formation includes how various axes of power are mutually constitutive, productive of different local regimes of power and knowledge that locate subjects and require complex negotiations of relations, including the interruption of coherence and (in)complete subordination to the demands of regulatory regimes.<sup>2</sup>

Engaging the real is not what it used to be. Different ideas about materiality, reality, representations, and truth distinguish different epistemological orientations where reality does not precede representation but is constituted by it. Such a shift from the sociological to the cultural brings textuality, discourse, and representation to the fore. The means of production are less the struggle than "the nature of social representations" (Foster, quoted in Altieri 1990, p. 457) with its questions concerning the psyche, subjectivity, and the self as sites of the production of social categories. Calls for "resistance postmodernism" or "left deconstruction" a la Tony Bennett and Terry Eagleton, among others, offer a "reductively oppositional" (Altieri 1990:475) reading of the post that reinscribes it back into modernist categories of political struggle (e.g., Kincheloe and McLaren 1994; Gabardi 2000). Fekete (1992) terms this a recuperation of postmodernism into a politically intelligible place "in the frame of the already established purposes of the day."

Derrida is clear that we "cannot not be" the heirs of Marx's break with myth, religion and nationalism as ways to think the world and our place in it (1994, p. 91). Derrida's "turn or return to Marx" (p. 32) breaks his silence on Marx in the face of proclamations as to "the end of Marxism" (p. 32). He seeks the Marx outside of "the dogma machine" (p. 13) where the place for

justice is "the infinite asymmetry of the relation to the other" (p. 22) as our way into a better future. Against charges of the nihilism of deconstruction, Derrida speaks of "a certain configurativity" where "the coming of the other" produces a democracy to come (Sprinkler, 1993, p. 231). In a present marked not by crisis so much as by *structural incompetence*, a "wearing down beyond wear" of the "conceptual phantasms" that have guided us through modernity (Derrida, 1994, p. 80), Derrida sees a moment of contestatory possibilities where more is at stake than philosophy when philosophy is at stake.

Spivak terms this a place for justice, a problematic of a responsibility, "caught between an ungraspable call and a setting-to-work" (1994, p. 23). Other to "inspirational academic heroics" (p. 26), a problematic of responsibility is premised on "the something that must of necessity not go through" (p. 20). Rather than a task of uncovering hidden forces and material structures and a textual(rhetorical)/real(material) binary and oppositional (dialectical) contradictions, this is about working the ruins of Marxism toward an other logic. As delineated in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, this different logic works against the leveling processes of the dialectic and for the excess, the non-recuperable remainder, the different, the other/outside of the logic of non-contradiction.

Worries about privileging text over people and narrative over life elide how "the real is no longer real" in a digitalized era that interrupts the easy real (Poster 1989). How discourse enframes and words the world becomes the issue rather than search for the "beyond" of ideology of "real" social forces and material structures. Instead of the nihilism so frequently evoked by the educational left in its efforts to make sense of the post, this is the yes of the setting to work mode of deconstruction that faces unanswerable questions, "the necessary experience of the impossible" in responding to the call of the wholly other (Spivak 1999, p. 428).

### **Conflating ideology critique and deconstruction**

Understanding the social and historical meanings of representational practices has encountered much resistance from traditional positivist knowledge approaches, but this is a shared project of marxism and the post. There are, however, key differences between ideology critique and deconstruction.

Ideology critique is about uncovering hidden forces and material structures in a discursive field organized by concerns for "truth." It endorses a binary of textual/material in its calls for grounding knowledge in "the crucial facticity of determinant brute economic reality" (Leslie 2000, p. 33). An Enlightenment project, a modernist project, it offers a material real in contrast to the ontological uncertainty of deconstruction. "If such a thing exists," Derrida writes, over and over again, marking that indeterminacy that is the "originary complication" of a deconstruction that is not an unmasking but a keeping open, alive, loose, on guard against itself.

The critique of ideology was the "essence of structuralist cultural studies" in a way that moved from interpreting reality as determined by some assumedly knowable empirical and historical presence to attending to the unconscious, imaginary relations and the construction of subjectivity (Van Loon 2001, p. 275). Experience became an effect of structure in an early version of the de-centering of the subject that prepared the way for the linguistic turn that followed Althusserian structuralist marxism. From early semiology through discourse analysis to an increasing attention to deconstruction, troubling language as a transparent medium has undercut universal categories and a romanticized, universalized subject.

Deconstructive destabilization works otherwise. Its interest is in complicit practices and excessive differences rather than unveiling structures and illuminating the forces and relations of production. Purposefully doubled in its necessary implications in what it seeks to trouble, deconstruction works against the critical righteousness of ideology critique where "the

materialist critic has an educative role that involves the propagandistic task of eliciting correct consciousness” (Leslie 2000, p. 33). In reading the subject, modes of investment are no longer based on traditional notions of categorical thinking such as false consciousness, on the one hand, or the more idealized model of intentional agency of reason and will. Indeterminacy and paradox become conditions of affirmative power by undoing fixities and mapping new possibilities for playing out relations between identity and difference, margins and centers. Ways of knowing become "an archive of windows," a study of the histories of enframing that focuses on the staging of truthfulness. Particularly interested in that which works to efface the frame effect, the deconstructive shift is from the real to the production of the reality effect. In this shift, practices dedicated to the disappearance of anything easily identifiable as "the real" are claimed as political work.

Practices of respectful twisting open up to difference and get things moving as practical or praxiological engagements that say yes to turning forms against themselves. This is an immanent critique, a critical intimacy of intervention from within. Quite other to the masterful, totalizing critical distance of ideology critique with its assumptions of an outside, this is Derrida’s thesis of necessary complicity, the necessity of participating in what is being reinscribed in a way that responds to the call of the wholly other. Perplexed by design, doubled in implication, the practical politics of putting deconstruction to work entail a sort of “getting lost” as an ethical relationality of non-authoritarian authority to what we know and how we know it (Lather, 2007).

### **Applied post: Misreading the work of mourning**

The century of "Marxism" will have been that of the techno-scientific and effective decentering of the earth, of geopolitics, of the *anthropos* in its onto-theological identity or its genetic properties, of the *ego cogito*--and of the very concept of narcissism whose aporias are. . .



the explicit themes of deconstruction. This trauma is endlessly denied by the very movement through which one tries to cushion it, to assimilate it, to interiorize and incorporate it. In this mourning work in process, in this interminable task, the ghost remains that which gives one the most to think about--and to do. Let us insist and spell things out: to do and to make come about, as well as to let come (about). (Derrida, 1994, p. 98)

In an interview for the 1995 conference, "Applying: To Derrida," Derrida says, "Deconstruction cannot be applied and cannot not be applied. So we have to deal with this aporia, and this is what deconstruction is about" (1996, p. 218). In order to invent the impossible, application is much more about dissemination and proliferation under conditions of responsibility within indeterminacy, "a moment of non-knowledge, a moment beyond the programme" (p. 223) than it is about something technical and neutral, programmable and predictable. Some examples of "applied Derrida" in education include program evaluation (Stronach and MacLure, 1997), philosophy of education (Garrison and Leach, 2001), various feminist poststructural interventions (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000); pedagogy (Trifonas, 2000), and practitioner-oriented research in nursery teaching and math education (Brown and Jones, 2001). See, as well, special issue of Qualitative Studies in Education on "Poststructuralist Lines of Flight in Australia," guest edited by Bronwyn Davies (17(1), 2004).

Calls to attend to the real world, "a mobilization of a sense of urgency—an urgency to act, to declare, to represent, to render an account" are situated in the history of the fraught relationship between French and continental philosophy and Anglo-Saxon sociohistorical empiricism (Van Loon 2001, p. 280). Against the "fiddling while Rome burns" characterizations of deconstruction, deconstruction is aimed at provoking fields into new moves and spaces where they hardly recognize themselves in becoming otherwise, the unforeseeable that they are already

becoming. Demand that it serve an immediate and evidently useful purpose belies its “exorbitant method” that is loyal to a tradition by keeping it alive while transgressing the horizon of legitimation, a performative within/against where it is what it does in an undecidability that is never over and done with (Caputo 1997a,b).

One could talk of a "public or perish" governing mentality of educational research of late, the increased demand for its usefulness in the context of policy and practice (Willinsky, 2001). It is tempting to revert to the quick and narrow scientificity of the past (e.g., Ladwig, 1996). But, in spite of federal moves to legislate “scientific method” in educational research, the game has changed (Lather, 2004a,b). Efforts to reinscribe the idealized natural science model are contested by methods that attempt to account for complexity and contingency without predictability. This expands our idea of science as cultural practice and practice of culture toward projects that develop a better language to describe a more complicated understanding of what knowledge means and does.<sup>3</sup>

Make something new, Derrida says, that is how deconstruction happens.

In *Specters of Marx*, exploring a logic of mourning and haunting, Derrida enacts an in-between logic, between presence and absence, in order to unlock thinking and help us otherwise. For example, a certain praxis characterized by salvation narratives, consciousness-raising, and a romance of the humanist subject and agency cannot not be mourned in spite of poststructural critiques of the doctrine of eventual salvation, voluntaristic philosophies of consciousness and vanguard theories of "emancipating" some others as the “experience of the promise” of Marxism.

In the distinctions Krell (2000) draws between Freud and Derrida, it is impossible mourning, unsuccessful mourning that is, in Derrida, the very promise of affirmation. As opposed to Freud’s theorized “hyperbolic identifications and narcissistic or anaclitic [libidinal]

object choices in the first place” (p. 15), Krell sees the undecidability of Derrida’s mourning as facing that “there never was any *there* there for us” (p. 18). Remaining true to the memory of the other is not about withdrawing affirmation but about being “always a bit lost” (p. 20) to one another, a loss of presence at the heart of being, as opposed to the “too solidly *taken over*” of the orthodox “legitimation by way of Marx” (Derrida, 1994, p. 92).

Mourning work always follows a trauma. Philosophically, the work of mourning is about ontologizing what remains after the rigor of troubling or problematizing a concept. Our work in the next section is to use such postmarxist haunting to reinscribe foundational studies in a way that mourns its remainders and irremediable losses. To be postmarxist is not so much to be out of date or surpassed as confronted with undecidability, incompleteness and dispersion rather than the comforts of transformation and closure.

Such a move is in, with, for and against the much that must be refused: the privileging of containment over excess, thought over affect, structure over speed, linear causality over complexity, and intention over aggregative capacities (Levinson, 1995). Ontological changes and category slippages mark the exhaustion of received categories of mind/body, nature/culture, organism/machine (Haraway, 1997). The goal is to shape our practice to a future that must remain to come, in excess of our codes but, still, always already: forces already active in the present.

### **Postmodern Research in Educational Foundations:**

#### **The Postmodern Always Rings Twice<sup>4</sup>**

In the preceding section, we have risked a “proper reading” of Derrida as endlessly open, enacting a principle of multiplication and dispersion that is neither straightforward continuity nor

radical rupture (Bennington 2000, p. 184). In this, we have echoed Derrida's claim that deconstruction only ever made sense to him as a radicalization of Marx (1994, p. 92).

The ghost of Marx, the work of mourning, the debt to be paid: perhaps in the interminable task of mourning work in process, the ghost that gives us much to think about and to do is the "will have been" of the century of Marxism for those who insist on the worldly engagement of deconstruction. Running with concepts that destroy their own names, what is sought is an unsuccessful and hence possibly faithful mourning for that which we think we cannot think without. This is mourning not as consolation but as a tracing of loss that doubly affirms: both the loss and the still yet of the yes. This is "affirmation with no ax to grind, affirmation without mastery or mockery, without outcome or end, affirmation without issue. . . affirmation without exit" (Krell 2000, pp. 209,212).

As Michael Peters argues, distinctions must be made between "the end" of this or that (e.g., truth, objectivity and progress) and what he terms, importantly, "a philosophical corrective" that might engender examination and reconstruction "in the face of the demise of epistemological foundationalism" (2004). In Peters' argument, the ends of poststructuralism are about complicating reference, not denying it. Through a profound vigilance regarding how language does its work, it is a skepticism not about the "real," but about "when a language is taken to be what being itself would say if it were given a tongue" (Caputo, 1997b, p. 17).

This is the sort of working "under erasure" that is key in "post" logic, a logic that involves simultaneously troubling and using the concepts we think we cannot think without. It entails keeping something visible but crossed out in order to avoid universalizing or monumentalizing it, keeping it as both limit and resource. Why is it that the critiques of truth in Nietzsche, self-presence in Freud, referential language in Saussure, and metaphysics in Heidegger are so resisted

in educational foundations? What allows the traditional foundations of knowledge to continue largely unproblematized? What is the persistence of this traditional worldview in the face of the loss of its plausability given twentieth century turns toward epistemological indeterminacy? Why is contemporary interest in situatedness, perspective, relationality, narrative, poesis and blurred genres met with so much resistance?

Our argument in this chapter is that the turn that matters in this moment of the post is away from abstract philosophizing and toward concrete efforts to put the theory to work. No one says this better than Gayatri Spivak in her appendix to A Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999), entitled “The Setting to Work of Deconstruction.” Arguing for Derrida as most importantly about “an other-directed swerve away from mere philosophical correctness” and toward “a greater emphasis on ethics and its relationship to the political” (p. 426), she terms “the affirmative call or appeal to the wholly other” as the present phase of the argument of deconstruction, a “setting to work that cannot be defined within the system” (p. 428).

The implications of our reading for educational foundations of Spivak’s “phase theory” of poststructuralism goes something like this: The future pluperfect of deconstruction’s “what will have been said” temporality complicates any linearity. “Third and fourth generations” of “first phases” are interrupted by a return of “first-generation” treatment of the post as precisely what is needed now in order to generate an intelligibility for poststructuralism in educational foundations circles toward a different reception that recognizes indeterminacy as not about relativism but about responsibility in not knowing. Here ‘responsible deconstruction’ is to ask “what would it be to learn otherwise” (Spivak, 1994, p. 62) in order to set to work anew, wanting “more and other” in terms of the relations of places of thought, welcoming the horizon of alterity that necessarily haunts all projects of responsible criticism. In the remainder of this chapter, our

central argument is that a transvaluation of foundational studies might mean finding ways to participate in the struggle of these forces as we move toward a future that is un-foreseeable from the perspective of what is given or even conceivable within our present conceptual frameworks.

Given this interruption of tidy linearity, what happens when “the post” comes again? Given “the othering of deconstructive philosophy” (Spivak, 1999, p. 429) what does the “risk of deconstruction without reserve” (p. 430) look like at the site of educational foundations?

### **The Setting to Work of Deconstruction in Educational Foundations**

In this section, we track the post across history of education, comparative education and cultural studies of education. Such areas are chosen on the basis of a traditional humanities oriented single-discipline, a traditional social science oriented interdisciplinary, and, in the case of Cultural Studies in Education (CSE), a multidisciplinary site that is, arguably, the postmodern disciplinary formation par excellence.

### **Traditional Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Arenas**

As Tozer notes, foundations of education is itself an ambiguous term with long-running tensions around single-discipline studies and multidisciplinary (1993). Noteworthy is its combination of the humanities, particularly history and philosophy, and the social and behavioral sciences. Noteworthy, too, is its “normative orientation toward democracy as the historically central value commitment of the culture of the United States” (p. 11). Tozer’s point is that the area is not about fundamentals but about “foundational study of the interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives within education” toward more effective meaning construction in professional practice (p. 12). With this bit of definitional work, we turn now to how the post is moving across the sub-fields in educational foundations of history of education and comparative education.

## History of Education

The history of education, as a scientific discipline, has so far been unable to integrate postmodern theories adequately into its own discourse. Explicit discussion of the relationship between postmodernism and history of education has scarcely begun. (Cohen & Depaepe, 1996, p. 302)

This statement from a special journal issue titled *History of Education in the Postmodern Era* captures the state of the relationship between postmodernism and history of education up until the mid 1990s, when the issue appeared. To be sure, the special issue is widely cited within a scholarly dialogue that continues to evoke strong opinions about postmodernism and its place in history of education. Yet, it has scarcely moved educational historiography into the postmodern era. Indeed, over ten years later, while historians of education continue to debate the theoretical and methodological currents of the field, their conversations do little more than retrace old territory and rehash familiar themes.

In 2003, *History of Education* featured a special issue that was “concerned with the ways in which we as historians of education engage with theoretical and methodological problems” (McCulloch & Watts, p. 129). In their introduction to the special issue, Gary McCulloch and Ruth Watts maintain that it is “crucial” for educational historians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to “resist any temptation that there may be to retreat or withdraw from theoretical and methodological concerns” because, while such action “may appear to insulate the history of education from the often bewildering changes of the twenty-first century world,” it would merely consign history of education to a state of “irrelevance, even to oblivion” (p. 130; see also McCulloch, 2002, p. 204). Historians of education must do more than “grudging[ly]” acknowledge the concerns of the twenty-first century; they must demonstrate “sensitivity to the potential uses of different theories

and methods in enhancing our understanding of the educational past” (p. 130). Although this counsel is proffered to historians of education in 2003, it merely echoes that given in the mid 1990s. One of the oft-cited conclusions from the 1996 special issue is that “postmodernism does not really force us to do anything new: but it does oblige us to do it well and to be seen doing it well” (Lowe, 1996, p. 323). Thus, postmodernism is reduced to a mere ‘reminder’ to history of education scholars to research thoroughly and be sensitive to multiple viewpoints.

Even cloaked in these benign terms, postmodernism still engenders strong criticism. Among its detractors, Jurgen Herbst (1999) suggests that “there is little genuine fresh input” in history of education (p. 739). Following four decades of success, a crisis has arisen in the field, and the severity of the situation is partly a function of postmodernity. Indeed, American historians of education “wonder whether the recent turn to post-modernism hasn’t reduced their efforts to mere playing with words and texts” (p. 742). Herbst declares:

The guidance and support that earlier generations of scholars found in rationality, ideology, or faith is absent. Instead, post-modernist theorists proclaim that the fading ghosts of Marxism, existentialism, liberalism or whatever other form of ‘history as an act of faith’ are politically inspired and thus suspect. Reliance on them is a mere illusion. The practitioners of the linguistic turn add that there is nothing to explain. There are no educational realities, no classrooms, no childhood, no youths; only text that can be decoded, deconstructed, and manipulated. The academic world has turned into a world of words, a world of its own creation that reflects only upon itself (p. 740).

While strong disillusionment with postmodernism is not the only point raised in the article, it is an argument that caused history of education scholars to take notice. The reactions to Herbst’s opinion of postmodernism and his other provocative claims in the article caused a panel



to be organized at The History of Education Society's 2001 Annual Meeting. In addition, replies to the article appeared in a 2001 edition of *Paedagogica Historica*.

In one of those responses, Marc Depaepe (2001) reiterates Lowe's claim that "postmodernism does not really force us to do anything new" (p. 637), but rather forces educational historians to do their practice well. Depaepe calls for a type of hermeneutics, which Agustin Escolano described as, "based on the historicity and linguisticity of experience, seeks the identification of meaning and the sense of memory which the narrator as mediator elaborates as a text, restoring and reestablishing the gaps in the story, even critically so as to give the analysis the coherence it requires regarding the totality of the discourse and the context" (Escolano, 1996, p. 340). The "added value" of postmodernism, in Depaepe's view, is that it not only "deconstructs, demythologizes, and tarnishes the 'great', 'heroic' and often exaggerated stories of the past" but also "qualifies the great emancipatory meta-narratives about education" and demonstrates that, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the "increase of educational opportunities did not necessarily provide increased opportunities for empowerment and autonomy but could also lead to subjection and dependence" (p. 638).

In the other reply to Herbst's criticism of postmodernism, Nick Peim (2001) champions a more radical "rethinking of the history of education from the ontological, the phenomenological and the hermeneutic perspectives," and an "engagement with the theoretical resources of cultural materialism" (Peim, 2001, p. 660).<sup>5</sup> Peim proposes "a movement (decentered, of course) to investigate the theoretical bearings of the subject, the constitution of its objects, and a (perhaps renewed) self-awareness about the positionings of practitioners of the history of education—wheresoever they may be—and the institutions, networks and spaces they inhabit and may want to create as well as the restrictions and affordances they work with and within" (p. 660).

Agreeing with Peim that postmodernism and poststructuralism are highly differentiated fields, Richard Aldrich (2003) observes: “The study of history of education, like the study of history itself, has been and always will be a changing and contested terrain. One of the great problems of the ‘post’ approach is that historical accounts of various shapes and sizes are lumped together as ‘modernist’ or ‘empiricist’, and uniformly condemned” (p. 141).

In a 2004 editorial entitled “History of Education—Defining a Field,” the new editors of *History of Education*, Joyce Goodman and Jane Martin, reflect on the “form and direction of debates” (2004, p. 1) throughout the journal’s existence. They acknowledge, once again, the “call to sensitivity to the potential uses of different theories and methods” (p. 5) that has been a recurrent theme within the journal. They further explain that “at issue, here, is how to recognize the extent to which historians of education absorb social science models and methodologies and do so without abandoning a commitment to the specificity of historical evidence and close readings of historical texts, whether oral, visual, spatial, documentary or material” (p. 5).

Like those in comparative education, debates about the future development of the field of history of education expose significant resistance to the post—a resistance that centers on theoretical and methodological precision and the historian’s search for truth.<sup>6</sup>

### **Comparative Education**

Postmodernism was one of the most debated issues in the academic world during the 1980’s. Yet, the discussion almost bypassed the comparative education community. I argue that postmodernism should be a central concept in our comparative education discourse (Val Rust, Presidential Address, 1991, p. 610).

This statement from then-President of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), Val Rust, serves as an introduction of the “post” to comparative and international

education, a disciplinary formation of some fifty years standing (Gottlieb, 2000). Robert Arnove's Presidential address some ten years later lists the shifts the field has undergone across modernization theory and structural functionalism. . . to Neo-Marxist, world systems, and dependency theories. . . to ethnomethodological and ethnographic approaches to a variety of 'isms' — post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism coupled with feminist perspectives. . . multiculturalism . . . Critical Race Theory and Critical Modernism. (Arnove, 2001, p. 26)

Arnove notes those who are worried about a “lost sense of coherence with this multiplicity of research strands” (p. 497) and fears of division and antagonism. While viewing such diversity as a strength of the field, his call under “what needs to be done” is a list of projects of “sharing our international expertise [with] social movements for economic justice” (p. 502). With such a call largely untouched by postmodern critique, it appears that Esther Gottlieb was on the mark in assessing the effect of the post on the field as “at best a slow trickle-down effect” (2000, p. 165) as she addressed her own question, “are we post-modern yet?”

This sort of “bookend” look at Presidential Addresses frames a field that moved along throughout the 90's in a jumble of competing and incommensurable ways of knowing with uneven attention to its “sister” fields of area studies and comparative literature. Like comparative studies of education, area studies maintained its “insularity” (Palat, 1999, p. 99), marginalizing “postmodern angst” and mostly refusing any “questioning of its conceptual underpinnings and continuing relevance (p. 87). In contrast, comparative literature, perhaps due to its necessary engagement with literary criticism where such issues were front and center, faced what Spivak terms “the death of a discipline” (2003) as these areas so rooted in Cold War American expansionism dealt with shifting global dynamics and the epistemic changes they have spurred.

Like many areas of the academy, efforts to articulate the post often had a problem with “letting go of modernity’s language” in the continuing essentialist and instrumentalist rendering of the post (Paulston, 1999, p. 446). By the mid 90’s, a more astute rendering was being offered to the field. Paulson and Liebman in their 1994 invitation to “postmodern social cartography” for example, use Usher and Edwards to trouble modernist notions of emancipation, mastery projects and “the monster of a new postmodern metanarrative” (1999, p. 446).

1996 bought a special issue of the British journal Comparative Education on postmodernity (32(2)), the theme of the tenth World Congress of Comparative Education Societies theme, “Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity,” and Paulston’s edited collection that deliberately set an “oppositional postmodern strategy” against a critical modernist perspective in the concluding chapter.

A “counterattack” was unleashed from within the field (Paulston, 1999). From attempts at selective adaptation of (largely unrecognized) incommensurables to counterattacks that included warnings of the “wooly thinking’ of such dangerous postmodern ideas as pluralism, multiplicity, and uncertainty,” the field ended the century in a flurry of efforts “to survive the poststructuralist storms” (p. 461).

The work of Peter Ninnes and Sonia Mehta illustrates how the debates continued with growing force into the new century (2000, 2004; Ninnes and Burnett, 2003; Mehta and Ninnes, 2003). The challenges of postfoundational thinking to “the lifeblood of the major sets of ideas in comparative education” (Mehta and Ninnes, 2003, p. 238) have led to such a state that Epstein and Carroll declared “the recent rise of postmodernism” to be “the most serious challenge ever to boundary stability” (2005, p. 63). What this might be made to mean in terms of directions of the field can be approached by contrasting Epstein and Carroll’s article, subtitled “the Postmodern

Deviation,” with Ninnes and Mehta’s introduction to Re-Imagining Comparative Education, subtitled “Postfoundational Ideas and Applications for Critical Times.”

Epstein and Carroll are worried about the “surging interest in postmodernism in recent years” (p. 64) leading to its becoming a dominant force in the field.<sup>7</sup> Almost fifteen years after Rust announced its tardy arrival, seen now as “a force to be reckoned with” (p. 64), their interest is in the displacements, foundations, and irreducible excesses of the post. Re-introducing historical functionalist ancestors that they argue have been displaced by the post, Epstein and Carroll conflate phenomenology and postmodernism in ways that make one wonder what Derrida was doing in his early work within/against Husserl.<sup>8</sup> In such work, Derrida positions phenomenology as a privileged site for deconstructive questions regarding the philosophy of consciousness, transparent intentionality, and a unified subject in language and presence. In short, it is both within and against phenomenology that deconstruction is first articulated.<sup>9</sup> Still more misread is the move of Derrida to pay necessary fidelity to the very heritage that one deconstructs. “The best way to be faithful to a heritage,” he argues, is to “make something speak from within itself” against its own dogmatism out of its gaps and blindspots without, precisely, trying to kill it (Derrida and Roudinesco, 2004, p. 2).

A combination of fear and scorn of “the postmodernist surge” permeate what Epstein and Carroll understand of it in their urging that the field take as serious threat a list of quite well rehearsed worries about the post. Concerns include attacks on the “very foundations of ‘knowability’ and ‘truth’ (p. 69); “an extreme form of German idealism and relativism” (p. 70); Nietzschean nihilism; Heideggerian metaphysics; Baudrillardian hyperreality; Lyotardian small narratives; Foucauldian radical discontinuities—one could go on. And much could be made of reading the motif of “abusing ancestors” in terms of “anxieties of influence” (Bloom, 1997) and

symptomatic defensiveness regarding that which is consigned to “this graveyard of discarded ideas” (Epstein and Carroll, 2005, p. 80). Of more interest in tracking the post across comparative education as a disciplinary formation, however, is how these concerns are being brought to a field as if they had not been much debated across a broad span of disciplinary areas, including education itself (e.g., Peters, 1998; St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000; Lather, 1991). According to Epstein and Carroll, “the perils of postmodernism” are many, all culminating in “vehemently irrationalist dogmas” (p. 84) that undercut all empirical and rational efforts in this “academic rupture” (p. 84). The answer is, to them, clearly, “a return to the founding principles of comparative education” (p. 85). Calling on Alan Sokal and Ann Oakley to conclude, the alarm is sounded about the advance of “the nihilistic influences of continental philosophers” (p. 88) if reason is not returned to the field.

This bespeaks the very “insularity” that Palat (1999) writes of in regards to area studies more generally. Given shifts in capitalist development and state formations, the “theoretical and epistemological debates being conducted in the disciplines” (p. 99) continue to be ignored at the cost of perpetuating “the enclosed, self-referential character of area studies” (p. 100) in a way that renders them as “anachronistic” as the “colonial studies” and “imperial history” of a bygone era (p. 104). As Spivak notes, even the very foundations and governmental organizations that have funded the development of international expertise in higher education now recognize this as they try to “revitalize” the field “after 9/11” (2003, note 2, p. 103). Arnove’s worries that some parts of the field “may have been cut back or integrated into larger policy studies units” (2002, p. 492) seems small recognition of such possible displacement.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps most interestingly, the sort of angst around the post so evident in Epstein and Carroll seems a sort of displacement itself in “beating up the messenger” who might, if attended to, actually aid in “the fundamental

excavation of the theoretical categories” (Palat, 1999, p. 89) that might re-position comparative studies of education in terms of continued relevancy. For example, globalization and the analytic move away from autonomous nation states creates “a new lease of life” and a “new world for comparative education,” including a shift in the perceived value of the field (Dale, quoted in Spring, 2008, p. 333).

Ninnes and Mehta present quite a different story from Epstein and Carroll. Speaking “from the margins,” their interest is in creating a “safe space” where such ideas can be developed without fear of losing one’s “legitimacy” in the field. This is in contrast with Epstein and Carroll’s fears that the post is “surging” into the field and marginalizing its functionalist and positivist roots. Using post-foundational as “an umbrella term” for postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism (2004, p. 2), Ninnes and Mehta address the well rehearsed misreadings of the post such as irrational, nihilistic, relativistic, etc. Drawing on Paulston (1999), Peters (1998) and, particularly, St. Pierre and Pillow (2000), they frame various responses of the field to the post with a focus on the place of science in terms of progress and the advancement of knowledge. Ninnes and Mehta take on various critiques of the post and argue that if the field is “serious about issues of social justice” (p. 9), it would do well to more seriously engage with it. They survey the very few examples of work in the field that has engaged with the post, with a focus on the dominance of “the substantive use of Foucault’s ideas” (p. 11). They conclude with a discussion of how postcolonialism interrupts the dependency theory that has dominated the field’s engagement with such issues.

What is noteworthy about their intervention is that it is built on previous work in a way that illustrates the “learning curve” that under girds their current take on the post. From book reviews<sup>11</sup> to a discourse analysis of two articles that counsel resisting the post, to an accounting

of the work in comparative education from 1991-1999 that made use of post frameworks, including a citation survey, Ninnes and Mehta engage with secondary material in education in an effort to bring a deeper understanding of the post to the field. While one might wish they had read more “primary” sources, perhaps a linking with “the broader education literature” (2004, p. 12) is most useful at this juncture in demonstrating that this field that so engages with the very issues most central to the post in terms of globalization and “the other” has fallen behind even the rest of education.

Comparative education, then, given its “tardy” engagement with the post, might be situated as an exemplar case of resistance to such ideas, with an interesting tension around the location of hegemony and margin. The call to stop “abusing ancestors,” driven by fears of hostile take-over is contrasted with a rather mild call “from the margins” toward “re-imagining the field” (2004, p. xi) in a way that announces itself as about multiplicity, not negation.

As recognized by Ninnes and Mehta, entertaining the post is, indeed, “dangerous” to the very foundations of the field (p. x). They are, hence, well advised to couch their work in modest, pluralistic and “learning process” terms (p. xi). Epstein and Carroll are, as well, quite alert to the implications of the post for re-writing the field. While they are clear as to the loss entailed by postfoundationalism, they have no sense of the “yes” that might re-energize basic categories of analysis instead of killing them. This might be the limit situation in which they find themselves, their constitutive misreading given what they see and how they see it. What is clear is that, no longer “bypassed,” comparative education has the post at both sides of the door, knocking to be put out perhaps more loudly than to get in.

### **Emerging Movements in the Education Field:**

#### **The Foundations/Cultural Studies Nexus**



[T]he future of social foundations of education is already intertwined with cultural studies in education. (Steve Tozer, 2001, p. 304)

Wright (1997, 2000, 2004) delineates the convergences and divergences between cultural studies and cultural studies in education in terms of social justice, power relations, national and racial identifications and identities, social difference and diversity, and popular culture. While Wright is most useful in situating CSE in relation to Cultural Studies across the university, our focus is on what happens at the intersection of cultural studies and colleges or schools or departments of education. This section situates Cultural Studies in Education (CSE) as “in-the-making” (Ockman, 2000). Its tale is of contradictory tendencies at one of the primary sites where CSE is being articulated, educational foundations.

### **The Canon Wars in Education: Educational Foundations as Contested Ground**

The shifting curricular terrain and identity of this thing called “foundations” is part of the culture wars going on across universities regarding the traditional canon and the contest for center, as formerly marginalized perspectives vie for legitimacy. The struggle is between margins and centers, some “others” against a master narrative that is now being threatened. The contest over the term “foundations” is at the center of the canon wars in education. As the culture wars have played out in other areas, “revisioning” continues in what Wright refers to as “the current rapid but apparently perennially precarious institutionalization of cultural studies of education in North American colleges of education.”<sup>12</sup>

To understand how such efforts fit into the culture of colleges of education, one needs to look at the historical contest for authority in colleges of education between administrative studies, teacher education with its roots in normal schools, and educational psychology with its history as the originary site for the scientific study of teaching and learning (Labaree, 1992,

1996). Teacher education is the latest dominant with its claims of research-based evidence on effective teaching techniques and command of the rhetorical ground of teacher improvement. Career professionals, clinical faculty, professional development schools, lead teachers: such talk permeates colleges of education in the present moment. One also needs to take note of the history of internal divisions that characterizes the social foundations of education (Tozer, 1993, 2001, 2003). That history is made up of a sort of permanent crisis of location where disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity have both waxed and waned over the years since its 1930's origin at Teachers College Columbia. External critiques also make up the history of social foundations as captured by Noblit et al:

Our predecessors were betwixt and between. Their identities were challenged on both sides. Educators saw them as not being central to the training of teachers, understood as an exceedingly practical endeavor, and social scientists and humanists saw them as not being true academics, given their normative concerns with both training teachers and reconstructing the social order. (2003, p. 318)

Hence, beset by internal and external critiques, long contested on grounds of relevance to teaching and teacher education, marginalized by the "parent" disciplines, educational foundations as contested ground is nothing new. Tozer writes of foundations of education as "a confused and often marginalized field" (1993, p. 6), sometimes morphing into social foundations of education, and notes that its problematic status has been characterized as eroding and in disarray from its inception.

Tozer's (2003) analysis of the hold of analytic philosophy of education with its tradition that closes out the social in the name of a universal logic of truth gives some explanation for the particular tensions involved in the foundations/cultural studies nexus. Against this analytic

tradition, Tozer notes the resurgence of social philosophy in the 1980's and urges a move away from "the narrowly, guild-defined meaning" of the field (p. 86). Calling upon "feminist, neo-Marxist, critical, identity, postcolonial and generally postmodern theorizing," he further urges a continuing evolution toward "a new philosophical/educational praxis" that engages philosophers of education in the practical needs of schooling (p. 85). "Making the philosophical practical" and "*making the practical philosophical*" (Ibid, italics in the original), the effect has been to leave his "'analytic' colleagues wondering what happened to philosophy" (p. 86) as the field moves in more cultural directions.

What is displaced in such a move is the kind of philosophy that excludes the political, institutional, and rhetorical contexts of knowledge production and reception. In Judith Butler's new book, her final chapter is entitled "Can the 'Other' of Philosophy Speak?" Here she is interested in a philosophy that has lost control in patrolling what is philosophy, a philosophy that has found itself doubled, outside itself, "lost" in the other, face to face with the philosophical value of not being so sure of itself (2004b, p. 234). With continental philosophy largely performed outside the boundaries of philosophy departments, literary critics, cultural critics and social scientists have created an interdisciplinary "theory/philosophy conflation" (p. 247) that makes "the very notion of philosophy a stranger to itself" (p. 250). Here, Butler argues, philosophy proper becomes "a loner, territorial, protective, increasingly hermetic" (p. 246).

Such arguments bespeak a displacement of philosophy by interdisciplinary social theory that includes the political, institutional, constructive and rhetorical features and contexts of knowledge production. The diffusion of continental philosophy outside "philosophy departments 'proper'" has grown out of an analytical philosophy orthodoxy (Leitch, 2003, p. 70) that underwrites the rise of cultural studies as "postmodern interdisciplinarity" (p. ix). This has

created various sorts of defensive projects of consolidation. The result is often, on the one hand, an “institutional bottlenecking of cultural studies” (p. 8) and, on the other, “a certain triumph through rhizomatous transformations, graftings, and hybridizations” (p. 38).

This picture of philosophy writ large maps onto a sort of culture war in colleges of education between traditional foundations of education and the evolution of CSE. While each telling of such a tale is discourse-relative, perspective-dependent and historically contingent in several ways, tensions abound. Depending on how the story is told and what we take up as true, the academic location of CSE depends on particular institutions and can be theorized in a variety of ways.

### **Theorizing cultural studies in education**

Several strands of theorizing CSE are in evidence. Perhaps hegemonic in theory if not in practice, a left intellectual, interventionist, Birmingham style cultural studies is theorized (Giroux, 1997a,b; Hytten, 1997). Casella (1999) attends to this tradition but, as well, theorizes CSE as moderately building upon a long line of work done in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and history of education in a “melding of symbolic interactionism, critical multiculturalism, and forms of postmodern literary theory” (p. 112). Hytten (1999) theorizes two traditions: a “playful study of cultural artifacts” and a “more critically oriented tradition” (p. 528). Of late, in the larger university, an internal critique is amassing in Cultural Studies against the oppositionally oriented, overly textualist traditional concerns of the field (e.g., Stearns, 2003) and calls abound for “applied” cultural work across the field (Bennett, 1992; McRobbie, 1997; Ferguson and Golding, 1997; Morley, 1997; McGuigan, 2001; Van Loon, 2001).

Descriptions of CSE programs serve as an example of the mix of dominant, residual and emergent terms in articulating the foundations/cultural studies nexus.<sup>13</sup> Across various program

descriptions, Casella's pragmatic theory of moderate building upon a long line of critical and progressive work in social foundations seems more characteristic than the uses of a Birmingham style cultural studies to reframe schools of education (e.g. Giroux, 1997b).<sup>14</sup> An example is the Cultural Studies and Education anthology, consisting of articles from the Harvard Educational Review from 1986-2003 divided into areas of postmodern theory, gender and queer studies, postcolonial and ethnic studies, and popular culture and youth studies (Gaztambide-Fernandez et al, 2004). Designed to introduce cultural studies to education, except for the final chapters from Henry Giroux and Paul Willis, the collection is very much within the sort of critical take on foundational and multicultural studies that has typified research in social foundations for the last twenty years.

If one looks at the force of CSE as a cultural formation instead of looking at it as a cure for what ails educational foundations, one comes face to face with the demands CSE makes, its aggressive force, its own demands and rejections, particularly the desire for oppositionality that shapes and limits CSE as a disciplinary formation. This might, indeed, be part of the answer to Giroux's query as to "why educators refuse to engage the possibilities of cultural studies" (2004/1994, p. 233). When the aggressive force of CSE as inclusive meets the exclusionary force of aggressive identification of foundational studies, there is some working through of loss. How loss is lived differently across generations and ambivalence becomes a strategy for surviving the aggressiveness at stake in both inclusion and exclusion, opposition and normativity. While bad things happen, knowledge can be made from such sites. As Butler (2004a) notes, loss can become a resource if it is not resolved too quickly.

Is this loss but the latest wave in which "disciplinarity appears and disappears" (Noblit, Hatt-Echeverria and Hughes, 2003, p. 314)? Does it signal a new stage of evolutionary

development or, more radically, a displacement of the field, a “foundational into cultural studies” movement? Might it serve as a rhizomatic becoming space toward what Wright terms “a new imagination of education” (2004, p. xvi)? To what extent might CSE as an “unsettled, mixed up, mixed together anew” cultural formation serve as “a zone of historical indetermination,” a strategy for orienting ourselves to the future (Rajchman, 2000, pp. 14-15)?<sup>15</sup>

Working within tensions and intersections in complicated and dynamic instead of binary ways, the production of CSE is forged in conflict with dominant discourses, continuities as well as discontinuities, points of connection, persistences, the resurfacing of cyclical debates including a long-standing tradition of radical critique and critical initiatives. Disciplinary fragmentation and hybridization are not new. Disciplinary walls are porous; lines are hard to draw in spite of ossifications. Some theorize that disciplinary distinctions are mostly administrative categories (Dozan and Pakre, 1990), but they are, as well, the ground of many a highly invested turf-war. Post movements interrupt the binary between disciplinary and interdisciplinary locations that have dominated thinking about educational foundations in ways that press against the logic of the criteria that form such categories.

One example is job listings in education over the last decade or so.<sup>16</sup> The job descriptions are particularly noteworthy for the language of the dominant, residual and emergent all mixed up (Williams, 1977/1994). Eastern Michigan, for example, wanted “preparation in one or more of the main disciplines of social foundations” but as well wanted specialization in multicultural or urban education or cultural studies. UNC-Greensboro was “seeking cultural studies/social foundations” candidates with expertise in “policy studies, financial and economic aspects of education, curricular and instructional leadership for social justice.” Finally, from Syracuse: cultural foundations of education, “history, philosophy, and sociology of education and thematic

concentrations in disability studies, gender and education, higher education, popular culture, qualitative research methods, and school reform. We seek applicants strongly prepared in a foundational discipline (preference for history or philosophy).”

Across varied theorizations, CSE can be positioned as a sort of “difficult knowledge” (Pitt and Britzman, 2003) characterized by excess, non-containment and undecidability where dominant, residual and emergent categories create tension and movement. To theorize CSE as a stammering sort of (post)disciplinary formation is to be much less interested in policing it than in asking what might be made possible if it is situated as, in Foucault’s words, “a discourse that has a great ability to circulate, a great aptitude for metamorphoses, a sort of strategic polyvalence” (2003, p. 76). Whether “putting the post to work” (Spivak, 1999) or more mainstream efforts to link research and practice, CSE works as a supplement, an interruption to more institutionalized practice, adding something discontinuous, possessing a displacing power. Whether it comes as a moderate, evolutionary building on a long line of work, a more Birmingham style oppositional version, or a rhizomatic becoming,<sup>17</sup> CSE as “not yet contained” provides a productive site for resituating educational foundations within contemporary demands for intellectual work to be of use in “post-foundational” times.

### **Conclusion**

Grasping our thought in time is never easy. Toward this end, this chapter has offered a reading of postmodernism in educational foundations toward articulating what is at stake in this emerging movement in the education field. Trying to be attentive to continuities as well as ruptures and discontinuities across the complex operations at play, we have presented such movement as provisional, fragmenting and heterogeneous, sometimes with a moderate face, other times more contentious in an always already contested field of educational foundations. As

an effort to identify and amplify what is already begun, this has been a tale of how the postmodern is put into discourse, where varied interventions in the name of the postmodern are differentially constructed in time and place.

Combining evolution, displacement and rhizomatics, the movement of the post across foundational studies is a story of disaggregation that continues the “rancor and disagreement” that has long characterized the field (Noblit, Hatt-Echeverria and Hughes, 2003, p. 319). This struggle might be read as “an effect of reluctant permeability” (Foucault, 2003, p. 117) where educational foundations cannot avoid calling upon the new movement. Indeed, the “old” and the “new” are posited as “already intertwined” in terms of the future as, in spite of very different histories, their critical social and educational projects intersect (Tozer, 2001, p. 304). The “incomplete receptiveness” that accompanies both the “request for a discourse and an essential deafness to it once it has been given” is, in Foucault’s words, “a game of demands and rejections” (ibid) at work in such intersections.<sup>18</sup>

In the face of the re-negotiation of American hegemony in the neo-liberal regime of globalization,<sup>19</sup> perhaps a disjunctive affirmation of the post and educational foundations can make an edge toward the development of democratic processes more attuned to antagonisms that cannot be managed by the deliberative, rational and consensual (Deutsche, 1996). “Disjunctive affirmation” is a term used by Foucault (1998) in a review of Deleuze’s efforts to bring Freud and Marx together not in reconciliation but to unleash thought in order to disorient via uncontainable differences. If certainty is disappearing<sup>20</sup> and relations of appropriation and conquest proliferate rather than reduce violence, perhaps we are all a little lost in finding our way in a new geography where the juxtaposition of postmodernism and educational foundations



might find a dynamic out of their divergence in transitioning toward new openings in clearly contested space.

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<sup>1</sup> As there is so much slippage in the field, we have relied on Tozer to sort out the terms. He traces the movement from “educational foundations” in origin talk at Teachers College (2001, p. 288) to “social foundations” as an identifiable field after 1940 (p. 290). This shifted to “foundations of education” in the late 1970’s Council of Learned Societies of Education

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*Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction* (p. 296), with “Social Foundations of Education” as the name for the “official voice” of the disciplinary focused foundational organizations (e.g. History of Education Society, Philosophy of Education Society) as well as the American Educational Studies Association (AESA) in the governing structure of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (note 54, p. 308). We have avoided the term “educational studies” as it has its roots in the formation of the AESA in the late 1960’s which, while very entwined with the story we tell of educational foundations, has its own story to tell (Noblit, Hatt-Echeverria and Hughes, 2003). We mostly use the original term, educational foundations, but some intentional “enactment” of the slippage occurs as it typifies the field.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault writes: “Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity; maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation for the self. Maybe our problem now is to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. . . to get rid of those technologies, and then, to get rid of the sacrifice which is linked to those technologies. In this case, one of the main political problems nowadays would be, in a strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves” (1997, p. 231).

<sup>3</sup> For a historical survey of the weight of the natural science model on educational research, particularly via a narrowed psychology, see Lagemann 2000.

<sup>4</sup> This subtitle is adapted from Adair, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to responses from Depaepe and Peim, *Paedagogica Historica* (2001) also presented replies from Gaither and Rousmaniere. They, however, responded to Herbst’s other concerns about the state of the field, which were not primarily directed against postmodernism.

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<sup>6</sup> One item for consideration that is not addressed here is the work being done by ANZHES and its journal *History of Education Review*. A special journal issue produced in 1991, *History of Education Review* (20[2]), included articles responding to the “Foucaultian challenge of discussing issues such as ‘citizen formation,’ the production of new ‘subjectivities’ and new discursive regimes of truth” (Campbell & Sherington, 2002, p. 56). They conclude, however, that “the promise of a radical new wave of educational history around such themes has not eventuated, at least in Australia at the beginning of the century” (p. 56).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Nelly Stromquist wrote in a 2005 survey of the field that “critical sociological, postmodernist, and feminist paradigms are increasingly present” (p. 91), with “frequent attacks” on “both functionalist and conflict paradigms” due to disappointment with modernity’s promises (p. 94). Movement toward postmodernity is noted, with particular focus on Foucault whose theory of power is held to be “invaluable” in analyzing the education of subordinated groups.

<sup>8</sup> These worries about displaced ancestors also echo Said’s critique of the practice in area studies of “the restorative citation of antecedent authority” (1985, as quoted in Palat, 1999, p. 100).

<sup>9</sup> And from Foucault, The Order of Things, “If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which . . . in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness” (1970, p. xiv).

<sup>10</sup> See Gottlieb for a delineation of these programmatic absorptions and losses, as well as loss of independent degree programs and funding cuts from international donor agencies (2000, p. 171).

<sup>11</sup> Ninnes and Mehta review Michael Peters, Naming the Multiple: Poststructuralism and Education (1998), Thomas Popkewitz and Mari Brennan, Foucault’s Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power in Education (1998), and Ian Stronach and Maggie MacLure,

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Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace (1997) in the flagship journal for the field, Comparative Education Review.

<sup>12</sup> Wright's phrase comes from a Bergamo Curriculum Theorizing annual conference proposal, 2004. This state of affairs goes well beyond colleges of education as seen by the demise of the Birmingham School's sociology and cultural studies program (Gilroy, July 2002). Gilroy attributes this to administrative restructuring of British universities but, also, to the diffusion of cultural studies as a project in a "deeper realignment in the constellation of disciplines and scholarly interests" (p. B20).

<sup>13</sup> From Ohio University: "Cultural Studies in Education is an interdisciplinary field that brings perspectives from the humanities and social sciences to bear on the study of education. It recognizes that educational systems are situated in the context of culture, knowledge, and power. Cultural Studies seeks to analyze the relationships between school and society with interpretive, normative, critical, and comparative methods." Areas of study include: critical perspectives on pedagogy and democratic education; literacy: culture and history; comparative and international education, and socio-economic development; diversity and anti-bias curriculum addressing issues of ethnicity, class, and gender; and history, philosophy, and sociology of education.

<sup>14</sup> One example is the "Social, Cultural, and Critical Studies Faculty Working Group" at the University of Michigan that has explored future directions for foundational studies since 2001. Of note here is that "cultural" is listed among several perspectives in a way that breaks the hold of the larger field of Cultural Studies and situates it within the traditions of social foundations.

<sup>15</sup> Rajchman (2000) is writing about the renewal of pragmatism.

<sup>16</sup> For example: from the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at the Faculty of Education at McGill University for a job in Curriculum Studies for someone who works in a

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variety of areas including “cultural studies, postcolonial and poststructuralist theories in curriculum, interdisciplinarity, and new technologies. The successful candidate should be able to contribute to course development in areas such as language and learning across the curriculum, and teachers and curriculum planning, as well as support undergraduate and graduate work in curriculum reform.” A second example is a Cultural Studies in Education job at the University of Ohio, listed several years ago, to teach “courses in cultural studies and the associated disciplines of history, philosophy and sociology of education as well as courses related to issues of diversity, school and society.” From 2000, an educational foundations position at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for a candidate “with strengths in diversity issues and the cultural foundations, sociology, history and philosophy of education.” A 2005 job in CSE at U-T Austin: “the program trains educational scholars and innovative policy-makers who promote educational equity and justice. . . offering teacher education courses on the socio-cultural and linguistic foundations of learning.” And a collage from jobs surveyed in the mid 90’s when Ohio State University was pulling its program together: From Florida State, “expertise in philosophy and practice issues such as feminist perspectives, relations of theory to practice, social philosophy, teaching, curriculum and learning, and/or cultural studies.” From the University of New Mexico: “background in social, cultural and/or historical theories and emerging trends in the social context of schooling, particularly in areas of postcolonialism, globalization, and queer or feminist theories. Will teach sociological studies, foundations of education, philosophy of education, sociology of education, and curriculum theory. Develop new courses in globalization and education, feminist and/or queer theory, indigenous and postcolonial theory.”

<sup>17</sup> A rhizome, famously, is a formation where any point can be connected to anything other (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987/1980). It is made up of “very different dates and speeds” (p. 3), an



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assemblage, a multiplicity, an “aggregate of intensities” (p. 15), a “little machine” of proliferations (p. 4) that “*grows between*, among other things”(p. 19, original italics) and maps the “yet to come” (p. 5). “A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. . .[and] never allows itself to be overcoded” (pp. 7,9). Defined solely by circulation, it is “without a General” (p. 21), always in the middle, “and. . . and. . . and. . . ,“ a “practice of pragmatics” where ontology is overthrown, foundations are done away with and endings and beginnings are nullified (p. 25).

<sup>18</sup> Foucault is writing about the penal system and its calls upon a scientific, medical, or psychiatric analysis of crime’s motives.

<sup>19</sup> Neo-liberalism is the post-WWII shift in the role of western governments away from *laissez-faire* economics and toward a state initiated broadening of economic thinking that diffuses the enterprise-form throughout society as its general organizing principle. Choice, commodity-form, the managerialism of identity and personal and professional relations, all result in “the capitalization of the meaning of life” (Gordon, 1991, p. 44).

<sup>20</sup> A review of the film *Gunner Palace* about US troops in Iraq includes such lines as “no definition of victory in their future” and “Unfortunately, they still have no way to define *completing* [their mission]” (Gabrenya, 2005, P. F6).