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An historical analysis of George S. Counts's concept of the American public secondary school with special reference to equality and selectivity

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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF GEORGE S. COUNTS'S CONCEPT OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EQUALITY AND SELECTIVITY

by

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VITA

The author, Eunice Dawn Madon, was born in Chicago on February 22, 1943.

Mrs. Madon began her career teaching English at the secondary level at Wells High School in Chicago after graduating from Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1964. In September of 1966, she assumed a similar position at Steinmetz High School in Chicago. A few years later she was appointed chairperson of the English Department. Returning to school, she earned a Master of Arts in Guidance and Counseling in 1976 from Northeastern Illinois University. In 1979 she became a guidance counselor and then in 1982 was appointed attendance coordinator. In this capacity she designed a computerized system of attendance and researched and implemented an automated telecommunications system. While completing research on her doctorate, the writer was employed as a program coordinator for a unique college preparatory program focusing on wellness and sports science. Currently, she is a counselor at Steinmetz.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

To my father, the late Gene Zolezzi

The preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks is of more importance to the public than all the property of all the rich men in the country.

John Adams
Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law, 1765

CHAPTER 1

GEORGE S. COUNTS: FROM KANSAS TO THE VANGUARD OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

The Early Years

The educator, statesman George Sylvester Counts was born in a quiet rural area outside of Baldwin City, Kansas at the end of an era. By 1889, the year of his birth, America had almost overcome the ravishes of the Civil War and was riding full steam ahead to a new era of industrial urbanism. Its sociological and economic makeup was rapidly changing. To people like Counts's parents and other denizens of rural America, the cities teaming with immigrants, factories and sweat shops were things read about in newspapers but were far removed from the day to day realities of life in Kansas.

Life on the farm was hard. Kansas farmers fought a constant battle for survival against the elements. Floods, blizzards, droughts, grasshoppers and Indians had taken their toll on the people during the fifty years it had taken to move the frontier across the state. Land in Kansas was open frontier land, free land for the homesteaders. But by 1890, three-quarters of the farms had been mortgaged due to the constant adversities. Farmers were paying 9 percent interest. "In many cases the face of the mortgages were as much as the value of the land."[1] This incensed people and brought about

the Populist Party and a group of outspoken crusaders who tried but failed to ease the economic burdens of the Kansas farmers.

With its placement in the middle of the continent, Kansas was a pathway from the East to the West. Groups traveled through the virgin territory to find a promised land beginning with the Santa Fe traders, then the Oregon settlers, the Mormons, the California gold seekers and finally folks from the Middle West from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Missouri and Kentucky. Principally American born, these settlers through their blood and sweat turned what was called the Great American desert into fertile fields. They like all frontier people shared an idealism. But through their common experiences of toil, deprivation and almost constant calamity, their idealism became more concrete and practical due to the necessity of the conditions. They were rugged individualists, but their individualism was one of conformity derived from necessity. The wilderness developed qualities of stoicism, patience, endurance and a morality that Carl Becker, the noted historian and a transplanted Kansan, said reflected the Pilgrims. Writing in 1910 he stated that:

> ...Kansas is more Puritan than New England of today. It is akin to the New England of early days. It is what New England, old England itself, once was--the frontier, an ever-changing spot where dwell the courageous who defy fate and conquer circumstances.[2]

Kansas had become a state only twenty-eight years earlier than Counts's birth. It was founded after a stormy period

that could be called the Civil War of Kansas. The controversy revolved around the question of whether or not Kansas was to become a slave state or a free state. Its citizens chose freedom.

In this part of the country Counts was raised as part of a family that could trace its roots back to early eighteenth century America. The latest forbearer in his family to arrive in the New World came before the War for Independence. On his father's side Counts could trace his genealogy back to John Counts (Kuntz) who arrived in Virginia from Germany around 1714. His mother's side had an even more prestigious ancestor, William Bradford, the first Governor of the Plymouth Colony. Counts's family was active even then in the struggle for freedom. His paternal great grandmother moved to Ohio when the State of Virginia voted to retain the slave system. Objecting to the what she felt was wrong, she sold her land, freed her slaves and moved to a free state. Her son, Counts's grandfather, had served in the Civil War, and George was often the recipient of his war stories. Counts, of course, hastened to add that in the intervening years there was a great mixture of ethnic elements that entered his family's genealogy. He quotes his father as having answered his question about his ancestry with the remark that he had better not inquire too deeply or he might find an ancestor hung as a horse thief.[3]

Counts recalled his parents as being well educated though neither had finished high school. His father, who spoke well

and was something of an artist, read a lot particularly about geology and the controversy that was sparked by Darwin's theory of evolution. He was also involved in church and community affairs. His mother tended the family but also was a talented musician, playing the organ and singing around the house as she completed her tasks. Counts, like many, was remorseful that he never really appreciated them until after their deaths.[4]

George began his education in a one room schoolhouse in Baldwin when he was five years old after his father had bought a farm closer to town. He did not complete the first year but went back the following year and completed four grades in two years. Thereafter, he became a firm believer in the ungraded classroom. After graduation at fourteen, George went on to the public high school in Baldwin where he was active in student activities. Public schools of the period in Kansas admitted all students, rich or poor, black or white. Along with his family's ethics, this way of life was seen as normal and perhaps fueled his fervor for equal educational opportunity for all.[5]

As a boy George helped out on the farm doing chores in accordance with his abilities, picking firewood when he was younger and later tilling the land, milking cows and gaining the practical experience and skills necessary for adulthood. Much of Counts's boyhood was spent working the farm, trapping, hunting and camping. He loved the freedom of the wilderness

around him and carried a burning desire to be a fur-trapper from his earliest cognizant days to his retirement, but events happened to change his life. One of the turning points of consequence he relates is his experience in a logging camp when he was seventeen. He had dreamed of going to Canada and working as a fur trapper when he matured. He and his brothers even picked out supplies and equipment that they would need for their later experiences from a *Montgomery Ward* catalog. However, given the chance to really work in a logging camp, George got fired from his job (the only time he ever was fired) for riding the fume against the boss's orders. He then was sent back home where he continued his education at Baker University.[6]

Family life on the frontier farm of the Countses also centered on the strict moral teachings of the Methodist church. George and his three brothers and two sisters were reared in the Christian community that housed the Methodist University that George later attended. Religion played an important part in his upbringing. Church and Sunday School were attended without fail every Sunday. Card playing and alcohol were frowned upon. Children were not allowed to play on Sundays. In fact George's aunt was so determined that he become a minister that she put money aside and when he was of age, she arranged for an interview for the seminary.[7]

The Judeo-Christian ethics and teachings had a profound effect upon Counts as he matured even though he later rejected

Christian theology after hearing more revolutionary ideas i.e., particularly organic evolution at the University of Chicago. Eventually he developed his own *Weltanschauung*.

Childhood environment plays a large part in shaping the man of the future, and Counts was no exception. His later views of mankind and the world can be traced to his strict Methodist upbringing, his educated and close family life, and his rugged rural childhood in Kansas. Being born in a part of the country which had just recently attained statehood (1861), which had been transformed from the great American desert to the breadbasket of America, which had fought a battle for many years against slavery, which had fought battle after battle against the elements including blizzards, droughts, grasshoppers, and swindlers, which was populated mostly by transplanted Americans and not immigrants, and which had been the frontier only a few short years earlier played a large part forming the foundations of his character.

Unlike most Americans of his generation, after high school Counts furthered his education. Attending Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas, he specialized in Latin and Greek but also took courses in philosophy, mathematics and natural sciences. He graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1911. From his studies in the above disciplines, he developed an "evolutionary naturalism" outlook. With tongue in cheek he bragged that at Baker he earned "A's" in all his courses save for one "B+," and actively participated in

school activities and sports including football where he played left end and basketball where he played left guard. From these experiences he liked to joke that his critics said that he was on the left all the rest of his life.[8]

Having meet his future wife, Lois Hazel Bailey, the sister of a good friend, the previous year, George proposed marriage right after his graduation in June. He then sought and received a job teaching in the Sumner County High School in Wellington, Kansas for $85.00 a month to prepare for his upcoming marriage. The next year he was recruited to serve as the principal of the public high school in Peabody, Kansas for $100.00 a month while teaching biology, including the theory of organic evolution. Ironically, Counts had never planned to teach. In fact he had taken no courses in pedagogy during his years at Baker.[9]

Finally Lois and he were married September 14, 1913. They remained so until his death in 1974.[10]

Life at the University of Chicago

Upon completion of his second year as principal at Peabody High School, Counts received a scholarship to begin his graduate studies at the University of Chicago which he regarded as a "champion of radical ideas in biology, social science, philosophy and theology." Counts went to Chicago in the summer of 1913. He had intended to pursue his studies in the field of sociology. Once there, however, his future

brother-in-law William Bailey, also a student at the University of Chicago, persuaded him to confer with Dr. Charles Hubbard Judd, Dean of the School of Education and distinguished psychologist, about obtaining his graduate degree in education instead. Judd convinced him to do so, and Counts became the first of Judd's students to take a minor in sociology rather than psychology. Counts graduated *magna cum laude* in 1916 earning a doctor of philosophy in education and began his distinguished and lengthy career as a professional educator and a professor of social and cultural foundations of education.[11]

In the beginning as is not uncommon in young people, Counts moved from job to job. First he went to Delaware College located in Newark, Delaware (now the University of Delaware) as the Department Head of Education and the director of the summer school. He taught all the education courses plus some psychology and sociology courses. In 1918 he moved to St. Louis and taught at Harris Teachers College. The next year he joined the staff of the University of Washington in Seattle; then he went to Yale University for several years, and then back to the University of Chicago. Finally he settled at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1927 where he remained until he officially retired in 1955.

While the young Counts moved quite frequently in his early career, we will later see that he used the time and the places judiciously. He collected data from the school systems

of St. Louis, Seattle and Chicago as the basis for some of his empirical research in the 1920s and began developing his educational theories which would rise to the forefront in the 1930s.

In June 1913, Counts arrived in Chicago to begin his graduate studies at the University of Chicago, a citadel of liberal ideas and inquiries on social issues. He began his studies as a sociology major, but as previously mentioned shifted to education after talking with both his brother-in-law who was studying education at the university and Professor Judd.

The University of Chicago was light years ahead of other institutions of higher education in the study of the natural and social sciences and education at that time. The Chicago School of Pragmatism was in its heyday with John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Charles Rugg, Francis Parker, the first director of its School of Education, and others having buoyed its staff in the first decade of the new century. The university was a private institution of higher learning chartered in 1889, coincidentally the year of Counts's birth. It had been endowed by a $600,000 grant by John D. Rockefeller who sought to form an educational center in the West. Its first president and founder, William Rainey Harper recruited a very select and prestigious faculty for its opening in 1892. Albion Small, one of the most distinguished professors of

sociology in the United States and one of Counts's professors, was a chartered staff member.[12]

Counts came to the University of Chicago where wealthy families sent their sons, newly married and without a large amount of funds. He claimed to have supported both himself and his bride through odd jobs and fellowships, but given the cost, in all likelihood, he may have received some support from his family back in Baldwin.[13]

At twenty-four years of age, Counts was introduced to some of the greatest minds of the period such as Charles H. Judd, Albion Small, William I. Thomas, George Herbert Mead, and Franklin Bobbitt. These were men in the forefront of scientific studies of societal change.[14]

Upon realization of the above, one readily begins to observe that the rural individualism of Counts's early years contrasted greatly with the urban intellectualism and *avant garde* studies of the place. Terms like "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest" were part of the contemporary argot. Young Counts was exposed to the works of such social scientists of the era as G. Stanley Hall, E.L. Thorndike, Lewis Terman, James McKee Cattell and others in the course of his doctoral program. The ideas of John Dewey who had left the University of Chicago still strongly influenced the philosophy of pragmatism. For the first time scientists had undertaken massive studies of every aspect of human mental and physical behavior under controlled conditions. At Chicago,

these studies in the various disciplines were integrated. There were no barriers to bridging the different departments. One was able to pursue research from a holistic viewpoint. Undoubtedly Counts was greatly influenced by this. Counts scholar Gerald L. Gutek notes that:

> As he matured as an educational theorist, Counts increasingly stressed the content of educational, social, and political issues. For him, scholarship in the foundations of education needed to be multi-disciplinary and not restricted to a single methodology. While his early publications reflected a reliance on statistical method in dealing with specific school-related issues, Counts's later works moved to broad theorizing and commentary on major political, social, economic, and educational issues.[15]

One of the most influential men in Counts's life at the University of Chicago was Albion Small, the distinguished professor of sociology who had built the department of sociology at the University of Chicago into the premier exemplar for that discipline. Small, a man recognized as one of the pioneers in American sociology, emphasized practice rather than theory. The pre-eminent sociological theory that asserted that the accumulation of wealth was the motivating factor of human behavior was despised by Small. Instead he developed a philosophy contrary to that notion. Small felt society needed to provide for the material welfare of all citizens and not have the extremes of poverty and wealth that prevailed at that time.[16]

Counts enrolled in four of Small's classes including the popular, "The Conflict of Classes." Small taught that though

economics was an important facet in the development of Western societies, it was not the only one. He espoused "moral determinism" as the criteria to judge everything. In other words all things were to be viewed in their own moral context whatever that might be. He felt the sociologist needed to look at six areas: health, wealth, sociability, knowledge, beauty and rightness in determining the basis of human behavior. He viewed democracy as providing a constant conflict of interest for all elements of society and believed that sociologists needed to recognize how these various forces interact. Counts found himself learning the methodological study of sociology in a way that hammered away at the ethics and morals of human behavior.[17]

Also influential in Counts's life was Charles Judd, his adviser and mentor. Judd, an eminent psychologist, viewed his discipline as an integral part of education. But Counts did not always agree with Judd's positions. In particular he felt that:

> Judd did have a rather limited view, because there was no philosophy in the School of Education. Judd didn't want any philosophy because he said that philosophers just speculate, that we don't want speculation, that we want <u>science</u>. Science gives the answers.[18]

Yet surprisingly, this man of science, allowed his student Counts to complete a minor in sociology. The strong, authoritarian, stern, and formal Judd spent considerable time working with his students. He was a perfectionist who demanded total commitment from them. Counts enrolled in three

of Judd's courses and worked as his research assistant, participating as a fellow on various surveys and projects.[19]

Perhaps the most exhaustive study Counts engaged in under Judd was *A Study of the Colleges and High Schools in the North Central Association*. Its purpose was to:

> ...present a body of material to those interested in secondary education which will enable them to get some idea of the nature and scope of the work now being done by a selected group of secondary schools in the Middle West. It is hoped that the information here set forth will be of practical value to those in control of the high schools in the territory covered by this report. One of the chief values of the presentation of these facts in the form of tables is that it makes it possible for school authorities to compare the organization, material equipment, course of study, etc., of their own schools with a group of selected schools.[20]

Using a method previously employed by Jessup and Coffman in 1914, Counts presented "a statistical study based upon 1000 annual reports sent in by the principals of 1000 high schools of the North Central Association" of which Judd was then the secretary. The study analyzed items on a questionnaire. The actual writing of the report was divided with Judd writing the section on colleges and universities and Counts writing the part on the high schools. This early research gave Counts somewhat of a reputation as an authority on secondary education. The study was finely detailed and must have required extensive time. The report exemplified Judd's idea that the "student should be introduced to the problems of the school in a very direct and concrete way." Counts's dissertation for his Ph. D., *Arithmetic Tests and Studies in*

the Psychology of Arithmetic, a study conducted in the Cleveland high schools, also reflected Judd's philosophy, but it did not reflect Counts's desire. It was:

> ...a subject that I would not have chosen myself. I had been specializing in the social sciences, and I had in mind a dissertation that would involve the studies of schools somewhere in relation to societies, high schools only.[21]

One of Counts's favorite professors during his graduate years was William I. Thomas, his instructor in Social Origins. Counts admitted, Thomas "had a tremendous influence on me." The two met the first summer Counts arrived when he took Thomas' extremely popular course. Thomas, author of the *Source Book for Social Origins* (1907), developed a theory of an integrated sociological, historical and social anthropological analysis of social change. He believed that the most important of all human problems was social change which develops either through evolutionary or revolutionary forces that disrupt the status quo and cause human beings to adapt to the new environment.[22]

Thomas, like Small and Judd, reiterated the absolute necessity of careful analysis, stressing the need to analyze the collective available resources of a given society including its culture, values, attitudes and personality at a particular moment in time. He like the others viewed the world as a laboratory and social psychology as a scientific study. He espoused that "social psychology was the discipline that would investigate individual mental processes only

insofar as they were conditioned by society and social processes only insofar as they were conditioned by states of consciousness." Throughout his career Thomas stressed the study of human personality believing that the individual's conscious ability to change and adapt to his environment was the crux of socialization.[23]

It was in Thomas' class that Counts was first introduced to William Graham Sumner's *Folkways*. The book became an eye opener for Counts. Both Counts's biographer, Childs, and Counts, himself, relate in their works the effect that the sociological theory had on Counts. Thomas, differing from his colleagues, felt that the world had changed so immensely in the past decades that the society in which Counts and his peers now lived was totally different from any other in the history of mankind. Therefore studying past civilizations would shed little light on the present.[24]

As we will later see, Counts became the standard bearer of the interpretation that America had rapidly changed from an agrarian society into an urban, industrial one. This process occurred without any social planning for the future. Undoubtedly, Thomas' pronouncements at the University of Chicago in 1913 stimulated Counts to later call upon progressive educators to be progressive at the 1932 Progressive Education Association's convention. Seeing the rapid changes that left the masses poorer, less educated, and without direction, Counts felt a need for planning the course

society should take rather than continuing to allow it to react to the tumultuous situations into which it was thrown.

While each of the above professors had a tremendous impact on Counts, courses taken with others such as Charles E. Merriam in political science, Harold G. Moulton in economics and sociologists such as Charles R. Henderson, Frederick Starr and Robert E. Park, exposed Counts to the controversial and provocative theories of Comte, Marx, Spencer, Hegel, Sumner, Veblen and Dewey. In fact he credited "a great deal (of his) thought to John Dewey," who he finally met and with whom he became good friends at Columbia University in 1927.[25]

As a result of his exposure to some of the best intellectual and scientific minds of the day, Counts began to formulate his own ideas. According to John Childs:

> ...it became habitual for Counts to think of man and society in evolutionary and functional terms, of human behavior as essentially interactive and adaptive in nature, of learning as a function of this adaptive process and of man as both a creature and a creator of culture.[26]

He began to think of collectively of all the parts of society, yet each with distinctive markings and relationships and his thoughts on education took on a more social overview. Until finally he stated unequivocally that, indeed, education was an inescapable function of a given civilization and its problems at a particular place in time. According to Counts:

> The historical record shows that education is always a function of time, place and circumstances. In its basic philosophy, its social objective, and its program of instruction, it inevitably reflects in varying proportion the experience, the

> condition, and the hopes, fears and aspirations of a particular people or cultural group at a particular point in history.[27]

Having had the good fortune to study under such a distinguished group of teachers and researchers, Counts left the University of Chicago with a solid background in psychology, sociology and education. As previously stated, he began his long and distinguished career at the University of Delaware. Researcher Charles D. Jay suggests that since Samuel Chiles Mitchell, the President of Delaware College, later called the University of Delaware, was the commencement speaker at Counts's graduation perhaps Judd had put in a good word for Counts and that is how he obtained his first post-graduate job.[28] During the next ten years, he moved from school to school, but the empirical methods he learned under Judd remained with him and eventually came into the forefront.

The 1920s proved a productive time for Counts. He busied himself with studies of conditions in American secondary schools. These seminal works attempted to examine the effects of various social classes upon education.

Counts's Career as an Educator

By the time Counts arrived at Teachers College in 1927, his permanent position until his retirement in 1956, he began to expand his interests to societies outside the United States. He maintained this international interest was derived from his studies in anthropology and sociology at the

University of Chicago. Having been invited to participate in the 1925 research project of Dr. Paul Monroe, historian and teacher from Teachers College, Counts became a member of the Philippine Educational Survey Commission. He recollects that due to his participation in the study of the Philippine educational system, Dr. Monroe invited him to become the associate director for the International Institute at Teachers College which Monroe headed. The purpose of the Institute was to "foster an interchange of ideas among educators, teachers and students of the world." Through this pathway, Counts eventually secured a position at Columbia University. Always having had a keen interest in Russia from his boyhood days in Kansas, Counts, as a part of his job, chose to focus in on the language and institutions of Russia, a country which no one else at the institute had selected.[29]

By the summer of 1927, Counts was off to study Russia and its people. Fascinated by the promises of the Soviets to educate all their citizens and provide economic and technological service to all its people, Counts was eager to see it happening first hand. The trip was the first of three to the Soviet Union that he would make.

Two years later in 1929 Counts made an extended trip to the Soviet Union, crisscrossing the country in a Model A Ford that he had had shipped from the factory in Michigan. Traveling over backroads for some 6000 miles, Counts saw the

"backwardness" of the Soviet Union and at the same time the friendliness of the people.[30]

Returning to the United States in January 1930, Counts wrote *The Soviet Challenge to America*[31] which brought him negative criticism for suggesting that any country, particularly one as backward as the Soviet Union, could possibly surpass the United States. He sought improved relations with the Soviets. During the next decade he was outspoken in trying to gather support for centralized planning, particularly in education, during the economic depression of the 1930s.

Established as an authority on Russian society and education, Counts continued his interest in the Soviet Union throughout his life even to the point of reading the Russian newspaper *Pravda*, on a daily basis. In 1936 he returned to Russia as a guest of the Soviets, but things soured on that trip. Some twenty years later Counts wrote his most important work on the Soviet Union, *The Challenge of Soviet Education*,[32] a comprehensive work dealing with the close relationship between the Soviet educational system and its power structure. Counts demonstrated the close scrutiny that the Soviet government kept on the educational program, almost as much as it did on the military and the economics of the country. Published in 1957 at the time that the Russians launched Sputnik and Americans were scrambling to intensify

their mathematics and science curriculum, the work had a major impact on the policy of the United States regarding education.

Being seen as closely allied to the Soviet Union caused Counts at times to be called a Communist. The Hearst papers in particular dogged him during the 1930s and labeled him as "George Soviet Counts." But he was firmly planted in democracy. Fighting the economic inequality of the 1930s, Counts believed the answer to the problem was the need to democratize the social structure. Utilizing the basic concepts of American democracy, his proposed changes were primarily economic. Calling for a planned economy instead of the individualistic free enterprise system, Counts urged the teachers of the United States to work at designing the new social order.

Counts chose to unveil his revolutionary plan before the Convention of the Progressive Education Association in April 1932 at Baltimore. In his speech entitled *Dare Progressive Education Be Progressive?,* later published as part of the book *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?*,[33] Counts caught the teaching profession's ear, arguing that rather than blaming the economic crisis of the Great Depression on the failure of capitalism to flourish, educational institutions needed to take the initiative and lead the country phoenix-like out of the ashes of economic deprivation to a reconstructed society that would provide for a more equitable

distribution of wealth. American teachers were challenged to be in the forefront of this new order.

From 1929 to 1934 Counts worked with the Commission of the American Historical Association on the teaching of social studies in the schools. Its objective was to improve the study of history and civic education in the schools. As a member and later research director of the project, he met and began a life-long friendship with the noted historian Charles A. Beard. Having already developed the theme of the role of class throughout his empirical studies, Counts now began to be influenced by Beard's progressive definition of history that "any written history inevitably reflects the thoughts of the author in his time and cultural setting."[34]

The two, Beard and Counts, worked closely on the project so closely in fact that the report was called the Counts-Beard proposal. Eventually Beard published two books and Counts one of the fifteen volume report. Both co-authored the *Summary and Recommendations* volume. Counts's tome, *The Social Foundations of Education*, was published in 1934 expressing his personal viewpoint that teachers should be empowered to bring about change and reconstruct the society into a more equitable, collectivistic, industrial society.[35]

From his position in the AHA Commission, Counts was solicited to be senior editor of a new educational periodical called the *Social Frontier*. The journal was the voice of the reconstructionists. With Counts at the helm, and Beard,

George W. Hartmann, William Heard Kilpatrick, Harold Rugg, John Dewey, Merle Curti and others, as contributors, the publication sought to raise the consciousness of teachers and others to the evils of the profit system and other vested interests. Its goal was a more equitable society. According to Lawrence Dennis:

> Though the editor, editorial assistants, and most of the contributors were educationists, no one who read the journal leveled charges of pedagogical parochialism. The approach was broadly based, universal, and theoretical. Education was conceived as the entire process of enculturation and not simply schooling.[36]

After three years, Counts relinquished the editorship of the journal which continued publication until 1943.

In 1935 both Counts and Beard became members of the National Education Association's Educational Policies Commission which was established to continuously critique and appraise the American system of education with an end to suggest means of rapid improvement.

During the later part of the 1930s, Counts became involved in liberal political movements. He was elected president of the American Federation of Teachers in 1939, even though he had been defeated as candidate for the presidency of the college professors' Local 537 in New York. Aware of the heavy influence of the Communist element that had grown in the AFT during the 1930s, Counts set out to free the organization of their control. As president of the AFT for three consecutive terms, from 1932 to 1942, he presided over the

rewriting of the federation's constitution which eliminated members who were also members of totalitarian parties.[37]

Invigorated by his coast to coast travels as president of the AFT and encouraged by the growing activism of teachers, Counts developed an interest in politics. He became chairman of the American Labor Party in 1942, where once again he came up against strong Communist elements. But this time he and other "independent members," as he called them, split and formed their own party, the Liberal Party of New York, which usually did not run its own candidate for office, supporting instead the more closely ideologically allied candidate of the two major parties. As it happened, 1952 proved to be the exception when the party could not support either candidate of the major parties for United States Senator from New York and chose Counts to run. He was defeated but managed to collect almost half a million votes.[38]

In the early 1950s Counts, a prolific writer throughout his career, reached new heights and maturity in his scholarly writings. He produced a philosophy of education entitled *Education and American Civilization* which Gutek termed a "civilizational" philosophy of education due to its multi-faceted interpretation of the American heritage as simultaneously supporting democracy, humanity, science and technology.[39]

In 1955 Counts was required to retire from Teachers College at the mandatory age of 65. According to Dennis,

"While accepting the mandate with a public stoicism, he was personally hurt at being torn from his academic position during what he thought could have been some of his most productive years."[40] However, slowing down was not his style. He continued to travel, lecture, and teach, moving from the University of Pittsburgh, to the University of Colorado, to Michigan State University, to Northwestern University, and finally to Southern Illinois University in 1962, where he remained teaching courses in social and cultural foundations of education until his second retirement in 1971, four years prior to his death on November 10, 1974.

Throughout his life Counts felt that he had lived through a time when civilization changed so rapidly that there were no standards by which to gauge it. Life in the United States in the twentieth century had swiftly turned from a rural agrarian society into an industrial, technological one in which people and institutions were unprepared to cope with the complex changes that were mandated.

Born into that rural agrarian society discussed above just as a new era of civilization was beginning, Counts lived his adult life in a quick-paced urban, industrial, and technological environment. However, he felt that there was some special significance in his having experienced both the old and new orders. When he read *The American Mind* (1950), he was peculiarly effected by Henry Steele Commager's statement,

> The decade of the nineties is the watershed of American history. As with all watersheds the

> topography is blurred, but in the perspective of half a century the grand outlines emerge clearly. On the one side lies an America predominantly agricultural; concerned with domestic problems; conforming, intellectually at least, to the political, economic, and moral principles inherited from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries--an America on the whole self-confident, self-contained, self-reliant, and conscious of its unique character and of a unique destiny. On the other side lies the modern America, predominantly urban and industrial; inextricably involved in world economy and politics; troubled with the problems that had long been thought peculiar to the Old World; experiencing profound changes in population, social institutions, economy, and technology; and trying to accommodate its traditional institutions and habits of thought to conditions new and in part alien.[41]

Certainly if experience is the great teacher, Counts's life having spanned the "great watershed" gave him a laboratory in which to hone his research. Seeing the suffering and confusion of the Great Depression, the collapse of old world institutions, Counts developed a social philosophy of shared purpose and social planning. He believed that technology had created an interdependent world, but humanity had not found a way to deal with it. The individualism of the frontier and the intimate personal relationships of rural America still reigned while the actual process of modernization had produced a very mobile, technological, impersonal and functional society, in short, a new social order.

The Major Works of Counts Relating to the Current Study

As Counts began his career in the 1920s, he focused on the conditions of the secondary school perhaps because of his

dissertation study at the University of Chicago, perhaps because he had previously taught high school in Kansas, or perhaps because of his experience and expertise in completing the North Central Report for Professor Judd. In any case he published six books in that decade, five of which are relevant to this study. One is a textbook on educational principles; three are empirical studies; another is an analytical study of the social and political forces that are present in a large urban school system; and the final volume is a visionary challenge for educators faced with the complexity of the new industrial, technological society.

It is the last five books which are of importance to the purposes of the current study. Each are briefly described as to content and method in this section of the paper. A more detailed analysis will follow in later chapters.

Counts began his research in the 1920s with a study entitled *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education*.[42] In the finely detailed report, published in 1922, Counts surveyed the total public high school population of four medium sized cities in the United States: Bridgeport, Connecticut; Mount Vernon, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; and Seattle, Washington. Using statistical data gathered from these urban school districts, Counts set out to demonstrate that even though secondary education had experienced explosive growth in the preceding three decades and more Americans than ever were attending high school, it did not follow that

schools had become more democratic. The extraordinary advancement of secondary education did not necessarily provide for equal education opportunity for all but rather allowed the privileged classes to continue to dominate the attendance rolls at the various high schools.

Counts sought to ascertain the selective character of the American public high school, using the occupations of the fathers of the students who attended as a criterion to indicate class social standing. He demonstrated that the wealthier classes sent their children to school in much higher numbers than the poor. He showed the disparity among the social, ethnic and racial groups and concluded that the high school population and its graduates still were composed largely of young people of the upper classes. In his last chapter, he argued the value of secondary education for everyone and put to rest the common objections posed financially, socially and psychologically. He proposed that the American public high school must either educate all children without favor or chose a select group and teach those students the meaning of social obligation for the greater good of a democratic society.

Count's second major study, *The Senior High School Curriculum*,[43] published in 1926, researched the curriculum of fifteen senior high schools located throughout the United States. Its purpose was to ascertain whether or not high schools were changing to meet the needs of a growing

industrial, technological society. Using methods similar to the previous study, Counts surveyed urban schools from the East, West, North, and South. He examined the various subjects usually taught in high school i.e., English, foreign languages, mathematics, natural sciences, history, social sciences, commercial subjects, etc. Through the use of interviews and questionnaires, he concluded that the sociological make-up of the high schools had changed greatly as had American culture, but the actual curriculum was still based on traditional classical studies. With the larger number of students entering manual occupations rather than professional or non-manual careers, the curriculum needed to be broadened to give everyone a universal education so that they might function as a part of American society without feelings of deep despair and frustration.

The third and last empirical study that Counts undertook during the 1920s dealt with the social class make-up of 532 urban Boards of Education around the nation. Writing in 1927, Counts still focused on the idea that education was being dictated by the upper classes and their culture with or without their cognizance. Counts in *The Social Compositions of Boards of Education*,[44] once again using urban school districts, did a methodical research survey. He sought answers to fundamental questions which identified the socio-economic background of the men and women who comprised these boards of education. To what social class did they belong?

What occupations did they represent? How much formal education had they had? Believing the most fundamental educational problem to be that of control, Counts demonstrated that a very narrow segment of society, the business and professional groups controlled the schools. According to Counts, this was a matter of great social significance since schools had evolved into major social institutions. Permitting one class to legislate for another was a dangerous practice, particularly as educators expanded their function beyond teaching the fundamentals of knowledge to teaching moral ethics and values.

Counts saw civilization as becoming more and more complex. Therefore, he felt it was necessary to safeguard the interests of minority groups. How to best accomplish this he did not suggest, but he recommended that the methods of controlling public education be placed under close scrutiny so that no one group could monopolize its forum.

In 1928, Counts published a scathing report of the events which led to the firing of Chicago School Superintendent William McAndew the previous year. In this book, *School and Society in Chicago*,[45] he methodically reported on the different social forces which come into play in the administration of schools. Once again the question of who controlled the schools was raised. Counts tied in the threads of his three earlier studies and showed how outside forces such as business, labor, women's clubs, religious

denominations, City Hall and the press pit against each other as well as against the internal forces i.e., the school board, the superintendent and the teachers who also were antagonistic toward each other.

While relating the scope of events that occurred in Chicago, Counts dealt with larger issues that encompassed most urban American school systems. He displayed an educational institution whose control was so complex that even those who by law and by definition were "in control" could not handle its unwieldy power. Enormous pressure was exerted on the school board and the superintendent by societal groups, each having its own set of priorities.

Counts exposed the politicians and their corruptness taken at the expense of the children's welfare. He uncovered the self-serving and petty special interest groups and questioned the future of American public schools and their control. He suggested broadening the base of representation of the masses, thereby providing the channels to candidly study their agendas. He also put forth the idea that educators should be organized, prepared and aware of the issues at hand to enable them to protect their interests and implement the program decided upon by the community.

The last tome of the current study, *Secondary Education and Industrialism*,[46] was originally prepared and delivered as the Inglis Lecture at Harvard University in 1929. In it Counts put forth the idea of his oft repeated theme that

industrialism had forever changed the world. The agrarian society of the past had disappeared. The rugged individualism of the past had been superseded by an industrial society in which all facets of society were so highly integrated that money was the only common denominator.

During the period of transition, there was an enormous growth in secondary education. The democratic traditions which evolved from the agrarian civilization, in particular, the idea that one could get ahead by merit and character, was the inspiration for the extension of the public schools to a second level. The expansion of the elementary school system prepared the base for the forward thrust of the high school. In addition, society had also become more highly integrated and interdependent. Transportation and communications had made gigantic leaps forward with the inventions of the automobile, the airplane, the postal system, the press, the telegraph, radio, and moving pictures. These tremendous developments paralleled the growth of education and made it more of a necessity. All of this created an environment where education acquired through living or experience as was obtained in the past was no longer sufficient. The increased wealth and income of Americans made widespread educational opportunities more available while the decrease in the death rate and the decline in the birth rate produced a larger ratio of adults to children and allowed American children the luxury of attending school.

Armed with this analysis, Counts chastised educators for not taking note of the above changes and letting schools drift without vision for the future. Secondary education which had been a rare privilege in the agrarian society was now a right for more than half the nation's adolescents. What had been a way of learning through living had become a thing of the past in a society in which knowledge and experience had to be gained through more systematic methods in educational institutions.

Counts was dismayed by what he thought to be a lack of effort by educators to analyze the transformation which was rapidly overthrowing the social and economic traditions of the past. He perceived the new order of things as destroying the fabric of American life and demanding a whole new social, legal, ethical, aesthetic and religious revision of Americans' ideas regarding the nature of man. Meanwhile educators trying to grope with these problems had no current formulae to use, relying instead on the old methods of the agrarian past.

Counts concluded by challenging educators to face the issues confronting them and to take up the gauntlet to construct a new theory of secondary education. He charged that failure to take the reigns at this point would be "either blind conservatism or aimless drift."[47]

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CHAPTER II

GEORGE S. COUNTS'S CONCEPT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION

Unlike most educational theorists, George S. Counts viewed the development of a country's educational institutions through the evolution of its civilization. Undoubtedly this culturally-oriented way of viewing the evolution of education was based on his graduate studies in sociology at the University of Chicago. As noted previously, he was greatly influenced by the sociologist Albion Small. As Counts stated:

> My early works were expressions of my social and sociological approach to education, and they did influence my theoretical thinking in latter years.[1]

This sociological perspective, melded with his graduate studies in education under Charles Judd, the eminent educational psychologist, influenced Counts to see education as expressing "a conception of civilization or way of life. It is an essential part of the process through which a civilization or way of life is renewed or changed from generation to generation."[2]

Through the study of its educational institutions, Counts sought to examine the educational history of the United States. Calling it a "living theory of education" rather than a purely theoretical one, he felt that the educational program

of a civilization had three areas which needed to be studied with care: the genius of its people, the history of its civilization, and the conditions of life in their natural setting. Through the values of its people, a country's educational program was an expression of its unique concept of civilization.[3] In order to more fully understand Counts's concept of secondary education, we must first examine his general theory of education in light of his beliefs.

Counts originally presented his analysis of the principles and ideas upon which American education was founded in *The American Road to Culture* (1930). Twenty-two years later in an expanded work, he wrote what some consider his most mature and thoughtful volume on the subject, *Education and American Civilization* (1952). Realizing the difficulty in such large scale analysis, he mentioned in the prefaces to both tomes a certain reluctance to print either. He did not allow publication of *The American Road to Culture* until eight months after its completion. Once again, he withheld publication of *Education and American Civilization* for months and did not look forward to seeing it in print. In the end, he felt that the attempts had to be made if only to focus more intently on society and civilization in relation to history and world order.[4]

Believing that both society and geography played heavily on the forces that gave form to education, Counts explained the development of American education by identifying the

principal forces that shaped education in the United States. (It should be noted that Counts consistently identified with the common people and popular grass roots movements in history.) Trying to look at American education from the eyes of a foreigner, he saw it as having evolved from the needs and wants of ordinary people. Their values and morals molded their institutions; and their needs and wants were based on the circumstances they encountered as civilization grew in the New World.[5]

The pioneers who came to America to seek political and religious freedom were for the most part not aristocrats. They brought with them a spirit of adventure and hard work and sought peace and security from political oppression and economic insecurity. They looked to escape from the tyranny of social class as well as obtain religious freedom. In the first three hundred years of American society, the people lived simply in rural communities, isolated from their neighbors by the terrain and occupied almost totally by the conditions necessary for survival. This agrarian civilization was generally motivated by its continuing need to work to exist.

The geography of the United States further isolated the rural civilization. While land was rich and plentiful, the varying climate and terrain directly affected culture in various parts of the country and caused distinct societies to develop and grow. Yet under the broad umbrella of the

concepts of democracy, American civilization flourished and produced from its foundations a progressive, scientific society which evolved into a highly integrated and interdependent society utilizing divisions of labor, money, transportation, and communications, and amassing large concentrations of people living in urban areas. These changes disrupted the old agrarian order, relaxed moral standards and sanctions, and created a society of greater economic inequality. In spite of these differences, however, Americans still saw themselves as one people and as having equal opportunity to succeed.[6]

The Historical Development

Counts's theory of the development of the American public school rested upon ten principles that he described as the foundation of the American system. Through these ten principles: (1) faith in education, (2) governmental responsibility, (3) local initiative, (4) individual success, (5) democratic tradition, (6) national solidarity, (7) social conformity, (8) mechanical efficiency, (9) practical utility, and (10) philosophic uncertainty, he explored the historical development of American education in relationship to the growth of American civilization.[7]

Faith in Education

From the origins of American civilization, education had been viewed as necessary for the advancement of the society. Citing Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, William Graham Sumner, Alexis de Tocqueville and others, Counts demonstrated that political thought down from the colonial period through the twentieth century "insisted that the survival of free institutions requires an educated people." Underlying this faith in education was the belief that all people are created equal and that individuals are a product of their environment. Socio-economic differences developed when equal opportunities were lacking or when injustices produced inequalities in life. These social and political beliefs coupled with the vast and varied terrain of the United States provided a back drop for a new society to evolve and grow. European ancestry and family connections, an important criterion in the old civilization, were less significant in the new world. Merit rather than birth was the social force that gave access to upward mobility.[8]

America provided a refuge for Europe's poor and oppressed. Seeking to escape poverty and religious and political persecution, these masses of underclass individuals created one of history's greatest civilizations. This fact, no doubt, fueled the continuing American belief that individuals through hard work and perseverance could succeed. According to Counts, this idea dominated not only American

thought but also its philosophy of education throughout its history. This popular faith in the individual's potential to succeed gradually became a faith in education. In turn, education was identified with schooling so that Americans came to rely upon the schools as "miracle workers." They viewed organized education as having the power to equalize individuals and achieve desirable social ends.[9]

To support his conclusions, Counts cited three significant ways Americans supported public schools. They (1) willingly taxed themselves to fund schooling; (2) by the early twentieth century they sent record numbers of children to secondary and higher education schools; and (3) at the same time they engaged in research on every facet of the educational program. Yet, Americans had difficulty in defining the purpose of education. Counts believed that Americans hesitated to examine education's basic purpose because they believed it was above criticism and evaluation.[10]

From Counts's point of view, Americans' exclusive focus on the schools as the sole educational institution provided a narrow vision of education that weakened the development of a genuine philosophy of education. The people had been repeatedly assured that tax-supported education was the hope of the masses, a way to enlighten and democratize a nation. The tenets of American education promised security, prosperity, and freedom; but later the Great Depression of the 1930s changed the beliefs and values of the people as they

experienced what Counts described as a "pain economy." Schooling was also perceived as a equalizing opportunity by Americans, but they neglected to look to other equally powerful institutions i.e. the family, church, news media, museums, etc., which also exercised educational functions of a non-formal nature.[11]

Governmental Responsibility

Governmental responsibility was the second principle upon which Counts based his theory of American education. Believing that governmental responsibility derived its meaning from the word "control," Counts felt that whoever had control selected both teacher and curriculum. Any philosophy or program of education had to satisfy those who were in control. In America in the early 1900s, the popular conception of control was perceived as being held by government. During earlier periods, schools were controlled primarily by religious groups who followed the model of European education. In Europe, the clergy had been considered intellectually and socially superior to the rest of the population. Gradually, the ecclesiastical influence in America diminished as science and technology created alternative views of knowledge. New modes of transportation and communication helped to develop commerce and industry and to enlighten and broaden the popular outlook.[12]

When the United States became independent, the church began to lose more of its control as the responsibility of educating the populace became that of the political state. As control of education passed from church to state, the state, believing that a democratic government needed an educated populace, sought to make its people good citizens through civic education. A second idea that brought educational control to the government was the widely held belief that only education could equalize opportunity. Therefore, it was necessary for the state to organize, control, and support education.[13]

Even though the state assumed responsibility for popular education, private schooling was tolerated. Most prominent in the eastern part of the country and in areas with a large Roman Catholic population, private and parochial schools were maintained and often attended, particularly by the more affluent classes. According to Counts, two factors caused Americans to accept private schools: (1) a conviction that parents had a right to educate their children in a manner consistent with their beliefs; and (2) the belief that experimentation and discovery would take place to benefit the general welfare if private education were allowed to flourish.[14]

The vast majority of schools, however, were not private but were public institutions controlled by the dominant classes of society. Counts believed this class domination

changed from time to time. For example, the ecclesiastics who controlled education during the colonial era gave way in the first half of the nineteenth century to the farmers during the agrarian period; finally, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the leaders of the privileged urban classes gained control in the industrial, technological era. Americans, he believed, accepted in good faith that the latter group would put the common good above their own interests and were content to delegate to them the responsibility of the schools. But he could not agree declaring that one class could scarcely be expected to protect the interests of another.[15]

Local Initiative

The development of the American schools was also based on an unusual policy of allowing local people to control their schools. Having derived a large portion of its population from Europe where schools were centrally controlled, the United States chose an opposite approach where each community supported and controlled its own schools. This, Counts believed, stemmed from the fact that the United States began as a loose federation of states wary of other distant governments. The Bill of Rights, in addition, reserved powers not mentioned in the Constitution to the states, thereby delivering control of education to the states.[16]

Believing that education was too powerful an instrument for any one group to control and fearing that a small minority

in the central government might dictate how and what was to be learned in their schools, Americans continued to insist upon local autonomy of their educational system. While this caused inequalities in educational programs, funding, and support, it also stimulated experimentation and facilitated growth and advancement for the entire nation.[17]

Local initiative went right to the heart of the smallest community. According to Counts "as late as the middle of the last century, public education practically everywhere was a function of the school district." School district boundaries were fixed by factors such as geographical conditions, transportation available, birth rate, material resources, levels of culture, and the educational needs of the community. These factors varied and caused districts to be unequal. The wealthier ones, generally in urban areas, had the advantage. The rural ones tended to be smaller and poorer due to the topographical vastness of the land.[18]

The American system of public education, Counts viewed, as the "genuine handiwork of the people" created by people from the immediate community and supported and controlled by local boards of education composed of local citizenry. He considered the public schools sensitive to local community needs. While this gave public schooling a democratic flavor, he felt it deficient in other areas, particularly in lowering academic standards. Because those in control of education were ordinary people who placed their trust in simple

literacy, earlier generations presumed that if all people could read, the distant goals of democracy would be attained. Thus popular education was more important than lofty principles.[19]

Individual Success

Individual success, Counts's fourth principle, was the foundation upon which the development of public education in America rested. It was derived from the fact that immigrants to the New World sought the promised land. The American dream was based on the idea of individual, material success. The seemingly unlimited natural resources available in the United States fueled the idea that anyone could go from rags to riches. Succeeding in the rugged New World depended upon one's initiatives and willingness to work.

The free school system that Americans were willing to fund became a means of moving up the economic ladder. The great increase in enrollments in both secondary and higher education that Counts observed in the early twentieth century reinforced the notion that individuals, motivated by the goal of monetary gain, sought out schooling as one of the prime instruments leading to success.[20]

According to Counts, Americans held a widespread belief that education correlated directly with financial value. In other words, earning power increased with the number of successful years of schooling completed. Americans organized

their school system around the eighteenth century assumption that everyone should work to the best of his or her ability to achieve his or her own selfish interests which in turn would provide the greatest good for society. Counts stressed that Americans in accepting the ethics of this situation, manifested the "extent to which the new pecuniary order and the idea of individual success have come to dominate their theory of education."[21]

In keeping with this idea, Americans created a curricular sequence in their schools that was relatively short so that students could alternate their study between academic and vocational courses without affecting their scholastic standing. They stimulated competition via a system of grades and credits and through sports and extra-curricular activities. This competition pitted individuals against each other rather than making them work collectively for the common good. Counts was convinced that Americans chose this system because it expressed the American ideal of free and individual enterprise.[22] During the Depression of the 1930s, Counts viewed individualism as an obstacle to the planning and coordination needed in a more collective kind of economy.

Democratic Tradition

The American democratic tradition incorporated respect for the common man and a disdain of social barriers. Much of the democratic tradition evolved from unique environmental

circumstance. The vast amount of land and natural resources gave the individual migrating to the new land a chance to develop and be in charge of his or her own potential. Since people regarded one another without artificial social barriers, this provided for a much more open society than the European cultures from whence they had come. Counts saw the democratic ethic as necessitating an educational system and exercising the most profound effect on its development. He stated:

> Obviously a government which presumes to rest upon universal suffrage must make provision for the political enlightenment of the masses. Considerations of democracy likewise played an important role in the development of the educational ladder.[23]

The American single track educational system differed dramatically from the European system which provided extensive schooling for the more privileged classes while giving the bare necessities to the masses. In theory, at least, in America, anyone capable and willing to work could climb the educational ladder from elementary to secondary school and from secondary school to higher education and graduate school at public expense. It was the establishment of the American public high school that Counts credits as the cornerstone for this educational ladder which transformed the dual system into a unified one.[24]

America's single track system drew together groups from all walks of life. While the more talented were encouraged to proceed to the next level to be trained for positions of

leadership, the rest were presumed at least to finish elementary school and enter high school. In the earlier eras, completing elementary school was sufficient, but with industrialization, secondary schooling was seen as the completion of a youth's formal schooling.[25]

Obstacles to educational opportunity were condemned by Counts. He criticized the bias against certain minority groups such as Jews, Orientals, recent immigrants, Native Americans, and especially the harsh treatment accorded the African-American. Yet the American single track educational ladder was, in Counts's opinion, one of the most equitable and closest to the ideal of true democracy in all of history. It provided a safeguard against rigid class stratification and allowed for movement from one class to another. He wrote "Americans are less anxious to remove social and economic inequalities than to obscure the existence and moderate the effects of such inequalities." As well as guaranteeing political freedom, they perceive democracy to mean the ability to be upwardly mobile and to be willing to live together in peace.[26]

Counts's examination of the American school system demonstrated that its secondary institutions were particularly steeped in democratic tradition. Rather than place differing programs in different buildings, the comprehensive high school won out over a series of specialized schools because it brought all youngsters together in one building regardless of

their chosen field and thus prolonged into the teen-aged years the common associations begun in the public elementary schools.[27]

In addition, the relationship of teacher and pupil in the American system of education from kindergarten to graduate school was quite different from the European situation. An atmosphere of informality and freedom permeated the program. Students became active participants in the whole process. Schooling became one of the most truly democratic institutions in the country.[28]

National Solidarity

During the early republic, the citizenry was widely diverse. Due to the distances and hazards which surrounded them, a sense of national integration was absent. But Counts believed that as the country grew, struggled for independence and fought wars against itself and others, it created a sense of being a homogeneous people, fearing that anything less than a common tradition and language might lead to the disintegration of the union. Counts did not foresee the multi-cultural society of today. His views rested on the prevailing ideas of the first half of the twentieth century. Ethnic groups new to the United States had to learn and conform to the ways of American life. The pluralism that existed had to bow to the common values and principles of the dominant society. By 1920, the country had grown to have a

nationality that was inclusive of certain immigrant cultures that had crossed her shores. Those of the past from the British Isles and Northern Europe had assimilated and were accepted, but more recent emigres from the slavic and Mediterranean countries of Europe were barely tolerated except as cheap labor. Americans, however, sought unity in their society and tried to make everyone a conforming individual or in other words a "Good American." They viewed the United States as a melting pot which would take the strangers from overseas and transform them into their likeness, making the country homogeneous.[29]

To Counts, the fundamental facilitator of this commonality was compulsory education. The public schools melded diverse populations into a nation of solidarity. They did this by requiring the younger generations of all ethnic groups to attend elementary school. By 1918 the mandate was extended in many states to make all youngsters attend secondary institutions until they were eighteen years old, thereby increasing the opportunity for homogeneity. Yet the reality showed that even with compulsory attendance laws, many children still did not attend high school. In 1920 according to Counts, of 8,300,000 children of high school age only 2,000,000 actually were enrolled in secondary schools.[30]

According to Counts popular support for compulsory schooling beginning with the elementary school was based on five points: (1) Education occupied children who no longer

could work because of child labor laws; (2) Education was considered an individual right; (3) It was judged a powerful means of socio-economic mobility; (4) It was thought of as a means of maintaining democracy; and (5) It was a means of integrating a diverse population into one culture. The foundation of common ways, beliefs and loyalties was necessary to maintain the republic, and one manner of developing a homogeneous culture was through public schooling. In this institution, all children studied the same subjects and individual differences were not taken into account. The fact that all students were endowed with a unique set of abilities or came from differing environments was not considered important. Efficiency dictated that all students be taught in the same manner. Basically the school provided skills, knowledge, and values necessary for individuals to cope with their daily lives.[31]

Of course, Counts understood that the pupils learned more in school than just academic subjects. Their continued interaction on a daily basis for many years gave them insight into other cultures and other social classes. Their "habits, dispositions and attitudes" were brought to the attention of each other. In the end this exchange of ideas and attitudes contributed to the promotion of national solidarity. It repeatedly brought together a new generation of Americans schooled in American ways and ideas.[32]

Social Conformity

While Counts admitted that two of the fundamental principles upon which he based his theory of American education, individualism and social conformity, were seemingly incompatible, he explained that the American emphasis on individual success was really a form of social conformity since society defined the standards by which one was judged. However, in the 1920s, Counts perceived the individualistic tradition as having burned out except for a "narrow sphere of competition for pecuniary success." He claimed that the social order had changed. The success of America had come from its experimentation and individualism which now led to a certain collective standardization. The country aided by the development of better and faster means of communication and transportation brought together its isolated people. What was discovered or invented in one community quickly spread to others. The means of mass manufacturing and marketing supplied a diverse population with similar products enabling the end result to be a uniform society.[33]

When the country had been sparsely populated, the agrarian isolation necessitated rugged individualism as a means of survival, but as the civilization developed to higher levels the ability to traverse long distances in shorter periods of time by car and instant communication achieved through the telegraph and telephone provided a backdrop for society to become more integrated and more standardized.

Industrialism made it possible for the entire nation to be carved in a singular mode.[34]

Viewing the same situation from a different perspective, Counts pointed out that the industrial technological society freed the individual from his or her close family and community relationships, allowing a person to leave one group and join another more to his or her liking. According to Counts:

> It is altogether possible therefore that these standardizing tendencies of industrial civilization are superficial and that contrary forces of a more fundamental character are at work...but...the immediate result in America seems to be widespread standardization of a taste and a general regimentation of thought.[35]

Americans' social conformity, much of which had been developed through the schools, was essentially conservative. Counts believed that the radical and revolutionary ideas held at the beginning of this new civilization were largely gone. He felt that this did not mean that American thought had come to a standstill but rather that the political and social agendas of the most powerful and wealthiest country in the world were still based on the competitiveness spawned by its pioneers.[36]

Mechanical Efficiency

While the "frontier nurtured simple and direct methods of work and social procedure," the large expanse of land and the small population required creative inventions to help perform

daily tasks. Thus, farming equipment was invented and adapted by the scattered population. Counts claimed this needed mechanical efficiency was one of the foundations of the new industrial order. He perceived Americans as striving for mechanical perfection often without purpose, seemingly only seeking an efficiency of motion and at once exchanging natural resources to conserve human power. The expectation was that technological innovation would increase leisure and harmony. But Counts believed that it quickened the pace of life and often induced anxiety.[37]

It was not surprising that this love of efficiency would infiltrate the schools, according to Counts. Calling it an idolatry of efficiency, he claimed it manifested itself in building construction, bonds, record keeping, and pupil management particularly in the massive and rapid movement of students throughout the educational system. While not opposing efficient management in the schools, he rejected it as the ideal of education that other professional educators stressed.[38]

Typically Americans sought efficiency in their program of mass education. In the nineteenth century, many schools were small, attendance irregular, the programs of study few, and the school year short. Schooling was neither compulsory nor universal. As the population concentrated in urban areas, mass popular education became necessary.

The cities with more abundant material resources and concentrated human resources, established large school systems. In the urban areas where a density of pupils existed, schools were built. But due to space constraints, little room was available for play and outdoor activities. Urban school buildings were generally large, often housing five to seven thousand students. Class sizes were also large with as many as forty to fifty students in the lower grades.[39]

Counts pointed out that the emphasis on mass efficiency posed a danger in losing the individual and causing the educational process to fail. He saw the efficient business-like management of the urban school systems as a product of industrialism rather than the agrarian heritage. While the organization of large masses of students into mechanical classifications was highly touted by many educators, he believed the learning process needed to be adapted to the individual child.[40]

Along with the movement to enlarge and consolidate the educational program, standardized testing entered the educational process early in the twentieth century. The standardization of procedures fit the efficiency idea. The most characteristic development of the period, 1900-1929, was the tremendous effort mobilized to create a science of education. Prevailing thought held that the scientific method would speedily and impersonally solve all educational

problems. Counts complained that in their concern for measuring the products of the schools and increasing educational efficiency, educational researchers had introduced scientific methods to objectively analyze every facet of the schools from the janitorial staff to the school boards to make the schools more efficient and operate them like businesses. He decried many educators were more concerned with "the fashioning of spelling scales and score-cards for school buildings" than in considering the enormous educational implications of the shift from an agrarian economy to an industrial, technological society.[41]

Practical Utility

Americans were of necessity very practical people. For the most part, they came from the European underclasses who for generations had lived off the land. They tended to view "book learning" with contempt because practical ideas were more important for survival. As the frontier expanded, they tamed the continent through their skills.[42]

It is not by chance that practicality also extended into the American educational program. Men who revered practical utility controlled the academic system in the United Stated during much of its history, with the exception of the early colonial period when the clerics ruled. The farmers and rural artisans who set educational policy during the agrarian period, were practical men, "who took the public schools

severely to task." They viewed book learning as something apart, not for the masses, but for the training of clergy, lawyers and professors. It was not until the rise of commerce and industry in the twentieth century that the educational idea that the school should serve community needs and relate its program to the activities of life came into the fore.[43]

Public schools were originally organized by untutored farmers. They held high regard for practical skills, but their cultural and intellectual standards were low. Book learning was deemed unimportant, so it followed that as the educational system grew, intellectual pursuits and the arts fell far behind the growth of applied science. The schools, extremely sensitive to the demands of society, taught any subject or skill for which there was an organized demand, thereby opening the door to practical utility in the curriculum. This sensitivity to the common people's needs Counts regarded as one of the system's great merits although he held lingering questions as to whether it really related the deeper feelings of the population or whether it was just pandering.[44]

By the 1890s as American psychologists such as Edward Thorndike, Louis Terman, Charles H. Judd, Karl Pearson, and Henry Goddard began experimenting with the scientific study of education, the classical idea of training the mind began to be replaced. When the outcomes of the scientists' experiments proved that training the mind did not prepare a student for

the real activities of life, Americans then assumed that learning was specific and molded their schools to train students for specific lifetime activities. But Counts was convinced that industrialism was so dynamic and was changing civilization with such rapidity that specific learning would not be able to keep up with the changes taking place. He felt that Americans were relying upon science and its application to education for objective solutions to their educational problems to the exclusion of formulating an educational philosophy. From Counts's viewpoint they looked to education "as an external means for the attainment of some definite and desirable goal." Schools were viewed as the means of promoting ideas for the success of the individual rather than as a means of solving the social problems brought about by the Industrial Revolution.[45]

Philosophic Uncertainty

The culminating principle that Counts claimed laid the foundation for the educational structure in the United States was that of philosophic uncertainty. He believed that this principle was based on Americans' mistrust of government, their emphasis on individual initiative, their opposition to centralization, their turning to science for answers, their pragmatic approach, their rejection of authority, and their disdain for rigidity.[46]

Americans' achievements were viewed by Counts as resulting from the spontaneous and uncoordinated efforts of different groups and individuals. Society, from his perspective, and its school system were unplanned. Any uniformity was "the product of a common cultural tradition, similar geographical surroundings, facts of communication, and unity of social purpose." Counts very definitely believed in social planning and rejected the popular general idea that society was too complex and too dynamic to control.[47] Yet, even though there was not a grand social plan for America, Counts understood that individuals and groups had their own agendas to promote.

> Schools are administered not only in a highly complicated society but also in a society with a history. As a consequence, an educational proposal is never granted an impartial reception and considered solely on its merits. It always finds itself cast among warring factions where its case is already prejudged by circumstance.[48]

This battle of various social forces was a constant occurrence among the more economically powerful and socially prestigious groups who usually controlled the schools.

Partisan politics in the schools were rejected by Americans; nevertheless, schools, as public institutions, were involved in politics. Although many people feared using schools for indoctrination, various groups tried to shape the schools' programs. Academic freedom was cherished as in the best interest of society, particularly in higher education, but it was difficult to achieve. Certain disciplines such as

mathematics, physics, and philology had complete freedom. Others which tapped at the heart of religious or ethical beliefs and values such as the biological sciences were more restricted. Counts stated that the greatest restrictions were tied to economics, political science, and sociology. They were dependent upon the prevailing mood and conditions of society at a given point in time. Little freedom was held by most elementary and secondary teachers. The fact remained that educational control at all levels was in the hands of the dominant class who refused to relinquish it for fear of being deposed.[49]

In essence, the values of the past rather than any well thought out philosophy dominated American education and impeded progress for social change. This caused consternation for Counts who believed, "any defensible or sound theory of secondary education must be in essential harmony with the great social trends which characterize the age." Unfortunately, he saw the only one purpose upon which the foundation of American education rested to be that of acquiring wealth.[50]

The Growth of the American Secondary School

The actual origins of the American public high school began in the early nineteenth century after the elementary or common school was well established. By 1850 free, common or public, tax-supported, state controlled, non-sectarian schools

proliferated the land and provided education to the great masses of children in the United States. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, formal education beyond the common school was obtainable only from private institutions for a fee. The most prominent of these private schools were academies. They evolved around mid-eighteenth century when the idea of a higher or more advanced school to provide a more practical curriculum than the existing Latin grammar school began to prevail. These academies began to replace the exclusively college preparatory curriculum of the Latin school with an enlarged and more functional curriculum. Largely independent, they gave students an advanced education in modern languages, sciences, history and mathematics. Building upon the common school curriculum instead of just becoming more demanding in their scholarship, they marked the transition from the aristocratic Latin grammar school of the past to the more democratic high school of the twentieth century.[51]

The demand for the tuition free high schools began about the time the academy had reached its full potential. Once the leaders of the movement for free public education had established common schools and settled questions regarding support and control, they turned their energies to the upward extension of the common school. Gradually even the general population began to question the gap between the tax supported colleges and common schools. With increased wealth in the

cities, the growth of the middle class and the rise of democracy, particularly the Jacksonian idea of the common man, the time was ripe for the establishment of the American public high schools.[52]

The first free secondary school was founded in Boston in 1824, without opposition. By 1827 Massachusetts passed legislation requiring the establishment of a high school in every town of more than 500. The American high school's development was slow. By the Civil War there were numerous schools in Massachusetts, and the movement spread throughout New England, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.[53]

While the academies continued to be patronized by more affluent groups, the high schools gained popularity with the middle classes. In many places, the two schools directly competed for students and state subsidies.[54] Eventually through favorable decisions made by the courts, the high school became firmly established as part of the system of public education in the United States and caused the demise of the academies.

The major court decision that greatly influenced the surrounding states' courts and ranks as the second milestone behind the Massachusetts law of 1827, was the Kalamazoo case. The state of Michigan through its constitution maintained both free common schools and a state university. No mention, however, was made of secondary schools. Though default the academies of Michigan prepared students for the university.

When the citizens of Kalamazoo voted to establish a free high school, hire a superintendent, and levy taxes to do so, they were challenged by an individual named Charles E. Stuart. In the case, *Stuart v. School District No. 1 of the Village of Kalamazoo*, the state supreme court ruled against the plaintiff. The court found:

> ...that neither in our state policy, in our Constitution, nor in our laws, do we find the primary school districts restricted in the branches of knowledge which their officers may cause to be taught, or the grade of instruction that may be given, if their voters consent in regular form to bear the expense and raise the taxes for the purpose.[55]

This decision had enormous implications for the future of public secondary schooling in the United States.

While other contemporaries in education, notably Ellwood Cubberley, garnered the factual connotations of the evolution and enormous growth of secondary education in the later half of the nineteenth century, Counts described the revolutionary changes in terms of the changing civilization. The agrarian society had evolved into a new industrialized civilization wholly unthought of and without precedent. And as it changed, education changed. In a little more than a single generation secondary education became available for over half the nation's youths. No longer was it a privilege, but instead it became a right of the individual.[56]

The responsibility for this phenomena rested on seven factors which Counts claimed were our heritage from the past: the expanded program of the common school, the highly

integrated society of the industrial civilization, the complexity of modern life, an increase in wealth and income, a decrease in the death rate and the decline of the birth rate.[57]

The American agrarian civilization that preceded the industrial, technological society was unique in all of history. It allowed a civilized society to drop all social distinctions of the past and to form a democracy fashioned from a way of life. People were called upon to judge one another by merit and achievement rather than inherited social status. It was this that Counts regarded as the basis for the American education system as well as the inspiration for the evolution of the American public high school.[58]

Counts considered the expansion of the elementary school to the point of universal public education for American children during the agrarian period as necessary for the upper extension of education. He was convinced that until the common school had become well advanced the secondary school could not have developed and grown. But it was industrial civilization, he felt, that created the need and opportunity for the masses to utilize the secondary schools.[59]

Counts believed that as technology increased, society became more complex and more dependent upon one another. Specialization increased and new methods and means of communication brought the country and its people closer so

that American civilization became the most highly integrated and interdependent society in history.[60]

Counts commented on how each of these factors bore directly on the swift democratization of secondary education. Rapid transportation made high schools accessible to more students. The break from the isolated farm family to a new community of people dependent upon each others' involvement in the production of goods and services required an enlarging of intellectual and social horizons and opened up occupational opportunities. Individuals came to depend less on personal experience for education and more on formal institutions and agencies. People no longer lived most of their lives in the geographical area of their birth but were far more mobile and had more social relationships. These trends made life increasingly complex and behind this complexity was science and technology. In the past, knowledge for dealing with life situations could be gained through ordinary living; in a technological society, not all necessary knowledge could be obtained through life experience.[61]

In addition, Counts pointed out that the once despised book learning was a necessity in the new social order, thereby giving even more incentive for parents to send their children to the new high schools. Yet, he also noted that if material resources had not increased in a corresponding manner, support for the extension of the educational program would have been lacking. In fact, he was convinced that the great expansion

of the high school after 1890 could be attributed to greater economic affluence.[62]

Modern technological society experienced demographic changes that impacted secondary education. The decrease in the death rate through the advancement of medicine, the application of personal and social hygiene and the increase of material comforts plus the decrease in the birth rate through contraception and other causes produced a dramatic change in the ratio of adults to children. Counts claimed that while the agrarian society had two children to provide for and educate, the industrial society had only one. The ages of the population widened as the life expectancy of adults increased to 58 years from approximately 35 and the average family size decreased. It was this shift in the ages of the population plus the economic luxury of leisure given to the young people of the period that swelled the high school enrollment.[63]

Development of the High School Curriculum

No record of the precise content of the first secondary institution in the New World has ever been found; neither has any historian been able to ascertain where or when the first secondary school appeared. However, Counts using his knowledge of early American history formulated that the colonists, largely Englishmen, brought with them their traditions regarding schooling and education. Basing his findings on documents of the period, he discerned that the

early secondary institutions called Latin grammar schools were dominated by the study of Latin and Greek. While some Latin grammar schools included the vernacular language, it was a minor part of the curriculum and taught to a much lesser degree. The sole purpose of Latin grammar schools was to prepare males for college.[64]

According to Counts, the Latin grammar school, "was part and parcel of the transplanted culture and shared the fortunes of that culture in the new environment." It followed the dictates of a society which in the seventeenth century manifested a strict class structure. Reigning at the top of this culture were those born into the aristocracy, next came the artisans, the freeholders, unskilled workers, indentured servants and finally the African and Native American slaves.

Within a relatively short period of history, however, the class culture transported from Europe to the New World began to crumble. Counts attributed the breakdown of the transported class structure to powerful forces working on the American continent. For example, the vast topography of the land caused the older order to disintegrate. Ecclesiastical rule declined and yielded to the hegemony of the business classes. Businessmen began to oppose the domination of clergy and "the lawyer enters the political arena and forms an alliance with landowners and large capitalists, an alliance that remains practically unbroken down to our own day." Along with the emergent social order, new ideals and beliefs

developed. Liberalism, an ideology of limited government, and economic individualism, attracted adherents and replaced the old order of birth and breeding.[65]

The American revolution in thought and procedures caused great changes in the secondary school curriculum. Schools called grammar schools, English schools, English grammar schools and academies sprang up all over the countryside. Although there were minor differences in their curriculum,

> The fact is that from the beginning of the eighteenth century there were some opportunities in the colonies for the study of each of the great divisions of subject matter now taught in the high school, even including strictly vocational subjects such as surveying, navigation, and bookkeeping. These opportunities, moreover, were opened to some extent to girls as well as boys. It is apparent therefore that the century which gave birth to the academy was the really creative century during the three hundred years under consideration. It fashioned a program and a philosophy which have remained in fundamentals unaltered down to the present day.[66]

Counts contended that the philosophy of the eighteenth century school program was rooted in entrepreneurial capitalism. Viewing Benjamin Franklin as epitomizing capitalistic values, he found it significant that Franklin was a proponent of the academy as a new type of secondary school. The academy's course of study was directed toward preparation for a vocation. To achieve that end, students needed to study subjects that they would utilize in everyday industry and commerce, such as modern languages, mathematics, science, history, geography and career courses, subjects which would provide the tools to succeed.[67]

Increasingly as the era progressed, the emphasis was directed toward a more inclusive curriculum running the gamut from the classics to technology. Extra-curricular activities eventually found their way into the schools and sometimes even into the core of the curriculum as in student government and civics education. Courses changed so drastically in one hundred years that they bore little or no resemblance to that of the earlier time.[68]

Along with capitalism and economic individualism, the doctrine of social equality began to emerge and soon democracy became a watchword of the American civilization, particularly after the War of Independence. As democracy established its hold, the middle class emerged and the aristocracy lessened its control. Wealth began to become more important than birth. The public high school, financed by the state, came into existence to enable individuals to climb the social ladder.[69]

According to Counts's interpretation, the development of the high school was slowed by the agrarian situation of the great majority of the population. Opportunities to gain wealth and status could not be achieved solely from the schools. Counts noted that the westward expansion of the country gave ample opportunity for most individuals to obtain what they were seeking. Life on the heartland did not depend on academic learning. It was not until the West closed that the tremendous growth of secondary schooling took place.

Secondly, Counts pointed to the industrial revolution as a force which effected the rise and entrenchment of high school. With advanced technology, industry won out over farming. As new occupations emerged, preparation beyond simple literacy became mandated. The high school paved the way to success by expanding its curriculum to include any subject that might help youngsters attain individual economic success. Much of this change was predicated on classical, liberal ideology that if the selfish, narrow, economic interests of the individual were met, the general welfare would improve. By 1918, the National Education Association's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education tried to reconstruct the underlying social and educational philosophy of mercantile capitalism. The "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" which the Commission formulated tempered the original philosophy but only slightly.[70]

By the 1920s with over five million youngsters in high school, the educational system, according to Counts, lacked a sustaining educational philosophy. While the fallacy of economic advantage still reigned as the chief purpose for schooling, organized education could not provide that security. It had not squarely faced the demands of the new social order to provide a cooperative and synergistic economic environment.[71]

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Counts believed that the American educational philosophy based on capitalism was

nearing its end. He foresaw a collectivist economy emerging in which cooperative planning would advance the social welfare.

> The growth of science and technology has carried us into a new age where ignorance must be replaced by knowledge, competition by cooperation, trust in providence by careful planning, and private capitalism by some form of socialized economy.[72]

To this end he called upon educators to lead the nation into a new era.

The Selective Composition of the High School

Secondary education historically evolved from a socially selective society, especially in Europe. Throughout the history of Europe and in the early years of North American settlement, only the intellectual and social elite attended schools beyond the elementary level. In nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, the dual educational system prevailed. The masses were given only the most rudimentary education while those of the upper class had the opportunity to attend secondary and higher schools that prepared them for positions of leadership and leisure. The original system of education brought to the New World mirrored the European structure, but due to the physical and social environment of the North American continent, it was not maintained. In its place, a single track system of education was inaugurated. Paid for with public funds, it provided equal education opportunity for all and was an offspring of American

democratic society.[73] Nevertheless, for a long period of time, according to Counts, much of the opportunity was theoretical since, in reality, young people were very dependent upon their family's economic circumstances to gain the leisure time necessary to attend high school. Poverty and racial and ethnic biases were barriers to deny youths the chance to attend secondary institutions.[74]

In addition, Counts regarded the late nineteenth and early twentieth century high school as being intellectually selective. It required students to maintain intellectual standards that were somewhat above the average of the masses and denied access to those unable to meet the academic requirements. The high school had been dedicated to those blessed by both "nature and nurture." Counts believed that the eventual universality of the secondary school would create a school that would be socially and psychologically blind and would "be regarded as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, cultural achievement of the American people." He perceived it as increasingly enrolling a heterogeneous mix of youths from all social levels and radically altering the character of the secondary school, from a place of inherited privilege to a truly democratic institution which focused on prioritizing social welfare and cooperative social planning. It needed to garner "the gifts of brains and heart" from the total population, including those of "humble talent" and utilize each to enrich civilization.[75]

The Function of the Schools

In a broad sense Counts described the function of the schools as a by-product of life occurring every time the individual adjusted to his or her environment. As society developed, schooling became the primary educative environment where children were placed to stimulate the powers already inherent in them. The educative process took the immature of society and inducted them into the group's life and culture.

> ...into its ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, into an appropriation of its material and spiritual possessions - its folkways and mores, its institutions and social arrangements, its skills, knowledge, and appreciations, its arts, sciences, and philosophies. Through this process the individual human being is formed and a particular society perpetuated.[76]

Counts, concurring with Dewey, discerned that the basic function of the school was threefold: to simplify the environment by eliminating the more difficult and more complex factors of adulthood; to purify it from the corruption of society; and to broaden the scope of the individual so that he or she might have a base line from which to make judgements regarding the group; However, Counts added a fourth characteristic, the "graduated environment," which he saw as facilitating growth through a pre-arranged process of adjustments from the simple tasks of childhood to the complexities of adult living.[77]

The school, Counts believed, was there to help the individual develop to his or her fullest potential physically, intellectually and morally. Each child was to be treated as

a unique person deserving of attention and made to feel that he or she was a worthwhile contributor to the group; thereby keeping a balance so that the weak would not feel useless and the strong would not feel morally superior.[78]

The creation of a sense of responsibility and obligation to society was also the job of the school. Counts postulated that youngsters needed to develop a fraternal spirit regarding freedom to explore their ideas and knowledge to know their rights along with an appreciation and a discernment of talent and ability. Lastly, students needed to view labor as socially useful and not demeaning.[79]

However, Counts considered the school to be only one of many agencies that consciously discharged educational functions. It was very specialized, and its function was both residual and normative-residual in the sense that its purpose was to execute the tasks that the other educational agencies did not perform and normative in the sense that it should go beyond just doing what the other institutions could not or did not do.[80]

In the past the residual tasks had been handled by other social agencies. But with the accelerated changes that took place with the advent of the industrialized society, the school increased its specialized tasks. Counts did not disagree with this function but cautioned that educators should not formulate programs without assessing the other institutions first. He continually emphasized the need of

cooperation among the varied agencies of education in the increasingly interdependent society that was emerging.[81] In the opinion of Counts, the basic function of the high school was to give students enough insight into their cultural heritage to enable them to adjust to their circumstances and understand the world which enveloped them. Secondary education broadened the world of childhood and enabled the adolescent to make new observations and see old ideas in a new light. It increased and modified the development of habits, dispositions, and appreciations while allowing the individual to master the functions of elementary school. In short, it enabled youth to face life equipped intellectually and morally with the ideals and principles necessary to function in their world.[82]

With his concept of secondary education clearly formulated, Counts began to look towards the reality of American public secondary education. He suspected that even though high schools were fast becoming a part of the rite of passage for youngsters in the United States, contrary to the democratic principles that Americans held high, all children were not really going to share this educational opportunity. As we will see in Chapter III, the European class structure from which most Americans had sought to escape was still at work albeit in a more subtle manner.

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

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16. Counts, *American Road*, 43.

17. Ibid., 44.

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28. Ibid., 90.

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30. Ibid., 108. George S. Counts, *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922), 3. In *American Secondary Education*, (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), 100, William Marshall French presents differing numbers. Of the 11,681,024 persons aged 13-18 in the United States only 2,383,542 actually enrolled in high school.

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32. J. Crosby Chapman and George S. Counts, *Principles of Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), 419.

33. Counts, *American Road*, 121.

34. George S. Counts, "Selection as a Function of American Secondary Education," Bulletin of the Department of Secondary School Principals. (March 1929): 86.

35. Counts, *American Road*, 123-24.

36. Ibid., 134.

37. Ibid., 136-137.

38. Ibid., 138.

39. Ibid., 140-141.

40. Counts, *Social Foundations*, 267. Counts, *The American Road*, 142.

41. Counts, *Social Foundations*, 277-278.

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43. Ellwood Cubberley, *Changing Conceptions of Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 142. Counts, *The American Road*, 157.

44. Counts, *Social Foundation*, 273. Counts, *American Road*, 164.

45. Ibid., 168-171 passim.

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48. George S. Counts, *School and Society in Chicago*, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1928), 15.

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63. Counts, *Secondary Education and Industrialism*, 39-42.

64. George S. Counts, " Three Hundred Years of the Secondary School Curriculum," *Bulletin of the Department of Secondary School Principals* 55 (March 1935): 111-112.

65. Ibid., 114-115. Ibid., 118.

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69. Counts, " Three Hundred Years," 120.

70. Ibid., 121. National Education Association, *A Report of the Commission on the reorganization of Secondary Education* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918).

71. Counts, *Social Foundations*, 282.

72. George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (New York: John Day Co., 1932), 48.

73. Chapman and Counts, *Principles of Education,* 445.

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75. Chapman and Counts, *Principles of Education,* 445-448.

76. George S. Counts, "The Place of the School in the Social Order," *National Education Association Proceedings* 64 (1926): 310. Counts and Chapman, 37. George S. Counts, *The Prospects of American Democracy* (New York: John Day Company, 1938), 296.

77. Chapman and Counts, *Principles of Education,* 47. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916).

78. George S. Counts, *School Can Teach Democracy* (New York: John Day Company, 1938), 18.

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80. Counts, "The Place of the School," 310-312.

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82. Counts and Chapman, *Principles of Education,* 458-459.

CHAPTER III

GEORGE S. COUNTS'S VIEW OF THE HIGH SCHOOL AS A SELECTIVE INSTITUTION

George S. Counts's labors in the 1920s centered on his analysis of the changes in the cultural foundations of education that related to the development and expansion of public secondary schooling. Early in the twentieth century the United States had experienced an overwhelming period of growth and transformation. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, society had been composed of a small agrarian social units of rugged individualist isolated by vast areas of undeveloped land. Life was simple; land was fertile; and the need for formal schooling very limited. Inherited social class structures were virtually non-existent. A rudimentary public elementary school education provided by common schools was sufficient to meet the needs of most of the people of the day, especially those in rural areas.

As America experienced industrial and technological expansion, masses of people relocated to cities, and their economic and educational needs changed. No longer could they supply all their necessities through their own labors. Society became highly interdependent and held "within its

close embrace metropolitan center and rural hamlet, industrial enterprise and vegetable garden, shop and field and factory."[1] This gave rise to the need for a more specialized education to meet the demands of an ever evolving, more complex society.

The democratic traditions of attaining position based on talent, hard work and character, which had surfaced in American society due to the nature of the people and the geography of the land, contributed to an upward extension of the elementary school. This extension of secondary education, the high school, was theoretically open to all, even if only a minority of the relevant age groups attended during America's rural, agrarian period. But this extension could not come about until the earlier expansion of the public elementary school had widened to become mandatory in almost every segment of American society.[2]

Once Americans no longer questioned the fact that all children should be schooled and once they supported public schools through taxes and laws, the idea of public secondary education spread. The motivation to develop secondary schools came from the new industrial society which weaved its threads of societal integration through its need for specialization and scientific growth. This made additional formal schooling more important for ordinary people. As transportation and communication evolved into higher forms, they increased the interdependency of the society.

The enormous complexity of civilization in the new industrial nation required an education more structured and developed than that just acquired through the process of living. In addition, the phenomenal increase of wealth, the decrease of the death rate, and the decline of the birth rate gave Americans the "extraordinary luxury" of being able to support public secondary education for all children of appropriate age.[3]

In the past only the privileged had been able to obtain a formal education beyond elementary school, not because of the high school's non-existence but because it was a luxury of time and money that few could afford. However, in the thirty years prior to the 1920s, secondary school enrollment increased at a phenomenal rate. As society became more highly industrialized, it created both a need for more formal learning and an available pool of adolescents to at last make secondary education a universal reality. By 1922 over two million out of approximately 8.3 million youngsters of high school age were attending a secondary school. It was this extraordinary increase in enrollment in the secondary schools that intrigued George Counts. He pondered whether this meant that secondary education had become more democratic.[4] Did the high school of the day truly present the equality of opportunity that utilized the democratic principles of the founding fathers or was the population at large supporting at

public expense an elitist institution for certain favored classes?

While these questions posed a dilemma for Counts and the nation as a whole, society's attention had begun focusing on the fact that "public elementary education was no longer education for the masses, but rather education for childhood." If that was so, Counts suggested that perhaps "secondary education is no longer education for the classes but rather education for adolescence."[5]

The Accessibility of American Public Secondary Education

Searching to find if there indeed had been a revolution in education as well as industry and whether or not the selective principle in secondary education had been abandoned, Counts began to collect data for his study of selectivity in the American public high school in 1919. He used four target cities from which he was able to secure the necessary information. The study included the entire high school populations of Seattle, Washington; St. Louis, Missouri; Bridgeport, Connecticut; and Mount Vernon, New York. None of the populations of the four cities represented the economic extremes of the very poorest or the wealthiest. All appeared to be of moderate wealth.[6] The cities represented an industrial center (Bridgeport), a trade and transportation center with industry at an earlier stage (Seattle), a bedroom community for people working in New York city (Mount Vernon),

and a manufacturing center (St. Louis). While even Counts admits to this not being an ideal cross-section of the nation, it did encompass both east and west coasts and the midwest. In addition it provided him with an opportunity to utilize previous associations from his various stints at Harris Teachers College, St. Louis, Missouri in 1918, the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington in 1919, and Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut the following year to secure access of his survey and his tests into the four school systems used for the study.[7]

The object of Counts's study was to discover the representation of the different population groups from which students in public high schools were drawn. The basis of the study rested on the use of uniformly printed cards to survey each student in attendance in a certain city on certain day. Counts took great pains to detail the procedure that was necessary for each home room teacher to use to make sure the responses were accurate and valid. In addition to the routine age, sex, grade, and course of study, his questions included whether or not there was a telephone in the home (then considered a status symbol of the wealthier classes), language(s) spoken in the home, information about the father including whether or not he was living, his country of birth, his present occupation, where or for whom did he work, was he either an owner or part owner of the business, plus the former occupation of the non-working or deceased father. Since the

questions pertaining to the father and his occupation were fundamental to the study, Counts proceeded to ask for the most accurate information regarding the father's occupation, sending a list of 147 principal occupations of the people of the United States garnered from the 1910 Census to each homeroom teacher to help ensure the most exact placement.[8]

The information asked about the mother was slightly different and not as relevant. Counts inquired if the mother was living, her city of birth, whether or not she was helping to support the family, and if so, how. If a guardian was involved, only his occupation was asked. Questions regarding siblings and their ages plus the future expectations of the students finishing the curriculum and their future plans completed the survey.[9]

While the study was published in 1922, the data was compiled beginning with the Seattle schools in 1919, St. Louis in 1920 and Bridgeport and Mount Vernon in 1920-21. Counts felt the 17,992 cases included in the study were quite representative of the group. However, he raised concerns regarding the accuracy of the responses he got. Specifically, he questioned the ability of the students to answer all questions and concluded that they were able to answer all questions with the possible exception of the father's ownership of the business in which he worked. Secondly he questioned if the students answered truthfully. Again he concluded that they most likely did so because in St. Louis

and Seattle, the larger systems in the study, the students were not required to put their names on the forms. And finally he queried the accuracy of the youngsters' predictions regarding their future upon graduation, but the mere fact that the students stated their intentions indicated to Counts the adolescent had some basis for the idea. Therefore, it gave validity to the student's social position.[10]

Perhaps just as importantly, Counts questioned whether or not the returns only sampled a selected group. Again he concluded that since the census was taken on a normal day in all schools but one and since the survey was received by practically all students in attendance on that day, the sample was random and did not address a select group.

Using a social-economic classification that he devised instead of utilizing the five groups of Frank William Taussig's classifications, which he felt were too narrow, Counts proceeded to divide the occupations of the fathers of the students in the survey into categories that maintained a reasonable homogeneity of social status, position in the economic order, and intellectual outlook. Conceding that his was not the "ideal" system of categorization, Counts included the following seventeen broad classifications: proprietors; professional service; managerial service; commercial service; clerical service; agricultural service; artisan-proprietors; building and related trades; machine and related trades; printing trades; miscellaneous trades in manufacturing and

mechanical industries; transportation service; public service; personal service; miners, lumber-workers and fisherman; common labor; occupation unknown.[11] The first two groups Counts perceived as the most important. The proprietors, in his opinion were "the most powerful occupational group in any American community; its members constitute the backbone of the chambers of commerce and similar organizations; it occupies a strategic position in a society based on private property and it controls economic power." The professional service, was the most "learned" and therefore significant. The rest tended to be positioned on his list in the descending order of their political and economic power.[12]

Counts analyzed and interpreted his data based on the above classifications and at no time utilized the mother's occupation even though the father or guardian may have been dead or the information was lacking. This was standard procedure for that period since only the father's occupation had any social significance.[13]

When Counts analyzed the numbers, it became apparent that the group that he called the most powerful, the proprietors, clearly headed the list as having had the most children attending secondary schools at that time. In fact more than 19 percent of the students enrolled in high school came from families headed by proprietors. On the other hand, children whose fathers came from the lowest socio-economic group, common labor, were represented by only a small minority of 1.2

percent of the high school population. The four non-laboring classes had the highest percentage of students in secondary schools totaling 55.2 percent. Among the laboring groups only the building and machine trades were well represented with 7.7 and 7.1 percents respectively.[14]

Counts also compared the rate of retention of the student body from the first year to the fourth year. While stating that the proportion of seniors is always smaller than that of freshmen, he noted that a selection of sorts was continually occurring in the high school. This Counts attributed to the usual elimination of students through drop outs and failures plus the increase of ninth graders due to the normal population increase and the greater interest in secondary education. Of more concern to him, however, was the data from the study that demonstrated that students from the upper strata of society remained in high school for the full four year term at a much higher rate than those from the lower classes. While the proprietors' children made up 17.7 percent of the total high school population in the freshman year, their numbers increased to 22.9 percent in the senior year. Whereas the common laborers' children totalled 1.8 percent in the freshman year and decreased substantially over the four years to only .6 percent in the fourth year, a drop of 67 percent. Generally speaking, the children in those categories which were poorly represented in the first year numbered even less in the fourth year. As the years passed, the student

body became more homogeneous. Counts's numbers clearly manifested that by the senior year high schools displayed a distinctly class character.[15]

Statistically Counts confirmed his position. It was clear to him that the senior classes in those high schools did not differ from the freshman classes merely because of age and subject matter, but in the numbers coming from the different socio-economic groups in the population.[16] American secondary education was selective. Students who come from families with higher incomes and status occupied a much larger percentage of the population in the secondary schools. They did not drop out or leave school in large numbers like those whose families were less wealthy. They tended to stay in school for the full four years. In fact taking the two extreme occupational classes, Counts calculated "that the chances that the child of a father engaged in one of the professional pursuits will reach the senior year of the high school are sixty-nine times as great as those of the child whose father is a common-laborer."[17]

Attacking the problem from a different angle, Counts obtained the results of a representative sample of 514 teen-aged youths who did not attend high school but worked instead. Using the commercial and industrial establishments of Seattle, he surveyed fourteen through seventeen year olds and found that only 2.5 percent of the working children had fathers whose occupations were listed as proprietors while 16 percent

of the children whose fathers were listed as common laborers were employed fulltime.[18]

In addition to employing parental occupation as a determinant of social status, Counts augmented his examination of the cultural effects on selectivity in the high school by surveying the possession of a telephone in the home as another index of the cultural level of a student. He found that the percentage of telephones increased pointedly from level to level in the secondary school, rising from 39.7 percent in the freshman year to 60.3 percent in the senior year. This correlated with the statistics produced for father's occupations and provided additional support for his theory.[19]

Other sociological factors also were investigated including such direct family influences as the number of siblings, the birth order, the mortality of the parents and the occupation of the mother outside the home. Among the findings that Counts obtained from his study were the size of the family was not an influencing factor regarding remaining in school for the four years, but smaller families definitely were in the majority in sending their children to high school. The most frequent number of siblings found in the families of the children surveyed was one. The second highest was none. Being born first also negatively influenced one's chances of attending a secondary school since many firstborn children of the day needed to work to help support the family. Perhaps a more important factor was the death of one or both of the

parents. Counts found that it strongly impacted the chances of a child enrolling in high school. Using the 1910 Federal Census, he computed that of the children of high school age, 24 percent had lost one or both parents through death while his own survey showed only 12.9 percent of the students in the selected secondary schools had lost their parents. One other factor that was small but significant at that time was a mother working outside the home. Upon examination, Counts concluded that "while it is uncommon for the mothers of high school students to contribute to the family support by engaging in remunerative work, this condition obtains quite frequently among the children of the elementary school." In fact only 1,289 of the 17,265 high school students or 7.5 percent who answered the survey reported that their mothers worked outside the home.[20]

In the interest of giving a more complete sociological picture, Counts included data from two of the cities, Bridgeport and Mount Vernon, that focused on immigrant education. He observed that children of native parentage clearly had an advantage in obtaining a high school education and were enrolled in secondary institutions in proportionately larger numbers. But he also recognized that some ethnic groups most notably "the Irish and the Russian Jews make almost as good a record as the native stock with their advantageous social and economic position." On the other hand, large groups of immigrants particularly the Italians,

Poles and those from the old Austria-Hungarian Empire had poor showings.[21]

Counts also included African-Americans in his educational survey, certainly a liberal idea some thirty years before *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka. Since the city of St. Louis had a "considerable" African-American population and one of its six high schools was a black school, he decided to include it in a separate section. He found that African-Americans had as large an enrollment in the public high schools as whites when considered in proportion to the number of blacks residing in St. Louis. Twice as many of these students were girls. The occupations of the fathers did not make a significant difference in their representation in the schools. However, over 30 percent of the African-American mothers helped to support the family, 24.4 percent more than the mothers of white children. Another significant factor was the high mortality rate among blacks. Twenty-seven percent of the homes that African-American children came from had one or both parents not living. This was more than twice the rate for white children. Counts attributed it to their standard of living and mode of life. He, however, felt admiration for this segment of the population stating that:

> As a race the negroes (sic) are engaged in occupations which require little skill, for which the remuneration is low, and whose respectability is not high. Their standard of living is also low, and the home is not the center of stimulation and inspiration that it is among other groups in the population. The family is notoriously unstable because of the absence of those traditions that

> would give it stability. The high mortality of the race also acts as a disorganizing and disintegrating force in many negro (sic) homes. Taking into consideration these various influences, the attendance at the Sumner High School in St. Louis is little short of marvelous. These young people are carrying on a struggle for secondary education that is really unique in the annals of American education. The obvious handicaps under which they are striving can be duplicated by few social groups in this country today outside their own race. The present study shows no groups within the white population in the four cities investigated waging the fight so successfully and against such tremendous odds, as is the negro (sic) population of St. Louis.[22]

To supplement his examination of public high school selectivity and throw addition light on educational opportunities in American, Counts secured data from two private elite high schools, the University of Chicago High School and Phillips-Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. Taking a random sample, he found what he expected; 42.7 percent of the students enrolled had fathers who were proprietors, 31 percent came from families headed by professionals and 11 percent represented the managerial services. Given the fact that 29.1 percent of all students in public high schools came from the manual laboring classes while only a negligible proportion of private school students came from that socio-economic group, public secondary education while still very selective in no way was as elitist as private schools.[23]

THE PRESCRIBED CURRICULUM

Not only was there a selection process in American secondary education, but the selective principle reached into the core of the schools, its curriculum. With the American public high school in a period of transition from its rapid growth, Counts found that almost every city he studied was in a state of flux regarding the organization of its secondary schools. He recognized that something new was being formulated for secondary education, as indicated by the continuing enlargement of the curriculum, the adoption of new subjects and the constant trial and error of different pedagogical methods. Yet he cautioned that while all these changes gave evidence of the secondary school responding to the new social order, the path that secondary education needed to forge was unclear in the minds of the policy makers. Both administrators and teachers knew that the curriculum had changed to meet community needs, but they failed to see how it could still be improved. They were aware of the phenomenal growth of the high school in the past generation but did not understand the radical changes the rapid expansion and the emerging industrial society had created. Social change had far out-distanced the progress of educational thought.[24]

The newer curriculum, although changed from the past, still had its basis in tradition rather than scientific fact or educational philosophy. The traditional curriculum had been designed for a narrow segment of the population, those

children of privilege or for a few outstanding children of lesser means. Its original purpose was to provide a classical education for the small group of upper echelon students going on to college. However, with the changes wrought by the rapid expansion of the secondary school, the focus shifted, but educational leaders were slow to follow. The curriculum of the twenties did not reflect an analysis of contemporary American civilization.[25]

The high school curriculum which had been forged by its predecessor, the academy in the nineteenth century, had distinctly college preparatory leanings although it often offered other less academic courses of study. It included tracks such as the business-commercial, the shorter commercial, the English terminal, the English-science and the scientific. As high schools proliferated, a multiplicity of curricula appeared. Educators found that their was no standardization. In 1892 the National Education Association formed a Committee of Ten, headed by Charles Eliot, then president of Harvard University, to study the problem. The Committee, weighted heavily with college academicians, recommended that the secondary schools remain college preparatory in nature, but that they should have a broader curriculum than the Latin grammar schools of the past. They recommended four curricula, the classical, the English, the modern language and the Latin scientific and suggested that students study fewer courses but more in-depth. The courses

they recommended embraced foreign languages, including modern languages, English, mathematics, science and history.[26]

Twenty-five years later in a much more industrial-technological era after World War I, the National Education Association again created a commission to study public secondary schools in America. This time its goal was to reorganize the high school. The commission, chaired by Clarence Kingsley, and staffed by professors of education and educational administrators, established seven "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" which they believed constituted the principal aims of adolescent education: health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home-membership, vocation, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. These goals were to be incorporated into the secondary school curriculum and were much broader in scope than the previous committee's; they called for a comprehensive high school which was socially integrated as well as providing the next step in American education. Schools were to help the students to develop as adolescents and to encourage them to define and then pursue their goals. "The important social and educational significance of the comprehensive high school was that it represented an institutional effort to continue the democratic equalizing tendency of the 'ladder concept' in secondary education."[27]

By the mid-1920s Counts conducted a second study of American secondary schools. This one was based on the senior

high school curriculum. Surveying fifteen cities' school systems located across the country, Counts found that,

> Changes in high-school practice, though numerous, have by no means kept pace with the changing character of secondary education. Although magnificent and costly buildings have been erected, although the expenditures on the high school have been greatly increased, although many new subjects have been added to the curriculum, and although the social life of the school has been developed and enriched, the basic traditions and practices of the high school remain essentially unchanged.[28]

The curricula had expanded to include anywhere from fifty to more than one hundred units of subject matter. But through association with the traditional program, they had lost their verve and took on the attributes of the older courses. They adopted the very values which they were brought in to oppose and thereby became acceptable.[29]

Counts found that both teachers and administrators believed that the social prestige of the academic subjects was an important factor in the selection of curricula in the various schools. Since in the past the college preparatory curriculum had been a right of the socially privileged classes and the gifted students, this course of study whether or not it was needed for a particular individual's lifestyle was taken to mean entrance into a higher social class. Educators readily admitted that the greatest motivation for attending high school was the belief by both pupil and parent that the institution was a means of gaining access to preferred occupations and to favored social positions.[30]

While previously the schools ministered to the needs of a very privileged and homogeneous class, as the secondary school expanded, it had to minister to a very diverse population; yet it still carried the baggage of the past and deferred meeting the multicultural needs of its constituents. The idea of preparing all students for the professions and non-manual occupations was attacked as elitist and as inappropriate for the jobs in which the majority of students would work.[31]

As Counts studied the curriculum that the various socio-economic groups elected, he found that students who came from lower class families enrolled in the more "practical" courses, those that provided the skills to earn a living right after high school. The statistics from the St. Louis schools' vocational course of study demonstrated that 38.5 percent of the enrollment was composed of sons of common laborers; whereas only 3.4 percent of the school's population had fathers engaged in professional careers. Conversely, students from the upper ranks of society chose courses that prepared them to enter college. Citing statistics from the Bridgeport high schools, Counts demonstrated that of the girls whose fathers were in professional occupations, 57.1 percent pursued the college course while only 24.3 percent elected the commercial course. But at the other end of the spectrum, 87.5 percent of the girls enrolled in the commercial course came from homes where the father was employed as a common laborer.

Not a single girl in that group was in the college preparatory course. The statistics demonstrated that the groups of students least represented in the high school took courses of study that terminated in high school.[32]

Graduates and Drop Outs

These differences found in the choice of curricula were not the only indicators of the selective character of the secondary schools. The expectations of the students following graduation also displayed how the selective principle operated beyond the secondary school years. The classes that were poorly represented in the Senior year were even less represented in the schools of higher education. Through the survey Counts had obtained information on the students' expectations following high school. While he felt the question, "What do you intend to do following graduation from high school?" might not have objective validity on an individual basis since it was based on conjecture, it was significant when it related to the occupational groupings he used.[33]

Since careers for men and women were distinctly different in the 1920s, Counts divided his findings on students' future expectations into two groups representing each sex. He established that 36.5 percent of the total female population planned on attending college. Almost one-fourth of those not going on to college opted for clerical careers. Approximately

5 percent elected teaching and nursing, and most surprisingly to a man of Counts's generation, less than one percent or 82 of 9,286 anticipated a domestic career.[34]

As expected the percentage of college-bound young ladies rose as one tracked the students from freshman to senior year. While only 28.5 percent of the freshmen girls planned to attend college, the number increased to 45.8 percent in the senior year. The reverse occurred with girls preparing for clerical occupations. Some 30.4 percent of the freshmen planned on a clerical career, but only 14.3 percent of the seniors did.[35]

Not surprisingly some 49.4 percent of proprietors' daughters and 61.8 percent of professionals' daughters intended to go on to college while only 14.6 percent of the daughters of common laborers did. All totaled 76.7 percent of the girls planning to attend institutions of higher education had fathers in one of the top five occupational groups (proprietors, professional service, managerial service, commercial service, and clerical service).[36]

The young men enrolled in high school at the time of the survey planned to attend college in even larger numbers. Almost 58 percent intended to go on to higher education with no other occupation having a percentage higher than clerical service at 4 percent. A little more than 16 percent were undecided and 10.5 percent were going to into some kind of nebulous "work." According to Counts, the statistics

illustrated that boys more than girls regarded their enrollment in high school as preparation for college. He felt that these young men saw secondary education as a way of attaining a higher socio-economic level in life.[37]

When surveyed, some Freshmen male students (451 of 6,782) indicated that they did not expect to graduate. Analyzing the results, Counts concluded that students whose fathers were engaged in professional careers were the most certain about completing high school. Only 3.3 percent thought they might not graduate, while 20 percent or one in five students whose fathers were common laborers felt they might drop out.[38] Even though the sample for future expectations was small, it continued to increase the evidence that the children of the wealthier classes not only attended high school in much higher numbers but completed its curriculum at a much greater rate as well.

Controlling the Secondary Schools

While the problem of selectivity in secondary education admissions and curricula certainly represented huge challenges to Counts and his colleagues, an even greater problem had to be understood and grappled with by the educational leaders of the day--that of the school board.

As Counts concluded his first two studies regarding the secondary schools in the 1920s, he realized that, "The fundamental character of public education in the United States

is, in the last analysis, determined by the board that controls the school."[39] In the past that fact was not significant since communities tended to be small and homogeneous. But with the advent of the industrialization of America, great masses of humanity came together in cities teeming with a mixture of peoples and cultures. This gave urgency to the problem of control and representation of the various groups in the public schools.

Counts cited four great changes that had occurred in both education and society that presented the schools with an imperative need to change to maintain a democratic system. In two to three generations the schools had become an establishment to be reckoned with due to their unprecedented growth. They had developed enormous public budgets and had become extremely complex and controlled by many diverse and conflicting interests. The united ideals of the past were now looked at in divergent manners.[40]

According to Counts an educational program needed to be mapped out among the highly diverse and sometimes opposing groups to meet the varying needs of each. How to develop the plan had society warring. If the processes of industrialization had not given such a boost to the expansion of public education, American education would have been able to continue in an unobtrusive manner. The establishment of universal elementary education and the extension of secondary education to almost half the population made the schools a

significant social institution and probably the number one propaganda agency. This phenomenal growth had all the social groups, cultures and special interest groups fighting to be part of the power structure controlling such a force.[41]

The question of control of the schools was vital to Counts who saw it as being reflected in all decisions. It permeated the entire school system. Social control of the school system dictated the ideas and philosophies that were taught in the schools. Merit alone was not enough to get new ideas and theories into the schools. Accessibility was the key, and that access was provided by those in control. Counts stated:

> Only the most stupid and unenterprising can fail to perceive the promise of power which the school holds out to those who would organize its curriculum; only the most public-spirited can refuse to yield to the temptation to use such power in the attainment of selfish ends; and perhaps none can be expected to hesitate to employ the school in the promotion of narrow, though honest, purposes.[42]

Counts regarded the schools as a battleground for conflicting agendas put forth by loosely allied groups of society. In this complex social milieu the free wheeling conflicts which often resulted in an exchange of alliances between these groups were in the end controlled by the members of the boards of education who had the ultimate power.

> To be sure, back of the board stands the state, but to the board the state has delegated the practical control of pubic education. Within the wide limits created by legislative enactment, the broad outlines of policy are shaped by the members of this body....The teacher is the creature of the board of education, however, and, in his behavior

> both within and without the school, he must conform to standards agreeable to the board. To a degree and in a fashion seldom grasped, the content, spirit, and purpose of public education must reflect the bias, the limitations, and the experience of the membership of this board. The possibilities which the school possesses as a creative and leavening social agency are set by the good will, the courage, and the intelligence of that membership. The qualitative advance of public education must depend as much on the decision of the board of education as on the development of the science and philosophy of education.[43]

Given the above, Counts's questions then centered on who composed the boards that controlled public education in the United States? From what social strata did they emanate? What was their background, education, training, and agenda? Counts sought to find the answers. He was deeply vexed that such an important issue as the social composition of the boards of education was overlooked by school administrators. Instead of being concerned with the social make-up of the boards and their abilities to represent the community in rendering their decisions, they were more concerned with its smooth operation and efficiency in the practical administration of the schools.[44]

Challenged by his two previous studies on selectivity in public high school membership and its curriculum, Counts began a third study to gather further evidence of the highly selective nature of secondary education in the 1920s. He studied 1,654 school boards surveying city boards, county boards, state boards, and college and university boards.[45]

Once again using occupations as symbols of position in society, Counts divided the occupations of board members into seven major divisions: proprietors; professional service; managerial service; commercial service; clerical service; manual labor; and agricultural service; the same categories he had used in his study of selectivity in the high school, but minus those of artisan-proprietors; building and related trades; machine and related trades; printing trades; miscellaneous trades in manufacturing and mechanical industries; transportation service; public service; personal service; miners; lumber workers and fisherman. He found that three of the occupational groups dominated 80 percent of the boards. The largest percentage of board members were engaged in agricultural service, some 30 percent. This obviously was indicative of the many rural boards surveyed. The other two groups, the proprietors and professional service, represented 21 and 29 percent respectively. Common laborers as a group once again were poorly represented on any board with only 3 percent of their members belonging to a school board. Counts felt that the district and county boards were more closely associated with the people since the membership on the rural boards was generally composed of people in occupations in which the great majority of the people in the area engaged. However, in the cities the opposite occurred. The laboring classes composed over 60 percent of the population; yet only 8 percent of their members were on any boards.[46]

Women were also in the minority. Counts viewed them as being severely discriminated against since they constituted at least one half of society, yet comprised only 10.2 percent of all the boards surveyed. More of them held membership on city boards rather than rural ones.[47]

Regarding education, Counts's research revealed that 61 percent of the board members had gone beyond the secondary school; 20 percent had completed high school but had gone no farther; and 19 percent attended only elementary school. Counts believed these statistics demonstrated that in terms of educational opportunities, the board members were very highly selected. While on the surface this appeared to provide a favorable situation, he questioned whether these people, all products of the same type of educational system, did not bring their biases with them and find it difficult to adjust to changing social needs.[48]

Taking his analysis even further, Counts discovered that by studying the occupations of the presidents of the various boards, they clustered around only a few professions. Boards elected lawyers to their presidencies in proportion to their numbers by a ratio of one to 3.5. In other words for every 3.5 lawyers who were members, one occupied the presidency. Professional service representatives held a ratio of one to 4.6, while agricultural service representatives maintained a one to 10.8 ratio and manual labor had a one to 13.9 ratio. Women rarely were elected president of the board. Only one

woman occupied the presidency for every twenty-nine board members; whereas men had a one in six chance of becoming board president. Generally speaking, the classes which were poorly represented on the boards rarely had their members named president.[49]

Counts summed up the study by calling the boards "narrowly selective." He painted a picture of boards of education composed of college and university men from society's favored classes. The control of education and the formulation of its policy, he believed, were dominated by those individuals or their associates who were in control of the economic resources of the country.[50]

Selection and the Institution

According to Counts the new social order that arose from the expansion of the Industrial Revolution called for drastic rethinking of the core responsibilities of American society. Education as one of its largest institutional agencies had to rediscover its tasks. It had to sidestep evasive tactics to come to terms with life in the new civilization and to construct a fresh theory of secondary education to deal realistically and democratically with the demands of the new society. Secondary education's tremendous growth surged in the latter third of the nineteenth century as a result of the Industrial Revolution, but from 1890 until the 1920s its expansion was without precedent. Its increased enrollment

jumped from 200,000 students to 2.5 million. At that time approximately 25-30 percent of all the children aged fourteen to eighteen were enrolled in high school. In some communities secondary school enrollment reached as high as 80 percent. The numbers clearly demonstrated the differences from the past. Yet they did not show the subtle class distinctions that were exhibited by the population that attended high school. They revealed masses of students partaking of secondary education but did not indicate the lopsided socio-economic groupings.[51]

The Formal Structure--Equality of Opportunity

American education was unique in its establishment of a single track system. With the precedent setting decision of Justice Thomas C. Cooley in the Kalamazoo case in 1872, American education bridged the gap from elementary schools to colleges. The landmark case raised the question of whether or not taxpayers should be required to pay for the education of a small, elite portion of the population preparing to attend college. Cooley's judgment asserted that indeed taxes could be raised to support and maintain a public high school. Since the state of Michigan was already maintaining both public elementary schools and colleges, there was a need for a transitional school, the middle rung on the ladder of education, so that students who completed elementary school would have equal opportunity to obtain a college education

thereby utilizing the top end of the system already supported by the populace. This upward extension of education to the second level from the elementary school revolutionized education in America. No longer did the old European dual educational system hold true. Maintenance of the social and economic stratification of classes was no longer a burden of the educational institutions. The democratic ideals of the founding fathers expressed themselves in the principle of equalization of opportunity in the schools. Inherited special privilege was not applicable. Schools became available to all who wished to attend.[52]

Counts perceived that the genius of the American people was shown in the establishment of the American public high school. It was a concrete example of democracy in action. It presented equality of opportunity for all by opening its doors to individuals from all walks of life and denying it as the inheritance of one special group.[53]

The democratization of the secondary schools, Counts believed, was accelerated by the enlargement and enhancement of the high school curriculum, new teaching methods and new guidelines for promoting students. More importantly it was:

> ...traced to the presence of certain social ideals in the United States, the prior extension of the opportunities of elementary education, the appearance of a highly integrated society, the growing complexity of civilization, the increase in wealth and income, the decrease in the death rates, and the decline of the birth rate."[54]

By expanding secondary education to include all Americans, society had taken a stand. It demonstrated that equality of opportunity was part of the social fabric. It shunned the inheritance of privilege and denied the stability of the classes. Leadership in the society was developed through the individual's strengths not his background. To Counts this not only was a major contribution in the evolution of education but enabled American civilization to grow.[55]

The Real Dynamics--Selectivity

Prior to the great changes in society caused by the Industrial Revolution, education had been a very selective process benefitting only those who came from the upper classes of the propertied and privileged. With the dynamic expansion of secondary education in the early twentieth century, it seemed as though education in general and secondary education in particular were becoming almost universal, and the ideal of equality of opportunity in education was within the reach of most Americans. However, it is quite obvious to the reader of Counts's research of the 1920s that this was not the case. Secondary schools continued to be highly selective in their make-up. Whether through overt discrimination or through more subtle manipulation, the poorer class children were kept in large part from attending secondary schools while their wealthier counterparts were sent to school not only in larger numbers but for longer periods of time.

Based on his studies, Counts concluded that his facts revealed that secondary education at that point in time did not meet the ideal of democracy. He believed the United States to be closer to that ideal than any other nation, but he found that with all the talk of equality of opportunity being afforded through free public schooling from primary grades all the way through college, the reality was that "In a very large measure participation in the privileges of a secondary education is contingent on social and economic status." This selectivity of upper crust young people to further their formal schooling, he viewed as a more dangerous threat to democracy in the industrial, technological society than in the past when rugged individualism could be maintained throughout a lifetime without detriment to one's lifestyle.[56]

In addition since public education was financed by direct and indirect taxation, Counts painted a picture of the rich being educated at the expense of the poor, while the lower socio-economic classes were "either too poor or too ignorant to avail themselves of the opportunities which they help to provide."[57]

Counts perceived the crux of the problem of selectivity in the high school to lay at the foot of the family. The circumstances and goals of the family were the prime reasons children continued their formal education. But families were unequal; therefore the inequities found in other segments of society spilled over into the educational arena.

> When not preserved through the operation of biological forces, the inequalities among individuals and classes are still perpetuated to a considerable degree in the social inheritance. While the establishment of the free public high school marked an extraordinary educational advance, it did not by any means equalize education opportunity; for the cost of tuition is not the entire cost of education, or even the larger part of it. Education means leisure, and leisure is an expensive luxury. In most cases today this leisure must be guaranteed the individual by the family. Thus secondary education remains largely a matter for family initiative and concern, and reflects the inequalities of family means and ambition.[58]

Counts maintained that equality of opportunity did not necessarily mean the same opportunity nor the same number of years of schooling for each individual. It meant that given a certain potential the individual could attend secondary school and beyond. However, he recognized what he called the selective principle, which eliminates some and not others. He questioned where this selective principle belonged in the American educational system. Knowing that a wide range of intelligence existed among children of a certain age, he believed nature to have set the limits. Yet taking the masses of children who were average or above in intellect, he was inclined to favor completion of secondary education.[59]

In fact Counts was not opposed to selection. What bothered him was that the United States had neither universal secondary education nor any "defensible principle" for selecting certain individuals to obtain their schooling. Selection seemed to rest on a sociological basis first and with the psychological basis sometimes used as a secondary

source. Socio-economic background counted as the determining factor for obtaining a high school education for the vast majority of students whether or not they were capable of the achievements required at that level.[60]

Counts felt that selective high school enrollments could only be justified if the students fully understood that there were social obligations involved. Since this was not the case in American secondary education, he strongly urged that universal education be provided. He discounted the theory that the economic system could not afford it, stating that:

> A people that spends annually three billions of dollars on luxurious services, over two billions on tobacco and snuff, one billion on candy, and three-quarters of a billion on perfumery and cosmetics, need fear neither bankruptcy nor revolution by even quadrupling the present expenditure for secondary education.[61]

He also indicated that if the vast majority of the people wanted secondary education, they would get it.

Perceiving that secondary education was so biased, Counts urged that a conscious choice be made between what he viewed as theory and practice. In theory Americans wanted the ideal education for all children. The democratic idea of equal opportunity for all was part of their heritage. In practice, however, the higher the level of education, the more restricted and selective it became. Counts, as a democratic liberal, mandated the choice by opening the high schools to all children of appropriate age or closing them to all but a select few who would be chosen objectively and would be taught

the meaning of social obligation. Either, he concluded, would provide the service for the entire country. His preference, however, was opening the schools to all. An educated population would after all fuel the fires of democracy.[62]

CHAPTER THREE NOTES

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3. Ibid., 38.

4. George S. Counts, *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 3.

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8. Ibid., 7.

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11. Ibid., 13. Ibid., 22-23.

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16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 43.

18. Ibid., 47.

19. Ibid., 90.

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21. Ibid., 109.

22. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 347 U. S. 483 (1954). Ibid., 114-117. Ibid., 122-123.

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24. George S. Counts, *The Senior High School Curriculum*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), 144-145.

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26. Gerald L. Gutek, *Education in the United States: An Historical Perspective*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 118-119.

27. Ibid., 120-121.

28. Counts, *The Senior High School Curriculum*, 2.

29. Ibid., 9. Ibid., 146.

30. Ibid., 131.

31. Ibid., 148.

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34. Ibid., 75.

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36. Ibid., 79.

37. Ibid., 80. Ibid., 84.

38. Ibid., 86.

39. George S. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education: A Study in the Social Control of Public Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 1.

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42. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education*, 82. Counts, *School and Society*, 347.

43. Ibid., 14. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education*, 1.

44. Ibid., 2-3.

45. Ibid., 9.

46. Ibid., 52-54.

47. Ibid., 41.

48. Ibid., 47. Ibid., 50.

49. Ibid., 62-63. Ibid., 43.

50. Ibid., 81. Ibid., 74.

51. Counts, *Secondary Education and Industrialism*, 12. Counts, *The Senior High School Curriculum*, 1-2.

52. Gutek, 117.

53. Counts, *The Senior High School Curriculum*, 1.

54. Counts, *Secondary Education and Industrialism*, 23-24.

55. Counts, *The Senior High School Curriculum*, 1.

56. Counts, *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education*, 149.

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58. Ibid., 148.

59. Ibid., 149-153.

60. Ibid., 154.

61. Ibid., 151-152.

62. Ibid., 156.

CHAPTER IV

COUNTS'S SUGGESTED PROGRAM FOR REFORM

Recognizing the selective nature of the system of education in the United States, George S. Counts set out to reform both the system and its philosophy. As previously stated, Counts, after conducting three statistical studies of American public secondary education in the 1920s concluded the educational system was "adrift." Counts had a heavily credentialed background in educational research; he had travelled to the Pacific rim to study Philippine education and had observed history in the making in Russia as the Soviets set up their five year plan for economic growth and education following the Revolution. With this background, Counts proposed to revolutionize American public education.

At the Progressive Education Association's annual meeting in 1932, Counts called the American educational system morally and spiritually bankrupt and proposed a bold, new direction for American education.[1] The economic depression of the 1930s provided a reformer's backdrop for a new plan in which Counts vigorously outlined a philosophy of education calling for social planning and democratic collectivism. He declared with unshaken confidence that schools were to assume responsibility

to reverse the misfortunes plaguing the country. The education establishment had to lead America back on the road to fulfilling its lingering promise of a better life for all. Needless to say such heresy made educators stand up and take note. The remaining business of the convention was suspended so that its members could consider Counts's radical proposals.

Counts had done his homework through his careful studies of American education in the 1920s. He documented the continued chasm of the haves and have nots in American society by demonstrating in *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education* (1922), that those of wealth and privilege were more likely than the poor to obtain a secondary education. In *The Senior High School Curriculum* (1926), he illustrated that the secondary school curriculum was based on the needs and desires of the upper classes bent on obtaining a higher education.[2]

In 1927 he published his study, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education*, which demonstrated that people of wealth and privilege controlled the schools through membership on the boards of education, and finally in *School and Society in Chicago* (1928), he documented the muddled mess that tainted the Chicago school system as its board dominated by representatives of wealthy and powerful interest groups tried to stop the teachers and other citizens from obtaining control and directing the system.[3]

Through these continued studies of secondary education, its curriculum, character, and control, Counts began to weave his own revolutionary plan. He observed that schools, under the guise of being democratic institutions, were not what the people believed them to be. In fact, they were shams being foisted upon unsuspecting American citizenry to maintain a gulf between the classes. Based on these observations, Counts formulated his radical ideas. The cardinal point of his educational program focused on stopping the drifting educational policy of the United State through thoughtful social planning by education professionals. His plan centered on the foundation of American freedoms--democracy which required an educated populace to function properly and justified the support and maintenance of the public school system.

Counts had documented the dramatic increase of the high school population in the previous generation. He had provided statistics to validate his suspicion of the inequities of public secondary education in America and had observed directly how important education and a planned economy had become in changing the Russian culture and economy at a critical point in time. Utilizing his experiences and knowledge, he envisioned American education with schooling as one of its agents as possessing the powerful ability to change society, but he was not naive enough to believe education to be omnipotent. Rather he viewed it as having the capacity to

save a democratic society and empower its students to utilize that ideal as a guide to improve the quality of life for all Americans, and narrow the gap between the classes.

Commencing in the 1920s, Counts foresaw a need to radically change the structure of American public secondary education. The old world order, he warned, had altered so drastically that education had an imperative mandate to generate change. Otherwise, the foundations of American democracy would weaken and perhaps collapse under the stress of the new industrial society.

Counts had repeatedly demonstrated in his studies of American public secondary schooling that the old system favored the wealthier classes despite the American ideal of universal education. The public high schools of the United States continued to glaringly perpetuate inequities along socio-economic and racial/ethnic lines. Objecting to this transparent, undemocratic system, Counts called for the "entire structure" of secondary education to be "rebuilt" to enable social, economic and political democracy to become a reality.[4]

Proclaiming, as he consistently did throughout his writings, that education is always a conception of the life or civilization which it expresses, Counts called for an analysis of American civilization to decipher the new social order and to determine the necessary changes that secondary education must undergo to become a viable institution in the new world

order. He called for educators to construct a theory of secondary education which dealt with the problems of contemporary society declaring that they needed to tap the "deep-flowing currents of social life" in order to influence society and keep education from merely reflecting it. Their challenge was to transform the existing educational institutions to complement the new civilization.[5]

Creating such an educational program was not to be done without much pondering and preparation. Counts regarded the task as "very serious business...one of the most vital and responsible forms of statesmanship." To develop a complex program of education, he proposed that educators use a three-fold process, first analyzing the situation, then selecting from the among the multitude of possibilities, and finally synthesizing their choices confirming values and purpose along the way.[6]

The fundamental changes in the high school in Counts's judgment had to begin with the curriculum. The 1920s were a period of transition for the American public high schools. Everywhere he searched, Counts found change or imminent change but no focus. In school after school, curricula were being modified. Courses were added and deleted providing evidence of their sensitivity to the "changed position of the high school."[7] However, all this activity did not narrow the gap between a school structured to meet the needs of an agrarian

society and that of a school in the new industrial civilization which had superseded it.

While encouraged by the shift in the educational program of the American public high school, Counts, none the less, was quite disturbed by the fact that there was no educational philosophy to underlie the change. All the activity he viewed as wasteful experimentation since the secondary school curriculum was still being based on tradition rather than science, the new methodology of the twentieth century. Therefore, Counts insisted:

> The objectives of secondary education must be defined in terms that lend themselves to observation and measurement, and then the materials of instruction must be judged in the light of their contributions to the achievement of these objectives.[8]

Reforming the Curriculum

The traditional function of the American public secondary school to prepare students for higher education no longer applied to all its constituents. A much broader spectrum of society attended high school altering both the function and the focus of the educational program. The old aristocratic curriculum based on the classical studies needed to prepare individuals for higher education did not serve the needs of the more socio-economically diverse student population of the twentieth century. Whereas the curriculum had previously been dictated by the colleges to the high school, Counts urged that

it now needed to be determined by the societal requirements of the civilization which he stated as:

> The great purpose of the public school therefore should be to prepare the coming generation to participate actively and courageously in building a democratic industrial society that will co-operate with other nations in the exchange of goods, in the cultivation of the arts, in the advance of knowledge and thought, and in maintaining the peace of the world.[9]

In the past secondary education had been highly selective in admitting only the children of the upper echelons of society and those who were gifted. Therefore, the academic program had become an insignia of rank and a perceived way of escaping from the lower classes into the non-laboring wealthier stations of life. The notion that secondary education provided a way of life that escaped manual labor ceased to be true. Yet the choice of a different curriculum more related to the individual's needs caused students to be seen as socially inferior. Counts called for a curricular program that would provide for the development of all students to their fullest potential. He sought to base the curriculum on a careful analysis of American "habits, knowledge, attitudes, appreciations and powers," in essence, all that was expected of them that they could not obtain through an elementary education or through life experiences. Adamant that American education support and defend the principles upon which the country was founded, Counts included as the primary goal of the curriculum the explicit expression and implementation of democracy through consensus decision-making,

recognition of individual worth and a fraternal spirit.[10]

Moreover Counts believed the secondary school should provide the individual with the skills and insight necessary to systematically study the forces and institutions of the "great society" that existed in America. The curriculum, as he perceived it, must broaden the individual's horizons developing certain perspectives and appreciations which would be utilized throughout learning. Contemporary education had to acknowledge the temporary status of a given period in time by teaching relevant knowledge. However, the most important function of secondary schooling according to Counts was the foundation of intellectual ideas and moral principles that students would learn which would enable them to function independently able to competently make informed choices.[11]

Reconstructing the curriculum, as Counts outlined, did not mean enormous changes in subject matter. Rather than changing the disciplines, "the spirit, the approach, the orientation would be different...the emphasis everywhere would be placed on the social and cooperative and creative impulses." Six fields of human interest were cited by Counts as needing inclusion in the core of the curriculum: health, family, industry, citizenship, recreation, and religion. Of paramount importance were activities promoting the health of the individual. The program had to strive for physical excellence in all students and give the youngsters knowledge to control diseases. Secondly, students had to be taught

about family life and relationships, hygiene and sex education, child care, home economics, etc. Young people also needed to become aware of the interdependent roles of economics, industry and environment and how these forces affected their lives. In particular, Counts urged that they be taught to respect and value all forms of socially useful labor.[12]

Citizenship or social science, the fourth element that Counts deemed necessary for inclusion in secondary school curriculums, was to incorporate the values, morals and ideas upon which American democracy was structured. It needed to foster the democratic ideals of human equality and worth and stress freedom of speech, "fairmindedness, integrity, scientific spirit: a respect for and an appreciation of talent, training, and character: a sense of the fundamental social obligation of labor: and an enlightened devotion to the common good." Unlike the other disciplines, Counts put more details in the social studies curriculum. He outlined broad areas of study such as: the history of mankind evolving to the ideal of democracy; the industrial revolution and the resulting collectivist economy; contemporary American and world problems; current social and philosophical ideas; the study of propaganda; and a critical evaluation of the current society in light of democracy and future progress.[13]

Recreation and religion were two other areas Counts suggested secondary schools address. To the first, he

challenged the school to look to the individual for direction. To the latter he suggested that it play an important part in the curriculum because of the interest and idealism of adolescents in religion and the wider interpretations of the universe that the subject broaches. Counts warned that neglecting the mention of religion in the schools would adversely affect one of the most important realities of life.[14]

Counts considered every high school to have both an official and unofficial program, the former being the curriculum taught in the classroom and the latter that which was created by the students. The activities conducted outside the classroom were as important, to Counts, as those studied in the formal setting, particularly student government which he saw as a microcosm of real world democracy in action. These activities gave "meaning and unity" to the task that schooling was trying to accomplish. Such programs in the ideal provided hands-on experiences for future life situations and naturally differentiated ability grouping.[15]

From the official program Counts viewed the academic study of language, both foreign and English, mathematics, natural sciences and history as important. Language arts, in particular, he believed to be "one of the surest indices of intellectual excellence" and mathematics as "indispensable," especially in creating the new modern civilization. What he objected to was the traditional way in which they were being

taught. He opinioned that they should be adapted to the modern way of life. English composition needed to be taught in a more utilitarian way than the formal structure being used. Literature needed to relate to human experience; mathematics to life experiences, rather than future study;[16] science,

> I'd like to see science studied in our schools by all children, all members of the younger generation as a humanistic subject, as an ingredient in out culture that has transformed our ways of life. But that's something they don't get. They ought to understand science as such a force.[17]

History must be more inclusive telling the story of the struggles of the great masses. To accomplish the task, Counts advocated a program to restore the democratic, egalitarian basis upon which American society was grounded. His educational program rested upon a knowledge of America's cultural heritage that was reconstructed to bridge the enlarging gap between the social classes. He did not shy away from actually suggesting the deliberate teaching of democratic collectivism in schools.

In fact Counts was firmly convinced that "all education contains a large element of imposition." This was not only a desirable feature but the professional obligation of all teachers. Counts maintained that in all of life, man is imposed upon by his conditions and that such imposition in the form of cultural traditions provided a base line for measurement and a mold for societal membership.[18]

Counts criticized his colleagues for promoting the idea that education should be taught outside the cultural milieu of the period as though it were some fixed theory that never changed and insisted that education be adjusted to fit the civilization in which it was being taught "shaping attitudes, tastes and even imposing ideas." Education must provide a vision based upon loyalties to the society and must encourage individuals to lead civilization rather than just allowing them to adapt to its changes.[19]

Curriculum Development

But who should develop such a curriculum? Who was to furnish the details? Who was to test the product? All of these questions plagued Counts as he proposed his reformist ideas. While encouraged by the experimentation he saw all about, he felt it was insufficiently forceful or comprehensive. It lacked objectivity and a scientific basis. Moreover, the complacency of administrators and teachers made it difficult to change the status quo.[20]

Counts was convinced that curriculum reform needed to be a coordinated effort that went beyond the high school and included not only elementary education and higher education but became a comprehensive national endeavor. In his judgment, both the universities and colleges and the elementary schools exerted too much control over the secondary

school curriculum, and any form of a nationally standardized program was woefully lacking.[21]

Aware of the great strides made in communication and transportation, Counts alluded to the advent of a global world order. "Increasingly the people of these cities will live in the same world and will experience the same educational needs." Therefore, he urged educators to come together to objectively look at the problem and design a broad outline, that would enable American public schools to function as a whole from kindergarten to college.[22]

Counts was steadfast in his conviction that curriculum building was extremely difficult and complex. As the foundation of the school, curriculum had to be designed by those intensely trained for the job. Recognizing that these designers must have a great scope of knowledge and experience, Counts suggested a coalition of school personnel as being most responsive to the integral, creative factors necessary for developing a scientifically and civilizationally based curriculum.

Counts recommended that educational professionals representing seven areas be selected to construct curriculum: the psychologist, sociologist, philosopher, instructional specialist, classroom teacher, curriculum specialist, and high school administrator. Viewing the state legislatures and school boards as untrained in the specifics of curriculum making and powerful interest groups as too narrowly focused,

Counts shied away from the usual sources which he felt already held too much control over the curriculum. He held disdain for the tremendous influence of higher education and saw teachers of various disciplines as too supportive of their own narrow niche.[23]

As members of the coalition that Counts recommended, the psychologist, he reasoned, would be the expert in adolescent and learning behaviors. The sociologist would be aware of both the social heritage and the conditions of life in modern America. Formulating a system of values and purpose would be the philosopher's task. The instructional specialist would translate the ideas and findings of the first three into materials for the classroom teacher. As the actual liaison with the students, the teacher would have the ability to strategically utilize the materials and gauge their effectiveness. Evaluation would fall to the curriculum specialist whose task would be to research the educational outcomes. Lastly, the administrator would integrate the organizational plan and sell it to the community.[24]

Organizational Reform of the High Schools

From Counts's point of view, the coalition had to begin restructuring the curriculum by changing the administrative organization of the public high schools. Based on procedural rather than educational values, the program of studies in American public secondary schools was divided into units which

measured time spent on subjects rather than student achievement. If as Counts declared, the object of education was to elicit outcomes upon which the individual could rely for future conduct in society, then the amount of time spent in a course could not be equated with learning. Therefore, the curriculum had to be evaluated and modified in terms of future predictors of behavioral changes rather than time expended on a subject. The curriculum had to be updated to include the more pragmatic aspects of life which would benefit the majority of students in an industrial society.[25]

With the advent of universal secondary education, Counts was convinced that the student population could no longer be viewed as homogeneous in ability. Steps had to be taken to adapt the curriculum to the needs of the less able student. More than just interest and vocational destination separated the student population, he suggested that not only tracking be established but also instructional materials be modified to reach all students. In addition, he advocated smaller class sizes recognizing that although people can learn in large groups more individualized instruction leads to greater success.[26]

Counts also leveled criticism at the structure of secondary education. From his studies, he found widely varying programs across the United States. The four year high school still dominated the landscape, but there was a new tendency to found a program composed of three years of junior

high, three years of senior high and two years of a junior college. Counts believed that it was unnecessary for three institutions to dispense similar programs and advocated only the two year junior high with a four year senior high school. The fact that parts of the high school curriculum were being duplicated in the colleges disturbed him so that when critics pointed to the American system of education as being wasteful in comparison with European programs, he candidly supported shortening the senior high school program for some students. He had no qualms that a flexible program would enable academically achieving students to finish sooner and provide for some economy in the system.[27]

Counts believed the comprehensive high school was central to the American secondary school system as a place for students of all cultures and classes to interact regardless of their future career destination. It was an environment in which common values, morals, and principles would promote a unity among the populace. As a product of a democratic society, it provided mobility in the society and cohesiveness in the civilization. While Counts held great faith in the comprehensive secondary school, he also allowed that specialty schools which would augment the efforts of secondary education and provide for a richer, fuller society were consistent with his ideals.[28]

Changing the Fundamental Character of the High Schools

If as Counts claimed the fundamental character of American public secondary education rested with the existing school boards, then obviously his reform program had to commence there. Advocating a balanced, enduring stability between school and society, Counts proclaimed,

> A form of control is desired which will protect the school against the assaults of selfish interests and passions of the mob, but which at the same time will make it responsive to the more fundamental changes in society and the more solid advances in professional knowledge.[29]

Clearly, he desired an intimate popular relationship between the school and the society in which it operated. But this relationship was untenable given the compositions of school boards in America.

If as we have seen in Chapter 3 the boards of education across the United States were dominated by the privileged classes representing scions of capitalism, then public schools were being ruled by a small but powerful group of people. This in Counts's judgement was undemocratic and unacceptable. Even if these individuals were beyond reproach and competent individuals, they did not and could not represent all the varying factions of the society for "no one can transcend the limits set by his own experience. The best of us are warped and biased by the very processes of living."[30] Therefore, these people could not be responsive to the needs of the majority of the community they claimed to represent.

Influential educational theorists of the period, namely William Estabrook Chancellor and Ellwood P. Cubberley, regarded the school boards' task as overseeing an efficiently run school system. Challenging that idea, Counts favored the view held by labor organizations that democratic educational policy making was more important than functional efficiency. For the former idea, the types of individuals then in power came from similar educational, professional, and social backgrounds. They were successful business and professional men who transferred business attitudes and efficiency to the schools' functioning. However, if the second idea were to take hold, then school board membership had to become more representative of their constituents.[31]

Counts called the perpetration of the idea that an individual from a dominant group could speak for society as a whole, "a pious fraud." He pointed out that the reigning group's interests because of their dominance tended to be identified as society's interests. Actually these representatives supported their own group's positions. Even if they truly attempted to represent all their constituents with honesty and integrity, they still could not rise above their own experience. The whole idea of who should control education developed into a matter of significant importance for all of society if the priority of the boards turned to educational policy making. Whether they were elected or appointed did not significantly alter the type of

representation on the boards. Counts was quick to point out, that in the larger, urban areas the favored classes had economic and social control.[32]

There was no easy solution to the problem. Counts ruminated:

> The remedy for the situation, if there be any, would seem to lie in the frank recognition of the pluralistic quality of the modern city. Such recognition would involve the extension of a direct voice in the control of education to the more powerful interests and the more significant points of view.[33]

Such a forum would bring together differing social groups including teachers and discount the theory that Americans were basically homogeneous in their view of civilization. It also would keep the schools from being totally manipulated by one or another factions of society.

Even though the radically changed boards would and could formulate more equitable and representative policy for the schools, it still fell to the teaching profession to implement these reformed policies and programs. In order to do that Counts called for a more selective and better trained professional staff. Attracting intelligent, committed individuals to the profession, he stated, depended upon the working conditions society provided for those who would educate its offspring. Contrary to popular opinion, teachers, in his estimation, whether guiding kindergartners or teaching finite mathematics, were of more value to society than lawyers, physicians, engineers, theologians or other

professionals. Therefore, they needed a more rigorous and liberal education. Methods and techniques which had dominated the teacher training programs from the beginning had to take a much lower priority.[34]

Arguing for a better educated profession, Counts's second recommendation was to grant professional authority to the entire educational staff from classroom teacher to the superintendent. Such increased professionalism would protect the educational system from internal attacks and from outside interest groups who sought to force their special interest upon a whole system. With such authority, teachers, due to their large numbers, could unite to challenge unprofessional suggestions that violated accepted academic standards. Professionalism would lessen possible large scale disruptions in the school program and contribute to the stability of public education.[35]

Societal Reform

School reform was only one component of Counts's larger vision. All around him, he saw lives devastated by an economic situation that was weakening American democracy. Convinced that the country with the richest resources in the world could provide a decent life for all its citizens not just the wealthy few, Counts mapped out a plan that would shape the new social order and mold it into a new collectivist democracy. Differing radically from the "primitive

egalitarian, individualistic democracy produced by the log cabin, free land, and social isolation," the new program was to be developed through careful study of American values and culture and was to be lead by, of all groups, that somewhat "timid race," teachers.[36]

Counts believed that teachers were in the unique position of not representing any particular class but rather holding the "common and abiding" interest of all people. He sensed that due to their position of trust, teachers were under a special obligation to lead society out of the abyss in which it found itself in the Great Depression. Society had a great pool of resources in teachers, from the most intelligent scientists at the universities to the most nurturing individuals at the elementary level. Certainly, they could do no worse than the captains of industry had done in foisting on the public the delusion "that the dollar is the master key which unlocks every door."[37]

Placing teachers at the helm, Counts advocated reconstructing the social order to redistribute the wealth of the nation to all of its inhabitants so that poverty and deprivation would be eliminated. The conversion from an agrarian society into an industrial, technological civilization had changed the priorities of the nation and undermined the basic economic and moral principles upon which the United States had been founded. Too few individuals controlled both the economic and political scenes. True

democracy had been jeopardized, and privilege and corruption had weakened the American dream. It was Counts's firm conviction that economic control once more had to be placed in the hands of the common man, and corruption displaced with brotherhood and understanding. His program sought to integrate the democratic ideal into the technological environment to provide material resources and a better life for all.[38]

The Great Depression of the 1930s was a catalyst for Counts to inaugurate his ideas which had been developing during the twenties. Coming to fruition against the background of extreme inequities and the widespread desperation of the poor and unemployed, his concepts generated questions regarding a diminishing American democracy and the people's unswerving faith in education. His intention was to promote a national forum to foster implementation of wide-sweeping reform of educational and socio-economic foundations.

According to Counts, the government originally created "by the people, for the people, and of the people," to serve the needs of the entire populace no longer functioned in that mode. In many ways, it promoted the desires of the upper echelons of society and maintained rigid class distinctions at the expense of those less fortunate. In his opinion, the government must protect the public instead of private interests. He believed that in an industrial civilization technology had progressed to the point that overcoming the scarcity of goods and services could be accomplished. The

ability to provide for the needs of society was on hand. With the bounty of resources available in the United States, starvation and poverty were cruel, inhumane, and unacceptable in a true democracy. The inequitable distribution of wealth was not only unhealthy but superfluous. The power brokers of the period were allowed to raid both material and human resources for their own profit at the expense of the masses. Decrying this practice, Counts promulgated that government had to reign in private profiteers and save the resources rather than allow them to be depleted for excessive profit while millions of people were forced into poverty. In the land of plenty, economic issues had become fundamental in the struggles of people.

> The shift in the position of the center of gravity in human interest has been from politics to economics: from considerations that had to do with forms of government, with the establishment and protection of individual liberty, to considerations that have to do with the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth.[39]

The survival of democracy from Counts's viewpoint depended upon a new economic order based on collectively owned natural resources and important forms of capital. Three major phenomena had changed the simple way in which property rights had been a part of the agrarian society. The closing of the frontier had dried up the availability of free land; while at the same time, the population was increasing; and the Industrial Revolution with its specialization created a lifestyle based on money rather than real property. Strongly

believing that private ownership was diverting science and technology from serving the common good, Counts advocated that America change to a more collectivist economic order. The alternative, he felt, would be to abandon democracy and return to a "modern form of feudalism."[40]

Relentless in his idea of pursuing a "war on poverty and human misery," Counts attacked the "sacred cow" of private enterprise. He pushed for popular control of industry and technology. The new industrial social order had rendered obsolete the once popular belief that hard work and moral principles could provide individuals with an economically secure life.[41] The industrial society had become so interdependent through the production of goods and services and the advancement of communication and transportation that the Jacksonian principle of rugged individualism was no longer viable. Counts observed the acute change and like a voice in the wilderness cried out to his colleagues that individualism was dead.

> The day of individualism in the production and distribution of goods is gone. The fact cannot be overemphasized that the choice is no longer between individualism and collectivism. It is rather between two forms of collectivism: the one essentially democratic, the other feudal in spirit; the one devoted to the interests of the people, the other to the interests of a privileged class.[42]

To the objection that such heresy would invade personal freedoms, Counts retorted that the only freedoms exchanged would be those allowing excessive profiteering and the control of the masses by the few. Freedom, he warned, needed a sound

economic base. With such a foundation he believed that society would be assured of the necessities of life and could then work toward the further advancement of the civilization.[43]

The profound social and economic transformation that Counts called for rested on controlling technology and advancing a new form of collectivist democracy where all national resources were under popular control and special privilege along with corruption were eliminated. These elements coupled with our democratic heritage of guarding civil rights and liberties were to be utilized in achieving a better civilization based on justice, human worth and beauty to ensure the constitutional guarantees of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.[44]

Counts viewed American society as desperately needing change in order for democracy to survive. He felt that the growing gap between the privileged and the poor that resulted from the immense and rapid upheaval of the agrarian social order would cause not only economic disaster but would restructure the civilization into a feudal society. To avert such a disaster, Counts believed that teachers especially equipped by their numbers and position of trust could lead society to a fairer, more just distribution of wealth. With their enormous power wielded through the schools, teachers could impose upon their students, the future generations of Americans, the collectivist, democratic ideals needed in the

new society and could mold the schools into models of equality. However, as we will see in Chapter V, Counts's vision did not take hold. While secondary schooling became accessible to almost all Americans, wealth and privilege still remained as the primary barrier to equality in education.

CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

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10. Counts, "Changing High School Curriculum," 336; George S. Counts, *The School Can Teach Democracy* (New York: The John Day Company, 1939) 17; see also Counts, *Education and the Promises*, 104-5; Counts, *Senior High School Curriculum*, 147; George S. Counts, *The Prospects of American Democracy* (New York: The John Day Company, 1938) 322.

11. Counts, *Prospects*, 324; Ibid., 329; see also Chapman and Counts, *Principles*, 49; and Ibid., 458-59; and Counts, *Education and American Civilization*, 325.

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13. Counts, *Schools Can Teach Democracy*, 17; Counts, *Social Foundations*, 549-52 passim.

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CHAPTER V

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The inequality of educational opportunity in American public schools was a lifelong concern of George S. Counts. From the beginning of his educational career, Counts demonstrated his interest in the selective nature of schooling in America which he regarded as a threat to the democratic foundations of the United States. To him the selective function of American education produced the possibility of a rigid class society in which the original intent of our forefathers that of equality for all would be lost. With the frontier closed and the industrial society becoming more complex and intertwined each passing year, the simplicity of staking out on one's own and succeeding became limited by one's literacy and formal schooling. These in turn were limited not by one's ability but rather by one's family's economic resources.

It was Counts's study of the selective character of the American secondary school which confirmed that family background, occupation and income played a large part in paving the way for children to enter high school and to

graduate some four years later. Higher socio-economic levels not only allowed children to attend high school, but also gave them the leisure time required to complete it. Those of lesser economic means usually dropped out of high school to help with family financial situations. School was a luxury that children from the lower socio-economic classes could not afford. To have the necessary free time to attend and the extra funds required to pay for the hidden costs of books, supplies, transportation and clothing aside from the loss of income the family would have derived from the child's meager earnings was usually above the means of the majority of the immigrant and working class people.

Family status, as exemplified by the occupations of the father, also determined the educational and career paths that adolescents took. As Counts's study showed the children of wealthier socio-economic standing, the merchants, professional, and managerial classes, tended to prepare themselves for occupations and professions that required higher levels of formal education and which were suited to their family's stature in the community.[1]

As the industrial civilization rapidly expanded, intensified and became more technical in the twentieth century, the American work force following suit enlarged and became more highly skilled. Schooling gained in importance with the increased demand of the economy, but the selective character of the schools remained.

Similar Socio-Economic Factors at Work

Since Counts's pioneering studies, other educators have surveyed the inequalities of public secondary education. Most concluded as he had that American public high schools were highly selective in their character and thereby, not providing equal educational opportunities for all adolescents. In 1959 Talcott Parsons studied the social mobility of 3,348 adolescent boys from ten public high schools in the Boston area. Measuring both socio-economic status and individual ability, he found that of the young men whose fathers were engaged in major white collar occupations, 80 percent were planning to attend college while only 12 percent of the boys whose fathers were classified as semi-skilled or unskilled workers were planning a college career. In a similar vein, the number of students preparing to attend college increased with each notch up the occupational ladder their parents had achieved. For the children of skilled workers, the percentage rose to 19, while the percentage for those children of minor white collar workers and middle white collar workers rose to 26 and 52 percent respectively.[2]

Parsons, delving a step further than Counts, found similar results occurred when ability was compared to intentions. Fifty-two percent of those grouped in the highest quintile of ability opted for college versus only 11 percent of those in the lowest group. Perhaps more importantly, in every ability grouping, the relationship of the father's

occupation to future plans glaringly manifested itself so that in the highest quintile the college intentions of sons of laborers and sons of major white collar workers ranged from 29 percent for the former to 89 percent for the latter.[3]

Like Counts, Parsons viewed schooling as a socializing agency, but he added another dimension, that of role allocation or social selection. In his estimation the correlation between one's social status and one's educational attainment increased as one obtained more schooling. This, in turn, he recognized as being directly related to future occupational status.[4]

A few years later at a time when the federal government was funding compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children, James Coleman demonstrated that academic test performance depended more on a child's family background and those of his peers, than the amount of resources available for his education. Coleman, then an educational researcher from Johns Hopkins University, was authorized by Congress in 1964 to study the availability of equal educational opportunity in the United States. Through a survey of some four thousand schools and over 600,000 students, his study revealed widespread racial segregation in American schools. But more shockingly, he rocked the educational community by reporting that these same "schools are remarkably similar in the effect they have on the achievement of their pupils when the socio-economic background of the student is taken into account." In

other words, regardless of the unequal nature of the schooling American children were receiving, academic attainment was still heavily dependent upon family background just as Counts had shown. School resources, in effect, made little difference in the outcome of achievement.[5]

Yet Coleman's report brought to the forefront the wide discrepancies of a supposedly democratic system of education. Did not all students have the right to equal educational resources even if they were not related to achievement? As public institutions, schools needed to provide the same services and facilities for all citizens. Therefore, the right to an equal opportunity in receiving an education was being denied to those from poorer schools.

By the 1970s social upheaval had given the schools and their composition a higher profile. Colin Greer in *The Great School Legend,* viewing the school as a socializing agency as Counts did, followed a similar but negative tack. Using early twentieth century surveys as his basis, he claimed that the failure of children in the public school systems of American was "precisely appropriate to the place assigned them and their families in the social order." Schools, Greer argued, paralleled social patterns, educating certain individuals for opportunities based on the existing social hierarchy. The American dream of success for those who worked diligently and were of solid character ignored the "glass ceiling," a clear view of the unobtainable, imposed by the wealthier social

classes who controlled the civilization. Greer believed that through the public schools the elite impeded the upward progress of the individuals from the lower classes, by keeping them in their "place," and certifying from an early age that they were inferior. Through this process they assured themselves that the bastions of the upper classes of the society would continue to be protected.[6]

A few years later another group of researchers from the Center for Educational Policy Research at Harvard University, headed by Christopher Jencks, began surveying the distribution of educational opportunities in the United States and found selectivity in public schooling much the same as Counts had some forty-three years before. Using the U.S. Census figures for 1964, Jencks recorded that 94 percent of all adolescents attended at least one year of secondary school and 82 percent graduated. This definitive increase in the total number of students attending high school from the two million or 25 percent of American youths that Counts reported in 1922, seemed to indicate the accuracy of his perception that America's overriding belief in equality of opportunity was woven into the social fabric of its civilization. The reality however, proved to be different. Access to school resources and utilization of these resources were quite unequal in the public educational system. Although the percentage of students of high school age attending secondary schools was larger by almost 70 percent than in 1920 when Counts's data

was secured, large scale selectivity still existed, but affected adolescents in other ways. Schools were unequal in the quality of the programs they delivered, in the teachers they employed, in the physical facilities that housed the programs and in the funding they received. Jencks estimated that the schools children of the wealthy attended received over twice the amount of available funding compared to the schools of the poor.[7]

Employing a much broader scope to study the causes of inequality in American education than Counts had, Jencks measured the distribution of cognitive skills and demonstrated similar inequities in educational opportunity produced by both genetic and environmental heredity. Examining the academic credentials of the parents, he found that I.Q. played a much lesser part in an individual's educational attainment than family background. The strong educational influence of the family was coupled to both its socio-economic status and its cultural characteristics. While cognitive skills, he felt played a significant role, he found them to be indeterminable.[8]

Jencks's study agreed with Counts's findings that family status was closely allied to educational attainment, but he concluded contrary to Counts's belief, that equalizing educational opportunity would not result in making society more equal. Jencks put forth the idea that education played a marginal role in determining the grossly unequal

distribution of income and opportunity that existed in the United States. In fact he suggested a more direct system of compulsory income redistribution as a way to overcome inequalities. Never the less, he concluded that the correlation between educational advantage and future success held by most Americans was tenuous at best.[9]

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, more strident educational reformers, claimed in their book, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, that the sole function of American education was a competition between social control and social justice. They, like Counts, promulgated the argument that the rich derive disproportionate advantage from the educational system at the expense of the poor all under the guise of equality of educational opportunity. Counts had described it as the rich being educated at the expense of the poor who were "either too poor or too ignorant to avail themselves of the opportunity which they helped to provide."[10]

To support their thesis, Bowles and Gintis provided statistics which indicated that a strong correlation existed between the socio-economic level of the parent and the number of years of schooling an individual attained. According to their research an adolescent from the top levels of society could expect five additional years of schooling over a youngster from the lowest social class. Moreover, the higher the family's income, the more likely the student will attend college independent of his or her ability. Through the use of

standardized tests, the pair established that I.Q. had little to do with economic success except in the extremes. Therefore, they rejected the idea that educational resources improved cognitive ability. Agreeing with Counts, Bowles and Gintis concluded that education in the United States was not only highly unequal but related to I.Q. only very tenuously. "On balance, the available data suggests that the number of years of school attained by a child depends upon family background as much in the recent period as it did fifty years ago."[11]

Diane Ravitch, a critic of Bowles and Gintis and an educational historian, dismissed the two reformers as offering a Marxist's view of American education. She suggested a more conservative almost reactionary view of the equality in American education. Refuting the idea that schools can be all things to all people, she proffered that education provides opportunity but does not guarantee success. Critics, she claimed, were confusing equal opportunity with equal results. According to Ravitch the concept of equal opportunity rests on the assumption that the individual not the group is the constitutive unit of society, and in America it is the individual's hard work, ability and excellence that is valued. In other words, because some groups repeatedly failed to achieve, the blame could not be placed upon society, but rather it should be reflected on the individuals within the group. Furthermore, she offered that equality of opportunity

taken to the extreme would cause Americans to suffer while total equity would result in the destruction of individual freedoms and privacy.[12]

Ravitch's defense of the *status quo* some fifty years after Counts had first exposed the selective nature of secondary schooling, continued to display the ambivalence of Americans regarding their idea of equality. While they professed abhorrence of heredity as the determining factor in gaining economic and political power, their educational programs discriminate against the poor in many ways, particularly in the method of garnering funds to support public schooling.

Over half a century before, Counts in analyzing the financial aspects of funding public secondary education stated that the burden of universal secondary schooling could be borne by the economic system of the United States; yet he questioned what he labeled the "antiquated" system of taxing property to pay for education suggesting that in a complex, industrial society, property was not always a tangible element and, therefore, not the most democratic means of collection. More recently, however, Jonathan Kozol examined school funding programs to determine why inequities still exist. He observed that money raised to support public education is still based on equalizing formulas developed over sixty-five years ago ostensibly to provide equality of educational opportunity. These programs which obligate the state to equalize the

differences between the various districts after local communities have raised funds through property taxes do not necessarily mean equal funding for all districts. The fact is that most districts tax at the same rate, but wealthier districts receive more money since property is valued at a higher level in that area. So while the tax is equally apportioned, the resulting revenue is unequally proportioned. States then augment the local revenues to approximate the basic level of each district. But if a district has more local funds than necessary to meet the needs of the schools in that area, the remaining funds are used to enhance the educational programs of that district. Richer districts obviously have more funds to pay for higher salaries, buy more equipment, build and maintain better schools, provide special programs, and maintain smaller classes. As Kozol points out, the basic formula for providing state educational funds to school districts guarantees that children have "an equal minimum" but not that every child has the same thereby creating an unequal basis for educational opportunity.[13]

The Issue of Control

While the debate on equality of educational opportunity for American children has always been in the forefront of the discussion of educational reform, control of the schools by the higher socio-economic classes has not been as visible and hence, not as volatile a subject. The common school system

originally had been controlled by the local communities, but as urban areas grew, the educational system expanded and spread out so that by the middle of the twentieth century, school districts composed of many facilities tended to be governed by very distant boards.

As Counts had disclosed in 1927 when he surveyed over sixteen hundred boards of education, the vast majority of school board members represented society's privileged classes. They were generally college educated men in control of the country's economic resources. Prior to his study, Scott Nearing had come to a similar conclusion using a much smaller sample of 104 cities in the United States. Almost 45 percent of the membership on the school boards in those urban centers were composed of businessmen while more than 34 percent represented other professional occupations. Only 4 percent of the members worked in manual labor positions.[14]

The pendulum began to swing towards centralization of the control and administration of education around the turn of the century as urban schools swelled. Reformers sought to rid the educational systems of lay people, replacing them with a strong central bureaucracy. Their idea was to get politics out of the schools and supplant it with professional educators more suited to operating a well run school. Business-like efficiency was their key watch word of the day and the key as they saw it to reforming the schools. So much so that in large cities, schools were being designed to run like assembly

line factories with children seen as the products. The reformers, generally upper class, white, Protestant, businessmen and captains of industry, asserted their influence seeking to shape the civilization in their mode by educating the next generation of children to their cultural standards without a thought to the pluralistic society upon which they imposed their values.[15]

The school bureaucracies controlled by the state continued to build until they became unresponsive to the common people. As a consequence of this growth, the relationship of the school and the community became increasingly estranged. Lay people had less and less influence as education became divorced from the needs and desires of the local community. Education became more sterile as professional educators gained more control and distanced themselves from the people they served.[16]

But the tide began changing in the 1960s. With the passage of the civil rights legislation, schooling became a battleground for the racial integration of society. Community control of the schools once again became an issue. While the power brokers wanted to keep the schools from becoming involved in the volatile politics of the times, the opposing forces claimed that it was just a rouse to maintain the *status quo* or to allow those in control to keep their elite, white, power base.[17]

New realizations of the lack of equal educational opportunities for the urban poor greatly contrasted with the ideal of a democratic educational system that the majority of Americans held. As the modern critics of the public educational system argued whether or not egalitarianism in society could ever be reached through equality of educational opportunity, American social values began to change. Established practices and beliefs began to be questioned, and doubt spread, as we have seen, as to whether schooling had much to do with equality in society. The family unit began to disintegrate as divorce and single parenting increased. Race relations became a prominent issue. Violence and illicit drug trafficking increased, and critics bombarded the existing system of public education pointing not only to its inequities but also to its structure and curriculum. By the late 1960s, local communities rejecting the equality of opportunity that had failed them and had kept them "in their place," clamored for control of their schools wanting to determine their own future. Eventually a call by the mainstream for a more pluralistic representation of the society in controlling the schools became part of the solution for the era, the same proposal Counts had suggested in *School and Society in Chicago* nearly forty years before.[18]

The Effect of the Socio-Economic Factor on Today's Minorities

During the 1960s and 1970s, a discontented generation began to question the political and cultural aspects of society. Ethnic and racial minorities, women, poor people and other groups who had experienced the economic inequality existent in the United States began to rise up against the injustices they felt through civil disobedience which at times became violent. The family unit began to change as women became more of a force in the work place and demanded equal treatment. Minorities, particularly African-Americans, demanded control of their communities and schools. Legislation was enacted to try to correct civil rights violations, and business took a fresh, albeit, cursory look at changing its practices. As intense political strife rose, the schools became a key battle ground for rectifying social inequality.

Racial integration of the schools along with compensatory education became a rallying point for reformers to correct past injustices. Special programs placed in the schools for the children of the poor tried to compensate for their "disadvantaged" culture by providing a more advantaged environment. President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" with its "War on Poverty" promised to eliminate both poverty and discrimination but failed. Both the political right and the left offered different reasons for the cause of poverty. Arthur Jensen, arguing in the *Harvard Educational Review,*

claimed that genetic differences among groups caused intellectual limitations; while on the other hand, Daniel P. Moynihan pointed to the environment and values of the poor, especially family situations as being the problem.[19]

In short a tidal wave of discontent hit the society, and everywhere dissident groups scrambled to resurrect the landscape into a mold that fit their needs. The African-American community, one of the largest minority groups, had begun a course to actively desegregate society and schools. After the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 that the doctrine of separate but equal schools established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* violated the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment through denial of equal educational opportunities to black children, African-American activists brought their cause to the streets with a series of non-violent resistance boycotts and sit-ins. While the South slowly desegregated its schools and public places, the North remained racially separate through *de facto* segregation. Conditions of urban blacks basically did not improve; unrest, unemployment and poverty led to civil disruptions. After continued rioting in major American cities, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders chaired by Otto Kerner, Governor of Illinois, was established by President Johnson. The Kerner Report, as it became known, studied all aspects of the causes of these racial disorders. The commission reported that in education the quality of

schooling in the black ghettos was inferior to that of white children in the same urban areas. The schools had failed to overcome the injustices that society as a whole had caused, and this failure created resentment and conflict in the black communities and the black school districts.[20]

Through the public outcry the means of correcting the inequalities created by racially isolated schooling resulted in the courts and Congress requiring forced busing of students to desegregate the schools to provide equal educational opportunities for all children. For the next twenty years much controversy and rhetoric surrounded the issue as the Northern school districts were forced to comply with the laws. As case after case was tried through the courts, the inherent inequality of segregated schools was shown to have resulted in African-Americans receiving unequal treatment in schooling.

Yet even today discrimination in education against African-Americans can be documented. Kenneth Meier addresses what he calls "second generation discrimination... as a racist response to desegregation pressure." His research exhibits that blacks receive unequal and inferior educations through a more subtle form of discrimination that of separating African-American students from white students through academic grouping and disciplinary measures.[21]

Using sorting procedures ostensibly to place students in homogeneous groupings according to abilities, schools, Meier claims, discriminate against less able students by providing

the most resources and highest quality education to the students with the most academic potential. While all races are effected by this selective system, the number of African-Americans placed in the lower academic classes is disproportionate to their numbers in school e.g., black students are three times more likely than white students to be placed in educable mentally handicapped classes, while white students are 3.2 times more likely to be placed in a gifted class than black students.[22]

Jonathan Kozol discovered overt discrimination still abounds in American public schools. Travelling from one city to another, he documented how rich school districts with almost twice the funds per pupil provided an abundance of teachers and resources for their children, while poorer, inner city, minority districts often go without and make do in schools that are literally falling apart. When the privilege are asked to contribute more to the education of the poor and minority groups, he found resistance and righteous declarations that it's just wasted money, but no objection to their schools having special programs and fine facilities.[23]

Except for Native Americans the United States has always been peopled by immigrants. The new wave of emigres made possible by the Immigration Act of 1965 changed the ethnicity of urban centers and caused schools to focus on ways to educated the influx of their children. In recent decades the "newcomers" arrived from different parts of the world because

the 1965 Act promoted familial ties and economic and political preferences over the quota system from 1924 that encouraged European immigration over all other countries. The largest number of new, legal immigrants came from Mexico. They, along with other Spanish-speaking people from countries in Central and South America plus a large influx of Puerto Rican-Americans arriving on the mainland, created a conglomerate minority group of Hispanic-Americans. Perceiving some of the same injustices being perpetrated against their people as the African-Americans had, they organized to promote their plight, and viewed education as a means toward achieving their quest for equality.

Under pressure from community groups, particularly Mexican-Americans, bilingual education became a rallying point. Whereas in the past schools had focused on Americanizing immigrants and mandating that their children learn English first through a program of total immersion and isolation, the newcomers resisted the old melting pot method. They wanted their children to retain the traditions of their culture particularly the language, but they also sought to educate them in a manner that would allow them to function well in the dominant culture. In 1968 Congress passed the Bilingual Education Act which provided federal funds to local school districts for the establishment of programs for limited English proficient students. These bilingual programs became a point of contention for many years between the dominant

society and these minority groups. The Hispanic people like most other immigrant groups accepted the perpetuated ideas that schooling provided upward mobility. They believed the American public system of education was the great upward equalizer that would give their children the opportunity to surpass their parents' socio-economic status through success in school. But they and other immigrant groups refused to capitulate to the white establishment regarding the need for bilingual instruction. Eventually the courts came down firmly on their side declaring that equal access to instruction was being denied to children who did not fully comprehend the language of the school. Never the less, while the bilingual programs did provide some educational opportunities for immigrant minorities, they could not supersede the other urban social and economic problems that the Hispanic and other minority groups faced daily.

One of the most damaging critiques of the 1980s was brought out by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a task force created by Terrel Bell, the first Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan. In its report entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, the commission indicted the entire American public school program claiming that it was being "eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people." In particular, the commission found a high

rate of illiteracy among youths especially those representing the larger minority groups and urban poor.[24]

In the seventy years since Counts's *Selective Character of the American Secondary School* was written, the world has changed radically. As a nation we have faced a Great Depression, World War II, the atomic bomb, the Korean War, major civil disobedience, Vietnam, energy crises, hostage-taking, Desert Storm and many other calamities in between. While communism has fallen in Russia, democracy has been maintained in America. The educational system of the United States has persisted in the same unequal manner that it did during the 1920s.

With a growing rate of illiteracy and a skyrocketing drop out rate, as much as fifty percent in some urban systems, the American ideal of equality of educational opportunity seemed to be rapidly dissipating for minority youths. Inequalities abound in inner city schools as evidenced by a great pool of research. Universal secondary education is available for nearly all citizens. Few do not partake of it at least for a few years, but equity in schooling does not exist. Class structure is still as stable as it was in the twenties. The children of privilege still are apt to attend school for more years than poor children, thereby deriving more benefit from the tax dollars--taxes paid by all the people, yet disproportionately benefitting the wealthier classes.

CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

1. George S. Counts, *The Selective Character of American Secondary Schools* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 143.

2. Talcott Parsons, "The School Class as a Social System: Some of Its Functions in American Society," *Harvard Educational Review* 29 (Fall 1959): 299.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 298.

5. James S. Coleman, *et al*, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), 21.

6. Colin Greer, *The Great School Legend* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972), 152-53.

7. Christopher Jencks, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972), 19. Counts, *Selective Character*, 3. George S. Counts, *The Senior High School Curriculum* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1926), 1. Jencks, 253. Ibid., 27.

8. Ibid., 253.

9. Ibid., 253-55. Ibid., 230.

10. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), 30. Counts, *Selective Character*, 152.

11. Bowles and Gintis, 30-33. Ibid., 8-9.

12. Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 97-173 passim.

13. Counts, *Selective Character*, 150-51. Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991), 208-209.

14. Scott Nearing, "Who's Who on Our Boards of Education," *School and Society*, 5:108 (January 1917): 89-90.

15. Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), xiv.

16. Michael Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 103.

17. Ravitch, *Great School Wars*, xv. David Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 272.

18. George S. Counts, *School and Society in Chicago* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1928), 254.

19. Arthur Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" *Harvard Educational Review* 39:1 (1969). Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1967).

20. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896). *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

21. Kenneth J. Meier, Joseph Steward, Jr., and Robert E. England, *Race, Class, and Education* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 30. Ibid., 9.

22. Ibid., 5.

23. Kozol, 134-35.

24. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 5.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

George Counts brought to his work a passion for the democratic ideal. While at times labeled a communist for his liberal viewpoints and more than passing interest in the Soviet Union, he was a staunch defender of democracy and, in particular, the single track democratic system of public education that he felt symbolized the "genius" of the American people. Counts, by the late 1940s, had become a staunch anti-Stalinist. He fought against both leftist and rightist totalitarianism.

Although Counts lived a great part of his life in large urban centers, such as New York City, his perspective was greatly colored by the frontier setting in which he was raised and by the fact that he had been born at the juncture of two great civilizations, one agricultural and the other industrial. For most of his life, Counts devoted himself to warning Americans of the need to plan for the enormous societal changes that civilization was experiencing. This tumultuous transformation of the United States from a rural, agrarian society into an industrial, technological nation,

overwhelmed the country and caused what Counts perceived as a leaderless civilization set adrift without goals or a course of action.

To chart the course necessary to save the country, Counts, one of education's most progressive and liberal thinkers, shocked his colleagues by suggesting in *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* that teachers take up the gauntlet and begin reforming American society into a democratic, collectivist nation.

Counts, a cultural relativist, held that education expressed a way of life at a particular point in time. From this deep seated belief, he examined American educational history through the evolution of its civilization. Looking to the values, principles and morals of the ordinary people who comprised the society, he was able to develop a comprehensive concept of American public secondary education.

The people who populated America in the earlier eras, in Counts's view, were common, hard working, God-fearing individuals who lived simply in rural communities, isolated from their contemporaries by terrain and distance. They had no inherited social standing and gauged people by their willingness to work and their genius to succeed. From their lifestyle Americans developed a system of schooling based on their faith in education being able to keep the fires of democracy burning. They were willing to support public schooling as a way to enlighten the populace and secure the

foundations of their government. Their development of the single track educational ladder stood as a monument to their true democratic leanings as the common school and later the comprehensive high school melded together a diverse population into a pluralistic nation.

It was the explosive growth of the secondary school at the turn of the century that caught Counts's attention. As he studied the evolution of the high school, he found the catalyst for its expansion to be the Industrial Revolution. As society became more complex and interdependent, the need for more structured education and specialized training became evident.

According to Counts against this backdrop a large increase in the wealth of the people occurred, coupled with a lower death rate and a decline in the birth rate. America for the first time had the luxury of being able to support not only elementary schooling but also secondary education for all children not just those born into the upper classes. Counts sought to find out if this phenomena really demonstrated that American education had become more democratic. He suspected that if the truth were known, the high school remained an elitist institution.

Setting out to research the question, Counts studied four large urban school districts. From a detailed survey he concluded that not only did the largest number of students attending high school come from the wealthier classes, but

they also were the students most likely to graduate. In effect, he concluded that public taxes supported a school system used disproportionately by the wealthier students. Not content to let his conclusions rest, he then pursued a different but related avenue of research in which he surveyed over sixteen hundred boards of education. Once again he found what he had suspected. The wealthy not only dominated the attendance rolls of the schools but controlled them as well. Turning his attention to the curriculum with a third study, he concluded that the curriculum also was dominated by criterion that was demanded and admired in the culture of the more elite of society. Counts affirmed that while seemingly the extension of American schooling to include public secondary education demonstrated a concrete example of the democratic principles at work, the reality showed that privilege was still a major factor in schooling.

To correct the inequalities in American secondary education, Counts called upon teachers to change the existing educational institutions into new forward looking agencies based upon scientific knowledge steeped in the philosophy of democratic collectivism. The purpose of the new curriculum would be to instill a belief in a democracy built upon cooperation and collectivism rather than the traditional rugged, individualistic, competitive system that existed. He sought to change the prevailing mood of isolationism in the United States to preparation for a more futuristic global

civilization where all mankind would share in the distribution of goods and knowledge and peace.

To implement such changes he urged educators to find the common moral principles, ideas, and ethics upon which the country was based and through a consensus decision making process reconstruct not only public schooling but through the imposition of the values decided upon, reconstruct the social order.

Seventy years after Counts published his book on selectivity in the high school, similar socio-economic factors are at work tearing at the foundations of democracy. Modern researchers such as Parson, Coleman, Jencks, Bowles and Gintis have arrived at conclusions very similar to Counts's: the wealthy receive a disproportionate amount of education at the expense of the poor. Contrary to the public belief, equality in American secondary education does not exist.

Hardest hit by the inequities in schooling are the minority groups in America. The African-American community discriminated against in schooling long after the Emancipation Proclamation freed its people continues to sustain injurious injustices through prejudice. Years after the courts ordered desegregation and busing to alleviate the inequities in education, a more subtle form of discrimination still persists through ability grouping and tracking. Other minorities arriving from different parts of the world seeking a better life in the United States continue to view American schools as

their ticket to success; but where as in the past the goals of both the home and the school were to Americanize the student through an immersion process, today's immigrant culture seeks to retain its heritage and culture in the schools molding American education around them.

Yet with all the faults and inequalities in American public secondary education, the people of the nation clamor for more not less schooling. Due to this increasing demand the high school in many senses has been overtaken by higher education as the elitist institution.

Conclusions

George S. Counts contributed immeasurably to the study of twentieth century education through his perceptive and futuristic ideas and visions, his early conclusive studies of inequality and selectivity in American public secondary education, and his enduring belief that education was the necessary foundation to support democracy. Counts through his research confirmed what he suspected namely that secondary education in the United States was not the equality driven institution that it purported to be. He was one of the first educators to point to such inequalities in the high school. His studies conducted in the 1920s while not as sophisticated as today's research, none the less, still are valid. As modern researchers continue to supply more data on the inequalities in American secondary education, they conclude

that although nearly everyone in the United State is able to partake of secondary education for at least some period unlike in Counts's day, the type and quality of programs in which students enroll varies greatly according to the socio-economic group to which they belong. Just as Counts had concluded, they, too, found family background has continued to be as important as ever in securing an advantaged education. They also agreed that control of both the school and the curriculum remains in the hands of the dominant classes of society, although some school reforms in later decades have opened up the schools to more pluralistic representations in both of the above as Counts had called for years earlier.

While Counts was on target with the above ideas, the collective democracy that he envisioned never took hold; nor did teachers ever become aggressive enough to take charge of the civilization. Yet if teachers had taken control, perhaps they could have "imposed" upon the population the need for cooperation instead of competition and the belief in the equality of all individuals in the world community so that man's inhumanity to man would cease.

Much of how Counts envisioned the future of civilization to be has come about as he foresaw it. The world has become much smaller in time and distance. Communication satellites can now bring a war that is being fought a half a world way into our living rooms via television. The international community has become so interdependent that we are all

effected by happenings in each other's backyards. Communism in eastern Europe has fallen, but the democracy that Counts so cherished still remains as the preeminent form of government in the world.

Suggestions for Future Study

While researching this paper, the author came upon certain areas in which serious studies are extremely limited. Hopefully the following subjects may provide fertile ground for other students of education to initiate research on these topics. The following are directly related to George S. Counts:

George S. Counts's Works on the Soviet Union

George S. Counts and Marxism

George S. Counts as Union Leader

George S. Counts's Idea of the Great Society Contrasted with that of the Johnson Administration

The Accuracy of George S. Counts's Predictions for America

In addition to those topics that are directly related to Counts, the following topics are contemporary issues that are based somewhat on his pioneering socio-economic emphasis on educational issues:

Comparative Solutions for Equality in Education

A Comparison of the School Melting Pot Theory to That of Bilingual/Bicultural Schooling

Schooling as a Corporate Sorting Machine

The Corporate Mentality: Capable Enough to Do the Work But Docile Enough to Maintain the System

A Comparison of Equality in Urban v. Rural School Districts

The Inequality of Education Within School Districts

Magnet Schools: Their Role in a Democratic Society

Counts has left his mark on education in a distinct manner. He was a man not content to focus on the narrow ideas of education alone; rather, true to his belief that education is an expression of a civilization, he raised issues that hit at the bedrock of society calling for a total reconstruction of the social order--a colossal task that only extraordinary individuals would ever ponder doing.

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