The Imperative for Social Foundations Revisited: A Technical Comment on Warren and Venzant Chambers (2020)

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Warren and Venzant Chambers (2020) raised an important concern about the marginalization and elimination of social foundations of education in educator preparation. Yet, their focus on "an essential tripartite coalition of disciplinary perspectives" encapsulated in sociology, history, and philosophy runs counter the interdisciplinary nature of social foundations.

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In 2020, disproportionate effects of police brutality, the global pandemic, and social inequality on communities of color brought into the limelight the importance of addressing racial injustice. Warren and Venzant Chambers's (2020) essay on the role of social foundations of education (SFE) speaks to this imperative. While we concur with the authors that SFE offers the critical theoretical, conceptual, and practical tools needed for centering equity and justice, we are concerned about the erasure of SFE's complexity and interdisciplinarity that the focus only on philosophy, sociology, and history of education could create.

More specifically, Warren and Venzant Chambers (2020) state that "philosophy, sociology, and history of education form an essential tripartite coalition of disciplinary perspectives indispensable to contemporary examinations of racial equity and economic justice" (p. 373). On the one hand, the field of SFE, with its long-standing commitments to social transformation (Counts, 1932), justice (Philip, 2013), and equity (Tozer, 2018), is well-equipped for meeting the challenges of the current historical moment (Hartlep & Porfilio, 2015b). Through years of defunding and curricular narrowing, however, SFE has been marginalized or eradicated from programs (deMarrais & Tutwiler, 2013; Dunn & Faison, 2015). As the nation's colleges and universities grapple with students' and activists' demands for recognition, representation, and reparations for communities of color, a renewed commitment to expanding SFE programs and curricular offerings represents a concrete response to these demands.

On the other hand, the focus on only three disciplines as representative of the entire field perpetuates the cycle of formulaic reductions inherent in the technocratic take-over of education—the very take-over that diminished SFE in the first place (Aydarova, in press; Butin, 2005; Hartlep & Porfilio, 2015a). The strength of SFE lies in its multidisciplinary perspectives that allow for more complex, nuanced, and robust understandings of social issues bearing on educational institutions, policies, and practices (Tozer & Butts, 2011). As the most recent version of social foundations standards state, the field

derives its character and methods from a number of academic disciplines, combinations of disciplines, and area studies, including: history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, religion, political science, economics, cultural studies, gender studies, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) studies, comparative and international education, educational studies, educational policy studies, as well as transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. (Committee on Academic Standards and Accreditation, 2013, p. 110)

To illustrate what might be erased when SFE is reduced to only three disciplinary perspectives, we offer the example of

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anthropology of education. Along with other social sciences, anthropology has produced research that has justified social inequality, upheld colonial regimes, and paved the way for crimes against humanity. Yet anthropology has also begun to grapple with its legacy of racism and has attempted to address the historic harm it has committed. The American Anthropological Association's (1998) statement on race tackled the colonial roots of racial hierarchies and challenged commonly held assumptions about the biological foundations of race. This statement is a powerful reminder that race is a social construct used to uphold "exclusionary mythologies" (Laughter, 2018, p. 259) that should be troubled rather than unquestioningly accepted as givens. The Council on Anthropology and Education (CAE)—a society of educational anthropologists—has placed "anti-oppressive, socially equitable, and racially just solutions to educational problems through research" (CAE, 2016, p. 1) at its mission's core. This centering of racial justice has created opportunities for envisioning possibilities of decolonization and abolitionist anthropology (Shange, 2019).

As one of SFE's disciplines, anthropology of education has contributed extensively toward expanding our understandings of how race, culture, language, gender, ability, class, and religion matter in school and what educational practices support the flourishing of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and students of color across geographic contexts (see Anderson-Levitt, 2012; Henze, 2020; Levinson & Pollock, 2011; and Spindler, 2000). Approaching culture as fluid, dynamic, and ever-evolving (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2017), educational anthropologists have provided educators with tools to inquire into the funds of knowledge—abilities, experiences, and knowledges acquired within families over time—found in underrepresented communities (González et al., 2005). Often negated by dominant paradigms and overlooked by educational institutions, students' cultural assets help educators meaningfully build on what is valued by families and communities. Similarly, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) as well as McCarty and Lee (2014) have examined how culturally responsive or sustaining pedagogy can be transformed into culturally revitalizing pedagogy to meet the aspirations of Indigenous communities. From documenting students' experiences of being racialized based on their ethnic (Rodriguez, 2020) or religious identities (Abu El-Haj, 2015; Sarroub, 2005) to examining how cross-group solidarities emerge (Lee et al., 2020), the field continues to unsettle and disrupt racial and social class hierarchies (Aydarova, 2019). Attending to the role of educational institutions in upholding systems of racial injustice globally (Abu El-Haj, 2020), anthropologists have grappled with efforts to foster transitional and transformative justice (Bellino et al., 2017).

Educational anthropologists have also engaged in public advocacy and activism. Bridging the world of academic scholarship and public media, Kevin Foster created *Blackademics TV* that "features Black scholars who explore issues in education to empower youth" (Sturdivant, 2015, p. 6). Mica Pollock initiated large-scale antiracist activist projects with K–12 teachers (the Schooltalk Project) and with students (#USvsHate). As a codirector of the Social Justice Education Project, Julio Cammarota (2016) documented students' struggle to preserve the Ethnic Studies program in Tucson, Arizona.

A potential danger of the "tripartite coalition" of philosophy, sociology, and history is that contributions like those mentioned above can become lost. To engage in research, policy conversations, and advocacy on the intersections between education and police brutality, the effects of a global pandemic on educational opportunities of marginalized students, and possibilities of more just educational futures, insights from different SFE disciplines and interdisciplinary subfields must be considered. As scholars of decolonial studies have pointed out, diversity of perspectives is necessary to ensure sustainability of educators' efforts (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). We hope more disciplinary voices and interdisciplinary projects will be cultivated in the struggle for racial justice in education and in the society writ large.

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