

What Is a *Good Education*

by Robbie McClintock

How, in power-speak, does public schooling link to national security? With the title of its opening section, TF68 assures readers that "the education crisis is a national security crisis." This title and the arguments that follow make two assertions: one about a condition, that of a *crisis*, and another through the copula, the *is*, which makes the condition of national security, its crisis, a derivative of the condition of education, its prior, contaminating crisis. An important perspective informs the way power-speak uses the copula to describe the relation between public schooling and national security. Once we have understood that perspective, we can then better grasp the conflicting principles that lead power-speak to judge that a crisis besets education of such horrendous scale that it spills over and threatens the very security of the nation.

What does the *is* link in the assertion that the education crisis is a national security crisis. As four commission members noted in dissenting views included at the end of the report, American national defense forces are far and away the strongest in the world. It is basic absurd to ask whether the education crisis, whatever it may be, is a *security* crisis, as such. The *is* links something deeper, more subtle than the objective condition of American military defenses. These are strong. National security is high. The linkage between education and national security has more to do with the concept of the *national* than it does with *security*. Let us consider how the education crisis might be a crisis with *the national*, not with security.

Understanding what is at issue can be very perplexing, and it is not something new with TF68. For several decades, an important strand of the education reform movement has concentrated on a purported relation between the condition of public education and the safety of the American nation. I have puzzled over it for several weeks, and then stumbled upon a resolution. a research note on *Traffic Safety Facts* released early this year by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

- [Clueless—1](#): Power-speak on Public Schooling
- [Clueless—2](#): "School Failure" as a State of Exception

Coming next, "Clueless—4" on what is a means and what is an end.

 Report Cover Image
A multi-part, close critique.