

## Historiographic Perspectives of Context and Progress During a Half Century of Progressive Educational Reform

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Related waves of contemporary school reform and curriculum critique have revitalized interest in the history of progressive education. Most recently those efforts to improve society through education have centered on the restructuring of schools and classrooms for more equitable educational opportunities and more cooperative forms of learning. Among theorists, there is a resurgent concern about social reconstruction as an ideology of education with a vision and commitment to democratic principles and values. In addition, the poststructural critique has renewed social reconstructionist efforts to dislodge formalism, objectivity, social Darwinism and social efficiency as principle tenets of schooling (see Stanley, 1992).

An historiographic understanding of how sociocultural change and the political context of schooling have influenced progressive education would improve our ability to integrate perspectives of the past into contemporary pedagogical thought as well as enhance future research endeavors. Breisach (1983) reminds us in his discussion of the uses of historiography that "Every important new discovery about the past changes how we think about the present and what we expect of the future; on the other hand every change in the conditions of the present and in the expectations for the future revises our perceptions of the past" (p. 2).

Since 1960, historians of education have grappled with the fate of progressive reforms. Yet their voices may have been silenced through loss or distortion in the maelstrom of reform-minded rhetoric. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: to examine changing definitions of progressive education, reveal the contexts, lenses, approaches, and themes from which historians have reconstructed its past and explore how that informs reform-oriented research efforts. An historiographic analysis of four principal themes -- the progress, the vision, the context, and the politics of reform -- portrays a complex process that tampered with and distorted the implementation of progressive educational reforms intended to alter the sociocultural conditions of communities/society in favor of maintaining a contextual, structural and pedagogical status quo.

In many ways, the historiography of progressive education parallels American historiography as well as the historiography of education. This comes as no surprise when we realize the American Historical Association (AHA) has played a major role in the professional foundations of both. While early twentieth century historians emphasized national unity, homogeneity, and the importance of America's destiny, historians of education, mostly educators, produced inspiring histories that sought to ennoble the new profession of teaching. However academic arguments of relevance, presentism, and utility came to haunt both historical traditions. Academic historians debated the value of presentism while, educators debated the relative merit of functional and non-functional scholarship. The 1930s represented a watershed as the Depression created fertile ground for the functionalists in

departments of education and progressive historians with a sense of the present in the AHA (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994; Breisach, 1983; Cohen, 1976). The two traditions came together in the thirties for the common purpose of outlining a reconstructed program for social studies education in the schools (Bowers, 1969; Kliebard, 1987). Yet their paths once again diverged. Bernard Bailyn (1960), in the name of professional historians, charged educators were propagating a narrow view of history, and education historians such as Ellwood Cubberley were guilty of using history to promote the glories of the education profession. Bailyn urged historians to think of education "not only as formal pedagogy but as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations" (p. 14). Lawrence Cremin amplified Bailyn's position in *The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley* (1965). Together these invited the attention of educational historians to what Diane Ravitch (1978) refers to as the Bailyn-Cremin critique.

### Defining Progress

The histories of progressive education included in this analysis<sup>1</sup> were all published between 1961 and 1993 -- years that saw movement in a number of directions away from traditional celebratory histories of public education. Cremin's *The Transformation of the School* (1961)<sup>2</sup> foreshadowed the Bailyn-Cremin critique by placing school reform within the context of social and intellectual history. Cremin viewed progressive reforms in education as a single movement that incorporated the combined efforts of groups of reformers each with distinct purposes but united in their desire to use the schools to improve the lives of families and communities as well as those of America's youth. For him, progress in education was marked by changes in the schools as a result of the academically conceived reforms of "scientism, sentimentalism and radicalism." Published at a time when progressive reforms were being widely condemned as the root of education's ills -- ills that were startlingly highlighted by the announcement that Russia had launched the first space satellite -- Cremin's *The Transformation of the School* took an optimistic view of school reform. Anything that moved schools into greater conformity with the changes of society contributed to the progress of the nation. As a result of such an inclusionary view, complementary as well as competing and contradictory reforms were labeled progressive. Cremin's failure to provide a definition of what he meant by progressive education anywhere within *The Transformation of the School*, is evidence of the confusion implicit in framing the movement as a whole.

His greatest contribution to the historiography of education was his enlarged perspective of education, a view that opened up the history of education to events within the broader intellectual and social framework of the community, the state, and the nation. *The Transformation of the School* established the social, intellectual, and political foundations upon which the historiography of progressive education would develop. Some 35 years later, it is still considered

one of the most comprehensive histories of the progressive era in education (Zilversmit, 1993).

The 1970s brought significant change in interpretations of progressive education. Among academic historians,<sup>3</sup> Progressive, New Left, Women's, African American, Latino(a), Asian American, Jewish American, and "critical liberal" historians planted the seeds for more complex historical interpretations generated from a variety of historical perspectives (Appleby, et al., 1994; Breisach, 1983). This was reflected in education with the appearance of revisionist histories written by historians committed to social action. Revisionists, fired by their witness of Vietnam War protests, civil rights activism, and reports of school dysfunction in books like *Death at an Early Age* (Kozol, 1972), believed education functioned primarily to serve the interests of the dominant class (Cohen, 1976). In their critique, revisionist historians<sup>4</sup>, as exemplified by Katz (1971), Karier, Violas, and Spring (1973), Spring (1972), Gumbert and Spring (1974), and Greer (1972), disengaged education from all intentions of social reform. They used liberal progressives' efforts to bring order to the confusion of a newly industrialized and urbanized society to show that the aim of educational reform was control, conformity, and the reproduction of existing social and economic relationships (Ravitch, 1978; Urban, 1975). In their zeal to render progressive education problematic, they defined "progressive" as any reforms that occurred within the progressive period -- psychometrics and social reconstruction, child study and vocational education, centralization and teacher professionalization were all subject to indictment. The legacy of revisionism has most ostensibly been its focus on the perspectives of immigrants, African Americans, and the poor as it questioned the ideology of progressive reform. Upsetting the simplicity of previous interpretations of progressive education by men such as Lawrence Cremin and Merle Curti (1959), the new data revisionists demonstrated a complexity that would henceforth defy singular interpretations of educational reform.

In contrast to both liberal and consensus historians, David Tyack wrote *The One Best System* (1974) with a conscious effort to incorporate the perspectives of the revisionists into a more balanced history of urban education (see Tyack, 1976). For Tyack, progressive education was fraught with accomplishments as well as failures, good intentions alongside ill-conceived plans, as urban school systems searched for solutions to problems created by the "sheer numbers and chaotic conditions" (p. 30) of city schools. He portrayed the progressive reform movement as a complex endeavor which carried with it different meanings for its various participants. For "administrative progressives," the progressive movement was one toward bureaucratic centralization, professionalization of school governance, and application of scientific principles to the education of America's youth. For "pedagogical progressives" or "libertarians," as he calls them, it was a movement to bring curriculum and instruction into greater conformity with the developmental stages and interests of the individual child; and for the social reconstructionists, it was educators assuming the responsibility for teaching children the habits and attitudes necessary for creating a more collectivist-oriented society. By analyzing progressive reforms from a variety of perspectives, Tyack concluded the political processes of education had resulted in persistent tensions between: professional autonomy and community control, the order and the

confusion created by large bureaucracies, Americanization and support for culturally diverse communities, and occupational opportunity and vocational/academic tracking.

Tyack's contributions to the historiography of progressive education have left an indelible mark on historical interpretations of progress. Subsequently historians have recognized the complexity of the period by narrowing the scope of their research, considering particular geographic areas, institutions, client-populations, or domains of theoretical, structural, pedagogical or curricular concern in greater detail. In addition, Tyack has set a precedent for historians of progressive education to use multiple ideological as well as sociocultural frames in an effort to explore more fully the range of motivation for and effects of education reform (see Tyack, 1976).

While some historians have labeled Tyack's history of urban education revisionist (e.g. Cohen, 1976) and others have noted its balanced presentation (e.g., Cutler, 1976; Ravitch, 1975; Schultz, 1975), most have recognized Kliebard's *Struggle for the American Curriculum* (1987) as establishing a third position (Zilversmit, 1987). Focusing primarily on the rhetorical curriculum in his delineation of four curriculum traditions, Kliebard drew upon both revisionist and traditional historiographic and ideological positions. Written in the more politically conservative climate of the 1980s and at a time when curriculum was once again coming under attack from many fronts, this is a history of progressive education as a struggle between competing interest groups for dominance within the field of curriculum reform. Kliebard's search for the intellectual roots of contemporary curriculum brought him to describe curriculum forces as an interplay of different reform movements each with its own professional interest group, journal, and chronological zenith. He saw curriculum policy at any given moment as a reflection of the struggle for influence among multiple schools of reform. He summarized the character of curriculum shifts in this way:

Curriculum fashions . . . might best be seen as a stream with several currents, one stronger than the others. None ever completely dries up. When the weather and other conditions are right, a weak or insignificant current assumes more force and prominence only to decline when conditions particularly conducive to its newfound strength no longer prevail (p. 208).

While interpretation of Kliebard's history provides no singular definition of progress, he has deepened our understanding of the reform process by suggesting that it is continual, complex, and undulating. He argued that progressive education was really a shifting mixture of four movements: child developmentalism, social reconstructionism, and social efficiency with the unifying characteristic of the three being their opposition to the fourth, the traditional humanist approach. As a result, he concluded, progressive education encompassed such a broad range of not only different but contradictory ideas that, as a construct, it became essentially meaningless. Through his analysis of the term "progressive education," he has alerted us to the rhetorical misuse of "progressive education" as a signifier of either Deweyan or democratic education reform.

Cuban (1993) has filled an enormous void in the history of progressive education through his historical study of classroom teaching in public schools, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms, 1890-1980*. His research responded to the shortcomings of Cremin, Ravitch (1983) and others whose work had left distorted images of the success of progressive reforms in public school classrooms (Zilversmit, 1993). Cuban focused on the choices teachers made as they created spaces for both complementary and conflicting changes. While his work covered a 110-year period in education history, a major portion of it focused on the progressive era. Using school surveys, research studies of teacher behavior, classroom photographs, data from a variety of other research projects, student recollections of classroom experiences, and teachers' narrative descriptions of their pedagogical techniques, Cuban reconstructed teaching practices in New York City, Denver, Washington, D.C., and rural, multiple grade-level classrooms. Drawing from examples of progressive experimental schools, he defined progressive practices as those which were tailored to students' interests, permitted the exercise of student creativity in an atmosphere of freedom, connected school experiences with life outside of classrooms, and empowered students to shape the direction of their own learning.

Reviewers of the first edition (e.g., Kantor & Lowe, 1986; Lucas, 1985; Nelson, 1984-1985; Sedlak, 1985) have praised his work as a pioneer effort in the history of teaching practices. Cuban was the first to argue that: progress involved both constancy and change, teachers selectively incorporated reforms into fundamentally teacher-centered classrooms, essential variations in the sociocultural and structural contexts of instruction existed between elementary and high school classes, and large differences persisted between the rhetorical curriculum and actual teaching practices. These differences accounted for the gap between what progress could have been and what it actually was.

Cuban's groundbreaking work in the history of teacher practices must have stimulated subsequent inquiry by authors such as Arthur Zilversmit (1993).<sup>5</sup> Zilversmit, although somewhat more theoretical, defined progressive education in terms of the child-centered, experiential and democratic teaching practices espoused by John Dewey. This was a slightly broader definition than Cuban's. For him, progress was the movement from subject-centered approaches to developmentally appropriate student activity that would further the child's social (democratic) as well as intellectual development. With *Changing Schools*, Zilversmit has added to our knowledge of primary sources through his inclusion of data related to school policy and teacher practices in Winnetka, other suburban Chicago schools, and schools in a variety of Middle American suburbs and cities.

Zilversmit, extending the chronology of the era to 1960, reached conclusions similar to those of Cuban -- that measured against the ideals of progressive education as expressed by John Dewey -- reform had failed and its ultimate failure was that so much of its perceived success was rhetorical. In describing the reasons for the failure of progressive education, he added little to the concerns expressed by Cremin, Tyack, and Cuban. Zilversmit consistently developed the theme that issues of power and the school's role in the reproduction, not the transformation, of society acted as major constraints in the implementation of John Dewey's conception of

progressive reform.

The historiography of progressive education has generally narrowed the movement's scope from Cremin's broadly defined and varied reforms embedded within the larger context of social and intellectual history to reforms that were primarily pedagogical focusing on child-centered instruction. While Cremin was concerned with reflecting a complete and balanced view of education, those that followed, influenced by revisionists, used multiple lens to focus critically on more narrowly conceived topics: urban schools, teaching practices, policy and ideology. Methodologies changed and additional sources were revealed as historians probed deeper into problems besetting the implementation of progressive reforms. Yet, regardless of variations in the historical representations of the movement, each of the historians from Cremin to Zilversmit ultimately traced both pedagogical and structural reforms to John Dewey's principles as expressed in the Chicago Laboratory School, *The School and Society* (1899), *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), *Schools of Tomorrow* (Dewey & Dewey, 1915), *Democracy in Education* (1916), and *Experience and Education* (1938).

### **A Distorted Reflection of the Vision: Reform and the Principles of John Dewey**

Historians from Cremin to Zilversmit have mourned the lack of unity and leadership necessary to the integration and implementation of progressive reforms across communities, school districts and classrooms. Without ballast, the progressive education described by Dewey's followers and that which emerged from schools were very distorted versions of John Dewey's vision. Tracing changes in their historical analyses provides an understanding of how educational historians constructed Dewey's actual role in defining progressive education.

Cremin (1961) argued that the demise of progressive education was traceable to the movement's deviation from its original purpose -- the Deweyan purpose. By 1920, "the system of ideas that for a moment in history seemed to converge in Dewey's *Schools of Tomorrow* and *Democracy in Education* fragmented; and what had appeared as minor inconsistencies in the earlier movement now loomed overwhelmingly large as different segments of the profession pushed different aspects of progressive education to their logical -- if sometimes ridiculous -- conclusions" (Cremin, 1961, p. 184).

Using the metaphor of a "caricature," Cremin showed how and why post-World War I creative self-expressionism and Freudianism, Kilpatrick's child-centered project method of the 1920s, the social reconstructionism of the 1930s and the life-adjustment movement of the late 1940s became the subject of a bitter irony of lay commentary. He related how Dewey, a humanist in academic circles, criticized much of what progressive education had become in the 1930s. He lamented the discrediting of organized subjects and the lack of adult guidance by child-centered pedagogues, he questioned the "educational science" that dominated some versions of progressive education, believing that education was an art, not a science; and he steadfastly opposed the indoctrination of social beliefs. Dewey warned against the negativism of an educational philosophy that concentrated on ideology to the

exclusion of students' intellectual development. Here, Cremin, realizing that Dewey's beliefs may have been anachronistic, displayed an almost maudlin frustration with the hybridized outcome of the movement. "In an era of excessive formalism Dewey wrote of bringing the school closer to life; in an age of educational inequity he talked of democratizing culture; at a time of unbridled economic individualism he called for a new 'socialized education' that would further a spirit of social responsibility" (p. 239).

Kliebard (1987) argued that Dewey, himself, may have contributed to the distortion of his own ideals, and this may have, in turn, impeded the progress of an educational reform that would have been more faithful to his principles. Kliebard explained that Dewey's writing left much to interpretation and Dewey, himself, used the distortions he saw as opportunities to question and further construct, clarify and synthesize his principles. Contrary to Cremin's belief that Dewey was in the forefront of the movement, Kliebard stated, that he "hovered above the fray."

The positions advanced by the major curriculum interest groups emerging in the 1890s did not so much present options from which he would choose as they represented the raw material from which he would forge his own theory of curriculum. . . . [Dewey] is not so much a central figure in one or another of these groups as he is someone who synthesized and reinterpreted certain of their ideas and consequently, he became identified in a way with all of them.

. . . . It was his fate to become identified with a vague, essentially undefinable, entity called progressive education, either an inchoate mixture of diverse and often contradictory reform or simply a historical fiction (p. 31).

The language Dewey used was the same as his contemporaries, but, as Kliebard examined Dewey's subsequent explications, he discovered the meanings of key words and phrases were altered significantly. Dewey's departure from the original meaning of terms such as occupational education was considerable. As mainline educators began to conceptualize theory into practice, they failed, in their interpretations, to see the differences. The reforms they devised and those that were implemented became distortions of what Dewey originally intended and their implementation was unsystematically fragmented and often hybridized with traditional school and classroom structures. Consequently, Kliebard concluded that Dewey's direct influence on the schools of the nation and the unity and leadership that could have provided was grossly overstated

Tyack (1974) provided a different interpretation of the constraint and distortion of Dewey's ideas. For Tyack, John Dewey's philosophy of democratic education directly addressed the problems of urban education. Administrative progressives operating within elitist traditions, Tyack argued, benefited little from either libertarian progressivism or social reconstruction, but they did attend to the ideas of the pedagogical progressives who translated Dewey's ideas into curriculum and psychological theory. Accordingly, Tyack explained, they latched onto the "project method," the 'activity curriculum,' and other incremental ways to 'meet individual needs' of children by subverting the hegemony of established school subjects" (pp. 196-197). Because they took a "hierarchical structure of differentiated schooling" (p. 197) for

granted, their route to reform subverted Dewey's progressivism into ways to motivate teachers to use more subtle techniques to teach and control students. Administrative progressives promoted these changes in part because they were "quick and dirty" ways of making progressive change palatable and more easily managed. What they failed to understand, according to Tyack, was that structural change in schools was needed to implement pedagogical progressivism. The spirit of Dewey's cooperative, democratic schooling within a stratified bureaucratic structure was quite simply lost in the dichotomy schoolmen posed between the mechanics of school administration and educational purposes and ideals. Through the process of his research, Tyack came to question whether Dewey's ideas could have ever penetrated the complexity of urban school systems with the structural support required to implement cooperative and democratic schooling.

Cuban (1993) picked up the remainder of this argument in using the structural context of teaching, in part, to explain why teachers hybridized reforms. Through his study of instructional practices during periods of reform, he concluded that teachers practiced situationally constrained decision-making wherein they negotiated which, how and how much student-centered learning they would incorporate into their instructional programs.

He pointed out that Dewey, in his Laboratory School, worked directly with children, teachers, and parents in order to turn his ideas into classroom practices. He had no need to work through the structural aspects of a large city school system. Yet as progressive pedagogy made its way into the school systems of Chicago, Gary, Indianapolis, New York City and Washington, D.C., it became evident that the rhetoric of progressive education became mainstream while teachers, speaking the jargon, were "walking the tightrope" (p. 45) between dominant and progressive beliefs and practices. In 1952, Dewey wrote that the most significant changes wrought by progressive education in the classroom were changes in classroom arrangement and personal relationships between teachers and their students. In his evaluation, there had been no fundamental change in teacher-centered instructional practices (Dworkin, 1959, pp. 129-130 cited in Cuban, 1993, p. 268). Cuban, along with Dewey, noted that hybrids may have been used to strengthen the teacher's authority, much the same as Tyack had argued that the rhetoric and the off-springs of Dewey's progressivism had been used to soothe the harshness and consolidate the control of administrative progressives.

According to Zilversmit (1993), schools and educators readily adopted the rhetoric of progressivism while either altering, distorting or ignoring the principles set forth by John Dewey. Administrators passing off as progressive changes the mere re-labeling of curriculum, college professors teaching in traditional teacher-centered patterns lecturing on the value of progressive child-centered, experiential learning, and teachers using the rhetoric of progressivism distancing themselves from parents and community members accounted in large part for the failure of progressive reforms.

In addition, Zilversmit, nudged by Westbrook's (1991) belief that Dewey underestimated the influence of power relationships, suggested that Dewey's principles may have been flawed. Because progressive teachers were to begin with the interests of the children and still have a clear sense of what the

children would accomplish, that which appeared to be the spontaneous eruption of learning was really "manipulation" by the teacher. In addition, teachers themselves were trapped in authoritarian relationships with their administrations and school boards which rendered them incapable of leading any kind of democratic reform movement. Zilversmit saw the "hidden" authority of the teacher and the more obvious structural hierarchy of schools as serious contradictions of and, as a result, impediments to Dewey's democratic intentions.

While none of the authors I encountered argued the distortions of Dewey's principles of child-centered experiential learning, there was debate over Dewey's precise role in the social reconstructionist wave of progressivism. C. A. Bowers (1969), unlike either Cremin or Kliebard, contended that social reconstructionists dominated the progressive movement with an increasingly more radical agenda antithetical to American culture and society. Bowers argued that Dewey provided not only the foundation but the fuel for this movement with the principles put forth in *Democracy in Education* -- the elimination of values from the classroom that were inconsistent with the values of cooperation and collective social responsibility. Believing in the intelligence of teachers and their ability to use critical judgment to formulate their own set of social values, Dewey held the teacher and schools responsible for preparing students to take their place in the social reconstruction of society. The crux of Bowers argument that Dewey was a social reconstructionist is summarized in this statement: "Dewey must bear some responsibility for giving education a political aspect" and for establishing the role of the educator as "statesman" (p. 76).

Using Dewey's and other's disdain for the notion of education as indoctrination in reconstructionist social values, William Stanley (1992) vehemently refuted Bowers, arguing that Dewey could not have been a social reconstructionist. Stanley defined Dewey's position on the role of education in social reform as one that called upon schools to develop the attitudes, habits and critical processes necessary for students to view alternatives, construct arguments, and make intelligent choices as active and responsible citizens. Were there distortions in the application of Dewey's thought by social reconstructionists such as Counts, Rugg and Brameld? Both authors would agree there were, but the extent to which they differed in degree of distortion would cause Bowers to classify Dewey as a radical social reconstructionist and Stanley to deny that possibility.

Historiography has sought understanding of the distorted reflections of John Dewey's conception of progressive education in order to locate the meaning of his ideas in the implementation of progressive reforms. This meaning has been constructed in three stages. First, Cremin recognized the distortions of Dewey's principles by academic educators including both those who were followers and students of Dewey and those whom we would classify as scientific educators. Second, Tyack, Cuban and Zilversmit noted the smoke screen of progressive rhetoric used by administrative progressives in order to give scientifically guided schooling a more humane image and coax teachers into using more subtle techniques of classroom control. The third stage, also described by Tyack, Cuban, and Zilversmitt, found teachers, left alone to negotiate their own understandings of progressive education. Consequently, they

produced producing teacher-centered hybrids that reflected both "constancy and change." These findings have left Dewey the role of foundational thinker and occasional gadfly in the effort to put schools in the forefront of social change. As a result, historians have variably concluded that, while his ideas were fundamental to the development of progressive education, they were also anachronistic (Cremin, 1961), ambiguous (Kliebard, 1987), utopian (Cuban, 1993; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and fundamentally flawed (Bowers, 1969; Zilversmit, 1993).

## Perspectives on School Context and Reform Implementation

The intricate connection between schooling and the sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions of American society is an overarching theme of these and very likely all histories of progressive education. Demographic shifts and resulting sociocultural and socioeconomic change confronted schools against a formidable background of teacher beliefs and attitudes about knowledge, teaching and learning. Culturally diverse students with different needs forced schools to reconsider changing responsibilities. At the same time, schools were charged with the preparation of America's youth for new roles in a newly urbanized and industrialized society. Each of the authors reviewed here has developed a unique perspective of the impact of the sociocultural, socioeconomic and structural contexts of schools on reform implementation.

### *Connecting Sociocultural Patterns with School Structures*

For Cremin (1961), "progressive education began as part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life -- the ideal of government by, of, and for the people -- to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the later half of the nineteenth century" (viii). Thus, he argued that in the minds of politicians, social workers, community advocates and reform minded educators, sociocultural change "transformed" schools into the principal mechanism promoting sociocultural adaptation.

To illustrate the role of reform-minded education, Cremin focused on the Americanization of children of immigrant families. He described the Americanization movement as a response to a cry from settlement workers, ministers of the Social Gospel, union members, municipal leaders, and immigrants themselves. Because each of these was driven by a different agenda, education developed an array of responses. Cremin described the breadth of responsibility teachers and schools bore for students' physical and emotional well being -- their provision of student physicals, cleanliness checks, bathing, home visitations, and the teaching of manners, concern for dress, and the business of getting along. New York City's Public Education Association, an organization of the city's elite women, fought for and won evening schools, school playgrounds, vocational studies, free lunches, visiting teachers, and special classes for the mentally and physically handicapped. Thus Cremin illustrated how progressive schools, motivated by the needs of a changing society, socialized children and adults into what he saw as the "melting pot" of a democratic society.

On a very different tack, Tyack's book, *The One Best System* (1974), portrayed a tension brought on by the conflicting

values of a dominant society fearful of disorder, violence and difference and the diverse values, beliefs, and practices of the newly urbanized. He characterized progressive reform in city schools as a response to the social disorganization created by the convergence of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization.

Invoking historical presentism, Tyack believed city schools should reflect the pluralistic nature of American society and should further the goals of social justice. He proposed that urban schools must open the way to community influence through shared decision-making.<sup>6</sup> In consideration of this, his thesis and his chief scholarly contribution is straightforward and persuasive -- despite the diversity of interests and culture in urban populations, educational reformers have tried to impose one system of public education upon the city and the nation. This continuing effort, begun with Horace Mann's common school movement, has produced a number of "persistent problems and misconceptions" (p. 11). The search for the "one best system" has impeded the development of a pluralistic society. While instituted to better serve students and communities, bureaucratization created barriers to community participation and resulted in the displacement of goals and the perpetuation of ill-conceived and "outworn" practices. Talk about "keeping the schools out of politics obscured actual alignments of power and patterns of privilege." Finally, the search for the "one best system" resulted in a "systematic" failure to effectively teach the children of the poor. It "perpetuated social injustice by blaming the victim, particularly in the case of institutionalized racism" (p. 11), and rather than supporting cultural diversity, it reproduced the hierarchical structure of the existing society. Tyack's research has caused him to question if there could ever exist a "one best system" inclusive enough to incorporate all of America's diversity without the imposition of cultural homogeneity.

Tyack's description of administrative progressives focused his thesis precisely on the progressive movement in education in the first half of the twentieth century. With the triumph of administrative progressivism, science became a legitimate tool for the centralization, bureaucratization and management of education. Schools became the gatekeepers of vocational opportunity. Educators classified children by their measured ability and probable careers and, with differentiated instruction, educated them accordingly. In fact, as Tyack put it, "the 'science' of psychological measurement enabled schoolmen [sic] to retain their traditional faith in individual opportunity while in fact the intelligence tests often were unintentionally biased against certain groups" (p. 189). To demonstrate the effects of these biases, Tyack described the lack of educational opportunities for African Americans and sons and daughters of immigrants. He criticized schools for historically compounding the injustices of racism and nativism with their sorting and classifying of students on the merits of scientifically endowed intelligence testing rather than modifying schools to accommodate differences in the beliefs, values, and norms of ethnic communities. Goals to inculcate white, middle-class norms into African American and immigrant children blamed the victim for inadequate intelligence. Unlike Cremin who saw the schools responding to sociocultural needs, Tyack saw the injustice of a system designed to satisfy the needs of an industrialized society reacting with the view that ethnically different children were either intellectually deficient or socially and environmentally deprived.

According to Kliebard's (1987) somewhat less critical analysis of the history of curriculum reform, education's curricular responses to social, cultural, political and economic change resulted in an on-going struggle among four curriculum traditions. Changing social orders, he argued, brought with them changing conceptions of what knowledge and skills were of greatest worth. Curriculum change was the process by which the knowledge and skills deemed most valuable came to be emphasized in the education of the country's youth. As society became more complex, different groups of academic educators emphasized different needs and values. Thus the curriculum of American schools moved in and out of various reform traditions as intellectuals and school people attempted to address the dominant forces of social change.

While not a powerful theme in Kliebard's work, it is easy to discern how each of the traditions reflected particular values and beliefs about knowledge and its role in social reform. Kliebard saw humanism and its function in the transmission of culture operating to preserve the status quo. Emerging in times when America was most actively engaged in international political and economic competition, humanism was used to foster patriotism, scientific and mathematical competence, and knowledge of geography, history, and literature depending on the needs or academic deficiencies of the times. The 1890s and the Victorian era with its emphasis on motherhood and the cult of the child ushered in the child development curriculum tradition with its stress on serving the needs and providing for the development of each unique child. A reaction to the rigidity of schooling, a mirror of the rugged individualism valued by society, and an attempt to facilitate the "American dream," this curriculum tradition fostered the social development and experiences of the child through such innovations as individualized study, experiential learning, the project method, the activity curriculum, and differentiated instruction. Social efficiency as a curriculum movement was intended to bring order into society and was especially useful in times of social disorganization. At the turn of the century, it promoted the use of scientific principles in reorganizing schools for greater effectiveness in preparing young people for their proper roles in the new industrial order. The differentiated curriculum, academic and vocational tracking, Tyler's principles of curriculum development and educational accountability have been its lasting legacies. Social meliorism emerged during the Depression era and has been connected to the need for social change. It has re-emerged at times of great social upheaval. During the Depression, it promoted social change by emphasizing the need for greater cooperation, collectivization, and equalization of wealth. During the late 1960s and 70s, it re-emerged to focus attention on issues of race, gender, and ethnicity. Sparked again by the neo-conservative revival, it has focused more recently on the social injustices created by conditions of race, class, sex, and handicap.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Connecting Culture and Teaching Practices*

While Cremin and Tyack each focused on the complex connections among culture, society and school structures and services and Kliebard has drawn a thematic picture of the responses of curriculum to social change, Cuban (1993) was the first to link teaching practices to the sociocultural context of schools and schooling. In his search for explanations for the limited success of

progressive pedagogy, the durability of teacher-centered instruction, the hybridization of teaching methods and the acceptability of some reforms over others, he turned to teachers' beliefs, values, and practices.<sup>8</sup> From the data he amassed, Cuban concluded that cultural beliefs about the nature of knowledge, how teaching should occur, and how children should learn were so widespread and deeply rooted that they guided the thinking of policy makers, practitioners, parents, and citizens toward certain forms of instruction. Western society's acceptance of canonical knowledge, facts, procedures, and opinions as universal unquestioned truths, led to norms for teaching and learning that valued the teacher as the fount of knowledge. She would, in turn, actively impart this knowledge to the next generation of learners. Students were to be passive, obedient, and respectful. Given parental and administrative expectations based on such norms, changes in the role of the teacher proceeded slowly if at all. Cuban reminded us that "transforming a cultural inheritance is not as easy as bulldozing, grading, and paving a new road" (p. 249).

Cuban contended that a number of cultural and social factors worked together to contribute to the stability of the classroom over generations. In addition to pressures from previous generations of students who wanted their children taught as they were, teachers too had been students and their beliefs about the role of the teacher were a product of the way they had been taught. In addition, teachers were socialized into a "teacher culture" that valued experience. Consequently, the on-the-job training new teachers received reinforced existing norms of teacher-centered instruction as opposed to promoting a progressive pedagogy that would encourage students' active, experiential learning. In this way the new teacher ran less risk that she would lose control of the classroom, control itself being a norm that was valued by the dominant society. Given the responsibility teachers bore for student performance and the risk that involved, teachers became reluctant to take chances, to try more student-centered learning activities.

On top of that, Cuban, like Tyack, explained that schools themselves used progressive reforms to socialize and sort students into varied socioeconomic niches. How schools were organized, what knowledge they conveyed and their attitudes toward cultural difference all reflected and reproduced the norms, beliefs, and practices of an hierarchically structured society. Grouping children by ability and anticipated vocation and emphasizing control, standardization and order were seen by schools and teachers as appropriate responses to the changing needs of an industrial society.

This, tempered by teachers' understanding and "professional and personal beliefs about the role of school in society, classroom authority and children's ethnic and socioeconomic status, gave shape to classroom practices" (1993, pp. 248-256). If teachers believed that schools functioned in order to instill the social values and norms of the dominant group in society, they taught immigrant and African Americans students and students from low income families differently than they taught those from white middle and upper class homes. With these students most often sorted into vocational programs, teachers were able to focus on different content, manage their classes differently, and frame activities with different goals in mind. This resulted in skills being emphasized to the detriment of knowledge, classroom management designed to inculcate values of compliance and order, and instructional

strategies selected to facilitate the greatest amount of teacher control.

As a result of his study, Cuban concluded that the sociocultural, socioeconomic and structural contexts of classrooms and schools provided the best possible explanations for the persistent nature of teacher-centered pedagogy, the selection of some instructional changes over others, and differences in the number and intensity of changes implemented at the elementary and high school levels.

Zilversmit (1993), in a study of school policies and pedagogical practices during the Depression and the early years of the Cold War, using data resembling, in nature, that of Tyack and Cuban, reported findings similar to Cuban's, yet somewhat broader in scope.

While the depression and the Cold War had impeded progressive reform, a more important reason for the limited impact of progressive education was, as Dewey recognized, that its implementation would require real change and would have to overcome resistance to changing "long established habits" (p. 169).

On a somewhat different note, however, Zilversmit connected community beliefs about the purposes of schooling with the tendency of schools to implement pedagogical reforms. Schools residing in upper-middle class and upper class suburbs showed more community and administrative support for progressive reforms that focused on the self-realization and creativity of the student. He suggested that such reforms were more consistent with the values of these parents. On the other hand, he stated, "These qualities might have less appeal for parents of the lower- and lower-middle class children. . ." (p. 88).

#### *Socioeconomic Context and Progressive Reform*

The 1930s ushered in a new era of progressive education beginning with George Counts' speech to the PEA and book of the same title, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order* (Counts, 1969). Counts, according to C. A. Bowers (1969), was responding to the mounting despair of the nation. Intellectuals and social reformers embraced social reconstructionism as a solution to the economic tragedy created by laissez faire capitalism. Bowers argued that this marked the beginning of educators' sociopolitical movement away from traditional conservatism and toward liberal social activism. Professors of education, beginning with a group at Teachers College who had been deeply committed to Dewey's democratic and social reconstructionist ideals, began to challenge schools and teachers to actively promote and prepare students for collective responsibility in a reconstructed society in which both wealth and responsibility would be more equitably distributed. In the depths of the Depression social reconstructionist members of the PEA called upon teachers to seek greater control over administrators, curriculum and school objectives. Bowers argued that these members of the PEA were motivated by the self-imposed impotence of Hoover's administration and that their "call to the teachers of the nation,"<sup>9</sup> to take up the class struggle was one of the "most extreme and utopian statements made by any group during the Depression" (p. 41). In practice, he said, there was no evidence to suggest that the teachers of the nation responded. Bowers asserted, however, that as paychecks began reflecting the effectiveness of Roosevelt's New Deal, support for social

reconstructionism and its mission waned even among the most ardent. With the coming of World War II, progressive education was confronted with reconciling its commitment to a liberal philosophy of education with the country's need for unity.

Zilversmit (1993) examined the broad impact of economic cycles on reform primarily in midwest schools. Although the 1930s marked a high point in the history of attempts to reform society through its schools, Zilversmit found the role of the Depression in discouraging innovation was obvious. Funds were cut, and as a result, all non-essential programs were deleted. With his examination of district documents, he discovered schools were more concerned with maintaining the basic health and safety standards of their buildings than with progressive practices. With budgets cut to the bare bones, teachers were unable to take professional courses, an important source of motivation for progressive practices. In comparing the socioeconomic status of communities, Zilversmit found that the places where progressive education prospered were typically wealthy suburbs whose communities were not as affected by the Depression as those in working class and rural districts. Schools in the South and particularly African American schools were particularly unlikely to entertain progressivism.

The question asked by Cremin in the first of the post-progressive movement histories appeared to seek ways in which schools set about the task of constructing a new industrialized and urbanized society from the culturally diverse people who came to settle in this country. The assumption was that this was possible. However a review of subsequent histories illustrates a growing frustration with the failure of pedagogical reforms intended to alter the way students related to each other and to learning and the mounting success of reforms intended to maintain existing socioeconomic hierarchies through scientifically managed schools and classrooms. Cuban viewed the sociocultural and structural contexts of schools as inconsistent with progressive changes in the classroom. Zilversmit explained that administrators purposefully chose to support only the most superficial changes in classrooms and then principally to take the edge off the more harsh reforms related to the management of education. Bowers and Zilversmit painted a bleak picture of progressive reforms run amuck in the confusion of the Depression. Thus the question that has emerged from this historiographic review is different than Cremin's original question. Can we reform society through education or must we first reform society, or communities, in order to reform education (see Zilversmitt, 1993)?

### **Perspectives on the Politics of Educational Reform**

In the works discussed here, there is the sometimes subtle but very important theme that reforms which acceded to the "political platform" gained greater and more sustained attention than those promoted only through the written and spoken words of professional educators. We know the politics of educational reform has never been conducted on a level playing field. What Tyack and Cuban (1995) have called the "policy elites" -- people who managed the economy, had privileged access to the media and to political officials, controlled foundations and were leaders in the universities and city and state superintendencies -- gained a disproportionate voice in progressive educational reforms. This, more than anything else, may explain why structural reforms promoting greater

efficiency and the scientific management of schooling sustained popularity in and access to schools while pedagogical changes sponsored by social meliorists and child developmentalists received, at best, intermittent attention. Each of the books reviewed here adds to the crescendo of evidence and arguments supporting the conclusion expressed by Tyack and Cuban (1995) that "Not all reforms are born equal; some enjoy strong political sponsors while others are political orphans" (p. 7).

### *State and National Policy and School Reform*

For Cremin (1961), the theme that progressive education was the educational arm of Progressivism tied reform directly to political and social change. Cremin demonstrated the connection between local issues of education and the broader reform agendas of progressive politicians and social reformers by detailing ways in which state and national legislation and offices and departments of education supported changes wrought by progressive educators. Selective attention from state and national government, the media, and national educational organizations and foundations generated national response to educators' progressive reform agendas. This, in turn, created pressures for local implementation.

Using government documents, Cremin and Kliebard (1987) demonstrated that government funded support for extension work, clearinghouse reports, conferences and research brought agricultural, vocational and life adjustment education to schools across the nation. Successful legislation supporting the nationwide implementation of curriculum reform was most often bolstered by diverse special interest organizations. For example, vocational education was supported by the Douglas Commission of Massachusetts, the National Association of Manufacturers, The National Women's Trade Union League, the National Educational Association, and eventually the American Federation of Labor. Because their combined interests presented vocational education as a cure for the shortage of trained workers, a prescription to prevent school dropouts, a means for controlling juvenile delinquents, and a way of appealing to students who were not bound for colleges and universities, schools of the nation regarded it as an urgent necessity.

Kliebard addressed the politics of reform in yet another way as he developed connections between national and international policy and curriculum shifts. During the early months of World War II, educational policy commission meetings across the country outlined the role schools would play in support of the war. In helping to maintain a democratic way of life, schools were to redirect subjects such as physics, mathematics, and biology in order to stress the skills and knowledge needed for wartime preparedness. Home and consumer economics received increased attention in order to provide students with skills for living under wartime conditions. Because ideas advocated by social reconstructionists could be construed as unpatriotic and child-centered education as lacking in social commitment, social efficiency reforms were ushered to center stage.

### *Coalition Building and Progressive Reform Implementation at the Local Level*

Unlike either Cremin's or Kliebard's histories, Tyack's *The One Best System* (1974) was principally about the politics of educational reform with a focus on developments within urban

education systems. For Tyack's administrative progressive, the social efficiency movement was premised on the idea that there was "one best system" of education for all students. As it developed, the "one best system" for urban schools became a powerhouse of centralization and a complex web of endless bureaucracy. To illustrate the value of coalitions in revolutionizing school administration, I refer to the stage Tyack described in which the control of urban schools across the country was gradually removed from community boards and placed in the hands of boards comprised of those in society's upper crust, and the management of schools was transferred to professional administrators.

Tyack illustrated how the development of coalitions between professional school administrators and influential businessmen became the key to urban progressive education. Based on his study of four large city school systems, Tyack argued that this process of coalition building followed predictable patterns. First muckrakers exposed the inefficiency, corruption and suffering evident in a city's schools. As the city's upper crust called for a "better class of men" to lead their schools, coalitions of leading citizens and professional educators came together to propose structural innovation. In many cases, school surveys were commissioned to give the process the right measure of scientific validation.

This coalition of administrative progressives composed of business and professional elites and new school managers formed small elite boards of directors to replace cumbersome boards made up of community members. The power and authority to act were delegated to a professional superintendent, and city schools adopted reforms promoted by industry and business. The press, supporting the business community, rationalized this as taking the schools out of politics. As the politics of paternalism replaced community control, it utilized an evangelical rhetoric to usher in an urban educational inheritance that mirrored the social stratification of society both in the top-down organization of its personnel and in its unchecked power to classify students for an occupationally and intellectually differentiated curriculum. The press respectfully explained this as scientifically sound decision-making properly exercised by professional educators.

#### *Mass Media, Professional Organizations and the Politics of School Reform*

As can be seen with coalition building, mass media played a dominant role in expanding the boundaries of educational reforms. In describing their function, historians moved from early positions regarding the popular media as essential and positive in its role as the gadfly of traditional education to more critical and complex positions that found the media both culpable in the manipulation of public opinion and essential as monitors of the public trust. From Cremin's (1961) perspective, popular magazines and newspapers were essential tools not only in sensitizing the public to the need for reform, as had Joseph Mayer Rice of the *Forum*, but also in transmitting ideas, information, and images related to reform implementation and providing a forum for intellectual debate. Through its education critic, Randolph Bourne, the *New Republic* informed audiences across the country of the Gary Plan just as Lincoln Steffens of *American* magazine kept the nation abreast of the scope of public services provided by the University of Wisconsin.

At the same time, periodicals such as the *New Republic* engaged the larger struggle between the privileged and the poor for the control of education. Cremin also stated that no single activity during the first decade of the Progressive Education Association's existence was as effective in creating a particular image of progressive education and in attracting public interest and acclaim as its journal, *Progressive Education*.

Unlike Cremin who often saw the decline of progressive education as a result of fragmentation and internal contradictions within the profession, Kliebard (1987) suggested the destructive effects media representation could have on specific reform measures. He searched in the broader politics of reform for reasons for the decline of "social meliorism" or social reconstruction as it is more generally called. In a case study of the rapid decline in the popularity of Harold Rugg's social studies textbook series in the 1940s, Kliebard found a vigorous and successful movement to remove the series, labeling it subversive and un-American. The campaign was spearheaded by organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Legion, and Daughters of Colonial Wars (Philadelphia) assisted by the popular press including the Hearst newspaper chain, *Time*, *Forbes*, and the *American Legion Magazine*. Later retractions of some of the charges made against Rugg provided evidence that not everything printed was truthful.

While the media brought progressive reforms in education to waspish audiences, professional organizations carried it to teachers and administrators. According to Cremin and Kliebard, organizations such as the Progressive Education Association and the National Education Association became both assets and liabilities in the implementation of reform. Cremin portrayed the early role of the Progressive Education Association as follows:

There is no denying the measurable service the PEA performed in the cause of educational reform. It gave the movement structure, voice, and visible form; it infused the movement with vitality and enthusiasm; and it provided the movement with dedicated leadership. In pamphlets, books, conferences, conventions, committees, and institutes that touched the lives of thousands upon thousands of teachers, the Association spread the progressive word. (p. 271)

Yet such success in moving the nation to evaluate traditional education practices was not universal or lasting, particularly with the PEA. Beginning as an organization of teachers, it evolved into an organization of academics. With this turn, the PEA narrowed its focus, became a forum for scholarly debates, and lost its teacher-constituency. Failure to exercise leadership among the fundamental forces that moved American education -- politicians, parents, administrators -- led to the organization's impotence in promoting the goals of social reconstruction. According to Cremin, Kliebard and Bowers (1969), the prolific writing and speech-making of the social reconstructionists had little effect for as one superintendent observed, "There were too many speeches on the subject and not enough grass roots efforts to work with teachers themselves" (Kliebard, 1987, p. 199). Bowers argued

that as the social reconstructionist agenda evolved, it became further and further removed from any understanding of our society and culture and lacked a realistic view of the constraints on the role of the teacher in society. Both Cremin and Kliebard showed, however, that this was not a universal problem among other professional organizations. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers continued to appeal to the broad educational interests of those on the front lines of reform. However it was Cuban's book (1993) that went the furthest to promote our understanding of the true complexity in teachers' seeming lack of response to progressive education reforms. It was not as simple as either Kliebard or Cremin would have had us believe.

#### *School and Community Politics and Reform Implementation*

While Cuban did not call it school politics, he reflected on the significance of power and authority, their use in school districts and implications for teachers' classroom practices in two general ways. First, based on data from New York City, Washington, D.C. and Denver school districts between 1920 and 1940, he concluded that "the organizational structure of the district, school, and classroom shaped teachers' dominant instructional practices" (p. 252). With rising expectations for teachers to arouse student interest, accommodate student differences, and be accountable for student's satisfactory performance, teachers confronted with class sizes of 40 or more students were forced to ration their time and their energy in their effort to cope with varied and often conflicting demands. As a result, they "invented teaching practices that have emerged as resilient, imaginative, and efficient compromises for dealing with a large number of students in a small space for extended periods of time" (p. 253) -- movable desks arranged in rows permitted efficient checks for classroom order, whole-class instruction facilitated efficient use of the teacher's instructional time, short-answer tests eased the task of scoring, homework assigned from the text provided simple ways of transmitting knowledge and assessing learning, and point systems speeded up the process of grading. On the other hand, student-centered approaches were more costly in terms of teacher time and lessened the teacher's ability to control learning. Consequently, they proved to be incompatible with prevailing classroom structures and behavioral norms, and the practical pedagogy of teacher-centered instruction continued to dominate schooling.

In a second, but related, perspective of school policy (or politics), Cuban argued that where educational policy makers systematically and effectively implemented reforms through staff development, teacher support, and teacher assessment, changes occurred. Cuban compared teachers' participation in the curriculum development processes, administrative mechanisms for disseminating information, and organizational connections between classroom practices and district wide goals in Denver's successful application of the results of the Eight Year Study against top-down initiatives of other cities. Where districts embraced instructional reform but provided no means of teacher participation in the planning and use of those reforms, only small pockets of teachers risked changing their teacher-centered ways. "Serendipity more than planning, often accounted for the spread of reform" (p. 252). Thus it was that the level of district commitment to reform defined the capacity of teachers to make changes in existing methods.

To this Zilversmit (1993) added his understanding of the politics of community support and school reform during the turbulent decade of the 1930s. "The role of community ethos in promoting innovation," he wrote, "was crucial" (p. 89). This was seen in a number of ways: the rhetoric used to frame progressive reforms so they would appeal to prevailing beliefs and attitudes within the community, the compromises that were struck in order to make in-roads for education reform within the community, and changes that were demanded as the currents of community politics shifted. For school administrators, public relations became a crucial issue in the promotion of progressive reforms.

From the perspective of politics, the story of progressive educational reform was portrayed by historians as a discouraging one. They described schools as amazingly resistant to change. Complexity in the change process, the shifting moods of the popular media and local control of education policy left the progressive education movement, a national reform effort, frustratingly fraught by political obstacles.

#### **Implications for Research**

A transcendent research question reflects the overarching concern of the historiography of progressive education: can we reform society through education or must we be bound to the common belief that schools are a reflection of society and individual schools a reflection of their communities? Dewey argued that the only way desired reforms would sustain faithful implementation and endure in classrooms would be if reformers attended conscientiously to the processes of change (Dewey, 1901, cited in Kliebard, 1987, p. 87). With these ideas in mind, as a result of this historiography of progressive education, three strands of thought appear to have strong implications for a research agenda that would inform the processes of future school initiatives. The first would inquire into current relationships between theory and practice seeking out, in particular, schools and teachers who have responded structurally and pedagogically to a reconceptualized social reconstructionist theory or its off-spring, critical theory (see Sleeter & Grant, 1993; Stanley, 1992). The second would delve into the complex interplay of community and school culture at times of social change and adjustment, and the third would study forces of the curricular and instructional change process especially the role of and variations in coalition-building efforts and public relations techniques.

Any research agenda relating to contemporary problems with roots in the past should consider an array of research paradigms and methodologies. However, ethnographic and case study methods have been particularly productive in unraveling the complex web of culture and change that mark the development of schools.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, in each of the proposed agendas, the reader can assume that I am referring to research done primarily within the constructivist paradigm whether it be historical or ethnographic. To paraphrase Cuban (1993), "The slow accumulation of classroom ethnographies, studies of individual teachers and students, and schoolwide [and community] portraits since the 1950s will aid the next generation of historians seeking to understand teaching practices since the mid-20th century" (p. 285).

Stanley (1992) has argued, contrary to the more pessimistic views of Bowers (1969), Cremin (1961) and Kliebard (1987), that social reconstructionism lives on in many aspects of critical

pedagogical theory and, in its reconceptualized form, is relevant to the needs of contemporary education. Accordingly, schools that empower students and teachers to develop a critical awareness of global issues at any level (local, state, national, or international), heighten others' awareness and understanding of these issues, and engage in democratically-oriented praxis provide a logical starting place for investigating the current relationship between critical or reconceptualized social reconstructionist theory and teaching practices.<sup>11</sup> I propose this research be undertaken either as teacher (action) research and/or as teacher/researcher collaborative inquiry. Such an agenda has already demonstrated its potential for addressing prior practices that have dichotomized academic theory and teacher practices and involving teachers and researchers working in tandem at the fulcrum of the dichotomy and at the center of the continual and recursive practice/assessment/development cycle. Such studies benefit from teacher narratives which, as Bruner (1994) informs us, are rich with the wisdom of reflective theorizing.

Another promising inquiry would engage researchers in ethnographic research of schools and the relationships they have to their communities over time. Communities, especially in urban and suburban areas, have undergone population shifts over extended periods of time, and schools have adjusted to those changes much the way the nation's schools had to go through structural alterations in response to demographic and sociocultural change at the turn of the century or ideological shifts in response to changing political or cultural climates over the past four decades. As Tyack (1974) and Zilversmit (1993) have demonstrated, the community context is one of the most significant considerations to the success of school reform. Communities have cultural expectations of schools which shape the way in which they respond to educational change. Where communities are involved in, understand the purposes of, and support the implementation of reforms, schools have faced fewer challenges and reforms have had greater staying power. Ethnographies of schools and their communities similar to Alan Peshkin's *The Color of Strangers The Color of Friends: The Play of Ethnicity in School and Community* (1991) are not only useful to the historians of the future but also serve the present as significant sources for understanding the complex interplay of school and community cultures. Because building a sense of school-community solidarity is becoming more and more essential to the success of educational reform, action research and case studies of school community relations are important tools for better understanding the significance of community inclusion in the reform process.

Historical and ethnographic case studies and cross-case comparisons of the change process in a cross-section of school districts also contribute to our understanding of the relationship of a variety of forces within the reform process -- especially staff development, community relations, coalition-building, and assessment -- to reform implementation. Cuban (1993) and Zilversmit (1993) have noted that reform is most likely to be taken seriously by teachers where districts plan for, support, and assess the teacher-change process and where teachers do not have to ward off challenges by parents and community members who are attached to the status quo. Districts that have undertaken reform with no attempt to build coalitions or establish a sense of solidarity in support of impending changes doom their efforts to failure. Yet few

administrators and school board members have a thorough understanding of this process. Historical and contemporary case studies could provide the knowledge districts need in order to develop and hone comprehensive action plans.

These are just a few of the several research agendas implied by the foregoing historiographic study of progressive education. Each is supported by one or more of the themes on which I have focused. I have included among my suggestions both historical and ethnographic work for I believe that research in the history of education must be functional, serving the needs of administrative and pedagogical practitioners, and also that history is most functional when it shares methods and purposes with contemporary action-oriented qualitative research. Because schools must operate within an intricate web of cultures, ethnographic, or constructivist, research of either a historical or contemporary nature is most appropriate to understanding the inter-relationship among the contexts, processes, and products of socioculturally or sociopolitically-sensitive reform initiatives.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I have concentrated my analysis on six full length works focusing on progressive education: Lawrence Cremin's *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957* (1961), C. A. Bower's *The Progressive Educator and the Depression: The Radical Years* (1969), David Tyack's *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (1974), Herbert Kliebard's *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (1986), Larry Cuban's *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms, 1880-1990* (1993), and Arthur Zilversmit's *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960* (1993).

<sup>2</sup> Since my work is historiographic, analyzing a limited number of works none of which is by the same author, I have only cited a work the first time it appears in each section of the paper. Articles and other works are cited in the usual manner.

<sup>3</sup> I have interchangeably used the terms "professional" historians and "academic" historians to distinguish historians in history departments from those in departments of education. This is in no way intended to demean those who practice education history. I recognize the professional and academic work of both groups of historians, and I also recognize that both must engage in each others' work as they build context for their own specializations. The use of the terminology, a matter of convenience for me, does however point to the power of language in establishing status relationships within the university. (see, e.g., Clifford & Guthrie, 1988)

<sup>4</sup> I have not developed these works individually because when I defined the scope of this historiography, I excluded works that were developed in support of a priori theories. In addition, many of their books are edited collections, and I had limited my scope to full length works.

<sup>5</sup> Cuban's work was originally copyrighted and published in 1984. It has since been revised significantly and re-copyrighted and published by a different press.

<sup>6</sup> My review of Tyack's work represents a synthesis of my own ideas with those of Ravitch (1975) and Schultz (1975).

<sup>7</sup> I have taken the liberty of amending Kliebard's descriptions of the application of each of these traditions in order to bring them up to the present.

<sup>8</sup> The last two of these will be discussed in more detail within the politics of school reform.

<sup>9</sup> *A Call to the Teachers of the Nation* was a pamphlet issued by the PEA Committee on Social and Economic Problems. It was discredited by the PEA Board of Directors even before its publication.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this paper, it occurs to me, I have used the word culture wherein historians may have used the word "constancy." I realized the metaphoric relationship of the two words one day near the end of my work as I was gazing at the cover of the second edition of Cuban's *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms* (Cuban, 1993). In re-thinking whether I should return to the text of the paper and use a historian's word because this was an historiographic study, I decided against it. My decision was a reflection of my personal belief that social history can and has benefited tremendously from ethnographic perspectives and methodology.

<sup>11</sup> A key to access might be through teachers engaged in the professional organization Educators for Social Responsibility (see Berman & LaFarge, 1993).

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