Section 2 examines the history of oppression in the United States as experienced by immigrants who came to America in pursuit of the American dream. Immigrants encountered discomfort, rejection, even persecution because they arrived as “foreigners” with different customs, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs. Immigrants of color also experienced oppression based on their race, and certain religions have been oppressed for their beliefs. The forms that this oppression have taken are identified in the definition of oppression provided in Andrzejewski (1996):
Oppression exists when any entity (society, organization, group, or individual) intentionally or unintentionally distributes resources inequitably, refuses to share power, imposes ethnocentric culture, and/or maintains unresponsive and inflexible institutions toward another entity for its supposed benefit and rationalizes its actions by blaming or ignoring the victim. (p. 56)

Chapter 4 describes how ethnic diversity of immigrants historically has been perceived as threatening to white supremacist attitudes of the majority group. Historic attempts have been made to curb immigration to America, especially of immigrants perceived as not being satisfactorily white enough, and to justify anti-immigration efforts through the early twentieth-century quasi science of eugenics. Because of the reform of immigration laws in 1965, ethnic diversity of immigrants has dramatically increased. The chapter examines issues stemming from the increased cultural and linguistic diversity, especially in our elementary and secondary schools. The chapter concludes with a description of anti-immigrant activities that underscores the persistence of these attitudes on the part of a significant percentage of the American population.

Chapter 5 describes negative attitudes and actions of Americans of European descent toward people of color coming in the United States, beginning with their conquest of American Indians, the importation of Africans as slaves, the rejection of Asian immigrants, and the exploitation of Spanish-speaking ethnic groups. The oppression of these groups took different forms, but the common denominator was that they were not white. Race would sustain the oppression against individuals from these groups long past the period of time when they arrived as strangers in a strange land.

Chapter 6 focuses on the religious diversity of immigrants and the challenge that diversity has always represented to the creation of a free society. The religious diversity of people who settled in America eventually led to a shared concern that religious differences not be used to justify persecution, and the concept of religious freedom was included in the first amendment to the Constitution. Although members of different Protestant faiths began to accept one another as equals, Catholic, Jewish, and atheist immigrants were discriminated against. Although Catholics and Jews finally achieved a status as equals, the 1965 immigration reform resulted in an unprecedented increase in persons of other religions—such as Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Once again the United States is being challenged to live up to its principle of providing religious freedom that acknowledges and accepts people from diverse faiths as equal partners in our religiously diverse nation.

In response to the cultural history just described, Chapter 7 identifies four perspectives that describe individual reactions to racial, ethnic, and religious diversity in America. The most recent perspective, pluralism, emerged in the 1920s and today is challenging this history of oppression by calling for Americans to recognize the value of diversity and the contributions diverse groups have made, and continue to make, to American society. Because the problems related to this diversity are ongoing and are discussed in the next section, this chapter emphasizes pluralism as a force for change, for a new direction in our society in response to the diversity that not only exists but is increasing.
CHAPTER 4

Immigration and Oppression: The Assault on Cultural and Language Diversity

“We are all citizens of one world; we are all of one blood. To hate someone because he was born in another country, because he speaks a different language or because he takes a different view on a subject, is a great folly.”

John Comenius (1592–1670)

As British colonists settled in America, they struggled with the issue of ethnic diversity because the need for more people to settle this new land conflicted with their xenophobia—the fear of or prejudice against people from other nations. There was no such struggle with racial diversity. As Kammen (1972) noted, European colonists came to America with racist notions of primitive Africans and savage Indians that justified enslaving them; seeds of white supremacy were sustained—and nurtured—on American soil. Ethnic diversity, however, was different. As the dominant ethnic group, British immigrants witnessed people from other European nations coming to the colonies, creating the difficult task of coexistence in a diverse community of immigrants. The challenge of devising an appropriate response to diversity has never been fully resolved. Instead, America has been enmeshed in an ongoing paradox of established immigrants fearing each wave of newcomers.

As the dominant ethnic group, how did British colonists react to diversity?

Part of the dilemma of ethnic diversity was the determination of British colonists to retain their identity. The French who settled to the north in Canada had readily adapted to Indian ways, especially with regard to economic practices such as trapping and through intermarriage with Native American women. The Spanish came as conquerors, but after their conquest, they still required Indian labor to sustain their control of conquered territory. Like the French, the Spanish borrowed cultural elements from conquered peoples, and intermarriages produced what would eventually be termed a new race: “La Raza.”

Those who settled the English-speaking colonies tended to emigrate in family groups. Although some immigrants came to seek their fortune and return home, most came to establish permanent settlements. The British came as subjects of the English king, prepared to create an English colony as an extension of Britain. Although settlers occasionally used information gained from Indians about such things as edible plants and food preparation, their goal was to recreate as much of the Old World as was possible in the New World.

The problem with recreating the Old World was that it was not possible to make the colonies into a New England. In addition to British colonists (English, Scottish, and Irish), significant numbers of
Dutch, German, and French colonists arrived, as well as small groups from other European countries and adventurers from parts of the world other than Europe. Germans in particular were as adamant as the English about maintaining their cultural heritage. They lived together in communities, spoke to each other in German, posted signs in German, imported books from Germany, and founded schools where their children were taught in German.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, British colonial leaders became so alarmed by German behavior that some called for restricting or excluding Germans from further immigration. Benjamin Franklin believed it was necessary to Anglicize the Germans because of the size of their population. As their numbers continued to grow, he feared that the Germans would “shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of us Anglicizing them” (Feagin, 1997, p. 18). Although Franklin obviously shared the desire of British colonists to Anglicize the colonies, he also recognized positive attributes of German immigrants and the contributions they were making to colonial development: “All that seems necessary is to distribute them more equally, mix them with the English, and establish English schools where they are now too thick settled” (Brands, 2000, p. 219).

Franklin was concerned with Anglicizing Germans and all immigrants who were not from Britain and, therefore, unfamiliar with British customs and language. In 1749, he sponsored the establishment of a school that included no foreign language instruction. His desire to Anglicize foreign colonists was also reflected in the views of President George Washington: “The more homogeneous our citizens can be made . . . the greater will be our prospect of permanent union” (Kammen, 1972, p. 74). Perhaps the desire for a more homogeneous citizenry was the reason the New American Congress passed a law in 1790 that limited citizenship in the United States to immigrants who were “white” persons. This early expression of xenophobia would lead to the growth of nativism in the United States.

**Causes of Xenophobia and Nativism in the United States**

Assimilation refers to a process in which immigrants adopt cultural traits from their host country and are absorbed into society (note Figure 4.2 on page 77). British colonists preferred a homogeneous population of immigrants who could be assimilated into a dominant Anglo culture, but immigrants from other countries often demonstrated a persistent wish to maintain their own ethnic heritages. Their desires contributed to the development of xenophobia in response to the constant infusion of ethnicities among immigrants to America. When established immigrants, who considered themselves “natives,” felt threatened by the many non-British immigrants in their midst, organizations based on nativist concerns would appear. Feagin and Feagin (1996) define nativism as “an anti-immigrant ideology that advocates the protection of native inhabitants of a country from [new or potential] immigrants who are seen as threatening or dangerous” (p. 503). Nativists have been the primary group engaging in the oppression of immigrants consistent with the definition of oppression (Andrzejewski, 1996) quoted in the section introduction.

Franklin’s desire to Anglicize non-British immigrants and Washington’s desire for a homogeneous population can be described as a benign form of nationalism based on nativist concerns. Although nationalism represents one of the primary themes of nativist activities in the United States, two additional themes have characterized many nativist attitudes and actions: anti-Catholicism and antiradicalism.

**Nativism as anti-Catholicism**

Although the religious beliefs of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and other founders of the American republic were quite different from those of most Christians today, at its birth the United States
was a nation strongly influenced by Protestant Christianity. The presence of Catholics had been tolerated throughout the colonial period, but by 1820, the 200,000 Catholics in the United States stimulated anti-Catholic sentiment, especially in urban areas. (See Figure 4.1.) By 1850, there were almost two million Catholics in the United States; the Irish alone constituted 42% of that foreign-born population (Fuchs, 1990). During George Washington’s presidency, immigrants had to be U.S. residents for a minimum of five years to be eligible for citizenship. The Nationalization Act signed by President John Adams changed the requirement to fourteen years of residency, but it was returned to five years after Thomas Jefferson became president. A nativist group calling itself “Native Americans” began forming in some of the larger cities; the party lobbied vigorously against immigrants becoming eligible for citizenship after five years. The Native American party insisted on a residency of twenty-one years before an immigrant was eligible for citizenship. Their main concern was voting, arguing that immigrants coming from nations governed by monarchs were not prepared to be self-governing. Since an immigrant came with:

all his foreign habits, prejudices and predilections . . . can it be believed that he can disburden himself so completely of these, and have so learned to fulfill the duties of a citizen of the United States, in the very short term of five years? (Myers, 1960, p. 111)

At first, the Native American party encouraged people to welcome immigrants and only opposed their eligibility for citizenship after five years; however, by 1843, the movement had become hostile to continued immigration of both Irish and Catholics. In Philadelphia, the Native American party held a meeting in an Irish district of the city, initiating a confrontation between Protestants and Catholics; the violence that followed culminated in an angry mob setting fire to many buildings, reported in newspapers around the country. Federal troops were called in to restore order, which was no easy task, and peace prevailed for a little more than a
month before mobs attacked a Catholic church and troops fired at the crowd to force them to disperse. Two more days of violence resulted in two soldiers being killed and twenty-six soldiers wounded.

Being confronted with such extreme violence was unusual, but American Catholics employed a number of strategies in response to anti-Catholic activities. To avoid having their children subjected to anti-Catholic sentiments in public schools, Catholics created their own privately funded K–12 schools nationwide, eventually establishing Catholic colleges and universities as well. To counter anti-Catholic rhetoric in mainstream and Protestant newspapers, Catholics published their own newspapers. Hennesey (1985) described how Bishop John Hughes submitted several anti-Catholic articles to a Protestant newspaper under the name of “Cranmer,” then publicly announced that he was the author and that the articles included lies and distortions that the editors had not bothered to question or confirm. In addition, several Catholic organizations were founded in the 1800s, including the Knights of Columbus, which engaged in political activism but also provided centers for recreational activities and chapels for meditation and prayer. By the 1920s, church leaders adopted a different strategy, encouraging Catholics to become involved with “general reform groups in society and not limit their exertions to narrowly conceived partisan issues” (Hennesey, 1985, p. 247).

**Nativism as anti-radicalism**

Both anti-Catholicism and prejudice against the Irish fueled the nativism movement that flourished briefly in the 1850s, but the other negative sentiment contributing to the success of nativism was anti-radicalism. Most immigrants admitted to the United States in the first decades of the nineteenth century were overwhelmingly impoverished European laborers with minimal skills and little education. Some were sponsored by American capitalists to be contract laborers paid less than the wage native workers would accept. As new immigrant workers adapted to life in the United States, they came to realize how they were being exploited: many joined or helped create unions to demand better wages and benefits by engaging in strikes, marches, and protests. Nativists saw union actions as un-American, especially when the “foreigners” expressed socialist, anarchist, or other radical ideas. The antagonism toward what was regarded as radical activities by recent immigrants was clearly and frequently expressed on the editorial pages of urban newspapers (Higham, 1955):

- “Our National existence and . . . our National and social institutions are at stake.”
- “These people are not Americans, but the very scum and offal of Europe.”
- “There is no such thing as an American anarchist.”
- “Europe’s human and inhuman rubbish.” (p. 55)

The first quotation illustrates the nationalism often expressed in nativist sentiments; the other quotations reveal hostility and a dehumanized view of the perceived “radicals.” The un-American implication in each statement is central to the nativist perspective. Nativist concerns at that time also had to do with the decreasing amount of land available for immigrants in the Midwest and West; as a result, immigrants increasingly settled in urban areas. Because many immigrants were moving from southern and eastern Europe, land reformer Henry George commented, “What, in a few years more, are we to do for a dumping ground? Will it make our difficulty the less that our human garbage can vote?” (Higham, 1955, p. 42). The issue of immigrants becoming eligible for citizenship and voting continued to fuel individual xenophobia, and nativist political actions document a fear of the potential political power of incoming immigrants.

**Nativism, Politics, and Social Change**

The Native American party never gained political dominance, yet by the 1850s it had prepared the way for the rise of the “Know-Nothings,” a somewhat secret movement whose members were told to respond to any question about the organization by saying that they knew nothing about it. Staunchly anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic, Know-Nothings were concerned with what they perceived as the growing political influence of Catholics; these fears were confirmed by President Franklin Pierce’s
How successful were the nativists in their political activities?

The Know-Nothings fielded candidates for the American Party, and in 1854 elected 9 governors, 8 (of 62) senators, and 104 (of 234) members of the House of Representatives (Myers, 1960). In the 1856 elections, Know-Nothing members used force and threats to keep immigrants from voting and encouraged election-day riots in Louisville, Kentucky, and St. Louis, Missouri. When the Whig Party refused to nominate Millard Fillmore for a second term as president, the American Party nominated him as their candidate. Despite the success of other American Party candidates, Fillmore received only eight electoral votes.

Reaction to the political success of the Know-Nothings was swift. In Congress a resolution was submitted, then voted down, condemning secret organizations and citing the Know-Nothings as a specific example. Political and religious leaders across the nation denounced the activities of the Know-Nothings, including the young political aspirant Abraham Lincoln, who wrote in a letter to a friend, As a nation we began by declaring that “all men are created equal.” We now practically read it, “all men are created equal except Negroes.” When the Know-Nothings obtain control, it will read: “All men are created equal except Negroes, foreigners, and Catholics.” (Myers, 1960, p. 146)

Why did nativists fail to form a major political party?

The political success of nativism in the 1850s was brief because the issue of slavery began to take precedence over anti-Catholic prejudice and fears, and it divided the Know-Nothings. By the end of the Civil War, the Know-Nothings and the American Party were no longer a political force, although the nativist fears that fueled their activity persisted as a major influence in the United States. As the American people debated the issue of slavery, American capitalists continued to sponsor importation of labor from overseas to keep wages low and profits high.

Throughout U.S. history, a significant percentage of Americans consisted of recent immigrants or children of immigrants who appreciated the opportunities in America and vigorously opposed attempts by nativists to restrict immigration. Meanwhile, there was constant pressure from society to promote the Americanization of immigrants, and public schools carried out societal expectations by encouraging immigrants to abandon their heritage and conform to American ways (Pai & Adler, 2006). Nativist attitudes in the United States continued to wax and wane, with xenophobia historically balanced by those who believed in America as a place for oppressed people to achieve freedom and fortune.

What influenced twentieth-century nativist attitudes in America?

It seemed certain to most Americans that if the United States was going to become a dominant political and economic power in the world, immigrants were needed in the labor market of its dynamic economy. But when World War I began, attitudes changed. Nativism surged again, driven by
feelings of nationalism and anti-radicalism. German Americans were singled out for especially opprobrious treatment, and their loyalty to the United States was questioned. Rumors abounded that German Americans were spying for Germany.

Because German Americans insisted on maintaining their dual identity as Americans of German descent, people of influence such as Teddy Roosevelt admonished them by denouncing all immigrants who claimed a dual identity. German Americans were surprised by such criticisms. From colonial times they had maintained their culture, language, and traditions through separate schools, organizations, and newspapers. Because of their industriousness, efforts to preserve their German heritage had been tolerated by American society until World War I, when nativist individuals and organizations attacked German Americans for keeping themselves separate and not assimilating to an Anglo ideal.

During World War I, surging patriotism intensified the demand that immigrants be Americanized quickly. Although this nationalism was a less abrasive form of nativism, it became more virulent when reinforced by anti-radical attitudes. Radical organizations were attacked as un-American, especially radical unions like the International Workers of the World, the “Wobblies.” Nativists accused certain immigrants of espousing ideas that were disloyal to the country and demanded their deportation.

German Americans were not the only targets of anti-American accusations. Anti-Semitism—having prejudices, stereotypes, or engaging in discrimination against Jews—increased with the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917. Jews were associated not only with communism, but also with international financiers who profited from the war. After World War I, nativists continued to complain that the Anglo ideal for America would disappear if diverse European ethnic groups continued to emigrate; however most Americans seemed to believe that those who came eventually would assimilate into the dominant culture.

By the 1920s, a revised perspective was being expressed. In settlement houses such as Hull House in Chicago, people providing social services began to appreciate the diversity of the immigrants. Social activist Jane Addams, cofounder of Hull House, and University of Chicago philosopher John Dewey described the advantages of diverse cultures and the value of people maintaining their heritages while...
still learning, as Benjamin Franklin had recommended, the language and customs of American culture. Although resentment toward Germans slowly dissipated after the war, anti-Semitism persisted as part of a new development in xenophobic attitudes in the United States.

**What new development affected xenophobic attitudes in the United States?**

In 1899, William Z. Ripley, an economist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published a so-called scientific study identifying and describing three European races: Teutonic, Alpine, and Mediterranean (Higham, 1955). Based on emerging theories about race, Nativists argued that for U.S. citizenry to achieve unity, immigrants of the blue-eyed, blond-haired Teutonic type (also called “Nordic” or “Anglo Saxon”) should be given preference. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts called for an end to all further immigration to the United States, and Teddy Roosevelt chastised Anglo Saxon women in America for not producing as many children as immigrant women (Brodkin, 2002). In the aftermath of World War I, pessimism about diverse groups being able to assimilate into an Anglo Saxon American culture fueled racist sentiments expressed in widely read books such as Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color*. (See Figure 4.3.)

Madison Grant (1916/1970) provided the most influential expression of this pessimism in *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Bias of European History*. Grant rejected the idea that immigrants from other than Nordic heritage could achieve the Anglo Saxon ideal; thus the “Great Race” of Anglo Saxons was doomed to disappear in America. Claiming that his ideas were grounded in the emerging science of genetics, Grant concluded that intermarriage between races produced degraded offspring who would revert to lower qualities contained in their parents’ genes. Referring to Ripley’s three European races, Grant stated, “The cross between any of the European races and a Jew is a Jew” (p. 16). Confirming Grant’s assertion, the eugenics movement provided “scientific” evidence of the human degradation caused by miscegenation, and 30 states passed laws banning interracial marriage (Stubblefield, 2007). Many well-known and respected Americans such as automaker Henry Ford expressed beliefs consistent with Madison Grant’s theories and the findings of eugenics, and racism—including anti-Semitism—was incorporated into traditional xenophobic attitudes.

**FIGURE 4.3**

This advertisement from a 1923 *Time* magazine warns its readers that the days of white supremacy may be numbered and urges white people who want to do something about it to read Stoddard’s book, *The Rising Tide of Color*. 

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**Three books by Lothrop Stoddard**

**The Revolt Against Civilization**

“...when the book has attained such an extraordinary amount of attention is not true. Its purpose is to show how, as we know, the first successful attempt to present a scientific explanation of the world-wide epidemic of unrest that broke out during the Great War and still rages in both hemispheres.” —Saturday Evening Post, $2.90

**The New World of Islam**

This book is the one—current events are being put out in startling fashion. “...and it has presented, in a clear and readable form, what did not exist before in any language, a short, concise account of the modern Mohammedan world and its reaction to the invasion of the West.” —Atlantic Monthly, $1.00

**The Rising Tide of Color**

White world supremacy is in danger. The world-wide ascendancy of the white race, apparently so insurmountable, is in reality threatened by the colored races. This is a startling book, one for the reader who is able to stand up against the impact of new ideas. It is a clear, sharp warning to the whites, and an appeal for white solidarity. —$1.00
How did racism affect nativist attitudes and actions?

Nativists used the new racist concern for preserving the nation’s Anglo-Saxon heritage to sound the alarm about the numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—80% of all U.S. immigrants from 1900 to 1910. Stanford University’s Ellwood P. Cubberley echoed their concerns in his history of education textbook (1919):

These Southern and Eastern Europeans were of a very different type from the North and West Europeans who preceded them. Largely illiterate, docile, lacking in initiative, and almost wholly without the Anglo-Saxon conceptions of righteousness, liberty, law, order, public decency, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock . . . our national life, for the past quarter of a century, has been afflicted with a serious case of racial indigestion. (p. 338)

Nativists triumphed in 1924 with the passage of an immigration law establishing quotas for immigrants based on country of origin. The quotas ensured that immigrants from northern Europe (the so-called Nordic type) would constitute the majority of U.S. immigrants, guidelines that remained largely unchanged for the next four decades. Although people of color were the primary targets of nativists, other groups were also affected by racist attitudes.

What groups were affected by the addition of racism to xenophobia?

This new racist form of nativism was directed not only against people of color, but also against white people perceived as not being white enough, which often meant not sharing the common prejudices of the white majority. This was especially observed in southern states. In 1898, debates at Louisiana’s state constitutional convention focused on who would be denied the right to vote. Although blacks were the main targets, Italians were considered “as black as the blackest negro in existence” (Barrett & Rodiger, 2002, p. 32). Because of such perceptions, some Italians were victims of southern violence in the nineteenth century. In Tallulah, Louisiana, five Sicilian immigrants owned businesses that served primarily black customers. Local whites resented the immigrant storekeepers because they treated black people as equals. Before long, the locals fabricated a quarrel over a goat and lynched the five Sicilians (Higham, 1955).

The idea of perceiving Italians, Irish, or others as separate races based on their national origins seems strange today; yet most Americans, including members of identified “races,” accepted this designation. In the 1930s, an Irish campaign manager representing an Irish politician made the following speech at an Italian neighborhood meeting to ask the Italian men to vote for his candidate in the upcoming election:

Maybe I’m the only Irishman here, but this is not a racial contest. You don’t select your man because of his race. There are too many who cry him down because of that. But these people that sit behind closed doors and discriminate against a man because of his race have no place in American life . . .
SECTION 2 Cultural Foundations of Oppression in the United States

This district don’t house men and women that vote only because of their racial strain. For the immigrants of your race and my race, I have no apology. In the time of need, we answered the call of our country. One of the largest quotas of men was sent out from this district. At that time there was no discrimination because of a man’s race, there was no turning men back for that reason. We sent out boys by the thousands in order that we might enjoy the blessings of free government. Here we never turn down a man because of his race or creed. (Whyte, 1955, p. 227)

The experiences of the four major racial groups are the focus of Chapter 5.

As the civil rights movement gained momentum, allegations of racism were made in many areas. President John Kennedy admitted to inequities in immigration policies based on the 1924 law. Attorney General Robert Kennedy characteristically stated the issue more bluntly. “As we are working to remove the vestiges of racism from our public life, we cannot maintain racism as the cornerstone of our immigration laws” (Eck, 2001, p. 7). In 1965, Congress amended immigration laws to eliminate the racially biased National Origins Quotas. From 1968 to 1993, 80% of the people immigrating to the United States came from Central or South America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Roberts, 1997). The influx of Latino immigrants spawned a renewed xenophobia, especially in California (see Figure 4.4).
The Paradox of Xenophobia and Nativism in a Nation of Immigrants

Daniels (2002) noted the absurdity among Americans to regard the people who first came to the United States as “colonists” or “settlers” and then to identify the people who came later as “immigrants.” Social observers such as author John Steinbeck (1966) have described how immigrants were initially reviled only to be accepted later: “the surges of the new restless, needy, and strong . . . were resented, resented, and accepted only when a new and different wave came in” (p. 14). Part of being accepted involved the former immigrants expressing xenophobic sentiments against current immigrants. In fairness, Americans have not consistently expressed such sentiments; instead, Daniels (2002) has observed the following pattern:

When most Americans are generally united and feel confident about their future, they seem to be more willing to share that future with foreigners; conversely, when they are divided and lack confidence in the future, nativism is more likely to triumph. (pp. 265–266)

As previously mentioned, nativists used the work of scholars and scientists within the growing ranks of the eugenics movement in support of their efforts to limit immigration. British scientist Francis Galton coined the term eugenics as “the study of agencies under social control that may improve or repair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally” (Lynn, 2001, p. 4). American scholars endorsing the eugenics movement were concerned about the perceived degeneration of mental abilities among Americans. Many believed there was a racial component to the problem represented by immigrants whom they regarded as the primary cause of this decline of intelligence in America. As Stubblefield (2007) noted, many scholars believed that “White people were ‘civilization builders,’ while members of other races supposedly lacked the ability to produce civilization” (p. 163). Scholarly support for the eugenics movement would decline precipitously after the Nazis tainted it with their emphasis on race purification and their implementation of genocidal practices.

Although the eugenics movement in the United States never attracted a majority of academics, some in the eugenics camp were influential scholars: Robert Yerkes of Harvard (president of the American Psychological Association), Lewis Terman of Stanford, and Edward Thorndike from Teachers College, Columbia University (Selden, 2006). Because of their academic interests, Yerkes, Terman, and Thorndike were responsible for developing early intelligence tests (see Table 4.1). When Henry Goddard implemented intelligence tests with the immigrants at Ellis Island, he reported that 80% were “feeble minded” (Brodkin, 2002).

Because some respected scholars supported it, the eugenics movement flourished from 1910 to 1940, shaping the content of biology textbooks, reinforcing popular views concerning white supremacy, and contributing to the growth of anti-immigrant attitudes. One legacy of the eugenics movement is the standardized testing used to measure academic achievement that students still take today—but testing is not the only legacy of the eugenics movement.

Established in 1937 to promote eugenics policies, the Pioneer Fund advocated the forcible removal of “American Negroes” to Africa. The first Pioneer Fund President, Harry Laughlin, wrote the Model Eugenical Sterilization Law, adopted by thirty states in the United States and Nazi Germany. Laughlin proposed that Adolf Hitler be given honorary membership in the American Eugenics Society. The Pioneer Fund continues to support scholars working on race-based IQ theories, including work employed in support of the controversial comments about race made in The Bell Curve (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). The Pioneer Fund also supported a recent book by Lynn (2001) arguing in favor of eugenic principles, and has continued to be a major funding source for the English Only movement (Tatalovich, 1997).

How is the English Only movement an example of xenophobic behavior?

Nativists have always been critical of immigrants who maintain their native language. They lobbied for literacy tests primarily as a strategy to reduce immigration, but for almost two decades Congress
rejected the idea. When Congress finally passed such legislation, both Democratic and Republican presidents vetoed these laws until 1917, when Congress passed this requirement over President Wilson’s veto (Delgado, 1997). Nativist opposition to immigrants maintaining their native language was evident in their criticisms of German immigrants, and culminated during World War I with state and local laws that forbade public displays of signs with German words and banned the teaching of German in public schools. In some communities German textbooks were burned as an act of patriotism (Crawford, 2000). The percentage of students taking German in U.S. high schools went from 25% in 1915 to 0.6% by 1922 (Baron, 2000). Today, English Only advocates demand that English be declared the “official language” of the United States, and they are working toward that goal on a state-by-state basis. English Only supporters claim that

their desire to establish English as the official language of the United States is simply a response to the large number of immigrants who refuse to learn how to speak English.

The problem with this claim is the lack of supporting evidence. English Only proponents point to the existence of dual language street signs, billboards and government brochures and to bilingual instruction in schools. They believe that the use of non-English languages, especially in bilingual instruction, legitimizes these languages and elevates their status as well as the status of those who speak these alternate languages. Yet studies do not indicate a threat to the widespread use of English, reporting that well over 90% of U.S. residents speak English fluently (Crawford, 2000; Wiley, 2005). Critics of English Only activities argue that it is no coincidence that the current movement was initiated just 15 years after the 1965 immigration re-

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**TABLE 4.1 Sample Questions from the World War I Army Mental Tests**

Alpha and Beta Tests developed by psychologists Robert Yerkes, Lewis Terman, and Henry Goddard assisted by Carl Campbell Brigham, founder of Educational Testing Service (ETS)

These sample questions reveal how culturally biased and inappropriate the early tests of “intelligence” could be; yet such tests were used with immigrants to determine which ones were of acceptable intelligence and which were “feeble minded.”

From Alpha Test B:

2. Five hundred is played with: rackets pins cards dice

3. The Percheron is a kind of: goat horse cow sheep

7. Christy Mathewson is famous as a: writer artist baseball player comedian

10. “There’s a reason” is an “ad” for a: drink revolver flour cleanser

19. Crisco is a: patent medicine disinfectant tooth-paste food

29. The Brooklyn Nationals are called the: Giants Orioles Superbas Indians

32. The number of a Kaffir’s legs is: two four six eight

35. The forward pass is used in: tennis hockey football golf

38. The Pierce Arrow car is made in: Buffalo Detroit Toledo Flint

*Source: Owen, David. None of the above: The truth behind the SATs, 1999, p. 176.*
form that resulted in the majority of U.S. immigrants becoming people of color, and there is some evidence of a xenophobic motivation behind English Only organizations. For example, Crawford (2000) reports on an investigation of US English, a major English Only organization, that found evidence of their real agenda: “determination to resist racial and cultural diversity in the United States” (p. 23). Baron (2000) argues that the history of such organizations “often masks racism and certainly fails to appreciate cultural difference” (p. 447). Latino immigrants appear to be the main targets; in a survey asking financial supporters of US English why they contributed to the organization, 42% of respondents agreed with the statement: “I wanted America to stand strong and not cave in to Hispanics who shouldn’t be here” (Crawford, 2000, p. 24). Such attitudes support criticism that English Only activities disguise xenophobic attitudes by insisting that their goal is to promote assimilation by encouraging immigrants to learn English. Reviewing historic and current efforts to pass English Only legislation, Baron (2000) concludes: “no matter how idealistic or patriotic its claims . . . (it has) a long history of nativism, racism, and religious bigotry” (p. 451).

Immigrants have always tended to learn English out of necessity for economic and social well-being. Today, fewer than 14% of Americans speak a language other than English: Less than 6% of Americans speak no English (Wiley, 2005). Despite these facts, the English Only movement has been successful in promoting state legislation to establish English as the official language. Almost half the states have existing laws declaring English as the official language. Some laws are largely symbolic, no penalties are enforced, and there is no prohibition against teaching foreign languages or implementing and supporting bilingual programs. However, some state laws prohibit their governments from printing materials in other languages.

Because Spanish is the first language of a significant percentage of immigrants, English Only laws prevent recent immigrants who are trying to learn English from having access to useful information. Such laws may also prevent legally eligible people from voting (Tatalovich, 1997). Whether symbolic or harmful, English Only laws reflect the xenophobic reaction of a great many people in the United States against many of our recent immigrants, primarily people of color whose first language is not English and who may not yet be literate in English. English Only laws justify the antagonism some individuals feel toward people speaking a different language; at times this antagonism even results in violence.

How have xenophobic attitudes promoted violent behavior?

Today, immigrants or people who appear to be immigrants have been victims of violence. Recent Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Hmong immigrants can attest to this. White shrimp fishermen in Texas threatened Vietnamese fishermen when shrimp became scarce. In Wisconsin, a young white man attacked a Japanese exchange student whom he mistakenly believed was a Hmong immigrant. Xenophobia encourages individuals to see recent immigrants as “foreign”; instead of applauding their hard work and success, xenophobia causes people to criticize immigrants for taking “our” jobs. This kind of prejudice against foreigners and the stereotypes that accompany it can foster animosity and even violent behavior.

Such violence has occurred many times, but an especially outrageous example occurred in 1997 in Rohnert Park, California. What made this incident especially deplorable was that police officers were responsible for the violence that resulted in the death of an Asian immigrant. An engineer of Chinese descent had gone to a bar with co-workers to celebrate his new job. At the bar, some patrons taunted him with racist slurs and insults. When he arrived home, he was still angry and still under the influence of alcohol as he raged about the bar incidents. Neighbors heard his shouts and called the
police. When police officers arrived, the father of three young children walked out of his garage holding a long stick approximately one-eighth of an inch thick. When he waved the stick at the police, they shot him. Although the man’s wife was a nurse, the police officers wouldn’t let her help her husband; instead, they handcuffed the wounded man as he lay in a pool of blood in his driveway and bled to death. According to Martinez (2000), the police officers justified the shooting by saying that because he held a stick, they anticipated that: “the man would use ‘martial arts’ against them” (p. 95). Even the “model minority” stereotype was not enough to overcome prejudice and negative stereotypes.

What American nativist attitudes are evident today?

By the early 1990s, 73% of Americans surveyed believed the United States needed to strictly limit immigration, and surveys since then find that this sentiment continues to be widely supported (Ramos, 2002). The brunt of anti-immigrant backlash is largely directed at Latinos, especially Mexicans in areas such as Southern California where the Mexican population is expected to increase by two thirds from 2000 to 2020. Scherer (2005) quotes a Southern Californian’s reaction: “Migration from Mexico is the catalyst that’s starting the demise of America” (p. 57). This is not an isolated opinion. According to a 2005 NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, almost half of Americans polled agreed with the statement: “Immigration detracts from our character and weakens the United States” (Scherer, 2005, p. 53).

Since the 1990s, anti-immigrant activity in America against Spanish-speaking immigrants has steadily increased, especially against illegal immigrants. Because immigrants from Spanish-speaking ethnic groups, referred to as Hispanics or Latinos, have constituted more than 50% of all U.S. immigrants, it is not surprising that they are the primary targets of anti-immigrant activity (Lee, 2004). Today nearly 40 million Latinos live in the United States, with perhaps one out of six arriving illegally as undocumented workers. Latinos are currently 12% of America’s workforce, a figure expected to double in just two generations, in part because today one of every five babies born in the United States is Latino (Grow, 2004).

Still, many Americans accept immigrants coming to the United States. The NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll reported that 41% of those surveyed felt that immigrants made America a better place. Some Americans argue that racism is behind much of the anti-immigrant sentiment today, just as in the past. Buchanan and Kim (2005) profiled twenty-one leaders of anti-immigrant groups and described evidence of overt racist behavior for many of them: One was a member of the Council of Conservative Citizens, a white pride group that opposes “race-mixing”; one had published numerous articles reflecting a white supremacist perspective; the Web site of another claimed that the Mexican government was plotting to take over the southwestern United States; and a group founded by one leader was identified as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that tracks activities of hate groups in the United States.

Some of the harshest comments are directed at “illegal aliens.” Scherer (2005) quoted the leader of an Arizona anti-immigrant group who said America “was being flooded with illegals, people that are substandard humans” (p. 57). Jim Gilchrist, one of the founders of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, a vigilante group sponsoring “border patrols” of armed citizens to prevent illegal entry into the United States, helped found his group because “illegal immigrants will destroy this country” (p. 32). Gilchrist has not expressed concern about the increasing involvement by white supremacist groups to recruit people for the Minuteman organization. In the wake of this hostility toward illegal immigrants, which is constantly reinforced by some talk show hosts on radio and cable television, it should not be surprising to learn that the FBI reported a 40% increase in hate crimes against Latinos from 2003–2007 (O’Grady, 2009).

In response to anti-immigrant hostility, Shorris (2001) argues that illegal immigrants make an important contribution to the U.S. economy by taking “the worst of jobs, the ugly work, the dangerous work, the backbreaking debilitating work, the jobs that even the jobless reject” (p. 272). Some of these jobs are extracting innards from slaughtered chickens on a conveyor belt; cultivating and harvesting mushrooms in damp caves; doing fieldwork as contract laborers (digging onions, picking beans, or harvesting other fruits and vegetables); skinning, gutting, and butchering animals at meatpacking
plants; and working in manufacturing sweatshops for Third World wages. Despite complaints about illegal immigrants, it is not clear that Americans would be willing to pay the price, literally, if they were absent. (See Figure 4.4.) Scherer (2005) quotes one Arizona resident: “I don’t want to pay five bucks for a can of string beans” (p. 56).

At the University of California, Los Angeles, the North American Integration and Development Center analyzed the work performed by 3 to 4 million undocumented workers in the United States. Their report stated that undocumented workers generated $154 billion toward America’s gross domestic product, including $77 billion toward the state domestic product of California alone. Anti-immigrant leaders insist that illegal immigrants are receiving services such as welfare and health care that deplete limited resources of state and local governments. According to a University of California, Davis study, however, the vast majority of undocumented workers do not enroll in government assistance programs because (1) many are not adequately fluent in English, (2) many are not aware of such programs, and (3) many are reluctant to ask for help for fear of being detained by authorities and deported (Ramos, 2002).

Another criticism directed at Spanish-speaking immigrants is that they aren’t learning English fast enough and are changing American culture from Anglo to Spanish. Scherer (2005) quotes a Southern Californian arguing that where he lives has changed “literally overnight into a foreign country. The Fourth of July was not being celebrated but Cinco de Mayo was. All the billboards [were] in a foreign language” (p. 55). Although the Census Bureau reports that 78% of U.S. Latinos tend to speak Spanish even if they can speak English, a study by HispanTelligence found that the number of Latinos fluent in both English and Spanish had increased to 63% (Grow, 2004). Ramos (2002) cites a University of Southern California research project reporting that 7 of 10 Latino children write and speak English fluently.

It is true that Latino children are more likely to maintain their native language than are other immigrant children, but that is consistent with past practices of immigrating groups. Germans, Italians, Norwegians, Chinese, Jews, and Japanese immigrants established schools, which children usually attend after public school, to maintain their native language and culture. It is also true that Latinos have changed U.S. society. It is easy to identify Latino influences on American music, entertainment, literature, business, scholarly activity, and even on the English language (see nearby box). Mexican cuisine can be found almost everywhere from fine restaurants to fast food; salsa recently surpassed ketchup as the most popular American condiment. Addressing Latino influences, Shorris (2001) insists that they are not “signs of conquest. . . . Civilization need not be a zero sum game. The victories of Latino culture are victories of pluralism, additions” (p. 47). They are also victories for the American economy, even though anti-immigrant critics don’t seem to understand the significance of their contribution.

**Spanglish?**

Many commonly used words in American English are direct or slightly modified borrowings from the Spanish language. There are many place names, including cities such as San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Santa Fe, and states such as Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Montana, and Nevada. This list includes just a few of the many Spanish contributions to American English:

- adios, adobe, amigo, bronco, burro,
- canyon, chili, cigar, coca, cola, coyote,
- guerrilla, hacienda, hombre, hurricane,
- lasso, loco, macho, mesquite, mosquito,
- padre, peon, pinto, plaza, poncho,
- ranch, rodeo, savvy, sombrero, vista

**How do immigrants contribute to the American economy?**

The anti-immigrant argument, directed primarily against Mexican Americans, is that they don’t contribute to our economy but to the Mexican
economy, because they tend to send much of their money home to families and relatives in Mexico. Ramos (2002) cites a study by the National Academy of Science finding that legal and illegal immigrants spend more than $10 billion each year within the U.S. economy. As they were becoming the largest minority group in the United States with almost 40 million people, Latinos’ disposable income increased from 2001 to 2003 by about 30% to a total of $652 billion (Grow, 2004). As this population continues to increase, so will their purchasing power, estimated to exceed $1 trillion by 2010. Latinos are currently about 13% of the U.S. population, and demographers predict that they will constitute 18% by 2030 and 22% by 2050 (Ramos, 2002).

Private sector businesses have started courting Latino consumers. Surveys report that Latinos tend to purchase high-quality brand-name products and maintain loyalty to those brands. Procter & Gamble spent $90 million in one year, 10% of its budget, on an advertising campaign targeting Latinos. Kroger Company, the nation’s leading grocery store chain, spent almost $2 million creating a *supermercado* in a Houston neighborhood that had become 85% Latino. In addition, more Latinos are becoming entrepreneurs. According to the Internal Revenue Service, from 1988 to 2003, Latino entrepreneurs increased by 30% (Grow, 2004). Perhaps inspired by Cuban success, entrepreneurs from other Latino groups have discovered that their fluency in Spanish gives them an advantage in working with their counterparts in Central and South America. Despite this commercial success, most Americans still don’t seem to appreciate the potential and immediate benefits of having a linguistically diverse citizenry.

### The Value of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Cultural and linguistic diversity have evolved in human societies around the world, and each manifestation of a distinctive culture and language illustrates the complexity and richness of human creativity. Although human beings occupy the same planet, each language demonstrates how diverse groups interpreted and understood their world, and the differences between languages reveal that despite our similarities, human beings tend to see that world in distinctive ways. The four languages spoken by the most people in our global population are Mandarin Chinese (16%), English (8%), Spanish (5%), and Arabic (4%), but over 200 languages today are spoken by more than a million people (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Taken together, these different worldviews provide a dynamic perspective on human beings accommodating to diverse environments.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) defines linguistic diversity as “the range of variation exhibited by human language” (p. 70), and she reports that there are between 6500 and 10,000 languages throughout the world, as well as a number of different sign language systems. A more precise estimate is impossible because so many languages are disappearing. In the United States alone there used to be more than 300 indigenous languages, but only 175 still remain and many are becoming extinct. Linguists have identified 43 indigenous languages that are on the verge of extinction, and as for the rest, they are only confident that three indigenous languages will survive: Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut (Crawford, 2000). When 93-year-old Helen Sater died in a Canadian hospital in 1996, she was the last living person who was fluent in her native Tuscarora language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The Tuscarora were once part of the powerful alliance known as the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. With over 300 indigenous languages already present and with the arrival of people speaking diverse European languages, the history of North America should be regarded as an ongoing chronicle of communities that were multilingual as well as multicultural; yet Americans continue to be ambivalent about linguistic and cultural diversity. The reality of linguistic diversity in the United States today can best be appreciated by visiting our urban classrooms.

### Do Americans support or oppose linguistic diversity?

According to Gort (2005), 25% of all K–12 students in the United States currently come from a home...
where a language other than English is spoken. Although more than three fourths of these students are Spanish-speaking, the following list includes other languages spoken by children in U.S. schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>Hmong, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Armenian, French, Polish, Portuguese, and Serbo-Croatian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Arabic, Haitian Creole, Tagalog, and Navajo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuing the pattern of using nationalistic justifications for nativist attitudes, some Americans argue that immigrants and their children should not be encouraged to maintain fluency in their native languages, but should instead focus on learning English and assimilating into American society. They often cite other countries such as Canada, the former Yugoslavia, India, or the former Soviet Union to illustrate their concern that social disruptions can occur when groups within a nation maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage, but as Baron (2000) has written, “where multilingualism has produced civil strife . . . (it) invariably occurs when minority-language rights are suppressed” (p. 451). Another argument against promoting bilingualism or multilingualism is based on the perception that it is normal for a nation’s citizens to be monolingual, yet most individuals in the world today are either bilingual or multilingual. As Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) has noted, those of us who are monolingual are the abnormal ones.

A primary motivation for maintaining one’s native language is to preserve one’s sense of identity and ability to function within a linguistic community. The Latino parents that Villanueva (1997) interviewed were committed to helping their children become bilingual and bicultural so that the children could communicate with their grandparents and participate meaningfully in cultural celebrations in their community. In addition, an individual’s identity is often grounded in his or her religious faith, and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) has described the intimate relationship between language and religion. She reports that people who have learned to pray in their native language have established their sense of connection to their God in a way that often makes it difficult for them to pray in their second language. Despite these and many other reasons for maintaining one’s native language, most immigrant families in the United States tend to learn English and eventually cease to be fluent in their native language.

**Why do immigrant families tend to lose their native language?**

In contrast to American fears concerning the failure of immigrants to learn English and assimilate into American culture, studies document a pattern of the loss of linguistic diversity in subsequent generations of immigrant families. In her review of this research, Gort (2005) concludes that fluency in the native language is usually lost by the third generation and cites some studies suggesting that the loss of language among U.S. immigrant families is accelerating rather than diminishing. Tse (2001) provides the following description to illustrate the typical pattern among immigrant families. Adult immigrants with or without children come to the United States and learn enough English to function in their daily lives while retaining fluency in their native language. They teach the native language to their children, but once these children begin attending K–12 schools, they learn English, speak English with their peers not only at school but in their community, and tend to prefer using English by the time they leave elementary school. When these children become adults and have children of their own, English is usually the only language spoken at home, resulting in grandchildren who are only able to talk to their grandparents in English.

Some Americans insist that this pattern does not accurately describe what is happening in the families of recent Latino immigrants, but Portes (2007) has reviewed studies of second generation Latino families in the United States reporting that 98% of the members of these families are fluent in English, whereas only 35% retain their fluency in Spanish. This loss of language is consistent across Western nations in which the dominant group (speaking English or French or German) demands that immigrants...
abandon their own language and heritage and adopt the language and cultural traditions of the dominant group. This can be most clearly seen in the education of immigrant children. After describing this form of assimilation that demands cultural and language conformity, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) concludes: “This is the preferred Western strategy in the education of ethnic minority children. It amounts to linguistic genocide” (p. 174). Some educators in the United States and elsewhere have been sensitive to this issue and have advocated a different approach.

**What alternative pedagogical strategy have American educators proposed?**

American educators have advocated for bilingual education in an effort to preserve linguistic diversity in the United States; after some initial success, they have been losing ground over the past three decades. As part of the reform efforts of the 1960s, Congress overwhelmingly passed the Bilingual Education Act in 1968. To understand why bilingual education soon attracted critics, it is important to understand the rationale for the passage of this Act. The bill’s chief sponsor offered the following argument to his Senate colleagues:

> It is not the purpose of this bill to create pockets of different languages throughout the country. It is the main purpose of the bill to bring millions of school children into the mainstream of American life and make them literate in the national language of the country in which they live: namely, English (Crawford, 2000, p. 88).

Ralph Yarborough (D-Texas) made this argument to convince his Senate colleagues that this bill would serve the needs of Mexican Americans like those in his district where adults with limited English skills were trying to find jobs while their children struggled to learn English. He portrayed the Bilingual Education Act as an anti-poverty program for a constituency he believed had largely been overlooked in other “Great Society” programs. This means that from the beginning, most politicians and Americans viewed bilingual education not as a way to achieve bilingualism but as a more effective means of encouraging assimilation. If students learned better by teaching them in Spanish, then some instruction could be delivered in Spanish so that students would not fall behind in their content learning. The assumption was that bilingual education was a transitional program that would temporarily maintain fluency in a native language until the student’s English skills were sufficient to allow all of his or her instruction to be in English.

Many advocates for bilingual education disagreed with this interpretation, arguing that students had a right to maintain not only their native language but also their cultural heritage while they learned English and adapted to their new culture. These advocates were not opposed to assimilation, but they believed that it should be done in a more culturally pluralistic fashion. In the early 1970s, Massachusetts and several other states had to repeal their English Only laws to establish “transitional bilingual education,” but these states and Americans across the country were disturbed when a nationwide study in the late 1970s reported that 86% of bilingual programs retained Spanish-speaking students after they had become fluent in English. This caused considerable consternation among state and federal lawmakers who had believed that bilingual education programs would take a transitional approach (Crawford, 2000). In 1978, Congress voted to allow federal funds to be used only for “transitional” bilingual education programs. Lost in this controversy was another finding from the same study that half of all bilingual teachers were not proficient in the students’ native languages, raising doubts about whether bilingual education programs could produce students who were genuinely fluent in their native language as well as English. In 1980, a report by the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies encouraged advocates for bilingual education by stating: “The melting pot tradition that denigrates immigrants’ maintenance of their skills to speak their native tongue still lingers, and unfortunately causes linguistic minorities (in the U.S.) to be ignored as a potential asset” (Tse, 2001, p. 51).

Even so, the nationwide study raised doubts that would continue to plague bilingual education programs, and early research did not diminish these doubts. Shorris (1992) described numerous conflicting studies that reported findings that were both supportive and critical of bilingual education. Increasingly, critics of bilingual education portrayed it as a language-maintenance program...
rather than as a way for children of immigrants to learn English and academic content more effectively. In the midst of this debate, the Reagan administration chose to promote and fund the implementation of English-only approaches to teaching students learning English as a second language (Crawford, 2000).

As the controversy continued, it became obvious that this was not simply an educational debate, but that there were social and political aspects as well. Advocates for bilingual education were interested in more than language learning; they argued for the value of teaching diverse “viewpoints, histories, sociopolitical realities and languages, and to promote the intrinsic worth of diversity in general” (Gort, 2005, p. 34). Opponents were adamant that such goals went beyond the original mandate of helping non-English speaking students to learn English, and they also criticized bilingual programs for separating their students from students in the regular classes, isolating them from the kinds of interaction with their American peers that might enable their assimilation into American society. Critics of bilingual education were more successful in their efforts to persuade Americans that bilingual education programs were not working.

By the 1990s, many Americans perceived bilingual education as being more likely to promote students’ maintenance of their native language and culture rather than their learning English and assimilating into American society, even though ongoing research began to make a stronger case for the efficacy of bilingual education programs. Salas (2005) cites a number of studies finding that students whose first language was not English achieved more academic progress in English when they also had instruction in their first language. Salas also referred to a review of research on bilingual education programs concluding that students in these programs “do as well as or better on standardized tests than students in comparison groups of English-learners in English-only programs” (p. 34). Still, the five million English language learners (ELLs) in K–12 public schools today are unlikely to be enrolled in bilingual programs because the federal Bilingual Education Act was not renewed in 2002, and, despite research supporting bilingual education, federal policies continue to emphasize English-only educational programs for ELLs.

Have research studies identified effective approaches to ELL instruction?

English-only programs have often involved a total immersion approach in which only English is spoken in the classroom, yet advocates for this approach can produce no credible studies to support it; instead, they usually offer anecdotal evidence. By contrast, there are numerous studies documenting the diverse outcomes achieved in bilingual education programs. Gort (2005) reviewed these studies and reported: “... a growing body of research points to the educational, social, and psychological benefits associated with educating bilingual learners in their native language as they develop skills in English” (p. 25). In 2006, the National Literacy Panel published its review of research on programs educating ELLs, and in that same year the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence published its review of these programs. Literacy expert Claude Goldenberg of Stanford University engaged in a meta-analysis of these two major reviews of literacy studies to determine what conclusions could be reached.

Goldenberg (2008) began by providing some demographic data: Of the five million ELLs in U.S. schools, 80% are Spanish-speaking. Approximately 60% of ELLs are receiving some form of English-only instruction. Test results reveal that ELLs tend to have low scores on measures of academic achievement, but there is no way of knowing if these low scores reflect poor content knowledge or the limitations of the students’ proficiency in English because the tests taken by ELLs were in English. Although that question cannot be answered, Goldenberg (2008) reports that one of the major findings emerging from both studies was that “Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English” (p. 14). Goldenberg also noted that this finding was consistent with four previous meta-analyses of research on ELLs. He emphasized the significance of this finding: “No other area in educational research with which I am familiar can claim five independent meta-analyses based on experimental studies, much less five that converge on the same finding” (p. 15). Further, both research reviews that Goldenberg analyzed reported that ELLs in bilingual education programs tended to develop sufficient literacy
skills to be not only fluent in speaking two languages, but also fluent in reading and writing in both languages (i.e., not only bilingual but biliterate).

**Why should educators be advocates for bilingual programs?**

Tse (2001) suggests that American educators should refer to the report from the 1980 President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, which stated: “Our vital interests are impaired by the fatuous notion that our competence in other languages is irrelevant” (p. 50). In addition, Gort (2005) argued that there is support for bilingual education in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 because it identified learning a foreign language as a “core academic subject” (p. 33). As the global economy becomes an increasingly important factor for our national economy, it is advantageous for the United States and any nation today to have citizens fluent in one or more languages other than their native language. There is evidence that this advantage has been apparent at the federal level for decades. Since 1946, when it was first established, the largest foreign language school in the United States has been the Defense Language Institute for military and government personnel.

Tse (2001) addresses the reason for establishing the Defense Language Institute in the first of her three arguments describing the advantages of increasing the number of bilingual or multilingual Americans. The first advantage is for *diplomacy/security*—having fluent speakers of the world’s languages enables the United States to play a major role in global affairs and negotiate peaceful solutions to political conflicts. Bilingual Americans also strengthen our ability to gather credible intelligence with regard to issues affecting our national security. The second advantage is *economic*—because of globalization, businesses increasingly need employees who can not only speak another language, but also understand the culture where the language is spoken. Businesses that are able to navigate the linguistic and cultural terrain will be able to establish better relations with trading partners around the world. The third advantage is *educational*—promoting bilingualism in our children and youth will inevitably increase the numbers of college students majoring in a language, and that will likely result in increasing the numbers of bilingual students choosing to enroll in teacher training courses. For many years now, it has often been difficult for our K–12 schools to find teacher candidates who are both fluent in a language and have teaching certification.

For all of these reasons, educators who are advocates for bilingualism may be more successful today if they renew their efforts to implement bilingual education programs in our K–12 schools. There are also various forms of bilingual education approaches such as dual language (also known as two-way immersion) that have experienced great success with students and parents. Dual language programs pair ELLs with students who want to learn another language in the same classroom. A bilingual teacher may provide instruction in two languages and the students serve as resources for each other. In a program with Spanish-speaking students, the students learning Spanish use their ELL peers as language tutors, and ELLs use their partners to tutor them in English. The growing need in the United States and in the world for linguistic diversity and cultural competence should be a catalyst for a more pluralistic attitude toward diverse languages and cultures. If Americans develop greater respect for the linguistic and cultural diversity of immigrants to the United States, it could dispel some of the myths about immigrants that too many Americans still believe.

**What myths about immigrants do many Americans believe?**

Myths about “foreigners” who legally or illegally enter the United States have long fueled negative attitudes toward immigrants. Many Americans have expressed anti-immigrant sentiments openly, and immigrants and their children cannot help but hear them. As part of a longitudinal study, immigrant youth in high schools were asked what most Americans think about “people from my country”; 65% of their responses were negative—being stupid, lazy, thieves, and gangsters (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Although most myths about immigration refer to all immigrants, some refer specifically to immigrants with refugee status. According to the United Nations, a *refugee* is a person “unable or unwilling to
CHAPTER 4  Immigration and Oppression: The Assault on Cultural and Language Diversity

return to his or her country because of a well-founded fear of persecution . . . based on race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political party” (Pipher, 2002, p. 18). The myths highlighted in this chapter reveal current nativist attitudes about immigrants and refugees.

**Myth #1:** Immigrants arrive ignorant, penniless, with very little formal education and immediately have to go on welfare.

Macedo and Bartolome (2001) record an example of this myth being expressed by a former president of Boston University complaining about the number of Cambodians in Massachusetts: “There has to be a welfare magnet going on here . . . Why should Lowell be the Cambodian capital of America?” (p. 11). In fact, immigrants often have been professionals in their country of origin—doctors, professors, and engineers. Although the figure varies each year, in 2007, 28% of U.S. immigrants had a college degree (Just the Facts, 2008). Still, even those arriving with college educations may take minimum wage jobs because institutions or professional organizations in the United States may not recognize their practices, skills, or degrees, forcing them to return to school to be certified in their profession or retrained in related fields. Despite obstacles of language and culture, the percentage of immigrants, including refugees, receiving welfare is approximately the same as native residents (Levinson, 2002). The statistics about modern immigrants to the United States document that they rarely become permanent recipients of public assistance.

Immigrants are consumers who pay rent and buy groceries and other products that help strengthen the economy. Most studies of the economic impact of immigrants report that they ultimately benefit local economies, even taking into account the services that may be required to assist them during their first few years in the country. With regard to undocumented immigrants, they are not eligible to receive most forms of public assistance beyond admitting their children to public schools or to the emergency room of a hospital, but they do pay taxes. The New York Times reported that illegal undocumented immigrants contribute approximately $7 billion each year to Social Security, and since they can never claim this money, it will be used to fund the benefits of other workers in the Social Security system (Scherr, 2008). Despite such contributions, many Americans express negative attitudes toward recent immigrants, especially the majority who are Spanish-speaking. Baron (2000) observes that some Americans appear to equate bilingualism with a lack of patriotism. Perhaps this was the basis for the animosity expressed by one caller to a Massachusetts radio talk show who referred to Spanish-speaking immigrants as “bilinguals” in a clearly derisive manner (Macedo & Bartolomé, 2001). It is ironic to see the ability to speak fluently in more than one language transformed into a racial slur.

**Myth #2:** Immigrants cling to their culture, language, and traditions, and refuse to assimilate into the American “melting pot.”

New immigrants have always maintained their cultural heritage, in part because their identity has been profoundly shaped by the native culture. When immigrant children become adults, they typically integrate their cultural heritage with American culture, producing a hybrid of traditions and values taken from both. As for learning English, it is not unusual to find that immigrants are multilingual when they arrive; often English is one of the languages they know.

Immigrants pay taxes, send children to schools, serve in the military, and are affected by local political decisions. Recent immigrants have demonstrated their desire to be actively engaged in our democratic society by participating in voter registration efforts and transporting voters to the polls for elections. Because the Constitution leaves the issue
of voting qualifications up to the local government, some cities have responded by giving voting rights to immigrants who are not yet citizens. The assimilation of immigrants is further complicated by a backlog of those pursuing naturalization, a process that can take years if not decades before they are granted legal permanent resident status, and the process has been delayed even further since the 9/11 tragedy (Wucker, 2003).

In many European countries, immigrants represent over 10% of the population. In Germany, this percentage is predicted to rise to 30% by 2030. The countries accepting more immigrants than the United States include Canada, Australia, Germany, and Switzerland (Ramos, 2002). The main difference between U.S. immigration and that of other countries is that more diverse groups are admitted to the United States than are accepted by other countries. Between 70% and 80% of immigrants around the world are refugees. The United States accepts less than 1% of the refugees; several other countries admit a higher percentage. According to the 2000 Census, immigrants constituted 10% of the U.S. population, whereas in 1900, they constituted 15% (Passel & Edmonston, 1994; Pipher, 2002).

People who express concerns about excessive admission of immigrants to the United States often refer specifically to Mexicans, who constituted 25% of all legal immigrants in the 1990s, and an undetermined number of illegal immigrants. Current xenophobic attitudes have demanded restrictions on Mexican immigration and more money for border patrols to keep out illegal immigrants. Mexican immigration has not diminished, but increased border scrutiny has caused legal Mexican immigrants to stay in the United States rather than return home for fear they might not be allowed reentry: The number of those returning to Mexico plummeted in the 1990s. Although stricter border enforcement has not kept illegal immigrants from coming, it has resulted in three times as many deaths of those attempting to enter the United States (Massey, 2003).

**Myth #3:** The United States is taking more than its fair share of immigrants; other countries need to take more.

Illegal immigrants make up 20% of the immigrant population and about 2% of the U.S. population. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, the number of illegal immigrants in the United States is relatively stable, increasing slightly since 1996 (USCIS, 2005). The popular image of illegal immigrants is that of Mexicans illegally crossing the border into the United States. In fact, over 41% of illegal immigrants in the United States entered legally, often recruited by employers, and only become illegal by remaining after their work visas expire.

The United States has a visa waiver program for residents of twenty-two selected countries, mostly in Western Europe, whose citizens can come to America for up to 90 days simply by purchasing a round-trip travel ticket. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reports that many people who come with such visas stay well beyond the 90-day limit, also becoming illegal aliens. According to the INS data, major abusers of the privilege come from France, Sweden, and Italy (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997). So why is it that only Mexicans are viewed as “illegals”? The stereotype of Mexicans sneaking across the U.S. border illustrates not only xenophobia, but racism.

**Myth #4:** The main problem with U.S. immigration is the large number of illegal immigrants getting into the country.

This allegation appeared in a 34-page booklet on illegal immigration published by the American Legion and disseminated to its nearly three million members. It included the false assertion that illegal immigrants infected more than 7,000 Americans with leprosy, even though this myth had already been proven false through investigations by many sources, including the news program 60 Minutes (Scherr, 2008). Further, the source for the claim that immigrants were bringing various diseases into the United States came from an article written by a lawyer with a history of anti-immigrant attitudes.
and no medical expertise. According to Scherr (2008), there is no medical research reporting an increase in the numbers of Americans with diseases stemming from the presence of immigrants.

Unlike the disease myth, the myth about immigrants engaging in criminal acts seemed to be supported by a *New York Times* article claiming that 21% of all crime in the United States was committed by undocumented workers; however, after the researcher making the claim was confronted with evidence of errors in his interpretation of the data, he corrected his calculations and reduced his estimate to 6.1% (Wilson, 2008). In addition, estimates of criminal behavior often come from data about people in prisons, and many immigrants are in prison for violating immigration laws, not for violent crimes. As Wilson (2008) reported, research on criminal activities over several decades has consistently concluded that: “Immigrants aren’t a crime problem” (p. 21). Finally, with regard to the terrorism aspect of this myth, Scherr (2008) cites a 2005 study by the Nixon Center reporting that this allegation was patently false, concluding that “...not a single (terrorist) entered from Mexico” (p. 34).

### Myth #6: Immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans.

For as long as there has been immigration, business owners have insisted and continue to insist that immigration is necessary to sustain U.S. economic growth. According to a Cato Institute study, immigrants do not increase joblessness, even in lowest-paid worker categories. A 2006 study found that states with large increases in immigration did not experience more unemployment for native-born workers (Scherr, 2008). Studies have also found that an influx of immigrant labor may create new jobs: One Los Angeles County study of a decade of immigration reported that Mexican immigrants created 78,000 new jobs (Cole, 1996). A 2005 study by the Kenan-Flagler Business School found that Hispanics accounted for 35% of the increase in the North Carolina workforce, and the increased number of Hispanic workers created 89,000 new jobs in the state (Wiggins, 2006).

As in the past, it is employers who are demanding immigrant labor for available jobs. In 1986, the U.S. government made it a crime for an employer to hire undocumented workers; now, many employers hire subcontractors to supply them with workers, thus placing the risk of arrest on the subcontractors for hiring undocumented workers. Unions have begun to accept the reality of immigrant labor and have been attempting to organize workers—especially laundry workers, janitors, hotel housekeepers, and waiters. These unions have become the main voice representing immigrant concerns (Massey, 2003).

A new and possibly growing problem may be the fault of businesses that urge opening immigration to more workers: the use of H1(b) visas and professional visas for entry into the United States. During the labor shortage of the 1990s, American companies increased their use of H1(b) visas to recruit qualified workers for vacant jobs, and there have been allegations of abuse concerning the use of these visas. Trade pacts signed by the Bush administration relax H1(b) rules to allow into the United States additional thousands of workers from countries with whom the United States has free trade agreements. If this problem continues, immigration laws in the United States will likely be revised once again. Maintaining fairness in addressing the diversity and complexity of immigration issues in the American economy is an ongoing challenge, but the goal should be to provide opportunity to immigrants, no matter when they came to the United States.

### Afterword

This history of immigration demonstrates that there have been and still are diverse but clearly defined attitudes toward immigration on the part of American citizens, political leaders, and representatives of business and industry. Although entrenched workers sometimes resent the economic competition, our society has always benefited from the willing labor of immigrant workers. We have also benefited from the cultural diversity represented by immigrants from so many different nations. Although some have complained that immigrants do not assimilate and have repeatedly insisted that immigrants should rid themselves of their old culture, history teaches us that there is no royal road for
immigrants trying to adjust or adapt to a new culture; in reality, there are diverse pathways. Each immigrant may take a different route, but each will end at the same destination—becoming an American.

America, it would seem, is miraculously both singular and plural, organized and scattered, united and diffused.  

Henry Kariel (1924–)

**TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Americanization** The demand that immigrants to the United States reject their ethnic or cultural heritage and conform to American ways as defined by the dominant group

**Anti-Semitism** Having anti-Jewish prejudices or stereotypes, or engaging in discrimination against Jews

**Assimilation** A process whereby immigrants adopt cultural traits of the host country in order to be identified with that country and integrated into the immediate society

**English Only** A movement in various states demanding that legislatures make English the official language of the state, with the eventual goal of having the federal government make English the official language of the United States

**Eugenics** The study of agencies under social control that may improve or repair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally

**Linguistic diversity** The range of variation exhibited by human language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000)

**Nativism** An anti-immigrant ideology advocating the protection of “native” inhabitants of a country from new or potential immigrants who are viewed as threatening or dangerous (Feagin & Feagin, 1996)

**Oppression** When any entity (society, organization, group, or individual) intentionally or unintentionally distributes resources inequitably, refuses to share power, imposes ethnocentric culture, and/or maintains unresponsive and inflexible institutions toward another entity for its supposed benefit and rationalizes its actions by blaming or ignoring the victim (Andrzejewski, 1996)

**Xenophobia** Fear of or prejudice against people from nations other than one’s own

Now go to Topics #1, 4, and 10: Ethnicity/Cultural Diversity, Language, and Immigration in the MyEducationLab (www.myeducationlab.com) for your course, where you can:

- Find learning outcomes for these topics along with the national standards that connect to these outcomes.
- Complete Assignments and Activities that can help you more deeply understand the chapter content by viewing classroom video and ABC News footage.
- Apply and practice your understanding of the core teaching skills identified in the chapter with the Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions learning units.
CHAPTER 4  Immigration and Oppression: The Assault on Cultural and Language Diversity

DISCUSSION EXERCISES

Exercise #1 What I Know Is . . . What Do We Know about Hyphenated Americans?

Directions: In a society as diverse as that in many parts of the United States today, immigrant cultures are sometimes strongly demonstrated, as in those described here. After reading each item, explain what you know and how you tend to feel about the sub-cultural diversity illustrated within each category. If possible, explain what knowledge you have and/or the feelings you hold about those differences. Finally, attempt to explain any animosity or frustration that could result from experiencing those cultural differences.

1. Differences in social interaction:
   A. How loudly some racial or ethnic groups seem to talk in conversation.
   B. Direct eye contact between conversants is prohibited in some cultures.
   C. Some family sizes are large and seem to be happy living together, even in smaller spaces than actually needed.
   D. Physical contact in public between men and women is forbidden, and neither is walking together allowed.

2. Differences in dress:
   A. Women from a number of countries wear a traditional sari, many of them of exquisitely beautiful fabrics.
   B. The Sikh male turban is part of culture and religion.
   C. The burqa for Muslim women may be required by cultural and religious policy.
   D. Male Hasidic Jews wear black suits, hats, and payess (uncut sideburns).

3. Differences in cultural traditions:
   A. Preparing foods from many countries involves ingredients that are not familiar to many of us whose parents and grandparents have more thoroughly integrated customs and foods into a standard American fare.
   B. National celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo and Syttende Mai are often unknown to a majority of Americans, even though American citizens with heritages from different countries work to keep their homeland traditions alive.
   C. The significant events of a culture can be observed through seasonal rituals, religious occasions, wedding ceremonies, and family activities and vary according to ethnicity, religion, and country, such as gathering for H’mong New Year and for funeral rites.

Exercise #2 The Immigration Letter to the Editor

Directions: This letter appeared in newspapers across the United States, each signed as if written locally. Discuss your understanding of its message, and then move to the Questions for Discussion. As you read, consider which of the four ethnic perspectives presented in this chapter is illustrated.

I am tired of this nation worrying about whether we are offending some individual or their culture. . . . I am not against immigration, nor do I hold a grudge against anyone who is seeking a better life by coming to America. Our population is almost entirely made up of descendants of immigrants. However, there are a few things that those who have recently come to our country, and apparently some born here, need to understand.

This idea of America being a multicultural community has served only to dilute our sovereignty and our national identity. As Americans, we have our own culture, our own society, our own
SECTION 2 Cultural Foundations of Oppression in the United States

language and our own lifestyle. This culture has been developed over centuries of struggles, trials, and victories by millions of men and women who have sought freedom.

We speak ENGLISH, not Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian or any other language. If you wish to become part of our society, learn the language! “In God We Trust” is our national motto. This is not some Christian, right wing, and political slogan. We adopted this motto because Christian men and women, based on Christian principles, founded this nation, and this is clearly documented. It is certainly appropriate to display it on the walls of our schools. If God offends you, then I suggest you consider another part of the world as your new home, because God is part of our culture.

We are happy with our culture and have no desire to change, and we really don’t care how you did things where you came from. This is OUR COUNTRY, our land, and our lifestyle. Our First Amendment gives every citizen the right to express opinions and we will allow you every opportunity to do so. But once you are done complaining, whining, and griping about our pledge, our national motto, or our way of life, I highly encourage you to take advantage of one other great American freedom, THE RIGHT TO LEAVE.

God Bless America

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think the writer means in saying that the view of America as a multicultural community “has served only to dilute our sovereignty and our national identity”? 
2. Are large numbers of immigrants not learning English?
3. Should Spanish-speaking immigrants who are learning English be criticized for trying to maintain fluency in Spanish or other native languages spoken by other immigrants?
4. Are immigrants complaining about the use of “God” in the Pledge of Allegiance?
5. If “God is part of our culture,” do you have to believe in God to be an American?
6. Who is intended to be included in the “We” of the last paragraph?
7. How could the letter be written to reflect any of the other ethnic perspectives?

REFERENCES


 Provides definitions for a variety of terms essential for discussing intergroup relations.


Reviews the history of linguistic diversity in the United States and its implications for concerns expressed by people in the English-Only movement.


Discusses the process of Americanization of immigrants to the United States with attention to the use of white privilege as an inducement for immigrants to conform to the majority.


Describes Franklin’s development as a scholar, entrepreneur, political leader, and the influence he had on the emerging nation.


Discusses the racism and anti-Semitism that has characterized anti-immigrant sentiment and the factors that resulted in the ultimate acceptance of white ethnic immigrants.


Profiles twenty-one leaders of anti-immigrant groups in the United States and describes their attitudes and the actions they and their groups have taken.


Describes some popular myths about immigration and provides information disproving each of these myths.

Discusses reasons for decreased linguistic diversity in the United States, especially the demise of indigenous languages, the growth of the English-only movement, and bilingual education.


Describes how schools were established in the United States and the influences that shaped the development of American public schools.


Describes U.S. immigration patterns from the colonial period to the present, paying particular attention to the ethnic minorities who migrated.


Discusses recent proposals directed toward making U.S. citizenship more difficult to obtain.


Examines the growth of diverse religions in the United States, especially with regard to immigration patterns since 1965, and describes its impact and potential.


Provides an overview of the development of nativist sentiment in the United States from the early 1800s to the present.


Provides definitions of essential terms and concepts for intergroup relations.


Argues that immigrant groups have been successful in embracing and practicing basic social and political principles of U.S. society.


Provides a meta-analysis of two major reviews of research on English Language Learners.


Discusses misconceptions about bilingual education, describes quality bilingual programs, and explains why bilingual education is necessary for educational equity.


 expresses fears that the white race may be losing its position of supremacy in the world.


Describes current Latino population and its projected growth and the economic implications currently and in the future.


Provides a comprehensive description of the experience of Catholics in America from the colonial period to the present.


Discusses the basis for advocacy of human rights globally and in the United States.


Analyzes research to argue that differences in intelligence stem from race/ethnicity and are genetically determined and that economic success or failure is determined by intelligence.

Describes the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States, culminating in significant anti-immigrant policies and legislation of the 1920s.


Provides data on educational attainment of recent immigrants.


Analyzes and attempts to reconcile contradictory aspects of American culture as revealed in the history of the colonial experience and in the emerging nation.


Examines changes in racial composition of immigrants since 1965.


Describes the extent and nature of immigrants using welfare services.


Provides background on the historical formulations of eugenics, gives examples of how eugenics has been implemented, and discusses the role that eugenics could play in the future.


Examines issues of language and limitations in multicultural education; the first quote is from John Silber, who was chair of the Massachusetts State Board of Education at the time.


Discusses the need to go beyond the focus on black people and white people in addressing problems of racism in the United States.


Analyzes recent trends in Mexican immigration to the United States and the impact of U.S. government reactions taken in response to these trends.


Describes the historic targets of bigotry since colonial days, with emphasis on Catholics, Jews, and immigrants, and the actions taken against these minorities by the majority.


Reviews racist rhetoric against illegal immigrants in the media and the efforts of activists to challenge such hate speech.


Describes the evolution of the Americanization concept and its implementation in schools.


Examines 1980s immigration and compares it to immigration trends from 1880 to 1920.


Presents stories about a variety of recent immigrants, including the conditions that forced them to immigrate and the difficulties they encounter trying to adjust to American culture.


Discusses historic cyclic migration of Latino workers into the United States and confronts various misconceptions about recent Latino immigrants.


Provides statistics and describes studies on U.S. immigrants, focusing on the contributions of Latinos and the implications of Latino immigration.
CHAPTER 4  Immigration and Oppression: The Assault on Cultural and Language Diversity

Discusses proposals to deny citizenship to children of undocumented immigrants, relating this to the eugenics movement and other historical examples of racism.

Discusses criticisms of bilingual education, implications of NCLB for bilingual programs, and studies documenting the effectiveness of bilingual programs.

Describes current anti-immigrant controversy, especially in Southern California, with comments from immigration critics and supporters.

Reviews several anti-immigrant myths reported in a publication by the American Legion and debunks all of them.

Analyzes the development of the eugenics movement in the United States in the early twentieth century and what lessons should be learned from this development.

Provides a personal narrative of the diverse Latino groups in the United States using many personal stories told within a historical context.

Describes how the education of indigenous and ethnic minority children contributes to the loss of linguistic diversity in Western societies including the United States.

Describes the arrival of Africans to America and how they lost their equal status with other immigrants.

Examines how the earnings of immigrants are affected by trends in skill composition and the length of time immigrants have lived in the United States.

Includes observations of America with regard to politics, democracy, values, contradictions, consumerism, diversity, environment, global perceptions, and the future.

Explains how eugenicists manipulated the concept of “feeblemindedness” at the start of the 20th century to label people of color, poor people, and women as inferior.

Describes the lives of recent immigrants based on the authors’ longitudinal study and other studies, and examines the difficulties they face as they try to assimilate.

Describes the experience of diverse racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

Examines the English Only movement as an example of the new nativism.

Explains causes and consequences of language loss in the United States and debunks myths about English language learning among immigrant children.
SECTION 2  Cultural Foundations of Oppression in the United States


Provides data on illegal residents in the United States, formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) until merged with Homeland Security.


Describes the efforts of several Latino families who believe in the importance of being bilingual and bicultural, and how they are helping their children achieve both goals.


Presents an ethnographic study of an urban Italian neighborhood in the 1930s.


Discusses African American attitudes concerning the current immigration debate, especially with regard to employment opportunities.


Provides statistics and commentary concerning language diversity in the United States.


Reviews allegations of criminal behavior by immigrants and evidence used in support of such claims to refute the claims and show how data has been misused or misinterpreted.


Examines efforts of recent immigrants to express political concerns and play an active role in addressing local issues.
Ableism: Disability Does Not Mean Inability

“All governments treat disabled people badly. They all see us as a burden. All governments, whether capitalist or socialist, have separated us from the rest of society. . . . Until we are businessmen, politicians, community leaders, people at all levels of society, we will be marginalized and segregated.”

Joshua Malinga (Contemporary)

In 1993, members of the United Nations declared people with disabilities an oppressed minority group. Writers of the UN Human Rights and Disabled Persons Report documented that around the world, people with disabilities were being treated as outcasts and that the situation was getting worse as their numbers increased. The 1995 representatives at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen described disabled people as “one of the world’s largest minority groups facing poverty and unemployment as well as social and cultural isolation” (Ervelles, 2001, p. 93). Despite the statements of these global organizations, the concept of ableism (sometimes erroneously called handicapism) has yet to be accepted by many people in the United States and around the world.

Ableism has been defined by Linton (1998) as the negative determination of an individual’s abilities based on his or her disabilities. Ableism promotes the belief that people with disabilities are inferior to able-bodied persons in order to justify discrimination against them. Linton’s definition asserts that the dominant group oppresses people with disabilities, as do other minority groups. Many people, including some people with disabilities, reject that assumption. Hahn (1988) observed,

Unlike other minorities . . . disabled men and women have not yet been able to refute the implicit and direct accusations of biological inferiority that have often been invoked to rationalize the oppression of groups whose appearance differs from the standards of the dominant majority. (p. 26)

Why should people with disabilities be considered a minority group?

In 1973, the passage of the Rehabilitation Act was perhaps the first public acknowledgment that people with disabilities could be considered a minority group in need of civil rights protections. Section 504 of that act prohibited discrimination against people with a disability who had appropriate qualifications for jobs in federally funded programs (Longmore, 2003). In 1990, Congress acknowledged discrimination against disabled people by passing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide a legal recourse against discrimination. (See Figure 12.1.) Hahn (1994) argued that in a democratic society, policies and practices reflected people’s attitudes, and that American social attitudes were a major
Like other minority groups, people with disabilities and their advocates have had to protest and demonstrate to draw attention to the discrimination against them. 

Source: Courtesy of Richard B. Levine

FIGURE 12.1

source of problems for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, some people still question the appropriateness of viewing persons with disabilities as a minority group.

The Fall 2001 issue of the *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* addressed the question of whether people with disabilities could be regarded as an oppressed minority. Although the contributors agreed that disabled people were oppressed, guest editor Andrew Batavia strongly disagreed. Although acknowledging problems in the past, Batavia argued that people with disabilities in the United States live in conditions “dramatically better” than those in other countries. Reacting to the high rate of unemployment for disabled people in the United States, Batavia said employers had the right to hire the most qualified person for a job regardless of disability, implying that disabled applicants were often not the most qualified.

Because of the efforts of disability rights advocates and with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, Batavia argued that people with disabilities no longer experience the regrettable discrimination that occurred in the past and therefore do not qualify as an “oppressed minority.” Apparently Batavia had not reviewed recent statistics: A survey of people with disabilities reported that the percentage of unemployed adults had increased since the ADA became law, as had the percentage of people living in poverty (Wilson & Lewicki-Wilson, 2001). Batavia’s denial rationalization that discrimination no longer affects people with disabilities today is unusual because such arguments are more likely to be expressed by a nondisabled person than someone like Batavia who has a disability.

Another argument denies that people with disabilities are oppressed because having a disability makes one part of the majority. According to the rationale of this argument, having a disability places a person on a continuum where mild physical disabilities, such as poor eyesight, can be corrected by wearing glasses, whereas a more severe physical disability may require someone to use a wheelchair. The logic continues that whether minimal or severe, almost all of us are disabled in one way or another and must learn to live with the condition. In response, Gill (1994) argues that to be a person with a disability means the disability has a significant impact on daily life: For example, the disability influences an individual’s sense of identity, or others’ perceptions of the disability have a significant influence on their reactions to the person, including the likelihood of negative attitudes of rejection or even discrimination. Our reactions reflect a similar rejection of or discrimination toward people from other minority groups.

Putnam (2005) argues that identifying people with a disability as a minority group is consistent with other acceptable models for disability because it defines the problems associated with disabilities as stemming from an inappropriate “fit” between the environment and the persons with disabilities and not emanating from the disabled individual. Having a disability would not present a problem “if a partic-
Aableism: Disability Does Not Mean Inability

The disability rights approach views disability as a natural phenomenon which occurs in every generation, and always will. It recognizes people with disabilities as a distinct minority group, subject at times to discrimination and segregation... but also capable of taking our rightful place in society.

Laura Hershey (1962–)

Cultural Ableism

Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities are not recent phenomena. Whether perceived as wicked, violent, or merely foolish, people with physical, emotional, or mental disabilities have been identified consistently as deviant because they were not normal, leading to negative and sometimes hostile behaviors. In the early 1900s, the U.S. Public Health Service categorized people with retardation as “defectives” along with criminals and delinquents, later labeling them “mental defectives” to distinguish them from the prostitutes, pimps, pickpockets, and paupers. But all such human beings were frequently placed together in institutions because they were nevertheless deviants, different from the norm, requiring their removal from communities. The historical record reveals a pattern of cultural ableism, images and beliefs perpetuated in society that promote the perception of people with disabilities as deviant or incompetent.

What are the historical perceptions of people with disabilities?

Understanding how societies have regarded people with various kinds of disabilities can explain not only negative individual attitudes, but also why different societies institutionalized people with disabilities. Wolfensberger (1970) explained some of the major historical perceptions of people with disabilities in the following categories.

A Subhuman Organism Although other groups (such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Jews) historically have been regarded as subhuman, the perception is still associated with people with disabilities, especially those labeled “mentally retarded” who have been occasionally referred to as “vegetables,” alluding to medical terminology for performance of vital functions (heart rate, blood pressure) as vegetative functions. Logical thinking and other higher brain activity were assumed impossible for retarded persons. As late as the nineteenth century, “mental defectives” were housed in rooms not heated in winter nor cooled in summer because it was assumed that they were not sensitive to heat or cold like “normal” people. Even in the last half of the twentieth century, caregivers for institutionalized people with mental disabilities have been known to use cattle prods for control. Once we dehumanize a group to subhuman status, there are few limitations to what can be done. Another example of the subhuman perception was articulated in a 1960s Atlantic Monthly article suggesting that organs should be harvested from severely and profoundly retarded people, referred to by the author as “human vegetables,” and donated to those on organ waiting lists to “increase the intellectual
betterment of mankind” (Wolfensberger, 1970, p. 17).

**Object of Dread**  The origin of this perception is the medieval myth of the *changeling* where people believed that upon the birth of a normal child, evil spirits came in the night and stole the child, replacing it with a defective child such as one who was mentally retarded or with cerebral palsy. In Grimm’s fairy tale “The Elves,” a changeling with “fixed staring eyes” is substituted for the original baby. The belief that evil spirits were the source of changelings may have influenced Martin Luther’s perception of defective children as spawn of Satan, denouncing them as a “mass of flesh” without a soul (Winzer, 1997). Today, some Christians regard deformity or disability as a sign of “moral failure” or as a visible stigma of sinfulness (Pelka, 1994). Some parents of children with disabilities regard the child as punishment from God; some mothers experience enough depression to seek therapy following the birth of such a child.

**Object of Pity** This perception may not seem negative because it appears to include compassion.
for disabled people, but it is a compassion seldom accompanied by respect. Fundraising campaigns by well-meaning organizations work to arouse pity with poster children or by having telethons that parade children with disabilities to stimulate viewers to make contributions. According to Charlton (1998), surveys conducted in the United States have concluded that more people form their attitudes about people with disabilities from telethons than from any other source. Because telethons tend to reinforce images of people with disabilities as helpless or dependent, the disability community in America has voiced objections to them, with some organizations responding by agreeing not to participate in telethons for fundraising purposes.

Diseased Organism This perception views a person's physical or mental disability as a temporary condition that can be cured by chemical or psychological treatments. Ancient Egyptians often regarded disability as a condition for which medical "cures" were prescribed. Egyptian doctors hoped to restore eyesight to blind people by applying a solution to their eyes made of copper, myrrh, Cyprus seeds, and other ingredients. Although many Greeks believed that supernatural forces caused disabilities, physicians including Hippocrates rejected superstition and attempted to identify physiological causes of disabilities (Winzer, 1997). In the United States today, national fund drives solicit money for research to find cures for disabilities, presenting people with that disability not only as an object of pity, but also as a diseased organism: The disability is perceived as "unhealthy" and the person is portrayed as needing to be cured. This medical view of people with disabilities is pessimistic because until a cure can be found, people with disabilities are regarded as having "incurable diseases." Because of such perceptions, people with disabilities have been placed in institutions, which penalize them for the crime of being disabled.

Holy Innocent/Eternal Child This perception is normally identified with one group: people labeled "mentally retarded." Viewed as incapable of sin, the Holy Innocent image can be found in most countries, religions, and cultures, and is often regarded as a benign view. The perception suggests that people with mental retardation need to be protected and sheltered, isolated from the outside world to perpetuate their innocent, childlike qualities. But encouraging people with mental retardation to maintain childish behaviors rather than learn adult behaviors is a barrier to their ability to live independently. Linton (1998) observed that when people with disabilities are viewed as "living in the body, not in the mind, [they] are configured as childlike, even infant like, acting on primary drives rather than engaging in purposeful behavior" (pp. 95–96). This perception can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, illustrated in reports of people with mental retardation who have been constantly treated as children even during adolescence who persist in childlike behaviors as adults, requiring constant care (Wehmeyer, 2000).

Object of Ridicule In literature, folk stories, and jokes, people with disabilities are subject to humiliation for the sake of humor. People with mental retardation have been portrayed as village idiots and ridiculed in moron jokes. According to Fiedler (1993), pagan practices of displaying freaks for public entertainment were revived in the Middle Ages by the Catholic Church, which displayed disabled or deformed "monsters" on feast days. In the nineteenth century, carnival side shows with magicians and sword swallowers also featured freaks: giants, dwarves, human skeletons, and other physically malformed or disabled people. Legendary showman P.T. Barnum popularized the freak show in the United States, exhibiting Chang and Eng (the original Siamese twins) and General Tom Thumb (a midget), along with anonymous pinheads and armless or legless wonders, now immortalized in wax at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Living or dead, people with deformities or disabilities...
are still perceived as odd, ridiculous, or bizarre—anything but human.

Each of these historical perceptions has stigmatized various disabilities and dehumanized people who had them. Today, many disability advocates in the United States (and elsewhere) are combating such negative images by insisting that people with disabilities are simply one cultural group among many others in a diverse society, that they have a disability culture that influences their development in different ways from the experiences that affect nondisabled Americans. According to Johnson and Nieto (2007), these arguments are being supported by an emerging discipline called Disability Studies, in which scholars examine “disability as an area of study in a manner similar to ethnic, linguistic, and women’s studies” (p. 40). These scholars have identified characteristics that describe what advocates mean when they talk about a disability culture.

How do scholars describe a disability culture?

Because of past rejection, many people with similar disabilities have come together to support each other in their efforts to achieve the goal of living a normal life that includes a job, a home, a family, and so on. As a result of this collaboration, they have had similar experiences and developed cohesiveness based on common needs and shared aspirations. As Pai and Adler (1997) point out, a traditional concept of culture suggests that a group’s historical experience together will create a “pattern of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs, as well as material artifacts” (p. 23). Using this kind of conventional definition for culture, Reagan (2005) argues that people with disabilities have created and continue to be influenced by a unique disability culture in the same way that individuals from racial and ethnic groups are shaped by their unique cultures.

Perhaps the clearest example of a disability culture is the deaf culture since it represents both cultural and linguistic diversity. Reagan (2005) agrees with scholars who describe many components of culture, but he identified four components that must be shared by all members of a culture: (1) historical knowledge and awareness, (2) a common language, (3) awareness of a cultural identity supported by cultural artifacts and identified by distinctive norms and patterns of behavior, and (4) a network of voluntary, in-group social organizations.

Scholars have provided evidence that deaf culture includes these components. With regard to the first component, much has been written in disability studies research about the shared historical experience that has shaped the deaf community and individual identities. As Padden and Humphries (1998) have noted: “(The) knowledge of Deaf people is not simply a camaraderie with others who have a similar physical condition, but is, like many other cultures . . . historically created and actively transmitted across generations” (p. 2). The issue of transmitting the culture leads to perhaps the most compelling argument for a deaf culture in the United States: the existence of American Sign Language (ASL). In the early 1970s, linguistic research concluded that ASL was a language characterized by its unique grammar and syntax, and that “manual language developed naturally in deaf children similarly to the way oral language developed in hearing children” (Hehir, 2005, p. 21). Deaf children usually become fluent in ASL early in their lives, and information being transmitted by this language becomes what Padden and Humphries (1998) describe as “the heart of the culture” (p. 5). This is the reason that many deaf people advocate for a bilingual/bicultural approach in classrooms educating deaf children and youth. In addition to recognizing deaf culture, this pedagogical approach should challenge the historic perspective of deafness as a deficit and enhance the goal of helping deaf children learn Standard English. Deaf advocates also argue that hearing students could benefit from learning about historical events that have affected the deaf community as well as some of the issues confronting deaf people today. These arguments are the same ones made by other cultural groups who advocate for bilingual/bicultural education for their children.

As for the two remaining components for culture, deaf people frequently express their sense of a shared cultural identity. Padden and Humphries (1998) and Reagan (2005) have reported about their distinctive cultural artifacts in communications with the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) combined with a Teletypewriter (TTY) —a computer with a keyboard input and printer or display output; in television (closed-caption pro-
gramming); and other personal devices such as doorbells connected to lights in their homes. These cultural artifacts exist to assist deaf people in functioning more effectively in their everyday lives. As for patterns of behavior, Reagan (2005) identified cultural patterns among deaf people such as a high rate of endogamous (in-group) marriage, and behavioral differences such as establishing eye contact or the acceptability of physical contact. These cultural norms for deaf people have sometimes created misunderstandings similar to what has been experienced by ethnic groups during cross-cultural interactions. Finally, the deaf community has established numerous social organizations related to sports, theater and the arts, and social clubs, as well as state and national organizations.

Many deaf people and disability advocates are working to remove the stigma historically associated with disabilities. In the United States, they are challenging people to reject the assumption that regards any disability as a deficit, and to understand disability as one more example of human diversity. Since 20% of Americans have some form of disability (Russell, 1998), it is surprising that so many individuals persist in maintaining negative attitudes about people with physical or mental disabilities. To understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to examine some factors that contribute to the perpetuation of these negative attitudes.

**Individual Ableism**

Negative attitudes are reflected in the language we employ to identify disabled people. The word *disabled* implies inability; the prefix *dis* is generally regarded as signifying *not or no*. Derived from Latin, the prefix actually means *apart or asunder*, which is consistent with the historic practice of keeping disabled people apart from society.

People with disabilities are described as being “afflicted with” or a “victim of” a disability. Affliction is associated with disease, as is being a victim, so this language relates to the cultural image of the person with a disability as a diseased organism. Using words or phrases like *crippled, handicapped, impaired,* or *confined to a wheelchair* foster the belief that people with disabilities are incompetent or damaged, not capable of being independent. The term *confined to a wheelchair* is especially absurd. People in wheelchairs are not confined, but liberated by them. The wheelchair provides mobility to people who might be “confined” to their apartment or home if they did not have a wheelchair. Physical barriers can be identified easily, but it is much more difficult in America today to identify and overcome barriers created by **individual ableism**—prejudiced attitudes and actions toward people with a disability based on our assumptions about them.

**What assumptions are made about people with disabilities?**

Fine and Asch (2000) discussed five erroneous assumptions that nondisabled people commonly make about persons with disabilities:

1. **Disability is a biological problem of a particular individual.** This assumption is related to the medical model of disability, which views the disability as a problem and the solution is to find a cure for it. The assumption overlooks the influence of prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination about disabilities. Individuals with disabilities react to their environmental circumstances. Putnam (2005) commented that the absence of disability accommodations by architects, urban planners, and public officials suggests to people with disabilities that they are not being recognized nor included as part of a community. That is not a problem created by their disability but by the thoughts and decisions of others.

2. **Any problems for a person with a disability must stem from the disability.** People with disabilities may have health problems like
anyone else, but they are not “unhealthy,” nor is a disability a cause of disease. If a man with a disability is upset because he feels he has been discriminated against, it is discrimination and not the disability that is the cause of his anger. Being in a wheelchair is not necessarily frustrating, but a woman in a wheelchair may be frustrated when confronted with no curb cuts, no ramps for her to enter a building, or inaccessible rest rooms within the building.

3. **A person with a disability is a “victim.”** This assumption may suggest a humane and even compassionate attitude, but it is steeped in pity and lacks respect for the person with a disability. Studies of people with disabilities often report that their subjects do not feel that they are victims but are more concerned about how to function effectively in their environment. In one study cited by Fine and Asch (2000), when questioned about their disability, a consistent response from people with disabilities was “it could be worse” (p. 323). Human beings want to live full, productive lives, and people with a disability are no different.

4. **Being disabled is central to self-concept and social comparisons for a person with a disability.** Although having a disability is usually a factor in shaping a person’s sense of identity, self-concept refers to how a person feels about himself or herself. A person with a disability will develop his or her self-concept in ways similar to nondisabled people who tend to rely on factors such as academic achievement, honors and awards, aesthetic interests, good relationships with family and friends, demonstrating competence at work, and so on. As for social comparisons, people with a disability who have a job are not likely to compare their job performance only with other disabled workers but instead with all of their co-workers. Fine and Asch (2000) explain that a paraplegic woman “may be as likely to compare herself with other women her age, others of her occupation, others of her family, class, race or a host of other people and groups who function as (her) reference group” (p. 334).

5. **Having a disability means a person will need assistance.** This assumption comes from the history of “handicapped people” as helpless and dependent on others. In the 1930s, people with a disability were classified as “unemployable,” preventing them from being considered for jobs in federal and local work relief programs (Longmore, 2003). Based on this assumption, disabled people are not viewed as responsible for their disability, nor are they seen as capable of resolving difficulties created by their disability. Yet people with disabilities are only as dependent as the environment makes them. The blind person on the elevator may ask someone to push the button for the right floor unless the elevator panel also has floor numbers in Braille. A wheelchair user will have to bring friends or ask strangers for help getting past a flight of steps if there is no ramp allowing wheelchair access. People with severe cerebral palsy may have trouble communicating with others if they are not given access to a computer and trained to use it. Because of assumptions like these, advocates for people with disabilities have had to defend them aggressively and demand that they be given opportunities to achieve their goals.

For example, a young woman who was born without arms chose to attend a large Midwestern university and enrolled in the nursing program. Although she had an excellent academic record, the nursing faculty was opposed to accepting her based on concerns that the young woman would not be able to perform physical tasks required of nurses. When a campus disability advocate became involved, a compromise was reached. The young woman was admitted to the nursing program but would not be allowed to take licensure exams. This resolution was acceptable to the young woman; she had hoped to earn a nursing degree because of her interest in the subject matter. After graduation, the young woman wrote articles for nursing journals, based on her research and observations, eventually becoming an editor. Nursing faculty had not focused on what the young woman could do, nor had they anticipated this outcome; their focus had been on tasks the disability would prevent the young woman from doing.

One more example: Sharisa Kochmeister was born with severe cerebral palsy. As a child she was also diagnosed as severely mentally retarded before she learned to use a computer. Initially someone held her hand while she hunted for letters on the
keyboard; eventually, she could operate a computer independently. When she turned fifteen, her IQ was retested and her score was measured at 142. In a similar case, a teenager who had been diagnosed as mentally retarded was asked what it felt like before she learned to communicate with a computer. She replied, "(As if) I was a clown in a world that was not a circus" (Kliwer & Biklin, 1996, p. 90). These examples of change do not reflect a transformation in the ability of the people being labeled; rather, they reflect a change in opportunities for those who were labeled as well as a change in the assumptions of those responsible for the labeling.

What labels represent legitimate ways of identifying people?

Most Americans appear to believe that the "mentally retarded" label is a well-defined, scientifically determined, unambiguous way to categorize human beings: It is not. In the early 1900s, people with Down syndrome were considered profoundly retarded; today, it is estimated that 20% to 50% of people with Down syndrome are mildly retarded. In 1952, the American Psychological Association (APA) recommended institutionalization of people with IQs less than 50 who were considered severely retarded (Adelman, 1996). The current conclusion of the APA is that half of those with IQs of less than 50 can be considered moderately retarded and that neither moderate nor severely retarded individuals require continuous custodial care.

Another disability that professionals have been forced to reevaluate is cerebral palsy. In 1960, experts assumed that 75% of people with cerebral palsy were retarded. After some alternative methods of communication and assessment were developed, from adaptations for typewriters to special computers, assumptions of mental retardation diminished significantly (Kliwer & Biklin, 1996). These examples demonstrate why disability advocates are concerned about the labels given to people, especially children, and the consequences of such labeling.

What are some current controversies about labeling children?

Over the past forty years, studies have reported an overrepresentation of children of color among those labeled as needing special education services (Losen & Orfield, 2002). Overrepresentation means that children from a particular racial group are at least twice as likely to be labeled as white students are. For example, as we began the twenty-first century, African American children were still the most overrepresented racial group in diagnoses of mental retardation. According to Losen & Orfield (2002), black children were three times more likely to be given that label than white children. Parrish (2002) found that "In at least 45 states, black children in special education are extensively overrepresented in some categories" (p. 15). Parrish reported that American Indian children also tend to be overrepresented in special education, while Latino children are overrepresented in some states but underrepresented in others. As a further clarification, Parrish noted that when a racial group represents a significant part of a state’s population, it is even more likely that children from this group will be overrepresented in special education classes. For example, although Asian American/Pacific Islander children tend to be underrepresented in all special education categories in the United States as a whole, in Hawaii, where these children comprise 59% of all K–12 students, Asian American/Pacific Islander children are almost three and a half times more likely to be labeled mentally retarded (Parrish, 2002).

In addition to the negative attitudes fostered by such labels, there is some evidence of significant differences by race in how these labeled children are treated in schools. According to Fierros and Conroy (2002), in school districts with a large number of racial minority students, among the population of students identified as needing special education services, black students were more likely than white students to be placed in restrictive settings rather than being placed in regular classrooms. In addition, Osher, Woodruff, and Sims (2002) report that black students labeled as having emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) are far more likely to be suspended, expelled, or removed from schools. The consequences go beyond schools, as demonstrated by research on students labeled EBD in the United States finding that more than four times as many black students as white students end up in the juvenile justice system. In New Jersey alone, those black students labeled EBD were more than 16 times as likely to have had a “correctional placement” than white students labeled EBD (Osher, Woodruff, &
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Sims, 2002). This disparity betrays the schools’ fundamental purpose of providing a safe and appropriate setting for all students to learn. Students should come to school expecting to find an environment where they are encouraged to develop their abilities and receive support services when necessary to help them achieve academic success. When schools reinforce negative attitudes toward students with a disability, they reinforce the negative perceptions of those nondisabled people who continue to view disabled people as “not able.”

How can negative attitudes be changed?
The first thing that can be done is create labels that promote a more positive image. The use of people with disabilities began to be widely accepted in the 1970s as a substitute for the disabled and the handicapped (Linton, 1998). The term places people first to emphasize the humanity of the group and retains the word “disability” to acknowledge an existing mental or physical problem. Linton (1998) defined people with disabilities as referring to “people with behavioral or anatomical characteristics marked as deviant . . . that makes them targets of discrimination” (p. 12).

Although there is no agreement regarding the acceptability of alternative terms, there is agreement on the offensiveness of negative terms such as impaired, crippled, and handicapped. These are words that contribute to the perception of people with disabilities being not just “disabled” but “unable,” implying an inability to manage for themselves or to contribute to society. According to the World Health Organization, a disability is not a handicap. Disability refers to “a restriction of functional ability and activity caused by an impairment (e.g., hearing loss, reduced mobility),” whereas handicap generally is employed as a reference to “an environmental or attitudinal barrier that limits the opportunity for a person to participate fully in a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and cultural factors) for that individual” (Bernell, 2003, p. 41).

Imagine a woman in a wheelchair approaching a building. Her legs do not function well enough for her to walk; the wheelchair provides mobility. As she nears the steps of the building, she discovers it has no access ramp. Now she is handicapped. She has found a way to be mobile, but because of the insensitivity or prejudice of the architect or building owners, the lack of a ramp is a barrier that denies her and any wheelchair user access to the building.

Institutional Ableism

Institutional ableism is a consequence of established laws, customs, and practices that systematically discriminate against people with disabilities. A unique consequence for this minority group has been their placement in institutions in the United States, comparable only to nineteenth-century poorhouses for paupers. Poorhouses and poor farms have come and gone; yet institutions for people who have mental or physical disabilities remain, despite efforts in recent years to close them and to place people with disabilities into communities.

Why were people with disabilities placed in institutions?
The first institutions charged with caring for people with disabilities were hospices built within monasteries. An early reported example comes in the fourth century: a hospice for the blind at a monastery in Caesarea, now Turkey. According to the legend of St. Nicholas, as bishop of Mya in southwestern Turkey, he provided care for “idiots and imbeciles.” For his efforts he was named the patron saint of the mentally retarded, although that part of his history was lost in his transformation into the American Santa Claus (Winzer, 1997). As monasteries were built in Europe, many included hospices to care for poor, homeless, or disabled people. Using hospices to satisfy Christian mandates to
care for “the least of these” continued into the sixteenth century, when turmoil over church reforms created a schism termed the Reformation, resulting in Protestant churches as alternatives to the Catholic Church.

Even before the Reformation, the Catholic Church contributed to an increasingly negative attitude toward people with disabilities. St. Augustine sowed seeds for religious rejection when he refused to allow deaf people to become church members because of his literal interpretation of St. Paul (Romans 10:17): “Faith comes by hearing.” During the Middle Ages, as Europe was devastated by plague and pestilence, especially the Black Death, fear fostered a growing hostility toward people exhibiting strange appearances or odd behavior (Barzun, 2000).

With the Reformation, monasteries were abandoned or forcibly closed and inhabitants evacuated. Communities were confronted with the problem of disabled people and beggars wandering the streets. Not surprisingly, attitudes toward the newly released people became increasingly negative. Laws were passed that vagrants be whipped (Ribton-Turner, 1972). By the fifteenth century, the Catholic Church declared a virtual war on witches, which resulted in the arrests, torture, and deaths of a great many people who in some way were considered unusual or deviant. Evidence suggests that people who were mentally ill and people with disabilities were among the unfortunates serving as scapegoats.

The association with witchcraft often stemmed from people with mental retardation making odd comments or from mutterings of the mentally ill. Some citizens believed the strange talk was dialogue with the devil; others regarded the conversations as divinely inspired. Whether they talked with God or the devil, deviants were not tolerated on the streets. Some communities placed mentally retarded vagrants in the old city wall guard towers, which came to be called a “Fool’s Tower” or “Idiot’s Cage” (Winzer, 1997). In other communities, homeless people were charged with vagrancy, tortured, and expelled, or if they could work, they were forced into slavery (Ribton-Turner, 1972).

Reformation leaders John Calvin and Martin Luther did not question the prejudices behind this behavior; in fact, they contributed to them. According to Calvin, Satan possessed mentally retarded people; Luther believed Satan was responsible for fathering all mentally retarded children, and urged the parents of one mentally retarded child to drown it in a nearby river (Winzer, 1997).

When the centuries-old scourge of leprosy ended as the seventeenth century began, buildings used to quarantine lepers (leprosaria) became vacant. Communities found a solution to their dilemma of what to do with deviants: Europe initiated the great confinement to these newly christened “lunatic hospitals” (Foucault, 1989). Although the hospitals were initially used to house mentally ill people, they accepted “mental defectives,” including people with various physical and mental disabilities, and eventually amassed a wide assortment of “defectives.” Before long, only about 10% of inmates were considered insane in the average lunatic hospital. In addition to people with disabilities, other inmates included prostitutes, beggars, alcoholics, social dissidents, and people with syphilis (Winzer, 1997). Whereas hospices had protected disabled people from the wickedness of the world, lunatic hospitals protected the world from the wickedness of such morally, mentally, and physically deviant human beings.

It was apparent early on that hospitals could not provide treatment to rehabilitate inmates. The purpose of institutions was to remove defective people from society. Not surprisingly, the quality of “care” in such places was not good; rumors often circulated of inhumane treatment. In England, the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem was referred to as “Bethlehem,” which reduced to “Bedlam,” coining a word to describe chaotic conditions there. By the nineteenth century, reformers visiting lunatic hospitals were appalled by the horrible conditions: some inmates wandering around naked and shivering, others chained to beds, some sitting in their own excrement, many bitten by rats or other vermin roaming the grounds. Reformers advocated for “moral treatment” of people in the institutions: eliminating chains, giving patients work, and treating patients with respect to develop self-esteem (Foucault, 1989).

Moral treatment involved not defining patients as deviant so much as regarding their defects as conditions requiring accommodations for them to function more effectively. Foucault (1989) tells the story of a mentally ill man who refused to eat because he thought he was dead and he was certain that dead people did not eat. One night, institutional staff came to the patient’s bed looking pale,
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ashen, and dressed in clothing to simulate the look of a corpse. They brought in a table and some food, then sat down and began eating. When the patient asked why they were eating when they appeared to be dead, they replied that dead people had to eat like anyone else. They finished their meal and left. The next day the patient resumed eating. This approach was taken with patients who had mental or physical disabilities as well.

Instead of being defined as insurmountable deviance, disability gradually came to be regarded as a human condition; institutional staff began to provide accommodations to help individuals take better care of themselves and to function effectively with others. Although reforms were not universally applied, they constituted a practical alternative to the punitive treatment that had characterized previous institutional practices.

How were institutions for people with disabilities established in the United States?

When the United States entered the global community as a new nation, people with disabilities simply lived in communities, primarily cared for by their families, although some religious facilities also provided care. Their situations varied widely—from being employed to being the town fool or even a pariah whom the family hid from the community. In nineteenth-century America, attitudes toward people with disabilities were challenged. Americans were not to view people’s disabilities as an act of God but instead in a biological context: Rehabilitation was emphasized as the appropriate response.

Following the Civil War, a transformation of public attitudes seemed to be demonstrated by the construction of numerous institutions and residential schools that were often dedicated to a particular kind of disability. Institutionalizing people with disabilities was especially popular in urban areas, indicating a shift in responsibility for care from families and communities to the state as the nation moved into the twentieth century. Based on a biological view of human disability, the institutions were usually administered by people with medical training who claimed to use rehabilitative strategies. In reality, the function of institutions was usually custodial care—monitoring and restraining patients—reflecting ongoing negative American attitudes toward disabled people.

What evidence exists that negative attitudes prevailed in institutions and in society?

The negative attitude toward institutionalized patients is documented legal history. A 1913 Wisconsin law mandated the institutionalization of disabled people who constituted a “menace to society.” A similar law passed the following year in Texas stated that people with disabilities mingling freely in the community was “a most baneful evil,” describing people with disabilities as “defect(s)... [that] wound our citizenry a thousand times more than any plague... [they are] a blight on mankind” (Garrett History Brief, 2001, p. 72). Encouraged by the eugenics movement following World War I, every state in the United States passed laws singling out people with mental or physical disabilities for institutionalization. Some states went so far as to authorize the removal of children with disabilities from their homes, even against the wishes of parents.

With most disabled people confined to institutions, continuing prejudice was demonstrated in the 1930s when over thirty states enacted laws permitting involuntary sterilization of people in state funded institutions. Among the targets of this law were those identified as “feeble minded, idiots, morons, and mental defectives.” States justified their actions by claiming the need to eradicate the possibility of procreation for people who were such burdens on society (Garrett History Brief, 2001; Russell, 1998).

In Europe, German Nazis implemented a program of involuntary sterilization that was continued...
until the end of World War II. Subsequently, allies identified forced sterilization of people with disabilities for inclusion on the list of Nazi war crimes. Russell (1998) explained why it was deleted: “Allied authorities were unable to classify the sterilizations as war crimes, because similar laws had . . . recently been upheld in the United States” (p. 22).

People with disabilities who were institutionalized in the United States were largely ignored until 1972, when Geraldo Rivera exposed the appalling conditions at New York’s Willowbrook State School where “one hundred percent of all residents contracted hepatitis within six months of entering the institution. . . . Many lay on dayroom floors (naked) in their own feces” (Linton, 1998, p. 40). The description parallels conditions denounced by “moral treatment” reformers a century earlier, yet ten years after the Willowbrook scandal, problems persisted in American institutions. Linton (1998) cites a 1984 New York Times article about a community facility for physically and mentally disabled people in California that described staff serving spoiled food, not repairing malfunctioning toilets, and physically and sexually abusing patients.

**Are institutions for people with disabilities providing good care today?**

Although reduced in number, institutions for physically and mentally disabled people still exist despite the fact that national and state political leaders know they are harmful to the people in them. In 1996, a federal General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation of public institutions for mentally retarded people warned Congress of serious deficiencies in quality of care: “insufficient staffing, lack of active treatment and deficient medical and psychiatric care” (Garrett History Brief, 2001, p. 72). The GAO report described harm to residents including injuries, unnecessary illnesses, and physical degeneration—in a few instances the institutional “care” contributed to a resident’s death.

Some states attempted to eliminate institutions by passing “deinstitutionalization” laws, but this has not solved the problem. When institutions have closed, residents have often been relocated not to communities but to another form of institutional care—nursing homes. Care provided in nursing homes reportedly is no better, and is sometimes worse, than the care residents experienced in institutions (Russell, 1998).

**What is the alternative to placing people with disabilities in institutions?**

Instead of being placed in institutions, people with disabilities prefer to live in family homes or group homes in their communities. A 1996 federal court ruling found that some city zoning ordinances had limited or prevented the establishment of group homes in neighborhoods by including “density laws” restricting the number of “unrelated persons” in a house or the number of group homes within a certain area. Some cities have even passed so-called ugly laws that forbid people with an unsightly appearance from appearing in public (Garrett History Brief, 2001, p. 72). The irony of such ordinances is that placing disabled people in communities to receive care not only increases their quality of life, it is also more cost effective for taxpayers than providing care in nursing homes or institutions.

**What is the cost of care for people with disabilities?**

Taxpayers fund over 60% of the expenses for people with disabilities in nursing homes and institutions. Although people with disabilities overwhelmingly prefer to be cared for at home and require only minimal assistance, almost 2 million Americans with disabilities live in nursing homes at a cost of over $40,000 per person per year (Lefleur, 2009). According to Russell (1998), costs could total less than $10,000 per year to provide an individual with personal assistance services at home. State institutions are even more expensive: More than 75,000 people with developmental disabilities still live in state institutions at an average annual cost of

> If our brothers are oppressed, then we are oppressed. If they hunger, we hunger. If their freedom is taken away, our freedom is not secure.

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*Stephen Vincent Benet (1898–1943)*
more than $80,000 per person. Charlton (1998) estimated that the most expensive support system that could be created to provide adequate care for someone living in their own home within their community would cost no more than $30,000 per year.

Charlton (1998) reviewed numerous studies that consistently reported benefits for people with disabilities living in communities: “living at home, in a house or an apartment, is better psychologically, more fulfilling, and cheaper than living in nursing homes” (p. 47). By contrast, critics point out that nursing homes and institutions make substantial profits for private corporations while providing primarily low-wage jobs. As quoted in Business First, one private corporation providing “health care” said their three primary objectives were: “1. increase net profit, 2. increase net profit, and 3. increase net profit” (Russell, 1998, p. 103).

Advocates for normalization oppose confining disabled people in institutions. The concept refers to the implementation of policies and practices to help create life conditions and opportunities for disabled people that are at least as good as those of average citizens. Normalization promotes strategies for disabled people to live and work in communities, and it challenges nondisabled people to eliminate barriers that prevent disabled people from being involved in community life. Based on the concept of normalization, disability advocates help people with disabilities move out of institutions and into communities, and they have lobbied for legislation to protect the civil rights of disabled people living in communities. (See Figure 12.3.)

How do other countries respond to the needs of people with disabilities?

In 1995, the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee reported that the United States spent less on long-term disability benefits than several European countries (Russell, 1998). Germany and Austria both provide cash benefits to disabled people regardless of their financial resources. Those receiving benefits can spend the money however they wish, including hiring family members to provide care. In Germany, cash benefits are half what can be obtained in service benefits, but it is at the discretion of the recipient to determine which kind of benefits to accept. Human services personnel pay random visits to recipients to assess the adequacy of their care. In 2000, Austria provided benefits for 310,000 people funded by general tax revenues.
and Germany provided benefits for 1,280,000 people funded by a 1.7% tax on salaries and pensions, a cost shared by employers, employees, and retired workers (Batavia, 2002).

Austrian legislation has promoted hiring disabled workers, stipulating that for every twenty-five workers employed, one worker must be a person with a disability. If the company fails to meet this standard, it is assessed a fine of approximately $155 a month that it must continue to pay until it hires the required number of disabled workers. Money collected from fines is retained in an account from which employers can receive funds to make physical modifications necessary to employ workers with disabilities (Koppelman, 2001).

In France, benefits to people with disabilities are not as generous as in Austria and Germany, but they exceed those of the United States. Benefits are based on financial resources of recipients, with a maximum national benefit. Local French governments responsible for providing benefits are funded from general tax revenues that supported approximately 86,000 people in 2000. Local agency representatives make annual home visits to recipients to ensure that adequate services are being provided (Batavia, 2002).

How does the United States support people with disabilities who want to live independently?

In 1973, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program was created to assist people with disabilities. The means-tested program offers a range of $400 to $700 per month, but recipients must remain without other means of support to receive SSI funds. If recipients make extra money to be more financially secure, they are likely to lose the benefit.

In one case that exemplifies SSI policy, Lynn Thompson, a quadriplegic, was attempting to live on SSI payments of about $600 a month when she began earning extra income at home stuffing envelopes. After she reported her earnings, social security officials declared her income in excess of allowable limits and ordered her to return $10,000 of the benefits received or, if she couldn’t pay the money, her benefits would be terminated until that amount was withheld. Termination of her benefits meant Thompson could no longer afford to hire a personal care attendant and she would need to leave her home and enter a nursing home. Thompson fought to overturn this decision, but the legal battle dragged on. Ms. Thompson committed suicide rather than be forced into a nursing home (Russell, 1998).

Is there discrimination against people with disabilities living in communities?

People with disabilities who are fortunate enough not to be institutionalized also encounter discrimination in the community. Hahn (1988) described the problems:
Disabled persons have not only exhibited one of the highest rates of unemployment, welfare dependency, and poverty in the United States; but they also have experienced a more pervasive form of segregation in education, housing, transportation, and public accommodations than the most rigid policies of apartheid enacted by racist governments. (p. 26)

In addition to housing, already discussed, disabled people experience discrimination in four critical areas: jobs, mobility/accessibility, health care, and education.

Jobs Because of the shortage of men, women were hired for traditional male jobs during World War II; employment of people with disabilities also increased during the war. As was true for women workers, unemployment rates for disabled people increased after the war, as jobs were assigned to returning soldiers. The work performance of people with disabilities during the war proved that they not only wanted jobs, but they could perform their tasks competently. This lesson has apparently been lost on employers: Ongoing documentation reveals that people with disabilities continue to be discriminated against in hiring decisions.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), there are 41.2 million people with disabilities in the United States representing 15% of the total population. About 48% of disabled people were employed full time, yet a survey by the National Organization on Disability reported that 66% of working-age disabled adults want to work rather than rely on SSI benefits. Of disabled people who work, 80% are employed in sheltered workshops that hire only disabled workers for as little as 20% to 30% of the minimum wage, often earning as little as $11 a week. Although the unemployment rate was less than 4% in the late 1990s, unemployment for working-age disabled adults maintained the same range—from 65% to 71%—reaching a high of 80% in 2000 according to Harris poll data analyzed by Sowers, McLean, and Owens (2002).

In a case illustrating the difficulties of finding work, a disabled man in Maine with a PhD in chemistry asked the state agency for assistance in finding a job. The agency sent him to the Goodwill store to be trained to sort socks. Another case occurred in Rhode Island where the vocational rehabilitation agency refused to provide further education to a quadriplegic man, arguing that he was adequately taken care of by SSI benefits (Garrett History Brief, 2001). Longmore (2003) cited a study in which 40% of people with a disability who were unemployed or working only part time identified “employer bias” as a major factor in their difficulty finding full-time employment. Even when they are employed full time, people with disabilities may still encounter discrimination by being paid less than their co-workers who have similar responsibilities or by being hired for a position with few responsibilities and little chance for promotion. Given this kind of discrimination, it should come as no surprise that in the United States, almost a third of working-age adults with disabilities are living in poverty.

Mobility/Accessibility The ability of people in wheelchairs to function effectively in the community is affected by the existence of ramps, elevators, curb cuts, and wheelchair lifts on public buses. According to a Harris survey, 60% of people with disabilities report that their social, recreational, and employment opportunities are substantially limited due to lack of accessible public transportation. Accessibility problems have been cited as the reason why 40% of disabled people say they cannot participate in community activities such as attending church. Even buildings with ramps are not necessarily accessible. Many ramps are too narrow, too steep, or lack handrails. Theaters, sports facilities and other public settings may provide wheelchair accessible spaces that are segregated from the other seats, not allowing wheelchair users to sit with friends or colleagues (Longmore, 2003). Accessibility problems can also impede a disabled citizen’s right to vote. A 1996 study reported that almost 60% of New Hampshire’s polling places were not accessible to disabled people, and a national study found that almost half of people with disabilities in
their survey had experienced problems of accessibility at their polling places (Garrett History Brief, 2001).

Although the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) required public buildings to be accessible, most are still not accessible, and the ADA did not require accessibility for nonpublic buildings. A concept promoting accessibility to all buildings is termed “visitability”; advocates encourage the construction of homes, businesses, and other non-public buildings to accommodate people with disabilities. The primary accommodations required are level entryways, wide doorways, and an accessible bathroom. This concept not only benefits people with disabilities but their family, friends, and neighbors who want to interact with them (Kaminski et al., 2006). This idea is not new. In 1985, Mace proposed the universal design concept that advocates creating products capable of being used by all people and constructing environments that are accessible to everyone. A ramp instead of steps leading to the entrance of a building provides access for people with disabilities but also makes access easier for mothers with baby strollers or workers carrying heavy items. The concept of universal design is a means of improving a community for everyone.

Health Care According to Sulewski, Gilmore, and Foley (2006), people with disabilities spend more on health care than people without disabilities; therefore, access to health care is a major concern. People with disabilities often encounter difficulties in obtaining health insurance. The insurance industry openly uses personal health and genetic data in its review of potential clients. Russell (1998) cited one study reporting that 47% of applicants identified to be screened for “defects” were ultimately denied health insurance—even though no defects were found. In addition, Taylor (1998) found that disabled people are twice as likely as nondisabled people to report that they did not receive needed medical services during the previous year.

Because some people with disabilities need services and equipment not provided by private insurance, access to Medicaid is essential. Medicaid is the primary provider of health care for nearly 7 million people under age 65 who have disabilities (Sulewski, Gilmore, & Foley, 2006). People with disabilities often report that one of the main obstacles to seeking employment is the fear of losing Medicaid because taking a full-time job can jeopardize their federally funded health care. Once they are covered by an employer’s health care plan, they can lose their federally funded medical benefits. Often, it takes up to two years to reclaim and receive federally funded health care if an individual with a disability loses his or her job. Many choose to not work or to only work part-time for a salary that keeps them eligible for Medicaid. According to a 1998

**FIGURE 12.4**

In the 1980s, Berke Breathed’s “Bloom County” was one of the first comic strips to feature a character using a wheelchair.

Harris poll, one third of all disabled people who are unemployed chose not to work rather than risk violating their eligibility for Medicaid (Sulewski, Gilmore, & Foley, 2006).

Education Since the United States began, children with disabilities were kept at home or sent to segregated institutions. From 1930 to 1960, the number of children and youth with a disability increased significantly, and so did research on their needs. By the 1950s, public schools were allowed to establish special education programs for these students, and from 1948 to 1956, schools providing such programs increased by 83% (Osgood, 2005). Even so, the assumption persisted that a segregated setting was the best way to teach these students. In the 1960s, researchers coined the term “learning disability” and identified various conditions that interfered with a child’s ability to learn, and the ranks of disability activists grew. Following several court decisions and state legislation, the federal government passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) in 1975, requiring public schools to educate students with a disability in the “least restrictive environment.” Although the Act did not use the term “mainstreaming,” the idea that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive and most acceptable available environment had become the law of the land.

The problem that quickly emerged was that the concept of mainstreaming had different meanings for different people, including parents, teachers, and administrators. Some viewed mainstreaming as promoting the placement of students with disabilities into regular classes with support services to help them become academically successful; others argued that the “least restrictive environment” for academic achievement was occasionally a regular classroom, but more often a special education classroom where special accommodations could be made (Osgood, 2005). Research studies tended to support the position of disability advocates who insisted that students with physical and mental disabilities learned more when they were integrated into regular classes than when they were taught in separate classes (Hines, 2001; Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2000). Yet the pace of change was slow, and the degree of ongoing segregation for special education students was documented in a 1987 Massachusetts report that included a comment from a student with a disability who had graduated from high school. Reflecting on his school experience, he stated that he and his disabled peers were “completely unprepared for the real world . . . Believe me, a segregated environment just will not do as preparation for an integrated life” (Osgood, 2005, p. 162).

In the 1990s, disability advocates began arguing for the merger of regular education and special education both in schools and in teacher preparation programs. They had abandoned mainstreaming to lobby for inclusion or “full inclusion”—calling for a total integration of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms (Kavale & Forness, 2005). Their efforts were assisted by a series of court decisions, influenced by civil rights laws, that ruled in favor of families with disabled children and ordered schools to adapt regular classrooms to meet the needs of students with a disability (Osgood, 2005). Despite these rulings, the debate has continued to the present. Opponents argue that disabled students demand too much time from teachers and that it is unfair to nondisabled students (Morse, 2005). Advocates counter that teachers can utilize aides, peers, and classroom strategies to ensure that all students receive appropriate educational experiences. Although Gliona, Gonzales, and Jacobson (2005) argue that alternate placements (i.e., segregation) may provide a better learning environment to meet the needs of some disabled students, Linton (1998) insists that inclusion is more than a teaching approach, and that it is not just “an educational plan to benefit disabled children. It is a model for educating all children equitably” (p. 61). Despite these arguments, the reality is that serious problems persist in educating students with a disability. Orfield, Losen, Ward, and Swanson (2004) have reported that only 32% of students with disabilities are graduating from high school. Yet we should also acknowledge the progress that has been made over the last 40 years in educating students with disabilities. Osgood (2005) assessed the issue:

Most of this progress has been recorded with children who have mild disabilities. Representing almost 90 percent of the overall special education population, children identified as mildly disabled have been the foot soldiers in efforts to integrate regular classrooms, as their academic needs and classroom behavior supposedly demanded less in
the way of classroom adaptations, classroom disruption, or teacher time. (p. 194)

Studies report that children are curious and interested in human differences, that they do not demonstrate a fear of differences unless they are taught to do so (Coleman, 2006). Even so, disability activists contend that most problems for people with disabilities stem from the attitudes of the nondisabled. When they advocate for inclusion, they not only argue that integration benefits students with disabilities by confronting stereotypes and stigmatizing labels, but that the presence of students with disabilities can benefit nondisabled students by providing opportunities to develop attitudes and skills that will enable them to work with people who may be different from themselves (Sapon-Shevin, 1999). Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provided legal recourse against discrimination, disability advocates have argued that it is more effective to address the negative attitudes causing discrimination. For that reason, many believe that inclusion is the best strategy to improve attitudes and increase opportunities for people with disabilities.

How difficult is it to change people’s attitudes?

As Fiedler (2008) wrote, “Perhaps the greatest obstacle to school change efforts is the attitudes of the individuals who must implement the change” (p. 258). The effectiveness of school change efforts has varied according to the attitudes of the teachers and administrators involved; this is true for community change efforts as well. Posner (1979) described an incident from Israel illustrating the difficulties involved in changing attitudes. Two villages did not have enough orange pickers at harvest time, so they arranged for young men at a nearby institution for the mentally retarded to help with the harvest. Before the young men arrived, researchers came to the villages and conducted an attitude survey. The researchers reported that 66% of villagers said there should be no contact between retarded people and children; 68% thought retarded people should be permitted to work only in sheltered workshops; 95% said institutions were the best place for retarded people; 58% believed that retarded people should be forbidden to marry.

When the retarded workers came, they picked oranges with great care and an enthusiasm not often displayed by other workers. Workers were told that if fallen oranges had not been bruised they could be used; only the retarded men inspected oranges that had fallen or been dropped. The retarded men climbed to the tops of ladders to pick oranges from high branches; no other workers were willing to climb so high. As the days passed, townspeople invited the workers to join them for lunch and the retarded men played with the children from the village. When the harvest was over, the young men returned to their institution. The researchers returned to conduct a second attitude survey to see if changes had occurred in the attitudes of village residents. They found that the same 66% still believed there should be no contact between retarded people and children; the same 68% still thought retarded people should not work alongside others; the same 95% said retarded people should be in institutions, and the same 58% believed they should not marry. But please, all the villagers asked, will you make sure they send those nice young men back again next year?

But in the ideal world, my differences, though noted, would not be devalued. Nor would I. Society would accept my experience as “disability culture,” which would in turn be accepted as part of “human diversity.”... In such a world, no one would mind being called Disabled.

Carol Gill (Contemporary)

Our attitudes are resistant to change: Change occurs only when we first examine our attitudes for myths, misperceptions, or stereotypes. It is especially important for aspiring teachers to reflect on their attitudes because every teacher will teach children or youth with disabilities. But assessing personal attitudes is not only appropriate for teachers
but for others as well: It is equally important for employers who have the choice of hiring a person with a disability and for employees who may work with that disabled person. According to Williams (2003), one out of five Americans—about 52 million people—has a disability. We can make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities who live in our communities. It is a choice each of us must make. If made wisely and compassionately, that choice will be a force for change.

**Deviant/Deviancy** Someone whose appearance or behavior differs from the norm, from acceptable standards, in society

**Disability** A restriction of functional ability and activity caused by an impairment (such as hearing loss or reduced mobility) (Bernell, 2003)

**Eugenics** The study of agencies under social control that may improve or repair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally

**Handicap** An environmental or attitudinal barrier that limits the opportunity for a person to participate fully in a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and cultural factors) for that individual (Bernell, 2003)

**Inclusion** Integration of all students with a disability into regular education classrooms

**Individual ableism** Prejudiced attitudes and behavior against others based on the assumption that one’s level of ability is deviant from the norm, demonstrated whenever someone responds by saying or doing something degrading or harmful about persons whose ability is looked on as unacceptable

**Institutional ableism** Established laws, customs, and practices in a society that allow systematic discrimination against people with disabilities

**Mainstreaming** The responsibility of schools to educate all students, regardless of disability, in the least restrictive and most normally acceptable environment

**Normalization** Policies and practices that help create life conditions and opportunities for disabled people that are at least as good as those of average citizens

**People with disabilities** People with behavioral or anatomical characteristics marked as deviant, which identify them as targets for discrimination (Linton, 1998)

**Universal design** Designing and creating products and constructing environments that are accessible to everyone
Exercise #1 Group Home Discussion Activity

Directions: Imagine that you are a supervisor for people with various disabilities living in a group home. Identify activities listed below that a mentally retarded (MR), cerebral palsied (CP), epileptic (E), or physically disabled (PD) person should be permitted to do. Write the abbreviation for the particular disability next to each activity. If you feel that all people with the disabilities just listed should or should not be allowed to do the particular activity write “all.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Interpersonal Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engage in sexual activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use birth control devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have and raise children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Lifestyle Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Choose their own clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dress and look the way they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participate actively in the church of their choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plan their own leisure time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Engage in recreational activities of their choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Economic Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Choose the job they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Support themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Be financially independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enter into contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Live where they choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Rights and Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Vote in political elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Drive a car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Drink beer and/or liquor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have medical insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Be educated to their fullest potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Be held responsible for their actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise #2 Disability Awareness Activity

What is a disability? How much do we know about disabilities? How prevalent are our disabilities?

Part One: List all the disabilities that you can think of; you will be reminded of additional disabilities as you listen to the suggestions of others. Attempt to identify at least 50 different disabilities. (“Paraplegic” may be combined with “quadriplegic” for example, in order for there to be room for a wide representation.)

Part Two: Sort your disabilities list into three principal groups: physical, emotional, or physiological. (For example, multiple sclerosis is a physical degeneration of one’s muscular system; schizophrenia is commonly identified as a brain chemistry imbalance.) If you are uncertain of the category of a disability, discuss it with others. Recall from the chapter that disabilities may be permanent or temporary, evident and observable, or invisible.

Personal Insight Builder: Make three generalizations regarding how humans are different according to disability. Can you identify instances of unjustifiable discrimination against persons with disabilities? What attitudinal adjustments might be made within the general U.S. population regarding our attitudes toward persons with disabilities?

REFERENCES


Describes concerns, criticisms, and responses to labeling people in special education.

Discusses significant historical events as well as the intellectual contributions of those individuals who have had a lasting impact on the culture of the Western world.


Critiques the other articles in this issue that provide evidence or analysis supporting the idea that people with a disability represent an oppressed minority group.


Describes home care as an alternative to institutional care in the United States and other nations.


Reviews various definitions of disability and examines problems related to definitions and research methods in labor market research.


Describes the status of people with disabilities in various cultures and compares it with the treatment that people with disabilities in the United States receive.


Discusses the origin of the concept of stigma and analyzes the reasons why some differences in human beings are valued and others are stigmatized.


Provides information about the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act and updated statistics on complaints filed.


Explains how social differences such as disability, gender, race, and social class have been produced by and still operate within the context of global economic exploitation.


Discusses the need for teachers and parents to be advocates for people with disabilities and provides strategies, examples, and resources for being an effective advocate.


Addresses the question of whether or not disabled people constitute a minority group.


Provides a history of people with disabilities and deformities, describing how they were viewed in the past and how these perceptions have shaped contemporary attitudes.


Examined data from selected U.S. cities and found Latinos and Blacks overrepresented in special education and less likely to be educated in inclusive classrooms.


Examines reasons why people with disabilities are stigmatized, including explanations for widely held and erroneous assumptions about disabled people.


Describes perceptions of madness, the institutionalization of mentally ill people, and their treatment in such institutions from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century.


Presents historical and contemporary evidence of discrimination against disabled people.


Args that placing all people at some point along a continuum of disability reflects a discomfort with differences and is an attempt to minimize them.

Argues that the common view of alternate placements as always restrictive and referring to them as “segregation” is harmful to the goal of educating children with special needs.


Examines cross-cultural perceptions of people with a disability and provides historic examples of disabled people being valued for their differences.


Describes the history of special education, its current practices, and recommends principles for making decisions regarding future directions for special education.


Examines how public policy shaped the experiences and perceptions of people with disabilities.


Discusses research on inclusion and benefits for nondisabled and disabled students.


Reports the findings of a content analysis of 11 multicultural textbooks with regard to the extent and nature of their inclusion of disability culture and deaf culture.


Presents a case study of a voluntary visitability program in Irvine, California.


Explores the history of efforts to integrate students with disabilities into regular education classes and discusses current issues pertaining to ongoing integration efforts.


Describes changes in labeling people as mentally retarded in the past and currently, and the changing perspectives on independent living for those individuals who have been labeled.


Describes the history and philosophy of inclusion and successful classroom practices; the benefits of inclusion are described in Chapter 9, pp. 37–40.


Uses a personal example to discuss the inadequate social services available in the United States, and compares U.S. social services with social services in Austria.


Discusses the need for disability studies to understand the experience of disabled people as a minority group; defines ableism and other relevant terms in Chapter 2, pp. 8–33.


Discusses historical discrimination against people with disabilities in the media and in society and describes the evolution of the disability rights movement.

Reports on numbers of people with disabilities in nursing homes and those who want to be placed in communities.


Presents findings of past studies on overrepresentation of racial minorities in special education and summarizes issues related to this topic that are discussed in this book.


Challenges the advocates of inclusion by refuting some assumptions of the inclusion movement and describing difficulties inclusion can create for teachers and students.


Examines data revealing disparities of graduation rates for students of color compared to white students and includes narratives from students of color who dropped out of school.


Addresses issues related to overidentification of racial minorities in special education and the impact of effective and ineffective school interventions.


Explores the origins and evolution of the inclusion concept and the growth of advocacy for inclusion in the United States.


Presents numerous examples of the cultural life of deaf people and includes comments and anecdotes from individuals in the deaf community.


Discusses concepts of culture in Chapter 2, “Culture, Education and Schooling.”


Analyzes national data to consider under- and overrepresentation of students of color in special education and how this relates to funding of special education services.


Examines current evidence that attitudes in the United States reflect a “health chauvinist society” that is prejudiced against disabled people and blames them for having a disability.


Describes negative attitudes in the United States toward people who are mentally retarded and uses an incident from Israel to illustrate the difficulty of changing such attitudes.


Presents a conceptual framework for understanding disability identity and uses this framework to analyze research on disabilities.


Defines the components of culture, then discusses evidence and provides examples of how the deaf community has created a culture reflecting these components.


Describes the history of societal responses to vagrancy primarily in England, but with chapters on Russia, Turkey, and countries in Western Europe (first published in 1887).


Examines historical examples of the oppression of disabled people and contemporary issues concerning poverty, institutionalization, and denial of civil rights.


Describes three waves of the disability movement with professionalism superseded by the parent movement that is now being challenged by those promoting self-advocacy.


Explains why diversity is being promoted in the corporate world, the benefits of diversity, and principles for being an effective manager of diverse employees.


Examines the relationship between language and behavior and describes how rhetorical analysis can be an aid for people with disabilities as they define themselves.


Describes the experiences of disabled people from ancient times including how they were portrayed in literature and the evolution of institutions to care for them.


Analyzes the role of ideology and concepts of deviancy in shaping attitudes toward disabled people; describes how the principle of normalization could change human services.