1 Foundations of Multicultural Education

Equality is the heart and essence of democracy, freedom, and justice.

A. Philip Randolph, Civil Rights Leader, 1942

As you read this chapter, you should be able to:

- Acknowledge the diversity of students in today's schools.

- Examine the role that culture plays in the lives of students and their families.

- Consider whether cultural pluralism is a reasonable and achievable goal in the classroom.

- Recognize why knowing your students is so important to effective instruction.

- Identify the obstacles to creating a just and equal classroom.

- Describe characteristics of multicultural education in the classroom.

You are just beginning your first teaching position in a nearby urban area. Like many new teachers in an urban area, you were offered the job only a few weeks before school started. You had never been to that part of the city but were sure you could make a difference in the lives of students there. You quickly learn that many students have single parents, many of whom work two jobs to make ends meet. Almost all of the students are eligible for free lunch. The families of some students do not speak English at home, but the principal says the students speak English. You are disappointed in the condition of the school, and your classroom in particular, but have been assured it will be repainted during one of the vacation periods.

When students arrive on the first day, you are not surprised that a large proportion of them are from families who emigrated from Central America during the past two decades. The population includes some African American students and a few European American students. You did not realize that the class would include a student who had just moved from Bulgaria and spoke no English and that the native language of two students was Farsi. You have taken a few Spanish courses but know little or nothing about the languages or cultures of Bulgaria and Iran. You wonder about the boy with the black eye but guess that he has been in a fight recently.

| REFLECTIONS |

1. What assumptions about these students and their academic potential did you make as you read this brief description?

2. What kinds of challenges are you likely to confront during the year?

3. What do you wish you had learned in college to help you be a better teacher in this school?

1

Diversity in the Classroom

Educators today are faced with an overwhelming challenge to prepare students from diverse populations and backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and a world in which some groups receive greater societal benefits than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, religion, ability, geography, or age. Schools of the future will become increasingly diverse. Demographic data on birthrates and **immigration** indicate that the numbers of Asian American, Latino, and African American children are increasing. Over 40% of students in P–12 schools today are students of color (Aud et al., 2010). By 2020, students of color are projected to represent nearly half of the elementary and secondary populations. However, the race and sex of their teachers match neither the student population nor the general population: 83% of the teachers are European American, as shown in Figure 1.1. In elementary schools, 85% of the teachers are female. Teachers at the secondary level, compared with the elementary level, are more likely to be male; female teachers comprise 58% of the teachers at this level (Aud et al., 2010).

In 2008 Latinos, Asian Americans, American Indians, and African Americans already comprised more than half of the public school student populations in Arizona (55.6%), California (72.1%), the District of Columbia (94%), Florida (53%), Hawaii (81%), Louisiana (52%), Maryland (54%), Mississippi (54%), Nevada (58%), New Mexico (71%), and Texas (66%) (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Students of color represent three of four students in many of the nation's largest school districts (Sable, Plotts, & Mitchell, 2010). Although the U.S. Census Bureau (2010k) reports that only 20% of U.S. children live below the official poverty level, 45% of all public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs in the nation's schools (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). African American and Latino students are more likely than other students to be concentrated in high-poverty schools (Aud et al., 2010). The number

Figure 1.1 Pan-Ethnic and Racial Diversity of K–12 Teachers and Students: 2008.
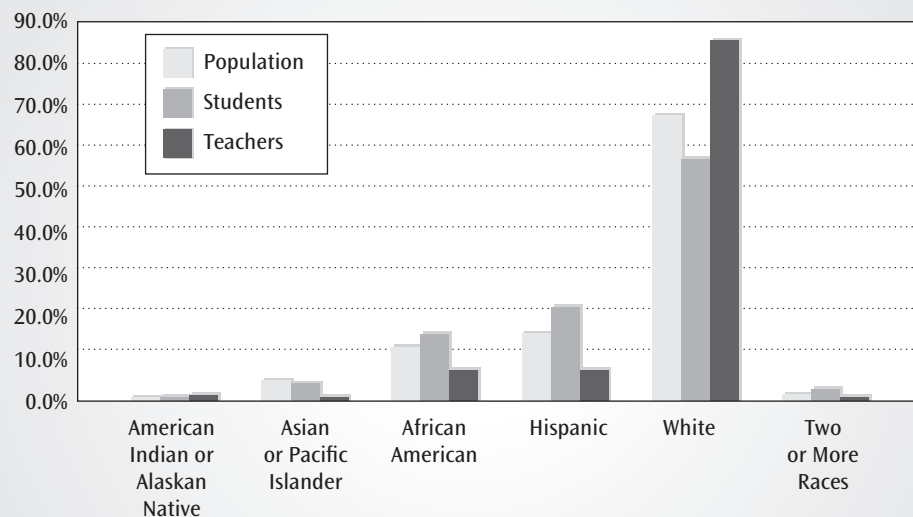
Source: Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Drake, L. (2010). *The condition of education 2010* (NCES 2010-028). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

of students with disabilities who are being served by special programs has increased from 4.3 million in 1987 to 6.5 million, or 30% of the school population, in the 2008–09 school year (Snyder & Dillow, 2011).

It is not only ethnic and racial diversity that is challenging schools. During the past 40 years, new waves of immigrants have come from parts of the world unfamiliar to many Americans. With them have come their religions, which seem even stranger to many Americans than the new immigrants. While small groups of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs have been in the country for many decades, only recently have they and their religions become highly visible. Even Christians from Russia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and the Philippines bring their own brands of worship to denominations that have strong roots in this country. The United States has not only become a multicultural nation, it has also become a multireligious society. In earlier years, most religious minority groups maintained a low and almost invisible profile. As the groups have become larger, they have become more visible, along with their houses of worship.

These religious differences raise a number of challenges for educators. The holidays to be celebrated must be considered, along with religious codes related to the **curriculum,** appropriate interactions of boys and girls, dress in physical education classes, and discipline. Immigrant parents value the importance of education for their children, but they do not always agree with the school's approaches to teaching and learning or accept the public school's secular **values** as appropriate for their family. Values are the qualities that parents find desirable and important in the education of their children, and include areas such as morality, hard work, and caring, often with religious overtones. Working collaboratively with parents and communities will become even more critical in providing education equitably to all students.

Understanding the cultural setting in which the school is located will be very helpful in developing effective instructional strategies that draw on the cultural background and experiences of students and the community. You should help students affirm their own cultures while learning that people across **cultures** have many similarities. In addition, students should become aware of cultural differences and inequalities in the nation and in the world.

Teachers will find that students have individual differences, even though they may appear to be from the same cultural group. These differences extend far beyond intellectual and physical abilities. Students bring to class different historical backgrounds, religious beliefs, and day-to-day experiences that guide the way they behave in school. The cultures of some students will be mirrored in the school culture. For others, the differences between home and school cultures will cause dissonance unless the teacher can integrate the cultures of the students into the curriculum and develop a supportive environment for learning. If the teacher fails to understand the cultural factors in addition to the intellectual and physical factors that affect student learning and behavior, it will be difficult to help students learn.

Multicultural education is an educational strategy in which students' cultures are used to develop effective classroom instruction and school environments. It supports and extends the concepts of culture, diversity, equality, social justice, and democracy into the school setting. An examination of these concepts and their practical applications in schools will lead to an understanding of the development and practice of multicultural education.

Culture

Culture defines who we are. It influences our knowledge, beliefs, and values. It provides the blueprint that determines the way we think, feel, and behave. What appears as the natural and

only way to learn and to interact with others is determined by our culture. Generally accepted and patterned ways of behavior are necessary for a group of people to live together, and culture imposes order and meaning on our experiences. It allows us to predict how others will behave in certain situations.

Culturally determined norms provide the dos and don'ts of appropriate behavior within our culture. Although we are comfortable with others who share our culture because we know the meanings of their words and actions, we often misunderstand the cultural cues of people from different cultures. Culture is so much a part of us that we fail to realize that not everyone shares our way of thinking and behaving. This may be, in part, because we have never been in cultural settings different from our own. This lack of knowledge often leads to our responding to differences as personal affronts rather than simply cultural differences. These misunderstandings may appear insignificant to an observer, but they can be important to participants. Examples include how loud is too loud, how late one may arrive at an event, and how close one can stand to another without being rude or disrespectful. Teachers may misinterpret the actions and voices of their students if they do not share the same culture.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

We learn our culture from the people who are closest to us—our parents or caretakers. The ways that we were held, fed, bathed, dressed, and talked to as babies are culturally determined and begin the process of learning the family's culture. Culture impacts how we dress, what we eat, how we speak, and what we think (Ryan, 2010). The process continues throughout our lives as we interact with members of our own and other cultures.

Two similar processes interact as we learn how to act in society: **enculturation** and **socialization**. Enculturation is the process of acquiring the characteristics of a given culture and becoming competent in its language and ways of behaving and knowing. Socialization is the general process of learning the social norms of the culture. Through these processes, we internalize social and cultural rules. We learn what is expected in social roles, such as mother, husband, student, and child, and in occupational roles, such as teacher, banker, plumber, custodian, and politician. Enculturation and socialization are processes initiated at birth by parents, siblings, nurses, physicians, teachers, and neighbors. They demonstrate and reward children and other adults for acceptable behaviors. We learn the patterns of our culture and how to behave by observing and participating in the culture in which we are raised.

Because culture is so internalized, we tend to confuse biological and cultural heritage. Our cultural heritage is not innately based on the culture into which we are born. For

Our cultures are adapted to the environments in which we live and work. While the environment in rural areas is characterized by space and clean air, urban dwellers adapt to smog, crowded conditions, and public transportation.
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example, Vietnamese infants adopted by Italian American, Catholic, middle-class parents will share a cultural heritage with middle-class Italian American Catholics rather than with Vietnamese. Observers, however, may continue to identify these individuals as Vietnamese Americans, because of their physical characteristics and a lack of knowledge about their cultural experiences.

Another characteristic of culture is that it is shared. Shared cultural patterns and customs bind people together as an identifiable group and make it possible for them to live together and function with ease. The shared culture provides us with the context for identifying with a particular group. Although there may be some disagreement about certain aspects of the culture, there is a common acceptance and agreement about most aspects.

Actually, most points of agreement are outside our realm of awareness. For example, we do not usually realize that the way we communicate with each other and the way we raise children are culturally determined. Not until we begin participating in a second culture do we recognize differences among cultural groups.

Culture is also adaptive. Cultures accommodate environmental conditions, available natural and technological resources, and social changes. For example, Eskimos, who live with extreme cold, snow, ice, seals, and the sea, develop a culture different from that of Pacific Islanders, who have limited land, unlimited seas, and few mineral resources. The culture of urban residents differs from that of rural residents, in part, because of the resources available in the different settings. The culture of oppressed groups differs from that of the dominant group because of power relationships within society.

Finally, culture is a dynamic system that changes continuously. For example, a Japanese American who learned Japanese from his grandparents will be considered old-fashioned when he communicates in Japanese with new immigrants. Some cultures undergo constant and rapid change; others are very slow to change. Some changes, such as a new word or new hairstyle, may be relatively minor and have little impact on the culture as a whole. Other changes have a dramatic impact as occurs when new technology such as the smartphone is introduced into a culture, producing changes far broader than the technology itself. Such changes may also alter traditional customs and beliefs. For example, the use of the computer has led to changes in the way we communicate with each other for business and personal purposes. It has even changed the way some people meet each other. Instead of blind dates, they are matched by a computer dating service with people they may want to meet.

MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURE

The cultural patterns of a group are determined by how the people organize and view the various components of culture. Culture is manifested in an infinite number of ways through social institutions, lived experiences, and our fulfillment of psychological and basic needs. To understand how extensively our lives are affected by culture, let's examine a few of these manifestations.

Our values are initially determined by our culture. They influence the importance of prestige, status, pride, family loyalty, love of country, religious belief, and honor. Status symbols differ across cultures. For many families in the United States, accumulation of material possessions is a respected status symbol. For others, the welfare of the extended family is of utmost importance. These factors, as well as the meaning of morality and immorality, the use of punishment and reward, and the need for higher education are determined by the value system of our culture.

Culture also manifests itself in nonverbal communication patterns. The meaning of an act or an expression must be viewed in its cultural context. The appropriateness of shaking hands, bowing, or kissing people on greeting them varies across cultures. Culture also determines the manner of walking, sitting, standing, reclining, gesturing, and dancing. We must remind ourselves not to interpret acts and expressions of people from a different cultural group as wrong or inappropriate just because they are not the same as our own. These behaviors are culturally determined.

Language itself is a reflection of culture and provides a special way of looking at the world and organizing experiences that is often lost in translating words from one language to another. Many different sounds and combinations of sounds are used in the languages of different cultures. Those of us who have tried to learn a second language may have experienced difficulty in verbalizing sounds that were not part of our first language. Also, diverse language patterns found within the same language group can lead to misunderstandings. For example, one person's "joking" is heard by others as serious criticism or abuse of power; this is a particular problem when the speaker is a member of the dominant group and the listener is a member of an oppressed group or vice versa.

Although we have discussed only a few daily patterns determined by culture, they are limitless. Among them are relationships of men and women, parenting, choosing a spouse, sexual relations, and division of labor in the home and society. These patterns are shared by members of the culture and often seem strange and improper to nonmembers.

ETHNOCENTRISM

Because culture helps determine the way we think, feel, and act, it becomes the lens through which we judge the world. As such, it can become an unconscious blinder to other ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Our own culture is automatically treated as innate. It becomes the only natural way to function in the world. Even common sense in our own culture is naturally translated to common sense for the world. Other cultures are compared with ours and are evaluated by our cultural standards. It becomes difficult to view another culture as separate from our own—a task that anthropologists attempt when studying other cultures.

This inability to view other cultures as equally viable alternatives for organizing reality is known as **ethnocentrism**. Although it is appropriate to cherish one's culture, members sometimes become closed to the possibilities of difference. These feelings of superiority over other cultures can become problematic in interacting and working effectively and equitably with students and families of other cultures. Our inability to view another culture through its own cultural lens prevents an understanding of the second culture. This inability can make it impossible to function effectively in a second culture. By overcoming one's ethnocentric view of the world, one can begin to respect other cultures and even learn to function comfortably in more than one cultural group.

Debate / Should Patriotism Be a School Requirement?

What does it mean to be an American? Many schools are revitalizing the teaching of patriotism in elementary schools. First graders in some schools are being taught to love their country along with reading and writing. Green-briar East Elementary School in Fairfax County outside of Washington, DC, hosts an annual Patriotic Salute in which their diverse student population sings "God Bless America," "This Land Is Your Land," and "We're Glad We Live in the U.S.A." Patriotic programs have included essay contests on the subject of being an American and assemblies to honor veterans. Other schools avoid interjecting patriotism into their curriculum, viewing it as the student's personal responsibility.

At times of crisis such as 9/11 and armed conflicts with other nations, state legislators and school board members are sometimes inclined to require students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the national anthem, or participate in patriotic activities on a daily or other regular basis. However, these practices begin to infringe on the rights of groups and do not have unanimous support in all communities. For instance, the Supreme Court declared early last century that Jehovah Witnesses students could not be forced to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Do you think patriotism should be required in schools?

FOR	AGAINST
■ Students need to understand what it means to be American.	■ Civics instruction should be about personal responsibility, not instilling patriotism.
■ Schools have an obligation to help students embrace American democracy.	■ Democracy is about making informed, thoughtful choices.
■ Students need to learn to appreciate the United States.	■ Loving your country is not something that should be indoctrinated.

| QUESTIONS |

1. Why do some school districts feel obligated to push patriotism in their schools?

2. How might schools address issues of good citizenship without offending parents who find the focus on patriotism inappropriate?

3. What do you think is an appropriate balance between helping students be good citizens and overtly pushing patriotism?

Source: Kalita, S. M. (2004, June 8). A blending of patriotism, native pride: In diverse Fairfax school, civics starts in 1st grade. *Washington Post,* p. B.1.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

"Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins." This North American Indian proverb suggests the importance of understanding the cultural backgrounds and experiences of others, rather than judging them by one's own standards. The principle of cultural relativism is to see a culture as if one were a member of the culture. In essence, it is an attempt to view the world through another person's cultural lens. It is an acknowledgment that another person's way of doing things, while perhaps not appropriate for us, may be valid for him or her. This ability becomes essential in the world today as countries and cultures become more interdependent. In an effort to maintain positive relationships with the numerous cultural groups in the world, we cannot afford to ignore other cultures or to relegate them to an inferior status.

Within our own boundaries are many cultural groups that historically have been viewed and treated as inferior to the dominant culture that has been the basis for most of our institutions. These intercultural misunderstandings occur even when no language barrier exists and when large components of the major culture are shared by the people involved. These misunderstandings often happen because those in one group are largely ignorant about the culture of another group and give the second culture little credibility. One problem is that members of one group are, for the most part, unable to describe their own cultural system, let alone another. These misunderstandings are common among the various groups in this country and are accentuated by differential status based on race, gender, class, language, religion, and ability.

Cultural relativism suggests that we need to learn more about our own culture than is commonly required. That must be followed by study about, and interaction with, other cultural groups. This intercultural process helps one know what it is like to be a member of the second culture and to view the world from that point of view. To function effectively and comfortably within a second culture, that culture must be learned.

THE DOMINANT CULTURE

U.S. political and social institutions have evolved from an Anglo-Saxon or Western European tradition. The English language is a polyglot of the languages spoken by the various conquerors and rulers of Great Britain throughout history. The legal system is derived from English common law. The political system of democratic elections comes from France and England. The middle-class value system has been modified from a European system. Even our way of thinking, at least the way that is rewarded in school, is based on Socrates' linear system of logic.

Formal institutions, such as governments, schools, social welfare, banks, and businesses, affect many aspects of our lives. Because of the strong Anglo-Saxon influence on these institutions, the major cultural influence on the United States, particularly on its institutions, has been white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant (WASP). But no longer is the dominant group composed only of WASPs. Instead, many members of the ethnically diverse middle class have adapted traditionally WASP characteristics and values that provide the framework for the dominant culture.

Although most of our institutions still function under the strong influence of their WASP roots, many other aspects of American life have been influenced by the numerous cultural groups that have come to comprise the U.S. population. Think about the different foods we eat, or at least try: Chinese, Indian, Mexican, soul food, Italian, Caribbean, and Japanese. Young people of many cultures choose clothing that is influenced by hip-hop and black culture. But

Members of Congress do not yet represent the diversity of the nation's population.
© Jeff Malet Photography/Newscom

more important are the contributions made to society by individuals from different groups in the fields of science, the arts, literature, athletics, engineering, architecture, and politics.

Although the United States has an agrarian tradition, the population now is primarily located in metropolitan areas and small towns. The country has mineral and soil riches, elaborate technology, and a wealth of manufactured goods. Mass education and mass communication are ways of life. Americans are regulated by clocks and calendars, rather than by seas and the sun. Time is used to organize most activities of life. Most Americans are employees whose salaries or wages are paid by large, complex, impersonal institutions. Work is done regularly, purposefully, and sometimes grimly. In contrast, play is fun—an outlet from work. Money is the denominator of exchange. Necessities of life are purchased rather than produced. Achievement and success are measured by the quantity of material goods purchased. Religious beliefs are concerned with general morality.

The overpowering value of the dominant group is **individualism,** which is characterized by the belief that every individual is his or her own master, is in control of his or her own destiny, and will advance or regress in society only according to his or her own efforts (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2008). This individualism is grounded in the Western worldview that individuals can control both nature and their destiny. Traits that emphasize this core value include industriousness, ambition, competitiveness, self-reliance, independence, appreciation of the good life, and the perception of humans as separate from, and superior to, nature. The acquisition of such possessions as the latest technology gadgets, cars, boats, and homes measures success and achievement.

Another core value is **freedom**, which is defined by the dominant group as not having others determine their values, ideas, or behaviors (Bellah et al., 2008). Relations with other people inside and outside the group are often impersonal. Communications may be very direct or confrontational. The nuclear family is the basic kinship unit, but many members of the

dominant group rely more on associations of common interest than on family ties. Values tend to be absolute (e.g., right or wrong, moral or immoral) rather than ranging along a continuum of degrees of right and wrong. Personal life and community affairs are based on principles of right and wrong, rather than on shame, dishonor, or ridicule. Youthfulness is emphasized in advertisements and commercials. Men and women use Botox and have plastic surgery to try to maintain their youthfulness. Many U.S. citizens, especially if they are middle class, share these traits and values to some degree. They are patterns that are privileged in institutions such as schools. They are values to which the dominant society expects all citizens to adhere.

Many groups that immigrated during the twentieth century have become acculturated or have adopted the dominant group's cultural patterns. Although some groups have tried to maintain their original culture, it is usually in vain as children go to school and participate in the larger society. Continuous and firsthand contacts with the dominant group usually result in subsequent changes in the cultural patterns of either or both groups. The rapidity and success of the acculturation process depends on several factors, including location and discrimination. If a group is spatially isolated and segregated (whether voluntarily or not) in a rural area, as is the case with many American Indians on reservations, the acculturation process is very slow. Discrimination against members of oppressed groups can make it difficult for them to acculturate when they choose to do so.

The degree of acculturation is determined, in part, by individuals or families as they decide how much they want to dress, speak, and behave like members of the dominant group. In the past, members of many groups had little choice if they wanted to share the American dream of success. Many people have had to give up their native languages and behaviors or hide them at home. However, acculturation does not guarantee acceptance by the dominant group. Most members of oppressed groups, especially those of color, have not been permitted to assimilate fully into society even though they have adopted the values and behaviors of the dominant group.

Pluralism in Society

Although many similarities exist across cultures, differences exist in the ways people learn, the values they cherish, their worldviews, their behavior, and their interactions with others. There are many reasonable ways to organize our lives, approach a task, and use our languages and dialects. It is when we begin to see our cultural norms and behaviors not just as one approach, but as superior to others, that differences become politicized.

Differing and unequal power relations have a great impact on individuals' and groups' ability to define and achieve their own goals. These differences among and within groups can lead not only to misunderstandings and misperceptions, but also to conflict. Cultural differences sometimes result in political alliances that respond to the real or perceived presence of domination or subordination faced by a group. The result may be strong feelings of patriotism or group solidarity that expand into armed conflicts across nations, tribes, religious communities, or ethnic groups. Feelings of superiority of one's group over another are sometimes reflected in anti-Semitic symbols and actions, cross burnings, gay bashing, and sexual harassment.

Conflicts between groups are usually based on the groups' differential status and value in society. The alienation and marginalization that many powerless groups experience can lead to their accentuating their differences, especially to separate themselves from the dominant group. Groups sometimes construct their own identities in terms of others. For example,

European Americans often do not think of themselves as white, except as it makes them different from Latinos or African Americans. Males define themselves in opposition to females. Many European American men have been socialized to see themselves as being at the center of a world in which they are privileged in relation to women and people of color.

By developing an understanding of differences and **otherness**, we can begin to change our simplistic binary approaches of us/them, dominant/subordinate, good/bad, and right/wrong. We begin to realize that a plurality of truths is appropriate and reasonable. We seek out others for dialogue and understanding, rather than speak about and for them. We can begin to move from exercising power over others to sharing power with them.

ASSIMILATION

Assimilation occurs when a group's distinctive cultural patterns either become part of the dominant culture or disappear as the group adopts the dominant culture. **Structural assimilation** occurs when the dominant group shares primary group relationships with the second group, including membership in the same cliques and social clubs; members of the two groups intermarry; and the two groups are treated equally within society. Assimilation appears to be relevant for voluntary immigrants, particularly if they are white, but does not apply equally to **involuntary immigrants**, who did not choose to emigrate, but were forced to through slavery or other means. Many of these families have been in the country for generations and yet are not allowed to fully assimilate, especially at the structural level.

White European immigrants usually become structurally assimilated within a few generations after arriving in this country. Marriage across groups is fairly common across white ethnic groups and Judeo-Christian religious affiliations, and it is growing across other groups and races. More than two of three Asian Americans and half of Latinos marry outside of their group. However, only 7% of whites and 17% of African Americans were marrying outside their groups in 2008 (Lee & Bean, 2010). If the assimilation process is effective, an immigrant group becomes less distinct from the dominant group and, in the process, changes the dominant group.

Schools historically have promoted assimilation, teaching English and the U.S. culture to new immigrants. Until 30–40 years ago, students of color would have rarely seen themselves in textbooks or learned the history and culture of their group in the classroom. Even today, the curriculum is contested in some communities when families do not see their cultures and values represented. In contrast, school boards in some communities have banned ethnic studies and a focus on any group other than European Americans, which they believe represents the common culture and norms that all students should know and adopt. When national history standards were being developed in the early 1990s, the historians involved proposed a multicultural curriculum that celebrated the similarities and differences of the ethnic groups that comprise the United States. Some very influential and powerful individuals and groups accused the project of promoting differences that would lead to divisiveness among groups and would undermine national unity and patriotism. These traditionalists were so outraged by the proposed multicultural curriculum that the standards were presented to Congress, which condemned them by a vote of 99 to 1 (Symcox, 2002).

CULTURAL PLURALISM

The theory of **cultural pluralism** describes a society that allows multiple distinctive groups to function separately and equally without requiring any assimilation into the dominant society. Some immigrant groups have assimilation as their goal; others try to preserve their native

cultures. Refusing or not being permitted to assimilate into the dominant United States culture, many immigrants and ethnic groups maintain their own ethnic communities and enclaves in areas of the nation's cities, such as Little Italy, Chinatown, Harlem, Koreatown, East Los Angeles, and Little Saigon. The suburbs also include pockets of families from the same ethnic group. Throughout the country are small towns and surrounding farmlands where the population comes from the same ethnic background, all the residents being African American, German American, Danish American, Anglo American, or Mexican American. American Indian nations within the United States have their own political, economic, and educational systems. For most American Indians, however, the economic, political, and educational opportunities do not approach equality with the dominant group.

The members of these communities may be culturally encapsulated in that most of their primary relationships, and many of their secondary relationships, are with members of their own ethnic group. Cross-cultural contacts occur primarily at the secondary level in work settings and political and civic institutions. In segregated communities, families may not have the opportunity to interact with members of other ethnic groups, who speak a different language or dialect, eat different foods, or have different values. They may learn to fear or denigrate members of other ethnic groups. Many European Americans live in segregated communities in which they interact only with others who share the same culture. Most people of color are forced out of their ethnic encapsulation to try to achieve social and economic mobility. Many of their secondary relationships are with members of other ethnic groups at work, school, or shopping centers.

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism allows different cultural groups to maintain their unique cultural identities while participating equally in the dominant culture. Multiculturalism is possible in a nation that acknowledges its cultural diversity and recognizes the advantages of cross-cultural interactions and cooperative organizational processes (Lewis, 2008). People are not required to give up their unique and distinct cultural identities to be successful in the dominant culture. Diversity in the workplace, school, university, or community is valued and affirmatively sought. It allows individuals to choose membership in the cultural and social groups that best fit their identities without fear of ostracism or isolation from either their original or their new group. Lewis (2008) characterizes multiculturalism as liberating "individual and groups from the extremes of homogenized and collective identities," producing "a more open and respectful acceptance of cultural difference, both within and necessarily outside the borders of nation" (pp. 298–299).

A society that supports multiculturalism promotes the retention of diverse ethnic and religious group identities. Some citizens believe that a societal goal should be the integration of diverse groups and the promotion of more equality across groups. Others believe that individuals should be able to maintain their ethnic identities while participating in a common culture. These beliefs are not necessarily mutually exclusive; for example, society could be integrated, but members would not be required to relinquish their ethnic identities. At the same time, an integrated society may lead to greater assimilation in that primary contacts across ethnic groups are more likely.

Identifying the degree of students' assimilation into the dominant culture may be helpful in determining appropriate instructional strategies and providing authentic learning activities that relate to the lived experiences of students. The only way to know the importance of

cultural membership in the lives of students is to listen to them. Familiarity and participation with the community from which students come also help educators know students and their families.

Cultural Identity

Groups in the United States have been called **subsocieties** or **subcultures** by sociologists and anthropologists because they exist within the context of a larger society or culture in which political and social institutions are shared (Ryan, 2010). These groups provide the social and cultural identity for their members, allowing them to have distinctive cultural patterns related to their group memberships while sharing some patterns with members of the dominant culture. At the same time, there is no essential or absolute identity such as female or male, American or recent immigrant, or Buddhist or Jew. Our identities in any single group are influenced by our historical and lived experiences and memberships in other groups.

Numerous groups exist in most nations, but the United States is exceptionally rich in the many distinct groups that make up the population. Group identity is based on traits and values learned as part of one's ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, native language, geographic region, place of residence (e.g., rural or urban), and abilities or exceptional conditions, as shown in Figure 1.2. Each of these groups has distinguishable cultural patterns shared among all who identify themselves as members of that particular group. Although they share certain characteristics of the dominant culture with most of the

Figure 1.2   Cultural identity is based on membership in multiple groups that continuously interact and influence each other. Identity within these groups is affected by interaction with the dominant group and power relations among groups in society.
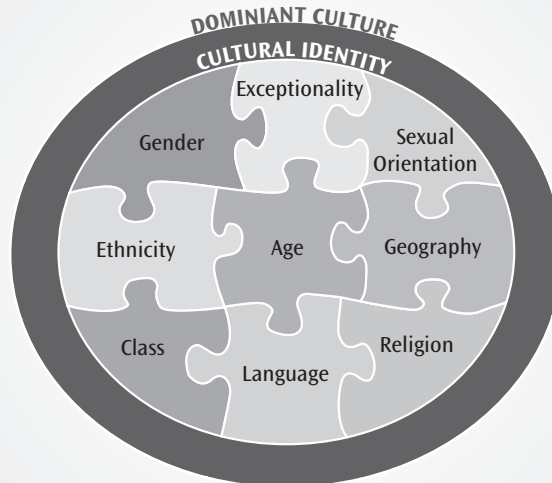
Source: Adapted from Johnson, J. A., Musial, D. L., et al. (2005). *Introduction to the Foundations of American Education* (13th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Copyright © 2005 Pearson Education. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

U.S. population, members of these groups also have learned cultural traits, discourse patterns, ways of learning, values, and behaviors characteristic of the different groups to which they belong.

Individuals sharing membership in one group may not share membership in other groups. For example, all men are members of the male culture, but not all males belong to the same ethnic, religious, or class group. On the other hand, an ethnic group is composed of both males and females from different religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The interaction of these various group memberships within society begins to determine an individual's cultural identity. Membership in one group can greatly influence the characteristics and values of membership in other groups. For instance, some fundamentalist religions have strictly defined expectations for women versus men. Thus, membership in the religious group influences, to a great extent, the way a female behaves as a young girl, teenager, bride, and wife, regardless of her ethnic group. One's economic level will greatly affect the quality of life for families, especially the children and elderly in the group.

This interaction is most dynamic across race, ethnicity, class, and gender relations. The feminist movement, for example, was primarily influenced early on by white, middle-class women. The labor movement had an early history of excluding workers of color and women, and their causes. Membership in one group often conflicts with the interests of another, as is the case when people feel forced to declare their primary identity by race rather than gender, class, or sexual orientation.

One cultural group may have a greater influence on identity than others. This influence may change over time and depends on life experiences. We can shed aspects of our culture that no longer have meaning, and we can also adopt or adapt aspects of other cultures that were not inherent in our upbringing. Identity is not fixed. Alternative views of self and culture can be learned as **cultural borders** are crossed.

The degree to which individuals identify with the groups of which they are members and the related cultural characteristics determines, to a great extent, their individual cultural identities. For example, a 30-year-old, middle-class, Catholic, Polish American woman in Chicago may identify strongly with being Catholic and Polish American when she is married and living in a Polish American community. However, other group memberships may have a greater impact on her identity after she has divorced, moved to an ethnically diverse neighborhood, and become totally responsible for her financial well-being. Her femaleness and class status may become the most important representations of her identity, as portrayed in Figure 1.3.

The interaction of these cultural groups within society is also important. Most political, business, educational, and social institutions (e.g., the courts, the school system, the city government) have been developed and controlled by the dominant group. The values and practices that have been internalized by the dominant group also are inherent within these institutions. Members of oppressed groups are usually beholden to the dominant group to share in that power.

Schools "validate, reinforce, and socialize children into many of the values of the larger society" (Hollins, 2011, p. 107). Assimilation policies promote the values of the dominant group, which are reflected in the **hidden curriculum**—the unwritten and informal rules that guide the expected behaviors and attitudes of students in schools. The children of immigrants and students of color are expected to communicate and behave according to the dominant cultural norms and to repress their own cultural identities. In the past, Americanization programs for immigrants not only taught English but also reinforced the meaning of being American. American virtues and being patriotic continue to be reinforced in many schools, especially in times of crisis, such as 9/11 and conflicts with other nations.

Figure 1.3 Cultural identity is adapted and changed throughout life in response to political, economic, educational, and social experiences that either alter or reinforce one's status or position in society. Some cultural group memberships may take on more importance than others at different periods of life, as shown here for a woman when she was 30 years old and married, and again when she was 35, divorced, and a single mother.

Cultural Identity at Age 30   Cultural Identity at Age 35
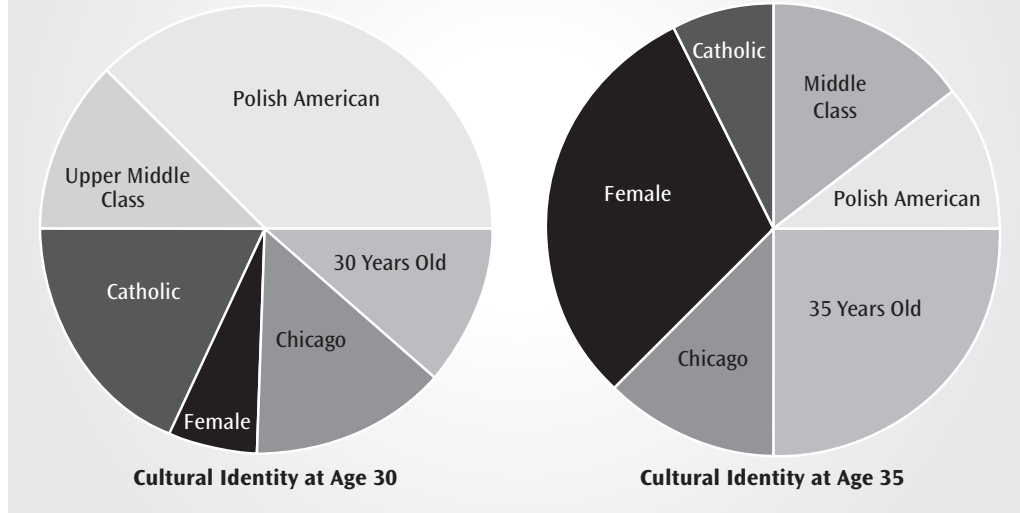
Understanding the importance of group memberships to your identity helps answer the question "Who am I?" An understanding of other groups will help answer the question "Who are my students?" The various groups that educators are likely to confront in a classroom are examined in detail in Chapters 2 through 10.

CULTURAL BORDERS

Each of us belongs to multiple cultures (e.g., ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups) that help define us. As long as those differences have no status implications in which one group is treated differently from another, conflict among groups is minimal. Unfortunately, cultural borders are often erected between groups, and crossing them can be easy or difficult. What is valued on one side of the border may be denigrated on the other side. For example, speaking both Spanish and English may be highly rewarded in the community, but speaking Spanish in some schools is not tolerated.

Educators establish cultural borders in the classroom when all activity is grounded in the teacher's culture. As we learn to function comfortably in different cultures, we may be able to move away from a single perspective linked to cultural domination. We may be able to cross cultural borders, bringing the students' cultures into the classroom.

BICULTURALISM

Individuals who have competencies in and can operate successfully using two or more different cultures are border crossers; they are bicultural or multicultural and are often bilingual or multilingual as well. Having proficiencies in multiple cultures allows one to draw on a broad range of abilities and make choices as determined by the particular situation.

Because we participate in more than one cultural group, we have already become proficient in multiple systems for perceiving, evaluating, believing, and acting according to the patterns of the various groups in which we participate. We often act and speak differently when we are in the community in which we were raised than when we are in a professional setting. We behave differently on a night out with members of our own sex than we do at home with the family. People with competencies in several cultures develop a fuller appreciation of the range of cultural competencies available to all people.

Many members of oppressed groups are forced to become **bicultural**, operating (1) in the dominant culture at work or school and (2) in their family culture to participate effectively in their own ethnic and religious communities. Different behaviors are expected in the two settings. Because most schools reflect the dominant society, students are forced to adjust to or act like middle-class white students if they are going to be academically successful. In contrast, most middle-class white students find almost total congruence between the cultures of their family, school, and work. Most remain monocultural throughout their lives. They do not envision the value and possibilities inherent in becoming competent in a different culture.

In our expanding, diverse nation, it is critical that educators be able to participate effectively in more than one culture. Understanding the cultural cues of different ethnic groups, especially oppressed groups, improves our ability to work with all students. It also helps us to be sensitive to the importance of these differences in teaching effectively.

Equality and Social Justice in a Democracy

The United States is a **democracy,** in which people participate in their government by exercising their power directly or indirectly through elected representatives. Schools and the mass media teach us that our democracy is one to be emulated by the rest of the world. A democracy should promote the good of all its citizens. Thus, the Constitution was fashioned with a coherent set of "checks and balances" to limit the systematic abuse of power. **Egalitarianism**—the belief in social, political, and economic rights and privileges for all people—is espoused as a key principle on which democracy is based. All citizens are expected to have a voice. Power should be shared among groups, and no one group should continuously dominate the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the country. Society and government, though not perfect, are promoted as allowing mass participation and steady advancement toward a more prosperous and egalitarian society.

One strength of a democracy is that citizens bring many perspectives, based on their own histories and experiences, to bear on policy questions and practices. Thus, to disagree is acceptable as long as we are able to communicate with each other openly and without fear of reprisal. Further, we expect that no single right way will be forced on us. For the most part, we would rather struggle with multiple perspectives and actions and determine what is best for us as individuals within this democratic society.

At the same time, a democracy expects its citizens to be concerned about more than just their own individual freedoms. In the classic *Democracy and Education,* philosopher and educator John Dewey (1966) suggested that the emphasis should be on what binds us together in cooperative pursuits and results, regardless of the nation or our group alliance and membership.

He raised concern about our possible stratification into separate classes and called for "intellectual opportunities [to be] accessible to all on equitable and easy terms" (p. 88).

The emphasis on individualism in the dominant culture provides a dilemma for educators who promote democratic practice. In many classrooms, individualism is supported through competitive activities in which individual achievement is rewarded. A democratic classroom is designed for students to work together across groups. Responsibility and leadership are shared by students and teachers as students practice being active participants in a democratic setting.

Both individualism and equality have long been central themes of political discourse in a democratic society. The meaning of equality within our society varies according to one's assumptions about humankind and human existence. At least two sets of beliefs govern the ideologies of equality and inequality. The first accepts inequality as inevitable and promotes **meritocracy,** which is a system based on the belief that an individual's achievements are due to their own personal merits. The focus is on individualism and the individual's right to pursue happiness and obtain personal resources. The second set of beliefs supports a much greater degree of equality across groups in society. People who believe in equality and social justice care about those who have fewer resources and develop policies that allow more people to share in the nation's wealth.

This dilemma forces the promotion of some degree of equality while preventing any real equity from occurring. Affirmative action, for example, is viewed by its critics as evidence of group welfare gaining precedence over individual achievement. The outcry against affirmative action suggests that racism no longer exists and that decisions about employment, promotion, and so forth are no longer influenced by racism and sexism. Whites filing reverse discrimination cases believe that their right to an education at a select school, a promotion, or a job should be based solely on their individual achievement. They believe that other factors, such as low income, ethnicity, race, or gender, should not be valued in the process. Even though egalitarianism is an often-espoused goal of democracy in the United States, inequities across groups continue to exist in society and are continually overlooked.

Students do not start life with an equal chance to succeed. Because of family income and wealth, some students have access to resources and experiences in their homes, communities, and schools that are not available to most low-income students.
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MERITOCRACY

Proponents of meritocracy accept the theories of sociobiology or functionalism or both, in which inequalities are viewed as natural outcomes of individual differences. They believe that all people have the opportunity to be successful if they just work hard enough (Grinberg, Price, & Naiditch, 2009). They give little credit to conditions such as being born into a wealthy family as a head start to success. Members of oppressed groups usually are seen as inferior, and their hardships blamed on their personal characteristics rather than societal constraints or discrimination.

The belief system that undergirds meritocracy has at least three dimensions that are consistent with dominant group values. First, the individual is valued over the group. The

individual has the qualities, ambitions, and talent to achieve at the highest levels in society. Popular stories promote this ideology in their descriptions of the poor immigrant who arrived on U.S. shores with nothing, set up a vegetable stand to eke out a living, and became the millionaire owner of a chain of grocery stores. Moving from the bottom of the economic ladder to the top is a rare occurrence. In reality, some individuals and families move up and down the economic ladder one quintile from where they started (Page & Jacobs, 2009). The second dimension stresses differences through competition. IQ and achievement tests are used throughout schooling to help measure differences. Students and adults are rewarded for outstanding grades, athletic ability, and artistic accomplishment. The third dimension emphasizes internal characteristics, such as motivation, intuition, and character, that have been internalized by the individual. External conditions, such as racism and poverty, are to be overcome by the individual; they are not accepted as contributors to an individual's lack of success.

Equal educational opportunity, or equal access to schooling, applies meritocracy to education. All students are to be provided with equal educational opportunities that purportedly will give them similar chances for success or failure. Proponents of this approach believe it is the individual's responsibility to use those opportunities to his or her advantage in obtaining life's resources and benefits. Critics of meritocracy point out that children of low-income families do not start with the same chances for success in life as children from affluent families. Even the most capable of these students do not enjoy equal educational opportunities if the schools they attend lack the challenging curriculum and advanced placement courses typically found in middle-class and affluent communities. Thus, competition is unequal from birth. The chances of the affluent child being educationally and financially successful are much greater than for the child from a low-income family (Page & Jacobs, 2009). Those with advantages at birth are almost always able to hold on to and extend those advantages throughout their lifetimes.

EQUALITY

With the persistence of racism, poverty, unemployment, and inequality in major social systems such as education and health, many have found it difficult to reconcile daily realities with the celebrated egalitarianism that characterizes the public rhetoric. These people view U.S. society as composed of institutions and an economic system that represents the interests of the privileged few rather than the pluralistic majority. Even institutions, laws, and processes that have the appearance of equal access, benefit, and protection are often enforced in highly discriminatory ways. These patterns of **inequality** are not the product of corrupt individuals as such, but rather are a reflection of how resources of economics, political power, and cultural and social dominance are built into the entire political-economic system.

Even in the optimistic view that some degree of equality can be achieved, inequality is expected. Not all resources can be redistributed so that every individual has an equal amount, nor should all individuals expect equal compensation for the work they do. The underlying belief, however, is that there need not be the huge disparities of income, wealth, and power that currently exist. Equality does suggest fairness in the distribution of the conditions and goods that affect the well-being of all children and families. It is fostered by policies for full employment, wages that prevent families from living in poverty, and child care for all children.

Critics decry this perceived socialism as being against the democratic foundations that undergird the nation. They believe that equality of resources and of societal benefits would undermine the capitalist system that allows a few individuals to acquire the great majority of those resources. They warn that equality of results would limit freedom and liberty for individuals.

PAUSE TO REFLECT 1.2

How do you view equality in society and schooling? Check the statements below that best describe your perceptions.

- ■ The ablest and most meritorious, ambitious, hardworking, and talented individuals should acquire the most, achieve the most, and become society's leaders.

- ■ The individual is more important than the group.

- ■ The U.S. economic system represents the interests of a privileged few, rather than those of the pluralistic majority.

- ■ Huge disparities of income, wealth, and power should not exist in this country.

- ■ It is the student's responsibility to get as much out of school as possible.

- ■ External conditions, such as racism and poverty, should be overcome by the individual.

- ■ Students from all cultural groups can be academically successful.

Which of these statements are most closely related to a belief in meritocracy, and which to a belief in equality?

Equality is more than providing oppressed group members with an equal chance or equal opportunity. One proposal is that equal results should be the goal. These results might be more equal achievement by students of both oppressed and dominant groups and similar rates of dropping out of school, college attendance, and college completion by different ethnic, racial, and gender groups and populations across socioeconomic levels.

Traditionally, the belief has been that education can overcome the inequities that exist in society. However, the role of education in reducing the amount of occupation and income inequality may be limited. School reform has not yet led to significant social changes outside the schools. Equalizing educational opportunity has had very little impact on making adults more equal. Providing equal educational opportunities for all students does not guarantee equal results at the end of high school or college. It does not yet provide equal access to jobs and income across groups. Programs for equal educational opportunity have not overcome the academic and economic disparities that exist among families. Equality in schools would mean that students in impoverished schools would be guaranteed to have teachers who are as highly qualified as the teachers in wealthy school districts. Equality requires financial support for providing quality instruction in environments that are conducive to learning by all students. More, not less, money may be needed to ensure equity in educational results for the children of dominant groups and other groups.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is another element of democracy that is based on the expectation that citizens will provide for those in society who are not as advantaged as they are. John Dewey (1966) called for social justice at the beginning of the twentieth century when he said, "What the best and wisest parent wants for his [or her] own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our

democracy" (p. 3). In schools, social justice requires the critiquing of practices that interfere with equity across groups. Social and economic inequities that prevent students from learning and participating effectively in schools must be confronted.

Enormous disparities exist between the very wealthy and the poor. The very wealthy have accumulated vast resources while the poor are unable to obtain the barest essentials for shelter, food, or medical care. Some suffer from the lack of housing or the lack of heat in the winter and lack of cooling in very hot summers. Every year there are reports of elderly, low-income people who die from exposure to excessive heat or cold. This reality is inconceivable to the many Americans who simply turn their thermostats to the precise temperature that will meet their comfort level. Every day children from low-income families come to school with insufficient sleep because of the physical discomfort of their homes, with inadequate clothing, and with empty stomachs. Tens of thousands suffer from malnutrition and no dental care. When they are sick, many go untreated. Under these conditions, it is difficult to function well in an academic setting.

Civil unrest has almost always been precipitated by the disenfranchised who have no realistic hope of extricating themselves from lives of despair. Children of affluent members of society do not typically form street gangs; they are usually too busy enjoying the good life that prosperity brings. The street gangs of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles are comprised almost exclusively of young individuals who are poor, embittered, and disenfranchised.

Those who have the power to bring about meaningful change in society are usually the more affluent. They have the resources and connections to make things happen. To bring about truly meaningful change requires paradigm shifts. Even the middle class may be reluctant to make changes if a change in the status quo diminishes their position. Changes are usually supported only if they provide benefits to the dominant group or do not affect them negatively.

Meaningful change in society requires a universal social consciousness. It requires, to some extent, a willingness of the citizenry to explore the means of redistributing some of the benefits of a democratic society. Effective redistribution requires that some who have considerable wealth provide a greater share in the effort to eliminate poverty and its effects. The end result could be a society in which everyone has a decent place to sleep, no child goes to school hungry, and appropriate health care is available to all.

OBSTACLES TO EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Prejudice, discrimination, and **privilege** stem from a combination of several factors related to power relationships. People who are prejudiced have an aversion to members of a group other than their own. Discrimination leads to the denial of privileges and rewards to members of oppressed groups. Privilege provides advantages and power to groups that have resources and status exceeding those of others.

Prejudice.   Prejudice can result when people lack an understanding of the history, experiences, values, and perceptions of groups other than their own. Members of groups are stereotyped when generalizations are applied to the group without consideration of individual differences within the group. Prejudice manifests itself in feelings of anger, fear, hatred, and distrust toward members of a specific group. These attitudes are often translated into fear of walking in the group's neighborhood, fear of being robbed or hurt by others, distrust of a merchant from the group, anger at any advantages that others may be perceived as receiving, and fear that housing prices will be deflated if someone from that group moves next door.

Some members of all groups possess negative stereotypes of others. For example, many African Americans and Latinos believe that all whites are bigoted, bossy, and unwilling to share power. Some women believe that all men are abusers because that is their experience with men. Feminists become labeled as lesbians because some activists are lesbians. Blue-collar workers are seen as intolerant and bigoted because that is how they have been portrayed in a number of movies. Fundamentalist Christians are labeled as sexist or homophobic because some ministers have preached that message. These negative stereotypes may describe some members of a group, but have been unfairly extended as characteristic of all members of the group.

Although prejudice may not always directly hurt members of a group, it can be easily translated into behavior that does do harm. An ideology based on aversion to a group and perceived superiority undergirds the activities of the neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan, skinheads, and other racist groups. A prejudiced teacher may hold high academic expectations for students of one group and low expectations for students of another group. Such prejudice could lead to inappropriate placement of students in gifted or special education programs.

Children who hold biased attitudes toward other groups may simply be reflecting their parents' attitudes, but other implicit messages from peers and the media also affect them (Berk, 2012). Children are influenced by what those around them think, do, and say. Even when parents model tolerance, children may still be exposed to the racist behaviors of others. They may hear older children or adults putting down some groups in jokes or with ethnic slurs. They observe how some individuals do not associate with members of certain groups (Anti-Defamation League, n.d). They may observe how some white teachers associate only with other white teachers in the cafeteria. They may see that a particular teacher's table is filled primarily with teachers of color. Unwittingly, these teachers are modeling behaviors for students.

Children are greatly influenced by the media. They watch television and have easy access to movies on television and those that family members rent. They see pictures in newspapers and in the magazines their parents have in the home. Hardly a day goes by without children being exposed to stereotyping, misinformation, or exclusion of important and accurate information (Anti-Defamation League, n.d).

For the past few years, children have been exposed to the horrors of war in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, as well as bombings in other parts of the world. They have heard or seen reports of American military personnel killed daily by people of color—usually Arabs, whom they assume are Muslims. They continually hear expressions of justifiable anger directed toward terrorists and suicide bombers, who are almost always described by race or religion. The popular media has always had its villains. From the American Indians to the Japanese and Germans in the Second World War, villains of choice have evolved from Communists to Latin American drug lords, and now to Arabs and Muslims. These messages can contribute to children developing prejudicial attitudes about members of a group. This situation is exacerbated by the minimal effort made to show that the majority of the people in these groups are good, law-abiding, loyal Americans.

The Anti-Defamation League (n.d.) suggests that children with poor self-images are prone to develop prejudices. By targeting individuals they can put down, they bolster their own self-worth, making them feel more important and powerful than those they attack. At other times, children may exclude or ridicule other children because they perceive this to be a popular thing to do that will enhance their standing among their peers (Anti-Defamation League, n.d). Because children are cognitively capable of becoming less prejudiced, developing activities that have been shown to reduce prejudice during the early years of elementary school is an appropriate education strategy for teachers.

Discrimination.   Whereas prejudice is based on attitudes, discrimination focuses on behavior. Discrimination occurs at two levels: individual and institutional. Individual discrimination is attributable to, or influenced by, prejudice. Individuals discriminate against members of a group because they have strong prejudicial, or bigoted, feelings about the group, or they believe that society demands they discriminate. For example, realtors, personnel managers, receptionists, and membership chairpersons all work directly with a variety of individuals. Their own personal attitudes about members of a group can influence whether a house is sold, a job is offered, a loan is granted, an appointment is made, a meal is served, or a membership is granted to an individual. The actions of these individuals can prevent others from gaining the experiences and economic advantages that these activities offer.

An individual has less control over the other form of discrimination. Institutional discrimination cannot be attributed to prejudicial attitudes. It refers to inequalities that have been integrated into the systemwide operation of society through legislation and practices that ensure benefits to some groups versus others. Laws that disproportionately limit immigration to people from specific countries are one example. Other examples include practices that lead to a disproportionately large percentage of African Americans being incarcerated; single, low-income mothers being denied adequate prenatal care; and children in low-income neighborhoods suffering disproportionately from asthma as a result of poor environmental conditions.

We have grown up in a society that has discriminated against people of color, low-wage earners, women, and people with disabilities since the first European Americans arrived. We often do not realize the extent to which members of certain groups receive the benefits and privileges of institutions such as schools, Social Security, transportation systems, and banking systems. Because we may think that we have never been discriminated against, we should not assume that others do not suffer from discrimination.

Many argue that institutional discrimination no longer exists because today's laws require equal access to the benefits of society. As a result, they believe that individuals from all groups have equal opportunities to be successful. They fight against group rights that lead to what they perceived to be preferential treatment of the members of one group over others. The government is usually accused of going too far toward eliminating discrimination against historically oppressed groups by supporting affirmative action, contracts set aside for specific groups, special education, and legislation for women's equity. Opponents of these programs charge that they lead to reverse discrimination.

However, the criteria for access to the "good life" are often applied arbitrarily and unfairly. A disproportionately high number of people of color and students with disabilities have had limited opportunities to gain the qualifications for skilled jobs or college entrance or to obtain the economic resources to purchase a home in the suburbs. As businesses and industries move from the city to the suburbs, access to employment by those who live in the inner city becomes more limited. A crucial issue is not the equal treatment of those with equal qualifications, but the equal accessibility to the qualifications and jobs themselves.

The consequences are the same for individual and institutional discrimination. Members of some groups do not receive the same benefits from society as most members of the dominant group. Individuals are harmed by circumstances beyond their control because of their membership in a specific group. The role of teachers and other professional educators requires that they not discriminate against any student because of his or her group memberships. This consideration must be paramount in assigning students to special education and gifted classes and in giving and interpreting standardized tests. Classroom interactions, classroom resources,

extracurricular activities, and counseling practices must be evaluated to ensure that discrimination against students from various groups does not occur.

Privilege.   Most male members of the dominant group do not usually think of themselves as white, financially secure, Christian, English-speaking, or heterosexual. They are not inclined to see themselves as privileged in society and do not view themselves as oppressors of others. Most schools and teachers do not recognize the inequality, racism, and powerlessness that work against the success of students of color, girls, English language learners, non-Christians, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities. Most members of the dominant group have not had the opportunity to explore their own European ethnicity and privileged position in society. They often have not studied or interacted with groups to which they do not belong. Therefore, they have not been disposed to locate themselves within the continuum of power and inequality in society.

In contrast to whites, members of oppressed groups are constantly confronted with the difference of their race, language, class, religion, gender, disability, and/or sexual orientation. The degree of identification with the characteristics of the dominant culture depends, in part, on how much an individual must interact with society's formal institutions for economic support and subsistence. The more dependence on these institutions, the greater the degree of sharing, or of being forced to adopt, the common traits and values of the dominant group.

Think about the following situations and how often you have been confronted with them (McIntosh, 2010):

- Turning on the television or opening the newspaper and seeing people of your cultural group widely represented
- Speaking in public to a male group without putting your cultural group on trial
- Performing well on a project without being called a credit to your cultural group
- Being asked to speak for all people of your cultural group
- Asking to talk to "the person in charge" and finding a person of your cultural group
- Worrying that you have been racially profiled when you are stopped for a traffic violation
- Being followed around by a clerk or security person when you shop

How differently would whites and people of color respond to these situations? The responses are based on one's own experiences. Some groups have more real or perceived privilege than others as they interact in the broader society.

These differing perspectives have led to public debates on college campuses about the need for affirmative action to ensure diversity as well as the integration of diversity into the common core of the college curriculum. Members of oppressed groups argue that their cultures are not reflected in a curriculum that includes the great books of Western European thought. The traditionalists, who are predominantly representatives of the dominant group, often invoke nationalism and patriotism in their calls to retain the purity of the Western **canon** and promote homogeneity in society. However, proponents of a common core curriculum that includes the voices of women, people of color, and religions other than Christianity also include many members of the dominant group who value differences and multiple perspectives.

The question appears to be whose culture will be reflected in the elementary and secondary, as well as the collegiate, curriculum. Those who call for a curriculum and textbooks that reflect only their history and experiences view their culture as superior to all others. Thus, they and their culture become privileged over others in schools. They do not see themselves as different; to them, diversity refers only to members of other groups in society. To be successful, members

of the dominant group are not required to learn to function effectively in a second culture, as are members of oppressed groups. The privileged curriculum reinforces this pattern. It is the members of the oppressed groups who must learn the culture and history of the dominant group, often without the opportunity to study in depth their own cultural group or to validate the importance of their own history and lived experiences. It is as if they do not belong. This feeling may lead to **marginalization** and **alienation** from school as students are not accepted by the dominant group and do not feel a part of the school culture.

Multicultural Education

Not all students can be taught in the same way because they are not the same. Their cultures and experiences influence the way they learn and interact with their teachers and peers. They have different needs, skills, and experiences that must be recognized in developing educational programs. Each student is different because of physical and mental abilities, gender, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, language, religion, class, sexual orientation, geography, and age. Students behave differently in school and toward authority because of cultural factors and their relationship to the dominant society. As educators, we behave in certain ways toward students because of our own cultural experiences within the power structure of the country.

Multicultural education is a concept that acknowledges the important role of diversity in the lives of many students and their families and builds on it to promote **equality** and social justice in education. Equality ensures that students are provided the same access to educational benefits regardless of their group memberships. Social justice allows teachers to provide more assistance to those students with the greatest need. When educators are given the responsibilities for managing a classroom to help students learn, they need to have developed the knowledge and skills for working effectively with students from diverse groups. The following beliefs are fundamental to multicultural education:

- Cultural differences have strength and value.
- Schools should be models for the expression of human rights and respect for cultural and group differences.
- Social justice and equality for all people should be of paramount importance in the design and delivery of curricula.
- Attitudes and values necessary for participation in a democratic society should be promoted in schools.
- Teachers are key to students' learning the knowledge, skills, and **dispositions** (i.e., values, attitudes, and commitments) they need to be productive citizens.
- Educators working with families and communities can create an environment that is supportive of multiculturalism, equality, and social justice.

Many concepts support multicultural education. The relationships and interactions among individuals and groups are essential to understanding and working effectively with students from groups different from those of the teachers. Educators should understand **racism, sexism,** prejudice, discrimination, oppression, powerlessness, power, inequality, equality, and stereotyping. Multicultural education includes various components that often appear in courses, units of courses, and degree programs. They include ethnic studies, global studies, bilingual education,

women's studies, human relations, special education, and urban education. Let's examine how multicultural education has evolved over the past century.

EVOLUTION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Multicultural education is not a new concept. Its roots are in the establishment of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Through their research and books on the history and culture of African Americans, Carter G. Woodson, W. E. B. DuBois, Charles C. Wesley, and other scholars were the pioneers of ethnic studies. Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin* to disseminate research and curriculum materials. These materials were integrated into the curricula of segregated schools and historically black colleges and universities, allowing students to be empowered by the knowledge of their own history (J. A. Banks, 2004).

By the 1920s some educators were writing about and training teachers in intercultural education. The intercultural movement during its first two decades had an international emphasis with antecedents in the pacifist movement. Some textbooks were rewritten with an international point of view. Proponents encouraged teachers to make their disciplines more relevant to the modern world by being more issue oriented. One of the goals was to make the dominant population more tolerant and accepting of first- and second-generation immigrants in order to maintain national unity and social control (C. A. M. Banks, 2004). However, issues of power and inequality in society were ignored. The interculturalists supported the understanding and appreciation of diverse groups but did not promote collective ethnic identities, the focus of ethnic studies.

Following the Holocaust and World War II, tensions among groups remained high. Jewish organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee provided leadership for improving intergroup relations and reducing the anti-Semitic sentiment that existed at the time. National education organizations and progressive educational leaders such as Hilda Taba and Lloyd A. Cook promoted intergroup relations in schools to develop tolerance of new immigrants, African Americans, and other groups of color. Like the earlier intercultural movement, many intergroup educators had the goal of assimilating immigrants and people of color into the dominant society (J. A. Banks, 2004). Some programs focused on understanding the "folk" cultures of these groups. Others were designed to help rid native European Americans of their prejudice and discrimination against other groups. There was disagreement among the supporters of intergroup relations about the degree to which they should promote an understanding of the culture and history of ethnic groups (C. A. M. Banks, 2004). Historian David Tyack (2003) found this movement to be one in which "oppression became reduced to stereotyping and separate ethnic identity was to be dissolved as painlessly as possible" (p. 81).

Although the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that schools should be desegregated, students in many classrooms today are from the same racial, ethnic, or language group.
© Bob Daemmrich/Alamy

By the 1960s desegregation was being enforced in the nation's schools. At the same time, cultural differences were being described as deficits. Students of color and whites from low-income families were described as culturally deprived. Their families were blamed for not providing them with the **cultural capital** or advantages such as wealth and education that would help them succeed in schools. Programs like Head Start, **compensatory education,** and special education were developed to make up for these shortcomings. Not surprisingly, those classes were filled with students of color, in poverty, or with disabilities—the children who had not been privileged in society and whose cultures seldom found their way into textbooks and school curricula.

In the 1970s the term "cultural deficits" was replaced with the label "culturally different" to acknowledge that students of color and immigrant students have cultures just as do the members of the **dominant group**. One of the goals of this approach was to teach the culturally different to develop the cultural patterns of the dominant society so that they could fit into the mainstream (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Students with disabilities were still primarily segregated from their able-bodied peers during this period.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s brought a renewed interest in ethnic studies, discrimination, and intergroup relations. Racial and ethnic pride emerged from oppressed groups, creating a demand for ethnic studies programs in colleges and universities across the country. Similar programs were sometimes established in secondary schools. However, students and participants in ethnic studies programs were primarily members of the group being studied. Programs focused on students' own ethnic histories and cultures with the objective of providing them with insights into and instilling pride in their own ethnic backgrounds. Most of these programs were ethnic-specific, with only one ethnic group studied. Sometimes the objectives included an understanding of the relationship and conflict between the ethnic group and the dominant population, but seldom was a program's scope multiethnic.

Concurrent with the civil rights movement and the growth of ethnic studies, an emphasis on intergroup or human relations again emerged. Often, these programs accompanied ethnic studies content for teachers. The objectives were to promote intergroup, and especially interracial, understanding to reduce or eliminate stereotypes. This approach emphasized the affective level—teachers' attitudes and feelings about themselves and others (Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

With the growth and development of ethnic studies came a realization that those programs alone would not guarantee support for the positive affirmation of diversity and differences in this country. Students from the dominant culture also needed to learn the history, culture, and contributions of groups other than their own. As a result, ethnic studies expanded into multiethnic studies. Teachers were encouraged to develop curricula that included the contributions of oppressed groups along with those of the dominant group. Textbooks were rewritten to represent more accurately the multiethnic nature of the United States and the world. Students were to be exposed to the perspectives of diverse groups through literature, history, music, and other disciplines integrated throughout the general school program. Curriculum and instructional materials were to reflect multiple perspectives, not just the single master narrative of the dominant group.

During this period, other groups that had suffered from institutional discrimination called their needs to the attention of the public. These groups included women, those with low incomes, people with disabilities, English language learners, and the elderly. Educators responded by expanding multiethnic education to the more encompassing concept of multicultural education. This broader concept focused on the different groups to which individuals belong, with an emphasis on the interaction of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in one's cultural identity. It also called for the elimination of discrimination based on group membership. No longer was it fashionable to fight sexism without simultaneously attacking racism, classism, homophobia, and discrimination against children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Celebrating Ethnic Holidays

Esther Greenberg is a teacher of Asian and African American students in an alternative education class. Ms. Greenberg's college roommate was Chinese American, and she remembers fondly her visit to her roommate's home during the lunar New Year. She remembers how the parents and other Chinese adults had given all the children, including her, money wrapped in red paper, which was a tradition to bring all of the recipients good luck in the New Year. Ms. Greenberg thought that it would be a nice gesture to give the students in her class the red paper envelopes as an observance of the upcoming lunar New Year. Since she was unable to give the students money, she took gold foil–covered chocolate coins (given to Jewish children) and wrapped these coins in red paper to give to her students.

Unfortunately, on the lunar New Year's Day, all of the African American students were pulled out of class for a special meeting. All of the remaining students were her Asian students. When she passed out the red envelopes, the students were surprised and touched by her sensitivity to a cherished custom.

When her administrator was told what Ms. Greenberg had done, he became enraged. He accused her of favoritism to the Asian students and of deliberately leaving out the African American students. When she tried to convince him otherwise, he responded that she had no right to impose Asian customs on African American students. She responded that this was an important Asian custom, and that the Asian students had participated in the observance of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. However, he continued his attack, saying that this was an Asian superstition bordering on a religious observance. She was threatened with discipline.

| QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION |

- Were Esther Greenberg's actions inappropriate for a public school classroom? If so, why? If not, why not? Was this a violation of the principle of separation of church and state?

- Did Ms. Greenberg create problems for herself by giving out the red envelopes when the African American students were absent from class? Did this create an appearance of favoritism of one racial group over the other?

- How could Ms. Greenberg have handled the situation to make it a pleasing experience for all concerned?

- Was the administrator the one who was out of line, and was Ms. Greenberg simply a victim?

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TODAY

The 1990s were characterized by the development of standards, which led to debates between fundamentalists and multiculturalists, especially around the history standards. The fundamentalists argued that the standards should stress what they believed to be the foundations of democracy—patriotism and historical heroes. The multiculturalists promoted the inclusion of diverse groups and multiple perspectives in the standards. In English language arts, groups disagreed about the literature to which students should be exposed, some arguing for multiple perspectives and others arguing that such literature might promote values they could not support.

Multicultural education is sometimes criticized as focusing on differences rather than similarities among groups. Theorists criticize it for not adequately addressing the issues of power and oppression that keep a number of groups from participating equitably in society. At least three schools of thought push multiculturalists to think critically about these issues: critical pedagogy, antiracist education, and critical race theory (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). Critical pedagogy focuses on the culture of everyday life and the interaction of class, race, and gender in contemporary power struggles. Antiracist education is the strategy used in Canada and a number of European countries to eliminate racist practices such as tracking, inequitable funding, and segregation in schools. Critical race theory focuses on racism to challenge racial oppression, racial inequities, and white privilege (Howard, 2010). Multicultural education as presented in this text attempts to incorporate critical pedagogy, antiracist education, and critical race theory as different groups are discussed. Multicultural education promotes **critical thinking** about these and other issues to ensure that education serves the needs of all groups equitably.

Still, after eight decades of concern for civil and human rights in education, racism persists. Educators struggle with the integration of diversity into the curriculum and provision of equality in schools. Some classrooms may be desegregated and mainstreamed, and both boys and girls may now participate in athletic activities. However, students are still labeled as at risk, developmentally delayed, underprivileged, lazy, or slow. They are tracked in special classes or groups within the classroom based on their real or perceived abilities. A disproportionate number of students from African American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, American Indian, and Southeast Asian American groups score below European American students on national standardized tests. The number of students of color and low-income students participating in advanced science and mathematics classes is not proportionate to their representation in schools. They too often are offered little or no encouragement to enroll in the advanced courses that are necessary to be successful in college. To draw attention to these inequities, the National Alliance of Black School Educators declared that "education is a civil right" and has called on the country to establish a "zero tolerance policy on illiteracy, dropout and failure" (National Alliance of Black School Educators, 2008, p. 1).

In a country that champions equal rights and the opportunity for the individual to improve his or her conditions, educators are challenged to help all students achieve academically. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the standards movement focused on identifying what every student should know and be able to do. The federal legislation for elementary and secondary schools, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), requires standardized testing of students to determine a school's effectiveness in helping students learn. It mandates that test scores be reported to the public by "race, gender, English language proficiency, disability, and socio-economic status" (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p. 10). The goal of NCLB is to improve the academic achievement of all students. Students in low-performing schools may transfer to a higher-performing school to improve their chances of passing tests if their school continues to be low-performing for three years. Congress has begun the process of reauthorizing the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act, which is currently called NCLB, and may have passed it by the time you begin teaching. Although a number of initiatives may change, the emphasis on improving student learning is not likely to decrease.

MULTICULTURAL PROFICIENCIES FOR TEACHERS

States and school districts expect teachers to have **proficiencies**, which include the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to multicultural education, by the time they finish a teacher education program. With NCLB, school districts are obligated to hire teachers who can help low-income students, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities meet state standards.

State standards for teacher licensure reflect the national standards in Table 1.1, which were developed by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC). Each of the 10 standards is further explicated by statements of the knowledge, dispositions, and performances that teachers should be able to demonstrate before a state license to teach is issued. The InTASC proficiencies related to multicultural education are discussed in this text; others will be addressed in other teacher education courses that you are required to complete. The portions of the InTASC standards (2011) that address multicultural proficiencies state that teachers should:

- Understand the role of language and culture in learning and know how to modify instruction to make language comprehensible and instruction relevant, accessible, and challenging (Standard 1).
- Bring multiple perspectives to the discussion of content, including attention to learners' personal, family, and community experiences and cultural norms (Standard 2).
- Know how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate learners' experiences, cultures, and community resources into instruction (Standard 2).
- Communicate verbally and nonverbally in ways that demonstrate respect for and responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and differing perspectives learners bring to the learning environment (Standard 3).
- Know how to integrate culturally relevant content to build on learners' background knowledge (Standard 4).
- Facilitate learners' ability to develop diverse social and cultural perspectives that expand their understanding of local and global issues and create novel approaches to solving problems (Standard 5).
- Prepare all learners for the demands of particular assessment formats and make appropriate accommodations in assessments or testing conditions, especially for learners with disabilities and language learning needs (Standard 6).
- Understand learning theory, human development, cultural diversity, and individual differences, and how these impact ongoing planning (Standard 7).
- Know how to apply a range of developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning goals (Standard 8).
- Reflect on one's personal biases and access resources to deepen his or her own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences to build stronger relationships and create more relevant learning expectations (Standard 9).
- Work collaboratively with learners and their families to establish mutual expectations and ongoing communication to support learner development and achievement (Standard 10).

Table 1.1 InTASC Core Teaching Standards

1. Learner Development. The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

2. Learning Differences. The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

3. Learning Environments. The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

4. Content Knowledge. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

5. Application of Content. The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

6. Assessment. The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

7. Planning for Instruction. The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

8. Instructional Strategies. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

9. Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

10. Leadership and Collaboration. The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, and other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

Source: **Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. (2011, April).** *InTASC model core teaching standards: A resource for state dialogue.* **Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, pp. 8–9.**

In working with students who come from different ethnic, racial, language, and religious groups from those of the teacher, the development of dispositions that are supportive of diversity and differences is important. Students quickly become aware of the educators who respect their cultures, believe they can learn, and value differences in the classroom. Examples of dispositions that the InTASC standards expect teachers to have developed include:

- Valuing the input and contributions of families, colleagues, and other professionals in understanding and supporting each learner's development (Standard 1).
- Believing that all children can achieve at high levels and persisting in helping each learner reach his or her full potential (Standard 2).
- Making learners feel valued and helping them learn to value each other (Standard 2).

- Valuing diverse languages and dialects and seeking to integrate them into instructional practice to engage students in learning (Standard 2).
- Realizing that content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated, and ever evolving (Standard 4).
- Valuing the variety of ways people communicate and encouraging learners to develop and use multiple forms of communication (Standard 8).
- Being committed to deepening understanding of one's own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families (Standard 9).
- Respecting families' beliefs, norms, and expectations and seeking to work collaboratively with learners and families in setting and meeting challenging goals (Standard 10).

As a new teacher, you should be able to demonstrate the proficiencies outlined above. The portfolio activities at the end of each chapter will provide opportunities for you to begin to collect artifacts related to these proficiencies for working with a diverse student population and delivering education that is multicultural. Each of these activities indicates the InTASC standard for which the activity may provide evidence of achievement. These artifacts could become part of the portfolio that you are developing in your teacher education program. They may be a valuable part of the portfolio that you present to a future employer, showing that you have developed the knowledge, skills, and dispositions appropriate for working effectively with a diverse student population. Finally, you may be able to further develop and refine these portfolio entries for national certification early in your teaching career.

Most state licensure tests include questions related to diversity in a combination of short-answer and multiple-choice questions. These often include a test of your knowledge of (1) the subject that you plan to teach and (2) pedagogy related to effective teaching. At the end of each chapter of this book you will have the opportunity to practice on a test item that is similar to one that you might find on the licensure test that you will be required to pass before you can teach.

REFLECTING ON MULTICULTURAL TEACHING

Teachers who reflect on and analyze their own practices report that their teaching improves over time. If you decide to seek national board certification after you have taught for three years, you will be required to provide written reflections on your teaching videos. You are encouraged to begin to develop the habit of reflecting on your practice now and to include in that reflection the multicultural proficiencies listed above. From the first day of student teaching, you should begin to reflect on your effectiveness as a teacher. Are you actually helping students learn the subject and skills you are teaching? An important part of teaching is to ask what is working and what is not. Effective teachers are able to change their teaching strategies when students are not learning. They do not leave any students behind. They draw on the experiences and cultures of their students to make the subject matter relevant to them. Self-reflection will be a critical skill for improving your teaching.

You can begin to develop skills for reflection while you are preparing to teach. Many teacher education programs require candidates to keep journals and develop portfolios that include reflection papers. Videotaping the lessons that you teach will allow you to critique your knowledge of the subject matter, interactions with students, and methods of managing a class. The critique could be expanded to address multicultural proficiencies. You may find it valuable to ask a colleague to periodically observe you while you are teaching and provide feedback

on your multicultural proficiencies. Honest feedback can lead to positive adjustments in our behavior and attitudes. To get you started, each chapter includes one or two opportunities for you to pause and reflect on issues related to diversity and multicultural education.

Summary

Students from diverse cultural groups will comprise over half of the elementary and secondary school populations by 2020. They come from diverse ethnic, racial, religious, socioeconomic, language, gender, sexual orientation, and ability groups. Understanding cultural diversity and the cultures of students, and knowing how to use that knowledge effectively can help teachers deliver instruction to help students learn.

Culture provides the blueprint that determines the way we think, feel, and behave in society. We are not born with culture, but rather learn it through enculturation and socialization. It is manifested through society's institutions, lived experiences, and the individual's fulfillment of psychological and basic needs. Historically, U.S. political and social institutions have developed from a Western European tradition and still function under the strong influence of that heritage. At the same time, many aspects of American life have been greatly influenced by the numerous cultural groups that make up the U.S. population. The dominant culture is based on its white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant roots and the core values of individualism and freedom with which many middle-class families identify.

Assimilation is the process by which groups adopt and change the dominant culture. Schools have traditionally served as the transmitter of the dominant culture to all students regardless of their cultural backgrounds. The theory of cultural pluralism promotes the maintenance of the distinct differences among cultural groups with equal power. Multiculturalism allows groups to maintain their unique cultural identities within the dominant culture without having to assimilate.

Cultural identity is based on the interaction and influence of membership in groups based on ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, native language, geographic region, and ability. Membership in one group can greatly affect one's identity with respect to the others.

A democracy provides social justice for all of its people. Egalitarianism and equality have long been espoused as goals for society, but they are implemented from two perspectives. The emphasis on individualism is supported in a meritocratic system in which everyone is presumed to start out equally, and where the most deserving will end up with the most rewards. Equality, in contrast, seeks to ensure that society's benefits and rewards are distributed more equitably among individuals and groups. Prejudice, discrimination, and privilege continue to be obstacles to equality.

Multicultural education is an educational strategy that incorporates cultural differences and provides equality and social justice in schools. For it to become a reality in the formal school situation, the total environment must reflect a commitment to multicultural education. The diverse cultural backgrounds and group memberships of students and families are as important in developing effective instructional strategies as are their physical and mental capabilities. Further, educators must understand the influence of racism, sexism, and classism on the lives of their students and ensure that these are not perpetuated in the classroom.

Professional Practice

Questions for Discussion

1. How will the changing diversity of the P–12 student population change schools and classroom instruction?

2. What impact does culture have on the behavior of students in the classroom and school? How can students' cultures be integrated into the classroom to validate them and make the curriculum more meaningful to them?

3. What practices in schools could support and promote multiculturalism? What practices support and promote assimilation into the dominant culture?

4. How do ethnicity, gender, and religion interact in determining cultural identity? Why might one's cultural identity change over time?

5. How can a focus on equality and social justice improve the quality of education and the academic achievement of students from diverse groups?

6. Why is multicultural education as important for students of the dominant culture as it is for students of other cultures?

Portfolio Activities

1. Write a reflective paper that describes your cultural identity and the social and economic factors that have influenced it. Identify their importance by drawing a circle similar to Figure 1.3 and indicating the degree of influence each cultural group has on your identity and why. (InTASC Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethnical Practice)

2. Select one of the schools in which you are observing this semester to develop a case study of the cultural norms prevalent in the community served by the school. In your case study indicate the diversity of the community and the cultural norms that are reflected in the school. Teachers, parents, and students should be interviewed during the development of the case study. Your observations of students should also inform your case. (InTASC Standard 2: Learning Differences)

3. As you progress through your teacher education program, you will be expected to work with students from diverse groups in field experiences, student teaching, and your own classroom. Complete the following checklist to show how close you are to meeting selected InTASC proficiencies related to cultural diversity and multicultural education concepts. Write an accompanying paper on how you will develop the knowledge, skills, or dispositions in which you are not already proficient. (InTASC Standard 1: Learner Development, Standard 2: Learning Differences, and Standard 3: Learning Environments)

Proficiency	Already Proficient	Partially Proficient	Not Proficient
Understand student with exceptional needs, including those associated with disabilities and giftedness.	☐	☐	☐
Understand the role of language and culture in learning.	☐	☐	☐
Know how to apply a range of developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning goals.	☐	☐	☐
Understand that learners bring assets for learning based on their language, culture, family, and community values.	☐	☐	☐
Able to bring multiple perspectives to the discussion of content, including attention to learners' personal, family, and community experiences and cultural norms.	☐	☐	☐
Value diverse languages and dialects and seek to integrate them into your instructional practice.	☐	☐	☐
Believe that all learners can achieve at high levels and persist in helping each learner reach his/her full potential.	☐	☐	☐
Are committed to working with learners, colleagues, families, and communities to establish positive and supportive learning environments.	☐	☐	☐

Digital Resources for the Classroom

1. For resources on the critical aspects of multicultural education, equity, and social justice, go to http://www.edchange.org/multicultural. The website includes quizzes, teacher resources, handouts, speeches, songs, quotations, and links to other resources.

2. To learn more about combating prejudice, visit http://www.adl.org/prejudice/default .asp. A complimentary copy of the booklet 101 Ways to Combat Prejudice can be downloaded.

3. Information on the maintenance of cultures and languages worldwide can be accessed at the website of the United Nations Educational, Scientifics, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture.

4. For more information on becoming a national board certified teacher, visit the website of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards at www.nbpts.org.

MyEducationLab™

Go to the MyEducationLab (www.myeducationlab.com) for Multicultural Education and familiarize yourself with the topical content, which includes:

- Assignments and Activities, tied to learning outcomes for the course, that can help you more deeply understand course content
- Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions learning units allow you to apply and practice your understanding of how to teach equitably in a multicultural education classroom
- Licensure Test Prep activities are available in the Book Resources to help you prepare for test taking
- A pretest with hints and feedback that tests your knowledge of this chapter's content
- Review, practice, and enrichment activities that will enhance your understanding of the chapter content
- A posttest with hints and feedback that allows you to test your knowledge again after having completed the enrichment activities

A Correlation Guide may be downloaded by instructors to show how MyEducationLab content aligns to this book.