CHAPTER 7

Working with Diversity
As we move into the second section of this book, we zero in on the nuts and bolts of human service practice. We will be reading about the specific ways in which human service workers go about the tasks of interviewing, counseling, leading groups, and planning and organizing programs and social change campaigns. To implement each of these strategies, the competent worker must bring to his or her tasks empathy for the clients and their special problems. This deep empathy must be based on an accurate understanding of the cultural context in which the client lives and interacts with his or her family, peers, and the larger society. All of our actions and attitudes have been shaped to some degree by the beliefs, traditions, and history of our ethnic, religious, and class groups.

Yet, as we have grown through childhood and into adulthood, we probably encountered different and often conflicting sets of beliefs. Most of us (with the exception of Native Americans and some Mexican Americans who originally lived on land conquered by the United States) are from another soil: African Americans, Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Chinese Americans, Nisei or Issei (Japanese Americans). So we have been socialized into our own blended culture while still being influenced by the larger society, composed to a great extent of the values and history of the predominately white, Anglo-Saxon, monolingual, upper-class, able-bodied men and women who settled in the "New World" and left their stamp on it.

Our sex roles, gender identity, and mental or physical disabilities also shape how we think and act and how others react to us. How has this process of acculturation shaped our clients, and what impact has discrimination had on those clients who are members of minority groups? This chapter will raise many questions to ponder as you venture into working with people who may be different from you in many ways. It will then propose some guidelines to help you perform ethnic-sensitive practice.

The comedian Chris Rock asked, "What does it say about America when the greatest golfer in the world [Tiger Woods] is black and the greatest rapper [Eminem] is white?" While much of Rock's comedy targets the racism that is directed against black people, in this statement he was celebrating the fact that in the United States today "no role or occupation (at least in sports and music) is now determined by skin color" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 31).
We celebrate the progress that this nation has made in combating racism. The
civil rights movement of the 1960s ended legal segregation. White people and people
of color now eat together in restaurants, sit together in public transportation, go to
school together, play on the same sports teams, and even get married. Advertisements
show black models in yachting clothes. Jimi Hendrix and The Who sell Apple Com-
puters, designer shoes, and SUVs. “Du-Rag kits, complete with bandana headscarf
and elastic headband, are on sale for $2.95 at hip-hop clothing stores and family cen-
tered theme parks like Six Flags. Salsa has replaced ketchup as the best selling condi-
ment in the United States” (Gallagher, 2003, p. 21). Black families in the media are
doing well. The Huxtable family in the Cosby Show is solidly upper middle-class. But
do these media pictures give the true picture of race relations in the United States?
Have we finally ended discrimination against people of color?
Many people think so. National polls show that a majority of whites believe
that discrimination against racial minorities no longer exists. They believe that
blacks have as good a chance as whites to find a job and are as well-off financially
and educationally as whites. When people are asked to explain why so many blacks
aren't doing well, “the most popular explanation is that of black people's lack of
motivation or willpower to get ahead” (Schuman 1997).
Most black people don't see it that way. Author bell hooks writes about her
childhood as a black girl. She learned as a child that to be safe it was important to
recognize the power of whiteness, even to fear it, and to avoid encountering it. She
remembers walking from her home to visit her grandmother:

It was a movement away from the segregated blackness of our community into a poor
white neighborhood. I remember the fear, being scared to walk to Baba's, our grand-
mother's house, because we would have to pass that terrifying whiteness—those white
faces on the porches staring us down with hate. Even when empty or vacant those
porches seemed to say danger, you do not belong here, you are not safe.
Oh! that feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming when we finally reached the
edges of her yard, when we could see the soot black face of our grandfather, Daddy Gus,
sitting in his chair on the porch, smell his cigar, and rest on his lap. Such a contrast, that
feeling of arrival, of homecoming—this sweetness and the bitterness of that journey,
that constant reminder of white power and control. (hooks, 1997, p. 175)

Times have changed since black folks had little intimate contact with whites,
but bell hooks believes that feeling of impending danger has never completely left
black people, even when they have adopted the values, speech, and habits of white
people. She says that even though it was a long time ago that she visited her grand-
mother, she still has associations of whiteness with terror. “All black people in the
United States, irrespective of their class status or politics, live with the possibility
that they will be terrorized by whiteness” (hooks, 1997 p. 175). She says that most
white people don't understand this terror.
Let's look at some facts about inequality between whites and people of color:
Home ownership. In 1999 over 73 percent of white households owned their own homes compared to 46 percent for blacks, 45 percent for Hispanics, 53 percent for Asians, and 56 percent for American Indians (U.S. Census, 1999).

Median family income in 1998 was $42,439 for whites, $25,351 for blacks, and $27,330 for Hispanics.

Assets. In 1993 whites had about ten times more in assets than blacks or Hispanics (U.S. Census, 1993).

College attendance. In 1997 almost 25 percent of whites over the age of 25 had four years of college or more compared to less than 14 percent for blacks and Hispanics (Gallagher, 2003, p. 35).

Poverty. In 2000, 9.8 percent of white people were in poverty, compared to 23.6 percent of black people, and 22.8 percent of Hispanics (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2001).

Health. Whites have lower rates of diabetes, tuberculosis, pregnancy-related mortality, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and are more likely to have prenatal care in the first trimester than blacks, Hispanics, or Asians.

Health insurance. In 1997, 15 percent of whites did not have public or private health care coverage compared to 21.5 percent for blacks, 34 percent for Hispanics, and 20.7 percent for Asians (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998).

Professional advancement. Blacks and Hispanics are underrepresented as lawyers, physicians, professors, dentists, engineers, and registered nurses. In Fortune 1000 industrial and Fortune 500 service industries, 96.6 percent of the executives are white males. White men comprise 90 percent of the newspaper editors and 77 percent of television news directors (Feagin, 2000).

Police apprehensions and convictions. A Department of Justice study in 1999 found that blacks and Hispanics were twice as likely as whites to be subjected to force when they encounter a police officer, were more likely to be subjected to car searches during a traffic stop, and were more likely to be ticketed than whites (Gallagher, 2003, p. 35). A 2004 Northeastern University study found that of the 366 police departments in Massachusetts, one of four engaged in racial profiling of minority drivers (Metro, 2004).

Political representation. In 2000 the House of Representatives was only 9 percent black, 4 percent Hispanic, although both blacks and Hispanics comprised over 12 percent of the population. The Senate was 97 percent white with no black or Hispanics members (Abrams, 2000). There are no black or Hispanic governors.

Voting rights. Blacks who lived in Florida in the 2000 presidential election were four times as likely as whites to have their ballot invalidated (Parker & Eisler, 2001).
AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

The founding fathers of the United States— all white and Christian— did not grant the vote to women or to black men. In fact, they gave the vote only to people who owned land. Those excluded from having a say in how the country was run have had to gain their equality by long, hard struggles. Frederick Douglass, an African American leader who literally fought his way out of slavery, said, “Power concedes nothing without a struggle. It never has and it never will.”

A look at history shows this to be true. The Civil War freed the slaves, and the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870 gave blacks the vote. But they were kept from using it until the civil rights movement that began in the 1950s struck down segregation laws (called Jim Crow laws) in the South. Then the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited racial and sexual discrimination, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned practices that disenfranchised African Americans.

The first wave of the women’s movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fought long and hard for the Nineteenth Amendment of 1920, which gave women the right to vote. The second wave of the women’s movement, beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present, renewed women’s struggle for equality on many fronts. Gays and lesbians began to fight for equal treatment when they resisted police repression in 1969 at the Stonewall Club in New York City, and their struggle continues. The struggle reached a new level when Massachusetts legalized gay and lesbian marriages in 2004. Vermont paved the way for this victory by recognizing spousal rights for same-sex couples through “civil unions.”

Many stigmatized groups began their struggles for equality and self-esteem in the 1960s, giving birth to advocacy groups such as the National Welfare Rights Organization, Mental Patients’ Liberation Front, Disabled People’s Movement, and others.

But power does not yield easily. The backlash against the liberation movements of the 1960s and early 1970s bubbled up in the mid-1970s, picked up steam in the 1980s, and led to a volcano of conservative repression with the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994 and their Contract with America, which essentially dismantled many of the social gains of the previous decades.

Conservatives oppose affirmative action programs that were established in the 1960s and 1970s. There are fierce fights against immigrants, bilingual education, multicultural curricula, sex education in schools, gay and lesbian rights, and abortion. In the past decade, laws have passed to deport illegal immigrants, cut off welfare benefits and food stamps for legal immigrants, end affirmative action for minorities, and end bilingual education. Since the 1980s, women’s progress in narrowing the gap between women’s and men’s wages has ended, with women still earning only 72 percent as much as men with the same level of education (National Organization for Women, 2004). The wage gap between women and men has even been widening for women under age 45. Dr. Heidi Hartmann, President of the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, characterizes the period since 1993 as “a disaster” for recent women graduates, ages 16–24, who are entering the labor market at lower pay rates than they would have ten years ago (PR. Newswire, 2004).
Where does the human service worker fit into this political maelstrom? When the battle enters directly into the social service field, the worker has to make choices about implementing restrictive policies. For example:

- If you work in the welfare department in a state that has an English Only law and you don’t know Spanish, how do you explain the regulations to a Spanish-speaking client? Policies won’t be printed in Spanish, and the agency might not employ a Spanish-speaking worker.

- Massachusetts passed a law prohibiting the placement of foster children with homosexual foster parents, but after years of organizing work by homosexuals and their allies, then passed a law forbidding discrimination against homosexuals. If you are a worker in a state child-welfare agency and the legislature passes a law saying you can’t place foster children with homosexual foster parents, what will you do if you disagree? Do you obey the law, even against your convictions? If you do, how do you resolve the internal conflict this is likely to cause? Do you oppose the law, and if so, how? Do you work with the movement that is fighting against it by joining demonstrations, writing letters to the editor, lobbying your legislators? Do you simply place a child with a foster parent whom you know to be homosexual but tell the foster parent to keep his or her sexual orientation a secret?

- If you are a human service worker in a state that has passed a law denying services to legal immigrants, what would you do? In California some workers could not in good conscience obey the law, and they vowed to continue to give services. Many teachers in California refused to obey the law that eliminated bilingual education and continued to teach as they had done before the law.

Some legislation may not require you to make such agonizing choices but will nonetheless affect your work environment and agency practice. If affirmative action is ended, your agency may become less diverse. If you are white, you will have fewer opportunities to work with people of color. African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American clients will have less chance of getting a worker who shares their culture.

Regardless of what you do about the politics of diversity, you will always need to understand how the issues affect your clients or you will be shortchanging your clients and shortchanging yourself as an effective worker. If you belong to a group that has been discriminated against, you probably have already had personal experience that will help you to identify with a client who has also faced discrimination. If, on the other hand, you have never experienced discrimination, it may be hard for you to identify with people’s reactions to it.

**Understanding Oppression and Privilege**

Individuals can be dominated by other individuals for a variety of reasons. Siblings often oppress each other; parents sometimes oppress their children. In this
discussion, however, we are talking about social forces that hold people down, hem them in, and block their ability to lead a good life. “Oppression and dominance name social realities that we can participate in without being oppressive or dominating people” (Johnson, 2001, p. 13). Oppression occurs because of structural inequalities in society.

Privilege is the other side of the coin of oppression. If Group A has something of value and keeps Group B from having it, Group A is privileged and Group B is oppressed. Any individual, however, could be privileged in one respect but oppressed in another. One way to look at this was devised by Patricia Hill Collins (1990) who constructed a “Matrix of Domination” which integrates categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, age, and ability. This matrix assumes that everyone is shaped by some combination of interacting social categories; and everyone experiences varying degrees of privilege and oppression depending upon her or his social location or place. In the African American community, for example, there are vast differences in lifestyle and outlook between affluent professionals and executives and the people on the bottom rung of the income and status ladder, yet the color of their skin ensures that both groups will face some discrimination.

In all ethnic groups, women have less power than men (although the patriarchal tradition is stronger in some cultures than others). But wealthy women have more power than poor women. A rich woman who is abused by her husband is unlikely to go to a shelter for battered women. She can afford to leave and rent an apartment or buy a house, provided she has access to the checkbook or charge account and her psyche has not been battered to the point of helplessness.

Ethnicity is only one of the many factors that determine people’s standing in society and feelings about themselves. Social class and gender are also powerful influences. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1966) maintained that social class was a more powerful determinant of behavior than ethnicity. He believed there was more similarity between poor people in the barrios of New York City and poor people in the favelas of Sao Paulo than between the poor Puerto Rican and the rich Puerto Rican. Although both the poor and the wealthy might share certain cultural beliefs and behaviors, their differing social class positions would result in different self-identities.

Psychologist Robert Coles (1977) studied many children in different groups, including children from wealthy families. He said that one of the most outstanding attitudes of the rich children is their “sense of entitlement.” They know they will inherit the country. Most poor people don’t expect to inherit anything. All they can hope for is to win the lottery.

Since we all participate in a racist, sexist, homophobic society, it is inevitable that we have internalized some of these cultural beliefs. We don’t need to feel guilty about that, but we do need to examine our own position in society and our own attitudes. Battling discrimination is a life-long process in which the authors of this book are also engaged. We provide two exercises at the end of this chapter that will give you and your fellow classmates an opportunity to examine oppression and privilege.
COLORBLIND PRIVILEGE

Some people say, “I don’t treat people any differently no matter what their color is. I don’t care if they’re black, brown, or purple—it’s all the same to me.” The good part about that attitude is the commitment to treating everybody with equal dignity and respect and the belief that everyone is valuable. The problem with that attitude is that people do come from different cultures, and those cultures affect how people think and behave. To ignore a person’s culture is to ignore an important aspect of that person’s uniqueness.

The sociologist Charles A. Gallagher maintains that colorblindness “maintains white privilege by negating racial inequality” (2003). The belief that America is free of racism and discrimination and that people get ahead only on their merits allows whites to believe that being white or black or brown has no influence on their economic situation. It allows whites to believe that their material success was gained only by individual hard work, determination, thrift, and investments in education, and has nothing to do with institutional racism. It also allows whites to avoid feeling any guilt about institutional racism.

People who are reading this book are likely to be college students. It hasn’t been easy for many of you to get to college and to stay there until graduation. Many of you work part-time, or even full-time. Many of you have been poor and are trying to work your way out of poverty. If you are white and someone suggests that you are privileged because of your white skin, you may think that is ridiculous. You don’t feel privileged. You have worked hard to get to where you are. Yet we suggest that you examine some of the things that made it possible for you to get to where you are. You might discover that you did in fact have some privilege because of your white skin. One of the authors of this book, Betty Reid Mandell, did that examination of her own life and found that despite her growing up poor she did indeed enjoy certain privileges that were denied to people of color. She began this exercise when she was doing outreach work at a welfare office to give people information about their rights. Here is the description of her self-examination:

CASE STUDY

You’ve been well cared for*

I was sitting in the Homeless Unit of the Grove Hall Department of Transitional Assistance (welfare department) chatting with some women. One was living in a homeless shelter in Saugus, a town on the north shore of Massachusetts; the other was applying for shelter. They were ashamed to be here. They said that they had worked and held responsible jobs. Life had dealt them raw blows. One had to leave her job because of an injury to her spine which seemed to require endless treatment, and she didn’t know when she could return to work. The other had various

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medical problems. She was infuriated because the DTA worker was “jerking her around.” She had an appointment for 9, and it was now 11 and they still hadn’t seen her.

They cared deeply about their children. The woman who lived in Saugus was driving her daughter to Boston every day so the child would not have to switch schools. I told her that a recent federal law requires the home school district to provide transportation from the shelter to the child’s home school. I pointed to the sign on the wall that told about this and urged her to call the number.

The woman who was being “jerked around” said in a resigned voice, “It’s all down hill when you get old. I’m 45 and I don’t think things will get any better.” I protested, “Come on, I’m 78 and I’m not going down hill. I’m still here fighting.” The women were amazed. “You’re 78?” they said. “You’ve been well cared for. We’ve been battered around all our lives.”

I’ve been thinking about that a lot. I think the women were implying that I had been treated better in life because I am white, while prejudice and discrimination against African-Americans had given them harsher treatment than I had faced. Was that true?

As a child, I didn’t feel privileged. My father was one of the last homesteaders to get free land from the government, but he got the worst land—dry land in the prairies of Colorado where it seldom rained and the dust storms were so fierce that you literally couldn’t see your hand in front of your face if you were outside, while the wind whipped sand through the cracks of the windows and doors. On a freezing winter day the car broke down coming home from the school, which was 7 miles away, and we froze our fingers and toes walking home for 2 miles.

My parents lived in constant dread of the bank foreclosing on the mortgage, and one day they held an auction to sell off cattle and machinery so they could pay the mortgage. We were eager to watch the auction, but my parents made us go to school so we would not witness their humiliation.

Still, we kept the farm and somehow all four of us children went to a public college where the tuition was cheap. My sister and I raised and sold prize 4-H steers and saved the money for college. I pumped gas at a filling station during World War II, helped with bookkeeping at the gas station, typed letters for a local cattle rancher, and when I went to college, had a work-study job and a scholarship. I paid for my graduate school by part-time secretarial jobs and stints as a group work leader at the YMHA and Community Church in New York City. I didn’t mind working, even enjoyed much of it, but I never felt that I had a privileged life.

Yet as I thought about it, I did get better breaks in life because of my white skin. When I read the history of the Homesteading Act, I learned that African-Americans were discriminated against and didn’t get even the poor land that my father got.

The Mexican-American children whose family came to town to pick sugar beets attended my school, but they had to leave because their family moved on to other migratory work when the beets were pulled. My family were permanent residents and I could stay in school.

When I went to Grange Hall dances, I noticed that the two sons of the only African-American farmer in our neighborhood stood on the sidelines and never asked any of the white girls to dance. I would have been shocked if they had asked me to dance, but I think I would have been pleased too because they were handsome and I had secretly wanted to get to know them. An unwritten community prejudice had kept us from getting to know one another. That was not privilege for me—that kept me from living as full a life as I could have.

At college I joined a sorority that I later discovered did not allow African-Americans to become members. I tried to resign, but was told that no one was allowed to resign. Their racism was mandatory!

The parents of one of my best friends in college were living in a Japanese-American concentration camp, having been put there during World War II. I gave speeches against the injustice, and I knew that my parents were never under suspicion of being spies because their skins were white.

I taught at a state college and since I retired I have lived on the state pension, as well as Social Security. Many African-Americans weren’t covered by Social
Security because it did not cover domestic workers or agricultural workers for many years. Even when they were covered, they often received less money because the work had paid so little.

I have had health problems too, but the state health benefit, combined with Medicare, pays for almost all of my medical care and I can choose any health care provider I wish. I can afford to pay for massages, acupuncture, and weight training classes, and to buy both prescription drugs and herbal medicine. I know that I am privileged in this compared to Medicaid recipients, who have a limited choice of doctors and cannot get all the services they need, and compared to people who work in low-wage jobs that don’t provide health insurance.

So yes, I have been privileged. Those women in the DTA office asked why I came to the office and did this kind of work. I told them that I had been a social work professor at Bridgewater State College, and I believed in not only talking about my knowledge and beliefs, but acting on them. They commended me and said that it was good to stay active and involved. “It’s sure better than sitting on the couch and clicking the remote.”

I agreed. I am privileged to be able to use my knowledge to come to the DTA office and tell a homeless woman that she does not have to drive her child 20 miles to school and back every day, and that the school system is breaking the law if they don’t pick the child up. I am privileged to know enough to go into a fair hearing with a woman and point out to the worker and the hearing officer that they are breaking the law by cutting off the woman’s welfare benefits. I am privileged to help a woman apply for food stamps. And I am privileged to know the brave mothers who come to the DTA and keep their spirits up for the sake of their children.

The playwright August Wilson talks about attitudes toward blackness:

When you go to the dictionary and you look up black, it gives you these definitions that say, “Affected by an undesirable condition.” You start thinking something’s wrong with black. When white people say, “I don’t see color,” what they’re saying is, “You’re affected by this undesirable condition, but I’ll pretend I don’t see that.” And I go, “No, see my color. Look at me. I’m not ashamed of who I am and what I am.” (Lahr, 2001, p. 52)

Overt racism is easy to spot, but covert racism is more subtle. In his discussion of unintentional racism, Charles Ridley describes how both color-blindness and color consciousness can lead to unintentional racism in counselors:

Color-blind counselors relate to minority clients as though race is unimportant. Their denial disregards the central importance of color in the psychological experience of the client. These counselors tend to overlook the influence of racism and discrimination upon the attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and personality development of minority clients. Color-blind White counselors also disregard the undeniable influence of their whiteness upon the client. (1995, p. 68)

Color consciousness is the opposite of color blindness. It is based on the premise that the client’s problems stem essentially from being a person of color.
The color-conscious counselor places too much weight on the color of the client and assumes that all problems are due to the client’s ethnicity.

**Impact of Prejudice on Self-Esteem**

Positive self-esteem is at the core of mental health. In the following anecdotes, consider how prejudice and discrimination might negatively affect people’s feelings about themselves.

- **A 70-year-old person recounted the following incident:** “I was driving into a parking lot and a youngish woman was driving out. She evidently didn’t like the way I was driving, because she screamed at me, “Where do you think you’re going, you old bat?”

  The 70-year-old woman had never considered being old as the most important part of her identity, but here she encountered a woman who saw her age as the most important part of her identity, and as a degraded status. The yelling woman combined her anger about a person’s driving with her contempt of old people. Because the older woman was secure in her identity, and in her driving ability, she was able to pass this incident off with a shrug. But this example of ageism is representative of the mountain of insults that older people face, insults that can wear down a shaky self-confidence.

- **A lesbian student is told by one of her teachers that she has no right to wear a necklace with a cross on it because lesbianism is against God’s will. The teacher forces her to “come out of the closet” to the class about being a lesbian, and when she does, some class members turn on her angrily. The student is hurt and angry, feeling that she has been emotionally violated.**

- **Battered women are not only physically abused, but they also face a barrage of emotional insults from their batterers, often to the point of agreeing with the batterers who tell them that they are worthless.**

- **Two social psychologists, Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson, tested the effects of expectations on students’ performance. They gave graduating black high school students GRE exams. When they told the students that white students get better scores on those exams than black students do, the students’ self-confidence went down and, true to the prediction, on average their scores were lower than the scores of white students. But when they were told that the exam was not being used to evaluate ability or qualification, their scores went up and were as good as the scores made by white students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). When their anxiety about performance was removed, black students worked up to their full potential, which is as great as that of white students. This study is one of the many that disprove the premise of the widely publicized book The Bell Curve, that the intelligence of black people is consistently lower than that of white people (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).**
Steele and Aronson also conducted a similar experiment with women, using math tests, and the results were the same.

How can a human service worker combat prejudice and discrimination? We need to work on three levels—with the larger community, with small groups, and with individuals. Working for community-wide social change will involve social activism. Causes that might be embraced include the women's movement, gay and lesbian liberation, welfare rights, antiracism, immigration issues, ageism, disabled patients' liberation, mental patients' liberation, or body-image liberation.

The most effective change in social attitudes is brought about by large-scale movements. Liberation movements not only change public attitudes, but they also can raise the self-esteem and self-confidence of oppressed people. People often internalize their oppression and come to believe that they are like what the oppressor says they are. When they join with similarly oppressed people, the very fight to free themselves raises their self-esteem. “Say It Loud: I’m Black and I’m Proud” is a slogan to counter the demeaning belief that black people are inferior. Gay Pride marches help restore pride to gays and lesbians. The women's movement has had a profound effect on women's self-esteem, giving support to women's quest for equality with men. The welfare rights movement helped welfare recipients feel themselves to be worthy and productive people.

On an individual level, the most important job for human service workers is to understand the culture of their clients. We use the word culture broadly. In a sense, every individual you work with is from a different culture. But in this chapter, we will focus particularly on groups that have been oppressed because of their ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or emotional status.

**UNDERSTANDING ETHNICITY**

**The Definition of Culture**

There is no one agreed-on definition of culture. We will use the term to connote a group of people who share history, language, traditions, and networks. They may also share a minority social status. More important, they see themselves and others see them in a special way, although their ethnic and cultural status may have slightly varied meanings for each individual (Lukes & Land, 1990).

Theories about cultural identity have changed over time. The melting-pot theory, popular among the “Establishment” of the 1960s, implicitly assumed that the white, Anglo-Saxon culture was the ideal that other cultures should aspire to. The theory proved to be inadequate. Ethnic groups never totally assimilate into the majority culture, and they have asserted their right to be unique.

During the War on Poverty, some sociologists proposed a “cultural deficit” theory (Moynihan, 1965), which assumed that minority cultures were inferior to the
mainstream. This theory called for socializing minorities into the mainstream culture. That was one of the guiding principles of the Head Start early-childhood program.

Through the organized efforts of those supposedly deficient cultural groups, the cultural-deficit theory yielded to a theory of cultural difference, which focused on the uniqueness of each minority culture but implied that each was separate from the dominant culture. However, that too was inadequate, as there is much overlap between the minority and dominant cultures.

A current theory is called **bicultural theory**. It states that, although people are socialized into their minority culture through family and ethnic community, they are also influenced by the dominant culture through social institutions and the mass media. No one is quite sure how people incorporate cultures. Each person goes through the process with varying degrees of success. The totally bicultural person moves easily between two cultures, feeling at home in each, to the extent that the dominant culture allows this (Lukes & Land, 1990, pp. 155–156).

Some anthropologists say that your ethnicity is situational, asserting itself according to the situation you are in (Green, 1982). An African American person might speak Black English with other African Americans, but when with white
people, will speak the dominant form of English. It is important to know how people deal with ethnicity in cross-cultural interactions as well as within their culture. It is absurd that the amount of melanin (pigment) in one's skin or the tightness of the curl of one's hair should cause another person to do anything more than casually notice these features as two of the many that distinguish one person from another. Yet the social meaning of these features in the United States has built up over three centuries, beginning with the arrival of the first slave ship from Africa. Since its arrival (and the thousands that came after), no one in this country has been casual about color. Ever since the arrival of those three fateful ships that Christopher Columbus led to the American continent in 1492, the rulers of this country have subjugated native populations and constricted them with minority status in their own lands.

Advances in genetics and biotechnology in the past few decades have caused a dramatic shift in thinking about race. Most anthropologists now agree that race is not a biological reality at all. It is nothing more than a social, cultural, and political invention (Chandler, 1997). But that is not how the general public sees it. A biological anthropologist at Yale University, Jonathan Marsh, said that changing most people's minds about race is "like convincing someone in the 17th century that the Earth goes around the sun and not vice versa. What you think is out there is different from what's really out there" (Chandler, 1997, p. A30).

The mapping of the human genome provided scientific proof that human beings are not divided into separate biological groups. J. Craig Venter, whose company, Celera Genomics, mapped the human genome, said, "It is disturbing to see reputable scientists and physicians even categorizing things in terms of race. There is no basis in the genetic code for race" (Stolberg, 2001, p. 1 wk).

While we agree that there is only one race, we go on to discuss race as a social construct because it is a concept deeply embedded in people's ideas about themselves and others.

The actress Lonette McKee, who played the role of Alice in the TV series Queen, has both African American and Finnish-Swedish ancestry. Her mother told her that she had the best of both worlds. But McKee does not agree.

The world doesn't tell you that when you're out there looking for a job. The world doesn't tell me that when I've got the job and then they don't want to pay me what I'm worth. It's a political, social reality—one drop of black blood, you're black. To look at yourself any other way is a lie. And we're involved in a system designed to weed us out, to keep us out of the mainstream. (Smith, 1993, p. 30)

**Media Stereotypes**

The media has a powerful influence in shaping our attitudes. A comparison of how the media presents black and white people shows that black people are likely to be shown in a more unfavorable light than white people. For example, consider the
media treatment of six fatal schoolyard shootings over eight months by white youths in American small towns.

Kip Kinkel, 15, the boy who allegedly killed his parents and two classmates in a gun rampage in Oregon, was “skinny,” “slight,” “diminutive,” or “freckle-faced.” A Newsweek story described him as having “an innocent look that is part Huck Finn and part Alfred E. Neumann—boyish and quintessentially American.” A Roxbury judge, Milton Wright, said, “Quintessentially American? That always means white” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1).

Luke Woodham, convicted in Mississippi of killing two students, was described as “the chubby, poor kid at Pearl High School who always seemed to get picked on,” a “nerd,” and “intelligent but isolated” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1).

Michael Carneal, who allegedly killed three students in West Paducah, Kentucky, was “thin” and “a solid B student.” Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden, who allegedly killed four girls and a teacher in Jonesboro, Arkansas, were “little boys.” Andrew Wurst, who allegedly killed a teacher in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, was a “shy and quirky eighth-grader with an offbeat sense of humor” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1).

Contrast these benign descriptions with the media treatment of young African American and Latino killers. They have been called “maggots,” “animals,” and “super predators.” Julian Bond, chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, comments, “If this were black kids doing this, you’d see op-ed pieces...talking about a pathology of violence loose in the community, about some dangerous elements being unleashed, about the breakdown of family values” (Dowdy, 1998).

News accounts of young black killers in court often describe them as “blank-faced,” “dazed,” or “showing no emotion.” “Unlike the more human terms given the white school killers, young black suspects often are not described physically at all. Often, the first description of them is whether the youth was in a gang” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1).

Boston District Attorney Ralph Martin says that many young black suspects are “seemingly sweet of countenance, and lacking in obvious bravado” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1), but he rarely sees black youth described that way in the newspapers.

Alvin Poussaint, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist, notes that although there is wide media discussion of mood disorders and depression for the white teenage killers, “there is little of that for low-income African-American and Latino youth killers who suffer at higher levels of the kind of depression that precedes violence” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1).

Julian Bond comments that it is time that the United States looked at factors behind youth violence that cut across race and class. He said, “It seems to me there’s kind of a pathology out there, some kind of love of guns, a gun culture out there that’s dangerous and insidious” (Dowdy, 1998, p. E1).

The following is an interview with two women of Puerto Rican heritage who work in a shelter for battered women. This interview illustrates some of the interconnections between ethnicity, social class, and gender.
Chapter 7 Working with Diversity

Oly Reid and Inez Figueroa, Counselors at a Battered Women’s Shelter

Oly Reid and Inez Figueroa work in a shelter for battered women and their children in a medium-sized city. Because the women whom they serve need to hide from their abusers, the location of the shelter is a secret. We interviewed them in an office that had no name on the door.

Some people have compared the battered women's shelters to the Underground Railroad of slavery times (a network of secret hiding places for runaway slaves). Oly entered this work out of the same passion for justice that motivated the abolitionists in the Underground Railroad. She has a fierce commitment to helping free women from abusive husbands. She says, “Women have been abused since the beginning. It is time to put a stop to it. We have to stand up for our rights.”

Oly does bilingual counseling in Spanish, conducts house meetings and support groups, supervises volunteers, and does administrative work. Inez is the legal advocate. She helps women with their court appearances and works with people in the community. The shelter is a one-family house with three bedrooms that houses ten women. The residents can stay six weeks if they have children, four weeks if they are single.

About 30 to 35 percent of the women they serve are Spanish-speaking. Both Oly and Inez are from Puerto Rico, so they are fluent in Spanish. If no one in the shelter speaks a woman's language, they can generally find another shelter where a worker does.

Most of the abusers are men, although, as Oly says, “We are all human and anyone can be an abuser” — mothers, sisters, lovers (both heterosexual and homosexual). Lesbians have double trouble when they are abused by a lover. Society rejects them because they are lesbians, because they are women, and because stereotypes dictate that women are never violent.

Most women are ashamed to ask for help, but women of some cultures are more ashamed than others. Two or three Chinese women have used the shelter, but, in general, the Chinese culture discourages revealing one's troubles because it would bring shame on the family. They are taught that “whatever their husband says, goes.”

Puerto Rican women have experienced oppression from white people in their native land. It is hard to expose their most intimate problems to white Americans because of shame and pride. Puerto Rican women often drop charges against their husbands because they are afraid of them. They live a very isolated life. They have to stay home and often don't learn English, while the man goes out to work and learns the language. When the women call the police, they are usually unable to express themselves clearly. But their husbands can. So the police believe the husbands.

Generally, women who are hiding from an abuser want to go to a shelter in another city because their abusers are less likely to find them there. Sometimes they even go to another state. Shelters communicate to help each other place women. If the abuser lives in the same city, the women can't go out of the shelter at all. They have to stay in the house twenty-four hours a day.

Women may minimize the abuse they have experienced, justifying the actions of the men and feeling themselves at fault. They think that if they don't make the men mad, the men won't hit them. They excuse men “because they are drunk and don't know what
they are doing," Oly said, "That is no excuse. If they don't know what they are doing, why don't they beat up a big man [instead]?")

Inez thinks that abusive men should get a mandatory jail sentence of one year. "The judge often gives a year's sentence, but the time gets cut through good behavior in jail and other reasons so that he is often out in three months and on the woman's doorstep again."

Most of the women have their kids taken from them, often unjustly. Even though they didn't abuse the children, the men will often get revenge on the women by complaining to the welfare department or the Department of Social Services that they have men living with them and supporting them or that men are going in and out of the apartment all the time, doing drugs, and so forth. One man wrote to the landlord saying that the woman was dealing drugs and that people were living in the apartment and not paying rent.

Sometimes abusive husbands are given visitation rights, but it is the women who have their children taken from them, and they have to prove themselves fit mothers. When the Department of Social Services (DSS) investigates, it often accuses the mothers of not protecting the children. Oly says, "But how can a woman in that situation find housing, pay a baby-sitter, pay the rent, heat, food, transportation, and so forth, without any help? DSS should help her get settled and support the family rather than taking the children away."

Sometimes women feel overwhelmed and place their children voluntarily, expecting to get them back when they have their lives together. But when they go to DSS to get them back, DSS may refuse to return the children.

Children need help too. Even if they have not been directly abused, they may have witnessed their mothers being attacked and this is very disturbing. One child said to her mother in the shelter, "You're not scared anymore. You were always scared at home." The mothers sometimes claim that the children weren't aware of what was happening, but the children always know.

The advice that Inez and Oly give to human service students is, "Be sympathetic. Let the woman know it's not her fault. She doesn't deserve it. She's not alone. Tell her, 'There is always help, someone who will listen to you.' If a woman says, 'My husband is going to kill me,' believe her."

Inez and Oly are always themselves in their work, never putting on a false front. When a woman cries, sometimes they cry with her. They hug the women and get angry along with them. Having gone through some of the things that the residents are going through, they are able to empathize with them.

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**Ethnic Identity**

It is risky to generalize about ethnic traits. There is much variety within each culture. For example, some of the literature on working with ethnicity points out that although the usual advice in interviewing technique is to look someone straight in the eye, that would be the wrong technique for some Asian, Latino, and Native American groups, who might interpret that as hostility. In her autobiographical novel *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston shows that this advice would be wrong for an older woman, Moon Orchid, who was newly arrived from China, but
right for her nieces, who were acculturated to the American tradition of looking people straight in the eye:

"Good morning, Aunt," they said, turning to face her, staring directly into her face. Even the girls stared at her—like cat-headed birds. Moon Orchid jumped and squirmed when they did that. They looked directly into her eyes as if they were looking for lies. Rude. Accusing. They never lowered their gaze; they hardly blinked.... Sometimes when the girls were reading or watching television, she crept up behind them with a comb and tried to smooth their hair, but they shook their heads, and they turned and fixed her with those eyes. She wondered what they thought and what they saw when they looked at her like that. She liked coming upon them from the back to avoid being looked at. They were like animals the way they stared. (Kingston, 1977, p. 133)

The most important guideline for a human service worker is to seek to understand how each individual person is affected by his or her ethnicity. To do that,
there is no substitute for asking the person. If you are working with many people from a culture different from yours, you would be wise to read as much as possible about that culture, including the literature of the culture. That will enrich your life as well as help you in your work. If their language is different from yours, it would also help you to learn their language. We are the first to admit that this isn't easy. One of the authors of this book, Betty Reid Mandell, has been struggling to learn Spanish so she can talk with Hispanic people who come to the welfare office where she does outreach. She has been taking Spanish courses for many years, but she is still far from being fluent. Yet even her halting attempts to communicate with Hispanic women are appreciated, and the women help her with the language.

The Power of Names

When we discuss ethnicity, we need to explain some terms. You may wonder sometimes what you should call a particular group of people. Do you call old people elderly, senior citizens, or simply old? How do you designate people who do not have all possible physical or mental functions? Are they handicapped, disabled, differently abled, physically challenged, developmentally disabled, or people with disabilities? Are American people of African descent called African Americans, black, or Negro? Are American people with Mexican ancestors called Mexican Americans or Chicanos (Chicanas)? Are people whose native language is Spanish called Hispanics or Latinos (Latinas)? Are indigenous people Indians, Native Americans, First Nations, or a specific tribal name?

The name that a group chooses to be known by is important because it reflects that group's self-identity. When a group is oppressed, the name it chooses becomes a political as well as a linguistic issue. For example, people with disabilities generally do not like to be called simply “disabled” rather than “people with disabilities,” because the former term implies they are deficient in some way and not whole people.

In the course of their liberation struggles, American people of African descent said they no longer wanted to be called colored, because that term carried connotations of lower status, so they changed their designation to Negro. During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, they proudly declared that their skin color should be a source of pride rather than shame, so they called themselves blacks. Later on, as they proudly claimed their African heritage, politically active people used the term African Americans. Recently the trend seems to be to return to the term black, partly out of consideration for West Indians, who do not consider themselves African Americans, and partly because black is an easier term. The term people of color is often used to describe people of ethnic groups that are not considered white or Caucasian, but some people point out that these are not entirely accurate terms because Caucasians are not actually white, and many Hispanics are white, even though they may be considered under the rubric of people of color. Similarly, some politically active people of Mexican descent changed the old term Mexican American to Chicano (for males) and Chicana (for females).
As these name changes take place, not everyone in the group adopts them, and often the old names linger on alongside the new ones. For example, the word colored is still part of the name of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Many people still call themselves Mexican Americans rather than Chicanos (Chicanas). Although many indigenous people prefer the term Native American to Indian, some activists are now saying that both terms are reminders of colonialism. They prefer the term First Nations or First Americans, or their tribal names. “American Indian” is also an accepted term. The Census Bureau calls all Spanish-speaking people Hispanics but makes it clear that “persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.”

As authors, we use the terms that we believe are in current usage by people who are in the forefront of their particular group’s liberation struggles. When more than one term is in current usage, we use both. When in doubt about the term a particular person prefers—ask that person!

BROAD CATEGORIES DISGUISE LARGE DIFFERENCES

Many different nations are lumped under the categories of “Asian American” or “Latin American,” but these broad categories obscure enormous national differences. One could no more speak of a “typical Asian” than of a “typical European.” Immigrants from Japan, China, Korea, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and the Philippines all speak different languages and come from vastly different cultures. Immigrants from Colombia, El Salvador, Argentina, Guatemala, Mexico, and Puerto Rico all speak Spanish, but they too come from very different national cultures. Although Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the same Caribbean island, their people speak different languages and have different histories and cultures.

The Census Bureau has finally recognized the reality that many people are of more than one race and for the first time in 2000 allowed people to select more than one racial category. The Census Bureau records “race” and “Hispanic ethnicity” as separate questions. Thus, a Hispanic person can be of any race. Officially, the proportion of ethnic groups in the United States in 2000 was as follows: Caucasian 69.13 percent; black 12.06 percent; Hispanic 12.55 percent; Asian 3.60 percent; American Indian and Eskimo 0.74 percent; Hawaiian and Pacific Islander 0.13 percent; two or more races 1.64 percent; other 0.17 percent (Censusscope.org, 2000).

The Hispanic population has surpassed the black population recently, and there is a trend toward an increasing Hispanic population.

Discrimination Hurts Everybody

The college students who scrawl JAP (Jewish American Princess) on a dorm door have been infected with a contagious, chronic virus. Having learned how to hate one group of people, they are likely to turn on others from backgrounds they do not understand or feel threatened by.
Prejudice and discrimination have economic, psychological, and political causes. In recent years, as the job market has contracted and wages have gone down, people's anxieties and fears about competition for jobs have increased. Many working people look for scapegoats, and we have seen a frightening increase in hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, American Nazi Party, Aryan Nation, and right-wing militias. The bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995 was an example of these groups' potential for violence and the danger that hate inspires.

Prejudice is widespread and is directed against many kinds of people. The comedian Tom Lehrer satirized the pervasiveness of prejudice in his song "National Brotherhood Week." Following are some excerpts:

Oh the white folks hate the black folks;  
And the black folks hate the white folks.  
To hate all but the right folks is an old established rule....

Oh the poor folks hate the rich folks;  
And the rich folks hate the poor folks.  
All of my folks hate all of your folks;  
It's American as apple pie....

Oh the Protestants hate the Catholics;  
And the Catholics hate the Protestants.  
The Hindus hate the Moslems,  
And everybody hates the Jews.  
During National Brotherhood Week, National Brotherhood week,  
Its National-Everyone-Smile-at-One-Anotherhood Week.  
Be nice to people who are inferior to you.  
It's only for a week, so have no fear.  
Be grateful that it doesn't last all year.*

In his classical study of prejudice, psychologist Gordon Allport described a racist as a person who is suspicious and distrustful of anyone perceived as "different" and who is a "super-patriot," believing that all newcomers or those who are different from the mainstream pose a threat to an idealized and more secure past (Allport, 1954, pp. 69–72). Allport's study discovered that bigoted people go through life feeling threatened. They are insecure, cannot live comfortably with themselves or others, and are burdened by guilt. They insist on a strict code of morality in order to try to control their own instinctive feelings, which they mistrust.

Prejudice generally leads to discrimination against the feared group. It is a way to shore up the prejudiced person's weak ego by feeling that he or she is better than other people. It is also a way to protect privileges, by keeping other people out of jobs, housing, or other benefits they need.

Sociologist Robin Williams says that "Racial ideologies developed to rationalize the social, economic, and political domination initially developed to enhance

*From Too Many Songs, Tom Lehrer. Copyright © 1965 by Tom Lehrer. Used by permission.
the resources and privileges of white Europeans" (1966), a domination that persists to the present day. Discrimination harms all workers. Discrimination against people of color and women enables management to pay workers low wages and to rationalize cutbacks in social spending. Anti-Semitism enables the power elite to use Jews as scapegoats to deflect anger away from those in control. As long as they are fighting with each other, minority groups cannot unite to bring about equality and equity for everyone.

The closing off of equal opportunities to people of color has not only caused incredible hardship to them and to their communities, but it has also created social instability that threatens all of society. Rising unemployment in the black community has affected the structure of the black family. Sociologists have pointed out the relationship of black male unemployment to the rise in single-parent families. Although he does not claim that this is the only reason for the rise in female-headed families, sociologist Robert Staples says that "the percentage of black women heading families alone...corresponds closely to the percentage of black males not in the labor force. Men want to help support their families and lose self-esteem when they cannot find work" (1988, p. 321).

Until the problems of unemployment and low income are solved, none of the other problems of the African American community can be solved. Slavery, and the decades of racism that followed, created a workforce in which "blacks still predominate in those occupations that in a slave society would be reserved for slaves" (Ezorsky, 1991, p. 74).

There is also a correlation between the numbers of unemployed young men and the crime rate. The official response to crime has been to build more prisons, at great expense to the taxpayer, but as the director of the American Civil Liberties Union points out,

Crime rates correlate, not with how many prisons are built, but with the proportion of young people in the population and the percentage of those young people who are unemployed, uneducated and face a bleak future. Most violent crimes are committed by alienated young men, who have no reason to hope and nothing to lose— a dangerous mix. (Glasser, 1992, p. 16)

**Institutional Racism**

How does institutional racism or sexism differ from individual racism or sexism? Imagine a situation in which no worker in an agency holds strong racist (or sexist) views, yet the policies of the agency are constructed so that minorities don't receive fair treatment. Such a situation is an example of institutional racism (sexism). It is larger, more powerful, and harder to change than one person's attitudes, because interconnected systems and policies perpetuate it. Even if a policy may appear fair and neutral on the surface, it can become racially discriminatory in the way it is practiced. Institutional racism is pervasive in all of society's institutions, including human services. The following are two examples of institutional racism.
A 10-year-old African American girl was living with warm, stable African American foster parents who wanted to adopt her. The girl’s relatives lived close by and frequently visited her. Even though the girl wanted to stay, the child-welfare agency tried to place her for adoption with strangers, a white couple from an affluent suburb. The relatives feared they would lose contact with her because none owned a car. They felt this move was motivated by the social agency’s elitism—“money equals a more loving family.” The aunt said, “A child belongs to people who love it, even if they are not rich” (Matchan, 1992, p. 1).

Research has shown that adoption workers favor affluent parents over low-income parents. We don’t know enough of the details of the above case to assert that social class biases were all that influenced the agency’s decision, but there is a solid body of research that makes one suspect the aunt was correct. When agency policy blindly gives preference to adoptive applicants because of a high salary, a home in the suburbs, and a professional occupation, these criteria will necessarily discriminate against minority applicants. Treated unequally by the society they live in, they are less likely to make a high salary, live in a well-serviced neighborhood, and have a stable work history in an occupation that requires long and costly training. This adds up to institutional racism.

Institutional racism can be attacked through changing social policy and legislation. One of the purposes of a practice called “subsidized adoption,” which was given federal support in the Child Welfare and Adoption Act of 1980, was to make adoption financially possible for those prospective parents who had been denied access to the chance to earn the money that qualified them to adopt. Now, more people of color and of low income are able to share their lives with those children who need a home, many of whom because of unequal opportunities are themselves from low-income and/or minority groups.

Another example of institutional racism occurs in the criminal justice system. The hypothetical stories that follow are based on research that contradicts the widespread belief that drug use is primarily confined to the black ghetto. In actual fact, white youth sell and use drugs at higher rates than black youth. Institutional racism seems to be at work here.

William Greer, an African American youth, was picked up by the police while he was using crack on a ghetto street corner. He was unemployed and could not afford a lawyer to represent him in court. The legal aid lawyer appointed to defend him was overworked and could not spend much time with William; in fact, he talked with William for just a few minutes before court began. He advised William to plead guilty and plea bargain rather than ask for a jury trial. The judge, known to be “tough on drugs,” sentenced him to a mandatory five-year prison sentence.

Jack Clifford, a white college student, was sniffing cocaine at a party. He had purchased the drug in the suburbs from another student who was known as someone who always had drugs for sale. The party got wild and a neighbor called the police. Jack had to appear in court on a drug charge. His parents hired a skilled lawyer. She asked the judge to allow Jack to get psychiatric treatment for his drug habit rather than go to jail. The judge agreed, knowing that the parents were successful professionals in the community.
Generally, the deviant behavior of poor urban people (minorities are overrepresented among the urban poor) is more likely to be defined as criminal and handled in the criminal justice system. Conversely, the deviant behavior of whites is more likely to be defined as a mental health problem and handled in the mental health system (Morales, 1978, p. 387). To explain this difference, researchers look to the dynamics of institutional racism.

Institutional racism is pervasive in the criminal justice system. Black and Hispanic youths are treated more severely than white teenagers charged with comparable crimes at every step of the juvenile justice system, according to a comprehensive report sponsored by the Justice Department and six of the nation's leading foundations (Butterfield, 2000, p. 1). The report found that minority youths are more likely than white youths to be arrested, held in jail, sent to juvenile or adult court for trial, convicted, and given longer prison terms. At each additional step in the juvenile justice system, things get worse for minority youth than for white youth. Here are the shocking facts:

- Among young people who have not been sent to a juvenile prison before, blacks are more than six times as likely as whites to be sentenced by juvenile courts to prison.
- For those young people charged with a violent crime who have not been in juvenile prison before, black teenagers are nine times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison.
- For those charged with drug offenses, black youths are forty-eight times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison.
- White youths charged with violent offenses are incarcerated for an average of 198 days after trial, but blacks are incarcerated an average of 254 days and Hispanics are incarcerated an average of 305 days.

Mark Soler, the president of Youth Law Center, said, “These disparities accumulate and they make it hard for members of the minority community to complete their education, get jobs and be good husbands and fathers” (Butterfield, 2000, p. 2).

In the past, when studies have found racial disparities in the number of adult black or Hispanic prison inmates, critics have said that it was because members of minorities committed a disproportionate number of crimes. Mark Soler said while that may be true, it does not account for the extreme disparities found in the report, nor for disparities at each stage of the juvenile justice process. He said, “When you look at this data, it is undeniable that race is a factor” (Butterfield, 2000, p. 2).

The nation’s war on drugs unfairly targets African Americans, who are much more likely to be imprisoned for drug offenses than whites even though far more whites use illegal drugs than blacks, according to a report by the advocacy group Human Rights Watch (Fletcher, 2000). African Americans accounted for 62 percent of the drug offenders sent to state prisons nationwide in 1996, although they represent just 12 percent of the U.S. population. Overall, black men are sent to state prisons on drug charges at thirteen times the rate of white men. The report said
that drug transactions among blacks often are easier for police to target because they more often occur in public than do drug transactions among whites. Human Rights Watch recommended the repeal of mandatory sentencing laws for drug offenders, increasing drug treatment, and eliminating racial profiling as a police tactic (Fletcher, 2000).

"We've spent a lot of money and we've wasted a lot of lives," said James Alan Fox, a criminologist who teaches at Northeastern University. "The war on drugs was a failed policy which resulted in the overincarceration of drug offenders, most of whom are not dangerous" (Rodriguez, 2001).

In 2003, there were 2.1 million people in U.S. prisons and jails, and the numbers continue to rise despite a fall in the crime rate. The Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics attributes much of the increase to get-tough policies enacted during the 1980s and 1990s, such as mandatory drug sentences, “three strikes and you’re out” laws for repeat offenders, and “truth in sentencing” laws that restrict early releases. The nation’s incarceration rate tops the world. Members of racial or ethnic minorities made up 68 percent of prison and jail inmates in 2003 (Cass, 2004). This figure is higher than previously believed because until recently prisons were counting Hispanic inmates as white (Rodriguez, 2001).

The “get-tough” sentencing laws adopted by the federal government and most states have forced judges to impose prison terms for certain crimes, including drunk driving and selling drugs. These laws have resulted in a disproportionate number of arrests of black men. The possession of 5 grams of crack results in a five-year mandatory minimum jail sentence, whereas it takes 500 grams of powdered cocaine to get the same penalty. Ninety-five percent of those convicted of crack offenses are black and Hispanic, although almost two-thirds of crack users are white. The prison sentences of blacks convicted on cocaine charges are 41 percent longer than those for whites (Wideman, 1995). These harsh sentences for crack users do nothing to solve the problem of drug abuse. There is a 68 percent recidivism rate for those who go to prison, compared to only an 11 percent rate of recidivism for those who get treatment (Wideman, 1995).

The racial inequalities of the war on drugs also disproportionately affect pregnant women of color. “Despite similar or equal rates of illegal drug use during pregnancy, African American women are ten times more likely to be reported to child welfare agencies for prenatal drug use” (Drug Policy Alliance 2003).

Some states are beginning to soften their stand on long mandatory sentences for minor drug offenses and policies that forbid early parole. Budget constraints are forcing states to reconsider the enormous amount of money they have spent on building prisons. After a two-decade boom in prison construction that quadrupled the number of inmates, states by 2001 were spending a total of $30 billion a year to operate their prisons. Crime is down, and voters are saying they are more concerned about issues like education than with street violence. A voter initiative in California provides for treatment rather than prison for many drug offenders. State legislators are finding they must cut the growth in prison inmates to satisfy the demand for new services and to balance the budget (Butterfield, 2001). Every year an
inmate spends in prison costs taxpayers an average of $22,000. A study by a Stanford University professor estimated that the cost of a life term for an average California prisoner is $1.5 million (Zimbardo, 1994).

**Discrimination against Arab Americans**

Discrimination against Arab Americans has been around for a long time, especially in the work place, but since 9/11 it has risen at alarming rates and spread into many other areas of life.

**Case Study**

**What a human service worker needs to know about Arab Americans: Meet Luby Ismail.**

Lubua “Luby” Ismail awoke before dawn in her hotel room near Orlando, Florida, knelt on the floor and bowed low in the direction of Mecca to say her morning prayers. She finished dressing, wrapped her Muslim headscarf, or hijab, snugly around her dark features and, after a light meal, headed off to lead a cultural training session at Walt Disney World Resort. Ismail sat in silence in the front of the room while the trainees, all of them Disney World employees, arrived. She then scrawled a message on the blackboard: “The first part of this session will be nonverbal, OK?”

As the students nodded in agreement, she wrote another message asking the trainees to share with their training partners, in writing, some assumptions that society—or the class members themselves—might make about a woman who looked and dressed like she did.

To the student who is reading this book: Put this book face down on the table and write down five words that come to your mind as you picture this Arab woman! Now read the responses that Luby got and compare them with yours.

The responses her trainees came up with ranged from “submissive” and “uneducated” to “foreign” and “someone who is not my friend.” Other responses she might have heard—especially if she had been accompanied by an Arab man—might have been Ali Babi, Sinbad, The Thief of Baghdad, white slaver, abuser of women, slave owner, polygamist, sheik, oil millionaire—images drawn from books and the media...and since 9/11, religious fanatic and bomber. Even Sesame Street, the children’s educational TV program, has one character dressed in stereotypical Arab garb and he always teaches negative words like “danger.”

Ismail then broke the silence by proclaiming in perfect English that she is a born-and-bred American who was the pitcher for her ninth-grade softball team and student body president in high school and who today is a wife and business owner. She is one of many advocates engaged in a campaign to pierce the stereotypes about Islam and its followers, called Muslims. These advocates want to help employers make their workplaces more comfortable for the country’s growing numbers of Muslims, who may be of any race or from any part of the world (Panaro, 2004).
Some basic facts that will help you avoid simplistic assumptions (a.k.a. stereotypes) (Adams, 2000; Deen, 2004):

- According to the 2000 Census, there are 1,189,731 Arab Americans in the United States.
- There are twenty-one separate Arab nations, but the United States only recognizes 16 of them.
- There is no simple definition of who an “Arab” is. That word refers to those who speak the Arabic language—but almost every country’s version of Arabic is different from another’s and several Arab countries have internal ethnic groups who speak a totally different form of Arabic or some non-Arabic language.
- There are two more terms often used to describe people like Luby (or her ancestors): Middle Easterners and Muslims (not Moslems). The first refers to geography and the second to religion. BUT—not all persons who consider themselves Arabs or Muslims come from the Middle East (some countries are in Africa, for example)...and not all Arabs are Muslims. Many are Christians, some are Hindus, and a few are atheists (they have no religion). Just to keep things complicated, there are three countries in the Middle East that are not Arab or wholly Muslim: Iran, Israel, and Turkey.
- While some Arab Americans are very wealthy, many others are extremely poor, and there is a small middle class. Arab Americans as a whole are more highly educated than are many other ethnic groups (except for Cubans).
- Arab Americans, very family oriented and often from large families, tend to shun social service intervention into private affairs. While conversation is very important and often close, many do not accept public touching of the opposite sex.
- Religious discrimination is currently at an all-time high. Most Americans know very little about the Muslim faith and the importance of articles of clothing, such as head coverings, scarves, as well as beards. Often the wearing of these is prohibited in schools and workplaces, and practicing Muslims may not be given the time or space for the daily prayers that are fundamental to their religion. Yet these observances are protected under the U.S. Constitution and Section VII of the Civil Rights Act.

What should a human service worker do to stop discrimination against Arab Americans?

1. Learn more about the religion and customs of the many Arab countries, and whenever you encounter others who are spreading misinformation, try to set the record straight.
2. Support your clients or fellow citizens who are being denied their rights to practice their religion (as long as such practice does not endanger others) in their school or workplace by suggesting accommodations that administrators might make. When helpful suggestions fail to make changes, encourage per-
sons who feel their rights are being abridged to file complaints with the top level of administration or the town or state Commissions Against Discrimination. Of course it is always more effective if the complaints come from other members of the affected population and if coalitions are built with like-minded individuals outside of the ethnic group or religion.

3. Remember that while it is important to learn about groups other than the one you belong to, be aware that there are enormous differences both among various populations and within groups who share some characteristics. For example, some very observant Catholics oppose abortion rights and work to repeal Roe v. Wade, while others who consider themselves co-religionists, reject abortion for themselves but support the legal right to choose. Similarly, some Jewish people eat only kosher foods and wear special clothes, while others feel free to eat what they wish and dress like the mainstream population, while still attending synagogue or organizing special celebrations for Jewish holidays.

Some useful resources include:

- American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (www.adc.org)
- The Middle East Network Information Center (MENIC, http://link.lanic.utexas.edu/menic/). Gives information about twenty-six Middle East countries.
- Council on Islamic Education (www.cie.org/)
- Encyclopedia of the Orient (Lexic Orient) (http://i-cias.com/e.o/). The only encyclopedia for North Africa and the Middle East
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology Arab student organization (http://web.mit.edu/arab/www/)
- Search on Google, using the words Arab American or Arab American Directory: Who's Who in the Arab-American Community
- The website www.findarticle.com gives you access to 3.5 million articles from over 700 publications.

**Anti-Semitism**

Is Mel Gibson's film “The Passion of the Christ” anti-Semitic? This question was hotly debated when the film was shown in the spring of 2004. Some people saw it as a powerful Christian message; others said the film unnecessarily paints Jews as most responsible for Jesus’ death, “thus repeating a charge that led to anti-Jewish violence and feelings for centuries” (Diamant, 2004). When an interviewer asked six Christian and five Jews what they thought of the film, all of the Christians said the film was emotionally compelling and a significant religious experience, but the main reaction of the Jews “was that the movie was insensitive to valid concerns about anti-Semitism” (Diamant, 2004). Reaction to the film showed that anti-Semitism is still a potent issue in the United States.
There is a long history of discrimination against Jewish people. They have been persecuted and punished simply because they were born of Jewish parents. Six million were exterminated in death camps by the Nazis in the 1940s. Jews are still arbitrarily excluded from neighborhoods, job promotions, or social clubs in many parts of the United States, causing personal pain and damage to their self-esteem. There has been an upsurge in vandalism to synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. Nazi skinheads, the Ku Klux Klan, and militia groups spread their virulently poisonous anti-Semitic message.

In Terre Haute, Indiana, on November 17, 2003, a Holocaust museum was destroyed by an arson attack. A hate-filled anti-Semitic extremist left a note venerating the Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVeigh. In Beverly Hills, California, in 2003, anti-Semitic graffiti defaced Jewish institutions during the High Holy Days. In the same year, in the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, congregants coming to services found their synagogues spray-painted with swastikas and a sukkah (religious enclosure) torched (Foxman, 2003).

As of 1990, the United States had the largest population of Jews of any country in the world (Schaefer, 1989), although Israel, because of the recent influx of Jews from the former U.S.S.R. and other Eastern European countries, may soon have the largest Jewish population. Yet Jewish people constitute only about 2 percent of the entire U.S. population, and their numbers are diminishing because of low birth rates and intermarriage.*

In contrast to people of color, no physical characteristics distinguish a Jew from a non-Jew, because they have come here from every corner of the world. American Jews have no common language, other than English (although Hebrew is spoken in Israel and in orthodox religious practice, and Yiddish was often spoken by an earlier generation of Eastern European Jewish immigrants). There is enormous variation in their involvement in Judaism and their identification with its practices and culture.

Currently, most people of Jewish ancestry are clustered in urban areas, primarily in New York and New Jersey, and in white-collar professions, although this was not so in their early immigrant days (Schaefer, 1989). They are not, as a group, economically deprived. Yet prejudice and discrimination have the same devastating effect on Jews as on other minority groups.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action, a policy that gives some preference in admissions, hiring, or promotion to equally qualified members of underrepresented minority groups, is

*The U.S. Census Bureau no longer asks questions about religious affiliation; therefore, statistics have had to be estimated since 1957, the last time this question was asked. The Gallup Organization estimates that about 2 percent of the U.S. population (5.6 million) identifies itself as Jewish (The Gallup Organization, 2004).
one of the mechanisms that attempt to redress the inequalities that minorities have historically encountered. African Americans have not only suffered from slavery, but also from many forms of discrimination since slavery. In housing, for example, the Federal Housing Administration, which underwrote one-third of all new housing construction from 1937 to 1972, required that all properties “continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes” (Chappell, 2004). The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 directly displaced 330,000 poor families, mostly black. State laws and local zoning ordinances artificially concentrated both poverty and wealth and sharply segregated people on the basis of ethnicity and social class (Chappell, 2004).

Federal support for affirmative action has weakened since the 1980s and the policy continues to be under fierce attack. White people who feel they have been denied opportunities because of affirmative action have fought it in court on the grounds that it violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In a case brought against the University of Michigan, the Supreme Court in 2003 ruled that colleges can consider race in admissions, but must also treat students as individuals, and not accept or reject them solely on the basis of their skin color. Soon after this decision was handed down, Ward Connerly, a member of the University of California Board of Regents who led successful ballot initiatives in California and Washington State that ended racial preferences, took his campaign to Michigan to put a similar measure on the ballot there. In Colorado the bill that
would have banned affirmative action in the state was defeated by one vote in the Republican-controlled state senate. That one vote was cast by State Senator Lew Entz, a Republican, who crossed party lines to deliver the deciding vote. Senator Entz had a large constituency of Hispanics, who favored affirmative action (Klein, 2004).

Not surprisingly, women and minorities are more likely to support affirmative action than are white males. A 2003 Gallup poll found that one in three white male teens favor college affirmative action programs, while two-thirds of female and minority teens favor them. A 2001 survey found that 43 percent of white men favored college affirmative action programs, compared to 64 percent of women and minorities (Jackson, 2003).

While affirmative action is often divisive and cannot by itself achieve racial equality, we believe it is still an essential device to counteract institutional barriers to minority advancement. Ezorsky reports, for example, that 80 percent of executives find their jobs through networking, and over 86 percent of available jobs do not appear in the classifieds.

Historic patterns of discrimination and segregation which exclude blacks from white neighborhoods, business and social clubs have locked blacks out of a remarkably high percentage of job opportunities simply because they do not have the necessary white contacts to learn of the jobs or to be considered for them. (Forman, 1992, p. 172, reviewing Ezorsky, 1991)

Furthermore, some hiring criteria such as diploma requirements or standardized tests often work against minorities. Many tests have been shown to be culturally biased, drawing material from the white middle-class world. This bias can be overcome either by constructing culturally sensitive tests or by giving training in test taking. For example, the highest pass rate on the National Teachers' Exam is by graduates of Grambling University, which has a primarily African American student body. That is because the university requires its students to take a test-taking course (Hacker, 1992).

Even when they are hired, blacks are discriminated against because of seniority-based promotion, layoff plans, and the "glass ceiling" (an invisible but real barrier to advancement) of tradition. Because they are the last to be hired, they are the first to be fired and among the last to be promoted (if ever).

Many universities have admission practices that favor upper-class people. Critics say that a policy of "legacy admissions," which gives preference to children of alumni, amounts to affirmative action for upper-class whites. Ivy League schools have admitted about 12 percent of their student body through legacy admissions, while Notre Dame's legacy admissions make up 24 percent of their student body. President George W. Bush was admitted to Yale through a legacy policy, as he himself has admitted that he was not accepted to Yale on the strength of his grades. The legacy policy at Texas A&M University helped more than 300 white students qualify for admission every year but only about 30 blacks and Hispanics. After Texas A&M did away with affirmative action for minorities, they decided that it was inconsis-
tent to keep a legacy policy that favored white students and did away with that policy. Georgia and California have also ended legacy policies in their state schools (Talk of the Nation, 2004, January 15).

Affirmative action has become a lightning rod that attracts people's anxieties about race. It “dominates the nation’s obsession with race relations” (Holmes, 1997, p. 1) and seems to have become magnified out of all proportion to its real significance in people’s lives. When public opinion polls ask whites whether they ever lost a job or a promotion or were denied college admission as a result of affirmative action, few say yes.

Affirmative action costs little, in comparison with social services. It hardly affects the majority of Americans. Most students who are eligible for college are accepted, regardless of affirmative action (Holmes, 1997).

We can get some idea of what will happen when affirmative action is done away with by looking at what has already happened in California, where Proposition 209 spelled the end of affirmative action in that state in 1997. There has been a dramatic decline in minority applications to medical and law schools at the University of California. Most applicants who were accepted did not enroll because they felt unwelcome. Just one of the fifteen blacks accepted to Berkeley’s Boalt Hall law school enrolled in the fall of 1997. Only fourteen of the forty-six Hispanics admitted did. The two Native Americans who were accepted turned the school down (Gorov, 1997). Hashona Braun, a black student at the law school, said, “We really don’t feel welcome here anymore, and the people who aren’t here yet feel even more unwelcome” (Gorov, 1997, p. A1). Michael Rappaport, dean of admissions at UCLA’s law school, said, “Another way of looking at it is that there are fewer blacks in Boalt than at the University of Alabama in the days of George Wallace. That’s what’s so frightening” (Gorov, 1997, p. A1).

One of the many programs that was ended because of Proposition 209 was a state-funded program called CAL-SOAP, or California Student Opportunity and Access Program. Its math classes aimed to give minority students an edge in math when applying for college. CAL-SOAP recruited about 200 seventh-graders a year who scored at least a 2.4 grade point average and then worked with them until they went to college. It also mentored and trained college students to work intensively with the teenagers. The program had a 100 percent college attendance rate. Norma Lara, a former CAL-SOAP participant and a student at the University of California at Berkeley, was the first in her family to attend college. She now worries about her 13-year-old twin sisters.

Lara says that Proposition 209

“says we're all one big happy family in California. We're all equal. Our education system is great. But it's obviously not true. We don't have a level playing field. In order for everyone to have the same opportunity, the education system has to be equal. They have to reform the school system before they can take that away.” (Katz, 1997, p. L7)

Some people argue that economic diversity is as important as racial diversity, and we need to refocus on a new kind of affirmative action based on social class.
Affirmative action helps middle class more than low-income minorities. Low-income white people as well as low-income minorities are also disadvantaged in college admissions. In the 146 most selective universities, low-income students make up only 3 percent of the student body. In two-year colleges generally, about two-thirds of those from the top economic quartile go on to a four-year college, while in the bottom economic quartile, only about one-fifth do (Talk of the Nation, 2004, April 15). This economic stratification is getting worse as colleges increasingly grant scholarship money on the basis of merit rather than need. As college tuition becomes more expensive, low-income students are increasingly priced out of college.

Immigrants

As our country celebrated the 500th anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of the nation, people from the First Nations reminded us that they had already "discovered" this nation and had been living in it for a long time before Columbus appeared at their shores. All the rest of us emigrated here from another country or, in the case of some Mexican Americans, came with the territory when the United States won the Mexican American War in 1848 and annexed Mexican land in the
Southwest. Here are vignettes about three children who recently immigrated and what it was like for them:

A twelfth-grade Lao Mien* boy who immigrated at age 14 tells an interviewer:

The school was so big! There was no one who could speak Mien and explain to me. My uncle had told me if I needed any help to go to the Dean. My teacher asked me something and I didn't understand her. So I just said “Dean, Dean” because I needed help. That is how I got my American name. She was asking me “What is your name?” Now everybody calls me Dean. It is funny, but it is also sad. My name comes from not knowing what was going on.

A ninth-grade Filipino girl who immigrated with her parents declares:

Our parents don't come [to school functions] because they don't know any English. I don't even tell them when they are supposed to come. They dress so different and I don't want our parents to come because the others will laugh at them and tease us. We are ashamed.

A Cambodian boy who immigrated is reminded of his past:

In an elementary school in San Francisco, a teacher is playing “hangman” with her class as a spelling lesson. One “Limited-English-Proficient” (LEP) student, a Cambodian refugee, bursts into tears and becomes hysterical. Later, through an interpreter, the teacher learns that the student had witnessed the hanging of her father in Cambodia. (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, pp. 180–181)

**FLUCTUATIONS IN IMMIGRATION POLICY**

The first wave of immigrants was predominantly white and European; the recent wave is, to a large extent, Hispanic or nonwhite and from third-world countries, especially Asia and Latin America. The immigration policy of the United States has fluctuated between the country's need for labor and people's xenophobia and fear of losing their jobs to foreigners; it has also been influenced by foreign policy. When the country needed workers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to build the railroads, work the mines and the steel mills, and weave cloth, it especially welcomed European immigrants for these jobs. African slaves were brought in primarily to work on southern cotton plantations. Chinese immigrants were brought in to help build the railroads in the West, especially for menial work that white men refused to do.

After the railroads were built, the country no longer wanted Chinese people and passed restrictive legislation to keep them out. They didn't even allow the Chinese men who had built the railroad to be present when the golden spike was driven to mark the joining of the two railroads (Hsu, 1971, p. 104). This was one example of the rising tide of racist fears that led to the United States excluding people of color.

*One of the tribes in Laos.
Some of the fears were fueled by competition for jobs. Organized labor feared that Chinese laborers would be used as strike breakers, which did sometimes happen.

Immigration policy in the United States has always made distinctions by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. Japanese people were excluded in 1907, except in Hawaii where they were needed as agricultural workers. In 1921, the United States adopted a national-origins system that limited admissions from each European country to 3 percent of the foreign-born population here as of the 1910 Census. That resulted in favoring northern Europeans over southern and eastern Europeans for nearly half a century. Most Asians were still excluded, but there were no limits on migrants from the Western Hemisphere (Schmitt, 2001b).

The civil rights movement helped to achieve more fairness in immigration policy. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 eliminated racial criteria and replaced country-by-country quotas with a system that awarded green cards (permits to work) based largely on family or employer sponsorship. The author Calvin Trillin, a connoisseur of ethnic food, is grateful for the Immigration Act of 1965 because it brought in a rich variety of ethnic food. He says, “I have to say that some serious eaters think of the Immigration Act of 1965 as their very own Emancipation Proclamation” (Trillin, 2001, p. 42). Immigration policy before 1965 “reflected not simply bigotry but the sort of bigotry that seems to equate desirable stock with blandness in cooking. The quota for the United Kingdom was so high that it was never filled. Asians were, in effect, excluded” (p. 42).

But the pendulum swung again in the 1980s. The Immigration Reform and Control Act, passed by Congress in 1986, was a response to increasing concern about illegal immigration, particularly across the Mexican border, but also from other war-ravaged Latin American countries. Now, for the first time, employers can be fined and sentenced to prison for hiring illegal aliens. That is why, if you start a part-time job at a restaurant or store, your employer will ask you to give proof of your citizenship.

The act has contributed to discrimination against both legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. Many employers hire and then exploit illegal immigrants, forcing them to accept substandard wages and working conditions because they fear deportation. Employers also sometimes assume that anyone who has a Spanish name or speaks English with an accent is an illegal immigrant, and so they refuse to hire immigrants who actually have valid work permits (Schaefer, 1989, p. 126).

The Immigration Act of 1996 provides for “expedited removal” of immigrants and represents a major change in the country’s treatment of immigrants. Columnist Robert Kuttner sees it as one aspect of a growing police state. Kuttner says that under the provisions of the act,

legal permanent residents who make innocent technical mistakes face Kafkaesque nightmares. Hundreds of U.S. married couples have been separated for years because a foreign-born spouse neglected to fill out paperwork.

People guilty of only technical lapses have been led off in handcuffs and jailed. Legitimate Canadian and Mexican business people, including corporate board members,
have been barred from entering the United States and treated like common criminals because they lacked some immigration form.

Other long time legal residents have been deported abruptly because of minor legal problems decades ago. The law disdains due process, makes judicial appeal almost impossible, and reinforces the thuggish tendencies of the Immigration and Naturalization service. (Kuttner, 1998, p. F7)

The 1996 law changed the rules for about 300,000 refugees from Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala who fled civil wars in the 1980s and were given temporary protection from deportation. The law increased the residency requirement from seven years to ten years, eliminated hardship to the refugee as a basis to fight deportation, and limited the number of immigrants who could seek permanent residency through this avenue to 4,000. The law also imposed a ten-year bar to reentry on those who leave the country and forced them to return to their home countries to obtain permanent visas ("Flaws," 1997). Under the old law, there was no income test for sponsors, just a requirement that incoming immigrants show they would not need public aid, but the new law imposed a legally enforceable income requirement. Advocates say this law needlessly divides hard-working husbands and wives from each other and their children. A study by the Urban Institute found that 40 percent of immigrant families in the United States and 26 percent of American-born people in the United States would not make enough to sponsor an immigrant under the new standards (Dugger, 1998).

The law also stipulates that legal immigrants who leave the country and then return—even after a brief vacation—may be subjected to harassment and imprisonment without due process if they have any criminal record. This includes the most minor infractions. Theft of cable television service, for example, can be treated as an "aggravated felony" under the new law, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) may detain legal immigrants and begin deportation proceedings against them for it (The Progressive, 1997).

One person who was caught in this web was Jesus Collado-Munoz, who was born in the Dominican Republic but has lived in the United States for more than twenty-five years as a legal permanent resident. He married and raised his family here. His wife and daughters are all U.S. citizens. Because of the "aggravated felony" provision in the new immigration law, Collado was jailed for sixteen months in a maximum-security prison in Pennsylvania, under threat of deportation, because of a twenty-two-year-old misdemeanor conviction (The Progressive, 1997). He had visited the Dominican Republic for two weeks, but on his return, INS agents detained him. He admitted that he had had a brush with the law when he was 19 years old. The mother of his then-15-year-old girlfriend brought statutory sexual-assault charges against him for having consensual sex with her daughter. The two teenagers were dragged into court. Collado pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and was convicted.

Twenty-two years later, the mother of Collado's old high school girlfriend pleaded for his release, to no avail. The federal courts could do nothing about this
injustice because with the new law, “Congress stripped federal judges of their power
to review cases like Collado’s and to grant waivers of deportation” (The Progressive,
1997). A lawyer for the ACLU Immigrant Rights Project said that “The situation of
Jesus Collado is the most compelling example of everything that’s wrong with the
immigration law. The Supreme Court has said again and again that due process ap-
plies to everyone” (The Progressive, 1997). The case drew national attention because
Collado’s ordeal highlighted the effects that tougher immigration laws could have on
the lives of ordinary citizens who committed crimes long ago (Ojito, 1998b).

In October 1998, an immigration court judge in New York dismissed the de-
portation case against Mr. Collado. While he was relieved, Collado said he still can-
not rest easy. While he was detained, he almost lost his restaurant in Washington
Heights. He has large debts, as both his wife and daughter had serious health prob-
lems. He sleeps fitfully and visits a psychologist once a week (Ojito, 1998b).

The Justice Department’s attempt to speed deportations of thousands of immi-
grants convicted of crimes in the United States was dealt a setback in 1999 when the
Supreme Court let stand appeals of court decisions that gave those immigrants the
right to judicial review of their cases (Vicini, 1999).

The Immigration Act of 1996 and the benefit-cutting effects of the Personal Re-
sponsibility Act created panic in the immigrant community. Immigrants and their
advocates fought back through both legal and political means. There have been
many legal challenges to the law. Lawyers in California challenged the law’s income
requirement as unconstitutional and discriminatory (Lewis, 1997). The twenty
members of the Hispanic Congressional Caucus mobilized their resources to fight
both the immigration law and the cuts in benefits of the Personal Responsibility
Act. Congress and the president decided that they had gone too far in attacking im-
migrants. House and Senate Republican leaders “who are trying to improve their
tainted image with immigrants in states with large immigrant populations, like
California and Florida” (Schmitt, 1997, p. 10) decided in 1997 to ease some of the
immigration curbs of the 1996 law. Congress passed a law in 1998 that allowed
about 40,000 Haitians who applied for political asylum before 1996 to stay in the
country. The changes to the law exempted about 400,000 Cubans, Salvadorans,
Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, and even some Eastern Europeans from the new de-
portation rules. However, it did not exempt thousands of Haitians who fled after a
military coup in 1991.

The fierceness of the anti-immigration sentiment was beginning to abate be-
fore the 9/11 attacks. The AFL-CIO, in an 180-degree policy turn, shifted from de-
nonucing illegal immigrants as a threat to American workers, to calling for a
general amnesty for them all (meaning they could stay and join a union) (Pertman,
2001, p. D2). Some states have granted drivers’ licenses to illegal immigrants. Vir-
tually no business owners worry at all about being fined for hiring illegal immi-
grants, because they almost never are. Cecilia Munoz, vice president of policy for
the National Council of La Raza, the largest Hispanic civil rights organization, says,
“Frankly, they’ll take anybody they can get and undocumented workers are often
the only ones willing to accept such poor wages” (Pertman, 2001, p. D2).
Much of the shift in attitude stemmed from the need for workers. Offering driver's licenses to illegal immigrants so they can get to work benefits not only the workers, but also the employers who need them (Pertman, p. D2). In 2000, high-technology employers facing labor shortages persuaded the Republican-controlled Congress to nearly double the annual quota for temporary, high-skilled immigrants, to 195,000. Most of those visas go to immigrants from China and India. They are paid less than U.S. workers, and are often deported when their services are no longer needed. In 2001, a broad coalition of employers from restaurant and hotel owners to landscapers and meat-packing plants lobbied to expand a temporary worker program to include lesser-skilled laborers in their fields (Schmitt, 2001b).

After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, fears about terrorist attacks led the White House and Congress to move rapidly toward making immigration laws tighter. The reversal, which came just as the administration had considered loosening its policies, sent a chill through legal and illegal Hispanic immigrants. Maria Blanco, national senior counsel for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said, “People are very disappointed that, so soon after the debate seemed to be moving forward on immigration, it has taken a few steps backwards. Latinos don’t want to be tainted by this broad brush” (Sterngold, 2001, p. 00).

Before the September 11 attacks, Mexican President Vincente Fox and President George W. Bush discussed the possibility of granting legal status to millions of undocumented Mexicans living in the United States. However, after the attacks, President Bush no longer talked about how hard-working immigrants seeking a better life should be given a chance. Instead, there is now a more mistrustful view of immigrants. The immigration debate has been recast to focus on border security and homeland defense (New York Times, 2001).

In 2004, President Bush proposed a “temporary worker” program that would allow undocumented immigrants living in the United States and workers abroad to obtain a three-year work permit with the employers’ sponsorship. Although the work permit would be renewable for an unspecified number of years, participation in the program could not lead to normal permanent residency and citizenship. Workers would still have to return to their home countries when their permits expire, they fail to maintain steady employment, or “break the law” (Northeast Action, 2004). Most of the major Hispanic advocacy organizations (including National Council of La Raza, the League of United Latin American citizens, United Farm Workers, and the National Immigration Law Center) oppose the president’s immigration policy, while welcoming his willingness to discuss immigration policy (Goldstein, 2004).

Both Republicans and Democrats tried to use the immigration issue to get votes. After President Bush proposed his plan, the Democrats put forward a bill that would make it harder to import so-called guest workers, but would open the path to citizenship for illegal immigrants already in the country and would loosen quotas that prevent many immigrants from bringing relatives into the United States (Alonso-Zaldivar, 2004, May 2).
The U.S. Immigration Service (formerly the INS, or Immigration & Naturalization Service) held some 23,000 people in custody in 2004. Many of these prisoners are contracted out to private prisons and local jails because the federal government lacked detention space and the local officials needed the revenue. More than half of the prisoners are held in county jails around the country as “administrative detainees,” not serving sentences. The local and federal custodians use the arrangement to evade accountability, and many incidents of torture have been reported.

At Florida’s Jackson County Jail in 1998, INS inmates described the regular use of “shock shields” against INS and state prisoners. One inmate witness told the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC) that the inmates were tied down “in the position of a crucifix” and left in that position for over nine hours with no food or drink. The guards would administer electric shocks to the inmates while they were tied with an electric shield and a stun gun. As a result of persistent complaints filed by FIAC, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department finally investigated and concluded that the Jackson County Jail was violating the U.S. Constitution by using excessive force and denying prisoners access to courts. The INS inmates were transferred out of the jail; state prisoners were left behind (Dow, 2004).

Immigrants and their advocates have mobilized to resist their discriminatory treatment. Inspired by the freedom riders of the civil rights movement, thousands of immigrants participated in an Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride in October 2003. With organizing support from the AFL-CIO and other groups, they marched and demonstrated in 116 cities across the country, including New York City, where over 76,000 rallied to publicize a host of immigrant rights issues from equal rights in the workplace to immigration reform (Northeast Action, 2004, p. 4).

Undocumented immigrants were guaranteed access to a free public K–12 education by a 1982 Supreme Court decision, but the 1996 Immigration Act prohibits undocumented immigrants from accessing any post-secondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit. As a result, many states have blocked access to in-state tuition for undocumented students. An estimated 60,000 undocumented students graduate from the nation’s high schools each year, and most are unable to pay in-state tuition at their public college, except in the few states that allow them to. A bill has been introduced in Congress called the DREAM Act, which would make it possible for immigrant students to pay in-state tuition, and would also make it easier for them to become legal permanent residents (Lazarin, 2003).

People’s fears about the costs of providing social services to immigrants may be exaggerated. Studies show that new immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, make little use of health and welfare services, because of both fear and not knowing about the services. The only large groups of immigrants to use such services are political refugees invited in by the U.S. government, principally Laotians, Cambodians, and Russians.

A study by the National Academy of Sciences that came out in 1997 concluded that immigration added about $10 billion a year to the nation’s economic output. Although the job prospects of low-skilled workers, particularly high school dropouts, were sometimes hurt by competition with immigrants, the effects are relatively small
and are not concentrated in the areas where immigrants live but are dispersed across the United States. The study concluded that immigration is neither a panacea for the nation’s economic problems nor a source of huge costs. The fiscal impact of immigrants overall is positive because they tend to arrive as young workers and “will help pay the public costs of the aging baby boom generation” (Pear, 1998a).

The people who benefit most from immigration, aside from the immigrants themselves, are businesses and the wealthy. David Card, an economist who studies immigration, said that when he moved to San Francisco, he noticed some changes from his lifestyle in Princeton. “In California, a professor has at least a gardener and maybe two, someone who cleans his house, and two or three day-care workers,” he said (Cassidy, 1997, p. 41–42). The study by the National Academy of Sciences said that in the six states where immigration is highest (California, New York, Texas, New Jersey, Florida, and Illinois), 78 percent of the male cooks and 62 percent of the female housekeepers are immigrants. The Academy report concluded that “benefits from lower prices are higher for households with very high levels of wealth and education” (Cassidy, 1997, p. 42).

Many undocumented immigrants are hired by the rich, despite the law prohibiting that practice. Two prominent cases involved people who were nominated for federal attorney general—Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood. President Clinton withdrew their nominations because it became known that they had employed illegal immigrants as nannies.

Although it is important to know the economic facts about immigration, economics is not the only factor to use in evaluating the benefits and costs of immigration. We can’t forget that immigrants built this nation and continue to enrich it in many ways.

Much of the anti-immigration sentiment seems to reflect a belief that there are “good” immigrants and “bad” immigrants. People whose ancestors arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries believe that this qualifies them as real Americans. The early immigrants are remembered as good, hardworking assimilators, while the new ones are “inferior, parasitic, and implacably foreign.” (Walker, 1995, p. 62)

Discussing the repressive Immigration Act of 1996, a New York Times editorial (“Hard Times,” 1997) warns of the threat to all of us:

This law won political passage by attacking an unpopular group. That, historically, is how more widespread deprivations of rights have started. The law is not just an assault on vulnerable people who deserve protection from abuse, but a threat to the liberties of all Americans. (p. WK14)

CUTBACKS IN BENEFITS FOR IMMIGRANTS

The Personal Responsibility Act created widespread panic among immigrants. A 51-year-old Cuban immigrant, diagnosed as schizophrenic, hanged himself after learning he would no longer qualify for public assistance because he was not a U.S. citizen (Conniff, 1997).
Many elderly and disabled noncitizens who have been in the United States for a long time and lack the mental capacity to do what is necessary to become citizens were thrown out of their homes or out of nursing homes or other group residential settings that were no longer reimbursed for their care. (Edelman, 1997, p. 48)

Cuts in programs for immigrants were predicted to save about $22 billion, about 40 percent of the savings in the bill. Almost 800,000 legal immigrants received SSI and most of them would be cut off. In response to protests and lobbying by immigration advocates, Congress restored $11.4 billion in immigrant benefits (Alvarez, 1997). It restored SSI benefits to most legal immigrants in 1997, but not to all. It restored food stamps to some immigrants, including the elderly, disabled, and children, but not to all. By the end of 1997, the law had pushed about 770,000 immigrants off the food stamp rolls across the nation.

In a suburb of Boston, a Latina woman told hunger researchers that she was so desperate to feed her two young children after using up her allotment of groceries from the local food pantry that she had no choice but to gather scraps from the garbage (Kong, 1998).

ELIMINATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Although elimination of bilingual education programs was also an attack on immigrants, in California it was supported by some Hispanics. California’s Proposition 227, a voter initiative, was sponsored by Ron Unz, a California multi-millionaire software developer and former Republican candidate for governor. Unz launched a national movement called English Only to eliminate bilingual education across the country by amending state constitutions, with the ultimate goal being to amend the Constitution of the United States. He spearheaded the defeat of bilingual education in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, but met fierce resistance in Colorado, where it was voted down. While Unz has funded many anti-bilingual education ballot initiatives, the English Only movement is led principally by a multi-million dollar conservative organization called U.S. English (DePass, T., 2003, April).

Unz scoffed at research that says it can take up to seven years for students to become fully fluent in academic English, and proposed that, except in charter schools, they be given just one school year—180 days—to learn the language intensively before being mainstreamed into all-English classes. This program, called “English immersion,” has eliminated most bilingual education programs, which helped limited English proficient (LEP) children keep up with all their required academic competencies, such as math, history, and science, while they are learning English through ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. Many LEP students learn to speak conversational English within the first two years, but research consistently shows that it takes four to seven years before most students are able to use English to learn academic subjects and perform on a par with native English-speaking peers (Massachusetts English Plus Coalition, 2003).

There is heated debate on the efficacy of bilingual education nationwide. Unz and his supporters argue that the offspring of earlier immigrant groups were forced
to learn English and, therefore, succeeded in America. Speaking for the opponents of Unz, Massachusetts State Representative Jarrett Barrios, a Hispanic, said, “There’s no way you can construe what Ron Unz is doing as anything less than anti-immigrant and anti-children” (Lupo, 2001). Opponents of English Immersion have argued that the initiatives are too punitive because teachers could be personally sued for speaking Spanish in the classroom, and too restrictive because they would eliminate dual-language programs and parent choice. Hispanic opponents argue that the attack on bilingual education is an attack on their cultural identity. Many African Americans joined the struggle to save bilingual education, remembering their own struggles to become literate, being able to vote, and having equal access to education. A 2003 Gallup poll showed that the views of Hispanic Americans are quite different from those of white Americans, with nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of Hispanics favoring it, compared to just over half (53%) of whites. Black Americans hold nearly identical views to Hispanics on the issue. Political affiliation also influences people’s views, with 69 percent of Democrats favoring bilingual education, compared to 46 percent of Republicans. Support for bilingual education also drops sharply among advancing age categories. Seventy-five percent of 18- to 29-year-olds favor bilingual education, compared to 61 percent of 30- to 49-year-olds, 49 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds, and just 44 percent of people aged 65 and older (Mason, 2003).
Guidelines for Ethnic-Sensitive Human Service Work

People who have been discriminated against because of their skin color have reason to be mistrustful of white-dominated organizations, including (and sometimes especially) human service agencies. Unfortunately, agencies have a poor track record in eliminating discrimination. After the Civil War, such agencies were almost always segregated and poorly funded. The Charity Organization Society served very few people of color. In her autobiography, The Woman Warrior, author Maxine Hong Kingston (1977) gives an example of the feeling of alienation created by discrimination.

Lie to Americans. Tell them you were born during the San Francisco earthquake. Tell them your birth certificate and your parents were burned up in the fire. Don’t report crimes; tell them we have no crimes and no poverty. Give a new name every time you get arrested; the ghosts* won’t recognize you. Pay the new immigrants twenty-five cents an hour and say we have no unemployment. And, of course, tell them we’re against Communism. Ghosts have no memory anyway and poor eyesight. (pp. 184–185)

The distrust that discrimination creates affects all of us. An individual white person may never have discriminated against anyone, but the climate of fear that prejudice has created in a society may make every white person seem like a potential enemy until she or he proves to be trustworthy.

Of course, people of color can also express prejudice against white people when they believe that all white people are alike. And some light-skinned black people are prejudiced toward dark-skinned black people. In Boston, a light-skinned Cape Verdean teacher was prejudiced against dark-skinned children in her class. She seated pupils by skin color, with lighter-skinned children at the front of the class and darker-skinned children at the back. The darker-skinned children always got the worst treatment. She shamed the children, hit them, and humiliated them. Some other teachers in the school protested and sparked an investigation by the U.S. Department of Education (Gaines, 2000).

GUIDELINES TO BUILD TRUST

1. Learn the culture. You can learn a lot about a person’s culture by asking sensitive questions. No matter how much you have read about a group’s culture, you won’t know how it affects the specific person you are talking with until you ask.

Here is an example of an incorrect assessment of a person based on a lack of understanding of the culture.

A young Southeast Asian woman was ordered by the court to attend therapy for repeatedly shoplifting merchandise from a neighborhood grocery store. The young woman

*In this story of Chinese people in San Francisco, the Chinese regarded all non-Chinese people as “ghosts” because they seemed as alien as ghosts. Interestingly, her protagonist saw black ghosts as more friendly than white ghosts.
had been in this country less than a year and spoke minimal English. She was assigned to a white therapist who after several failed attempts to get the young woman to communicate her reasons for shoplifting informed the court that the client was withdrawn, uncommunicative, and appeared depressed.

A young Asian paralegal working in the office at the time read the case and was able to shed some light on the problem. The Asian paralegal related that the item, repeatedly stolen from the store, sanitary napkins, was not openly displayed, or sold in public markets in the country of the Southeast Asian woman....In the woman’s country, it was considered highly improper for women to publicly acknowledge their monthly menses. Purchasing the pads outright or explaining her reasons for taking this product would have caused this woman great embarrassment and public shame, not to mention a breach of her ethnic and cultural values on proper conduct. (Boyd, 1990, p. 160)

2. Create a welcoming atmosphere. As soon as they walk in the office, people should receive the message that they are welcome. If the agency’s clientele includes people who speak a language other than English, posters on the wall and informational brochures should be written in that language. The magazine rack could include local African American and Hispanic newspapers. Gays and lesbians will be reassured to see their own newspaper or magazine.
3. Acknowledge the validity of their suspicion of you. Research has shown that people from minority groups are less likely to return to a human service agency after the first interview than are people from the dominant culture.

Maxine Hong Kingston (1977) talks of the reticence about discussing intimate affairs within the traditional Chinese culture, but she indicates that it was a much more serious offense to share secrets with the “ghosts.”

They came nosing at windows—Social Worker Ghosts; Public Health Nurse Ghosts; Factory Ghosts recruiting workers during the war (they promised free child care, which our mother turned down); two Jesus Ghosts who had formerly worked in China. We hid directly under the windows, pressed against the baseboard until the ghost, calling us in the ghost language so that we'd almost answer to stop its voice, gave up. (p. 98)

The person who suffers from discrimination feels a dreadful wound, a humiliating degradation, and if he or she is strong enough to feel it, tremendous rage. (Most tragically, the individual may turn the rage inward against him- or herself.)

The Autobiography of Malcolm X (Malcolm X & Haley, 1966) presents a vivid literary description of these feelings. An outstanding leader of the American Muslims in the 1960s, Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965. He gives us a personalized account of his disillusionment as he writes bitterly about the state welfare workers who claimed to be “helping” him. In the course of his life, he encountered a good many helping agents of the state and found them wanting. When he was a young
boy, his father was killed by whites, and his mother had to struggle to keep the family together, eking out a living by cleaning houses. She hated to accept welfare assistance, but when she finally gave in, she was harassed by welfare investigators. They termed her “crazy” for, among other behaviors, refusing to eat pork, even though she was a Seventh Day Adventist and it was against her religion to do so. They also opposed her seeing a male friend, even though this made her happier than she had ever been before. Malcolm X held them partially responsible for his mother having to go to a mental hospital, and he said they were as vicious as vultures (Malcolm X & Haley, 1966).

Malcolm X was placed in a foster home, and this is what he thought about that.

Soon the state people were making plans to take over all of my mother's children....[A] Judge McClellan in Lansing had authority over me and all of my brothers and sisters. We were "state children," court wards; he had the full say-so over us. A white man in charge of a black man's children! Nothing but legal, modern slavery however kindly intentioned....I truly believe that if ever a state social agency destroyed a family, it destroyed ours. We wanted and tried to stay together. Our home didn't have to be destroyed. But the Welfare, the courts, and their doctor, gave us the one-two-three punch. And ours was not the only case of this kind. (pp. 20–21)

When Malcolm was about to enter the third grade, an English teacher asked him what kind of career he wanted. Malcolm said that he wanted to be a lawyer, to which the teacher replied:

You've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be. You're good with your hands—making things. Everybody admires your carpentry shop work. Why don't you plan on carpentry? (p. 36)

By raising people's consciousness about discrimination and pressuring organizations to change, Malcolm X and other civil rights activists helped reshape social services as well as other institutions of society. Since the 1960s, many ethnic groups have developed their own agencies and professional organizations, creating changes in the policies and hiring practices of white-dominated agencies. The National Association of Black Social Workers was formed in 1968 to improve the provision of social services to blacks and to spur the recruitment of black social workers (McRoy, 1990, p. 11).

4. Emphasize strengths in individuals and communities. In the game of bridge, the person who plays the first card often plays to the strength of the partner. The same is true when working with people, especially with minorities, because people have already focused so much on their weaknesses.

Emphasizing people's strengths is equally important when working with communities as it is when working with individuals. John McKnight (1992) believes that some professionals who claim to help others actually harm them by focusing on their weaknesses. He has developed a questionnaire designed to discover
people's talents and a map called the Neighborhood Assets map designed to highlight a community's strengths. It lists strengths—cultural organizations, individual capacities, religious organizations, citizens' associations, home-based enterprise, social service agencies, and so on. McKnight also designed a map called the Neighborhood Needs map, which lists pathologies—slum housing, crime, mental illness, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and substance abuse, illiteracy, and so forth. The Neighborhood Needs map is the one that people use most often, but it ignores the strengths of a neighborhood.

The liberation movements of oppressed people have revealed their enormous strength and courage. Thousands of people have literally put their lives on the line to win their freedom. And there is the quieter but enduring strength they show by protecting their families and communities in the face of constant oppression and discrimination.

5. Find sources of power. Lorraine Gutierrez (1990) recommends that the worker and client together engage in a “power analysis” of the client's situation to assess the structural barriers a client faces and the potential strengths available to the client.

Clients and workers should be encouraged to think creatively about sources of potential power, such as forgotten skills, personal qualities that could increase social influence, members of past social support networks, and organizations in their communities. (Gutierrez, 1990, p. 152)

6. Use the network of family and friends. The first strength of any group is family and friends. Many minority groups rely heavily on this support. Some students of Native American culture say that it is hard for Native Americans to accumulate resources, not only because of their low-wage work and unemployment but also because of their ethic of sharing with other family members.

African American communities have a long tradition of mutual help. Carol Stack (1974) showed that although many families in a poor black community in the Midwest were officially designated “single-parent” families, they were actually extended-kin networks, sharing in child care. This was more typical among the very poor. As families became upwardly mobile, they were less likely to share their resources. Urbanization and industrialization have weakened extended-family networks for all of us. But the African Americans who shared their resources despite their poverty were expressing a higher value of caring and compassion than more affluent people, who were more preoccupied with “getting ahead.”

7. Use the community networks. The ethnic neighborhood itself is a support system in which people can share their language, religion, food, memories, and experiences. Networks include neighbors; churches; political, social, and service organizations; newspapers; stores; restaurants; and bars where people gather. The church is an especially important support network in the African American community. In Hispanic communities, the spiritualist is an important support to many people, and many Native Americans turn to the tribal medicine man or woman for
support and guidance. In her study of ethnicity in the social services, Shirley Jenkins (1981) found that, in general, minority people prefer going to services in their own community staffed by bilingual and bicultural workers.

8. Understand patterns of informality and friendliness. Pedro de Cunha, a Portuguese-American social worker, tells of common complaints among Portuguese immigrants regarding social agencies: “The social workers are too cold, too distant. They are never there when we need them; They don't really help; They never found us a job or an apartment” (de Cunha, 1983, p. 15). One of the problems, says de Cunha, is that the Portuguese come from a country that has not developed specialized helping agencies; instead, people tend to turn to the priest for help. The priest has many roles. Not only does he minister the Word and the sacraments, “but he is also the financial adviser, the marriage counselor, the funeral director, the father, the judge, the social worker” (p. 15). The grocer not only sells groceries; he “would not sell any groceries if he did not listen to the problems of his patrons, if he did not extend credit to those who cannot pay immediately, if he did not read the illiterate their mail” (p. 15).

People from an agrarian society expect help to come in the context of a personal relationship. They expect helping roles to be diffuse rather than specific. De Cunha recommends that workers be trained to understand their clients' background and expectations and become more comfortable being less formal and more friendly.

9. Be willing to share yourself. Workers need to be willing to share something of their own lives with clients, to make the atmosphere of the agency warm and nurturing. Perhaps you could serve refreshments or coffee, be willing to accept small gifts, be flexible about time, be willing to make an occasional home visit, and have at least one worker for walk-in clients.

10. Understand clients' lack of resources. People's poverty affects how they use social services. They may not even have the carfare or gasoline to get to the agency. If they do have a car, it is probably in poor repair and often breaks down. Clients may not be able to keep appointments because they can't afford baby-sitters or fear losing their job if they take any more time off from work. They may not have a checking account, so cashing a check might be costly and time-consuming.

11. Give concrete services and information. Because of their lack of resources, poor people need concrete help. Whatever your agency's activities, your knowledge of benefit programs might be more important than any mental health counseling. One formerly homeless woman said that she was in homeless shelters for four years because the workers there did not tell her about housing vouchers or how to get welfare benefits. It was not until she discovered a welfare rights group that she learned about her rights from other welfare recipients.

12. Learn how to empower. Oppressed people are relatively powerless. A large proportion of poor families are headed by women, who have less power than men.
Women of color make up a large proportion of the clientele in human service agencies. They are more than twice as poor as white women. They are overrepresented in low-status occupations and have on average a low level of education. The stress of having poor housing or no housing, insufficient food and clothing, and inadequate access to health services takes a toll on their physical and mental health. Human service workers need to deal with the psychological effects of their clients’ powerlessness and provide concrete resources to better their lives (Gutierrez, 1990, p. 149).

The literature on empowerment indicates that small-group work is the ideal method for empowerment. In these groups, members receive support, reduce self-blame, learn new skills, and provide a potential power base for action (Gutierrez, 1990).

**WORKING WITH WOMEN**

Many college women, even those who do not call themselves feminists, are benefiting from the gains won by the women's movement, even though they might not be aware of the struggles that other women went through to win them. Although women have many struggles to endure before they achieve equality with men, the gains of the women's movement have been enormous. The women's movement has touched every aspect of women's lives. Women have fought for equal pay and advancement and have often won. They have defined some lower-paying jobs as equal in worth to higher-paying men's jobs, even though the jobs may be different, and won some major comparable worth lawsuits. They have entered fields previously defined as men's work, and some have argued that housework and caretaking, traditionally defined as women's work, should be paid wages and shared equally by women and men.

**The Women's Movement and New Social Services**

Some of the most dramatic changes in the helping process were brought about by the women's movement. By 1994 shelters for victims of domestic violence had been established in more than two-thirds of the 3,200 counties in the United States (Carden, 1994). Women also created rape crisis centers; women's health centers; feminist mental health services; and services for displaced homemakers, women substance abusers, older women, single parents, and ethnic minority women (Gottlieb, 1980a, 1980b).

Feminists created new social services because they believed that traditional social agencies were not in tune with women's needs. Drawing on Freudian psychology, traditional workers said that a woman who is battered by her husband might have a sadomasochistic need to be beaten. But feminists would assert:

- The husband is committing a criminal act by beating his wife and must be legally restrained.
No one has the right to beat her for any reason.

She might be staying with him because she has:
- no place to go
- no money
- children to care for
- no marketable work skills
- shame because of the stigma of being abused

She might need supportive therapy, but she also needs:
- a court order
- a shelter
- a support group
- a job or an adequate welfare grant
- decent, affordable child care
- help in finding an apartment

Feminists also redefined rape. Traditional common wisdom assumed that women inadvertently “asked for it” by their behavior. Feminists defined rape as an act of violence used to control women. They told women that they didn’t ask for it or deserve it. They taught them how to struggle against it and how to do the healing grief work to recover from the assault. They told women that there is no “allowable” rape—forced sex by a date or by a husband is rape. They also lobbied to change the laws that made reporting of rape another form of assault on self-esteem. In fact, feminists looked at every aspect of services to women and suggested new ways to view old problems.

Feminists took a new look at depression, menopause, and premenstrual syndrome and critiqued the way the medical establishment deals with them. Depression, for example, is much more prevalent among women than among men. Feminists believe this is due to the socialization of women rather than to any inherent female characteristics. This socialization includes:

- A stress on self-effacement, which leads to low self-image
- A sense of powerlessness and of lack of control over one’s life
- Difficulty in asserting oneself
- An inability to cope with stress (Gottlieb, 1980a, 1980b)

Women, socialized to be passive rather than assertive, have a much greater tendency to turn their aggression on themselves than do men. This is generally considered to be one of the dynamics of depression.

Understanding New Theories about Women

There has been a flowering of feminist theory since the late 1960s that has had a profound effect on the human services. Feminist psychologists challenged some of
the traditional Freudian theory that claimed women were “naturally” masochistic, passive, and envious of men. These psychologists helped women to feel comfortable with the assertiveness they had been taught to repress since childhood.

Feminist research has helped women reclaim their sexuality by rejecting the Freudian assertion that the only “healthy” orgasm is a vaginal one (Koedt, 1971). Ann Koedt showed that the vagina has few nerve endings and that the clitoris is more sensitive to sexual stimulation than is the vagina. (Kinsey had also shown this in his research on sexuality in the 1940s, but it was not until feminists focused on female sexuality that these findings became more widely understood.)

“Women’s intuition” and emotionality, which had been ridiculed as inferior to the male world of “hard facts,” won a new respectability when feminist researchers, in comparing women’s ways of learning about the world and relating to people with men’s ways, concluded that women’s ways were different but might make for a more peaceful world.

**How Feminist Theory Influences Our Practice**

Feminist theory shaped Oly’s and Inez’s work in their shelter for battered women. They see themselves as comrades to the women they work with, struggling together to stop the abuse of women. They have shared their experiences and are living proof that it is possible to survive an abusive experience and to become strong, confident, and independent. This feeling of engaging in struggle with your clients as equals is one of the hallmarks of feminist social services.

Feminist therapy introduced a sociological and political perspective that had been lacking in most traditional therapy, helping women as well as men to realize that their problems were not just personal troubles but also social issues. The women’s movement was built through consciousness-raising groups, a model that was adopted by other self-help groups.

Yet much of feminist theory and practice has been focused too narrowly on middle-class white women, neglecting issues of social class and ethnicity. Women of color have written a wealth of literature and contributed research about their lives, and some white feminists realize that the assault on poor women is an assault on all women, particularly at a time when the middle class is eroding. However, although the leadership of the National Organization for Women has been militant in fighting against repressive welfare policies, most NOW members have not been involved in welfare rights struggles. That may be changing. When over 1 million people attended the March for Women’s Lives in Washington, D.C., on April 25, 2004, there was the largest representation of women of color and low-income women that has ever attended a women’s march. Cheri Honkala, a welfare recipient and leader of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union in Philadelphia, gave a moving speech about welfare and emphasized that choice for women involves not only the right to have an abortion, but also the right to choose to have children and the resources to care for them. Toni Bond, a low-income woman who had been helped to
get an abortion by the National Network of Abortion Funds, spoke powerfully about the importance of financial help to women who can’t afford an abortion. (There has been no federal funding for abortions since the Hyde Amendment was passed in 1974.)

Feminist scholars have analyzed social policies and social services, exposing institutional sexism. Abramovitz (1988) described how Social Security regulations discriminate against women. By giving larger pensions to those who earned more in their work, women, who almost always earn less than men, receive lower pensions. Thus gender inequality is perpetuated through the life cycle. Further, by not including caretaking work as wage earning, homemakers are unable to draw a pension of their own but must rely on their husband’s record of earnings.

A Gender Analysis of Child Welfare

Over thirty advocates in New York City, employing a feminist perspective, challenged the way the child-welfare system treated battered women and their children in New York City (Coalition of Battered Women’s Advocates, 1988). This group mobilized after the widely publicized death of a child, Lisa Steinberg, and the battering of her mother, Hedda Nussbaum, by the child’s father, an affluent attorney.

The coalition pointed out that women are often afraid to cry out for protection to the police or social service agencies for fear that they will lose their children or that the batterers/child abusers will retaliate against them or that no one will believe them. Often, service providers remove battered children from the home where a man is abusing his wife rather than force the abusive husband to leave. This can result in children being victimized a second time by the trauma of foster placement (Coalition of Battered Women’s Advocates, 1988). Many of these women and their children become homeless when they leave the batterer. Subsequently, many mothers are charged with neglect, and their children are taken from them and placed in foster homes.

The advocates demanded that the police and judges take women’s complaints seriously, removing the batterer from the house rather than the nonabusive mother and her children, and doing everything possible to prevent further harassment. They call on agencies to provide more safe, short-term emergency refuges for women and children and ask that funds used for foster home placement be used instead to provide violence-free homes for the children. Advocates also ask that service providers receive training in domestic violence, as few know even the basic facts about it.

The advocates lobby for more affordable housing, more community-based services such as day care, legal assistance, health care, substance abuse prevention, child abuse prevention, and job-training programs. They point out that undocumented abused women are especially at risk for fear of deportation, that lesbian mothers fear losing custody of their children if they ask for help, and that women of color face racist assumptions that their children are at a higher risk of abuse.
Domestic violence affects women of every race and class, yet the poor, who are disproportionately non-English speaking and/or black, are most often victims of involuntary intervention by police and child protective workers (Coalition of Battered Women’s Advocates, 1988).

WORKING WITH GAYS AND LESBIANS

In Chapter 5, we discussed the value judgments people make about gays and lesbians. Here we will put forward some guidelines for human service workers in their work with this particular population.

Betty Carter, a feminist therapist and director of the Family Institute of Westchester, tells the story of how her awareness was raised about the needs of lesbians:

My awareness was...raised by a trainee...who was an out lesbian. At the end of the training, she told me what a wonderful experience she had because we had all been so open to her sexual orientation. “But can I tell you something?” she asked. I said, “Of course,” knowing I didn’t want to hear it. “You know, there is nothing that would let anyone like me know that I would be welcome here.” I was totally startled because I had never thought about how stigmatized groups do need a sign that they are welcome. She pointed out that we had no featured course on gay or lesbian families. (Carter, 1995, p. 12)

Since then, Carter has instituted a training program on lesbian and gay family issues. She seeks the expertise of lesbians, who understand the complex issues of being marginalized because they experience it in their lives. After hearing the personal experiences of women in lesbian families, heterosexual workers who used to wonder why they needed to spend so much time and attention on lesbians and gays “had an awakening: ‘Oh, I never thought of how heterosexism would have affected someone that way’” (Carter, 1995, p. 14).

Carter uses what she calls a “gay lens” to take special notice of the effects of stigma. She says, “Until you tell me otherwise, I will assume everyone in your family and work system takes a dim view of your not being straight” (p. 15). The gay lens helps to define the task of therapy, which is empowerment. Carter tries to help them deal nondefensively and strategically with the way in which they are pushed to the margins of society, and she helps them to recognize it as a product of ignorance and fear that has almost nothing personal to do with them.

The gay lens not only helps Carter and other therapists work with lesbians, but it also helps them work with heterosexuals. Every new way of viewing issues has far-reaching implications for human service work. Carter describes how she uses the gay lens:

The “gay lens” challenges the way roles in relationships have become gendered. For example, if you ask about the division of chores in a heterosexual couple, it becomes clear who is in charge of the emotional life of the relationship and who will fix the boiler when it breaks. When we therapists are working with couples in a heterosexual rela-
tionship, most of us have stopped even questioning the fact that it is 99.9 percent of the
time the woman who is in charge of emotions and the man who is in charge of the
boiler. But when we look at lesbian and gay couples, it becomes clear that this isn't in-
evitable, because here you have two people of the same sex who have ungendered these
roles. The emotional life still gets taken care of; the boiler still gets fixed. So how do they
decide who does what, if it's not based on gender?

...The gay lens gives you a way to look at how same-sex couples manage to work these
things out, and you can apply it to straight clients. This is no small matter. A fair division
of housework and parenting would make life much more harmonious for heterosexuals.
Most of our clients come in with some irritation or larger complaints about these matters,
and I know I had started to believe it was impossible to achieve equity between men and
women around the house. But then I'll see a gay or lesbian couple and suddenly realize it's
not impossible for people to be total partners. Or, just as I'm about to give up on men for
being exasperatingly unemotional, I'll work with a gay couple and be amazed by how open
and tender they can be in expressing their feelings. (Carter, 1995, p. 14)

Gays and Lesbians won a major victory in 2004 when the Massachusetts Su-
preme Court declared that the equal protection clause of the Massachusetts Constitu-
tion called for full-fledged marriage rights— and nothing less— for same-sex
couples. Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to legalize same-sex
marriages. Conservatives fought the legalization of gay and lesbian marriages by
trying to introduce a constitutional amendment to prohibit same-sex marriages,
the Federal Marriage Amendment. However, the Senate voted 50 to 48 against the
amendment. Some Senators who are personally opposed to same-sex marriage
were nevertheless opposed to a constitutional amendment to prohibit it (NOW,
2004, July 14).

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities are an oppressed group because they have not been allowed
equal access to society's benefits. They are a minority both in absolute numbers and
in the political meaning of the term.

People with disabilities have an acronym for people who define themselves as
nondisabled: They call them TABs—Temporarily Able-Bodied. This word vividly
reminds us that being able-bodied is only a temporary condition. Any one of us
could get hit by a car when crossing the street or get hurt when skiing or diving. The
recognition of our own vulnerability helps to lower that psychological barrier be-
tween "them" and "us," which is the biggest handicap of all.

The liberation movement of the disabled population challenged the arbitrary
distinctions people make on the basis of differences in physical or mental function-
ing. Members declare that the real disability lies in society's unwillingness to structure
its architecture, public facilities and space, cultural offerings, and so forth to open up
the entire society to everyone regardless of their level of functioning.
New Definition of Disability Influences Our Practice

Traditional models of disability focused on labeling each “disease,” defining what people can do in the job market, and what functions a person can and cannot perform. The new model is a psychosocial model of disability. It looks at the entire environment of the person, including social attitudes, attitudes of other individuals, and the society that the able-bodied have created (Roth, 1987). The psychosocial model of disability was recognized in public policy by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the first civil rights act for disabled people, as well as by the Education for All Handicapped Children’s Act of 1975. That law required disabled children to be mainstreamed with able-bodied children as much as possible. The most sweeping civil rights law for disabled people was the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

At different times in history and in different places, certain disabilities could be or were viewed as somewhat of an asset, not as a liability. Dostoyevsky, who had epilepsy, describes the aura preceding an epileptic seizure as a route to cosmic clarity. Julius Caesar had epilepsy in Roman times, when it was considered to be a holy disease. During the nineteenth century in the Western world, people with tuberculosis were considered especially refined, sensitive, and wise. If a character in a nineteenth-century novel was described in Chapter 1 as refined, sensitive, and wise, it was sure to be revealed by Chapter 8 that the character was dying of tuberculosis or consumption.

Obtaining an accurate count of how many disabled people there are is especially tricky because the number depends on whom you define as disabled. Some deaf people do not consider their deafness a disability because they are totally immersed in the deaf culture and take great delight in it. They would consider it a handicap to be deprived of that culture. When the deaf students at Gallaudet College for the Deaf successfully rebelled against a hearing person being chosen as president of the college, some of them declared that their deafness should not be defined as a disability and that they were as “normal” as anyone else. Neurologist and author Oliver Sacks (1989), who described that rebellion so vividly, tells of a community on Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts in which so many significant citizens were deaf that everyone learned sign language. With no communication barrier, life was the same for the hearing and the nonhearing.

The 2000 census found there are about 50 million people with disabilities in the United States, of which some 70 percent—35 million—are unemployed (LRP Publications, 2004). There is a disproportionate number of disabilities among older people, poor people, people of color, and blue-collar workers. Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, and if they are employed, are more likely to earn less than able-bodied workers. They face discrimination in the job market and often have to navigate buildings not designed for their needs.

Six disabled Tennessee residents achieved a victory in 2004 when the U.S. Supreme Court declared that states can be liable for not making courthouses accessible. One of the people who sued was a man who refused to crawl or be carried up to a second-floor courtroom in a county courthouse to answer a criminal traffic
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complaint. He sued after the state charged him with failing to appear for his hearing (Greenhouse, 2004).

People with disabilities and their dependents who were covered under Social Security when they worked are eligible to receive payments from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). If their income is low enough, they might also qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Recipients of SSDI whose grants are lower than the SSI grant often receive both. Although it is possible to do some work and still receive SSI, in general, both programs require recipients to be unable to work in the same way or as much as able-bodied people. “This definition of disability reflects how government perceives disability, administers its remedies, and sometimes can even be said to create it” (Roth, 1987, p. 67). Human service workers who work with people with disabilities need to be informed about the eligibility guidelines for both programs, as well as for workers’ compensation, to make sure their clients get the benefits they are entitled to. Legal service lawyers who specialize in disability law can help with this.

Because applying for these benefits requires people to see and define themselves as disabled and thus unable to work, many people do not apply. This is a dilemma for both the client and the worker. On the one hand, clients are refusing needed income; on the other hand, people’s self-definition and self-esteem are critically important to their mental health. Some people will accept General Assistance even when the grant is much lower than SSI because they regard General Assistance as short-term temporary help until they get a job.

SUMMARY

1. There is a widening gulf of distrust between people of color and white people in the United States today.
2. The issue of diversity has stirred up public passions. There are fierce fights against immigrants, bilingual education, multicultural curricula, sex education in schools, gay and lesbian rights, and abortion.
3. Prejudice and discrimination may negatively affect people’s feelings about themselves.
4. In order to fully understand people, we must understand their culture.
5. The current theory about culture is bicultural theory, which assumes that people are socialized into their own culture and influenced by the dominant culture.
6. Having limited access to power defines a “minority group.”
7. The United States has been run predominantly by white, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking, middle- and upper-class able-bodied men. Those who differ have often suffered discrimination.
8. “White-skin privilege” refers to the fact that people with a white skin are awarded privileges not available to people of color.
9. Hispanics face discrimination sometimes on the basis of skin color and often because of not speaking English, or speaking with limited fluency and an accent.
10. Acculturation is stressful, causing conflict between the older and younger generations in families.
11. Ethnicity, social class, and gender must be considered together.
12. In order to understand any group, we must understand its history.
13. Because minorities have been discriminated against, they are likely to be distrustful of white-dominated organizations.
14. Institutional racism is harder to change than individual racism because it involves interconnected systems and policies that perpetuate it.
15. Affirmative action has become a lightning rod that attracts people’s anxieties about race.
16. The immigration policy of the United States has fluctuated between the country’s need for labor and peoples xenophobia and fears of losing their jobs to foreigners.
17. The 1996 Immigration Act, which provides for “expedited removal” of immigrants, represents a major change in the country’s treatment of immigrants.
18. A study by the National Academy of Sciences concluded that immigration added about $10 billion a year to the nation’s economic output.
19. The Personal Responsibility Act of 1996 denied federal help to legal immigrants in the SSI, food stamp, and Medicaid programs. In 1997 some SSI and food stamp benefits were restored.
20. The elimination of bilingual education programs was an attack on immigrants, but in California it was supported by some Hispanics.
21. It is important to emphasize people’s strengths rather than their weaknesses.
22. Family and friends are the most important supports for people.
23. Most minority groups are poor and therefore need concrete supports from human service agencies. Telling people about the benefits to which they are entitled empowers them.
24. Workers need to be willing to share themselves, be informal, be flexible about time, and be willing to make home visits.
25. Feminists have created alternative social agencies and new theories.
26. Feminist practice tends to be less hierarchical and more egalitarian.
27. Understanding issues that affect gays and lesbians not only helps them but can also give new insights into heterosexual behavior.
28. The new definition of disability does not accept the medical model; rather, it sees the problem as the reluctance of society to accommodate the needs of the disabled population.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is a good immigration policy for a nation? What guidelines would you use in setting up such a policy? The National Catholic Social Justice lobby, NETWORK, calls for “just reform of immigration policy” and “just U.S. foreign policy that fosters economic equity and alleviates global poverty.” What do you think would be a just reform of immigration policy and a just U.S. foreign policy?

2. The Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that there was no “constitutionally adequate reason” why same-sex couples should not enjoy the same legal rights as others. Opponents of that rule say that it will destroy traditional heterosexual marriage. On what do they base that argument? What do you think are the pros and cons of same-sex marriage?

3. Exercise: In group discussion, students name several social identity groups that they think influence people’s lives. This could include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, physical ability, religion, age, and any other. Each person should identify where she or he fits in those groups in a notebook. During class discussion, students should share this information to the extent that they feel comfortable doing so. Discuss how (or whether) people are oppressed, or feel oppressed, because of their social identity. (No one should feel under any pressure to share personal information.)

4. Exercise: In group discussion, students share information on neighborhoods they grew up in and organizations they belonged to. How diverse were these neighborhoods and organizations? Discuss the reasons for their diversity or lack of diversity.

5. France has passed a law saying that Muslim girls are not allowed to wear head scarves in school, as this violates the principle of the separation of church and state and erodes national identity. What do you think of this law?

WEB RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

NETWORK
www.networklobby.org

A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby that educates, lobbies and organizes to influence the formation of federal legislation to promote economic and social justice.
MoveOn.org
www.moveon.org/

MoveOn was started by Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, two Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, with their family and friends. MoveOn is working to bring ordinary people back into politics, charging that the system today revolves around big money and big media, and that most citizens are left out. MoveOn is a catalyst for a new kind of grassroots involvement, supporting busy but concerned citizens in finding their political voice. MoveOn builds electronic advocacy groups around issues such as campaign finance, environmental and energy issues, impeachment, gun safety, and nuclear disarmament.

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education
www.ncela.gwu.edu

News, discussion groups, and resources for educators working with linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Drug Policy Alliance
www.drugpolicy.org

Provides information about drug policy in states, the nation, and worldwide. Works to promote drug policies based on science, compassion, health, and human rights.

Betsy Leondar-Wright
www.classmatters.org

Betsy Leondar-Wright is the Communications Director at United for a Fair Economy. Her recent book, Class Matters: Cross-Class Alliance Building for Middle-Class Activists, helps activists collaborate better across class lines to build stronger movements for social change. Her website gives advice that she has gleaned from interviews with activists, resources, and information about class and how it intersects with other identities such as race, gender, disability, and sexual identity.

SisterSong: Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective
www.sistersong.net/

The SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective is made up of local, regional, and national grassroots organizations in the United States representing four primary ethnic populations/indigenous nations in the United States: Native American/Indigenous; Black/African American; Latina/Puerto Rican; Asian/Pacific Islander. SisterSong does community organizing, self-help, and human rights education on reproductive and sexual health and rights.
Abortion counseling or referrals
www.prochoice.com

National Abortion Federation Hotline (English/Spanish): 800-772-9100

National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF)
www.nnaf.org

NNAF provides support and technical assistance to local abortion funds, aids in the creation of new abortion funds in areas where they do not exist, and provides visibility and voice for women facing financial barriers to abortion. NNAF's member funds directly help over 19,500 women a year with a combined total of over $2 million in financial assistance.