INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION, 13/e

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0-205-43058-9 Exam Copy ISBN
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SAMPLE CHAPTER

The pages of this Sample Chapter may have slight variations in final published form.
Chapter 2  Diversity in Society
Chapter 3  Social Challenges in Schools
Chapter 4  Education That Is Multicultural
Viewing Education through Sociological Lenses

The lens of sociology provides a way to examine and interpret human social behavior. Sociology investigates our origins and the ways we interact with one another. It describes how society has been organized to meet its needs and analyzes the components that are effective and those that are not in serving the needs of the population. Sociological thinking helps policymakers and professional educators make sense of practices that contribute to or make it difficult for us to meet the goals of society.

The sociological lens depends on the analysis of data about the population; groups in society; and institutions such as the government, businesses, and schools to help us understand who we are. It allows us to ask questions about critical issues that affect our lives and the lives of others. In this chapter, we explore the impact of sociology on education by examining issues that affect schools, families, and students. The filters through which we will examine sociology in education in this section include diversity, culture, family structures, challenges of youth, purposes of schools, democracy, equality, and social justice.

Focus Questions

The following questions will help you focus your learning as you read Part II:

1. Why is culture important in knowing yourself, your students, their families, and the community served by schools?
2. How do race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status interact to result in discrimination and inequity in society and schools?
3. What impact do society and culture have on the education process?
4. Why do some students not receive the same benefits from education as others?
5. Whose values are taught in schools?
6. What roles do diversity, equality, and social justice play in the delivery of education that is multicultural?
7. What is culturally relevant teaching and why is it important in a diverse society?
8. How do schools interact with the culture of students and communities to promote or limit student learning?
9. What is the digital divide and why do educators worry about it?
Culture Clash

By Mary Ann Zehr, Education Week, February 5, 2003

HARRISONBURG, VA.—LEONARD YAVNY BELIEVES DARWIN’S theory of evolution contradicts biblical truths. He also thinks youths shouldn’t be taught about sex; if they learn about it, they might try it, he reasons. He requires his own children to be chaperoned on dates until they are married. And he doesn’t want his children to be exposed to Halloween, which he believes is a holiday originating from the devil. Yavny, the 42-year-old father of five children between the ages of 10 and 19, finds that these particular beliefs conflict with those of many of the teachers or students at the public schools his children attend here. But he has never complained to school personnel.

Instead, he counteracts what his children face at school by pointing out to them what he believes to be false teaching, holding them to specific expectations, and occasionally pulling them out of school activities. Last Halloween, for example, he and his wife, Galina, kept their children home from school.

Yavny is a conservative Christian and an immigrant from Ukraine who shares with many immigrants a critical view of the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that his children encounter in school.

Having received the largest number of immigrants ever in a single decade during the 1990s, the United States has become home to an increasing number of parents such as Yavny whose traditional values don’t mesh well with the more liberal values that tend to permeate public schools.

Harrisonburg, a city of 42,000 set in a farming region of Virginia, has received an immigrant wave of its own as jobs in the poultry industry have drawn newcomers here. In five years, the population of language-minority children in the Harrisonburg schools has swelled from about 400 students, most of whom spoke Spanish, to 1,180 students who speak 39 different languages.

And so, it’s not hard to find immigrant parents here who share Yavny’s perspective. They resist assimilation and expect their children to follow their lead. “We are raising our kids in the United States,” says Benita Castro, a native of Mexico who along with her husband recently threw an elaborate church ceremony and reception, or quinceañera, to celebrate her daughter Nancy’s 15th birthday, “but we’ll stick to our morals.”

Aisha Rostem, a Kurdish Muslim who sends her two teenage daughters to schools here, says through an interpreter, “I’m praying that they will be safe—that they don’t fight, that they don’t get involved in bad things.”

How these parents help their children make sense of the two worlds they live in—the world of school and the more traditional world of home and community—can have a huge effect on their children’s academic success and school life. So also can schools’ handling of this cultural clash make a difference in immigrant children’s lives.

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More than a million new immigrants annually introduce different religions, languages, and ways of thinking and acting into schools and communities, including areas of the United States that previously lacked the rich diversity of urban areas. The diversity to which educators are exposed daily is much broader than the new immigrants themselves. It includes socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, language, gender, physical and academic ability, and geographic background. Educators need to learn to incorporate the history, experiences, and perspectives of diverse groups into their teaching and to draw on students’ diversity to help them learn. The big ideas that will help you understand diversity include culture, microcultural membership, and cultural identity. These concepts are covered in this chapter.

Children learn how to think, feel, speak, and behave through the culture in which they are raised. Their parents, teachers, and other adults in the neighborhood and in religious institutions they attend teach the culture and model the cultural norms. Furthermore, when schools use a different language or linguistic pattern from those used in the home, dissonance between schools and the home can occur. When students never see themselves in textbooks or stories, the culture of their families and communities is denigrated. As a result, students too often learn that their own culture is inferior to the official culture of the school or mainstream culture.

Each of us belongs to a number of different groups within our culture. We have not only an ethnic identity such as African American, Navajo, German American, or Korean American, but we also identify ourselves as male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, Christian, Muslim, atheist, or member of another religious group. Who we are is influenced by our place on a continuum from poor to wealthy and young to elderly, as well as by the geographic location in which we grew up and are living. Our behaviors in these groups are influenced by the culture in which we are raised and later live, and they may differ from one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTASC Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>School-Based Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After reading and studying this chapter, you should be able to:</td>
<td>You may see these learning outcomes in action during your visits to schools:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe culture and some of its characteristics. (INTASC 3: Diversity)</td>
<td>1. Identify the microcultural memberships (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, gender, socioeconomic class, religion, physical and academic ability, and geographic background) of the students in a class that you are observing at the K–12 level. What are the differences within the ethnic groups represented in the class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Identify the dominant culture in the United States and describe how it is influenced by and affects other cultures of groups in the United States.</td>
<td>2. Examine the curriculum, textbooks, bulletin boards, and other materials used in the classroom to determine which microcultural groups are included and which never appear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understand three theories and ideologies that describe ways in which schools respond to students who are not members of the dominant culture.</td>
<td>3. In a school with English language learners, interview two or more teachers about the strategies they use to ensure that students do not fall behind academically because their native language is not English.</td>
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<td>4. Identify microcultural groups to which students and teachers belong and explain why some are more important to their cultural identity than others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Understand that student learning is influenced by language, culture, and family and community values. (INTASC 3: Diversity)</td>
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**diversity**
The wide range of differences among people, families, and communities based on their cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as their physical and academic abilities.

**culture**
Socially transmitted ways of thinking, believing, feeling, and acting within a group of people that are passed from one generation to the next.
culture to another. For example, expectations for men and women are influenced by ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status. Membership in these **microcultural groups**, the interaction across groups, and society's view of the group are critical factors in determining one's cultural identity. When we meet new people, we usually identify them immediately by their gender and race and maybe their ethnicity. We will not know their religion and its importance to them unless they are wearing something identified with a specific religion. We don't know the importance of their ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic status to their identity. Therefore, educators need to be very careful about stereotyping students and their families solely on the basis of factors that can be easily identified. Culture is far more complex, not allowing us to make assumptions based only on an individual's appearance.

**CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

Society is composed of individuals and groups that share a common history, traditions, and experiences. Culture provides the blueprint for how people think, feel, and behave in society. A culture imposes rules and order on its members by providing patterns that help them know the meaning of their behavior. Members of the same cultural group understand the subtleties of their shared language, nonverbal communications, and ways of thinking and knowing. But they often misread the cultural cues of other groups, a problem that can lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings in society and the classroom.

All people around the world have the same biological and psychological needs, but the ways in which they meet these needs are culturally determined. For example, the location of the group, available resources, and traditions have a great influence on the foods eaten, grooming and clothing patterns, teaching and learning styles, and interactions of men and women and parents and children. The meaning and celebration of birth, marriage, old age, and death also depend on one's culture. In other words, culture affects all aspects of people's lives, from the simplest patterns of eating and bathing to the more complex patterns of teaching and learning.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE**

Culture is learned, shared, adapted, and dynamic. People learn their culture through **enculturation**. Parents and other caretakers teach children the culture and the acceptable norms of behavior within it. Individuals internalize cultural patterns so well and so early in life that they have difficulty accepting different, but just as appropriate, ways of behaving and thinking. But when people live and actively participate in a second culture, they begin to see more clearly their own unique cultural patterns. Understanding cultural differences and learning to recognize when students do not share your own cultural patterns are critical steps in the provision of an equitable learning environment. Therefore, it is important to learn about your own culture as well as others.

An important aspect of culture is that it is dynamic and continually adapts to serve the

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**microcultural groups**

Distinct groups to which everyone belongs that are influenced by society and their own cultures.

**enculturation**

The process of learning the characteristics and behaviors of the culture of the group to which one belongs.
needs of the group. Individuals and families adapt their culture as they move from one section of the country to another or around the globe. The conditions of a geographic region may require adjustments to the culture. Technological changes in the world and society can also lead to changes in cultural patterns.

DOMINANT OR MAINSTREAM CULTURE

The dominant or mainstream culture in the United States is that of white, middle-class Protestants whose ancestors immigrated from Western Europe. Today, the dominant culture is primarily reflected in the lives of business managers or owners and professionals who are college educated and represent a number of ethnic and religious groups. The dominant culture is the one most financially successful families have grown up in or adopted.

The legal system, democratic elections, and middle-class values have their underpinnings in institutions and traditions of Western Europe. Historically, the male members of the group have dominated the political system and related government positions of authority. Policies and practices have been established both to maintain the advantages of the dominant culture and to limit the influence of other cultural groups.

What are some of the characteristics of the dominant culture today? Universal education and literacy for all citizens are valued. Mass communication, which has been enhanced by technology and electronic networks, influences people’s view of themselves and the world. A job or career must be pursued for a person to be recognized as successful. Fun is usually sought as a relief from work. Achievement and success are highly valued and are demonstrated by the accumulation of material goods such as a house, car, boat, clothes, and vacations.

Individualism and freedom are core values that undergird the dominant culture in the United States. Members believe that individuals should be in charge of their own destiny and success. Freedom is defined as having control of one’s own life with little or no interference by others, especially by government. Members of the dominant group rely on associations of common interest rather than strong kinship ties. Many people believe in absolute values of right and wrong rather than in degrees of rightness and wrongness.

Members of this group identify themselves as American. They do not see themselves as primarily white, Christian, English-speaking, middle class, male, or heterosexual. Many middle-class Catholics, Jews, and members of other faiths share values and behaviors similar to those of the dominant group, as do a number of middle-class African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Many low-income families also hold the same values but do not have the income to support a similar lifestyle. The mass media and international communications systems are contributing to the development of a universal culture that mirrors the dominant U.S. culture. Some people worry that the positive aspects of other cultures are losing ground as television and movies teach a common culture.

MICROCULTURAL GROUPS

Cultural identity is not determined by ethnicity and race alone. As shown in Figure 2.1, individuals are members of multiple microcultural groups. They are female or male and members of specific socioeconomic, religious, language, geographic, and age groups. In addition, mental and physical abilities help define who we are. Membership in these microcultural groups determines our cultural identity.

Students in U.S. schools are among the most diverse in the world. At the beginning of this century, one-third of the students in the nation’s schools were young people of color. They will make up 40 percent of the school population by 2020 and half of the population by 2050. They are already the majority in schools.
in California, Texas, and the nation’s largest cities. In many schools, the native languages of students are other than English. Some school districts can identify more than 100 languages used in the homes of their students. Religious diversity is no longer limited to the traditional Judeo-Christian roots as immigrants from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East bring their religious traditions to the mix. In addition, a growing number of students with disabilities are active participants in schools and society.

The relationship of individuals’ group memberships to the dominant culture may have a great influence on how individuals perceive themselves and are viewed by others. Because of the importance of power relationships between groups in discussions of diversity and equality, educators should understand how they themselves are positioned in this dialogue. Educators need to know which groups they belong to and what influence those memberships have on their own identity. A critical self-examination is helpful in the identification of otherness and difference that pervade a culturally diverse society. Later in this chapter, we will look in some detail at several microcultural dimensions and their significance in U.S. education.

DIVERSITY AND EDUCATION

Many people in this country celebrate the differences among groups and the contributions they have made to society. Others worry that these differences are leading to a divided society. The differences sometimes lead to misunderstandings, stereotypes, and even conflicts. At the same time, diverse groups share many characteristics, can learn what they have in common, develop common interests, and appreciate and value their differences.

Representatives of diverse groups have challenged the monocultural, universalist view of the world and society that has guided the country’s laws and practices. They question the curriculum taught in schools, colleges, and universities. They ask why so many Latinos drop out of school, why students in poverty attend dilapidated and filthy schools with few licensed teachers who have majored in the subjects they are teaching, why so many young African American men are in jail, why single mothers do not earn enough to stay out of poverty, and why so few students with disabilities are in general education courses.

Diversity raises concerns about equality and inequality in society and schools. Concerned educators are exploring the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and class as they relate to individual and group identity. They work to overcome the stratification based on race, able-bodiedness, language, gender, and socioeconomic status that often tracks students into special education, gifted programs, advanced placement courses, low-level courses, and uninteresting, academically unchallenging courses. Educators who believe that all students can learn understand that the cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students must be respected and reflected in all aspects of the education process.

As an educator, you will encounter students from diverse ethnic, racial, language, religious, and economic groups and with different physical and mental abilities. The translation of this reality into educational practice leads to different strategies and outcomes. Ethnographic studies provide valuable information about how teachers and schools interact with students in the learning process. Researchers have discovered that schools often use teaching strategies that differ

FIGURE 2.1 Cultural Identity Is Based on Membership in Multiple Microcultural Groups That Interact with One Another

socioeconomic status
The economic condition of individuals based on their (or their parents’) income, occupation, and educational attainment.

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from those that are effective at home, particularly as they relate to language and learning styles.

Over time the relationship of groups to society has been described differently by sociologists, politicians, philosophers, and educators. These differing descriptions have led to the development of policies and practices that range along a continuum from promotion to condemnation of group differences. Assimilation, pluralism, and cultural choice are three prevalent theories and ideologies.

### ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is a process by which an immigrant group or culturally distinct group is incorporated into the mainstream culture. The group either adopts the culture of the dominant group as its own or interacts with it in a way that forges a new or different culture that is shared by both groups. Members of a group experience a number of stages in this process.

The first step involves learning the cultural patterns of the dominant group. The speed at which group members become assimilated is usually enhanced by interactions in settings such as work, school, and worship. In many cases, previous cultural patterns are shed—either enthusiastically or grudgingly—as those of the dominant group are adopted. Native languages and traditions can be lost within a few generations. Society usually requires an individual to take these steps in order to attain some modicum of financial success or achievement of the “good life” in the United States.

The final stage of assimilation is structural assimilation. At this stage, members of the immigrant or culturally distinct group interact with the mainstream group at all levels, including marriage. They no longer encounter prejudice or discrimination and share equally in the benefits of society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the melting pot theory emerged as a description of how immigrants contributed to the evolution of a new American culture. This theory described the egalitarian state that is one of the core values of a democracy. Many immigrants believed that the prejudices and inequities they had experienced in their native countries would not exist in the United States and that they would become valued members of society. Although many European immigrants did merge into the mainstream, people of color were prevented by the prevailing racist ideology from “melting” or becoming structurally assimilated. Racism has prevented Native, African, Latino, and Asian Americans from becoming structurally assimilated for generations.

Assimilation remains the guiding principle in most schools. Acculturation, or learning of the dominant culture through immersion, is the prevailing strategy. School success usually depends on how well students are able to adjust to the dominant culture that permeates the curriculum and school activities. Their own unique cultural experiences and patterns are often not officially recognized, valued, or used in the teaching and learning process.

The poor academic performance of many students of color and students from low-income families is sometimes explained by a cultural deficit theory, in which students and their families are blamed for their failures. A problem, this theory suggests, is that these students have not been socialized to think and act like children of the dominant culture. Proponents of this theory blame the ed-

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**assimilation**
A process by which an immigrant or culturally distinct group is incorporated into the dominant culture.

**discrimination**
Individual or institutional practices that exclude members of a group from certain rights, opportunities, or benefits.

**acculturation**
The process of learning the cultural patterns of the dominant culture.
ucational deficiencies of the home environment and such factors as single parents, teenage mothers, and inadequate child-rearing practices. The provision of equal educational opportunity is a policy response to this theory. Compensatory programs are offered to help students overcome both their educational and cultural deficiencies by making them more like students from the dominant culture. The perception exists that these families do not value education, as manifested by the lack of books in their homes or lack of parental participation in schools. However, education is valued in most communities. The problem is more likely the lack of financial resources and inability to take off work to meet with school officials. Some teachers and school leaders have become creative in overcoming these problems.

**PLURALISM**

**Pluralism** exists in societies in which the maintenance of distinct cultural patterns, including languages, is valued and promoted. Groups may be segregated, but they participate somewhat equally in politics, economics, and education. In some cases, groups have been able to establish and maintain their own political, economic, and educational systems.

Pluralism in its ideal form does not exist in the United States at this time. Although diversity does exist, parity and equality between groups do not. For example, some Native American nations do have their own political and educational systems, but they do not share power and resources equally with the dominant group. Some groups choose to maintain their native culture, religion, and language. This goal is more likely to be attained if families live in communities where there is a fairly large concentration of others from a similar cultural background: Little Italy, Chinatown, Harlem, East Los Angeles, and Amish and Hutterite communities provide these settings. Sometimes culturally distinct groups have been forced into segregated communities because of discriminatory housing patterns.

The implementation of pluralism in schools requires the recognition of the multiple cultures that make up society. Rather than the dominant culture being centered in the classroom and school, the cultures of the particular group or groups served by the school are the predominant focus of the curriculum. Examples include the Afrocentric and Native-centric programs that exist today in some urban areas and tribal-controlled schools. Also, some ethnic and religious groups have maintained their culture and history in private schools. The Amish and Hutterites, for example, operate their own schools to prevent the destruction of their cultures by the dominant group. Jewish and Islamic private schools promote religious study and practices; the rules of the religion guide student and teacher behavior.

Public schools generally teach only the dominant culture. The faculty might not represent the diversity of the students in the school and might have little, if any, knowledge about the cultures represented or personal experiences with them. Students who are from low-income
families or from ethnic, racial, religious, or language groups other than the dom-
inant culture too often do not achieve well academically in these schools.

A cultural difference theory helps explain the differential achievement of
students of diverse backgrounds. Disjunctures in cultural patterns between
the home and school may prevent academic success. Schools that focus only on the
dominant culture expect all participants to operate as if they are members of
that culture. This practice gives an advantage to students from the dominant
group because the language and expected behaviors are the same as, or very
similar to, those in their homes and communities. Students from other ethnic,
racial, language, socioeconomic, and religious groups must reject their own cul-
tural patterns or become bicultural to be successful at school. Some parents and
communities have responded by establishing private or charter schools that re-
fect their own culture.

Schools in a pluralistic society are staffed by a diverse teaching force that at
a minimum represents the cultures of students. Teachers who share the cultural
backgrounds of students understand the students’ language patterns. Teachers
from different cultural backgrounds are expected to know multiple cultural pat-
terns of communication and learning and be able to use them to help students
learn.

■ CULTURAL CHOICE

Cultural choice is the freedom to choose and adapt the characteristics that de-
terminate one’s cultural identity. Early in the twenty-first century, diversity in the
United States is increasing. Some immigrants plan to assimilate into the domi-
nant culture as soon as possible. They choose to adopt the new culture and shed
the old. Others do not want to shed their unique cultural identity and patterns
in order to be successful members of society. Many learn to be bicultural and
bilingual, bridging two cultures and learning when it is appropriate to use the
patterns of each. Others do not have a choice. Ideally, we could choose to as-
similate, maintain our native culture, or become bicultural or multicultural and
function effectively in more than one culture. Under cultural choice, society
supports these choices and does not value one choice more than another or dis-
 criminate on the basis of group membership.

Unfortunately, this description does not match reality for large segments of
the population. Many people of color are acculturated, but discrimination pre-
vents them from being structurally assimilated even if they choose that route.
Strong identity and affiliation with their cultural group has been necessary as a
source of solidarity in the effort to combat inequities and obtain adequate hous-
ing and education. Although members of some cultural groups may be able to
live almost solely within their distinct cultural milieu, most are forced to work
within the dominant culture. Those who choose to assimilate might not be ac-
cepted by the dominant group and might also be rejected by the group into
which they were born.

Equality across groups does not yet exist, but it continues to be a value es-
poused by society. Discrimination against groups prevents their members from
having cultural choices. As the barriers to equality are reduced, there is likely
to be greater individual choice and mobility across groups. We will move to-
ward an open society in which cultural background determines who we are but
is not the basis for discrimination. Cultural differences will be respected and
encouraged to flourish.

Schools that value cultural choice consciously avoid promoting the domin-
nance of a single culture. Such schools integrate the contributions and histories
of diverse groups—particularly those represented in the school, but not limited
to them—throughout the curriculum. Bilingualism and the use of dialects pre-
vail in classrooms as well as school hallways. Students are the center of in-
struction, and teachers use students’ cultural patterns to promote learning.
Students learn to operate comfortably in both their own and other cultures, including the dominant culture. Equality is manifested in the equal participation of all groups in courses and extracurricular activities, as well as in comparable achievement on academic assessments.

**Socioeconomic Status**

Most people want the “good life,” which in the United States includes a decent job, affordable housing, good health, a good education for their family members, and periodic vacations. One way to estimate the good life is socioeconomic status, which is the primary determinant of the standard of living families are able to maintain. It also has a great impact on one’s chances of attending college and attaining a job that ensures material comfort throughout life.

Socioeconomic status (SES) serves as a criterion to measure the economic condition of individuals. It is determined by one’s occupation, income, and educational attainment. Wealth and power are other important factors that affect the way one is able to live, but these data are difficult to measure. We often can guess a family’s socioeconomic status if we know such things as where they live, their jobs, the type of car they drive, the schools attended by their children, and the types of vacations they take.

**Social Stratification**

Most societies are characterized by social stratification, in which individuals occupy different levels of the social structure. Wealth, income, occupation, and education help define these social positions. However, high or low rankings are not based only on SES criteria. Race, age, gender, religion, and disability can contribute to lower rankings as well. Although members of most ethnic groups can be found at all levels of the socioeconomic status scale in the United States, those from western European backgrounds have a disproportionately high representation at the highest levels.

Social mobility remains one of the core values of the dominant culture. We are told that hard work will lead to better jobs, higher income, and a better chance to participate in the good life. We read the Horatio Alger stories of individuals who were born in poverty but through hard work became wealthy as a corporate president, prestigious publisher, successful writer, athlete, or entertainer. Although dramatic upward mobility continues to occur, the chances of moving from poverty to riches, no matter how hard one works, are low. Individuals who are born into wealthy families are likely to attend good schools, finish college, and find high-paying administrative jobs. They are raised with high expectations, have the economic resources to assist them in meeting these expectations, and usually end up meeting them.

**Class Structure**

The population can be divided into distinct classes in order for researchers to study inequities in society and the characteristics of individuals and families at these different levels. One of the early categorization systems identified the population as lower, middle, and upper class, with finer distinctions in each of the three groups. The “underclass” is the label sometimes given to the portion of the population that lacks a stable income and is persistently in poverty.

Individuals who do manual work for a living are sometimes described as the “working class.” When farm laborers and service workers are included in the working class, this group represents 40 percent of the employed population. Most members of this class have little control over their work. Some of the jobs are
routine, mechanical, and not challenging. Work sometimes is sporadic and affected
by an economy in which employees face layoffs, replacement by computerized
equipment and other advances in technology, part-time work, and unemployment
as jobs move to locations with cheaper labor. Fringe benefits such as vacation time
and health plans are often limited. The education required for working-class jobs
is usually less than that for many middle-class positions, except for skilled and
crafts workers who have had specialized training and may have served appren-
ticeships. Even some of these skilled workers, however, work as long and hard as
others, often working overtime and holding two jobs to make ends meet.

The middle class is large. Most people who don’t perceive themselves as
poor or rich define themselves as middle class. Annual middle-class incomes
range from $30,000 to $80,000, encompassing 38 percent of the population. It
includes both blue-collar and professional or managerial workers. For most of
the middle class, $80,000 would be the top of their earning potential, and this
is often possible only because both spouses work. Families in this class have
very different lifestyles at the opposite ends of the income continuum. Clerical
workers, technicians, and salespeople in the group have less control over their
jobs than the professionals, managers, and administrators who often supervise
them. These workers tend to have somewhat better fringe benefits than do mem-
ders of the working class. The professionals in this group expect to move be-
yond $80,000 in their careers with the goal of becoming one of the 17 percent
of U.S. families earning $100,000 or more annually.

Many professionals, managers, and administrators receive incomes that are
above $75,000, placing them in the upper middle class. They have become the af-
luent middle class, but they often believe that their condition is universal rather
than unique. Many think that most of the U.S. population shares the same afflu-
ce, advantages, and comforts. A $75,000 salary in a neighborhood where most
families earn over $200,000 seems low; in another neighborhood, a family mak-
ing $75,000 would be considered well off. The professionals are men and women
who have usually obtained professional or advanced degrees. They include teach-
ers, lawyers, physicians, college professors, scientists, and psychologists. Ex-
cluding teachers, most of these families earn far above the median income of
$50,890. Successful executives and businesspeople are the managers and admin-
istrators in this group. These workers usually have more autonomy over their jobs
and working conditions than working- and lower-middle-class workers.

The upper class consists of wealthy and socially prominent families. The
income and wealth of members of this class are far higher than those of the
other classes, and the gap is growing. For example, in 1980 corporate chief ex-
cutive officers earned 42 times as much as their manufacturing employees; by
1990 they earned 85 times as much; and by 1998 the multiple had grown to
419. These great differences contribute to limited interactions with members of
other classes. Children in this class rarely attend public schools, isolating them
from peers of other social classes. Probably the greatest assimilation of lifestyles
and values occurs among members of ethnically and culturally diverse groups
who attain an upper-class status.

POVERTY

The U.S. government has established a poverty index that sets a conservative
ceiling on poverty. Using this threshold, which is an annual income of $18,104
for a family of four, 31.1 million persons are in poverty—11 percent of the pop-
ulation. There are many myths about people who are poor. One is that they do
not work. In reality, many work in full-time jobs that pay such low wages that
they cannot pull their families out of poverty.

Children, the elderly, and persons of color suffer disproportionately from
poverty, as shown in Figure 2.2. Sixteen percent of U.S. children live in poverty,
which is more than double that of most other major industrialized nations, even
though the United States has the highest gross domestic product per capita. Many industrialized nations have reduced child poverty levels to below 5 percent.4

Although 68 percent of the population living below the poverty level is white, only nine percent of all whites in the country are living in poverty. The percentage of other racial and ethnic groups in poverty is higher, as shown in Figure 2.3. The median income of Asian and Pacific Islanders was $61,511 in 2000 as compared to whites’ median income of $53,256. African American

![Graph showing children and adults living below the poverty level in the United States.](Image)

*FIGURE 2.2* Children and Adults Living below the Poverty Level in the United States


![Bar chart showing percent of population in poverty by racial and ethnic group.](Image)

*FIGURE 2.3* Percent of Population in Poverty by Racial and Ethnic Group

families earn 64 percent as much as whites; Latino families earn 66 percent as much as whites. And although this income disparity decreases when one compares two-income families with the same level of education, it does not disappear. Women who work full time year-round also encounter discriminatory practices that keep their incomes at 65 percent of that of men—a gap that has increased over the past few years.

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**

National origin is an important part of identity for many individuals. Native American tribes are the only indigenous ethnic groups in the United States; therefore, more than 99 percent of the U.S. population, or their ancestors, came from somewhere else at some time during the past 500 years. Many people can identify a country of origin, although the geographical boundaries may have changed since their ancestors immigrated. A growing number of people have mixed heritage, with ancestors from different parts of the world.

Although many people now identify themselves by their panethnic membership (for example, as African American or Asian American), race remains a political reality in U.S. society. It has become integrally interwoven into the nation’s policies, practices, and institutions, including the educational, economic, and judicial systems. As a result, whites have advantages that are reflected in higher achievement on tests and higher incomes as adults. The issue of race encompasses personal and national discussions of affirmative action, immigration, desegregation, and a color-blind society. Race and ethnicity may be linked, but they are not the same. Both influence one’s cultural identity and status in society.

**CROSS-REFERENCE**
The legal ramifications of segregation and desegregation in education are presented in Chapter 6.

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**I have a dream my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.**

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*
with their race; in fact, many see themselves as raceless. White has become the norm against which persons of color are classified as other. As a result, many whites are unable to see that they have been privileged in society. Their silence contributes to the maintenance of a racist society.

**ETHNICITY**

National origin is the primary determinant of one’s ethnicity. Ethnic group members share a common history, language, traditions, and experiences in the United States. Identification with an ethnic group helps sustain and enhance the culture of the group. Ethnicity is strongest when members have a high degree of interpersonal associations with other members and share common residential areas.

Ethnic cohesiveness and solidarity are strengthened as members organize to support and advance the group, fight discrimination, and influence political and economic decisions that affect the group as a whole. In the 1960s, these struggles with the dominant culture led to calls for changes in schools, colleges, government programs, and employment to support equality across ethnic groups. During this period, African, Latino, Asian, and Native Americans called for recognition of their ethnic roots in the school curriculum. By the 1970s, European ethnic groups, especially those of southern and eastern European origins, had also joined this movement. Ethnic studies programs were established in colleges and universities and some high schools to study the history, contributions, and experiences of U.S. ethnic groups that had traditionally been excluded.

**ETHNIC DIVERSITY**

The U.S. Census Bureau reports population data on the five racial and ethnic groups shown in Figure 2.4. These broad classifications do not accurately describe the ethnic diversity of the United States. For example, there are more than 500 Native American tribes. Each of these panethnic classifications includes numerous ethnic groups with identities and loyalties linked to specific countries. Fifty-eight percent of the population identifies with a single ancestry, 22 percent with multiple ancestries, and 20 percent do not identify an ancestry. Asian Americans include recent immigrants and people whose ancestors emigrated from countries as diverse as India, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. Latinos include people from Mexico, Central American countries, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spain, and South American countries. Although Africans continue to emigrate to the United States, most African Americans have long historical roots in this country; many have ancestors not only from Africa but also from Europe and Native American tribes. European Americans range from western Europeans who may have lived in the United States for several hundred years, to those from eastern Europe who immigrated in large numbers at the beginning of the twentieth century, to recent immigrants from Russia and other former Soviet countries.

In describing the United States, many people proudly refer to it as a land of immigrants who left their original homelands because of economic hardship or political repression. However, this picture is only partially true. The groups that are most oppressed in this country are those who are indigenous or whose ancestors entered the country involuntarily. Native Americans were here long before Europeans and others appeared. They suffered greatly as the foreign intruders took over the land, almost annihilating the indigenous population. Not
until the year 2000 did the U.S. government admit to the near genocide of native peoples, when the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs apologized for “the agency’s legacy of racism and inhumanity that included massacres, forced relocations of tribes and attempts to wipe out Indian languages and cultures.”

Additionally, the ancestors of most African Americans were brought by slave traders as a commodity to be sold. They were not treated as full humans until well into the nineteenth century. Not until late in the twentieth century did Africans begin to voluntarily immigrate to the United States in any significant numbers. Similarly, Mexican Americans in the Southwest were inhabitants of lands that were annexed as part of the spoils for winning the Spanish-American War; they did not immigrate. Today, many Mexicans would like to immigrate to this country but, prevented by immigration laws, cross the border illegally to obtain jobs and have a better chance for economic stability. However, illegal immigrants constantly face possible deportation, loss of everything they have gained in this country, and separation from their families.

**RELEVANT RESEARCH**

**Welcoming–Unwelcoming of Immigrant Students**

**STUDY PURPOSE/QUESTIONS:** The focus of this study was to examine how students from Mexico, Bosnia, Sudan, and other countries fared in a middle school they attended for its English as a second language (ESL) program.

**STUDY DESIGN:** The researchers conducted a qualitative study that included observing and interviewing ESL teachers, the ESL program director, an administrator, and white students. Members of the local community and ESL students were also interviewed. The researchers attended ESL parent meetings, faculty meetings that focused on ESL issues, and school assemblies. In addition, documents on extracurricular participation, school discipline, and busing policies were analyzed.

**STUDY FINDINGS:** In the early 1980s, the school district placed its ESL program for immigrant students in a middle school, which had a predominantly white, high SES student population. The students, who spoke 12 languages, were “caught in a contradictory process whereby they are welcomed at the school and yet, simultaneously, made to feel unwelcome in many respects.”

Community members spoke about the value of diversity in the school, but also worried about the students being a disruption. The school sponsored several welcoming events such as cultural fairs to help White students understand the countries from which the ESL students had come, but the events stereotyped groups and did not provide in-depth understanding of differences.

ESL classes lacked curricular materials, and class size was high (30 students) for providing the individualized attention needed in ESL. Most of the non-ESL teachers resisted having ESL students in their classrooms.

A pattern of segregation was found in school assemblies, the lunchroom, and classes. For example, during assemblies they were assigned to a secondary choir that sang a few songs, but not one of the ESL students participated in the main choir. None of the songs represented cultures other than the dominant U.S. culture.

ESL students traveled to the school from communities in other parts of the city. The fact that the buses arrived just before classes started and left immediately after classes made it difficult for the ESL students to participate in extracurricular activities. Suspension rates for immigrant students were more than four times as great as for white students. Students from Mexico and Africa were most likely to be disciplined.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Schools need to do more than offer ESL programs for immigrant students. They need to examine their policies and practices to ensure that these students are not excluded from the benefits available to students from the dominant group. In addition, teachers and administrators often need professional development to assist them in working effectively with ESL students.

Who can immigrate or be admitted as a refugee is determined by Congress. Immigration policies have prevented or severely limited the immigration of some groups while favoring others. For example, people with either Chinese or Japanese heritage have been excluded at different times. Individuals fleeing Communist regimes have often been granted refugee status, but others have found it difficult to obtain such status when fleeing regimes supportive of the United States, even though those regimes may be dictatorships with numerous human rights violations. Immigration quotas historically were heavily weighted toward western Europeans; beginning in 1965, however, immigration became more open to people from other countries. As a result, the numbers of Latinos and Asians coming to the United States have grown dramatically.

Schools are early recipients of a growing number of new immigrants. Immigrants today are settling beyond the urban areas of California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. States that have had limited ethnic diversity in the past—among them Arkansas, Iowa, Montana, and Nebraska—are becoming home to students from other countries as immigrant families are sponsored by persons in these communities or settle in rural areas and small to medium-sized towns because of jobs. Many immigrants also believe that these communities have values more similar to their own.

**LANGUAGE**

Language interacts with our ethnic and socioeconomic background to socialize us into linguistic and cultural communities. Children learn their native language by imitating adults and their peers. By age five, they have learned the syntax of language and know the meaning of thousands of words. When cultural similarities exist between speaker and listener, spoken messages are decoded accurately. But when the speaker and listener differ in ethnicity or class, miscommunication can occur. Even within English, a word, phrase, or nonverbal gesture takes on different meanings in different cultural groups and settings. Educators need to recognize that miscommunications between themselves and students may be due to inaccurate decoding rather than lack of linguistic ability.

**LANGUAGE DIVERSITY**

English is not the native language for nearly 47 million residents of the United States. Spanish, Italian, and sign language are the most common languages other than English. A number of new immigrant students enter U.S. schools with no or very limited school experiences in their home countries.

The length of time required to learn English varies. Most students become conversationally fluent within two or three years. However, young people may require five to seven years to reach the proficiency necessary for success in academic subjects such as social studies and English. Students who are conversationally fluent may be immersed in English-only classrooms without

*Bilingual education uses both the native languages of students and English in classrooms to ensure that students learn the academic concepts being taught.*

*Who does not know another language, does not know his own.*

*Goethe*
appropriate support to ensure that they can function effectively in academic work. The result is that these students may fall further behind their classmates in conceptual understanding of the subjects being taught.

As immigrants assimilate into the dominant culture of the United States, their native language is often replaced by English within a few generations. The native language is more likely to be retained when schools and the community value bilingualism. As commerce and trade have become more global, professionals and administrators have realized the advantages of knowing a competitor’s culture and language. They are encouraging their children to learn a second language at the same time that many of our educational policies are discouraging native speakers from maintaining their native language while learning English. The movement in some states for English-only usage in schools, in

**DEBATE**

**Should All Students Be Bilingual?**

Many immigrant students enter school using a language other than English. The role of schools in teaching them English and encouraging the maintenance of their own native language has long been debated. Another side of the coin is the importance of native English speakers learning a second language so that they are fluent in at least two languages. This debate illustrates two teachers’ perspectives on these issues.

**Y E S**

Douglas Ward is a bilingual learning disabilities resource teacher at William Nashold Elementary school in Rockford, Illinois. He is in his third year of teaching and is certified in bilingual special education and several other fields.

Yes, all students should be bilingual. Unfortunately, in the United States very few students become truly proficient in a foreign language. That is one reason for the shortage of foreign language and bilingual teachers.

Before the world wars, many immigrants in the United States used their native languages daily while they learned English. But the world wars and isolationist policies created a climate in which it was unpopular to speak anything but English. In some cities, fines were imposed on anyone caught speaking a foreign language in public business.

Many descendants of immigrants never learned their parents’ or grandparents’ native languages—in my case, Polish and German—because of these attitudes. My grandparents and parents, pressured by society, did not understand the importance of passing on their languages to me.

Learning a foreign language involves more than learning how to read, write, and speak. More important, it teaches students about a culture. Lack of understanding of cultural differences causes intolerance and war.

**N O**

Suzanne Emery retired last year after 35 years of teaching English and journalism, the last 25 at San Diego’s Mira Mesa High School. She reviews questions for California’s high school exit exam and edits the San Diego Education Association newsletter.

American education cannot be all things for all people. We’ve agreed generally on the need to improve achievement in the basic curriculum. Bilingualism should not be added to the mix. Nor should it join all the other mandates that politically correct states and school districts impose: cultural holidays, parenting classes, good health activities, well-rounded social growth, adequate physical activities, proper nutrition, and suicide prevention.

A second language is always a luxury. It is needed only for the college bound and then only in certain majors.

We’re told that European countries require two languages. But many European countries are very small, so bilingualism is a survival skill. And few other countries try to educate 100 percent of their children, as we do. In Europe, education is at the top of parents’ priorities. Need we talk about the distractions here?

And what is the second language of bilingual children around the world? It is English. We need to edu-

(continued)
daily commerce, on street signs, and on official government documents highlights the dominance of English desired by some citizens.

American Sign Language (ASL) is officially recognized as a language with a complex grammar and well-regulated syntax. It is the natural language that has been developed and used for communication among individuals with hearing disabilities. As with oral languages, children learn ASL very early by imitating others who use the language. To communicate with people without hearing disabilities, many individuals with hearing disabilities also use signed English, in which the oral or written word is translated into a sign. ASL is a critical element in the identity of people with hearing disabilities. The language can be more important to their cultural identity than their membership in a particular ethnic, socioeconomic, or religious group.
DIALECTAL DIVERSITY

Standard English is the dialect used by the majority of dominant group members for official and formal communications. However, numerous regional, local, ethnic, and class (or socioeconomic status—SES) dialects are identifiable across this country. Each has its own set of grammatical rules that are known to its users. Although each dialect serves its users well, standard English is usually viewed as more credible in schools and the work world. For example, most individuals involved in the media use standard English. Although teachers may be bidialectal, they are expected to use standard English as the example that should be emulated by students.

Many Americans are bidialectal or multidialectal in that they speak standard English at work but speak their native or local dialect at home or when they are socializing with friends. Social factors have an influence on which dialect is appropriate in a specific situation. At one time, students were not allowed to use a dialect other than standard English in the classroom. Some schools have proposed using the dialect of the community as a teaching tool, but the proposal usually leads to a public outcry against it, as happened in Oakland, California, when administrators suggested using Ebonics in classrooms. Today, students are usually allowed to speak their dialects but are encouraged to learn standard English to provide them with an advantage when they seek employment in the dominant culture.

GENDER

Males and females are culturally different even when they are members of the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious group. For example, the two groups are often segregated at social gatherings, employed in different types of jobs, and expected to behave differently. The ways they think and act are defined in part by their gender identity.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FEMALES AND MALES

Learning the gender of a baby is one of the important rites of parenthood. However, the major difference between boys and girls is the way adults respond to them. There are few actual physical differences, particularly before puberty. Primarily, the socialization process in child-rearing and schools determines gender identity and the related distinctive behaviors.

Some researchers attribute differences in mathematical, verbal, and spatial skills to different hormones that affect specific hemispheres of the brain. However, recent studies show that females and males are performing more alike, suggesting that the previously observed gender differences are not biologically determined. For example, no differences exist in quantitative abilities until the age of ten and then only slight differences that sometimes favor girls and sometimes favor boys in the middle school years. Males do perform better in high school, but the differences are declining as female students become more interested in mathematics. Gender differences in spatial abilities are also declining, and abilities in this area can be improved with training. There no longer appear to be gender differences in verbal abilities.

By age two, children realize that they are a girl or a boy; by five or six, they have learned their gender and stereotypical behavior. In most cultures, boys are generally socialized toward achievement and self-reliance, girls toward nurturance and responsibility. In the United States, differences in the expectations and behaviors of the two genders may be rooted in different groups’ ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status.
A major difference between males and females is how they are treated in society. Society generally places men in positions of superiority, as evidenced by their disproportionate holding of the highest status and highest-paying jobs. Many times this relationship extends into the home, where the father and husband may both protect the family and rule over it. Sometimes this relationship leads to physical and mental abuse of women and children.

Although 90 percent of all women in the United States will work outside the home at some time, society’s view of them as inferior to men has contributed to the current patterns of discrimination that keep many women in low-prestige and low-paying jobs. The jobs in which many women are concentrated are those that naturally extend their role as nurturers and helpers: nursing, teaching, and secretarial work. Job and wage discrimination is a critical issue for women, especially today when a large number of families are headed by women without the advantage of a second income. Women earn less than men throughout their life span, as shown in Figure 2.5. Families headed by single women are more likely to be in poverty than any other group; more than 27 percent of the persons in these families fall below the official poverty level. As barriers to professional education and employment are broken, the number of women in traditionally male occupations has increased. For example, the number of female physicians increased from 6.5 percent in 1950 to 29 percent in 2001; female attorneys and judges increased from 4 to 29 percent; and female principals in public schools increased from 20 percent in 1982 to 50 percent in 1998.

Schools often reinforce behavior that is stereotypically gender specific. Girls are expected to be quiet, follow the rules, and help the teacher. Boys and young men are expected to be rowdier and less attentive. Many working-class males develop patterns of resistance to school and its authority figures because schooling is perceived as feminine and as emphasizing mental rather than manual work.

Many males are also not well served by the current socialization patterns; some do not fit neatly in the dominant culture’s stereotypical vision of maleness. For instance, some men would feel more comfortable working as preschool teachers, nurses, or librarians—traditionally female careers—but may have learned that those jobs are inappropriate for “real men.”

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**FIGURE 2.5** Average Earnings of Males and Females Who Work Full-Time Year-Round

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Women’s Political Participation

Beginning in 1990, the global community agreed that gender equity was important in the development of a country. At the United Nation’s World Education Forum in Dakar in 2002, gender equality became one of eight goals to eliminate poverty and hunger. The consensus among the world’s leaders was that “no country’s development can be judged satisfactory if women do not fully participate in community life, in society and in work.” Participants expect member countries to show women’s progress in education, literacy, nonagricultural wage employment, and parliamentary representation.

A 2002 progress report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) shows limited progress in education, literacy, and employment. However, women’s involvement in parliamentary bodies has made gains in a number of countries. Although women remain absent from these bodies in many countries, eleven have already reached the goal of 30 percent. They include Argentina, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, and Sweden. The countries that met the benchmark did so by using quotas. The study also found that political participation is the only indicator in the gender equity goals that is not linked to poverty, which means that differences between wealthy and developing countries do not exist. For example, women’s participation in legislative bodies in the United States, France, and Japan are 12 percent or less, which is behind thirteen of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa—countries suffering from great poverty.

TITLE IX

Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments is the major legislation that addresses the civil rights of girls and women in the education system. It requires federally funded colleges and schools to provide equal educational opportunity to girls and women. Many attribute Title IX for increasing the number of girls and young women participating in college preparatory courses, completing professional degrees in college, and participating in sports. In the year that Title IX passed, only 7 percent of law degrees were earned by females as compared to 46 percent in 2000. Nine percent of medical degrees and 25 percent of doctorates were awarded to females in 1977, but by 2000, women received 43 percent of medical degrees and 44 percent of doctorates.

The most controversial part of Title IX is the provision for equal opportunity in athletics. The courts have upheld the application of a three-part test by schools and colleges to determine equal opportunity:

1. The percentage of male and female athletes is substantially proportionate to the percentage of females and males in the student population.
2. The school has a history of expanding opportunities for underrepresented females to participate in sports.
3. Even if a school is not meeting the proportionate expectation in #1, the school is fully and effectively meeting the interest and abilities of female students.

The number of girls and women participating in sports has increased dramatically since 1972. When Title IX was passed, 294,000 young women partic-
ipated in high school sports. That number has increased by 847 percent, with nearly 2.8 million females now participating in high school sports. The number of women in intercollegiate athletics has increased from 32,000 to 163,000, and the number of scholarships for female athletes jumped from a few to 10,000. At the same time, some groups have argued that Title IX has led to the elimination of some men’s sports as women’s sports are expanded.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Sexual orientation is established early in life. It is not learned in adolescence or young adulthood, nor is it forced on others by immoral adults. The majority of gay adults report feeling different from other children before they entered kindergarten. It has been estimated that 5 to 10 percent of the population is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). However, many cultural groups place high value on heterosexuality and denigrate or outlaw homosexuality as part of their religious doctrine or community mores.

Gays and lesbians often face discrimination in housing, employment, and many social institutions, as evidenced when schools and universities prohibit the establishment of gay student clubs. Some states still have laws that make it illegal to engage in homosexual relations. Homophobia, as expressed in harassment and violence against gays and lesbians, is tolerated in many areas of the country. Society’s prejudices and discriminatory practices result in many gays and lesbians hiding their homosexuality and establishing their own social clubs, networks, and communication systems to support one another.

Isolation and loneliness are the experiences of many gay and lesbian youth. If gays and lesbians openly acknowledge their sexual orientation or appear to be LGBT, they are likely to be harassed and face reprisals from peers and school officials. A 2001 study by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that verbal, sexual, and physical harassment are common experiences for LGBT students in our schools. Eighty-three percent of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed (name calling, threats), 65 percent sexually harassed (sexual comments, inappropriate touching), 42 percent physically harassed, and 21 percent physically assaulted. Females and youth of color report even higher incidences of abuse when homophobia interacts with racism and sexism.

Structures within the schools do not provide the same kind of support to LGBT students that is available to others. Nearly 70 percent of LGBT students fear for their safety in schools. However, students feel more comfortable and safer in schools when faculty and staff are supportive, LGBT people are portrayed in the curriculum, and gay–straight alliance or similar clubs exist. Educators often know little about this group and have had few or no contacts with LGBT people who are out, or open about their sexual orientation. They may not have taught students whose parents are gay or lesbian. Without a better understanding of homosexuality, teachers may find it difficult to work effectively with LGBT students or the children of gay and lesbian parents.
More than 49 million people, or 19 percent of the population over five years old, have a disability. About one-fourth of the persons with a disability indicate that their disability existed at birth or developed before they were age twenty. The percent of the population increases with age, as shown in Figure 2.6. Individuals with a disability are often labeled by society by the classifications listed in Figure 2.7. Those with physical disabilities can be readily recognized by their use of supports such as a cane, braces, wheelchair, or sign language. Some individuals are labeled very early in their school careers as mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed and are placed in special programs that may prepare them for self-sufficiency but sometimes limit their potential. Critics of labeling declare this system to be demeaning and stigmatizing.

Some school systems require a determination as to whether a child with special needs is diploma-bound by the end of kindergarten. This early determination can lead to low academic expectations for students who can perform at high levels with appropriate accommodations for their disability. Seventy-two percent of persons with disabilities hold a high school diploma and 11 percent have college degrees. Dropout rates for this population are relatively high. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately underrepresented in the labor force, sometimes because they are unable to go to work, but more often because the workplace has not made the accommodations that would make it possible for them to work productively.

Persons without a disability often react with disdain toward individuals with disabilities and view them as inferior. But like all other individuals, people with disabilities want to be recognized as persons in their own right. They have the same needs for love and the same desire to be successful as persons without disabilities. Instead, society has historically not accepted them as equals. Some individuals with severe disabilities are placed in institutions out of the sight of the public. Others are segregated in separate schools or classes. Too often they are rejected and made to feel inept and limited in their abilities.

Schools, which should be part of the solution, have often contributed to the problems of students with disabilities. Most classrooms are not physically designed to accommodate the special needs of all students. Chalkboards are too high for students in wheelchairs. Desks do not usually accommodate wheelchairs, and special ramps and elevators are often nonexistent. However, special equipment such as computers and amplification devices can make participation in learning possible for many students who were not provided that opportunity in the past.

**disability**
A long-standing physical, mental, or emotional condition that can make it difficult for a person to perform activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering.

**FIGURE 2.6** Percent of U.S. Population with a Disability

**FIGURE 2.7** Labels for Disabilities
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Individuals with similar disabilities often find comfort and security with one another, forming their own culture. Those with hearing impairments share a language that is used by few people without hearing impairments; the language provides them with a strong sense of community. In some cities, many individuals with visual impairments live in the community near a school for the blind, where they can be close to potential work settings and provide mutual support. Individuals with mental retardation sometimes share group homes in which they can support one another and develop a degree of self-reliance. In these settings, they establish patterns of communication and behavior that are natural to them but may seem odd to nonmembers. Persons with disabilities have many publications, websites (for example, www.nod.org of the National Organization on Disability), and support systems developed by them, their families, and friends. Some activists participate in advocacy groups to promote their interests and issues and to ensure they are granted the civil rights that others expect.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is the practice of fully integrating all students into the educational process, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, physical or mental ability, or language. Students see themselves represented in the curriculum as well as in classes for the gifted. Historically, inclusion referred primarily to the integration of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and schools. Inclusion of all students requires collaboration among the adults, including parents, who work with students with disabilities. Teachers should not be expected to serve as both the teacher and specialist. Ideally, teachers of general education collaborate with a special educator, often accompanied by a teacher’s aide and appropriate specialists such as a speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, vision specialist, adaptive physical education teacher, school psychologist, or school nurse. The team individualizes instruction for each student in an individualized educational plan (IEP). At times, students with disabilities may be pulled out of the classroom for special services, but these special sessions should be limited and should be used only to meet complex individual needs.

One of the goals of inclusion is to provide students with disabilities the same opportunities for learning academic content to which others are exposed. Most students with disabilities can achieve at the same levels as their peers without disabilities, but they require accommodations that allow them to access the content, the instruction, and the tools for learning. These accommodations may require physical changes in the classroom, such as increasing the height of a desk so that students in wheelchairs have a work space. It may require the provision of computers for students who cannot hold or control a pencil. It may require books in Braille, the use of sign language, and taped books.

Just because students with learning disabilities have difficulty reading
does not mean they can’t learn. Educators must assist them in accessing mathematics, science, social studies, and other curricula through methods other than reading. Taped books, computer programs that assist students in reading, and the use of computers for writing are appropriate accommodations to assist students with learning disabilities in understanding academic content. Some students with disabilities have been assigned full-time aides to assist them. Successful

PROFESSIONAL DILEMMA
Implementing Inclusion in a Second-Grade Classroom

Over time, classroom teachers have been given increased responsibility for making sure the needs of a child with an IEP are met in their classroom. Although a child may enter the classroom with an IEP requiring support from special educators, ultimately and legally it is the teacher’s responsibility to make sure the IEP is implemented in the classroom. It is also the teacher’s responsibility to handle any behavior or social difficulties that may occur in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher must work with the special educators to adapt lessons and assignments to the ability level of all of the students. Teachers must promote success for all learners rather than expecting failure.

Picture yourself as a teacher in an inner-city second-grade classroom. You have twenty-five students from low-income homes and several children for whom English is their second language. Among these students are three children with IEPs and four learners who are making limited academic progress but do not qualify for special education services.

The three children with IEPs have varied needs. One child is a girl in a wheelchair with physical needs requiring a nurse to accompany her in the classroom. Another child is an eight-year-old boy who was born with Down syndrome. He too has multiple needs, including speech/language therapy, occupational therapy to work on his fine-motor skills, and a behavior plan monitored by the school psychologist. The third child has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). His academic skills lag behind by a full year below grade level, and his attention span is minimal during periods of instruction.

In addition to these three children with IEPs, four children are reading at first-grade level. Although these children are obviously having difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling, they do not currently qualify for special education services as their performance level is not two standard deviations below their intelligence quotient–derived ability level.

Unfortunately, there is no reading specialist in your school to help teach the learners performing below grade level. Furthermore, the special education teacher is only required to provide direct services to the students with IEPs for two hours a week. There is a special education assistant assigned to assist with the children with IEPs in your classroom, but her time is split between all twelve first- and second-grade classes, so you are lucky to have her assistance on a daily basis. If the special educator or assistant is out for any reason, a substitute is rarely provided.

What would you do to include the student in the wheelchair in as many classroom activities as possible and to encourage social interactions with her peers?

What would you do to make sure the child with Down syndrome is accepted and included by his peers?

Where would you designate that the child with ADHD take his breaks in the classroom, and what would you provide to make him feel as though he were having a break?

What would you do to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the children who aren’t reading on grade level but do not receive special education services?

How will you meet the needs of all the students in your classroom and teach them at each of their ability levels?

Source: This Professional Dilemma was contributed by preschool special education teacher Michele Clarke.

To answer these questions on-line and e-mail your answers to your professor, go to Chapter 2 of the companion website (www.ablongman.com/johnson13e) and click on Professional Dilemma.
aides are those who encourage students to work independently so that they become self-sufficient in the process.

Researchers are finding improved student outcomes for students with disabilities who are in inclusive classrooms. Students without disabilities also receive positive benefits. Inclusion helps them become more tolerant of others, appreciate diversity, and be more responsive to the needs of others.18

**DISPROPORTIONATE PLACEMENTS**

Twelve percent of all students are provided with special education services. However, students in special education classes are likely to be students of color, English language learners, or whites from low-income families. Five percent of Asian American students are in special education, as compared to 14 percent of African American students. Students labeled *mentally retarded or emotionally disabled* disproportionately are from low-income families. Low-income children are also overrepresented in classes for seriously emotionally disturbed students. Middle-class students are more likely to be classified as *learning disabled*. This pattern is also found in the placement of males and students of color in special education and gifted classes. African American and Native American students are overrepresented in disability categories of learning disability, mental retardation, and emotionally disturbed, as are males in general. On the other hand, Latino, African American, and Native American students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. Educators need to monitor the reasons for their referrals of students to be tested for placement in these classes and provide equity in the delivery of education services.

Disproportionate placements of students in special education and gifted education programs may be due to a number of factors. Tests used for placement are often biased against low-income students, English language learners, and students who have not assimilated into the dominant culture. Some educators who recommend students for special programs are intolerant of cultural differences and do not want students in their classes who they believe will disrupt the classroom. Schools should monitor recommendations and placements to find out if students from some groups are being disproportionately placed in these programs and to take corrective action if needed.

**RELIGION**

Religion can have a great influence on the values and lifestyles of families and can play an important role in the socialization of children and young people. Religious doctrines and practices often guide beliefs about the roles of males and females. They also provide guidance regarding birthrates, birth control, child-rearing, friendships, and political attitudes.

By age five, children are able to generally identify their family’s religious affiliation. Although 88 percent of the population regard their religious beliefs as very or fairly important, less than half attend a religious service on a weekly basis.19 However, strong religious perspectives are reflected in the daily lives of many families.

**RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**

Religious pluralism flourishes in this country. Members of religions other than those with Judeo-Christian roots are increasing as more immigrants arrive from Asia and the Middle East. Other families declare themselves atheists or simply do not participate in an organized religion. Some individuals and families live in religious cults that are established to promote and maintain a religious calling.
Some religious groups believe that their religion is the only correct and legitimate view of the world. Other groups recognize that religious diversity has grown out of different historical experiences and accept the validity of diverse groups. At the same time, every major religion endorses justice, love, and compassion as virtues that most individuals and nations say they are trying to achieve.  

Although they are not as dominant as earlier in U.S. history, Protestants are still in the majority with 56 percent of the population. Two percent of the population are Jewish, and 27 percent are Catholic. Eight percent do not indicate a preference. Within each of the major religious groups, there are distinct denominations and sects that have the same general history but may differ greatly in their beliefs and perspectives on the correct way to live. Most Western religions are compatible with the values of the dominant culture; they usually promote patriotism and emphasize individual control of life.

With the influx of immigrants from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East over the past few decades, religious diversity among the population has increased further with the introduction of non-Western religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The interaction of these faiths with Western religions and their impact on mainstream society have yet to be determined. In the meantime, students from diverse religious backgrounds appear in classrooms. Teachers need to respect these differences if they are going to serve the students and community well.

For many people, religion is an essential element, determining their cultural identity. For example, some religious groups, such as the Amish and Hutterites, establish their own communities and schools to maintain the religion, foster mutual support, and develop group cohesiveness. Members of groups such as the Mormons promote primary relationships and interactions with other members of the same faith. Most social activities are linked to religion, and institutions have been developed to reflect and support the religious beliefs. In many rural areas, the church is the center of social and community activities. Many religions expect their members to spend much of their nonworking hours in church and charity activities.

### RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which requires the separation of church and state, is a cornerstone of American democracy. When it comes to schools, however, there is disagreement about the meaning of the amendment. Public schools cannot advance a religion, but they also cannot inhibit religion. Although schools must be neutral to religion, their policies and practices must protect the religious liberty of students. Religion cannot be ignored in the curriculum, but it should be acknowledged and taught about when appropriate.

Families appear satisfied with schools when the schools reflect the values that are important in their religion. But they may attack schools when the curriculum, assigned readings, holidays, school convocations, and graduation exercises are per-
ceived to be in conflict with their religious values. Many court cases over the past century have helped to sort out these issues.

GEOGRAPHY

Communities and their schools differ from one region of the United States to another. Children and families may suffer culture shock in moving from one region to another and from urban to suburban to rural areas. People in different parts of the country sometimes behave differently, dress differently, and like different things even if they are from the same religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Over the past thirty years, many individuals and families have migrated from the Northeast and Midwest to states in the South and West. By 2010, 60 percent of the U.S. population will live in the South and West, compared to 48 percent in 1970. One-fourth of the population will live in California, Florida, and Texas alone. The population in rural areas of the upper Midwest is currently older than in other parts of the country, but by 2010, one-fifth of Florida’s population will be over sixty-five years old, and 15 percent of the population in Arizona, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia will be retired.21

An examination of differences among rural, suburban, and urban communities captures some of the geographic variation. However, differences among communities are also found between the Northwest, Southwest, Midwest, South, and Northeast. Within these regions, states have their own cultural uniqueness. The geography of a state such as Colorado, for example, promotes the development of different cultural patterns among populations in the flat farmlands, urban centers, and mountains.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural schools are often the center of rural life. Values tend to be conservative, and the immediate family is a cohesive unit. Children may travel long distances to school. By urban and suburban standards, rural families live long distances from one another. To the rural family, however, the distances are not great, and a feeling of neighborliness exists. The social structure is less stratified than in more populous geographical areas, and everyone may appear to know everyone else.

Workers in rural areas generally are poorly paid for their work, earning about three-fourths of the wages paid in urban areas. Although housing costs may be lower, other expenses are not much different. As a result, 17 percent of the rural population live in poverty,22 although they are invisible to most people. Poverty is disproportionately high on Native American reservations but also exists on the midwestern plains, western ranches, and farms across the country.

Employment in manufacturing is limited in rural areas. However, increasing numbers of urban and suburban dwellers are choosing to live in the country and commute to their employment in the more populous metropolitan areas. These transplants are generally young and well educated. They are fleeing the complexities of city life to acquire self-reliance and self-confidence, to return to a
physically healthier environment, or simply to be able to own an affordable home. In some instances, this exodus to the country has caused problems for rural schools because the newcomers’ values have clashed with those of the rural community. Family living habits and expectations for school programs differ, and some newcomers demand increased social services. In many rural communities, it takes a considerable length of time for newcomers to be accepted into the social structure.

Despite the pivotal role of schools in rural life, these schools face real difficulties. Too often there are teacher shortages that result in the staffing of schools by teachers without a license or with limited academic background in the subject being taught. Teachers in rural areas sometimes feel isolated, especially if they are not from the area. As ethnic diversity increases in these areas, teachers will be confronted with cultures and languages to which they may have had little or no exposure.

### SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES

Nearly half of the U.S. population now lives in the suburbs. The suburban population has become more diverse as middle-class families of color have moved from cities. It is becoming even more ethnically and linguistically diverse as new immigrants settle in the suburbs. The most dramatic change in the suburbs, however, is that poverty now exists there as well as in cities and rural areas. The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that 20 percent of suburban children under six years old live in families with incomes below the poverty level.

Suburbs are characterized by single-family homes, shopping centers, and space for parks and recreation activities. Funding for schools has traditionally been better in the suburbs than in other areas. As a result, most suburban schools are in good condition; some boast sprawling, beautiful, and technologically advanced campuses. Most teachers are licensed and generally teach the subjects they are qualified to teach. Students outperform their rural and urban counterparts on achievement tests, and more suburban students than students from other areas attend college. Safety is usually not a concern for students, parents, or teachers. With changing demographics in the suburbs, however, these conditions are beginning to change—particularly in suburban areas close to major cities. Suburban taxpayers sometimes are unwilling to pay adequately for the education of children in poverty. Retirees sometimes fight school bond issues that are needed to support public education. Already, a growing number of middle- and upper-middle-class parents in the suburbs are choosing private schools.²³

### URBAN COMMUNITIES

Urban areas are usually rich in educational and entertainment resources such as libraries, museums, theaters, professional sports, colleges, and universities. The urban population is ethnically and racially diverse, but many residential areas remain segregated. In many cities, people of color constitute the majority of the urban population. The majority of the foreign-born population live in cities. For example, foreign-born persons make up 41 percent of the population in Los Angeles, 37 percent in both San Francisco and San Jose, 36 percent in New York City, and 26 percent in Houston. Twenty percent of elementary and high school students have at least one foreign-born parent.

Class differences are evident across urban neighborhoods. Low-income families and families in poverty are often isolated in neighborhoods with few resources, inadequate police protection, and poorly maintained parks, schools, and public areas. Children who live in an underserved section of a city are often restricted by it, having few contacts outside the area. Their opportunities
to participate in the educational and entertainment resources of the city are limited.

Although there are many single-family homes in a city, many children live in multifamily condominiums, apartments, and projects. Some city residents live comfortably by U.S. standards, but a disproportionate number of urban residents are economically oppressed. One of the reasons for high poverty rates among most groups in cities is the lack of academic credentials that qualify workers for better-paying jobs. Jobs that teenagers hold in other communities are filled in urban areas by adults for whom no other options are available. The result is high unemployment among youth from oppressed groups. Crime rates in many low-income neighborhoods exceed the national average. There are higher infant mortality rates, lower access to adequate health care, and a greater number of AIDS cases—_all factors that are common when people have inadequate incomes to support themselves and their families.

Public funding for city schools may be similar to that in other areas, but families in many urban neighborhoods are unable to contribute to schools at the same level as many suburban parents. Parents have less time to volunteer for school and community involvement or fund-raising projects. They often have more than one job. In some cases, they are caught in their own addictions and maladies exacerbated by the stress of poverty, violence, and lack of community support.

Many urban middle-class and upper-middle-class families opt for private schools over public schools. Children and youth in central cities of metropolitan areas are in poverty at higher rates than children in rural and suburban areas. African Americans make up 33 percent of central city school populations, and Latino students constitute 22 percent. A disproportionately high percentage of students are foreign-born or first-generation immigrants with limited English proficiency. Bilingual education and federally funded programs such as Title I for students from low-income families help to meet the needs of urban schools. Low-income students in urban areas are less likely to complete high school on time, although they complete postsecondary degrees at the same rates as their suburban and rural counterparts.

Severe teacher shortages exist in urban schools. As a result, many teachers have not completed a teacher education program and are working on emergency licenses. A large percentage of teachers in city schools have had little or no preparation in the subjects they are assigned to teach; this problem is particularly severe for mathematics and science. Perhaps this is a major reason why urban students perform less well on national achievement tests.

**Summary**

Culture determines the way individuals behave and think. Although characteristics and contributions of diverse cultural groups are reflected in U.S. society, white, Protestant, heterosexual, middle-class European Americans have had the greatest impact on societal values and behavioral expectations. Three ideologies describe the nature of diversity in the United States: assimilation, pluralism, and cultural choice.

The way students and their families live is greatly affected by their socioeconomic status, which is determined by income, wealth, occupation, and educational attainment. The population is socially stratified, providing some groups more advantage and prestige in society than others.

As a result of immigration from Asia, Mexico, Central America, and the Middle East, the United States is becoming more ethnically diverse. A growing number of English language learners are found in schools across the country. In addition, a number of students use a dialect that is not standard English in their home environments.
Although few biological differences exist between females and males, differences in economic status, jobs, and educational attainment continue to exist. Many educators are not knowledgeable about homosexuality and how to support LGBT students. Today’s teachers are also likely to have students with disabilities in their classrooms. Like members of other underserved groups in society, students with disabilities are often labeled and stereotyped in ways not conducive to learning.

Religious diversity in the United States is expanding to include religions other than Christianity and Judaism. Families from other religious backgrounds seldom see their traditions and values reflected in the public schools and often feel discriminated against because of their religion. As the population shifts and ages, families are forced to move to a different part of the country. Because cultural traditions and values differ from one region of the country to another, teachers should be aware of these differences.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Students and families bring their cultures into the classroom. To what degree do you think you should incorporate culture into the curriculum? How will you prevent your own cultural background from becoming the norm that dominates in the classroom?

2. Research shows that some students perform better academically and socially when they are segregated in single-sex classrooms. In what cases do you think such segregation is appropriate?

3. Which of the three ideologies related to the management of diversity in our society do you hope pervades the schools in which you will work in the future? Why?

4. How do you plan to manage your classroom to positively build on the racial, ethnic, gender, socio-economic, and ability differences of students? What pedagogical strategies (e.g., cooperative learning) will you use? Why?

5. Most classrooms today include one or more students with disabilities. Where will you turn for assistance in providing the necessary accommodations to help those students learn at the levels they are capable of learning?

**Journal Entries**

1. Reflect on how your membership in the microcultural groups described in this chapter has contributed to your own cultural identity. Consider why membership in one or more groups is especially important in the identification of who you are.

2. Record an experience that you have had with members of another culture that has influenced how you think about that cultural group. Write your reflections on how your impressions have changed over time as you have had experiences with other members of that group.

**Portfolio Development**

1. Identify one microcultural group with which you have no or limited experience and write a paper on the group’s historical and current experience in the United States. What other information will be helpful to you if students from this group are in your classroom when you begin teaching? How will you work effectively with the families from this group?

2. Contrast educational practices that have evolved to support different theories related to diversity and develop an argument for incorporating one or more of these practices into your own teaching.
THE PRAXIS PLT TEST AND DIVERSITY

1. The Praxis II Principles of Teaching and Learning (PLT) test, which assesses a prospective teacher’s knowledge about a variety of teaching-related skills, is required by many states. The test covers four broad categories: organizing content knowledge for student learning, creating an environment for student learning, teaching for student learning, and teacher professionalism. Learn more about the PLT test by reviewing the ETS Test at a Glance materials at www.ets.org/praxis/taags/prx0522.html.

2. Answer the following multiple-choice question, which is similar to items in Praxis and other state certification tests. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the Diversity and Education section in this chapter.

Seven of Ms. Bishop’s third-grade students are recent immigrants, all from different countries and all speaking little English. Ms. Bishop says her goal is for all seven students to learn English and American customs as quickly as possible so they can rapidly become part of U.S. society. Which ideology about diversity most closely corresponds to Ms. Bishop’s beliefs?

(A) cultural pluralism
(B) assimilation
(C) social stratification
(D) cultural choice

3. Answer the following short-answer question, which is similar to items in Praxis and other state certification tests. After you’ve completed your written response, use the scoring guide in the Test at a Glance materials to assess your response. Can you revise your response to improve your score?

Reread the chapter-opening Education in the News feature. The immigrant students mentioned who attend the Harrisonburg schools are members of several microcultural groups. Identify at least three microcultural groups for the Yavny and Castro families. How might membership in these groups affect the students’ school experiences?

WEBSITES

www.adl.org The Anti-Defamation League fights anti-Semitism, bigotry, and extremism. Its website includes information on religious freedom, civil rights, and the Holocaust as well as resources for teachers on fighting hate.

www.cec.sped.org The Council for Exceptional Children is dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. The website identifies resources for educators.

www.edc.org/womensequity The website of the Women’s Educational Equity Association provides information about Title IX and women’s equity issues, including links to additional resources.

www.glsen.org The website of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network provides resources and updates for ending bias against LGBT persons in schools and society.

www.lulac.org The League of United Latin American Citizens advances the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, health, and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States. The website provides information on current issues.

www.ncai.org The National Congress of American Indians works to inform the public and Congress on the governmental rights of Native Americans and Alaska Natives. The website includes a directory of tribes in the United States.

FURTHER READING


prevents students with disabilities from fully participating in the education system, having access to high levels of academic contact, and fully participating in society. Instead of accepting different ways of seeing, moving, and thinking, schools are guilty of ableism, which results in disvaluing persons with disabilities and treating them as inferior to others. Ladson-Billings, Gloria. (1994). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Descriptions and analysis of the culturally relevant strategies used by eight African American and white teachers who have successfully taught African American children.


**THEMES OF THE TIMES!**

Expand your knowledge of the concepts discussed in this chapter by reading current and historical articles from the *New York Times* by visiting the Themes of the Times! section of the companion website (www.ablongman.com/johnson13e).

**NOTES**


16. Ibid.


