

Goals and Misconceptions

Multicultural education is a reform movement designed to make some major changes in the education of students. Multicultural education theorists and researchers believe that many school, college, and university practices related to race, ethnicity, language, religion, and gender are harmful to students and reinforce many of the stereotypes and discriminatory practices in Western societies (Banks, 2016b; Banks & Banks, 2016; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010; Mayo, 2014; Nieto, 2016).

Multicultural education is *an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process* (Banks, 2016d). Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, and ethnic, racial, linguistic, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. Another important idea in multicultural education is that some students, because of these characteristics, have a better chance to learn in schools as they are currently structured than do students who belong to other groups or who have different cultural characteristics (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). Theory and research in multicultural education indicate that the total school must be reformed in order to implement multicultural education comprehensively and effectively. The variables of the school that must be reformed in order to implement multicultural education are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Multicultural education assumes that race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and social class are salient parts of the United States and other nations (Banks, 2009a, 2012, 2017). It also assumes that diversity enriches a nation and increases the ways in which its citizens can perceive and solve personal and public problems. In addition, diversity enriches a nation by providing all citizens with rich opportunities to experience other cultures, and thus to become more fulfilled as human beings. When individuals are able to participate in a variety of cultures, they are more able to benefit from the total human experience.

Multicultural education focuses on how race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, language, exceptionality, sexual orientation (lesbian, gay,

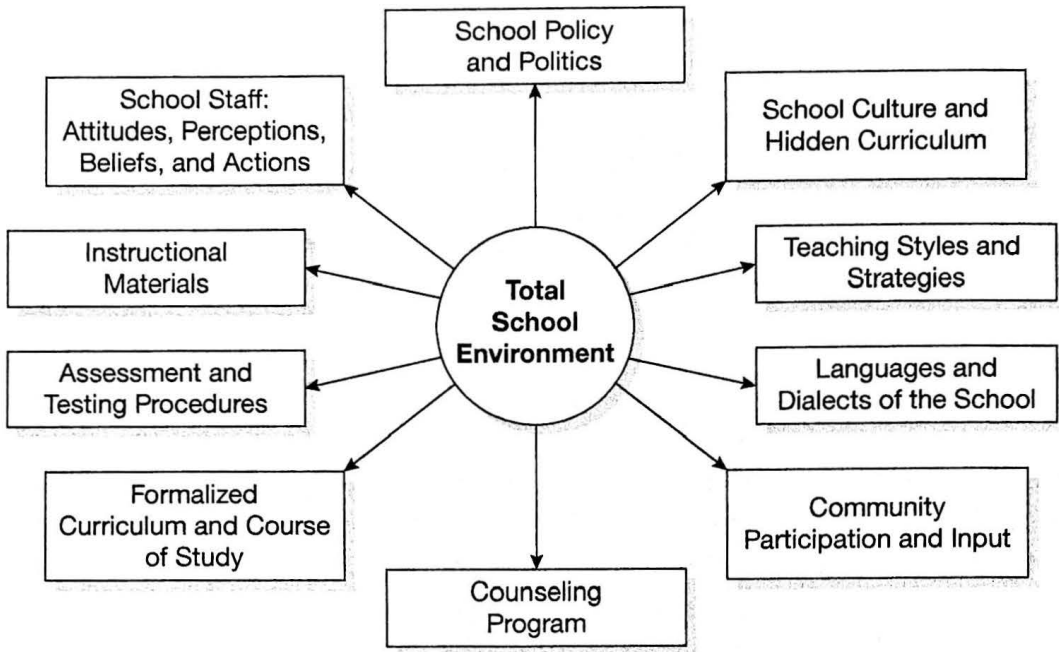


FIGURE 1.1 The Total School Environment

bisexual, or transgender [*LGBT*]), and religion influence student learning and behavior. Multicultural education examines the ways in which these variables singly and interactively influence student behavior. Multicultural educators use the term *intersectionality* to describe the ways in which these variables interact to influence the behavior of students (Grant & Zwier, 2012). Teachers cannot comprehensively understand the behavior of a student by knowing only her race or ethnicity. Teachers will gain a better understanding of the student and her behavior if the teacher also knows her primary language, social class, ethnic identity, and the extent to which the student identifies with her ethnic group. Figure 1.2 illustrates how these variables intersect and interact to influence student behavior.

The Goals of Multicultural Education

Individuals who know the world only from their own cultural perspectives are denied important parts of the human experience and are culturally and ethnically encapsulated. These individuals are also unable to know their own cultures fully because of their cultural blinders. We can get a full view of our own backgrounds and behaviors only by viewing them from the perspectives of other cultures. Just as fish are unable to appreciate the uniqueness of their aquatic environment, so are many mainstream individuals and groups within a society unable to fully see and appreciate the

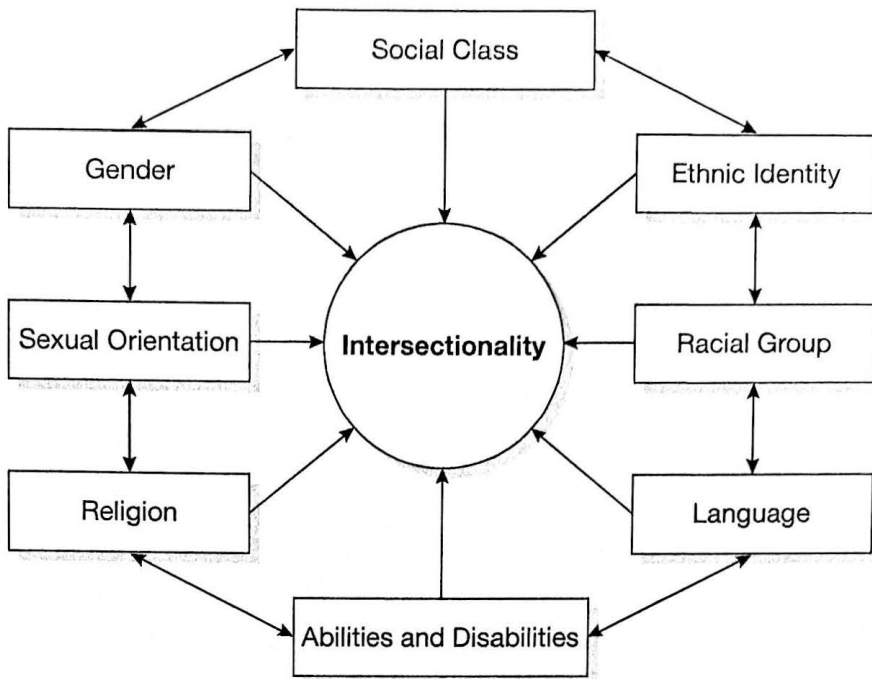


FIGURE 1.2 Intersection of Diversity Variables

uniqueness of their cultural characteristics. A key goal of multicultural education is to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures. Multicultural education assumes that with acquaintance and understanding, respect may follow.

Another major goal of multicultural education is to provide students with cultural, ethnic, and language alternatives. Historically, the school curriculum in the United States and other nations has focused primarily on the cultures and histories of mainstream groups with power and influence (Banks, 2009b, 2012, 2017). The school culture and curriculum in the United States were primarily extensions of the culture of mainstream Anglo American students (Spring, 2010; Valenzuela, 2012). The school rarely presented mainstream students with cultural and ethnic alternatives.

The *Anglocentric* curriculum, which still exists to varying degrees in U.S. schools, colleges, and universities, has harmful consequences for both mainstream Anglo American students and students of color, such as African Americans and Mexican Americans (Lomawaima, 2012; Nieto, 2015). By teaching mainstream students only about their own cultures, the school is denying them the richness of the music, literature, values, lifestyles, and perspectives of such ethnic groups as African Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and Jewish Americans. Mainstream American students should know that African American literature is uniquely enriching (Morrison, 2012) and that groups such as Italian Americans and Mexican Americans have values they can embrace.

The Anglocentric curriculum negatively affects many students of color because they often find the school culture alien, hostile, and self-defeating. Because of the negative ways in which students of color and their cultures are often viewed by educators and the negative experiences of these students in their communities and in the schools, many of them do not attain the skills needed to function successfully in a highly technological, knowledge-oriented society (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

A major goal of multicultural education is to provide all students with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to function within their community cultures, within the mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures (Banks, 2016b). Mainstream American students should have a sophisticated understanding and appreciation for the uniqueness and richness of Black English (also called “Ebonics,” which is formed from the words *ebony* and *phonics*). African American students should be able to speak and write Standard English and to function successfully within mainstream institutions without experiencing cultural alienation from family and community (Alim & Baugh, 2007; Hudley & Mallinson, 2011).

Another major goal of multicultural education is to reduce the pain and discrimination that members of some ethnic and racial groups experience because of their unique racial, physical, and cultural characteristics. Filipino Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and Chinese Americans often deny their ethnic identity, ethnic heritage, and family in order to assimilate and participate more fully in mainstream institutions (Cross, 2012). Jewish Americans, Polish Americans, and Italian Americans also frequently reject parts of their ethnic cultures when trying to succeed in school and in mainstream society (Brodkin, 1998; Jacobson, 1998). As Dickeman (1973) has insightfully pointed out, schools often force members of these groups to experience “self-alienation” in order to succeed. Wong Fillmore (2005) describes how the school alienates immigrant children from their families when it forces them to give up their home languages. These are high prices to pay for educational, social, and economic mobility. Students who become successful in school and in the larger society but become alienated from self, family, and community experience what Fordham (1988) has called a “pyrrhic victory”—a victory with pain and losses.

Some individuals of color in the United States—such as many African Americans, Native Americans, and Puerto Rican Americans—in their effort to assimilate and to participate fully in mainstream institutions, become very Anglo-Saxon in their ways of viewing the world and in their values and behavior. However, highly culturally assimilated members of ethnic groups of color are often denied full participation in mainstream institutions because of their skin color (Robinson, 2010; Touré, 2011).

These individuals may also become alienated from their community cultures and families in their attempts to fully participate in mainstream institutions. They may become alienated from both their community cultures and mainstream society and consequently experience marginality. In a classic and highly influential article published in 1928, Robert Park—the eminent sociologist at the University of Chicago—called this phenomenon “the marginal man.”

Jewish Americans and Italian Americans may also experience marginality when they deny their cultures in an attempt to become fully assimilated into American mainstream society and culture. Although they usually succeed in looking and acting like Anglo Americans, they are likely to experience psychological stress and identity conflict when they deny and reject their family and their ethnic languages, symbols, behaviors, and beliefs (Brodkin, 1998). Ethnicity plays a major role in the socialization of many members of ethnic groups; ethnic identity is an important part of the identity of such individuals (Appiah, 2006; Gutmann, 2003). When these individuals deny their ethnic cultures and identities, they reject an important part of self.

It is important for educators to realize that ethnic group membership is not an important part of personal identity for many individual members of ethnic groups (Mahiri, 2017). Other group affiliations—such as religion, social class, gender, or sexual orientation—are more important identities for these individuals. Some people identify with more than one ethnic or cultural group. This is especially likely to be the case for individuals who are racially and ethnically mixed—an increasing population within American society (Joseph, 2012). Ethnic identity becomes complicated for individuals of color for whom ethnic identity is not significant. Even though such individuals may not view their ethnic group membership as important, other people, especially those within other racial and ethnic groups, may view these individuals as members of a racial/ethnic group and think that ethnicity is their primary identity. Brodtkin (1998) defines *ethnoracial identity* as the way an individual views her or his ethnic identity and characteristics. *Ethnoracial assignment* is the way in which outside individuals and groups view and ethnically categorize an individual. Brodtkin describes the ways in which ethnoracial identity and ethnoracial assignments can differ in substantial ways and cause pain and confusion for ethnic individuals who view their ethnic group identity and characteristics differently from outsiders.

Ethnic group members who experience marginality are likely to be alienated citizens who feel that they have little stake in society. Those who reject their basic group identity are incapable of becoming fully functioning and self-actualized citizens and are more likely to experience political and social alienation. Banks (2015) maintains that citizens who are denied full citizenship participation in their nation-state because of their ethnic,

racial, cultural, linguistic, or religious characteristics experience *failed citizenship* and consequently develop weak and ambivalent national identities and weak attachments to the nation-state. Consequently, it is in the best interests of a political democracy to protect the rights of all citizens to maintain allegiances to their ethnic and cultural groups (Banks, 2016a; Benhabib, Shapiro, & Petranovic, 2007; Kymlicka, 2017). Individuals are capable of maintaining allegiance both to their ethnic group and to the nation-state.

Another goal of multicultural education is to help students acquire the reading, writing, and math skills needed to function effectively in a global and “flat” technological world—that is, one in which students in New York City, London, Paris, and Berlin must compete for jobs with students educated in developing nations such as India and Pakistan (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Technology enables companies to outsource jobs to developing nations to reduce the costs of products and services. Multicultural education assumes that multicultural content can help students to master basic skills essential to function in a global and flat world. Providing multicultural readings and data can be highly motivating and meaningful for students (Lee, 2007). Students are more likely to master skills when the teacher uses content that deals with significant human problems related to race, ethnicity, and social class within society. Students around the world, including students in the United States, live in societies in which ethnic, racial, language, and religious problems are real and salient (Banks, 2009a, 2017). Providing content related to these issues and to the cultural communities in which students live is significant and meaningful to students. Multicultural education theorists and researchers maintain that skill goals are extremely important (Lee & Buxton, 2010; Nasir, Cabana, Shreve, Woodbury, & Louie, 2014).

Education within a pluralistic society should affirm and help students understand their home and community cultures. It should also help free them from their cultural boundaries. To create and maintain a civic community that works for the common good, education in a democratic society should help students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in civic action to make society more equitable and just.

Education and Global Citizenship

Another important goal of multicultural education is to help individuals from diverse racial, cultural, language, and religion groups to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively within their cultural communities, the national civic culture, their regional culture, and the global community (Banks, 2008a and 2017c). In the past, most nation-states required citizens to experience cultural assimilation into the national

culture and to become alienated from their community cultures in order to become citizens. The assimilationist conception of citizenship and citizenship education have come into question in view of the historical, political, social, and cultural developments that have occurred around the world since World War II. Institutionalized notions of citizenship have been vigorously contested since the ethnic revitalization movements began in the 1960s and 1970s. Worldwide immigration, the challenges to nation-states brought by globalization, and the tenacity of nationalism and national borders have stimulated debate, controversy, and rethinking about citizenship and citizenship education (Banks, 2017a, b, c; Bashir, 2017; Benhabib, 2004; Castles, 2017). The debate over the extent to which citizens can maintain their cultural identities and characteristics and yet have full citizenship rights has intensified since populist revolts have risen in response to global migration, the migration of refugees to European nations, and the fear of terrorist attacks. These populist revolts have given rise to xenophobia and to the election of conservative leaders in the United States and other Western nations. These populist revolts also resulted in the passage of the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom that requires it to leave the European Union and in prejudice and discrimination against Muslims in many European nations, including the Netherlands (Rubin, 2017).

Traditional notions of citizenship assume that individuals from different groups have to give up their homes and community cultures and languages in order to attain inclusion and participate fully in the national civic culture. Assimilationist conceptions of citizenship education need to be questioned, especially with the rise of assimilation under new guises in many nations, such as “social cohesion” in Canada and the United Kingdom (Joshee & Thomas, 2017; Tomlinson, 2012). The revitalized and strong push for *assimilation* in many Western nations is linked to renewed quests for *social cohesion*, *strong nationalism*, and *neoliberalism*. The forces that promote social cohesion and strong nationalism are opposed to *globalization* and *cosmopolitanism*. Citizenship education needs to be expanded to include cultural rights for citizens from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, language, and religious groups (Gutmann, 2004; Young, 2000), especially in these neoconservative times in which social cohesion and nationalism are emphasized in many nations.

An effective citizenship education helps students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function effectively within their cultural communities, nation-states, regions, and the global community (Banks, 2007, 2008). Such an education helps students acquire the cosmopolitan perspectives and values needed to work to attain equality and social justice for people around the world (Nussbaum, 2002; Starkey, 2017). Schools should be reformed so that they can implement a transformative and critical conception of citizenship education that will enhance educational equality for all students.

The Standardization Movement

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 2001 and signed by President George W. Bush in 2002 to address the academic achievement gap between White students and students of color. One of the stated goals of the act was to make school districts and states accountable for the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and language groups. The act required states to formulate rigorous standards in reading, mathematics, and science and to annually test all students in grades 3 through 8 in these subjects. The act also required that the results of the assessments be disaggregated by income, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Many standards-based school reforms were created to respond to the requirements of the NCLB. However, many states had initiated standards-based reforms prior to the passage of NCLB. President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the Race to the Top initiative on July 24, 2009. The Race to the Top initiative was very similar to the NCLB initiative because it awarded points to states for performance-based standards for teachers and principals and for establishing charter schools.

With bipartisan efforts and the support of President Obama and Arne Duncan, the NCLB Act was substantially revised and many of its punitive and adverse requirements for teachers and students were mitigated with the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. It reduces the federal role in education policy, including in the testing and assessment of teachers in low-performing schools. The ESSA will become effective in the 2017–18 school year (Klein, 2016). Although the ESSA reduces the federal role in determining state and local policy related to testing, curricula, and accountability, its effects on state and local preoccupation with testing and accountability are not yet known. Consequently, the national emphasis on testing and accountability is likely to continue into the foreseeable future, especially since Donald Trump, a Republican, was elected president in 2016 and Republican majorities were elected in both houses of the U.S. Congress.

The national focus on creating high academic standards and holding educators accountable for student achievement is having mixed results in the nation's schools (Sleeter & Flores Carmona, 2017). Some researchers and educational leaders view the focus on national standards and standardized testing as promising. A study by Roderick, Jacob, and Bryk (2002) indicates that performance improved in low-performing schools after the implementation of standards-based reform. Some school leaders in

high-minority, low-achieving schools applauded NCLB because it required school districts and states to disaggregate achievement data by income, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. These administrators believed that the disaggregation of achievement data helped to focus attention on the academic achievement gap between White students and students of color such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans.

The NCLB, Race to the Top, and related reforms evoked a chorus of criticism from other researchers and school reformers (Au, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Meier & Wood, 2005; Sleeter & Flores Carmona, 2017). The critics of standards-based reforms argue that they have had many negative consequences on the curriculum and on school life (Kumashiro, 2012). They contend that these reforms have forced many teachers to focus on narrow literacy and numeracy skills rather than on critical thinking and the broad goals of schooling in a democratic society. In addition, concerns are voiced about an overemphasis on testing, less focus on teaching, and deskilled and deprofessionalized teachers (Au, 2009; Giroux, 1988). Amrein and Berliner (2002) analyzed 18 states to determine how high-stakes tests were affecting student learning. They concluded that in all but one of their analyses, student learning was indeterminate, remained at the same level before high-stakes testing was implemented, or went down when high-stakes testing policies were initiated.

Sleeter and Flores Carmona (2017) make an important distinction between *standards* and *standardization*, and explain why they support standards but are opposed to standardization. Standards—which describe quality—can be used by teachers to help students attain high levels of academic achievement. Standardization has negative effects on students, teachers, and schools because it leads to bureaucratization and to a focus on low-level knowledge and skills that can be easily measured by norm-referenced tests.

Teachers face a dilemma when they try to teach in culturally responsive ways as well as help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to perform successfully on state and national standardized tests. If teachers ignore the tests, low-achieving students will become further marginalized within schools and society, and the existing social, political, and economic structures will be perpetuated. Teachers may also put their own professional reputations and status at risk because of punitive sanctions they can experience in many school districts if the test scores of their students do not increase between testing cycles.

Sleeter and Flores Carmona (2017) recommend that teachers use multicultural content—which is highly motivating to students when it focuses on their own historical and cultural experience—to help students from diverse groups attain the knowledge and skills needed to reach high

levels of achievement on standardized tests. At the same time, teachers should help students conceptualize actions they can take to change the political, economic, and social systems that have victimized their groups historically and that still victimize them today (Baldwin, 1985a; Freire, 2000).

The Multicultural Debate

Multicultural education is an education for freedom that is essential in today's ethnically polarized and troubled world (Parekh, 2006; Parker, 2017). During the early 1990s, multicultural education evoked a divisive national debate, in part because of the divergent views that citizens hold about what constitutes an American identity and about the roots and nature of American civilization. In turn, the debate sparked a power struggle over who should participate in formulating the canon used to shape the curriculum in the nation's schools, colleges, and universities.

During the 1990s, the bitter canon debate in the popular press and in several widely reviewed books overshadowed the progress in multicultural education that had been made since the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The debate also perpetuated harmful misconceptions about theory and practice in multicultural education. It consequently increased racial and ethnic tensions and trivialized the field's remarkable accomplishments in theory, research, and curriculum development (Nieto, 2012, 2016). The truth about the development and attainments of multicultural education needs to be told, for the sake of balance, scholarly integrity, and accuracy.

Misconceptions

To reveal the truth about multicultural education, some of the frequently repeated and widespread myths and misconceptions about it must be identified and debunked.

Multicultural Education Is For the Others

One such misconception is that multicultural education is an entitlement program and curriculum movement for African Americans, Latinos, the poor, women, and other marginalized groups (Chavez, 2010; Glazer, 1997).

The major theorists and researchers in multicultural education agree that it is a reform movement designed to restructure educational institutions so that all students—including White, male, and middle-class

students—will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse nation and world (Banks & Banks, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Nieto, 2012, 2016). Multicultural education, as defined and conceptualized by its major architects during the last four decades, is not an ethnic- or gender-specific movement, but a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017).

The claim that multicultural education is only for ethnic groups of color and the disenfranchised is one of the most pernicious and damaging misconceptions with which the movement has to cope (Chavez, 2010; Glazer, 1997). It has caused serious problems and has haunted the multicultural education movement since its inception. Despite everything written and spoken about multicultural education being for all students, the image of multicultural education as an entitlement program for the “others” remains strong and vivid in the public imagination as well as in the hearts and minds of many teachers and administrators. Teachers who teach in predominantly White schools and districts often state that they do not have a program or plan for multicultural education because they have few African American, Latino, or Asian American students.

When multicultural education is viewed by educators as the study of the “other,” it is marginalized and prevented from becoming a part of mainstream educational reform. During the 1990s, the critics of multicultural education, such as Schlesinger (1991) and Glazer (1997), perpetuated the idea that multicultural education is the study of the “other” by defining it as the same as *Afrocentric* education.

The history of intergroup education teaches us that only when educational reform related to diversity is viewed as essential for all students—and as promoting the broad public interest—will it have a reasonable chance of becoming institutionalized in the nation’s schools, colleges, and universities (Banks, 2005). The intergroup education movement of the 1940s and 1950s failed in large part because intergroup educators were never able to get mainstream educators to believe that it was needed by and designed for all students (Taba, Brady, & Robinson, 1952). To its bitter and quiet end, intergroup education was viewed as something for schools with racial problems and as something for “them” and not for “us.”

Multicultural Education Is Against the West

Another harmful misconception about multicultural education has been repeated so often by its critics that it is frequently viewed by readers as self-evident. This is the claim that multicultural education is a movement against the West and Western civilization. Multicultural education is not against the West because most writers of color—such as Rudolfo A. Anaya,

Paula Gunn Allen, N. Scott Momaday, Maxine Hong Kingston, Maya Angelou, and Toni Morrison—are Western. Multicultural education itself is a thoroughly Western movement. It grew out of a civil rights movement grounded in Western democratic ideals such as freedom, justice, and equality (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013). Multicultural education seeks to expand for all people ideals that were meant for an elite few at the nation's beginning.

Although multicultural education is not against the West, its theorists believe that the truth about the West should be told, that its debt to people of color and women be recognized and included in the curriculum, and that the discrepancies between the ideals of freedom and equality and the realities of racism and sexism be taught to students. Reflective citizen action is also an integral part of multicultural theory. Multicultural education views citizen action to improve society as an integral part of education in a democracy. It links knowledge, values, empowerment, and action (Banks, 1996). Multicultural education is *postmodern* in its assumptions about knowledge and *knowledge construction*. It challenges Enlightenment, positivist assumptions about the relationship between human values, knowledge, and action.

Positivists, who are heirs of the Enlightenment, believe that it is possible to structure knowledge that is objective and beyond human values and interests. Multicultural theorists maintain that knowledge is positional, that it relates to the knower's values and experiences, and that knowledge implies action (Harding, 2012). Consequently, different concepts, theories, and paradigms imply different kinds of actions. Multicultural theorists believe that in order to have valid knowledge, information about the social condition and experiences of the knower is essential (Code, 1991; Collins, 2000; Harding, 2012).

Multicultural Education Will Divide the Nation

Many of its critics claim that multicultural education will divide the nation and undercut its unity. Schlesinger (1991) underscores this view by titling his book *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. This misconception of multicultural education is based partly on questionable assumptions about the nature of U.S. society and partly on a mistaken view about multicultural education. The claim that multicultural education will divide the nation assumes that the nation is already united. Although we are one nation politically, sociologically our nation is deeply divided along racial, gender, sexual orientation, and class lines. Class is one of the most pernicious divisions in the United States; the gap between the classes is widening. The percentage of the nation's wealth owned by the top one percent increased from 15 percent in 1975 to more

than 40 percent of the nation's wealth in 2013 (Saez & Zucman, 2016). As Stiglitz (2012) writes:

America has been growing apart, at an increasingly rapid rate. In the first post-recession years of the new millennium (2002–2007), the top 1 percent seized more than 65 percent of the gain in the total national income. (p. 2)

In his book, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*, Murray (2012) argues compellingly that the widening income gap in the United States is causing Whites in the nation to “come apart.”

Multicultural education is designed to help unify a deeply divided nation rather than to divide a highly cohesive one. Multicultural education supports the notion of *e pluribus unum*—one out of many. The *multiculturalists* and the *Western traditionalists*, however, often differ about how the *unum* can best be attained. Traditionally, the larger U.S. society as well as the schools have tried to create the *unum* by assimilating students from diverse racial and ethnic groups into a mythical Anglo American culture that required them to experience a process of self-alienation and harsh assimilation. Spring (2010) calls this process *deculturalization*. Valenzuela (2012) calls it *subtractive schooling*. However, even when people of color became culturally assimilated, they were often structurally excluded from mainstream institutions.

Multicultural educators view *e pluribus unum* as the appropriate national goal but believe that the goal must be negotiated, discussed, and restructured to reflect a nation's ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. The reformulation of the *unum* must be a process and must involve participation of diverse groups within the nation, such as people of color, women, straights, gays, the powerful, the powerless, the young, and the old. The reformulation of the *unum* must also involve power sharing and participation by people from many different cultural communities. They must discuss, debate, share power, experience equal status, and reach beyond their cultural and ethnic borders in order to create a common civic culture that reflects and contributes to the well-being of all. This common civic culture will extend beyond the cultural borders of each group and constitute a civic borderland culture.

In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa (1999) contrasts cultural *borders* and *borderlands*. She indicates the need to weaken cultural borders and to create a shared borderland culture in which people from many different cultures can interact, relate, and engage in civic talk and action. Anzaldúa states that

borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. (p. 3)

Progress in Multicultural Education

Multicultural Education Has Made Significant Curriculum Inroads

While it is still not the center of the curriculum in many schools, colleges, and universities, multicultural content and perspectives have made significant inroads into both the school and the higher education curriculum within the last four decades. The truth lies somewhere between the claim that no progress has been made in infusing and transforming the school and college curriculum with multicultural content, and the claim that such content has replaced the European and American classics.

In the elementary and high schools, much more ethnic content appears in social studies and language arts textbooks today than was the case 10, 20, or 30 years ago. Also, some teachers assign works written by authors of color along with the more standard American classics. More classroom teachers today have studied multicultural education concepts than at any previous point in U.S. history. A significant percentage of today's classroom teachers took a required teacher education course in multicultural education when they were in college. The multicultural education standard adopted by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 1977—which became effective January 1, 1979—was a major factor that stimulated the growth of multicultural education in teacher education programs. The NCATE diversity standard (Standard 4) required individuals preparing to become teachers to acquire the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions needed to work effectively with diverse student population groups (NCATE, 2008). In commenting on the diversity standard, NCATE gave examples of behaviors expected of teacher education programs and candidates, which included the ability to use examples of the cultures of students when teaching concepts and principles and to engage all students (including English language learners) in reflective interactions about challenging content (NCATE, 2008).

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers Education (NACTE) merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) on July 1, 2013, to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). None of the five CAEP standards speaks specifically to multicultural education, although Standard, Two “Clinical Partnerships and Practice,” states that teacher education candidates should have knowledge and skills that positively impact the learning and development of all students. Standard Three, “Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity,” states that teacher education candidates should “reflect the diversity of America’s P-12 students” (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], n.d.).

The teacher education market in multicultural education textbooks is now a substantial one. Most major publishers currently publish several major college textbooks in the field. Most major textbooks in other required education courses—such as educational psychology and the foundations of education—have separate chapters or sections that examine concepts and developments in multicultural education. Some of the nation’s leading colleges and universities—such as the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities; and Stanford University—revised their core curriculum during the 1980s to the 2000s to include ethnic content or established an *ethnic studies* course requirement.

However, the transformation of the traditional canon on college and university campuses has often been bitter and divisive (Nussbaum, 2012). All curriculum changes come slowly and painfully to university campuses. The linkage of curriculum change with issues related to race evokes latent primordial feelings and reflects the racial crisis in Western societies, including the United States. On some campuses—such as the University of Washington, Seattle—a bitter struggle occurred during several decades before a diversity requirement was finally established for all undergraduates on May 24, 2013. Students are required to complete “three credits of coursework that focus on the sociocultural, political and economic diversity of human experience at local, regional or global scales. The requirement is meant to help the student develop an understanding of the complexities of living in increasingly diverse and interconnected societies” (Diversity Requirement, University of Washington, 2015).

Significant changes are also being made in elementary and high school textbooks. The demographic imperative is an important factor driving the changes in school textbooks. The color of the nation’s students is changing rapidly. In the 2014–15 school year, 50.8 percent of the nation’s public elementary and secondary students were students of color (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). Table 1.1 shows the enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools by race or ethnicity in school years 2000–01, 2003–04, 2007–08, 2010–11, 2012–13, and 2014–2015. The percentage of students of color in the public schools will continue to increase in the coming years because the birthrate of people of color, and especially Hispanics, greatly exceeds that of Whites. The percentage of students who were non-White increased from 41 to 50 percent from fall 2003 through fall 2013. It is projected that the percentage of non-White students enrolled in U.S. public schools will make up 54 percent of the total enrollment in 2025 (Hussar & Bailey, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Language diversity is also increasing in the United States. The 2013 American Community Survey indicates that approximately 20.7 percent of the school-age population spoke a language at home other than English

TABLE 1.1 Number and Percentage Distribution of Public Elementary and Secondary Students, by Race/Ethnicity: Selected Years, 2000–01 Through 2014–2015

Year	Total Enrollment	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native
2000–01	46,120,425	100.0	61.0	17.0	16.6	4.2	1.2
2003–04	47,277,389	100.0	58.4	17.1	18.8	4.5	1.2
2007–08	48,397,895	100.0	55.8	17.0	21.2	4.8	1.2
2010–11	49,402,385	100	52.4	16.0	23.1	4.6	1.1
2012–13*	49,474,000	100.0	51	15.7	24.3	5.1	1.1
2014–15*	49,839,000	100	49.2	15.3	26.4	5.2	1.0
2020–21	49.4 million	100	46	15	26	6.0	1.5

* These numbers are projections.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2000–01, 2003–04, 2007–08, 2010–2011, and 2012–2013

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015, December). *Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region. Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2023*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_203.50.asp.

in 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Students who speak a language at home other than English are the fast-growing school population in the United States (Suárez-Orozco & Marks, 2016). Table 1.2 shows the 20 most frequently spoken languages at home other than English by people who live in the United States. Parents of color and parents who speak a first language other than English are demanding that their leaders, images, hopes, and dreams be mirrored in the curriculum and in the textbooks their children study in school.

Textbooks have always reflected the myths, hopes, and dreams of the people in society with money and power. As African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and women become more influential participants on the power stage, textbooks will increasingly reflect their hopes, dreams, and disappointments. Textbooks will have to survive in the marketplace of a nation that is increasingly racially, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse. Because textbooks still carry the curriculum in U.S. public schools, they remain an important focus for multicultural curriculum reformers.