CHAPTER 12
Education

Your Sociological Imagination

*C*olumnist Ann Landers published this letter from a teacher about the hidden realities of teaching in America. Let me see if I have this right. . . . I am also to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, modify disruptive behavior and observe them for signs of abuse.

I am to fight the war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, check their backpacks for guns and knives, and raise their self-esteem. I am to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship and fair play . . . I am to . . . maintain a safe environment, write letters of recommendation for student employment and scholarships, encourage respect for the cultural diversity of others, always making sure I give the girls in my class 50% of my attention.

I am required to work . . . toward additional certification and a master's degree, to sponsor the cheerleaders or the sophomore class (my choice); and after school, I am to attend committee and faculty meetings. . . .

I am to be a paragon of virtue, such that my presence will awe my students into being obedient and respectful of authority. I am to do all of this with just a piece of chalk, a bulletin board and a few books (some of which I may have to purchase myself). And for doing this, I am to be paid a starting salary that, in some states, qualifies my family for food stamps.

Is that all?

(Excerpted from "A Lesson on the Realities of Teaching," *The Los Angeles Times,* January 28, 2000).

Sections

1. **Development and Structure of Education**
2. **Functionalist Perspective**
3. **Conflict Perspective**
4. **Symbolic Interactionism**

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

❖ discuss schools as bureaucracies.
❖ outline the basic functions of education.
❖ evaluate the merit-based nature of public education.
❖ describe the ways in which schools socialize students.
❖ discuss educational inequality.

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Chapter Overview
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Development and Structure of Education

Key Terms

- **formal schooling**
- **open classroom**
- **cooperative learning**
- **integrative curriculum**
- **voucher system**
- **charter schools**
- **magnet schools**
- **for-profit schools**

Section Preview

Schools are becoming more bureaucratic. Advocates of open classrooms and cooperative learning contend that bureaucratically run schools fail to take into account the emotional and creative needs of individual children.

Bureaucracy in Education

School administration in the early 1900s was based on a factory model of education. Educators believed that children could be and should be educated in much the same way as cars were mass produced.

Schooling came to be seen as work or the preparation for work; schools were pictured as factories, educators as industrial managers, and students as the raw materials to be inducted into the production process. The ideology of school management was recast in the mold of the business corporation, and the character of education was shaped after the image of industrial production (Cohen and Lazerson, 1972:47).

Although teachers and administrators work hard today to personalize the time you spend in school, public education in this country remains very much an impersonal bureaucratic process. Schools today are still based on specialization, rules and procedures, and impersonality.

The 1954 classroom on the left clearly reflects the traditional mass production approach to education. Recently, as seen in the photo at the right, there has been more of an attempt to personalize education.
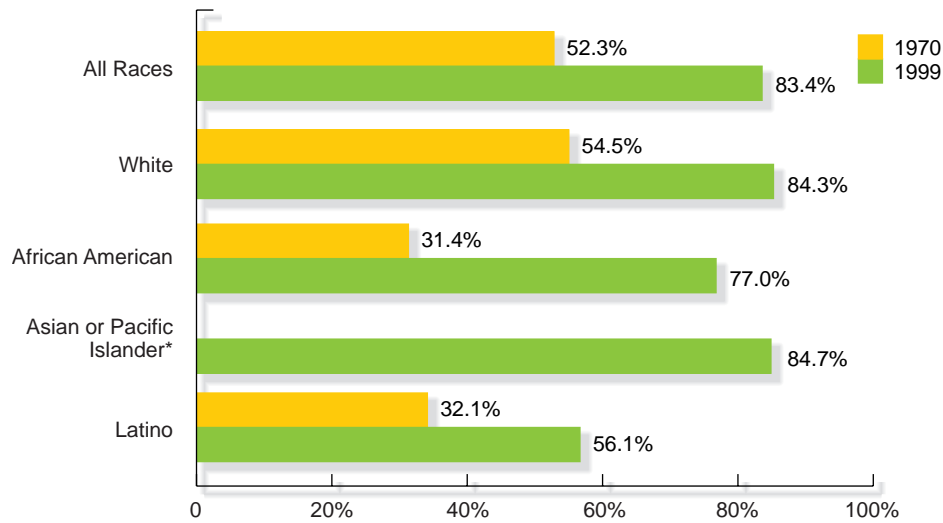
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Figure 12.1 High School Graduates by Race (1970 and 1999). *Displayed in this figure are the percentages, by racial and ethnic category, of persons 25 years old and older who have completed high school. Note that the proportion of high school graduates in each group has increased sharply between 1970 and 1999. As a result, each of these groups is placing more pressure on public schools to accommodate their members.*

*Note: No data available for Asian or Pacific Islander for 1970.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2001.*

Why should schools be standardized? For administrators, there are many advantages to following a bureaucratic model. For instance, in the discussion of formal organizations in Chapter 6, you read that one of the characteristics of a bureaucracy is the tendency to specialize. Professional educators are specialists—administrators, classroom teachers, librarians, curriculum specialists who decide on courses and content, and so forth.

In the bureaucratic model, education can be accomplished most efficiently for large numbers of students when they are at similar stages in their ability and development. (There were, in fact, approximately 60 million students in the public school system in 2000. Figure 12.1 shows the increasing percentage of young people from all races and ethnic groups who are completing high school.) In this way, a teacher can develop one lesson plan for a number of students. Age-based classrooms, in which all students receive the same instruction, reflect the impersonal, bureaucratic nature of schools.

Efficiency, the ultimate goal of a bureaucracy, is also increased when teachers teach the same, or at least similar, content. Materials can be approved and purchased in bulk, and testing can be standardized. This practice also allows students to transfer from one school to another and continue studying approximately the same things. Rules and procedures exist to ensure that all of this happens.

Schools are also part of a much larger bureaucratic system. This system begins with the federal government and progresses layer by layer through state and local governments. (See page 191 in Chapter 6 for an organizational chart of a public school district.)

> Bureaucracy is a challenge to be confronted with a righteous attitude, a tolerance for stupidity, and a bulldozer when necessary.
>
> **Anonymous**

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What do critics of the bureaucratic model say?   Critics claim that the old factory, or bureaucratic, model is not appropriate for schooling. Children, they point out, are not inorganic materials to be processed on an assembly line. Children are human beings who come into school with previous knowledge and who interact socially and emotionally with other students. According to critics of **formal schooling,** education that is provided and regulated by society, the school's bureaucratic nature is unable to respond to the expressive, creative, and emotional needs of all children. These critics prefer several less rigid, more democratic alternatives.

formal schooling
education that is provided and regulated by society

Democratic Reforms in the Classroom

Since colonial times, providing citizens with a good education has been an important value in the United States. The Puritans in Massachusetts in 1647 required towns with more than fifty families to hire a schoolmaster. The Land Ordinance of 1785 required that some of the income from land north of the Ohio River be used to support public schools. The first public schools were quite authoritarian, with firm rules and sharp lines drawn between students and teacher.

The American progressive education movement of the 1920s and 1930s was a reaction to the strict Victorian authoritarianism of early nineteenth-century schools. Educational philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952) led the progressive education movement, which emphasized knowledge related to work and to individual student interests. The progressive movement, with its child-centered focus, almost disappeared in the 1950s but reappeared in the 1960s as the humanistic movement. The humanistic movement supported the elimination of restrictive rules and codes and the involvement of students in the educational process. The aim of the humanistic movement was to create a more democratic, student-focused learning environment (Ballantine, 1993). It has proven to be an influential forerunner of classroom reform. Three ways to express the humanistic educational impulse are the *open classroom, cooperative learning,* and the *integrative curriculum.*

Working cooperatively in groups is one of the more democratic school reforms of the twentieth century.

open classroom
a nonbureaucratic approach to education based on democracy, flexibility, and noncompetitiveness

What is the open classroom?   The **open classroom** is a nonbureaucratic approach to education based on democratic relationships, flexibility, and noncompetitiveness. Here educators avoid the sharp authoritarian line traditionally drawn between teachers and students. The open classroom drops the idea that all children of a given age should follow a standardized curriculum. On the belief that competition is not a good motivator for children, the open classroom abandons the use of graded report cards based on comparison of student performance.

The open classroom, introduced in the 1960s, has resurfaced in the 1990s. Cooperative learning and the integrative curriculum are two important extensions of the open-classroom approach.

What is cooperative learning? **Cooperative learning** takes place in a nonbureaucratic classroom structure in which students study in groups, with teachers as guides rather than as the controlling agents (the "guide on the side" versus the "sage on the stage" approach). According to the cooperative learning method, students learn more if they are actively involved with others in the classroom (Sizer, 1996). The traditional teacher-centered approach rewards students for being passive recipients of information and requires them to compete with others for grades and teacher recognition. Cooperative learning, with its accent on teamwork rather than individual performance, is designed to encourage students to concentrate more on the process of getting results than how their answers compare to those of other students. Cooperation replaces competition. Students typically work in small groups on specific tasks. Credit for completion of a task is given only if all group members do their parts.

Using this approach successfully requires some expertise on the part of the teacher and can initially discourage students who are motivated by letter grades based on individual work. Nevertheless, some benefits of the cooperative learning approach have been documented (Children's Defense Fund, 1991). For example,

❖ uncooperativeness and stress among students is reduced.
❖ academic performance increases.
❖ students have more positive attitudes toward school.
❖ racial and ethnic antagonism decreases.
❖ self-esteem increases.

cooperative learning
instructional method that relies on cooperation among students

What is the integrative curriculum? As you have seen, the curriculum is predetermined for students in the traditional classroom. In the **integrative curriculum,** however, the curriculum is created by students and teachers working together. Since students are asked to participate in curriculum design and content, the integrative curriculum is democratic in nature. Giving students such power obviously deviates from the traditional subject-centered curriculum. Students and teachers become collaborators (Barr, 1995).

Subject matter is selected and organized around certain real-world themes or concepts. An example is a sixth-grade unit of study on water quality in Washington State.

integrative curriculum
an approach to education based on student-teacher collaboration

In an integrative curriculum, students apply teachings from many disciplines at the same time. Students shown here are on a field trip to explore mineral production in a local community.

Another Time

Understanding Freedom and Education in America

One hundred years ago, Russian immigrant Marie Antin wrote about her first days at school in the United States. Reading about her reactions might make Americans more appreciative of the public school system they often criticize.

Education was free. That subject my father had written about repeatedly, as comprising his chief hope for us children, the essence of American opportunity, the treasure that no thief could touch, not even misfortune or poverty. It was the one thing that he was able to promise us when he sent for us; surer, safer, than bread or shelter.

In the past, schools played an important role in transmitting American culture to many immigrant children. Are schools today still carrying on that function?

On our second day I was thrilled with the realization of what this freedom of education meant. A little girl from across the alley came and offered to conduct us to school. My father was out, but we five between us had a few words of English by this time. We knew the word school. We understood. This child, who had never seen us till yesterday, who could not pronounce our names, who was not much better dressed than we, was able to offer us the freedom of the schools of Boston! No application made, no question asked, no examinations, rulings, exclusions; no machinations, no fees. The doors stood open for every one of us. The smallest child could show us the way.

This incident impressed me more than anything I had heard in advance of the freedom of education in America. It was a concrete proof—almost the thing itself. One had to experience it to understand it.

Source: Excerpted from Marie Antin, *The Promised Land* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912).

Thinking It Over

1. Describe your thoughts and feelings about your school experiences as you think about Antin's perspective.

2. Do you agree with the author that education is the chief hope for children? Explain.

The unit became a part of an actual water quality project that originated in the Great Lakes region of the United States but now spans the globe. Lessons were organized around the actual work of determining water quality in Puget Sound. These lessons culminated in students' reporting to community groups about the quality of the water. In this way learning was relevant to a real-world problem that the students contributed to solving (Simmons and El-Hindi, 1998:33).

Instruction in this unit emphasized hands-on experience and utilized the multiple intelligences of various students. The latter idea recognizes that not all students in a classroom learn in identical ways. Students bring to any unit of study a variety of learning styles, interests, and abilities. Different units of study will engage students in varying ways.

Back-to-Basics Movement

In the 1990s, the "back-to-basics" movement emerged alongside cooperative learning and the integrative curriculum. Worried by low scores on achievement tests, supporters of this movement pushed for a return to a traditional curriculum ("reading, writing, and arithmetic") based on more bureaucratic methods.

What started the back-to-basics movement? In 1983, America received an educational wake-up call. The National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report dramatically entitled *A Nation at Risk.* Catching the attention of politicians and the general public, it warned of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in America's schools. Because of deficiencies in its educational system, the report claimed, America was at risk of being overtaken by some of its world economic competitors (Gardner, 1983).

Unlike the recommendations of the progressive and humanistic reform movements, most of the solutions offered by the commission were bureaucratic in nature. The report urged a return to more teaching of basic skills such as reading and mathematics. High school graduation requirements should be strengthened to include four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and a half year of computer science. School days, the school year, or both should be lengthened. Standardized achievement tests should be administered as students move from one level of schooling to another. High school students should be given significantly more homework. Discipline should be tightened through the development and enforcement of codes for student conduct.

voucher system
system in which public school funds may be used to support public, private, or religious schools

Alternatives to the Public School System

The debate over the most effective classroom methods continues. Meanwhile, educators and politicians are looking beyond the classroom to how schools are organized, funded, and administered. A new debate has arisen over school choice. The school choice movement promotes the idea that the best way to improve schools is by using the free enterprise model and creating some competition for the public school system. Supporters of school choice believe that parents and students should be able to select the school that best fits their needs and provides the greatest educational benefit. Methods used to accomplish this goal include the *voucher system, charter schools, magnet,* and *for-profit* schools.

What is a voucher system? People in favor of a **voucher system** say that the government should make the money spent per child on public education available to families to use for public, private, or religious schools. Families who chose a public school would pay nothing, just as in the current system. Parents who chose a religious or other private school would receive a government voucher to be used to pay a portion of the tuition equal to the amount the government spends per child in the public school system. Any additional tuition would be paid by the parents. A voucher plan in Cleveland, for example, provided publicly funded scholarships of

This charter school in Harlem is one alternative to the public school system.

about $2,000 annually to around four thousand city children in the 2001 school year. Most parents have chosen to spend the money at private schools rather than keep their children in public schools. The basic idea is that public schools would have to compete for the students and thus would improve their services. If parents were not happy with a school, they would have the freedom to remove their children and place them elsewhere.

Public reaction to the voucher approach has been mixed. So far, public vouchers affect only about one-tenth of 1 percent of American school children. Large-scale public programs exist in only two cities—Cleveland and Milwaukee. In 1999, Florida initiated the first statewide public voucher program. African American and Latino parents tend to prefer a voucher system because it provides some financial help to remove their children from public schools that they believe have let their children down. Because most whites seem to be satisfied with the public schools, they have not embraced the voucher system in large numbers (Thomas and Clemetson, 1999).

Courts have generally treated voucher systems as unconstitutional because they may contradict the principle of separation of church and state. On the other hand, in 1998 the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a ruling by the Wisconsin Supreme Court that allowed state money to go to low-income students for either private or parochial education schools. As of early 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court has not ruled directly on the constitutionality of school vouchers, but some state and federal judges have. Vouchers have been declared unconstitutional by lower court judges in Florida, Ohio, Vermont, Maine, and Pennsylvania. The Supreme Court is expected to rule on this issue before the end of 2002.

Up to now the evidence on the effectiveness of the voucher system is inconsistent. Although compared to public schools, some voucher programs have improved student test scores, other programs have produced no improvement (Toch and Cohen, 1998).

Critics fear that if this system were implemented, inner-city schools would suffer even more, since few inner-city parents could afford to make up the difference between the amount of the voucher and the cost of the highest-quality private schools. They also fear that national and local commitment to public education would decline, leaving the public school system in worse shape than it is now. Furthermore, the need to regulate private and religious schools would increase bureaucracy.

What are charter schools and magnet schools?

Charter schools are publicly funded schools operated like private schools by public school teachers and administrators. Freed of answering to local school boards, charter schools have the latitude to shape their own curriculum and to use non-traditional or traditional teaching methods.

The Mosaica Academy (now called School Lane), which opened in 1998 in Pennsylvania, is deliberately not organized along public school lines. The school day is about two hours longer than at public school and the school year is also longer. This school created its own curriculum with the goal of immersing students in the development of civilizations over 4,000 years (Symonds, 2000). In 2002 there were approximately 2,400 charter schools across the United States. The success of these schools is tied to the commitment of the teachers, principals, and parents.

Magnet schools are public schools that attempt to achieve high standards by specializing in a certain area. One school may emphasize the

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Education makes people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave.

Lord Brougham
Scottish statesman

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charter schools
public schools that are operated like private schools by public school teachers and administrators

magnet schools
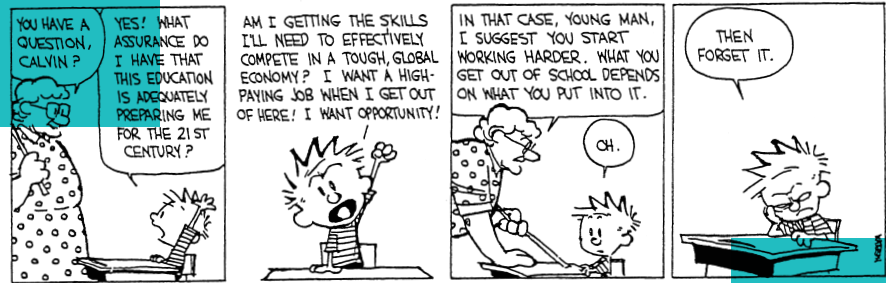public schools that focus on particular disciplines or areas, such as fine arts or science

performing arts while another might stress science. Magnet schools are designed to enhance school quality and to promote desegregation. They have become a significant factor in improving urban education.

Calvin expects to reap the rewards of education, but has a problem with the effort of getting educated.

What is the nature of for-profit schools?   Some reformers do not believe local or federal government is capable of improving the educational system. Government, they say, is too wasteful and ineffective. Why not look to business and market forces to solve the problems facing schools today? **For-profit schools** would be supported by government funds but run by private companies. By borrowing from modern business practices, the argument goes, these schools could be efficient, productive, and cost effective. Marketplace forces would ensure that the best schools will survive.

for-profit schools
schools run by private companies on government funds

The most comprehensive for-profit organization is Edison, which launched a $40-million, three-year campaign in 1992 to develop its program. Edison schools feature challenging curriculums, along with a schedule that has children in school almost a third longer than the average public school. Beginning in the third grade, students are equipped with a computer and modem to take home, in order to access Edison's intranet system (Symonds, 2000).

Critics of this approach are bothered by the idea of mixing profit and public service. What would happen to the students when their needs were weighed against the profit margin? Would for-profit schools skimp on equipment, services, and training? Another problem involves oversight. That is, with a for-profit system, voters would lose the power to influence officials and educational policy.

Section 1 Assessment

1. State three ways in which schools in the United States follow the bureaucratic model.
2. Identify three specific types of reform in public education.

Critical Thinking

3. **Analyzing Information**   Explain why such reforms as open classrooms and integrative learning are characterized as more democratic than the traditional or bureaucratic approach.
4. **Summarizing Information**   First briefly summarize the ideas about school choice presented in this section. Then evaluate them. Do you favor one approach over another? Give reasons for your choice.

Functionalist Perspective

Key Terms

- manifest function
- latent function
- tracking

Section Preview

Functionalists see the emergence of the educational institution as a response to society's needs. The manifest functions of education include transmission of culture, creation of a common identity, selection and screening of talent, and promotion of personal growth and development. Schools also serve latent functions.

manifest function
an action that produces an intended and recognized result

latent function
an action that produces an unintended and unrecognized result

Manifest Functions of Education

According to the functionalists, social institutions develop because they meet one or more of society's basic needs. Functionalists distinguish between a **manifest function,** which is an intended and recognized result, and a **latent function,** which is an unintended and unrecognized result. (Refer to page 26 to review the meanings of these terms.) The educational institution performs several vital manifest functions in modern society. Schools teach obvious academic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics. They also transmit culture, create a common identity for members of society, select and screen talent, and promote personal growth and development. Let's look more closely at each of these functions.

How do schools transmit culture?   Schools transmit culture by instilling in students the basic values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes of the society. The value of competition, for example, is taught through emphasis on grades, sports, and school spirit. Teaching the culture is absolutely essential if a society is to survive from one generation to the next.

Is the teacher lecturing to these students fulfilling a manifest or latent function?

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World View

Illiteracy Rates

One of the functions of education is to promote literacy—the key to continued learning, problem solving, and information analysis. This map shows rates of illiteracy among persons fifteen years of age and older in various countries of the world. Because of cultural norms and discrimination, more women than men are illiterate.

Illiteracy Rates Among People 15 Years and Older

■	> 70%
■	51%–70%
■	31%–50%
■	11%–30%
■	≤ 10%
■	No data
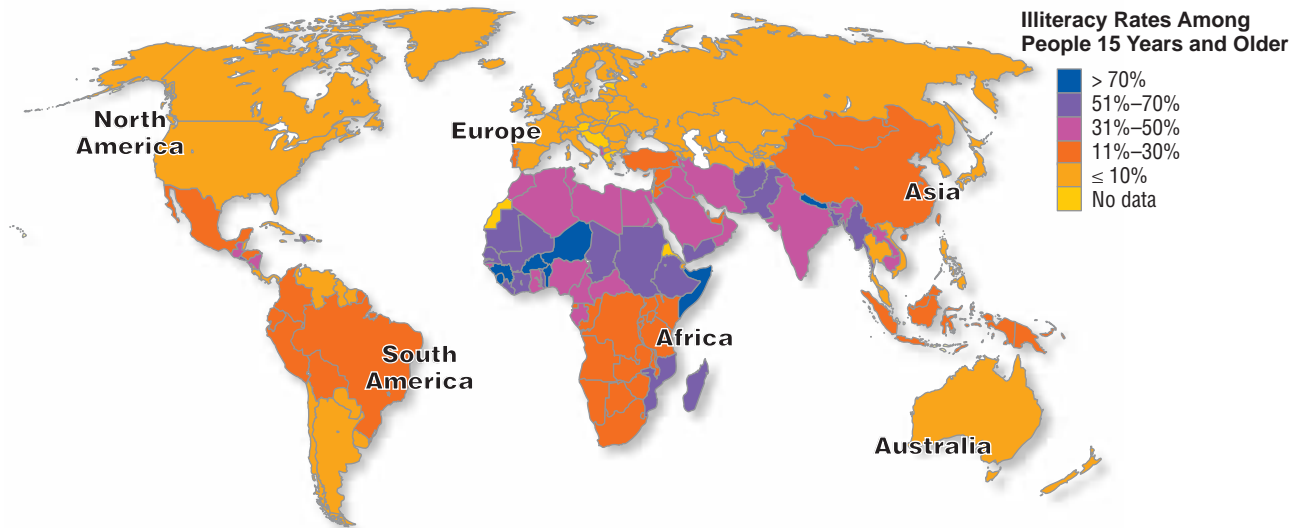
Interpreting the Map

1. Do you see a pattern in the rates of illiteracy? Explain.
2. How does the United States measure up?

Adapted from *The State of the World Atlas,* 6th ed.

How do schools help create a common identity?

Although television is now a strong competitor, the educational system remains the major force in creating a common identity among a diverse population. Learning an official language, sharing in national history and patriotic themes, and being exposed to similar informational materials promote a shared identity. The result is a society with homogeneous values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes. Schools in the United States contribute to this process. By attending local schools, newly arrived immigrant children, without the ability to speak and write English, soon learn to participate in the American way of life.

The current debate in the United States over bilingual education touches on the role that schools play in creating a common identity. People who emphasize recognizing and honoring cultural diversity usually support teaching in the student's own language, at least for some period of time. Opponents of bilingual education argue that bilingual education hinders the development of a common American identity and has not been proven to help students

> Education has in America's whole history been the major hope for improving the individual and society.
>
> **Gunnar Myrdal**
> **Swedish economist**

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succeed academically. Conservative political efforts have led twenty-four states to adopt English as their official language. The creation of a similar law for the nation is being discussed in Congress.

How do schools select and screen students?   For over fifty years, scores on intelligence and achievement tests have been used for grouping children in school. The stated purpose of testing is to identify an individual's talents and aptitudes. Test scores have also been used for **tracking**—placing students in curricula consistent with expectations for the students' eventual occupations. (Tracking is discussed further in Section 3 when we look at inequalities in education.) Counselors use test scores and early performance records to predict careers for which individuals may be best suited.

tracking
placement of students in programs according to academic ability levels

How do schools promote personal growth and development? Schools expose students to a wide variety of perspectives and experiences that encourage them to develop creativity, verbal skills, artistic expression, intellectual accomplishment, and cultural tolerance. In this way, education provides an environment in which individuals can improve the quality of their lives. In addition, schools attempt to prepare students for the world of work.

Latent Functions of Education

The educational institution has latent functions as well. Some are positive; others are not. Educators do not usually think of schools as day-care facilities for dual-employed couples or single parents. Nor do parents vote for additional school taxes so that their sons and daughters can find dates or marriage partners. Also, schools are not consciously designed to prevent delinquency by holding juveniles indoors during the daytime. Nor are schools intended as training grounds for athletes. Nonetheless, all of these activities are latent functions of the school system.

Each of the latent functions just mentioned is considered a positive contribution to society. But some consequences are negative, or dysfunctional. Tracking, for example, can perpetuate an unequal social-class structure from generation to generation. In addition, evidence suggests that tracking is harmful to those placed on "slower" tracks (Hurn, 1993).

Do you consider the opportunity to flirt a positive or negative latent function of schools?

Section 2 Assessment

1. List the essential functions of education described in the text.
2. What is the difference between a manifest and a latent function in education?
3. What type of function do schools perform when they keep children for their working parents?

Critical Thinking

4. **Making Comparisons** What do you think is the most significant latent function schools perform? Consider the advantages and disadvantages.

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Sociology Today

Educating Yourself for the Future

By the time you graduate from high school, the competition for well-paying entry-level jobs will be stiffer than ever before. Here are some tips to keep you in demand—whether you are college bound or going directly into the job market.

Career counselors urge job seekers to think in terms of *lifelong learning*. Never think of your education as coming to an end. The excerpt below is as true today as it was a generation ago.

For education the lesson is clear: its prime objective must be to increase the individual's "cope-ability"—the speed and economy with which he can adapt to continual change. . . . It is not even enough for him to understand the present, for the here-and-now environment will soon vanish. Johnny must learn to anticipate the directions and rate of change. He must, to put it technically, learn to make repeated, probabilistic, increasingly long-range assumptions about the future (Toffler, 1970:403).

Preparation for the future involves attempting to predict the future demand for particular occupations. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook for College Graduates* can be very helpful in this regard. Each year in these volumes, the U.S. Department of Labor publishes detailed predictions for specific occupations.

Educating yourself for the future also means being prepared to enter an occupation for which you have no specific training. You must remain willing to retrain and to enter an entirely new occupation—for example, to move from bank teller to computer programmer.

In spite of the fact that you will probably change occupations over the course of your work life, you should try to determine your true job preference before you spend a great deal of time learning a job that turns out not to be the one you want. Over half of all young people entering a chosen field quit their jobs within one year. This fact has led some observers to argue that few young people really understand the nature of the work for which they are preparing. How do you find out what jobs you would really enjoy? Volunteering time in a specific work situation can help. For example, hospitals usually have volunteer programs in which medical practitioners can be observed. If you think you would like to be a physician, nurse, or other health-care worker, get involved in one of these programs. You will not only help others but will help yourself, as well.

Finally, educating yourself for the future includes preparing for leisure choices. Careers have become so specialized that they satisfy only a small part of people's interests. Many high schools, colleges, and universities sponsor noncredit courses and seminars on such topics as personal development, photography, fine arts, and alternative lifestyles. These courses permit you to either pursue long-standing interests or develop new ones.

Doing Sociology

Make an informal survey of as many working adults as possible. Ask them what additional training, if any, they have undergone since taking their first jobs. Then ask them what plans they have for future training. Summarize your results, and bring the report to class to share.

Conflict Perspective

Key Terms

- meritocracy
- competition
- educational equality
- cognitive ability
- cultural bias
- school desegregation
- multicultural education
- compensatory education

Section Preview

In theory, America is a meritocracy in which social status is achieved. Proponents of the conflict perspective identify flaws in this model by pointing to inequality in our schools. Methods and programs aimed at promoting educational equality have been developed.

meritocracy
a society in which social status is based on ability and achievement

competition
system in which rewards are based on relative performance

Participating in academic contests, such as building rockets, is one way teachers can find those students who merit special recognition.

Meritocracy

Conflict theorists attempt to show that popular conceptions about the relationship between schools and society are not entirely accurate. Schools and society often touch each other in complicated and unobvious ways.

In a **meritocracy,** social status is based on ability and achievement rather than social-class background or parental status. In theory, all individuals in a meritocracy have an equal chance to develop their abilities for the benefit of themselves and their society. A meritocracy, then, gives everyone an equal chance to succeed. It is free of barriers that prevent individuals from developing their talents.

Meritocracy is based on competition. For this reason, sport is seen as the ultimate meritocracy. Although some sports have glaring shortcomings in this regard (see Chapter 15), sport does fit very closely with the definition of competition. For sociologists, **competition** is a social process that occurs when rewards are given to people on the basis of how their performance compares with the performance of others doing the same task or participating in the same event (Coakley, 1998).

Is America really a meritocracy? Although America claims to be a meritocracy, sociologists have identified barriers to true merit-based achievement, such as gender, race, and ethnicity. An example (greatly simplified) is how the edu-

cation system favors the wealthy. Schools in wealthy neighborhoods are significantly better than schools in economically disadvantaged areas. It follows, then, that students attending wealthier schools get a better education than students attending poorer schools. Furthermore, students attending poorer schools do not learn the values, manners, language, and dress of people in more affluent schools. Because the majority of students in poorer schools are members of racial and ethnic minorities, they find themselves at a disadvantage when applying for higher-level jobs that lead to higher incomes. (See Figure 12.2.)

How do minorities perform on college entrance exams? There are related barriers to achievement faced by racial and ethnic minorities. An important one of these is lower performance on college entrance examinations. African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have lower average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than whites. (See Figure 12.3 on page 402.) Sociologists attribute this fact, in part, to the differences in school quality noted above. And both school quality and SAT performance are related to social class. Children from upper-class and upper-middle-class families attend more affluent schools. These children also have higher SAT scores. Social class clearly affects SAT performance.
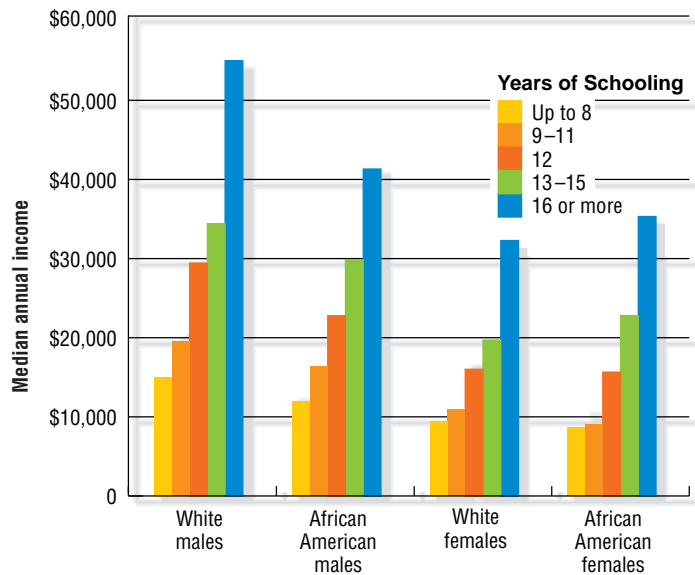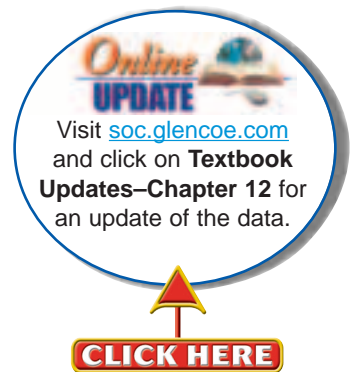

Figure 12.2 Median Annual Income by Gender, Race, and Education. *Clearly, this graph documents the income advantage that white males in the U.S. have over white females and African Americans of both sexes. Explain how this data challenges the existence of a true meritocracy.*

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Income 2000.*

Social class is a strong predictor of success on the SATs. How is race related to social class?

Figure 12.3 SAT SCORES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

An examination of this table reveals the gap in average SAT scores for whites and Asian Americans versus African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. Interpret these data as a conflict theorist would in the context of the U.S. as a meritocracy.

Racial/Ethnic Category	SAT Verbal Mean Scores	SAT Math Mean Scores	Totals
Native American or Alaskan Native	482	481	963
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	499	565	1064
African American	434	426	860
Latino Background			
Mexican or Mexican American	453	460	913
Puerto Rican	456	451	907
Latin American, South American, Central American, or Other Latino	461	467	928
White (excluding Latino origin)	528	530	1058

Source: The College Board, 2001.

Why are SAT scores considered vital to a meritocratic American society?

How do SAT scores influence economic achievement?
The SAT, created in 1926, was originally used to identify talented youth, regardless of social class background, so they could attend elite colleges and universities (Lemann, 1991). Ironically, as we have just seen, social class is a major factor in SAT performance. Consequently, social class (through SAT performance) still influences who will attend the institutions that are the gateway to America's higher social classes.

Don't the rewards tied to high SAT scores mean that America is a meritocracy?
On the surface it does seem that merit is being rewarded in the system just outlined. After all, it is those who do better academically who enjoy higher levels of success.

There are two problems with this conclusion. The first is the advantage some people have because their parents' social class creates an unlevel playing field. Talent in the lower social classes often does not get recognized and developed. Second is the assumption that SAT performance measures academic ability and the likelihood of success in both college and life. For example, African American students who attend the most prestigious schools—including those students with lower SAT scores (below 1000)—complete college at

a higher rate than black students attending less rigorous institutions. They are also more likely to go on to graduate or professional schools (Bowen and Bok, 2000). Apparently these students are succeeding because they attended better schools, even if they don't have high SAT scores.

At the least, these findings raise doubts about the ability of the SAT to achieve a level playing field. Recognizing this, an official at the Educational Testing Service (ETS)—developer and marketer of the SAT—announced in 1999 that ETS was creating a "strivers" score. The idea was to adjust a student's SAT score to factor in social class as well as racial and ethnic characteristics thought to place him or her at a competitive disadvantage. Any student whose original score exceeded by 200 points the score predicted for their social class, racial, or ethnic category would be considered a "striver." The strivers score would be made available to colleges and universities to use, if they desired, in their admissions decisions (Glazer, 1999; Wildavsky, 1999). The proposal was quickly withdrawn after a firestorm of criticism from both privileged and disadvantaged sources.

> It is no longer correct to regard higher education solely as a privilege. It is a basic right in today's world.
>
> **Norman Cousins**
> **American essayist**

Equality and Inequality in Education

The situation for those disadvantaged by social class, racial, and ethnic background is actually even more complicated. As already implied, it is tied to the larger issue of educational equality and inequality. **Educational equality** exists when schooling produces the same results, in terms of achievement and attitudes, for lower-class and minority children as it does for less disadvantaged children. Results, not resources, are the test of educational equality (Coleman et al., 1966).

educational equality condition in which schooling produces the same results for lower-class and minority children as it does for other children

Do schools provide educational equality? Research has shown that even the best teachers often evaluate students on the basis of their social class and their racial and ethnic characteristics. This tendency to judge students on nonacademic criteria is especially apparent in the practice of tracking. Researchers report that social class and race heavily influence student placement in college preparatory, vocational, or basic tracks regardless of their intelligence or past academic achievement (Oakes and Lipton, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997). Once students are placed, their grades and test scores are

*Would you expect to find educational equality in these two schools?*

Snapshot of America

School Expenditures

Everyone has heard "You get what you pay for." Because of this idea, many people use the amount of money spent on public schools as a measure of the quality of education. The accompanying map shows that some states spend more than twice as much per student as other states.

District of Columbia
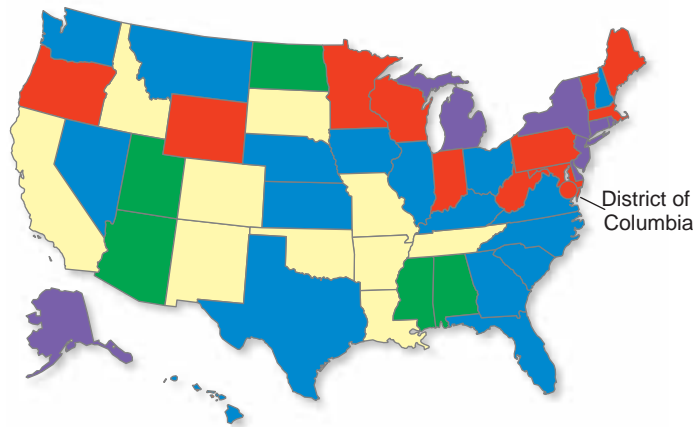
Public School Expenditures Per Pupil, 1999–2000

- More than $8,000
- $7,000–$7,999
- $6,000–$6,999
- $5,000–$5,999
- $4,000–$4,999

Interpreting the Map

1. How does your state compare with other states in school expenditures?
2. Do you see a regional pattern in public school funding? Explain.
3. What other factors might you want to know to determine if the amount of money spent affected the quality of education delivered?

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

influenced more by the track they are on than by their current performance. Regardless of earlier school performance or intelligence, the academic performance of college-bound students increases, whereas the performance of those on a noncollege track decreases. In other words, schools are not successfully providing educational equality for their students.

Cognitive Ability

cognitive ability
capacity for thinking abstractly

The technical term for intelligence is **cognitive ability**—the capacity for thinking abstractly. Dating back to the turn of the twentieth century, there has been a tradition in schools to attempt to measure cognitive ability.

Because cognitive ability testing is an important element in sorting and tracking students, it contributes to educational inequality. Whenever cognitive ability tests are discussed, the question of inherited intelligence always arises.

Is intelligence inherited? In the past, some people assumed that individual and group differences in measured intellectual ability were due to genetic differences. This assumption, of course, underlies Social Darwinism. (See pages 15–16 for a brief explanation of these assumptions.)

A few researchers still take this viewpoint. More than thirty years ago Arthur Jensen (1969), an educational psychologist, contended that the lower average intelligence score among African American children may be due to heredity. A recent book by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994), entitled *The Bell Curve,* is also in the tradition of linking intelligence to heredity. According to these authors, humans inherit 60 to 70 percent of their intelligence level. Herrnstein and Murray further contend that the fact of inherited intelligence makes largely futile the efforts to help the disadvantaged through programs such as Head Start and affirmative action.

What are arguments against the inherited intelligence theory? Most social scientists oppose the genetic explanation of intelligence differences between races because it fails to consider the effects of the social, psychological, and economic environment on intelligence. Even those social scientists who believe that genetics plays an important role in intelligence criticize both the interpretations of the evidence and the public policy conclusions contained in *The Bell Curve.* They point to the body of research that runs counter to Herrnstein's and Murray's thesis. More specifically, they see intelligence not as an issue of nature *versus* nurture but as a matter of genetics *and* environment (Morganthau, 1994; Wright, 1996). We know, for example, that city dwellers usually score higher on intelligence tests than do people in rural areas, that higher-status African Americans score higher than lower-status African Americans, and that middle-class African American children score about as high as middle-class white children. We also have discovered that as people get older, they usually score higher on intelligence tests. These findings, and others like them, have led researchers to conclude that environmental factors affected test performance at least as much as genetic factors (Samuda, 1975; Schiff and Lewontin, 1987; Jencks and Phillips, 1998). One of these environmental factors is a *cultural bias* in the measurement of cognitive ability.

What are culturally biased intelligence tests? Many early social scientists have argued that intelligence tests have a **cultural bias**—that is, the wording used in questions may be more familiar to people of one social group than to those of another group. Tests with cultural bias unfairly measure the cognitive abilities of people in some social categories. Specifically, intelligence tests are said to be culturally biased because they are designed for middle-class children. The tests measure learning and environment as much as intellectual ability. Consider this intelligence test item cited by Daniel Levine and Rayna Levine:

A symphony is to a composer as a book is to what?

a. paper
b. a musician
c. a sculptor
d. a man
e. an author

According to critics, higher-income children find this question easier to answer correctly than lower-income children because they are more likely to have been exposed to information about classical music. The same charge was made by critics of a recent SAT question that used a Bentley (a luxury-model

Do you think heredity or environment will have a greater effect on these boys' intelligence?

cultural bias
the unfair measurement of the cognitive abilities of people in some social categories

automobile) as its illustration. Several studies have indicated that because most intelligence tests assume fluency in English, minorities cannot do as well on intelligence tests. Some researchers have suggested that many urban African American students are superior to their white classmates on several dimensions of verbal capacity, but this ability is not recognized, because intelligence tests do not measure those specific areas (Gould, 1981; Goleman, 1988; Hurn, 1993).

Some researchers have shown that the testing situation itself affects performance. Low-income and minority students, for example, score higher on intelligence tests when tested by adult members of their own race or income group. Apparently children can feel threatened when tested in a strange environment by someone dissimilar to them. Middle-class children are frequently eager to take the tests because they have been taught the importance both of test results and of academic competitiveness. Because low-income children do not recognize the importance of tests and have not been taught to be academically competitive, they ignore some of the questions or look for something more interesting to do. Other researchers report that nutrition seems to play a role in test performance. Low-income children with poor diets may do less than their best when they are hungry or when they lack particular types of food over long periods of time.

school desegregation
the achievement of a racial balance in the classroom

Promoting Educational Equality

Although it is difficult to completely overcome the barriers of economic and social class, policy makers and educators are exploring ways to promote educational equality. Two methods are *school desegregation* and *compensatory education.*

The governor of Nebraska, Mike Johanns, is part of a program to educate school students on the culture of minority groups in their state.

Does desegregation always promote equality?   In this discussion, **school desegregation** refers to the achievement of a racial balance in the classroom. Desegregated classrooms can have either positive or negative effects on the academic achievement of minority children. Mere physical desegregation without adequate support may actually harm both white and African American children. However, desegregated classrooms with an atmosphere of respect and acceptance improve academic performance (Orfield et al., 1992).

Minority students who attend desegregated public schools get better jobs and earn higher incomes than minority students who attend segregated schools. The formal education they receive is only part of the reason. Middle-class students become models for the behavior, dress, and language often required by employers in the middle-class hiring world.

In addition, exposure to people of different backgrounds can lead to better racial and ethnic relations (Hawley and Smylie, 1988). On this evidence rests the promise of **multicultural education**—an educational curriculum that accents the viewpoints, experiences, and contributions of minorities (women as well as ethnic and racial minorities).

> **multicultural education**
> an educational curriculum that emphasizes differences among gender, ethnic, and racial categories

What is the purpose of multicultural education? Among minorities, school attendance and academic performance appear to increase with multicultural education. Multicultural education attempts to dispel stereotypes and to make the traditions of minorities valuable assets for the broader culture (McLaren, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Multicultural education has its critics, however. According to some opponents, encouraging people to think of themselves as culturally separate and unique divides rather than unites American society. Some critics point to instances in which multicultural programs, such as African American studies programs, actually promote feelings of racial separation in schools.

Does compensatory education work? The term **compensatory education** refers to specific curricular programs designed to overcome deficiency. Special compensatory programs provided during early childhood, it appears, can improve the school achievement of disadvantaged children (Zigler and Styfco, 1993; Campbell and Ramey, 1994).

> **compensatory education**
> specific curricular programs designed to overcome a deficiency

The best-known attempt at compensatory education is Head Start. This federally supported program prepares disadvantaged preschoolers for public school. Its goal is to provide disadvantaged children an equal opportunity to develop their potential. Follow-up studies report positive long-term results. Low-income youngsters between the ages of nine and nineteen who had been in preschool compensatory programs performed better in school. They had higher achievement test scores and were more motivated academically than low-income youths who had not been in compensatory education programs (Bruner, 1982; Etzioni, 1982). Later research also supports the benefits of Head Start (Mills, 1998). For example, compared to their peers, a group of children who scored lower on intelligence tests when they entered a Head Start program later had better school attendance, completed high school at a higher rate, and entered the workforce in greater proportion.

Section 3 Assessment

1. Do you think the United States is a meritocracy, as stated in the text?
2. What is meant by the term *educational equality?*
3. What role conflicts does multicultural education pose for teachers?

Critical Thinking

4. **Finding the Main Idea** Students from higher social classes are more likely to go to college than students from the lower classes. How does this fit with the idea of meritocracy?
5. **Evaluating Information** If schools fail to provide educational quality, what do you think will be the consequences in terms of role conflict?

> "
> Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.
>
> **B.F. Skinner**
> **American psychologist**
> "

Tech Trends

School's Out . . . Forever?

In a recent book, *The Age of Spiritual Machines,* author Ray Kurzweil makes forecasts concerning life in the twenty-first century. He claims that, by the end of the century, computers will be the most intelligent "beings" on the planet. Specific predictions on education in 2009 include the following scenarios.

The majority of reading is done on displays, although the "installed base" of paper documents is still formidable. The generation of paper documents is dwindling, however, as the books and other papers of largely twentieth-century vintage are being rapidly scanned and stored. Documents circa 2009 routinely include embedded moving images and sounds.

Students of all ages typically have a computer of their own, which is a thin tabletlike device weighing under a pound with a very high resolution display suitable for reading. Students interact with their computers primarily by voice and by pointing with a device that looks like a pencil. Keyboards still exist, but most textual language is created by speaking. Learning materials are accessed through wireless communication.

Preschool and elementary school children routinely read at their intellectual level using print-to-speech reading software until their reading skill level catches up. These print-to-speech reading systems display the full image of documents, and can read the print aloud while highlighting what is being read. Synthetic voices sound fully human. Although some educators expressed concern in the early '00 years that students would rely unduly on reading software, such systems have been readily accepted by children and their parents. Studies have shown that students improve their reading skills by being exposed to synchronized visual and auditory presentations of text.

Learning at a distance (for example, lectures and seminars in which the participants are geographically scattered) is commonplace. This also helps to relieve congested campuses and cut back on the burning of gasoline in city limits.

Technology is changing the face of education in this country. Some futurists predict that distance learning technology may eventually replace the traditional school building.

Analyzing the Trends

1. If Kurzweil's predictions came true, how would education's role in the socialization of students change?
2. If Kurzweil's predictions came true, would social stratification play a more or less important role in education than it does now? Use information from the chapter to support your answer.
3. If the predictions in the article came to pass, would we still need schools? Why or why not?

Symbolic Interactionism

K e y   T e r m s

- **hidden curriculum**
- **self-fulfilling prophecy**

The Hidden Curriculum

Symbolic interactionists are very interested in how schools transmit culture through the socialization process. Besides teachers and textbooks, which we will discuss later, the most important agent of this socialization process is the *hidden curriculum*. Modern society places considerable emphasis on the verbal, mathematical, and writing skills an adult needs to obtain a job, read a newspaper, balance a checkbook, and compute income taxes. However, schools teach much more than these basic academic skills. They also transmit to children a variety of values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes.

What is the hidden curriculum?

The **hidden curriculum** is the nonacademic agenda that teaches children norms and values such as discipline, order, cooperativeness, and conformity. These citizenship skills are thought to be necessary for success in modern bureaucratic society, whether one becomes a doctor, a college president, a computer programmer, or an assembly-line worker. Over the years, schools, for example, socialize children for the transition from their closely knit, cooperative families to the loosely knit, competitive adult occupational world. The school provides systematic practice for children to operate independently in the pursuit of personal and academic achievement. The values of conformity and achievement are emphasized through individual testing and grading. Because teachers evaluate young people as students, not as relatives, friends, or equals, students participate in a model for future secondary relationships—employer-employee; salesperson-customer; lawyer-client.

Fire drills teach safety procedures, but they also reinforce the importance of obedience and cooperation, part of the school system's hidden agenda.

Section Preview

Symbolic interactionists emphasize the socialization that occurs in schools. Through the hidden curriculum, children are taught values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes. Much of this socialization helps young people make the transition from home to the larger society.

hidden curriculum
the nonacademic agenda that teaches discipline, order, cooperativeness, and conformity

What, in addition to academic content, do textbooks teach students?

Textbooks

A critical part of the hidden curriculum is the development of patriotism and a sense of civic duty in future adults. For this reason, courses such as history and government generally present a view of history that favors the nation. Accounts of the American Revolution, for example, are not the same in British and American textbooks. Because few societies are willing to admit to their imperfections, schools tend to resist teaching critical accounts of history. For example, for many years U.S. history textbooks failed to portray the U.S. government's harsh treatment of Native American peoples.

Textbooks convey values and beliefs as much by what they omit as by what they include. While today's textbooks present a more balanced picture, surveys of primary school textbooks written before the 1980s found they almost always presented men in challenging and aggressive activities while portraying women as homemakers, mothers, nurses, and secretaries. Women were not only placed in traditional roles but also appeared far less frequently in the books than men did. When women did appear, they were not initiators of action, but played passive roles. Minority groups were rarely present in textbooks, and when they were it was often in a negative context.

Similarly, textbooks tended to portray all students as living in "little white houses with white picket fences." That image may have been part of the worldview of middle-class Americans, but parents of low-income or inner-city children complained that such pictures of middle-class life harmed their children. Poor children who compared their homes with middle-class homes felt out of place (Trimble, 1988; Gibson and Ogbu, 1991).

Today, active parent groups, minority special interest groups, and state boards of education work with textbook publishers to ensure that a more balanced picture of society is presented to students. Problems arise, however, when conflicts occur over whose view of society is the most accurate.

Teachers and Socialization

Classroom teachers have a unique and important role in socializing children. Teachers are usually a child's first authority figures outside the family, and children spend a lot of time in school. In addition, most parents urge their children to obey teachers, in part because their children's futures are affected by school performance.

How do teachers affect students' performance?   All teachers set academic tasks for their students, but teachers affect children unintentionally as well. In a classic 1989 study, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson explored the **self-fulfilling prophecy**—a prediction that results in behavior that makes the prediction come true. In their study, elementary school teachers were given a list of children in their classrooms who, according to the researchers, were soon to blossom intellectually. Actually, these children were

self-fulfilling prophecy
a prediction that results in behavior that makes the prediction come true

Figure 12.4 Focus on Theoretical Perspectives

Investigating education. This table illustrates differences in the ways the major theoretical perspectives investigate education as a social institution. It is, of course, possible for a theoretical perspective to study education using one of the concepts associated in this table with another perspective. Explain, for example, how conflict theory would interpret the hidden curriculum and tracking.

Theoretical Perspective	Concept	Example
Functionalism	Tracking	Schools shape the occupational future of children by placing them in educational programs based on test scores and early school performance.
Conflict Theory	Meritocracy	Students attending better schools have an occupational advantage over students from poorer schools.
Symbolic Interactionism	Hidden curriculum	Schools teach children the values of conformity and achievement.

picked at random from the school roster and were no different from other children in the school. At the end of the year, this randomly selected group of children significantly improved their scores on intelligence tests, while their classmates as a group did not. According to Rosenthal and Jacobson, the teachers expected the "late bloomers" to spurt academically. Consequently, the teachers treated these students as if they were special. This behavior on the part of the teachers encouraged the students to become higher academic achievers. (See Focus on Research on page 298. Also see Chapter 9, page 288, for a more general discussion of the self-fulfilling prophecy.)

Another early study by sociologist Eleanor Leacock (1969) found the self-fulfilling prophecy at work in a study of second and fifth graders in black and white low- and middle-income schools. And both studies demonstrate that self-fulfilling prophecies can transmit negative self-impressions as well as positive ones.

Do teachers foster sexism? As described in Chapter 10, children are taught to adopt the "appropriate" gender identity in school (Martin, 1998). Following a long line of earlier researchers, Myra Sadker and David Sadker (1995) have contended that America's teachers are often unfair to girls because they treat girls differently than boys based on assumptions and stereotypes of what is appropriate behavior. Well-meaning teachers unconsciously transmit sexist expectations of how male and female students should behave.

SOCIOLOGY Online

Student Web Activity
Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at soc.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 12—Student Web Activities** for an activity on sexism in schools.

CLICK HERE

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Snapshot of America
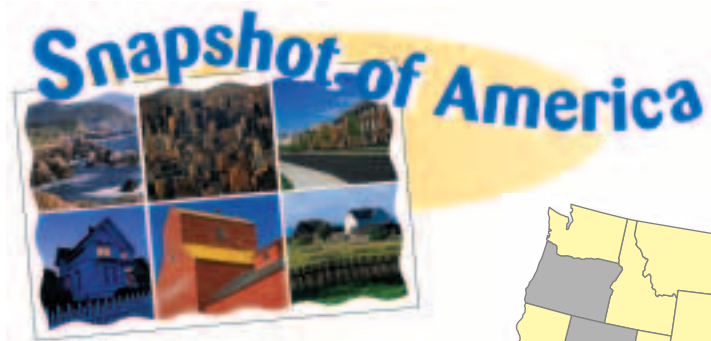
High School Dropouts

For many jobs, a high school diploma is a minimum requirement. People who do not complete high school earn only about three-fourths as much as high school graduates. This map shows the percentage of teenagers (aged sixteen to nineteen) in each state who are high school dropouts.

District of Columbia

High School Dropouts
- 6% or less
- 7%
- 8–10%
- 11–12%
- 13% or more
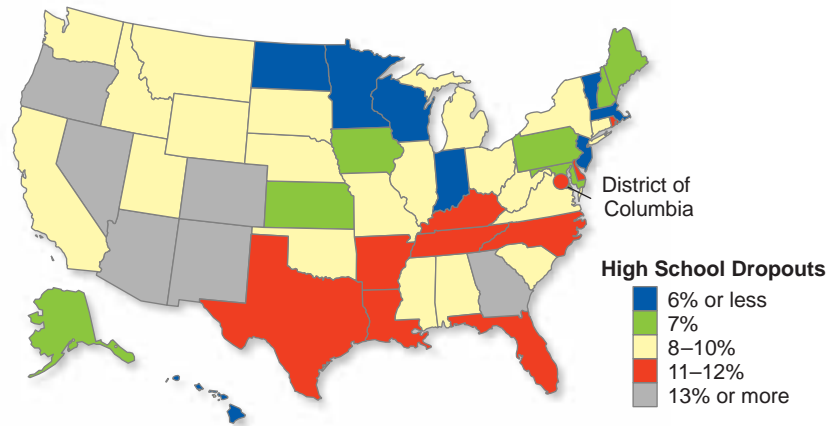
Source: *2001 Kids Count Data Sheet*. (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2001).

Interpreting the Map

1. Compare this map with the Snapshot on page 404. Do you see a relationship between the money spent per student and the percentage of high school dropouts?
2. Compare this map with the Snapshot on page 261. Do you see any relationship between the percentage of high school dropouts and the percentage of the population living below the poverty line?

Source: *2001 Kids Count Data Sheet* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2001).

Girls, for example, learn to talk softly, to avoid certain subjects (especially math and science), to defer to the alleged intellectual superiority of boys, and to emphasize appearance over intelligence. As a result, in a coeducational setting boys are

❖ five times more likely to receive the most attention from teachers.
❖ three times more likely to be praised.
❖ eight times more likely to call out in class.
❖ three times more talkative in class.
❖ twice as likely to demand help or attention.
❖ twice as likely to be called on in class.

The conclusions seem to be incontrovertible: in general boys talk more, move more, have their hands up more, do more, argue more, get more of the teachers' attention than do girls in a coeducational setting (Sadker and Sadker, 1995).

But, what about all the progress that has been made?
Contrary to the expectation of some, such inequalities are not gone from the educational scene. Writers who paint a rosier picture have so far failed to produce convincing evidence to support it (Deak, 1998).

There is objective evidence that girls are guided in school toward traditional female jobs and away from high-paying, powerful, and prestigious jobs in science, technology, and engineering (Millicent, 1992). True, significantly more high school girls want to go into engineering today than in the past. But five times more men than women receive bachelor's degrees in engineering.

These gender-based discrepancies cannot be explained by ability differences. Girls perform almost as well as boys on math and science tests (O'Sullivan, Reese, and Mazzeo, 1997). Girls score higher than boys at reading and writing at all grade levels and are more likely to attend college (Greenwald et al., 1999). Moreover, females fare better in single-gender schools and single-gender classes in coeducational schools.

Girls in these situations, in general, get better grades, report that they learn more and are more positive about the learning situation, have higher self-esteem, and more often move on to advanced courses than do girls in regular coeducational situations (Deak, 1998:19–20).

What evidence has been presented about the advantages of single-gender schools?

> **"**
> Education is the transmission of civilization.
>
> **Will and Ariel Durant**
> **authors/philosophers**
> **"**

Section 4 Assessment

1. Cite an example from your earlier schooling that you believe presented a viewpoint of history that was incomplete or slanted toward one perspective.

Critical Thinking

2. **Making Generalizations** Besides parents and teachers, what authority figures do young children meet?
3. **Applying Concepts** Describe a time when you were the subject of a self-fulfilling prophecy.
4. **Applying Concepts** Provide examples from your own experience to support or contradict the existence of the hidden curriculum.

Focus on Research

Case Study: Pygmalion in the Classroom

Are your beliefs strong enough to affect your feelings or behavior? You have probably experienced how your feelings and behavior change upon receiving new information. A feeling of well-being usually follows learning that you did better on an important math exam than you thought you could. You may even be encouraged enough to study math more enthusiastically in the future. If your own perceptions can affect your feelings and behavior, is it possible that someone else's beliefs about you can also influence your feelings and behavior? The idea that this can happen is called the *self-fulfilling prophecy*. As noted earlier, two social scientists, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1989), studied the self-fulfilling prophecy in a school setting.

For their case study, these researchers chose Oak School, a public elementary school located in a predominantly lower-class community. They hypothesized that children whose teacher expected their IQ scores to increase would in fact increase their scores more than comparable children whose teacher expected no IQ gains.

Students who are treated as if they are expected to perform at high levels often do.

At the beginning of the study, a test was given to all of the Oak School students. Although it was falsely advertised as a predictor of academic "blooming" or "spurting," it was actually a non-verbal intelligence test. Rosenthal and Jacobson subsequently identified for the teachers 20 percent of the children who allegedly were ready for a dramatic increase in intellectual growth. In fact, the researchers had selected the names of these students by using a table of random numbers. The difference in potential for academic growth between the children said to

be on the verge of "blooming" and the rest of the students existed only in the minds of the teachers.

Intellectual growth was measured by the difference between a child's IQ score at the end of the previous school year and that same child's IQ score eight months after the next school year began. As Rosenthal and Jacobson expected, the children in the "blooming" group gained more IQ points than the other children (a 12-point gain versus an 8-point gain). The IQ gain of the children in the "blooming" group over the other students was the most pronounced among first and second graders. First graders in the "blooming" group gained over 27 IQ points, compared with 12 points in the remainder of the class. Among second graders, the advantage was 16.5 IQ points to 7.

Low teacher expectations do not necessarily prevent good students from doing well in school. And high teacher expectations cannot spur poor learners to the highest levels of achievement; however, high teacher expectations can be a powerful motivator for low performers who are capable of doing much better (Madon, Jussim, and Eccles, 1997). This occurs because teachers with high expectations for students treat them in special ways—they tend to smile and look at them more often, set higher goals for them, praise them more frequently, coach them in their studies, and give them more time to study (Rendon and Hope, 1996).

Operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy has been confirmed by other researchers in many other social settings (Myers, 1999). Research subjects behave as they think researchers expect, and a client's progress in therapy is influenced by the therapist's expectation. People who are expected by others to be hostile will exhibit more hostile behavior.

Working with the Research

1. How do you think the self-fulfilling prophecy works? That is, how are expectations transmitted from one person to another, and how do these expectations produce behavior?
2. What are the implications of the self-fulfilling prophecy for students? For teachers?
3. Explain why the self-fulfilling prophecy supports the labeling process discussed on pages 214–217 in Chapter 7.

Summary

Section 1: Development and Structure of Education

Main Idea: Schools are becoming more bureaucratic. Advocates of open classrooms and cooperative learning contend that bureaucratically run schools fail to take into account the emotional and creative needs of individual children.

Section 2: Functionalist Perspective

Main Idea: Functionalists see the emergence of the educational institution as a response to society's needs. The manifest functions of education include transmission of culture, creation of a common identity, selection and screening of talent, and promotion of personal growth and development. Schools also serve latent functions.

Section 3: Conflict Perspective

Main Idea: In theory, America is a meritocracy in which social status is achieved. Proponents of the conflict perspective identify flaws in this model by pointing to inequality in our schools. Methods and programs aimed at promoting educational equality have been developed.

Section 4: Symbolic Interactionism

Main Idea: Symbolic interactionists emphasize the socialization that occurs in schools. Through the hidden curriculum, children are taught values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes. Much of this socialization helps young people make the transition from home to a larger society.

SOCIOLOGY Online

Self-Check Quiz
Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at soc.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 12—Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

Reviewing Vocabulary

Complete each sentence using each term once.

a. open-classroom model
b. cooperative learning
c. tracking
d. meritocracy
e. educational equality
f. multiculturalism
g. hidden curriculum
h. self-fulfilling prophecy

1. _____ is a prediction that results in behavior that makes the prediction come true.
2. A nonbureaucratic classroom structure in which students study in groups is called _____ .
3. An educational curriculum that accents the viewpoints, experiences, and contributions of minorities is called _____ .
4. _____ is equality defined in terms of the effects or results of schooling.
5. Placing students in curricula consistent with expectations for their eventual occupations is called _____ .
6. _____ is social status based on achievement rather than social class or parental class.
7. _____ includes discipline, order, cooperation, and conformity.
8. _____ did away with the sharp authoritarian line between teacher and students.

Reviewing the Facts

1. A student is told by teachers that he will not amount to anything. He then begins to fail subjects he has normally passed. What term would sociologists use to describe this occurrence?
2. Explain the difference between a manifest function of education and a latent function of education. Give three examples of each function.

FUNCTION	EXAMPLE 1	EXAMPLE 2	EXAMPLE 3
Manifest			
Latent			

CLICK HERE

CONTENTS

3. What are the three agents that assist schools to transmit culture through the socialization process?

4. What is the hidden curriculum and what purpose does it serve?

5. What is compensatory education? Give an example.

6. What is the difference between a charter school and a magnet school?

Thinking Critically

1. **Drawing Conclusions** Most real-world work situations involve a high degree of cooperation. Still, much of our educational system remains competitive. ACT and SAT tests are not taken cooperatively, for example. As you read in the chapter, cooperative learning has been offered as an alternative to individual learning. Based on your experience with cooperative learning, do you agree that it is a better way of learning? Why or why not?

2. **Analyzing Information** Do you think that our society benefits more from competitive situations or cooperative situations? Can both approaches be beneficial to society? In what instances might one approach be preferred to the other?

3. **Applying Concepts** On pages 20–21 in Chapter 1, you read about the McDonaldization of higher education. Using the concepts of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and technology, discuss how high schools are becoming McDonaldized.

4. **Making Inferences** In the next column is a list of student scores on the ACT test and family income. What might explain why students with higher family incomes also have higher ACT scores? Could intervening variables exist? How might an understanding of poverty explain the discrepancy in scores related to income?

5. **Drawing Conclusions** In the table in question 4, notice that 15 percent of the respondents did not answer the question about family income.

Family Income	ACT Score	Percent of Respondents
Less than $18,000	18.4	9%
$18,000–$24,000	19.2	7%
$24,000–$30,000	19.9	7%
$30,000–$36,000	20.5	7%
$36,000–$42,000	20.8	8%
$42,000–$50,000	21.2	9%
$50,000–$60,000	21.6	10%
$60,000–$80,000	22.1	13%
$80,000–$100,000	22.7	7%
Over $100,000	23.4	8%
No data provided	——	15%

These respondents had a composite score of 20.8. What conclusions might you draw about family income and ACT scores based on the "no response" group?

6. **Analyzing Information** A recent study of high school advanced placement (AP) courses revealed that students who had taken numerous AP courses, in some cases fourteen or fifteen, were admitted to the elite universities of that state. Other students who had also taken AP courses, but had taken significantly fewer of them, were denied entrance to those schools. Does this finding support or weaken the claim that the United States is a meritocracy? Explain.

7. **Understanding Cause and Effect** An elementary school teacher was given a list of her students on the first day of class. Next to each student's name was a number. One was 132, another was 141, and so forth. The teacher saw these numbers and was tremendously excited to begin the school year. In fact, she went out and bought extra materials. At the end of the school year, her students had shown incredible progress. When the principal came up to the teacher and congratulated her, the teacher thanked the principal for giving her so many students with high IQs. The principal said, "What do you mean?" "Well," the teacher replied, "on the first day of class, you gave me that list of student names with their IQs." "Those weren't IQ numbers; they were locker numbers!" The principal responded. Whether

this story is true or not, it is a good example of the self-fulfilling prophecy (or the Pygmalion effect). What might have happened if the numbers next to the students' names had been 94 or 97? Do you think that teachers in your school do the same thing this teacher did?

8. **Analyzing Information** To ensure that all students have a minimum standard of knowledge before leaving school, several states now require high school seniors to pass a comprehensive exam. Passing the test would give employers and colleges some assurance that a certain standard of achievement was met. Some parents are challenging the exam, claiming that students with passing grades could fail to get into a good college if they failed the exam. Others contend that students who have failed to pass classes could pass the exam and get credit. They argue that many students are unmotivated learners but could pass such an exam. From a societal viewpoint, what position would you take? Would you favor the examination? Could you propose a compromise solution that would satisfy both sides?

Sociology Projects

1. **School Board Meetings** Attend a school board meeting in your community. Obtain a copy of the agenda from the board of education several days before the meeting. Choose one controversial or proposed issue to research. After the meeting, approach one of the board members to interview on this issue and find out his or her position. Report back to your class about the issue, giving an objective view from various perspectives. (As an alternative, you might want to visit a PTO or PTA meeting and find out how parents and teachers view one particular issue.)

2. **Mock School Board Meeting** Organize a mock school board meeting at your school. First, attend a regular school board meeting to become familiar with the procedures. (Many communities broadcast school board meetings on local cable channels.) Select an issue that is of interest to you or that will affect your high school.

Work with classmates to fill these roles: school board president (to act as a neutral moderator), several school board members, several community members, and several students (to function as observers and take notes on what they see and hear). It would be a good idea for students to spend some time researching the chosen issue. Each school board member will be allowed a few minutes for opening remarks. Community members must be allowed to express their views, and then a vote should be taken on the issue.

3. **School Issues** Contact a student or students from another high school in your area. (These might be students you have met through church, sports, or other activities.) Compare how your schools function. Look at such issues as discipline and detention, attendance policy, making up work, extra credit, and support for extracurricular activities. Identify two areas in which your schools differ. Discuss these differences with a counselor, your principal, or an assistant principal to see if you can explain why the policy differences exist. (Are the differences a result of the bureaucracy, or do they have physical or geographical causes? Does anyone really know why things are done in a particular way?) Offer explanations for the differences, and arrange to present your findings to the class.

4. **The Ideal School of the Future** You are an architect who has been hired by your school district to design the ideal school of the future. Money is no object, and property owners who pay taxes have stated that they will spare no expense to keep the project going. Your task is to create a draft of the floor plan for the building, outside space, ball fields, bathrooms, cafeteria, and so forth. Identify the purpose of all the rooms (classrooms, labs, resource areas, exercise rooms, saunas, and so on). Submit your plan to your class (which will act as the community). Be prepared to redo the plan based on class members' recommendations. Remember, you are working for them.

5. School Handbooks Form a committee with some of your classmates to reevaluate your student handbook. If your school prints such a handbook, look at it and make recommendations for change. If your school does not have a handbook, formulate one. In either case, consider such issues as the following: description of the school day, length of class periods, attendance policies, discipline policies, requirements for graduation, required courses for specific subjects (the guidance office should have this information), extracurricular activities, student rights, and map of the building. If your school's handbook is missing any of these, make a recommendation that it be added. Research other schools to see what their policies are. Ask your teacher if your committee can present its findings to a school administrator.

6. Observing Classrooms This mock experiment will you give some experience in recording data and formulating a conclusion. You should conduct the experiment for at least five days. As you sit in your classes throughout the day, discreetly keep track of what happens when students raise their hands. Can you determine a pattern for who is called upon? Do the teachers tend to call on boys more than girls? On noisy students more than quiet ones? On conservative dressers more than radical dressers? Summarize your findings. Remember to remain objective and to respect individuals' privacy at all times. (Don't feel bad if you can't seem to identify a pattern—it just means your teacher is sensitive to his or her students. This is still good research.)

7. Schools in 2020 Design a school that will function in the year 2020, taking into account predicted advances in technology and presumed changes in social relationships and social roles.

8. School Culture Do a study of your school culture, including norms, roles, statuses, groups and subcultures. Include information about where people gather, common symbols and traditions, educational rites of passage, etc.

9. Stakeholders Stakeholders are people who have a vested interest in a process, or who are directly affected by a process. Identify the stakeholders of American education: the students, parents, colleges, technical schools, the military, employers, etc. What are their competing perceptions of the functions of education?

Technology Activity

1. The Center for Education Reform maintains a web site devoted to information about charter schools. Visit this site at http://www.edreform.com/charter_schools/. Select "Reform FAQS" and then click on "Charter Schools" that is colored blue.

   a. What are the three principles that govern charter schools?

   b. Be prepared to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of charter schools.

   c. Based on your review of this web site, do you feel that the Center for Education Reform presents an unbiased picture of charter schools?

   d. Now use your favorite search engine and see if there are any charter schools in your area with web sites. If there are, visit the site and find out about them. Do any of them sound attractive to you?

Chapter 12

Enrichment Reading
Savage Inequalities
by Jonathan Kozol

Jonathan Kozol is sociology's best known and most consistent advocate of educational reform. Kozol (1992) sees the roots of educational inequality in social inequality: Poor neighborhoods have poor schools. In the passage below, Kozol describes East St. Louis High School, an African American school located in "the most distressed small city in America." There are few jobs, no regular trash collection, and little protection from the pollution spewed from two chemical plants.

East St. Louis, says the chairman of the state board [of education], "is simply the worst possible place I can imagine to have a child brought up. . . . The community is in desperate circumstances." Sports and music, he observes, are, for many children here, "the only avenues of success." Sadly enough, no matter how it ratifies the stereotype, this is the truth; and there is a **poignant** aspect to the fact that, even with class size soaring and one quarter of the system's teachers being given their dismissal, the state board of education demonstrates its genuine but **skewed** compassion by attempting to leave sports and music untouched by the overall **austerity.**

Even sports facilities, however, are degrading by comparison with those found and expected at most high schools in America. The football field at East St. Louis High is missing almost everything—including goalposts. There are a couple of metal pipes—no crossbar, just the pipes. Bob Shannon, the football coach, who has to use his personal funds to purchase footballs and has had to cut and rake the football field himself, has dreams of having goalposts someday. He'd also like to let his students have new uniforms. The ones they wear are nine years old and held together somehow by a patchwork of repairs. Keeping them clean is a problem, too. The school cannot afford a washing machine. The uniforms are carted to a corner laundromat with fifteen dollars' worth of quarters. . . .

In the wing of the school that holds vocational classes, a damp, unpleasant odor fills the halls. The school has a machine shop, which cannot be used for lack of staff, and a woodworking shop. The only shop that's occupied this morning is the auto-body class. A man with long blond hair and wearing a white sweat suit swings a paddle to get children in their chairs. "What we need the most is new equipment," he reports. "I have equipment for alignment, for example, but we don't have money to install it. We also need a better form of **egress.** We bring the cars in through two other classes." Computerized equipment used in most repair shops, he reports, is far beyond the high school's budget. It looks like a very old gas station in an isolated rural town. . . .

The science labs at East St. Louis High are 30 to 50 years outdated. John McMillan, a soft-spoken man, teaches physics at the school. He shows me his lab. The six lab stations in the room have empty holes where pipes were once attached. "It would be great if we had water," says McMillan. . . .

In a seventh grade social studies class, the only book that bears some relevance to black concerns—its title is *The American Negro*—bears a publication date of 1967. The teacher invites me to ask the class some questions. Uncertain where to start, I ask the students what they've learned about the civil rights campaigns of recent decades.

A 14-year-old girl with short black curly hair says this: "Every year in February we are told to

read the same old speech of Martin Luther King. We read it every year. 'I have a dream. . . .' It does begin to seem—what is the word?" She hesitates and then she finds the word: **"perfunctory."**

I ask her what she means.

"We have a school in East St. Louis named for Dr. King," she says. "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

It startles me to hear her words, but I am startled even more to think how seldom any press reporter has observed the irony of naming segregated schools for Martin Luther King. Children reach the heart of these hypocrisies much quicker than the grown-ups and the experts do.

Source: Excerpted from Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 35.

Jonathan Kozol, a long-time social activist, is author of seven award-winning books which focus on the plight of the disadvantaged children of our nation. Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools, *shows the disparities in America's public school system.*

What Does it Mean?

austerity
hardship; severity

egress
act of coming out; exiting

perfunctory
routine; without enthusiasm

poignant
deeply affecting; touching

skewed
slanted; distorted

Read and React

1. What does Kozol mean by "educational inequality"? Do you agree or disagree with his view? Why?
2. Does Kozol believe there is a link between economic resources and educational inequality? Explain. Discuss why you agree or disagree.
3. If Kozol were going to speak to your local school board, what would you like to say to him regarding educational inequality?
4. Is educational inequality a problem in your school? In other schools in your community? Elaborate.
5. Imagine yourself in the school Kozol describes. How would it affect your education, view of life, and future?