CHAPTER 1

The Shifting Demographic Landscape

The changes in teacher education that we envision in this book, like all educational change, will not come quickly or easily. In order to bring them about, those of us who are teacher educators must have the will to engage in the long and difficult process of reform. In this chapter, we will present what we believe is incontrovertible evidence of the urgent need for teachers who are well prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds. In so doing, we hope to lay a strong foundation for our proposal for preparing culturally responsive teachers. First, we examine current and projected demographic data on race/ethnicity, English proficiency, socioeconomic status, and the academic underachievement of students of color. Then we describe the current and projected demographic profiles of the teaching force and discuss why the growing imbalance in the cultural backgrounds of teachers and their students is problematic.

While we present these data to support our argument that teacher education must be reconstructed, we recognize that, compelling as these numbers are, they do not inevitably lead to the conclusions we draw from them. For example, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) view data illustrating the persistent academic underachievement of students of color as evidence of their inherent inferiority. We view them, however, as evidence that our educational, social, economic, and political systems are not functioning properly. In a modern society that strives to be democratic and just, education should ensure (a) that all students develop advanced literacy and numeracy skills and facility with technology so that they can gain access to rapidly changing information; (b) that they acquire critical thinking skills, including the ability to analyze and interpret complex information, understand social problems, and envision potential solutions to those problems; (c) that they learn to respect and understand multiple perspectives and, at the same time, to evaluate the merit of different positions; and (d) that they become skilled at working collaboratively, making collective decisions, and communicating effectively in cross-cultural settings. Ultimately, it is the commitment to seek-

1

ing social justice and the recognition that education is a political and inherently moral activity that will give us the will to make the changes in teacher education programs for which we are calling. Thus, while we believe that the shifting demographic landscape presented in this chapter gives a special urgency to the changes we espouse, we also believe that a just and democratic society must prepare its teachers to facilitate the development of these skills, perspectives, and knowledge by all students, regardless of the proportions of different demographic groups in the overall student population.

THE CHANGING K–12 STUDENT POPULATION

The United States is becoming more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than ever, a trend that is expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. There are several reasons for this. For one thing, higher birth rates are projected for minority groups, especially among Latinos and African Americans.[1] Second, the differing age structure of each group will contribute to higher fertility rates and lower death rates among people of color, thereby increasing their share of the total population. Third, net immigration is expected to be considerably higher for nonwhite groups in the years to come. Combined, these factors will transform the makeup of the U.S. population over the next fifty years (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996). Indeed, the future is already apparent in the school-age population.

Over the past thirty years, the elementary and secondary student population has grown increasingly diverse. This steady trend toward diversity is evident in figure 1.1, which presents the percentages of white students and students of color in K–12 public schools for selected years, beginning with 1972. In that year, students of color accounted for a little more than one-fifth (or 22 percent) of the total enrollment in the public schools. Fourteen years later, their share of enrollment had grown to three-tenths (or 30 percent). By 1998, they constituted over one-third (37 percent) of the student population. Much of this growth was among Latinos and Asians. Already, students of color make up the majority of the K–12 enrollment in five states—California, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Texas—as well as in the District of Columbia; and they account for half of the student population in Louisiana (NCES, 1998). Similarly, they constitute a majority in all but two of the nation's twenty-five largest school districts (NCES, 1997a). While children of color are largely concentrated in urban schools, their numbers are increasing in suburban settings as well, particularly in districts located near large cities (Lucas and Villegas, 1996; Villegas and Young, 1997).

FIGURE 1.1
Percentage of White Students and Students of Color
in the Public Schools for Selected Years
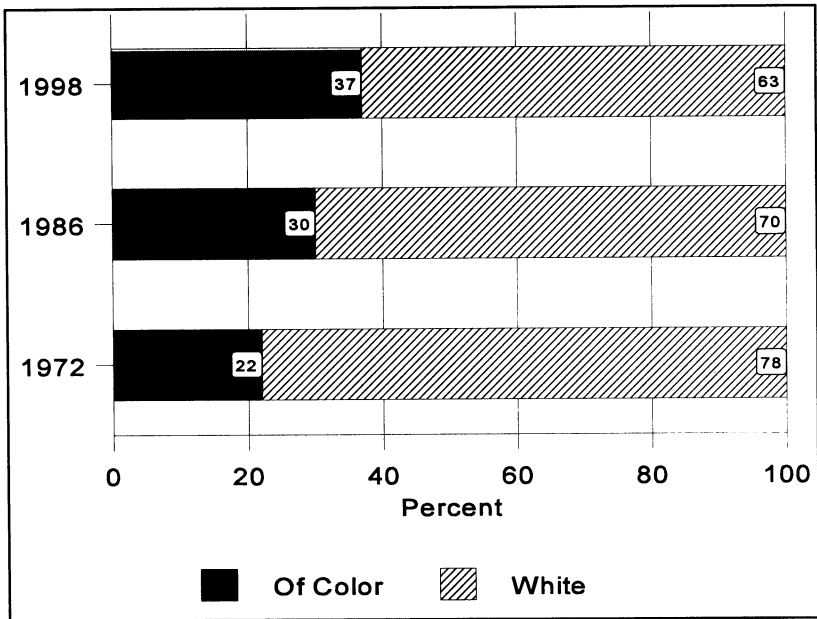
Sources: NCES, 1999a, 2000

No longer can we afford to ignore issues of diversity in the preparation of teachers, even when they are being prepared to teach in suburban schools.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (1996), during the first half of the twenty-first century, the K–12 student population is expected to grow substantially. If estimates hold, the number of five to nineteen year olds will increase from 56.2 million in 1995 to 79.6 million by 2050. This increase, however, will be distributed differentially between the white population and the population of color, as shown in figure 1.2. While children of color constituted about one-third of the student population in 1995, they are expected to become the numerical majority by 2035. This change will render the expression "minority students" statistically inaccurate. By 2050, so-called minorities will collectively account for nearly 57 percent of the student population.

Figure 1.3 presents the projected growth of the school-age population through the year 2050 for each major racial/ethnic group. Black Americans, the current largest student group of color, accounted for
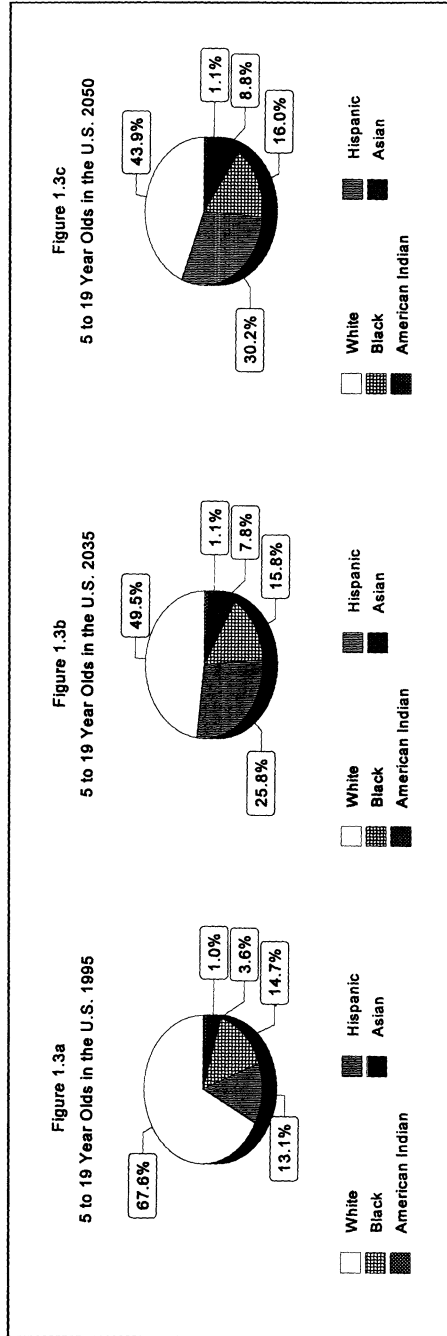
FIGURE 1.2
Projections for Five to Nineteen Year Olds in the United States through 2050:
White Youth and Youth of Color
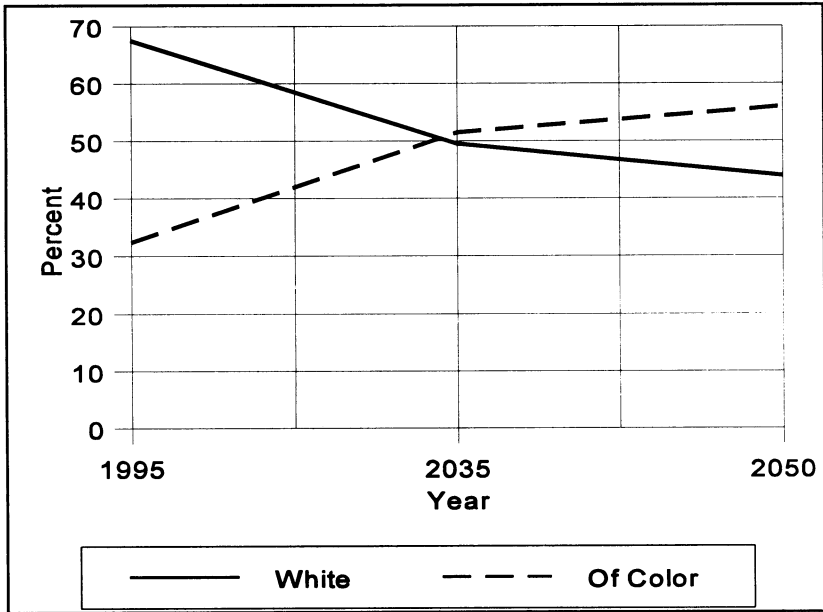
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996

14.7 percent of all five to nineteen year olds in 1995. By 2050, their representation is expected to rise to 16 percent, a relatively small proportional increase in the total share, but an important one given the sizeable growth projected for the K–12 student population. The American Indian student population will hold steady at about 1 percent over this time period. The proportions of young people of Hispanic and Asian backgrounds will increase significantly, however. As we reach 2050, Hispanics will constitute over 30 percent of the entire school-age population, up from about 13 percent in 1995. By 2010, Hispanic students will become the largest minority group in U.S. schools. Asians will also more than double their portion of the five to nineteen year old population, going from 3.6 percent in 1995 to nearly 9 percent by 2050. The biggest gains for both Hispanic and Asian groups are expected to occur by 2035. The growth among Hispanic and Asian students signals an increase in the number of young people who speak languages other than English at home, a fact that will have a significant impact on schools.

FIGURE 1.3
Current and Projected Distributions for Five to Nineteen Year Olds in the United States by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 1.3a
5 to 19 Year Olds in the U.S. 1995

67.6%
13.1%
1.0%
3.6%
14.7%

White
Black
American Indian
Hispanic
Asian

Figure 1.3b
5 to 19 Year Olds in the U.S. 2035

49.5%
25.8%
1.1%
7.8%
15.8%

White
Black
American Indian
Hispanic
Asian

Figure 1.3c
5 to 19 Year Olds in the U.S. 2050

43.9%
30.2%
1.1%
8.8%
16.0%

White
Black
American Indian
Hispanic
Asian

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996. Calculations by authors.

Existing racial/ethnic categories downplay the reality of the variation that characterizes different groups. Cultural differences within Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, Pacific Island, and Alaska Native groups abound. For instance, more than 300 separate tribes are included in the Census Bureau's definition of the American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut population (Educational Research Service [ERS], 1995), and numerous other tribes have not been officially recognized. Each of these tribes represents a different culture and language. Hispanics speak Spanish, but they come from many different countries, each with its own national heritage. The many groups that are considered "Asian" not only represent vastly different cultures but also speak many different languages. While many within this broadly encompassing group have done relatively well in this country educationally and economically, others—especially those from Southeast Asia—have fared less well in our society.

Linguistically, the K–12 student population has also grown more diverse in the recent past. Estimates of the actual number of limited-English-proficient students in U.S. schools over the past two decades have varied widely. Several factors have made it impossible to determine the exact number of English language learners in U.S. schools. There is no generally accepted definition of limited-English-proficiency and no standard for collecting information about limited-English-proficient populations, so data collectors and analysts have used different criteria to identify the populations they study. Further complicating matters, students may come from homes where a language other than English is spoken, but they may be fluent in English, thus complicating survey data collection. There is also the question of whether to consider only oral proficiency in population surveys or to include written proficiency as well. In addition, the attitudes toward immigration and the use of languages other than English in school and society are politically charged, making it difficult to judge the accuracy of survey responses. Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, estimates of LEP students ranged from about 2.5 million (Hopstock and Bucaro, 1993) to 3.7 million (Chapa and Valencia, 1993).

While we cannot be certain of the exact numbers of LEP students in the United States, we can be sure that their numbers have increased dramatically in recent years (Hopstock and Bucaro, 1993; McArthur, 1993; National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education [NCBE], 1998). This trend is evident in figure 1.4, which summarizes estimates of the LEP student population provided by State Education Agencies (SEA) across the nation for the years between 1985–86 and 1995–96, as reported by Hopstock and Bucaro (1993) and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (1998). As shown, these data indicate a gain of 1.76 million LEP students in elementary and secondary schools during this

FIGURE 1.4
Estimates of LEP Student Population by
State Education Agencies in Millions, 1986–95
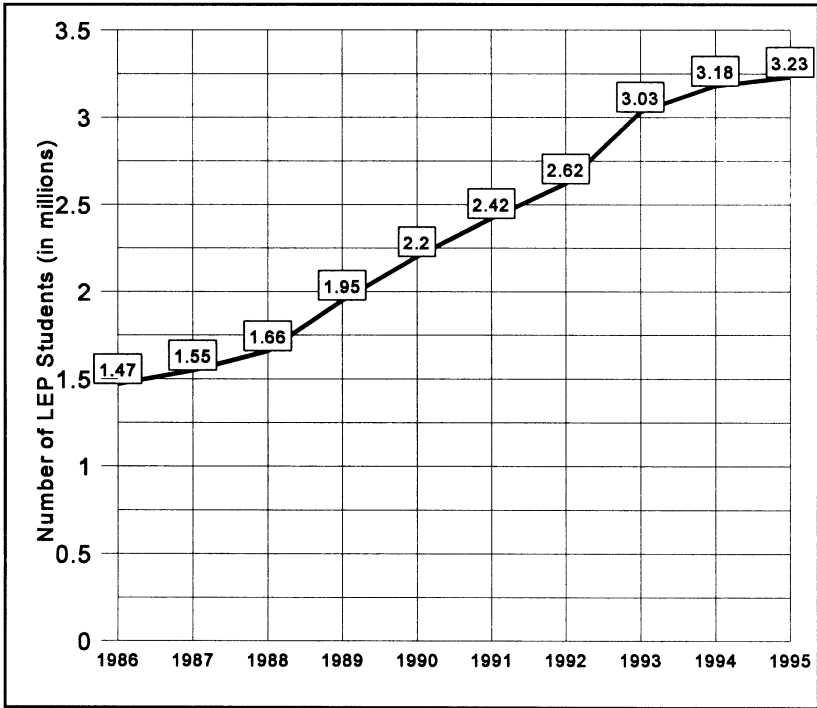
Sources: Hopstock and Bucaro, 1993 (for 1986–89);
NCBE, 1998 (for 1990–95)

period, with estimates rising to 3.23 million in 1995 from 1.47 million nine years earlier.[2] Thus, between 1986–87 and 1995–96, a 120 percent increase in the number of LEP students was reported by the SEAs.

Spanish has consistently been the language spoken by the overwhelming majority of students identified as LEP. In 1987, it was estimated that 72.5 percent of LEP students spoke Spanish, and in 1991 that proportion was 72.9 percent (Fleischman and Hopstock, 1993; Hopstock and Bucaro, 1993). While many people assume that all Spanish-speaking students are immigrants, this is not the case. In fact, in 1991, 39 percent of Spanish-speaking LEP students were born in the United States (Fleischman and Hopstock, 1993). Partly accounting for this phenomenon is the history of segregation of immigrant groups from the white, English-speaking U.S. population, especially immigrant

groups of color. The second most common language is Vietnamese (3.9 percent of LEP students), followed by Hmong (1.8 percent), Cantonese (1.7 percent), Cambodian (1.6 percent), and Korean (1.6 percent). Despite the preponderance of Spanish, many school districts serve students who speak a kaleidoscope of languages, complicating the task of communicating with them and of designing curricula that meet their varied needs while simultaneously building on their strengths.

The sharp rise in immigration experienced by the United States over the past two decades has accelerated the racial/ethnic and linguistic diversification of the K–12 student population. In 1990, for instance, more than 2.2 million foreign-born children enrolled in the nation's elementary and secondary schools, accounting for 5 percent of the student population that year (American Council on Education, 1994). The immigrant student population includes a wide range of languages, cultures, and experiences. Unlike their predecessors, who came largely from Europe, immigrant students today are mostly from Latin America (Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras), Asia (Vietnam, the Philippines, China, India, Korea), and the Caribbean (the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti). Increasing numbers of immigrants are also arriving from Eastern European countries with previously little representation in the United States (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1995). While many of these students have attended schools in their native country, a relatively large number—especially those from war-ridden countries and rural areas—have had little or no schooling prior to their arrival in this country (Chang, 1990; Gibson, 1987). Some of the children are literate in their native language, but many are not. A small proportion of them have attained some level of English-language fluency before entering U.S. schools, but the overwhelming majority speak little or no English (Chang, 1990). A sizeable number of these students were victims of extreme poverty in their native countries, and many continue to live below the poverty level in the United States. Some of the new immigrants have suffered the traumas of war, including the loss of or separation from their immediate families (National Coalition of Advocates for Students [NCAS], 1991). This wide range of experiences poses a major challenge to U.S. school systems, many of which find themselves unprepared to respond effectively to such diversity in backgrounds and needs (Villegas and Young, 1997).

The socioeconomic makeup of the student population is also undergoing a significant shift. Because a student's academic achievement is highly correlated with his or her socioeconomic status, the recent growth in poverty among children is of serious concern to educators. A review of recent trends is instructive. In 1965, the first year that the War on Poverty programs took effect, 14.7 million children—or 21 percent

of everyone under the age of eighteen in the United States—lived in poverty. By 1973, that number fell sharply to 10 million, or 14.4 percent of all children in this country. As social programs experienced financial cuts during the 1980s, the poverty rate climbed again. By 1995, the number of poor children was back up to 14.7 million—or 20.8 percent of the population eighteen years of age or younger (Kilborn, 1996). Compared to other advanced nations in the world, the United States currently has one of the highest rates of children living in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2000).

In addition to reductions in government programs, marked changes in family structure to more one-parent homes—primarily single-mother homes—have contributed to the rise in poverty rates observed during the past two decades in the United States. In 1995, for instance, over 41 percent of all families with children headed by a single female were poor, compared to about 19 percent of families headed by a single male and 7 percent of two-parent homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999b). A decline in real wages for individuals with limited education is another salient factor related to poverty increases (ERS, 1995; Freeman, 1999).

Although the numerical majority of poor children in the United States is white, poverty is far more pervasive among racial/ethnic minority groups, as illustrated in figure 1.5. In 1995, for example, 16 percent of all white children lived in poverty, compared to 42 percent and 40 percent of black and Hispanic children, respectively (Kilborn, 1996). A survey in the early 1990s showed that 77 percent of limited-English-proficient students were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches, a proximal indicator of poverty, compared with eligibility for only 38 percent of all students in the same schools (Fleischman and Hopstock, 1993). Thus, as the numbers of students of racial/ethnic and linguistic minority groups grow in the years ahead, the poverty rate within the student population is likely to rise. Making matters worse, a provision in the welfare law approved by the U.S. Congress and signed by the president in 1996 eliminated federal cash assistance for the nation's poorest children; this change threatens to push many more young people, both white and of color, into poverty in the future.

As this review of trend data shows, the number of students who are poor and of racial/ethnic and language minority groups is on the rise. Unfortunately, schools have historically served these populations inadequately. The consistent gap between racial/ethnic minority and poor students and their white, middle-class peers in scores on standardized tests is indicative of the inability of the educational system to effectively teach students of color as schools have traditionally been structured. Recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) illustrate this gap.
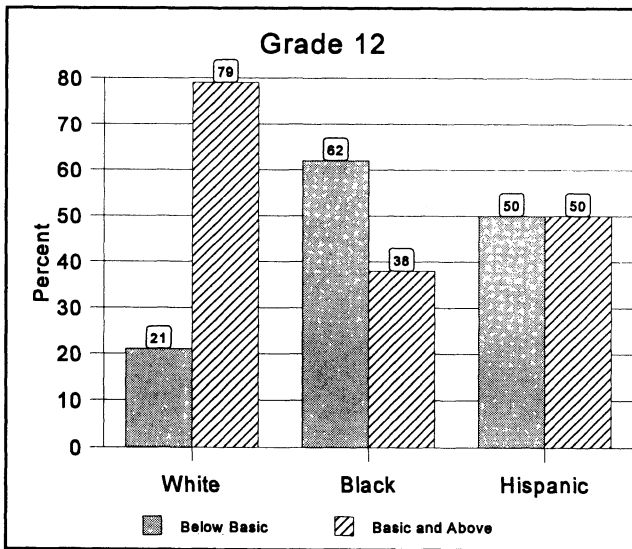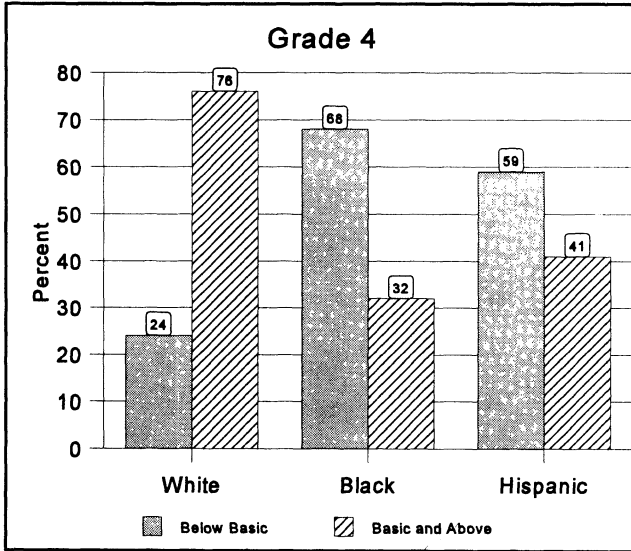
FIGURE 1.5
Percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic Children
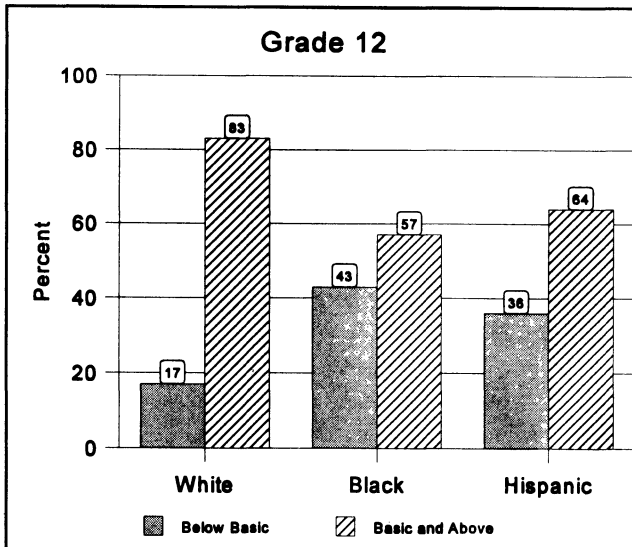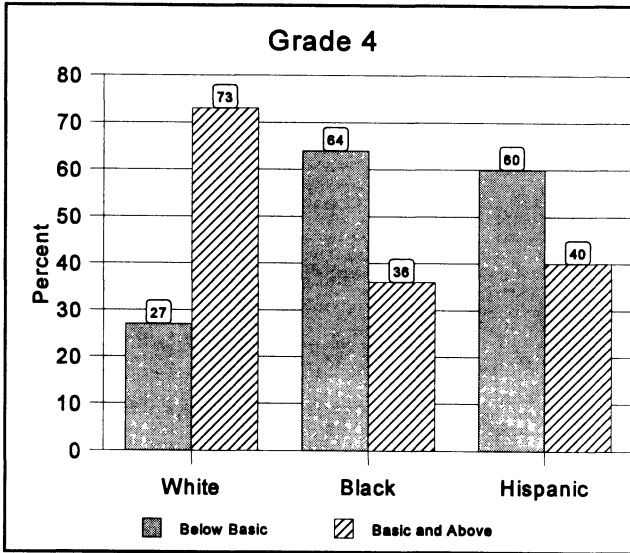in the United States Living in Poverty in 1995
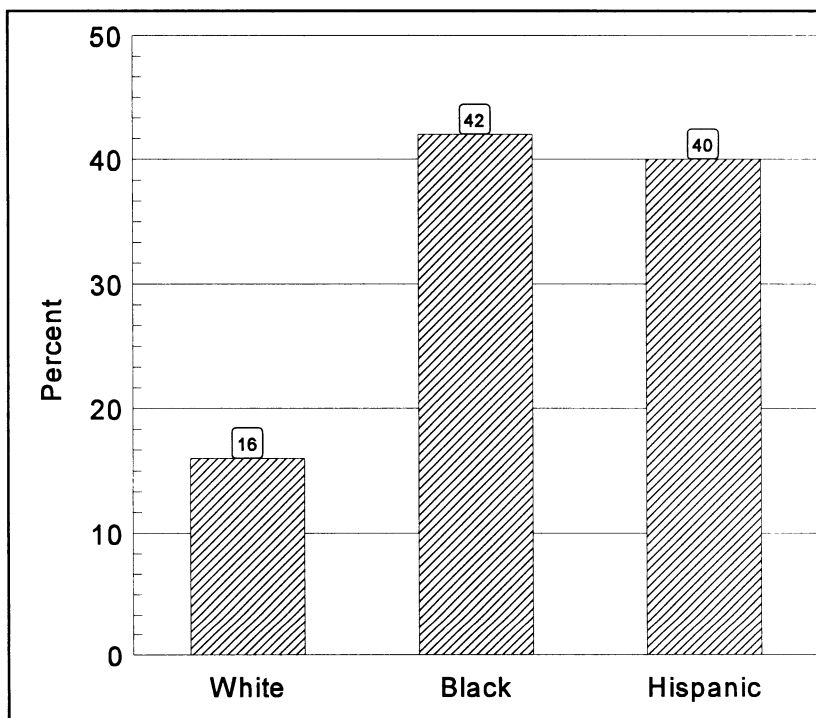
Source: Kilborn, 1996

Figure 1.6 compares the achievement levels of white, black, and His-
panic students in fourth and twelfth grades on the 1996 mathematics
assessment.[3] Of the fourth graders taking the test, 68 percent of black stu-
dents and 59 percent of Hispanic students scored below basic, compared
to 24 percent of white students.[4] That is, these students did not show even
"partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills." The figure also
illustrates that while students achieved at higher levels in the twelfth
grade, the disparities between white students and students of color persist.
Figure 1.7 shows a similar pattern of disparities in the reading assessment
of black and Hispanic students and their white counterparts. We have
reported the NAEP scores for mathematics and reading because skills in
these areas are fundamental to success in school at any level. The results
of the NAEP assessments in science and writing are consistent with this
pattern of disparity in achievement as well (NCES, 1997d; NCES, 1998).

FIGURE 1.6
Percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic Fourth- and Twelfth-Grade Students
at Different NAEP Mathematics Achievement Levels, 1996

Source: NCES, 1997c

FIGURE 1.7
Percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic Fourth- and Twelfth-Grade Students
at Different NAEP Reading Achievement Levels, 1998

Grade 4

Percent

	White	Black	Hispanic
Below Basic	27	64	60
Basic and Above	73	36	40

■ Below Basic   ▨ Basic and Above

Grade 12

Percent

	White	Black	Hispanic
Below Basic	17	43	36
Basic and Above	83	57	64

■ Below Basic   ▨ Basic and Above
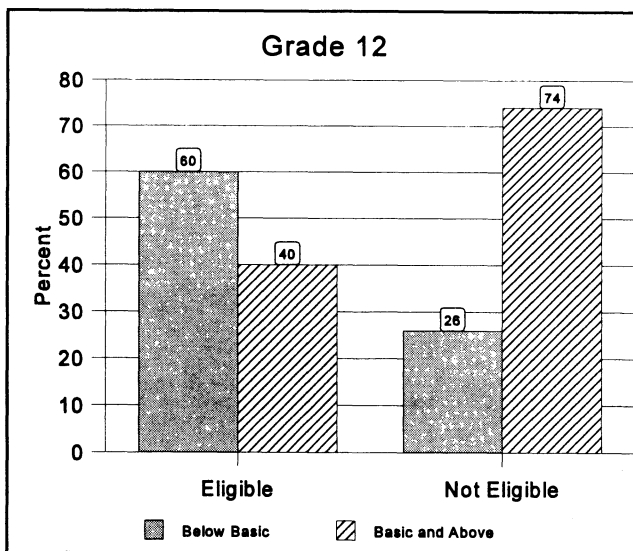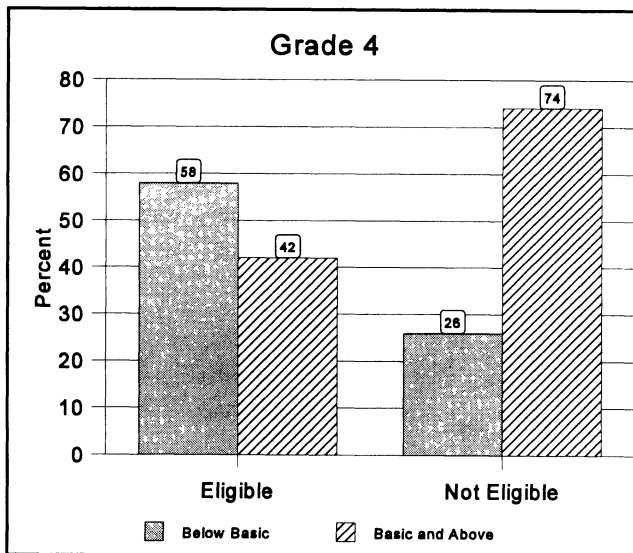
Source: NCES, 1999c

The failure of the schools to teach students from poor families of all racial/ethnic backgrounds effectively is also reflected in gaps between the performance of students of different socioeconomic backgrounds on the NAEP. Figure 1.8 compares the different achievement levels on the 1996 NAEP mathematics assessment for students who were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program (a proximal indicator of socioeconomic status) and for students who were not eligible for the program. As this figure shows, proportionately more students who were eligible for the program scored "below basic" than students who were not eligible. Again, the patterns are similar in both grades; considerably higher percentages of less affluent students had "below basic" scores, while higher percentages of more affluent students attained the basic level or above.

Scores on standardized tests are not the sole indicator of the inequitable distribution of educational benefits among groups. Data published by the Educational Research Service (1995) and the National Education Goals Panel (1994) provide evidence of disparities in the high school completion rates of the white population and black and Hispanic groups, highlights of which are summarized in figure 1.9. The data for eighteen year olds show on-time graduation rates for the three groups. On-time graduation was defined by Educational Research Service (1995) as the percentage of eighteen year olds who either held a high school diploma or were in their fourth year of high school in a particular year. Assuming that all high school seniors graduated in 1992, 84 percent of white youth would graduate on time, compared to 72 percent and 64 percent for black and Hispanic youth, respectively.

Not graduating on time does not mean that students will not ultimately complete high school. Because it takes some students longer than others to attain this goal, it is helpful to examine high school completion rates for older cohorts, as in the other two sets of data in figure 1.9. These data show a similar pattern of disparity in the nineteen-to-twenty and twenty-three-to-twenty-four year-old cohorts. In both cases, the completion rates for black youth were a full 10 percentage points lower than for white youth. More alarming still were the twenty-seven and twenty-six percentage point differences between the white and Hispanic populations. Data from the Current Population Survey that combine eighteen through twenty-four year olds show this gap in high school completion rates persisting in 1996: 91.5 percent of white people in that age group had completed high school, compared to 83.0 percent of black people and 61.9 percent of Hispanics (NCES, 1999b).

While these differences in educational attainment have always been problematic, they are becoming ever more so. In the industrial-based society of the past, workers with less than a high school diploma could secure

FIGURE 1.8
Percentage of Students Attaining Different NAEP Mathematics
Achievement Levels by Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Program Eligibility, 1996

Grade 4

	Below Basic	Basic and Above
Eligible	58	42
Not Eligible	26	74

Grade 12

	Below Basic	Basic and Above
Eligible	60	40
Not Eligible	26	74

Source: NCES, 1997c

FIGURE 1.9
High School Completion Rates for Different Age Cohorts
for White, Black, and Hispanic Groups, 1992
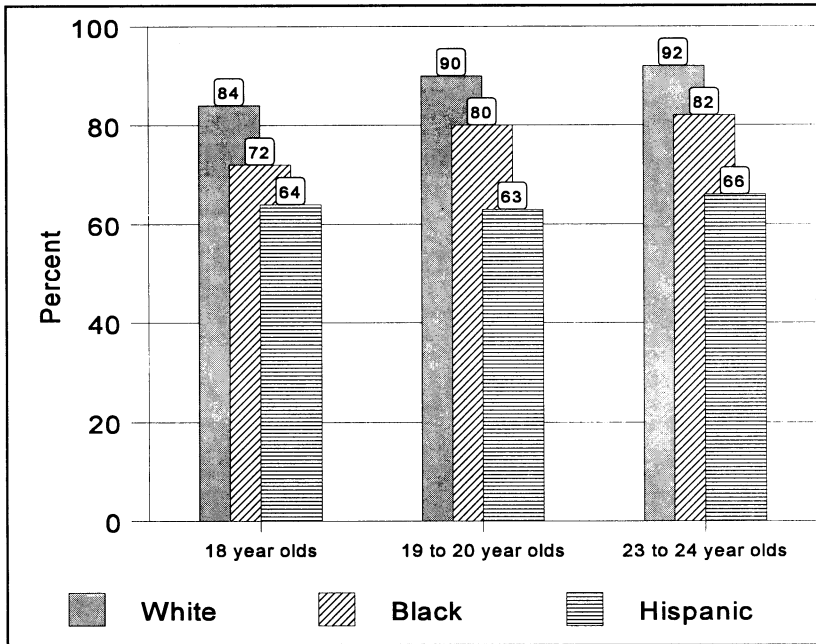
Sources: ERS, 1995; National Education Goals Panel, 1994

a job that would provide a living wage for a family. That world is rapidly disappearing. In the international information-based economy of the present and future, people without a high school education and some specialized training will be among the unemployed and underemployed as manufacturing jobs are replaced by jobs requiring knowledge of technology and access to information. Comparisons of income levels and unemployment rates provide evidence of disparities associated with educational attainment. Between 1973 and 1994, real incomes declined by 37 percent for families headed by high school dropouts and by 20 percent for families headed by high school graduates, while they increased for families headed by college graduates (Barton, 1997). It has also been reported that low-skilled workers have five times the unemployment rate of college-educated workers (Wilson, 1996). Ironically, while it is now essential to attain higher education in order to escape poverty, it is also becoming more difficult for those in poverty to make it into and through the higher education system. In 1979, eighteen to twenty-four year olds from the top

income quartile were four times more likely to graduate from college than those from the bottom quartile; by 1994, they were ten times more likely to do so (Barton, 1997). These educational disparities and the income inequality associated with them are growing rapidly, despite our overall economic well-being (Freeman, 1999; Reich, 1999). They represent wasted human potential, as more people are relegated to inescapable poverty and chronic underemployment. Further, the two-tiered society that we have become flies in the face of our ideals of democracy and social justice. We can hardly maintain the "moral authority that [has] defined us as a nation" (Reich, 1999, ix) if we do not address these undisputed disparities in educational and economic attainment.

The demographic trends presented above paint a picture of a changing student population. While the details of the experiences and perspectives of the majority of students of the future may be different from those of the largely European population of years ago, diversity has characterized the United States since its beginning. This diversity carries with it an infusion of resources that have served this country well in the past. At the same time, the differences within the changing population of today and the ways in which they depart from the dominant white, middle-class, native-English-speaking population pose new challenges to the educational system. The demographics and student outcomes data speak for themselves; it is up to the nation and, of particular interest here, the educational system—including teacher education—to respond productively to the changes that the data reflect.

CURRENT AND FUTURE TEACHERS

The demographic profiles of the K–12 teaching force and student body contrast dramatically in terms of race, social class, and language background. The racial/ethnic disparity is clearly evident in figure 1.10, which presents information for the 1995–96 school year, the most current data available on the racial/ethnic distribution of the teaching force. While students of color comprised over 35 percent of total elementary and secondary public school enrollments that year, people of color constituted only about 9 percent of the teaching force (NCES, 1997b). There is also a social class gap between many teachers and their students. As discussed earlier, 21 percent of all children (those eighteen years of age and younger) lived in poverty in 1995 (Kilborn, 1996). By contrast, the overwhelming majority of teachers in this country are from lower-middle-class and middle-class backgrounds (Fuller, 1992; Zimpher, 1989). The language backgrounds of the teaching force and the student population are also disparate. While more than one in seven students speak a language other than English at

FIGURE 1.10
Distribution of the Student Population and the
Teaching Force in Public Schools by Race/Ethnicity, 1995–96
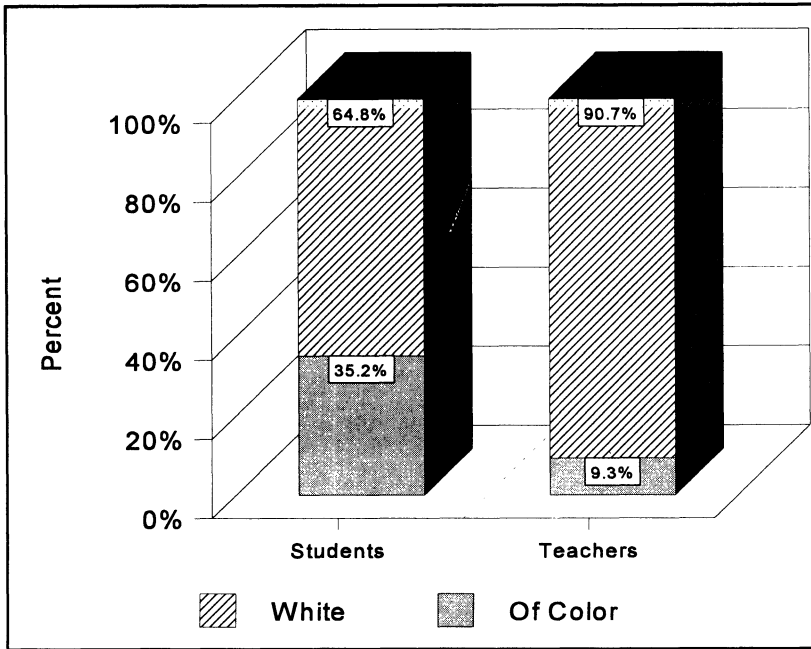

Source: NCES, 1997b

home (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1999), the typical teacher is English monolingual (Zimpher, 1989).

A look at the education pipeline shows that the racial/ethnic makeup of the future teaching force is not likely to change much in the years ahead (see figure 1.11). Of all undergraduates preparing to be teachers in schools, colleges, and departments of education in fall 1994, 87.5 percent were white, and only 12.5 percent were of color, including 7 percent black, 3.6 percent Hispanic, 1.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and .6 percent American Indian/Alaska Native.[5]

REPERCUSSIONS OF THE RACIAL/ETHNIC, ECONOMIC, AND LANGUAGE GAP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Why is it a problem that so many white, middle-class, English monolingual teachers teach students who are increasingly different from them

FIGURE 1.11
Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity in Schools,
Colleges, and Departments of Education, Fall 1994
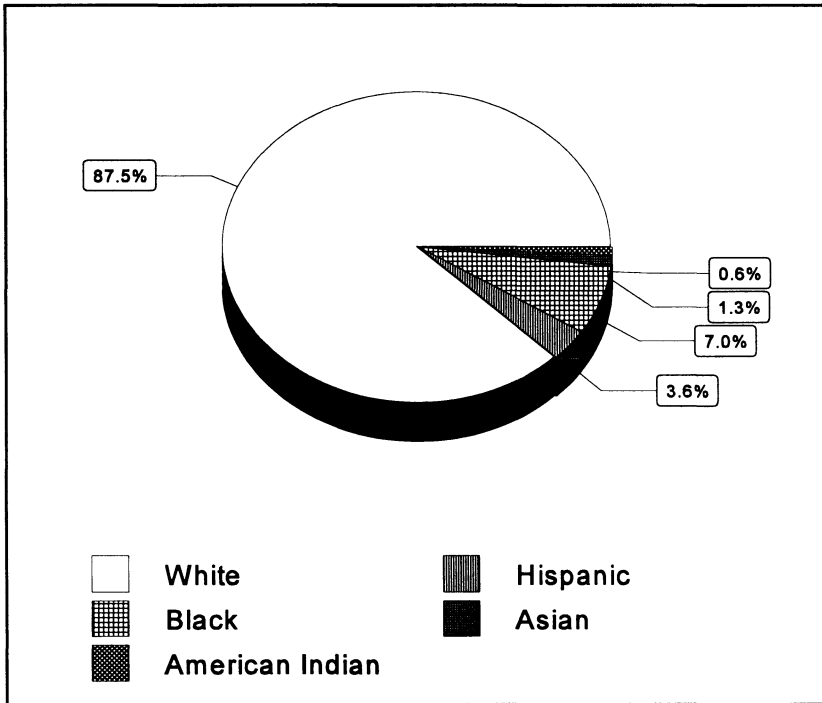
Source: AACTE, 1997. Calculations by authors.

racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically? The simplest response to this thorny question is that the sharp differences in the biographies of the teachers and their students make it difficult for the instructors to build cultural bridges between home and school for the students. When teachers know little about their students' experiences and perspectives, it is difficult for them to select materials that are relevant to the students' experiences, to use pertinent examples or analogies drawn from the students' daily lives to introduce or clarify new concepts, to manage the classroom in ways that take into account cultural differences in interaction styles, and to use evaluation strategies that maximize students' opportunities to display what they actually know in ways that are familiar to them. To remedy this serious problem, teacher education must help prospective teachers become culturally responsive teachers—that is, to develop strategies for learning about their students' individual and

cultural background knowledge and experiences and for using this insight in their teaching. We discuss these responsive teaching strategies in chapter 3.

There is a more fundamental problem with the growing cultural mismatch between teachers and students. Research shows that many teachers from mainstream backgrounds view student diversity as an obstacle to overcome rather than as a resource to build upon and that they hold low expectations for poor students of color (Gomez, 1996; Irvine, 1990a, 1990b). Many blame students' academic difficulties on parents' lack of interest in and support for education, on dysfunctional family and community life, and on students' lack of motivation and skills, while overlooking the role that inequalities in society and schools play in the construction of academic failure (Paine, 1989). From their perspectives as relatively privileged members of society who generally have had little contact with people very different from themselves, they tend neither to see the need for social transformation nor to view schools as sites for social transformation. Many are convinced that teaching is a politically neutral activity and that teachers should not take political stands. They, therefore, tend not to view themselves as moral actors who have an obligation to provide a quality education for all students (Goodlad, 1990b). Teacher education must also tackle this second, more complex problem if teachers are to be effective in our increasingly multicultural society. In chapters 2 and 4, we discuss strategies for helping teachers-to-be examine and modify such attitudes and beliefs.

It is also important to ask why the relative absence of teachers of racial/ethnic and language minority backgrounds is problematic. The most frequently cited reason is that minority teachers serve as vital role models for all students, but especially for minority students (AACTE, 1989; Bass de Martinez, 1988; Cole, 1986; Graham, 1987; Mercer and Mercer, 1986). They give minority children hope that they too can grow up to occupy responsible positions in our society (Franklin, 1987; Stewart, Meier, La Follette, and England, 1989), a message that is especially important for those who come from impoverished homes and have few models in their communities of successful professionals who are racially, ethnically, and linguistically like themselves. Second, minority candidates bring to teaching firsthand knowledge about minority cultures and languages and personal experience with what it is like to be a member of a racial, ethnic, and/or language minority group in this country. Such a shared background makes it easier for teachers to build the necessary bridges between home and school for students from subordinated groups (Hidalgo and Huling-Austin, 1993; Huling-Austin and Cuellar, 1991; Irvine, 1990a; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings and Henry, 1990), and to challenge these young people to examine critically the consequences

of disengaging from academic learning (Delpit, 1988; Foster, 1993; Ladson-Billings and Henry, 1990).
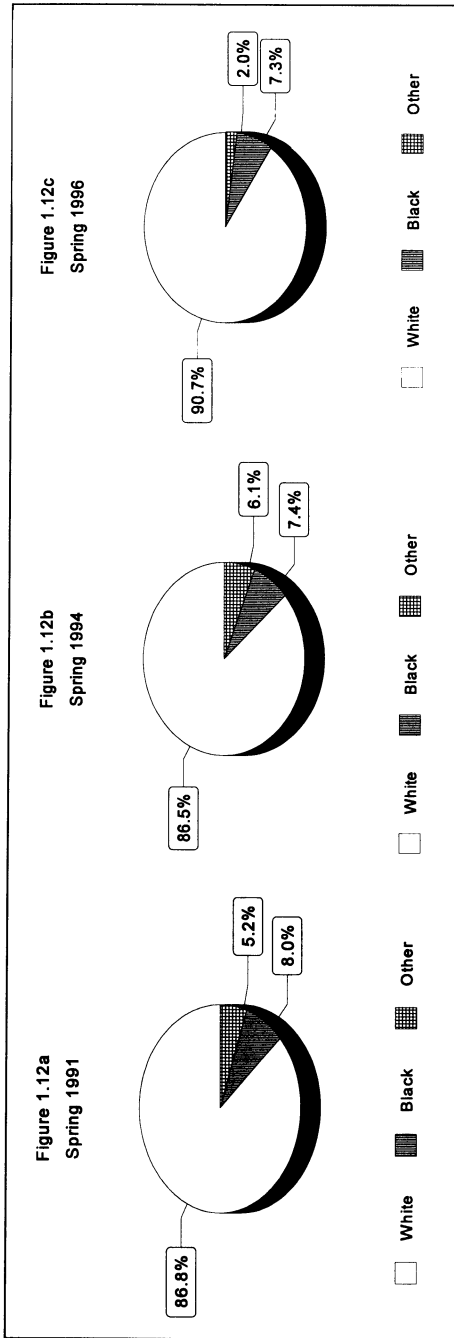
While the life experiences of people of color can give them an advantage in teaching students of color, this resource will have little payoff unless teacher education programs prepare them to draw on it in their teaching. It is foolish to think that a mere increase in the number of teachers of color will improve the school experiences of students of color, as much of the current literature on this topic seems to imply. Teacher education, therefore, not only must recruit more candidates of color but also must prepare them to be culturally responsive teachers (Villegas, 1997).

White Americans have consistently accounted for at least 86 percent of the teaching force in elementary and secondary public schools since 1971, the first year for which race information was reported for teachers in the *Digest of Education Statistics*. Between 1971 and 1980, the representation of black Americans in teaching held steady at 8 percent or slightly higher. In 1981, however, the proportion of black Americans began to drop until it reached a low of 6.9 percent in 1986. Concern in the education community over the loss of black teachers (see AACTE, 1987; Bass de Martinez, 1988; Cooper, 1986; Earley, 1987; Franklin, 1987; Graham, 1987; Irvine, 1988; Matcznski and Joseph, 1989; Post and Woessner, 1987; Spellman, 1988; Waters, 1989) resulted in a number of initiatives that boosted the fraction of black Americans in the teaching force back up to 8.0 percent by 1991. Since then, their share has declined again. As figure 1.12 shows, black teachers comprised only 7.3 percent of the total in 1996 (NCES, 1997c, 1999b). Some fear that the fraction of black educators will drop even further in the future.

The representation of Hispanics, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and American Indians/Alaska Natives in the teaching profession has also fluctuated since 1971, when collectively these groups accounted for 3.6 percent of all public school teachers. As figure 1.12 shows, in 1994 they comprised 6.1 percent of the teaching population. By 1996, however, their representation had dipped to 2.0 percent. This decline has led to calls for more aggressive recruitment of people from these racial/ethnic minority groups into teaching, especially from among the Latino population.

The underrepresentation of African Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities in the teaching force has been attributed to a variety of factors, most notably the inadequate education that many students of color receive in elementary and secondary schools, which limits the numbers who are eligible to go on to higher education in general and teacher education programs in particular. Equally problematic, the poor academic preparation of large numbers of those who complete high

FIGURE 1.12

Racial/Ethnic Distribution of the Teaching Force in Elementary and Secondary Public Schools for Selected Years

Figure 1.12a
Spring 1991

86.8%

5.2%

8.0%

☐ White   ▦ Black   ▦ Other

Figure 1.12b
Spring 1994

86.5%

6.1%

7.4%

☐ White   ▦ Black   ▦ Other

Figure 1.12c
Spring 1996

90.7%

2.0%

7.3%

☐ White   ▦ Black   ▦ Other

Source: NCES, 1997b, 1999a

school and go on to college (ETS, 1994) places many minority students at risk of dropping out of postsecondary education (King, 1993; Villegas, 1997).

The inability of teacher education to attract students of color also contributes to their underrepresentation in the teaching force (Coley and Goertz, 1991; Education Commission of the States [ECS], 1990; Irvine, 1988; King, 1993; Kirby and Hudson, 1993). Some of the reasons cited for the lack of popularity of teaching among people of color include increased opportunities for them in higher paying fields since the early 1980s (Kirby and Hudson, 1993), the difficult conditions of teaching (AACTE, 1987; Middleton et al., 1988; Zimpher and Yessayan, 1987), and increased use of loans as part of financial aid packages for postsecondary education, which deters minority students from choosing a career in a relatively poorly paid profession such as teaching (Dilworth, 1990).

Teacher education programs are also partly at fault for the relative absence of people of color in the teaching profession. While other academic fields compete actively for academically prepared students of color and offer potential candidates appealing incentives, teacher education programs generally pay scant attention to increasing their minority enrollments (Hood and Parker, 1991), nor do they allocate resources to retaining those minority students who enroll (Coley and Goertz, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1990). In chapter 5, we discuss ways to recruit more people of color into higher education in general and into teacher education in particular.

Teacher certification tests, which were introduced during the early 1980s as part of the accountability movement and have since become widely used, are another major barrier to increasing minority representation in the teaching force. While the long-term impact of teacher testing on minorities is not known, available data show that candidates of color have considerably lower pass rates than white candidates (Haney, Madaus, and Krietzer, 1987; Smith, 1992). Clearly, these tests have resulted in the exclusion of large numbers of people of color from teaching (Dilworth, 1990; Goertz and Pritcher, 1985; Smith, 1992).

It is highly unlikely that the teaching force will match the student population in terms of race/ethnicity in the foreseeable future. By highlighting disparities here, we do not mean to imply that teachers must be of the same backgrounds as their students to be effective. Nor are we advocating assigning teachers to students based on these social characteristics. We do want to emphasize, however, that most teachers and prospective teachers have no windows into the lives of increasingly greater numbers of their students. As we stated earlier, teacher education institutions can address this problem on two major fronts. They can

prepare all prospective teachers, including candidates of color, to be responsive educators. At the same time, they can attract more candidates of color into teacher education and provide them with the academic and social support they need to graduate and become certified teachers. In the remainder of this book, we detail our proposal for transforming teacher education, giving emphasis to both of these goals.