

# *Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform*

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### **THE MAINSTREAM-CENTRIC CURRICULUM**

The United States is made up of many different racial, ethnic, religious, language, and cultural groups. In the year 2000, people of color—such as African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans—made up 28 percent of the U.S. population. These groups are projected to make up 48 percent of the U.S. population by 2050 (Martin & Midgley, 1999). Despite the deepening ethnic texture within the United States, the U.S. school, college, and university mainstream curriculum is organized around concepts, paradigms, and events that reflect the experiences of mainstream Americans (Banks, 1996, 2004b). The dominant, mainstream curriculum has been challenged and fractured within the last thirty-five years, beginning with the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, the mainstream curriculum and textbooks today are much more multicultural than they were when the civil rights movement began. Progress has been made, and it should be acknowledged. However, the reforms have been neither as extensive nor as institutionalized as is needed, and the process of curriculum transformation needs to continue. Curriculum transformation is a process that never ends because of the changes that are continuing within the United States and throughout the world (Banks, 2004a).

A curriculum that focuses on the experiences of mainstream Americans and largely ignores the experiences, cultures, and histories of other ethnic, racial, cultural, language, and religious groups has negative consequences for both mainstream students and students of color. A mainstream-centric curriculum is one major way in which racism and ethnocentrism are reinforced and perpetuated in the schools, in colleges and universities, and in society at large.

A mainstream-centric curriculum has negative consequences for mainstream students because it reinforces their false sense of superiority, gives them a misleading conception of their relationship with other racial and ethnic groups, and denies them the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, perspectives, and frames of reference that can be gained from studying

and experiencing other cultures and groups. A mainstream-centric curriculum also denies mainstream U.S. students the opportunity to view their culture from the perspectives of other cultures and groups. When people view their culture from the point of view of another culture, they are able to understand their own culture more fully, to see how it is unique and distinct from other cultures, and to understand better how it relates to and interacts with other cultures.

A mainstream-centric curriculum negatively influences students of color, such as African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. It marginalizes their experiences and cultures and does not reflect their dreams, hopes, and perspectives. It does not provide them social equality within the school, an essential characteristic of democratic institutions (Gutmann, 2004). Students learn best and are more highly motivated when the school curriculum reflects their cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Many students of color are alienated in the school in part because they experience cultural conflict and discontinuities that result from the cultural differences between their school and community (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002). The school can help students of color mediate between their home and school cultures by implementing a curriculum that reflects the culture of their ethnic groups and communities. The school can and should make effective use of the community cultures of students of color when teaching them such subjects as writing, language arts, science, and mathematics (Delpit & Dowdy).

In the mainstream-centric curriculum, events, themes, concepts, and issues are viewed primarily from the perspective of mainstream Americans and Europeans. Events and cultural developments such as the European explorations in the Americas and the development of American music are viewed from Anglo and European perspectives and are evaluated using mainstream-centric criteria and points of view (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998).

When the European explorations of the Americas are viewed from a Eurocentric perspective, the Americas are perceived as having been “discovered” by the European explorers such as Columbus and Cortés (Loewen, 1995; Zinn, 1999). The view that native peoples in the Americas were discovered by the Europeans subtly suggests that Indian cultures did not exist until they were “discovered” by the Europeans and that the lands occupied by the American Indians were rightfully owned by the Europeans after they settled on and claimed them.

When the formation and nature of U.S. cultural developments, such as music and dance, are viewed from mainstream-centric perspectives, these art forms become important and significant only when they are recognized or legitimized by mainstream critics and artists. The music of African American musicians such as Chuck Berry and Little Richard was not viewed as significant by the mainstream society until White singers such as the Beatles and Rod Stewart publicly acknowledged the significant ways in which their own music had been deeply influenced by these African American musicians. It often takes White artists to legitimize ethnic cultural forms and innovations created by Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans.

### Public Sites and Popular History

Anglocentric history is not only taught in the nation's schools, colleges, and universities but is also perpetuated in popular knowledge in the nation's parks, museums, and other public sites. Loewen (1999) describes the ways in which public history in the nation's historic sites often distort history in order to present a positive image of Anglo Americans. The title of his book is *Lies across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*.

I have seen several examples of markers in public sites that perpetuate Anglocentric views of American history. The first appears on a marker in a federal park on the site where a U.S. Army post once stood in Fort Townsend in the state of Washington. With the choice of words such as *settlers* (instead of *invaders*), *restive*, and *rebelled*, the author justifies the taking of the Indians' lands and depicts their resistance as unreasonable.

#### Fort Townsend

A U.S. Army Post was established on this site in 1856. In [the] mid-nineteenth century the growth of Port Townsend caused the Indians to become *restive*. *Settlers* started a home guard, campaigned wherever called, and defeated the Indians in the Battle of Seattle. Indians *rebelled* as the government began enforcing the Indian Treaty of 1854, by which the Indians had ceded most of their territory. Port Townsend, a prosperous port of entry on Puget Sound, then asked protection of the U.S. army. (emphasis added)

The second example is in Marianna, Arkansas, my hometown, which is the city center for Lee County. The site commemorates the life and achievements of Confederate soldiers from Lee County and the life of Robert E. Lee, a general of the Confederate Army and a southern hero. The marker reads in part, "In loving memory of Lee County's Confederate soldiers. No braver bled for a brighter land. No brighter land had a cause so grand." The final example is from a marker in the Confederate Park in Memphis, Tennessee, which commemorates the life of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America. The marker reads, in part: "Before the war Between the States, he served with distinction as a United States Congressman and twice as a United States Senator. He also served as Secretary of War of the U.S. He was a true American patriot." Describing Davis as a "true American patriot" is arguable.

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### EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, educators have been trying, in various ways, to better integrate the school curriculum with multicultural content and to move away from a mainstream-centric and Eurocentric curriculum (Banks, 2002). These have proven to be difficult goals for schools to attain for many complex reasons. The strong assimilationist ideology embraced by most U.S. educators is one major reason (Banks, 2001). The assimilationist ideology makes it difficult for educators to think differently about how U.S. society and culture developed and to acquire a commitment to make the curriculum multicultural. Individuals who have a strong assimilationist ideology believe that most important events and developments in U.S. society are related to the nation's British heritage and that the contributions of other ethnic and cultural groups are not very significant by comparison. When educators acquire a multicultural ideology and conception of U.S. culture, they are then able to view the experiences and contributions of a wide range of cultural, ethnic, language, and religious groups as significant to the development of the United States.

Ideological resistance is a major factor that has slowed and is still slowing the development of a multicultural curriculum, but other factors have also affected its growth and

development. Political resistance to a multicultural curriculum is closely related to ideological resistance. Many people who resist a multicultural curriculum believe that knowledge is power and that a multicultural perspective on U.S. society challenges the existing power structure. They believe that the dominant mainstream-centric curriculum supports, reinforces, and justifies the existing social, economic, and political structure. Multicultural perspectives and points of view, in the opinion of many observers, legitimize and promote social change and social reconstruction.

During the 1980s and 1990s a heated debate occurred about how much the curriculum should be Western and European-centric or reflect the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity in the United States. At least three major positions in this debate can be identified. The ① Western traditionalists argue that the West, as defined and conceptualized in the past, should be the focus in school and college curricula because of the major influence of Western civilization and culture in the United States and throughout the world (Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger, 1991). ② Afrocentric scholars contend that the contributions of Africa and of African peoples should receive major emphasis in the curriculum (Asante, 1998; Asante & Ravitch, 1991). ③ The multiculturalists argue that although the West should receive a major emphasis in the curriculum, the West should be reconceptualized so that it reflects the contributions that people of color have made to the West (Zinn & Kirschner, 1995). In addition to teaching about Western ideals, the gap between the ideals of the West and its realities of racism, sexism, and discrimination should be taught (Dilg, 2003). Multiculturalists also believe that in addition to learning about the West, students should study other world cultures, such as those in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas as they were before the Europeans arrived (Gates, 1999).

Other factors that have slowed the institutionalization of a multicultural curriculum include the focus on high-stakes testing and accountability that has emerged within the last decade, the low level of knowledge about ethnic cultures that most educators have, and the heavy reliance on textbooks for teaching. Many studies have revealed that the textbook is still the main source for teaching, especially in such subjects as the social studies, reading, and language arts (Goodlad, 1984).

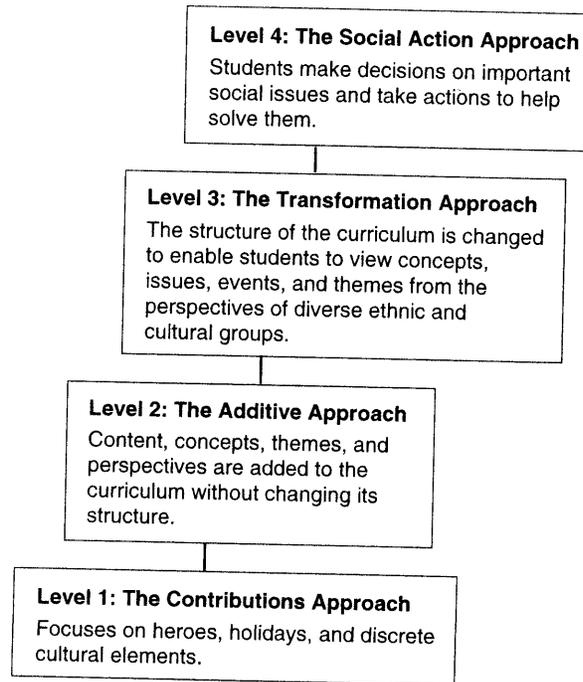
Teachers need in-depth knowledge about ethnic cultures and experiences to integrate ethnic content, experiences, and points of view into the curriculum. Many teachers tell their students that Columbus discovered America and that America is a “new world” because they know little about the diverse Native American cultures that existed in the Americas more than 40,000 years before the Europeans began to settle in the Americas in significant numbers in the sixteenth century. As Gary Howard (1999) states in the title of his cogent and informative book, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know*.

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## LEVELS OF INTEGRATION OF MULTICULTURAL CONTENT

### The Contributions Approach

I have identified four approaches to the integration of multicultural content into the curriculum (see Figure 10.1). The contributions approach to integration (Level 1) is frequently used when a school or district first attempts to integrate multicultural content into the mainstream curriculum.



**Figure 10.1 Banks's Four Levels of Integration of Multicultural Content**

The contributions approach is characterized by the insertion of ethnic heroes/heroines and discrete cultural artifacts into the curriculum, selected using criteria similar to those used to select mainstream heroes/heroines and cultural artifacts. Thus, individuals such as Crispus Attucks, Benjamin Bannaker, Pocahontas, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez are added to the curriculum. They are discussed when mainstream American heroes/heroines such as Patrick Henry, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Betsy Ross, and Eleanor Roosevelt are studied in the mainstream curriculum. Discrete cultural elements such as the foods, dances, music, and artifacts of ethnic groups are studied, but little attention is given to their meanings and importance within ethnic communities.

An important characteristic of the contributions approach is that the mainstream curriculum remains unchanged in its basic structure, goals, and salient characteristics. Prerequisites for the implementation of this approach are minimal. They include basic knowledge about U.S. society and knowledge about ethnic heroes/heroines and their roles and contributions to U.S. society and culture.

Individuals who challenged the dominant society's ideologies, values, and conceptions and advocated radical social, political, and economic reform are seldom included in the contributions approach. Thus, Booker T. Washington is more likely to be chosen for study than is W. E. B. Du Bois, and Pocahontas is more likely to be chosen than is Geronimo. The criteria used to select ethnic heroes/heroines for study and to judge them for success

are derived from the mainstream society, not from the ethnic community. Consequently, use of the contributions approach usually results in the study of ethnic heroes/heroines who represent only one important perspective within ethnic communities. The more radical and less conformist individuals who are heroes/heroines only to the ethnic community are often invisible in textbooks, teaching materials, and activities used in the contributions approach.

The heroes/heroines and holidays approach is a variant of the contributions approach. In this approach, ethnic content is limited primarily to special days, weeks, and months related to ethnic events and celebrations. Cinco de Mayo, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, birthday, and African American History Week are examples of ethnic days and weeks celebrated in the schools. During these celebrations, teachers involve students in lessons, experiences, and pageants related to the ethnic group being commemorated. When this approach is used, the class studies little or nothing about the ethnic or cultural group before or after the special event or occasion.

The contributions approach (Level 1 in Figure 10.1) provides teachers with a way to integrate ethnic content into the curriculum quickly, thus giving some recognition to ethnic contributions to U.S. society and culture. Many teachers who are committed to integrating their curricula with ethnic content have little knowledge about ethnic groups and curriculum revision. Consequently, they use the contributions approach when teaching about ethnic groups. These teachers should be encouraged, supported, and given the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to reform their curricula by using one of the more effective approaches described later in this chapter.

There are often strong political demands from ethnic communities for the school to put their heroes/heroines, contributions, and cultures into the school curriculum. These political forces may take the form of demands for heroes and contributions because mainstream heroes, such as Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, are highly visible in the school curriculum. Ethnic communities of color want to see their own heroes/heroines and contributions alongside those of the mainstream society. Such contributions may help give them a sense of structural inclusion, validation, and social equality. Curriculum inclusion also facilitates the quests of marginalized ethnic and cultural groups for a sense of empowerment, efficacy, and social equality. The school should help ethnic group students acquire a sense of empowerment and efficacy. These factors are positively correlated with academic achievement (Coleman et al., 1966).

The contributions approach is also the easiest approach for teachers to use to integrate the curriculum with multicultural content. However, this approach has several serious limitations. When the integration of the curriculum is accomplished primarily through the infusion of ethnic heroes/heroines and contributions, students do not attain a global view of the role of ethnic and cultural groups in U.S. society. Rather, they see ethnic issues and events primarily as an addition to the curriculum and consequently as an appendage to the main story of the development of the nation and to the core curriculum in the language arts, the social studies, the arts, and other subject areas.

Teaching ethnic issues with the use of heroes/heroines and contributions also tends to gloss over important concepts and issues related to the victimization and oppression of ethnic groups and their struggles against racism and for power. Issues such as racism, poverty, and oppression tend to be avoided in the contributions approach to curriculum integration. The focus tends to

be on success and the validation of the Horatio Alger myth that all Americans who are willing to work hard can go from rags to riches and “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.”

The success stories of ethnic heroes such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and Jackie Robinson are usually told with a focus on their success, with little attention to racism and other barriers they encountered and how they succeeded despite the hurdles they faced. Little attention is also devoted to the *process* by which they become heroes/heroines. Students should learn about the process by which people become heroes/heroines as well as about their status and role as heroes/heroines. Only when students learn the process by which individuals become heroes/heroines will they understand fully how individuals, particularly individuals of color, achieve and maintain hero/heroine status and what the process of becoming a hero/heroine means for their own lives.

The contributions approach often results in the trivialization of ethnic cultures, the study of their strange and exotic characteristics, and the reinforcement of stereotypes and misconceptions. When the focus is on the contributions and unique aspects of ethnic cultures, students are not helped to view them as complete and dynamic wholes. The contributions approach also tends to focus on the *lifestyles* of ethnic groups rather than on the *institutional structures*, such as racism and discrimination, that significantly affect their life chances and keep them powerless and marginalized.

The contributions approach to content integration may provide students with a memorable one-time experience with an ethnic hero/heroine, but it often fails to help them understand the role and influence of the hero/heroine in the total context of U.S. history and society. When ethnic heroes/heroines are studied apart from the social and political context in which they lived and worked, students attain only a partial understanding of their roles and significance in society. When Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks are studied outside the social and political context of institutionalized racism in the U.S. South in the 1940s and 1950s, and without attention to the more subtle forms of institutionalized racism in the North during this period, their full significance as social reformers and activists is neither revealed nor understood by students.

### The Additive Approach

Another important approach to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum is the addition of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic structure, purposes, and characteristics. The additive approach (Level 2 in Figure 10.1) is often accomplished by the addition of a book, a unit, or a course to the curriculum without changing it substantially. Examples of this approach include adding a book such as *The Color Purple* to a unit on the twentieth century in an English class, the use of the film *Miss Jane Pittman* during a unit on the 1960s, and the addition of a videotape on the internment of the Japanese Americans, such as *Rabbit in the Moon*, during a study of World War II in a class on U.S. history.

The additive approach allows the teacher to put ethnic content into the curriculum without restructuring it, a process that would take substantial time, effort, and training as well as a rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals. The additive approach can be the first phase in a transformative curriculum reform effort designed to restructure the total curriculum and to integrate it with ethnic content, perspectives, and frames of reference.

However, this approach shares several disadvantages with the contributions approach. Its most important shortcoming is that it usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspectives of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists because it does not involve a restructuring of the curriculum. The events, concepts, issues, and problems selected for study are selected using mainstream-centric and Eurocentric criteria and perspectives. When teaching a unit entitled “The Westward Movement” in a fifth-grade U.S. history class, the teacher may integrate the unit by adding content about the Oglala Sioux Indians. However, the unit remains mainstream-centric and focused because of its perspective and point of view.

A unit called “The Westward Movement” is mainstream and Eurocentric because it focuses on the movement of European Americans from the eastern to the western part of the United States. The Oglala Sioux were already in the West and consequently were not moving westward. The unit might be called “The Invasion from the East” from the point of view of the Oglala Sioux. Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux holy man, lamented the conquering of his people, which culminated in their defeat at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, 1890. Approximately 200 Sioux men, women, and children were killed by U.S. troops. Black Elk said, “The [Sioux] nation’s hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead” (Neihardt, 1972, p. 230).

Black Elk did not consider his homeland “the West,” but rather the center of the world. He viewed the cardinal directions metaphysically. The Great Spirit sent him the cup of living water and the sacred bow from the West. The daybreak star and the sacred pipe originated from the East. The Sioux nation’s sacred hoop and the tree that was to bloom came from the South (Black Elk’s Prayer, 1964). When teaching about the movement of the Europeans across North America, teachers should help students understand that different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups often have varying and conflicting conceptions and points of view about the same historical events, concepts, issues, and developments. The victors and the vanquished, especially, often have conflicting conceptions of the same historical event (Limerick, 1987). However, it is usually the point of view of the victors that becomes institutionalized within the schools and the mainstream society. This happens because history and textbooks are usually written by the people who won the wars and gained control of the society, not by the losers—the victimized and the powerless. The perspectives of both groups are needed to help us fully understand our history, culture, and society.

The people who are conquered and the people who conquered them have histories and cultures that are intricately interwoven and interconnected. They have to learn each others’ histories and cultures to understand their own fully. White Americans cannot fully understand their own history in the western United States and in America without understanding the history of the American Indians and the ways their histories and the histories of the Indians are interconnected.

James Baldwin (1985) insightfully pointed out that when White Americans distort African American history, they do not learn the truth about their own history because the history of Blacks and Whites in the United States is tightly bound together. This is also true for African American history and Indian history. The history of African Americans and Indians in the United States is closely interconnected, as Katz (1986) documents in *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*.

The histories of African Americans and Whites in the United States are tightly connected, both culturally and biologically, as Ball (1998) points out when he describes the

African Americans ancestors in his White family and as Gordon-Reed (1997) reveals when she describes the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, his slave mistress. The additive approach fails to help students view society from diverse cultural and ethnic perspectives and to understand the ways in which the histories and cultures of the nation's diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups are interconnected.

Multicultural history enables students and teachers to understand America's complexity and the ways in which various groups within the United States are interconnected (Takaki, 1993). Sam Hamod (cited in Reed, 1997) describes the way in which diverse ethnic perspectives enrich our understandings and lead to more accurate versions of U.S. society: "Our dual vision of 'ethnic' and American allows us to see aspects of the U.S. that mainstream writers often miss; thus, our perspectives often allow us a diversity of visions that, ironically, may lead us to larger truth—it's just that we were raised with different eyes" (p. xxii).

Content, materials, and issues that are added to a curriculum as appendages instead of being integral parts of a unit of instruction can become problematic. Problems might result when a book such as *The Color Purple* or a film like *Miss Jane Pittman* is added to a unit when the students lack the concepts, content background, and emotional maturity to deal with the issues and problems in these materials. The effective use of such emotion-laden and complex materials usually requires that the teacher help students acquire, in a sequential and developmental fashion, the content background and attitudinal maturity to deal with them effectively. The use of both of these materials in different classes and schools has resulted in major problems for the teachers using them. A community controversy arose in each case. The problems developed because the material was used with students who had neither the content background nor the attitudinal sophistication to respond to them appropriately. Adding ethnic content to the curriculum in a sporadic and segmented way can result in pedagogical problems, trouble for the teacher, student confusion, and community controversy.

### The Transformation Approach

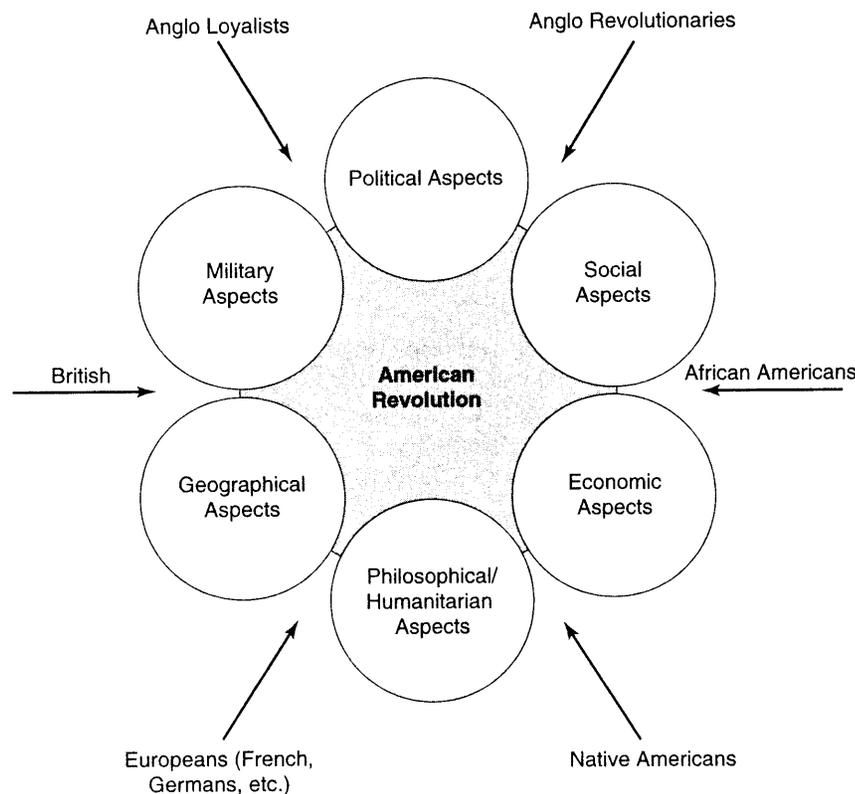
The transformation approach differs fundamentally from the contributions and additive approaches. In those two approaches, ethnic content is added to the mainstream core curriculum without changing its basic assumptions, nature, and structure. The fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed in the transformation approach.

The transformation approach (Level 3 in Figure 10.1) changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view. The mainstream-centric perspective is one of only several perspectives from which issues, problems, concepts, and issues are viewed. Richard White (1991), a historian of the American West, indicates how viewing the American West from a transformative perspective can provide new insights into U.S. history. He writes, "The first Europeans to penetrate the West arrived neither as conquerors nor as explorers. Like so many others history has treated as discoverers, they were merely lost" (p. 5).

It is neither possible nor desirable to view every issue, concept, event, or problem from the point of view of every U.S. ethnic and cultural group. Rather, the goal should be to enable students to view concepts and issues from more than one perspective and from the point of view of the cultural, ethnic, and racial groups that were the most active participants in, or were most cogently influenced by, the event, issue, or concept being studied.

The key curriculum issues involved in multicultural curriculum reform is not the addition of a long list of ethnic groups, heroes, and contributions but the infusion of various perspectives, frames of references, and content from different groups that will extend students' understandings of the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. society. When students are studying the revolution in the British colonies, the perspectives of the Anglo revolutionaries, the Anglo loyalists, African Americans, Indians, and the British are essential for them to attain a thorough understanding of this significant event in U.S. history (see Figure 10.2). Students must study the various and sometimes divergent meanings of the revolution to these diverse groups to understand it fully (Gay & Banks, 1975).

In the language arts, when students are studying the nature of U.S. English and proper language use, they should be helped to understand the rich linguistic and language diversity in the United States and the ways in which a wide range of regional, cultural, and ethnic groups have influenced the development of U.S. English. Students should also examine how normative language use varies with the social context, the region, and the situation. The use



**Figure 10.2 A Multicultural Interdisciplinary Model for Teaching the American Revolution**

Source: James A. Banks and Geneva Gay, "Teaching the American Revolution: A Multiethnic Approach," *Social Education*, Vol. 39, No. 7 (November–December 1975): 462. Used with permission of the National Council for the Social Studies.

of Black English is appropriate in some social and cultural contexts and inappropriate in others (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002). This is also true of standard U.S. English. The United States is rich in languages and dialects. The nation had more than 35 million Latino citizens in 2000; Spanish is the first language for most of them. Most of the nation's approximately 34.6 million African Americans speak both standard English as well as some form of Black English or Ebonics. The rich language diversity in the United States includes more than twenty-five European languages; Asian, African, and Middle Eastern languages; and American Indian languages. Since the 1970s, languages from Indochina, spoken by groups such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, have further enriched language diversity in the United States (Ovando & McLaren, 2000).

When subjects such as music, dance, and literature are studied, the teacher should acquaint students with the ways these art forms among U.S. ethnic groups have greatly influenced and enriched the nation's artistic and literary traditions. The ways in which African American musicians such as Bessie Smith, W. C. Handy, and Leontyne Price have influenced the nature and development of U.S. music should be examined when the development of U.S. music is studied. African Americans and Puerto Ricans have significantly influenced the development of American dance. Writers of color, such as Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, N. Scott Momaday, Carlos Bulosan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Rudolfo A. Anaya, and Piri Thomas, have not only significantly influenced the development of American literature but have also provided unique and revealing perspectives on U.S. society and culture (Gillan & Gillan, 1994; Rico & Mano, 1995).

When studying U.S. history, language, music, arts, science, and mathematics, the emphasis should not be on the ways in which various ethnic and cultural groups have contributed to mainstream U.S. society and culture. *The emphasis should be on how the common U.S. culture and society emerged from a complex synthesis and interaction of the diverse cultural elements that originated within the various cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious groups that make up U.S. society.* I call this process *multiple acculturation* and argue that even though Anglo Americans are the dominant group in the United States—culturally, politically, and economically—it is misleading and inaccurate to describe U.S. culture and society as an Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture (Banks, 2001). Other U.S. ethnic and cultural groups have deeply influenced, shaped, and participated in the development and formation of U.S. society and culture. African Americans, for example, profoundly influenced the development of the southern culture, even though they had very little political and economic power. One irony of conquest is that those who are conquered often deeply influence the cultures of the conquerors.

A multiple acculturation conception of U.S. society and culture leads to a perspective that views ethnic events, literature, music, and art as integral parts of the common, shared U.S. culture. Anglo American Protestant culture is viewed as only a part of this larger cultural whole. Thus, to teach American literature without including significant writers of color, such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Carlos Bulosan, and Toni Morrison, gives a partial and incomplete view of U.S. literature, culture, and society.

### The Social Action Approach

The social action approach (Level 4 in Figure 10.1) includes all the elements of the transformation approach but adds components that require students to make decisions and take

actions related to the concept, issue, or problem studied in the unit (Banks & Banks, with Clegg, 1999). Major goals of instruction in this approach are to educate students for social criticism and social change and to teach them decision-making skills. To empower students and help them acquire *political efficacy*, the school must help them become reflective social critics and skilled participants in social change. The traditional goal of schooling has been to socialize students so they would accept unquestioningly the existing ideologies, institutions, and practices within society and the nation-state (Banks, 2004a; Hahn, 1998).

Political education in the United States has traditionally fostered political passivity rather than political action. A major goal of the social action approach is to help students acquire the knowledge, values, and skills they need to participate in social change so that marginalized and excluded racial, ethnic, and cultural groups can become full participants in U.S. society and the nation will move closer to attaining its democratic ideals (Banks, 2004a). To participate effectively in democratic social change, students must be taught social criticism and helped to understand the inconsistency between our ideals and social realities, the work that must be done to close this gap, and how students can, as individuals and groups, influence the social and political systems in U.S. society. In this approach, teachers are agents of social change who promote democratic values and the empowerment of students. Teaching units organized using the social action approach have the components described below.

1. *A decision problem or question.* An example of a question is: What actions should we take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our school?
2. *An inquiry that provides data related to the decision problem.* The inquiry might consist of these kinds of questions:
  - a. What is prejudice?
  - b. What is discrimination?
  - c. What causes prejudice?
  - d. What causes people to discriminate?
  - e. What are examples of prejudice and discrimination in our school, community, nation, and the world?
  - f. How do prejudice and discrimination affect the groups below? How does each group view prejudice? Discrimination? To what extent is each group a victim or a perpetrator of prejudice and discrimination?
  - g. How has each group dealt with prejudice and discrimination?  
(Groups: White mainstream Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans)

The inquiry into the nature of prejudice and discrimination would be *interdisciplinary* and would include readings and data sources in the various social sciences, *biography*, *fiction*, *poetry*, and *drama*. *Scientific* and statistical data would be used when students investigated how discrimination affects the income, occupations, frequency of diseases, and health care within these various groups.

3. *Value inquiry and moral analysis.* Students are given opportunities to examine, clarify, and reflect on their values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings related to racial prejudice and discrimination. The teacher can provide the students with case studies from various sources, such as newspapers and magazines. The case studies can be used to involve the students in discussions and role-playing situations that enable them to express and to examine their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about prejudice and discrimination.

Poetry, biography, and powerful fiction are excellent sources for case studies that can be used for both discussion and role playing. Countee Cullen's powerful poem "Incident" describes the painful memories of a child who was called "nigger" on a trip to Baltimore. Langston Hughes's poem "I, Too" poignantly tells how the "darker brother" is sent into the kitchen when company comes. The teacher and the students can describe verbally or write about incidents related to prejudice and discrimination they have observed or in which they have participated. The following case, based on a real-life situation, was written by the author for use with his students. After reading the case, the students discuss the questions at the end of it.

### Trying to Buy a Home in Lakewood Island<sup>1</sup>

About a year ago, Joan and Henry Green, a young African American couple, moved from the West Coast to a large city in the Midwest. They moved because Henry finished his Ph.D. in chemistry and took a job at a big university in Midwestern City. Since they have been in Midwestern City, the Greens have rented an apartment in the central area of the city. However, they have decided that they want to buy a house. Their apartment has become too small for the many books and other things they have accumulated during the year. In addition to wanting more space, they also want a house so that they can receive breaks on their income tax, which they do not receive living in an apartment. The Greens also think that a house will be a good financial investment.

The Greens have decided to move into a suburban community. They want a new house and most of the houses within the city limits are rather old. They also feel that they can obtain a larger house for their money in the suburbs than in the city. They have looked at several suburban communities and decided that they like Lakewood Island better than any of the others. Lakewood Island is a predominantly White community, which is comprised primarily of lower-middle-class and middle-class residents. There are a few wealthy families in Lakewood Island, but they are exceptions rather than the rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission from James A. Banks (2003). *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, pp. 217, 219.

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Joan and Henry Green have become frustrated because of the problems they have experienced trying to buy a home in Lakewood Island. Before they go out to look at a house, they carefully study the newspaper ads. When they arrived at the first house in which they were interested, the owner told them that his house had just been sold. A week later they decided to work with a realtor. When they tried to close the deal on the next house they wanted, the realtor told them that the owner had raised the price \$10,000 because he had the house appraised since he put it on the market and had discovered that his selling price was much too low. When the Greens tried to buy a third house in Lakewood Island, the owner told them that he had decided not to sell because he had not received the job in another city that he was almost sure he would receive when he had put his house up for sale. He explained that the realtor had not removed the ad about his house from the newspaper even though he had told him that he had decided not to sell a week earlier. The realtor the owner had been working with had left the real estate company a few days ago. Henry is bitter and feels that he and his wife are victims of racism and discrimination. Joan believes that Henry is too sensitive and that they have been the victims of a series of events that could have happened to anyone, regardless of their race.

Questions: What should the Greens do? Why?

4. *Decision making and social action* (synthesis of knowledge and values). Students acquire knowledge about their decision problem from the activities in item 2 above. This interdisciplinary knowledge provides them with the information they need to make reflective decisions about prejudice and discrimination in their communities and schools. The activities in item 3 enable them to identify, clarify, and analyze their values, feelings, and beliefs about prejudice and discrimination. The decision-making process enables the students to synthesize their knowledge and values to determine what actions, if any, they should take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in their school. They can develop a chart in which they list possible actions to take and their possible consequences. They can then decide on a course of action to take and implement it.

### Mixing and Blending Approaches

The four approaches for the integration of multicultural content into the curriculum (see Table 10.1) are often mixed and blended in actual teaching situations. One approach, such as the contributions approach, can be used as a vehicle to move to other, more intellectually challenging approaches, such as the transformation and social action approaches. It is unrealistic to expect a teacher to move directly from a highly mainstream-centric curriculum to one that focuses on decision making and social action. Rather, the move from the first to higher levels of multicultural content integration is likely to be gradual and cumulative.

**Table 10.1 Banks's Approaches for the Integration of Multicultural Content**

Approach	Description	Examples	Strengths	Problems
Contributions	Heroes, cultural components, holidays, and other discrete elements related to ethnic groups are added to the curriculum on special days, occasions, and celebrations.	Famous Mexican Americans are studied only during the week of Cinco de Mayo (May 5). African Americans are studied during African American History Month in February but rarely during the rest of the year. Ethnic foods are studied in the first grade with little attention devoted to the cultures in which the foods are embedded.	Provides a quick and relatively easy way to put ethnic content into the curriculum. Gives ethnic heroes visibility in the curriculum alongside mainstream heroes. Is a popular approach among teachers and educators.	Results in a superficial understanding of ethnic cultures. Focuses on the lifestyles and artifacts of ethnic groups and reinforces stereotypes and misconceptions. Mainstream criteria are used to select heroes and cultural elements for inclusion in the curriculum.
Additive	This approach consists of the addition of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its structure.	Adding the book <i>The Color Purple</i> to a literature unit without reconceptualizing the unit or giving the students the background knowledge to understand the book. Adding a unit on the Japanese American internment to a U.S. history course without treating the Japanese in any other unit. Leaving the core curriculum intact but adding an ethnic studies course, as an elective, that focuses on a specific ethnic group.	Makes it possible to add ethnic content to the curriculum without changing its structure, which requires substantial curriculum changes and staff development. Can be implemented within the existing curriculum structure.	Reinforces the idea that ethnic history and culture are not integral parts of U.S. mainstream culture. Students view ethnic groups from Anglocentric and Eurocentric perspectives. Fails to help students understand how the dominant culture and ethnic cultures are interconnected and interrelated.
Transformation	The basic goals, structure, and nature of the curriculum are changed to enable students to view concepts, events, issues, problems, and themes from the perspectives of	A unit on the American Revolution describes the meaning of the revolution to Anglo revolutionaries, Anglo loyalists, African Americans, Indians, and the British. A unit on 20th-century U.S. literature includes works by William Faulkner, Joyce	Enables students to understand the complex ways in which diverse racial and cultural groups participated in the formation of U.S. society and culture. Helps reduce racial and ethnic encapsulation.	The implementation of this approach requires substantial curriculum revision, inservice training, and the identification and development of materials written from the perspectives of various racial and cultural groups.

**Table 10.1 Continued**

Approach	Description	Examples	Strengths	Problems
	diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial groups.	Carol Oates, Langston Hughes, N. Scott Momaday, Saul Bellow, Maxine Hong Kingston, Rudolfo A. Anaya, and Piri Thomas.	<p>Enables diverse ethnic, racial, and religious groups to see their cultures, ethos, and perspectives in the school curriculum.</p> <p>Gives students a balanced view of the nature and development of U.S. culture and society.</p> <p>Helps to empower victimized racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.</p>	Staff development for the institutionalization of this approach must be continual and ongoing.
Social Action	In this approach, students identify important social problems and issues, gather pertinent data, clarify their values on the issues, make decisions, and take reflective actions to help resolve the issue or problem.	<p>A class studies prejudice and discrimination in their school and decides to take actions to improve race relations in the school.</p> <p>A class studies the treatment of ethnic groups in a local newspaper and writes a letter to the newspaper publisher suggesting ways that the treatment of ethnic groups in the newspaper should be improved.</p>	<p>Enables students to improve their thinking, value analysis, decision-making, and social action skills.</p> <p>Enables students to improve their data-gathering skills.</p> <p>Helps students develop a sense of political efficacy.</p> <p>Helps students improve their skills to work in groups.</p>	<p>Requires a considerable amount of curriculum planning and materials identification.</p> <p>May be longer in duration than more traditional teaching units.</p> <p>May focus on problems and issues considered controversial by some members of the school staff and citizens of the community.</p> <p>Students may be able to take few meaningful actions that contribute to the resolution of the social issue or problem.</p>

A teacher who has a mainstream-centric curriculum might use the school's Martin Luther King, Jr., birthday celebration as an opportunity to integrate the curriculum with ethnic content about King as well as to think seriously about how content about African Americans and other ethnic groups can be integrated into the curriculum in an ongoing fashion. The teacher could explore with the students these kinds of questions during the celebration:

1. What were the conditions of other ethnic groups during the time that King was a civil rights leader?

2. How did other ethnic groups participate in and respond to the civil rights movement?
3. How did these groups respond to Martin Luther King, Jr.?
4. What can we do today to improve the civil rights of groups of color?
5. What can we do to develop more positive racial and ethnic attitudes?

The students will be unable to answer all the questions they have raised about ethnic groups during the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, birthday. Rather, the questions will enable the students to integrate content about ethnic groups throughout the year as they study such topics as the family, the school, the neighborhood, and the city. As the students study these topics, they can use the questions they have formulated to investigate ethnic families, the ethnic groups in their school and in schools in other parts of the city, ethnic neighborhoods, and various ethnic institutions in the city such as churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, schools, restaurants, and community centers.

As a culminating activity for the year, the teacher can take the students on a tour of an ethnic community in the city. However, such a tour should be both preceded and followed by activities that enable the students to develop perceptive and compassionate lenses for seeing ethnic and cultural differences and for responding to them with sensitivity. A field trip to an ethnic community or neighborhood might reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions if students lack the knowledge and insights needed to view ethnic cultures in an understanding and caring way. Theory and research indicate that contact with an ethnic group does not necessarily lead to more positive racial and ethnic attitudes (Allport, 1979; Schofield, 2004). Rather, the conditions under which the contact occurs and the quality of the interaction in the contact situation are the important variables.

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## GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING MULTICULTURAL CONTENT

The following fourteen guidelines are designed to help you better integrate content about racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups into the school curriculum and to teach effectively in multicultural environments.

1. You, the teacher, are an extremely important variable in the teaching of multicultural content. If you have the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills, when you encounter racist content in materials or observe racism in the statements and behavior of students, you can use these situations to teach important lessons about the experiences of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups in the United States. An informative source on racism is Gary Howard (1999), *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. Another helpful source on this topic is Chapter 11 in this book.
2. Knowledge about ethnic groups is needed to teach ethnic content effectively. Read at least one major book that surveys the histories and cultures of U.S. ethnic groups. One book that includes historical overviews of U.S. ethnic groups is James A. Banks (2003), *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*.

3. Be sensitive to your own racial attitudes, behaviors, and the statements you make about ethnic groups in the classroom. A statement such as “Sit like an Indian” stereotypes Native Americans.
4. Make sure that your classroom conveys positive and complex images of various ethnic groups. You can do this by displaying bulletin boards, posters, and calendars that show the racial, ethnic and religious diversity within U.S. society.
5. Be sensitive to the racial and ethnic attitudes of your students and do not accept the belief, which has been refuted by research, that “kids do not see colors.” Since the pioneering research by Lasker (1929), researchers have known that very young children are aware of racial differences and that they tend to accept the evaluations of various racial groups that are normative within the wider society (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Do not try to ignore the racial and ethnic differences that you see; try to respond to these differences positively and sensitively. Chapter 11 of this book provides thoughtful guidelines for avoiding the “colorblind” stance. Also see Walter Stephan (1999), *Reducing Prejudice and Stereotyping in Schools*.
6. Be judicious in your choice and use of teaching materials. Some materials contain both subtle and blatant stereotypes of groups. Point out to the students when an ethnic, racial, cultural, or language group is stereotyped, omitted from, or described in materials from Anglocentric and Eurocentric points of view.
7. Use trade books, films, videotapes, and recordings to supplement the textbook treatment of ethnic, cultural, and language groups and to present the perspectives of these groups to your students. Many of these sources contain rich and powerful images of the experience of being a person of color in the United States. Numerous books and videotapes are annotated in James A. Banks (2003), *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*.
8. Get in touch with your own cultural and ethnic heritage. Sharing your ethnic and cultural story with your students will create a climate for sharing in the classroom, will help motivate students to dig into their own ethnic and cultural roots, and will result in powerful learning for your students.
9. Be sensitive to the possibly controversial nature of some ethnic studies materials. If you are clear about the teaching objectives you have in mind, you can often use a less controversial book or reading to attain the same objectives. *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker (1982), for example, can be a controversial book. A teacher, however, who wants his or her students to gain insights about African Americans in the South can use *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, by Mildred D. Taylor (1976), instead of *The Color Purple*.
10. Be sensitive to the developmental levels of your students when you select concepts, content, and activities related to racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups. Concepts and learning activities for students in kindergarten and the primary grades should be specific and concrete. Students in these grades should study such concepts as *similarities*, *differences*, *prejudice*, and *discrimination* rather than higher-level concepts such as *racism* and *oppression*. Fiction and biographies

are excellent vehicles for introducing these concepts to students in kindergarten and the primary grades. As students progress through the grades, they can be introduced to more complex concepts, examples, and activities.

*(If you teach in a racially or ethnically integrated classroom or school, you should keep the following guidelines in mind.)*

11. View your students of color as winners. Many students of color have high academic and career goals. They need teachers who believe they can be successful and are willing to help them succeed. Both research and theory indicate that students are more likely to achieve highly when their teachers have high academic expectations for them.
12. Keep in mind that most parents of color are very interested in education and want their children to be successful academically even though the parents may be alienated from the school. Do not equate education with schooling. Many parents who want their children to succeed have mixed feelings about the schools. Try to gain the support of these parents and enlist them as partners in the education of their children.
13. Use cooperative learning techniques and group work to promote racial and ethnic integration in the school and classroom. Research indicates that when learning groups are racially integrated, students develop more friends from other racial groups and race relations in the school improve. A helpful guide is Elizabeth G. Cohen's *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom*.
14. Make sure that school plays, pageants, cheerleading squads, publications, and other formal and informal groups are racially integrated. Also make sure that various ethnic and racial groups have equal status in school performances and presentations. In a multiracial school, if all of the leading roles in a school play are filled by White actors, an important message is sent to students and parents of color whether such a message was intended or not.

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## SUMMARY

This chapter describes the nature of the mainstream-centric curriculum and the negative consequences it has for both mainstream students and students of color. This curriculum reinforces the false sense of superiority of mainstream students and fails to reflect, validate, and celebrate the cultures of students of color. Many factors have slowed the institutionalization of a multicultural curriculum in the schools, including ideological resistance, lack of teacher knowledge of ethnic groups, the heavy reliance of teachers on textbooks, and the focus on high-stakes testing and accountability. However, the institutionalization of ethnic content into the school, college, and university curriculum has made significant progress within the last thirty years. This process needs to continue because curriculum transformation is a development that never ends.

Four approaches to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum are identified in this chapter. In the *contributions approach*, heroes/heroines, cultural components, holidays,

and other discrete elements related to ethnic groups are added to the curriculum without changing its structure. The *additive approach* consists of the addition of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum, with its structure remaining unchanged. In the *transformation approach*, the structure, goals, and nature of the curriculum are changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, and problems from diverse ethnic perspectives.

The *social action approach* includes all elements of the transformation approach, as well as elements that enable students to identify important social issues, gather data related to them, clarify their values, make reflective decisions, and take actions to implement their decisions. This approach seeks to make students social critics and reflective agents of change. The final part of this chapter presents guidelines to help you teach multicultural content and to function more effectively in multicultural classrooms and schools.

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### Questions and Activities

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1. What is a mainstream-centric curriculum? What are its major assumptions and goals?
2. Examine several textbooks and find examples of the mainstream-centric approach. Share these examples with colleagues in your class or workshop.
3. How does a mainstream-centric curriculum influence mainstream students and students of color?
4. According to Banks, what factors have slowed the development of a multicultural curriculum in the schools? What is the best way to overcome these factors?
5. What are the major characteristics of the following approaches to curriculum reform: the contributions approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, the social action approach?
6. Why do you think the contributions approach to curriculum reform is so popular and widespread within schools, especially in the primary and elementary grades?
7. In what fundamental ways do the transformation and social action approaches differ from the other two approaches identified above?
8. What are the problems and promises of each of the four approaches?
9. What does the author mean by “multiple acculturation”? Do you think this concept is valid? Why or why not?
10. What problems might a teacher encounter when trying to implement the transformation and social action approaches? How might these problems be overcome?
11. Assume that you are teaching a social studies lesson about the westward movement in U.S. history and a student makes a racist, stereotypic, or misleading statement about Native Americans, such as, “The Indians were hostile to the White settlers.” How would you handle this situation? Give reasons to explain why you would handle it in a particular way.
12. Since September 11, 2001, and the United States/British–Iraq War in 2003, there has been an increased emphasis on patriotism in U.S. society. Some groups have called for

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