

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Barriers to Inclusion

Special Education in the United States
and Germany


Justin J. W. Powell



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JUSTIN J.W. POWELL

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Barriers to Inclusion provides an in-depth comparative and historical account of the rise of special education over the twentieth century in the United States and Germany. This institutional analysis demonstrates how professional groups, social movements, and education and social policies shaped the schooling of children and youth with disabilities. It traces continuity and change in special education classification and categorical boundaries, explores the growth of special education organizations, and examines students' learning opportunities and educational attainments. Highlighting cross-national differences over time, this book also investigates demographic and geographic variability within the federal democracies, especially in segregation and inclusion rates of disabled and disadvantaged children. Germany's elaborate system of segregated special school types contrasts with diverse American special education classrooms mainly within regular schools. Joining historical case studies with empirical indicators, this book reveals persistent barriers to school integration as well as factors that facilitate inclusive education reform in both societies.

Justin Powell's book compares German special education, hyper-organized but segregatory, with chaotic but more inclusionary American arrangements. The work is highly informed, with a strong historical perspective. It creatively explains the different national trajectories in terms of political, professional, cultural, and organizational arrangements. It will be of great interest to those concerned with special education, but also to sociologists of education, and students of comparative education more generally.

—John W. Meyer, Professor of Sociology, emeritus, Stanford University

By offering an astute comparison of special education systems in the United States and Germany, Barriers to Inclusion provides invaluable tools for understanding what educators on both sides of the Atlantic take for granted. Justin Powell gives us a meticulously researched and clearly argued account ever mindful of the major historical forces at work in both countries. The book suggests new ways to appraise mainstream approaches to education for all students, while raising broader questions about ideas of citizenship in two distinct socio-political contexts.

—Catherine Kudlick, Professor of History, University of California, Davis

This comparative analysis examines the multiplicity of barriers for individuals with disabilities to educational opportunities. Well written and carefully argued, this dynamic and multifaceted study offers an intriguing examination of two educational systems, provides important insights, and introduces a new perspective that combines disability studies paradigms with historical analysis.

—Angela Stone-MacDonald, Comparative Education Review

Justin J.W. Powell is Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Luxembourg.

To my family, on both sides of the Atlantic

First published 2011 by Paradigm Publishers

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Powell, Justin J.W., 1970–

Barriers to inclusion : special education in the United States and Germany /

Justin J.W. Powell.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-59451-208-7 (hc : alk. paper)

1. Special education—United States—History.
2. Special education—Germany—History.
3. Inclusive education—United States—History.
4. Inclusive education—Germany—History.

I. Title.

LC3981.P69 2011

371.90973—dc22 2010038984

ISBN 13: 978-1-59451-208-7 (hbk)

ISBN 13: 978-1-59451-209-4 (pbk)

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Acknowledgments

This book springs from a life lived in both the United States and Germany. Along the way, I have been blessed to be a member of diverse learning communities and to be in dialogue with others searching for answers to crucial questions addressed here about schooling, disability, and social inequality. The challenge is to adequately acknowledge all the people who have guided, assisted, and joined me along this path.

Growing up in the American South in the 1970s, I attended schools that had only recently been desegregated, racially. Children with disabilities would be the next group to be integrated in general public schools. This would require similar societal and political struggle. Under protection from the *Education of All Handicapped Children Act* of 1975, my twin brother Martin, ten minutes my senior, was among the first “mainstreamed” children in Charlottesville, Virginia. The local school district finally made necessary accommodations and allowed him to attend elementary school—2 years later. Growing up increasingly aware of such conflicts, and of persistent stigmatization and institutionalized discrimination, has shaped my understanding of social inclusion, of learning opportunities, and of institutional change.

Thanks to my grandparents, Marie Luise Foldberg Schmiegelow and Paul Kiene in Oldenburg, I was fortunate to spend my childhood summers learning to speak German and to cross cultural boundaries. The comparative analysis developed here builds on various phases of education and research in both countries, as exchange student, as doctoral candidate, and as postdoctoral fellow. This book explores a topic at the intersection of sociology of education, comparative-historical analysis, life-course research, and disability studies. Internationally, social scientific interest in disability has grown steadily over the years. I am grateful to Adrienne Asch, Richard Scotch, and Irving K. Zola, early advisors who awakened my interest in disability studies while I was still an undergraduate at Swarthmore College. Further periods of study, research, and teaching at the Universities of Heidelberg, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wisconsin–Madison, and Göttingen, as well as degrees earned at Berlin’s Humboldt and Free Universities have deepened my appreciation for similarities and differences in American and German educational institutions. Likewise, work at the Social Science Research Council in New York, between college and graduate school, offered insights into the frontiers of the social sciences as well as connections to scholars working across a range of disciplines in the United States and Europe.

Ties to the Max Planck Institute for Human Development (*Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung* [MPIB]) facilitated my move to Berlin. Thanks to Julia Delius, Maike Reimer, and Antje Stange for making my start at the MPIB in early 1999 so agreeable. There, I wrote my M.A. thesis, embarked on doctoral work, conducted most of this book’s comparative analysis, and wrote the initial draft, which was submitted to the Free University Berlin as a dissertation in sociology. I am deeply indebted to Karl Ulrich Mayer for giving me the opportunity to work at the MPIB in the first place, for his many insights and helpful comments, and for supporting the publication of this book. I am grateful to Heike Solga for recognizing the contributions that I could make

to her research group on the causes and consequences of educational disadvantage (*Ausbildungslosigkeit: Bedingungen und Folgen mangelnder Berufsausbildung*). Her open door, analytical vision, and continuous support over the past decade have made this scientific journey possible. Our tight-knit research group provided an ideal setting for growth, not only intellectual. For their support and encouragement, even as several of us transitioned to the *Georg-August-Universität Göttingen* and then to the Social Science Research Center Berlin (*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung* [WZB]), I thank Alessandra Rusconi, Dietmar Hobler, Lisa Pfahl, Maurice Gesthuizen, and Sandra J. Wagner, with whom I had the pleasure of sharing an office for several formative years. Alongside our group were other sociologists who provided a rich context for dialogue about education and life courses, including Hannah Brückner, Anke Höhne, Holger Seibert, Heike Trappe, Anne Goedicke, and Erika M. Hoerning. I also thank Gero Lenhardt, Hans-Peter Füssel, Lothar Krappmann, Gundel Schümer, and Wolfgang Edelstein for engaging conversations and enthusiasm for my work in progress. For his encouragement and good advice from the earliest stages of this project, I am grateful to Ulf Preuss-Lausitz.

Many other individuals contributed their time and knowledge to support my work on this project. Special, general, and inclusive educators and school administrators in several states and *Länder* allowed me to visit their classrooms and shared their experiences. Statisticians from the US Department of Education and from the *Kultusministerkonferenz* office in Bonn provided data sets and documents, even in advance of publication. Without access to well-stocked libraries and the librarians who maintain such collections and provide the needed specialist literature, such a comparative-historical study would not be possible. I express my gratitude to the staff of the MPIB's *Dokumentation*, especially Ursula Flitner. Thanks to Charles Maier and Abby Collins, who enabled my access to Widener Library for several months in Cambridge. Many years ago, Nicholas Lemann gave me insights into the writing life as I tracked down materials on the genesis of standardized testing in America at the New York Public Library and Teachers College, Columbia University. Merci to Bud Woodward of Alderman Library at the University of Virginia for obtaining several rare sources. I thank Larry Wu for making possible a productive research semester at the Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

My appreciation goes to scholars interested in disability and education in Germany who motivated me and provided valuable feedback: Walburga K. Freitag, Susanne von Below, Günther Cloerkes, Kai Felkendorff, Alexander Graser, Lutz Leisering, Anne Waldschmidt, Thomas Hofsäss, Sieglind Ellger-Rüttgardt, Rainer Benkmann, and Wolfgang van den Daele. I am also grateful to those colleagues further afield who commented on pieces and presentations that have evolved into this book, including Carol Poore, Mark Priestley, David Baker, Alan Sadovnik, Liat Ben-Moshe, Corinne Kirchner, Cathy Kudlick, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. Among the many colleagues and friends, some were particularly helpful in reading draft chapters at various stages and giving significant feedback from their distinctive sociological vantage points, for which I thank Heike Solga, John W. Meyer, Bernhard Ebbinghaus, Michael Maschke, Betina Hollstein, Lisa Pfahl, and John Richardson.

In the final stages of editing, the MPIB's in-house publishing team was superb, not least in mastering the shift from QuarkXPress to InDesign. I thank Erna Schiwietz, Dagmar Gülow, Renate Hoffmann, and most of all Christel Fraser for her thoroughness and patience in proofreading and layout. At Paradigm, Dean Birkenkamp was enthusiastic from the start and unfailingly understanding throughout an extended gestation period.

Over a good number of homecomings, Emily Powell & Bob Koester and Martin Powell hosted me, contributed proofreading, and affirmed this book's *raison d'être*. Before, during, and after many research or conference visits, a number of friends have been especially supportive and generous hosts, and I acknowledge them here. In New York, Simon St. Laurent, Jay Rhoderick, Domenica Pugliese & Omar Gonzalez, Andrea Schneeman & Christopher Spooner, Jennifer Griffin, and Karl B. Stewart made sure our connection wasn't lost. Diana Joy Colbert, Deborah Moss, Tim Sullivan, Matt Aldrich & Jessie Casida, and Tom Perica & André Gordon also welcomed me back to the "center of the universe." In San Francisco, Pat Egan and Lewis Bossing showed me the Pacific horizon. In Washington, Jeneen Piccuiro & Stas Burgiel and Erin Haney & Markus Goldstein took good care of me. Making it to Berlin regularly, Pamela Swett & Matthew Leighninger brought along their vivacious sons and their experiences as authors. At home in the German capital, I enjoyed vital sustenance from Betina Hollstein & Werner Rammert, Kathleen Shanahan & Andreas Lindner, Moritz von Bredow, Markus Spörndli, Sophie Schricker, and Frank Vollbehrr & Hans-Ulrich Südbeck.

My father witnessed the completion of my dissertation; though sadly not the printing of this book. As consummate book lovers and true believers in the power of education, my parents Angelika Schmiegelow Powell and Lazarus W. Powell III inspired me to add to our library. For a decade and a half now, I have shared much more than books with Bernhard Ebbinghaus, and I am most grateful for his sustaining companionship. Expressing my heartfelt appreciation to my family on both sides of the Atlantic, I dedicate this book to them.

JJWP

Special Education and Student Disability Over the Twentieth Century

To the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities ...
should be educated with children who are not disabled.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (United States, 1997)

The education of disabled youth should increasingly be accepted
principally as the shared responsibility of all schools.
KMK Recommendation on Special Educational Needs (Germany, 1994)¹

The United States and Germany are meritocratic societies that aspire to provide equal opportunities in education to all children and to integrate them as citizens into the democratic polity. Over the 20th century, both countries successfully eliminated the outright exclusion of disabled children and youth from public schooling, but they achieved this in contrary special education settings. While in the US students with disabilities spend time in a variety of special and general classrooms, in Germany most attend one of ten special school types that remain separate from general schools. Although inclusive education programs throughout these countries demonstrate that such educational models can be successfully implemented within both national contexts, tenacious barriers to inclusion persist.

Comparing these two nations, this book asks why their special education systems developed as they did, diverging over time. Legislative mandates and numerous court cases in both countries have assured disabled students' participatory rights in public schooling and reformed special education. However, students participating in special education continue to suffer stigmatization as well as frequent separation and segregation. Many children and youth identified as "having special educational needs"² still lack access to high expectations, rich curricula, and individualized support in the general classrooms of their neighborhood schools. In scores of places, even the general school attendance of children with disabilities proves challenging—or remains contested. While international conventions and charters reflect growing political, legal, and scientific support that emphasizes inclusive education's benefits for individual learning and its desirability in, and for, democratic society, it has yet to be universally accepted or achieved in either country.

Thus, the questions this study addresses are: If a repeatedly declared aim—put forth most forcefully by parent advocates and the disability rights movement—is to make schooling more inclusive, what explains the tenacity of barriers to inclusion evident throughout the American and German educational systems? Which ideologies, institutions, and interests are responsible for development and change in special and inclusive education? How have special education organizations been reformed in these countries—and with what consequences for students who are considered disabled?

Why have these systems diverged considerably, especially since World War II? How do American and German schools currently define and serve students with special educational needs, affecting their educational experiences and life courses?

Guided by an institutional perspective, the following chapters analyze changes in educational institutions and organizations. If we wish to understand why—to differing degrees—the US and Germany have not yet reached their proclaimed goal of inclusive education, we must observe structural and cultural barriers: diverse school settings as well as concepts of student disability. Often in conflict but also reflecting ambivalence toward special education, a host of professional and advocacy associations, social movement groups, and policymakers have shaped these systems, with significant consequences for students' school experiences and educational attainments. To better understand special education and student disability, I compare differing educational policies, school organizations, categories of special educational needs, and classification processes in these two nations over the 20th century.

By tracing changes in the symbolic and social boundaries of special educational needs, student disability will be analyzed primarily as an ascriptive social status, not as a fixed objective property of individuals. While the probability of being born with an impairment or becoming disabled early in life remains low, it increases during schooling, especially as learning disabilities are increasingly identified.³ Investigating special education, as it defines and elaborates educational norms, provides insights into changing societal and school-based conceptions of disability, intelligence, and competence.⁴ Analyses of special education's transformation uncover how educational systems manage the diversity of human abilities that schools are to foster and shape. They also allow us to gauge the provision of learning opportunities as well as of legitimated additional resources and accommodations that students need to access the curriculum and participate fully in school life.

Empirically, this book explores the historical origins and long-term growth of German and American (special) education that has universalized schooling for all children and youth. Of all disabled children and youth, often placed at the bottom of meritocratic hierarchies, some remain in general classrooms, while others are educated in separate classes or even in their own schools. The consequences of disparate special education institutions for students will be shown using indicators of classification rates, allocations to various special and inclusive education settings, and educational attainment probabilities.

The approach is both comparative and historical, as I investigate the construction of disabilities through one of the major institutions that defines them. In the longitudinal analysis, I will show that, with universalized compulsory schooling, not only did general education expand massively but special education grew apace. Embedded in general educational systems, subsidiary special education organizations developed, most rapidly since the mid-1950s. Provision of such schools and classrooms reduced the exclusion of children with perceived impairments and matched general education teachers' increasing transfers of disadvantaged or difficult students from general classrooms. As its student bodies became more heterogeneous, (special) educational systems differentiated them, using official classification systems, into a range of disability categories—and into

diverse organizational settings. The cross-national and regional comparisons emphasize both similar origins and contrasting developments of German and American educational systems within the context of the global rise of participatory rights to education for all and inclusive education.

This account charts a remarkable expansion of educational rights for children with disabilities over the 20th century, as it maps the development toward universal access to education as the key to citizenship in two societies that pioneered compulsory schooling and special education. While early founders of special education had focused mainly on educating blind and deaf people, today's special education programs serve a highly heterogeneous group of children with social, intellectual, ethnic, linguistic, and physical differences. Although children with similar disadvantages and disabilities can be found in all countries, significant disparities exist not only in the size of the identified group and its demographic characteristics but especially in provided learning opportunities.

The complex decision-making processes and management of schools from multiple levels of governance have led to considerable differences in reactions to the challenges of student diversity and individual learning needs. Over the past few decades, educational reforms have modified the increasingly successful provision of support and services to disabled children and youth, seeking to not only secure the quantity of learning opportunities but also to improve their quality. The issue is no longer whether to educate children with perceived impairments, but rather which services they should receive and in which educational settings. Today's conflicts are not so much about access to schooling itself, but rather about access to individualized and peer learning opportunities and to high expectations. At the heart of the debate surrounding inclusive education are the barriers that exist in the institutions and organizations of (special) education that continue to serve students outside general schools and classrooms.

These two nations' special education systems increasingly diverged since the Second World War, with the US maintaining a range from special schools to inclusive classrooms and Germany solidifying its two-track system of special and general schools. Whereas many American states have succeeded in replacing special schools and classes with inclusive classrooms over the past several decades, most of Germany's states (*Bundesländer*) maintain their segregated school systems. Internationally, these two country cases lie between the most segregating (e. g., Belgium, Greece) and most inclusive national educational systems (e. g., Italy, Norway; see EADSNE 2003; OECD 2004; Chapter 2). In both countries, attempts to achieve the goal of inclusive education have been challenged, especially in secondary education. Which disadvantages should be compensated, how much, in which school settings, and what level of school certification should result remains a matter of continued debate. Ambivalence toward well-intentioned, but often stigmatizing, special education programs highlights the tension between the aspiration to equality and merit measured by standardized tests and school performance.

Regardless of one's normative preference for traditional special education or for inclusive education, the fact remains that, despite repeated rhetorical promises and legal commitments, neither the American nor the German society has fully embraced the unitary model of educating (nearly) all students together in general classrooms.⁵

Whereas access to education as a human right is globally understood and sought after, and nations compete using their educational investments to foster scientific innovation and produce human capital, inclusive education has only recently attained the status of a global norm (UNESCO 1994; OECD 2004). Yet the codification of inclusive education also underscores the parallel “paradigm shift” (Kuhn [1962] 1970) in understanding disability from medical to social models—from an emphasis on charity, welfare, and rehabilitation to a focus on human rights, antidiscrimination, and participation—that has spread quickly around the world over the past few decades (see Degener & Quinn 2006). In this book, attention is given to such global models and discourses in education and disability as well as citizenship and universal personhood (see Soysal 1994). Those ideas frame the study of how the national and regional (special) education systems in the US and Germany responded to the global expansion of rights and organized the schooling of disabled children and youth differently.

Compulsory Schooling, Citizenship, and Special Education

If an educated citizenry is the foundation of a democracy, it also represents the basis of a nation’s economy because skill formation is crucial not only for formulating political values but also for working in complex organizations. Compulsory schooling laws were originally enacted to socialize national citizens and to ensure the preparation of future workers (Heidenheimer 1997). By offering free public education and making it compulsory, democratic nation-states acknowledged the intimate relationship between education and citizenship (Marshall [1950] 1992: 16). Developed at the nexus of industrializing nation-states, forceful social movements and growing citizenship rights, mass schooling arose with the cultural ideologies of the modern system and the nation-state (Ramirez & Meyer 1980: 393). Socializing and integrating diverse student populations into the rapidly developing industrial nation represented crucial challenges for schools. As nation-states invested in, and mandated, schooling to educate their young citizens, their educational systems expanded in scale and scope. First, they did so in respect to literacy, then kindergartens, secondary schools, and higher education institutions (Meyer et al. 1977; Kaelble 2002), with educational systems extending their reach over the life course as students began to spend ever more time in school. Provision of learning opportunities and skill formation have become increasingly valued public goods, relied on for social and economic development as well as for democratic governance.

While compulsory schooling was initially introduced in Prussia and Massachusetts, Saxony included children with impairments from 1873, and Massachusetts was the first American state to do so, from 1885. Although these states were thought to be approaching universal mass education by 1870, with “all” children attending school, the formal enactment of compulsory schooling laws should not be (mis)taken for social reality, as nearly universalized enrollment rates often preceded or followed enactment (Meyer, Ramirez & Soysal 1992). Indeed, as this book emphasizes, the exclusion of disabled children has only been fully eliminated over the past few decades. They constitute the last group to be granted widespread access—in principle—to local neighborhood schools.

When accomplished in practice, compulsory schooling of all children greatly increased student body diversity, as girls, children of low socioeconomic status, migrants and ethnic minorities, and finally those with perceived impairments were brought to school. Educational systems responded to this challenge with increasing differentiation through school structures, such as age grading (Tyack & Cuban 1995: 88–91) and special education (Richardson & Parker 1993: 361). The goal of these reforms was to homogenize learning groups, in an attempt to resolve the tension between expanded access to common schooling and organizational constraints (Richardson 1999, 2000). Many schools and teachers lacked the resources and support, the training and methods, or the determination to accept these students. Informed by disciplinary knowledge, classification systems and groups or tracks based on ability and intelligence were organizational, pedagogic, and political responses to that diversity. In fact, while compulsory attendance affirmed the goal of schooling for all school-age children, it also specified the rules for the exemption of those deemed “ineducable” or “disabled”: Developments in special education reflect changes in these rules of access to, and passage through, schooling (Richardson 1999: 148).

As emergent mass educational systems in Germany and the US reflected evolving conceptions of citizenship, the rise of special education detailed dialectical relationships between in/educability, ab/normality, and dis/ability.⁶ Over 200 years and more, special educators elaborated their profession, specializing on types of student dis/ability most often based on statistically derived and psychometric definitions of ab/normality and intelligence. From the beginning, such cultural ideologies and models, inscribed in educational policies, affected which children were classified disabled and schooled in mostly segregated special education, if at all. The spread of special education, gradually at first, resulted in the concomitant establishment of special classes and schools to meet these newly acknowledged needs and rights of disabled and disadvantaged students. Often after a professional struggle, especially vivid in the perennial debates about the value of integrative versus special schooling, organizational forms emerged as the embodiment of the profession’s ideas and compromises.

While disablement, especially among war veterans, was a central concern of early welfare states (Skocpol 1995), disabled citizens in both countries have been among the last social groups to establish their rights in the areas of education, political participation, and labor markets. However, in accord with the power of citizenship, social movements continue to press for the inclusion of disabled people (Janoski 1998: 232).⁷ As democratic political culture developed, people were less and less willing to ignore surrounding inequalities, especially those that are viewed as arbitrary or unfair, such as being born with an impairment (Phillips 1999: 132). As states concerned with the welfare of their citizens expanded their social and educational policies to address a variety of individual needs and risks, special education grew to attend to those relating to learning. The rationale for state investment in education gradually extended to include children of all backgrounds and those with perceived impairments. Yet, such children fundamentally challenged and changed these systems, which, in turn, produced new categories—and larger numbers—of disabled students.

Rising expectations and standards in schooling have led to increasing proportions of students who participate in special education programs. These are charged with the

task of compensating for a variety of student disadvantages and to meet strict standards. While special education's diverse educational settings emerged gradually, they have expanded far more rapidly since the Second World War. Such programs offered assistance not only to children with recognized impairments. Increasingly, they also served children with a variety of learning needs that the profession defined, often in conjunction with developments in psychology, medicine, and neuroscience. While public schooling attempted to systematically provide learning opportunities for all children, special education programs demonstrated that all children can participate in, and benefit from, schooling. While special educators have played a key role in individualizing education and innovating pedagogic praxis before such strategies were adopted in general education (see Safford & Safford 1996), inclusive education programs accentuate the considerable benefits of classroom diversity for each individual's intellectual and social learning process. The ideal emphasizes the importance of respecting and honoring differences and to enable all children to develop their competencies without stigmatization. Around the world, shared regard for the transformative power of education and common visions of schooling and curricula shape what, and how, students learn. Nevertheless, considerable national and regional disparities indicate that a variety of pedagogic strategies and types of schools and classrooms can attain—or attempt to meet—such collective goals as literacy and social competence.

As this study will demonstrate, educational systems structure the alternatives available to individual students and their educational trajectories. Student disability must be understood as the result of educational institutions and interactive processes and may not be abridged to embodied differences. A key insight of social-political models of disability is that, if environmental and attitudinal barriers were removed, disablement could be substantially, if not completely, reduced. Among these barriers is ableism, defined as prejudice or discrimination against people with disabilities.⁸ While physical and communicative access to schooling has been improved in many areas, especially in recent decades, much remains to be done to ensure that all schools and classrooms are accessible to most children. Considerable recent successes in schooling even the most disabled students manifest the importance of access and accommodations. However, attempts to replicate such state, regional, and local successes are often fraught with implementation difficulties, due to the complexities of school systems and contingent historical developments. Further, the self-fulfilling prophecy of ableism contributes to students' disablement, however difficult it is to measure its quality or quantity. Despite these challenges, promising educational models are powerful motivational tools for ongoing reforms and innovation in pedagogical practices.

Today, not only does education influence political and economic allocation but also having educational credentials has become the "primary mechanism by which individuals are defined as full and legitimate societal members" (Ramirez & Rubinson 1979: 80). International declarations of human rights identify education as fundamental, as essential and indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights, and for development. Education is a global human right that states must provide, and indeed it seems that nearly everyone supports this movement toward universal access to education and equal opportunity, even given interindividual variations in ability (Meyer 2001). Responding to

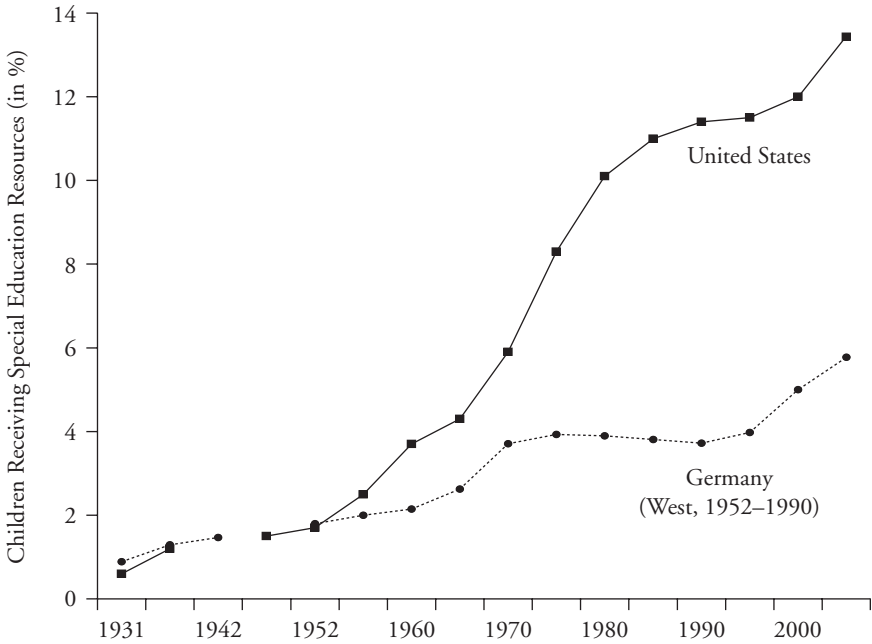
these principles, governments and nongovernmental organizations around the world have committed themselves to “education for all.” Indeed, “public schooling has become the major means by which governments try to promote positive economic change, strengthen national identity, and inculcate citizenship values and behavior in entire populations of people” (Baker & LeTendre 2005: 1). School participation, performance, and certification all enjoy tremendous importance in societies around the world—and for most people.

If real educational expansion reduced exclusion, then it was the ideal of equal opportunity that encouraged even underprivileged groups to invest in schools’ offerings. As participation rates, educational achievement goals, and attainment levels have risen, children and youth who remain unsuccessful in school and fail to earn valued credentials face disadvantages throughout their life courses. While substantial disparities between and within nations exist, disabled individuals’ position vis-à-vis both education and employment has often been tenuous, as conventional arguments against their schooling reflected hesitance to invest in their developing capabilities (see Nussbaum 2006). However, proponents of self-sufficiency and the importance of each individual’s contribution to society have countered that point of view. But such arguments about equality of educational opportunity and individual self-reliance only go so far. Indeed, disabled people suffer both formally and substantively unequal citizenship, as “efficiency and productivity are irretrievably ableist discourses that can only condemn (some) persons with disabilities to a presumptive inferior status. An enabling citizenship needs to be unshackled from the ideology of productivity and efficiency” (Devlin & Pothier 2006: 18). Alternative ambitious goals, such as equality, dignity, and solidarity, are set forth in the *World Declaration on Education for All* and *Framework for Action* that aim to universalize opportunities to learn: “Every person—child, youth and adult—shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs” (UNESCO 2000). Further, all children should learn together to counteract exclusion from schooling as well as marginalization within schools (Peters 2004). In the interim, the cases of Germany and the US—pioneers in providing schooling for all and in developing special education—emphasize the challenges all countries face in restructuring schools to achieve inclusive education. The main theme of this book is the comparison of how the US and Germany successfully reduced disabled children’s exclusion from schooling by building special education systems—and their ongoing struggles to implement inclusive education reforms, which call these systems into question.

Comparing the Development of Special Classes in the United States and Germany’s Special Schools Since 1900

Contrasting the development of special education in these nations shows that its main organizational forms—special classes and special schools—resulted from differing models of special education and from choices powerful groups made in particular times. Analyses of the national trajectories, their divergence, and manifold regional differences within these nations facilitate the identification of principal barriers to inclusive education. To evaluate the impact of the (at times contradictory) forces of

Figure 1.1
Special Education Population (% of Schooled Children),
United States and Germany, 1931 to 2003



Note. Germany 2000 includes “integrated” students for the first time.

Source. Germany: Statistisches Bundesamt 1951: 13, 1957: 22–25; Myschker 1969: 161, 1983: 120–166; Hofsäss 1993: 70; Krappmann, Leschinsky & Powell 2003: Figure 17.1. US: Mackie 1969; NCES 1993; Trent 1994; Richardson 1999; US DoED 2005 and prior years, author’s calculations.

aiming to achieve high standards of educational performance and put into practice inclusive education, I compare the two-track segregated German educational system of special and general schools with the American multitrack system, a continuum ranging from special schools to inclusive classrooms. I argue that to understand the divergent institutionalization of special education requires attention to three major phases: First, special education adopted a similar structure to that of the general educational system (*isomorphism*); second, special education diffused and differentiated (*expansion*); and third, segregated schools and separate classes persist (*inertia*). While the two countries had special education populations of similar proportion until the mid-1950s (see Figure 1.1), the American system has expanded much more quickly than the German system since then.

Recovering from large-scale eugenic and social Darwinist experiments, both countries established significant new school structures—segregated schools and separate

classes—for students with particular learning needs. Social and political reformers challenged and changed many of the older institutions, many of which had not followed a primarily pedagogical mission. Over the post-World War II period, the US established ever more special education classrooms, which separated students within a school, reinforced by other more or less common tracking practices in general schools. In contrast, special educators in Germany developed a multitude of types of independent special schools (*Sonderschulen*), added at the bottom end of the hierarchy of general school types. Policymakers at, and below, the national level and local decision makers responded to defined learning needs by providing additional resources to special education. They extended the rights for access to public (and private) education. Such policies strengthened parental groups and disability advocates in their quest to further reduce disabled children's *exclusion* from public education, often with a view toward realizing *inclusion* via full-time participation in general classrooms. People with disabilities, increasingly organized in a global social movement, challenge medical or individual deficit models of disability. Inclusive schooling and antidiscrimination legislation are two pillars of the movement's political struggle and of disability policy, and indeed these reinforce each other.

Whereas most studies do not examine how system growth affects how educational opportunities are distributed (Walters 2000: 242), this book emphasizes the dynamic relationship between the expanding provision of a form of education and changes in demand for schooling (see Lundgreen 2000, 2003). Together, these shape the distributions of learning opportunities and credentials. I will argue that decision makers in the US and Germany have met widespread demands for increased access to education by disadvantaged groups not only through general educational expansion but also by elaborating legitimated organizationally fitting parallel systems of special education to serve ever more students. I will show that the institutions and organizations that grew to supply *special* education reflect the competing educational and social ideologies, scientific and professional principles, and diverse interest groups that had influenced the genesis and growth of *general* educational systems.

Special and inclusive education's organizational settings offer highly variable opportunities to learn, even as most students spend more years in school. Educational expansion has increased the overall level of educational attainment in successive cohorts. However, despite considerable compensatory investments, the distribution of opportunities and outcomes has not (yet) been equalized among groups, along class, gender, ethnic, and dis/ability boundaries. The many factors to be analyzed include the growing disabled student population, school structures and social selection processes—bureaucratically routinized and professionally legitimated—and their interplay at multiple levels. By investigating how segregating and separating schools and classrooms evolved over the 20th century, we can better understand today's continuing struggles over inclusive education.

In the following chapters, I will analyze the institutionalization of special education and explore cultural and structural barriers that have constrained efforts to achieve inclusive education, especially since the 1960s. Based on evaluations of the main lines of development from special education's origins, the case studies examine the core

educational ideals, dis/ability definitions, and special education classification systems; review the main trends of educational expansion and differentiation over the past century; and delineate major special and inclusive education reforms in each country.

Classifying “Special Educational Needs”: Categorical Boundaries of Student Disability and Disadvantage

The third theme running throughout the book is the shifting demographics of students who participate in special education. Which social groups and categories of students received which learning opportunities, and what consequences did these school settings have for their educational experiences and attainment? Immediately evident are not only national but also considerable state and local differences in disability definitions, in school structures, and also in the barriers to, or facilitators of, inclusive education. Such differences indicate that the implementation of inclusion depends not only on national contexts and continuing reforms but also on local-level understandings and ongoing school restructuring.

In particular, I examine three processes relating to “special educational needs” categories and their institutionalization:

- (1) the social mechanism of *classification* (gatekeepers classifying students based on the concepts in/educability, ab/normality, and dis/ability) together with the symbolic and social boundaries of special education categories—as well as continuity and change in classification systems that produce the demographics of special education, along such lines as disability, socioeconomic status, gender, race or ethnicity, measured intelligence, and behavior;
- (2) the highly variable organizational settings in which disabled students attend school and the resulting differential *learning opportunities* and educational pathways offered; and
- (3) probabilities of *educational attainment* (credentials that youth in special education may earn) that affect their later employment opportunities and life chances.

Thus, I focus on changes in cultural categories, organizational structures, and institutional conditions at the nexus of the ascribed low status of student disability and low educational attainment. Disabled children bear a significantly higher “risk of educational failure” (Richardson 2000: 307 ff.), defined as leaving secondary education without certification. Paradoxically, educational expansion has *increased* stigmatization of less-educated youth because they constitute the lowest educational category—that has become smaller and more socially selective over time—while ever more of their peers have earned certificates (Solga 2002b: 164, 2005). But as these risks accumulate among special education students in each country, differing institutional arrangements provide specific vocational education and training and employment opportunities.

Temporal and spatial differences result in significant disparities in the size and composition of special education populations, in group learning opportunities, and in individual educational attainments. Considerable regional variation in these indicators reflect the decentralized governmental control of schooling in these federal nations.

Investigating historical, national, and regional dimensions of variance enables us to locate environmental and attitudinal barriers and factors that affected the institutionalization of special and inclusive education, such as ideologies, traditions, and social movements. These systems' development, current social and educational policies, and types of federalism affect the balance of special and inclusive education. Regional disparities in such factors as population density, economic conditions, and poverty rates impact schooling and student performance. Disciplines and professions, especially through teacher training, influence which programs are offered and how curricula are implemented. The effects of differing school organizations and opportunity structures become visible in the presented indicators.

Special education classification processes and categories (re)define students and establish boundaries around groups of children, not only on the basis of "dis/ability" but also age, gender, race and ethnicity, language skills, and behavior. Understanding these factors on multiple levels more fully, we learn about both opportunities and constraints in implementing reforms of (special) educational systems. This knowledge is crucial for designing inclusive schools that strive to more fully utilize the diversity of interests and abilities found among all groups of children: to develop each individual's intellectual and social competencies.

At the local level of schools, international and national categories of special educational needs or dis/ability are interpreted, revised, and applied to individual students. As I will show, such characteristics are subjective relational constructions, as even the theoretically most "objective" categories, such as blindness, exhibit highly variable classification rates. Categories of special educational needs are interpreted by the relevant decision makers quite subjectively, according to local conditions, knowledge, and preferences. Although the existence of these needs is taken for granted, the individual categories are highly contested due to local definitions and meanings. But, categories also have careers, with enhanced awareness and research often leading to rapid increases in classification rates. For example, a quarter of American parents surveyed in the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) in 2001 thought their child had an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Wagner & Blackorby 2002: 24), a category that has received considerable media attention (on diagnostic expansion through medicalization, see Conrad & Potter 2000). However, the allocation of classified students to learning opportunity structures no longer follows directly from such categorical differentiation, given that students in every disability category can now be found in every type of school setting. Membership in a category often provides fewer answers than questions it raises.

Similarly, recent standards-based reforms and mandated achievement outcomes affect students already in special education and increase the number transferred—on the basis of increasingly stringent accountability measures and rising standards.⁹ The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation in the US that sanctions low-performing schools and a plethora of reforms in Germany since the first results of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests were published in 2001 have increased the pressure to perform. These developments provide multiple incentives for increasing classification of students. The disparate participation rates of disabled

students, internationally and locally, in large-scale assessments indicate these programs' increasing, although not uniform, authority. As will be shown throughout this study, categorical boundary-drawing is of great consequence for individual students and for schools, as it not only determines who will receive additional resources to access the curriculum but also who will be considered disabled in school.

Organization of the Book

Divided into three parts, the book's first part provides theoretical approaches to examine the macro level of national and state educational systems, the meso level of schools and settings, and the micro level of classroom interactions, categorical boundaries, and classified students. Chapter 2 focuses on comparative and historical methods and their application to national educational systems, as it embeds the American and German special education cases in an international comparison of special education. Chapter 3 explores concepts to help understand the institutionalization of special education systems over the 20th century. Here, the focus is especially on changes in the organization of schools and school systems that structure opportunities to learn in American and German special and general schools and classrooms.

Chapter 4 reviews the debate about paradigms of dis/ability and "special educational needs," explicating the mechanism of classification that regulates the differentiation and allocation of students. Discussing categorical boundaries and statistical "normality," this chapter systematizes the evolution of categories, analyzing American and German dis/ability classification systems historically. Relevant gatekeeping processes within school systems will be elaborated: evaluation, identification, referral, assessment, diagnosis, and classification. Official classification results in altered educational opportunities and attainments and thus affects educational and occupational trajectories over the life course.

The main empirical part presents historical analyses of national education policy and school organizational developments, identifying similarities and differences in special education institutionalization, especially the post-World War II divergence of American and German systems. In particular, this section presents current rates of classification, distribution among types of schooling, and educational attainment rates. The country case studies explore national and regional trends.

Chapter 5 investigates special education's role within American schools, analyzing educational expansion and increasing integration by general education policy change, federal mainstreaming mandates together with local and state (non)compliance, and growing minority group rights. Chapter 6 discusses the growth of Germany's special school system since 1900, within hierarchically ordered school systems, directed and defended by a powerful group of teacher civil servants. Inclusion and integration indices show variance among the 50 American states and 16 German *Länder* and by disability category. Such disparities indicate that educational structures significantly affect social groups' and individuals' educational success or failure. Chapter 7 presents the results from the empirical chapters in a systematic cross-national comparison of classification,

learning opportunity, and attainment patterns. Focusing mainly on the period from the 1960s onward, I describe historical continuities in special education, massive educational expansion and differentiation generally, and education policies, recommendations, and ongoing reforms.

Then, the prior analyses are synthesized to answer the questions outlined above. Chapter 8 discusses crucial explanatory factors of the national divergence in special education institutionalization: similar ideological, social, and political tensions, but differing institutional environments and organizational constraints. Societal and educational disability paradigms and the implementation of special and inclusive education policies in contrasting legal and political systems determined which schooling structures evolved and how. The institutional histories and empirical findings highlight not only structural and cultural differences over time but also demographic and geographic variability. I trace (special) education developments from their origins to identify the ideas and interests behind legitimated organizational solutions to student heterogeneity. The final chapter posits that inclusive education's success in the 21st century will depend on many of the same social and political forces that determined the rise of special education in the 20th century. A better understanding of the relevant factors that blocked past reforms in some places, but enabled inclusive education to flourish in others, will facilitate continuing efforts to reduce the remaining barriers to inclusion.

Comparing Special Educational Systems

Considerable differences exist between special education categories and organizations, even among advanced industrial countries. This chapter locates the American and German cases in a broader cross-national comparison. It explores approaches to investigate educational stratification and “student disability,” emphasizing the benefits of comparative and historical research on educational systems. Neither comparative education nor educational sociology has given much sustained attention to special and inclusive education. Yet ongoing debates about education for all and inclusive education as well as rapid shifts in understanding the phenomenon of disablement emphasize the richness of this field of inquiry, especially from a life-course perspective. Beyond the significant discrepancies across time and place in the meanings attached to individual learning processes and human development trajectories, comparative special education investigates variations in the responses to these differences, in the provision of learning opportunities in diverse settings, and in the preparation for transitions from school to further education, vocational training, and work. While this study utilizes available aggregate statistics to accomplish this, it also emphasizes that the limited range of data sources on this large minority group and the continued exclusion of disability from many large-scale national and cross-national investigations has become an increasingly problematic barrier to education research and reform. As governments and international organizations rely more than ever on benchmarks of student competencies, performance, and achievement, as well as curricular standards to guide policy change and legitimate resource distribution, the growing proportion of students considered to have special educational needs must be acknowledged. Researchers must also address diverse cross-cultural understandings of dis/abilities and the associated difficulties in constructing and utilizing cross-national data sets.

Despite these challenges, the available evidence does enable us to cast grave doubts on clinical models that predominantly identify disability as an individual deficit. The data presented here is meant to underscore the significance of cultural contexts and historical contingency in determining who is classified as disabled, not just during school careers but beyond, and to inspire further comparative research. The cross-national description first focuses on cultural norms and values relating to dis/ability, expressed in the categorical boundaries of special educational needs. Especially through professionalized school gatekeepers who apply standards, these elaborate bureaucratic classifications spread disciplinary knowledge, define rights, and determine resources available for special education’s dynamic constituent group (discussed in-depth in Chapter 4). Secondly, examining special education organizations provides unique insights into the differentiation and allocation processes that sort students within complex school structures, defining who will have access to which opportunities and curricula (discussed in-depth in Chapter 3). Transfer into special education is fraught

with ambivalence and is often contentious and requires extensive mediation between its many positive and negative consequences: not only the provision of additional resources and protection of rights but also prevalent stigmatization; even institutionalized discrimination. Reflecting this state of affairs, the overview of special education categories and organizational forms also situates the American and German cases, in which multiple levels of comparison are explicitly addressed, from the global and national to the state and local levels. There is broad consensus on the importance of early and sustained access to learning opportunities and high expectations for personal development that facilitates active participation in communities and occupational success. Furthermore, we know that, while educational systems do successfully reduce some inequalities, they also (re)produce others. This chapter demonstrates the contribution that comparative special education research can make to our enhanced understanding of the construction of student dis/ability and of educational and social inequalities.

Comparing Special Education Categories

Given the dominance of the professions and medical models of disability that define special educational needs, we might expect that rates would be roughly similar across advanced industrialized countries. Yet the proportions of all children classified vary considerably, from less than 1 % to nearly a fifth of all students across Europe (EADSNE 2003). Such large differences exist not only in the overall size of the group receiving resources and its demographics but also in the respective categories of special educational needs. Although similar disadvantages and types of impairments can be found in all countries, special education programs obviously serve a highly diverse group of children and youth. Therefore, the first step to take is an analysis of the distinctions these systems make and the types of needs they deem relevant.

The cross-national overview begins with special education classification systems and categories used in 20 countries. We find a wide range, with one end of the spectrum—Denmark, Norway, and the United Kingdom—utilizing no elaborated classification system in official education statistics, but rather grouping identified students in one general “special educational needs” category, or distinguishing solely between those students with and without official statements or records of need. In contrast, the OECD monitored the categorical provision of resources, reporting in 2004 that Belgium’s Flemish-speaking community distinguishes fully 17 special education categories.¹ Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Mexico, and the US each distinguish 15 categories, followed by Canada’s province of British Columbia, Czech Republic, Finland, Spain, and Switzerland each recognizing 14 categories. Other countries included in the OECD review count somewhat fewer categories: France and Luxembourg 13 each, Hungary and Japan 12, Turkey 11, Italy and Poland 10, and Sweden 9. If such differentiation is seemingly unnecessary for the provision of support at least in some developed democracies, why is the number of categories so disparate even among the remaining countries? (see Table 2.1)

Table 2.1
Categories of Special Educational Needs Used in Twenty Countries

Categories in use	BEL- CAN-																				No.
	USA	DEU	FI	BC	CZE	FIN	FRA	GRC	HUN	IRL	ITA	JPN	LUX	MEX	NLD	POL	ESP	SWE	CHE	TUR	
Partially sighted	15	15	17	14	14	14	13	15	12	15	10	12	13	15	15	10	14	9	14	11	20
Blind																					20
Partially hearing																					20
Deaf																					20
Physical disabilities																					20
Learning difficulties (severe)																					20
Learning difficulties (moderate)																					19
Learning difficulties (light)																					9
Learning disabilities																					15
Second language/mother-tongue-teaching																					15
Emotional and behavioral difficulties																					13
Speech and language difficulties																					13
Disadvantaged																					12
Combinatorial disabilities																					12
Other																					11
Hospital																					9
Traveling children																					5
Gifted and talented																					4
Autism																					3
Remedial help																					3
Aboriginal and indigenous																					2
Young offenders																					2

Note. Not included are countries that use no elaborated classification system, such as Denmark, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

+ Many American states have "gifted and talented" programs, but national special education legislation has not led to the establishment of programs in all states.

* Germany's Conference of Culture Ministers (*Kultusministerkonferenz* [KMK]) issued a recommendation on "autism" in 2000, but it is not yet an independent support category (*Förderstuehpunkte*).

Source. Adapted from OECD 2004; Annex 2.

Turning to the 22 categories currently used to identify students with disabilities, difficulties, and disadvantages, all the selected countries that differentiate included the categories “partially sighted,” “blind,” “partially hearing,” “deaf,” “physical disabilities,” and “learning difficulties” in their classification systems (OECD 2004: Annex 2). Three quarters of these countries included “learning disabilities” and “second language teaching” as categories, with almost as many reporting “emotional and behavioral difficulties” and “speech and language disabilities.” In more than half of the countries, “disadvantaged,” “combinational disabilities,” and “other” are used. Finally, in a small proportion of countries, the following categories are also applied to legitimate provision of funds to students—“gifted and talented,” “autism,” “remedial help,” “aboriginal and indigenous,” and “young offenders.” Recent cross-national studies of inclusive and special education and social exclusion have condensed these nearly two dozen categories into just three broad classes of students who “receive additional resources to access the curriculum” (Evans et al. 2002; OECD 2004): (a) children with disabilities; (b) children with learning difficulties; and (c) children with disadvantages. This typology emphasizes the main groups served by special education programs and policies. However, as the country case studies show in detail (Chapters 5 and 6), significant differences in classification between and within countries are found not only when including disadvantaged students or those with learning disabilities but also in the seemingly most “objective” categories, such as “blind” or “deaf” (see Table 2.1).

Returning to cross-national population size estimates, we find that the proportion of students who receive special education resources, of all compulsory school-age students in a European and North American sample, stretches from Greece and Italy with less than 1.5%, to Finland where almost 18% of all schoolchildren receive some form of special education services, with Germany at 5% and the US at 12% in between (Powell 2006). These differences can no longer be attributed solely to clinically diagnosable differences in learning abilities, but rather call for social explanations.

Here, a summary of social constructionist logic (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Hacking [1986] 1999; Gergen 2001) helps to make sense of the presented cross-national data. Social constructionist theses critically assess the status quo in that they emphasize the effects of ideologies, historical processes, and social forces on a taken-for-granted element of contemporary society. Yet, according to Ian Hacking (1999: 19), there are varied grades of commitment to such critique, from historical to ironic, reformist or unmasking, rebellious, and even revolutionary. Such analyses usually follow the same general steps, beginning with a precondition and advancing toward optional arguments, each subsequently more radical. Applied to the case of special education, the starting point is that, in the present state of affairs, special education is taken for granted—special education appears to be inevitable and functionally necessary. Relying primarily on clinical models of disability, special education is widely presumed to be an indispensable response to individual impairments, learning needs, or abnormal behavior in school. In contrast, “social constructionism challenges the assumption that there is a fixed and unchanging essence of human disability” (Turner [1960] 2001: 253 f.). Critical studies frequently do more than simply question the taken-for-grantedness of special education in most contemporary societies. They doubt the benefits derived from existing special

education programs, or they argue even more pointedly that society would be “better off” if special education were “done away with,” or at least radically transformed. Some social model theorists go even farther, arguing that disability is entirely produced by society, emphasizing oppression as a consequence of contemporary social structures (e. g., Oliver 1990, 1996). Recent debates in Disability Studies explore alternative and additional perspectives, from feminism (Morris 1991; Thomas 1999) to postmodernism (Corker & Shakespeare 2002; Davis 2002; Tremain 2005) to critical realism (Shakespeare 2006). These lines of thought argue that the strong form of the social model overstates the case, may disregard embodied individual differences and lived experiences, and bolsters thinking in dichotomies. However, regardless of contemporary dialogue on the cutting edge of Disability Studies, increasingly over the past few decades new paradigms in science, policy, and advocacy have replaced clinical models and individual deficit thinking with social-political models of disability that emphasize participation over charity, rights over welfare, and inclusive education over segregated schooling. In the case at hand, a sociological approach explaining the considerable categorical differences as the result of culturally embedded and historically evolved educational systems seems most promising, regardless of one’s grade of commitment to change.

While cross-national data show vast variance in nearly every indicator relating to the complex phenomena of disablement and education, they represent only the first step toward understanding the complex meaning of these differences. Not only is the needed in-depth research on educational systems lacking but these are continuously being reformed. Whereas the field of cross-national educational policy analysis has grown tremendously over time, research on special and inclusive education is less well developed, which hinders comparative work (Thomas & Loxley 2001). However, as with the above-presented data on categories, available information on additional resources and the educational environments in which they are delivered facilitates the generation of relevant questions to ask of the status quo.

Comparing Special Education Organizations

In terms of educational settings, a remarkable range of educational organizations provides services in special schools or classes as well as more mainstream settings in Europe (Eurydice 2005). These countries have or are implementing reforms toward more school integration or inclusive education, but at very different paces (EADSNE 1998). In fact, the World Bank reports that most countries around the world have started to establish inclusive education programs (Peters 2004), yet among OECD countries, the proportion of schoolchildren considered to have special educational needs who are integrated in general school settings ranges from almost none to almost all (OECD 2004). Thus, while all advanced industrialized countries classify some students, provide particular organizations to serve such students, and confer educational credentials on them, the learning environments they experience differ, sometimes dramatically. This emphasizes that special education organizations must also be analyzed, not only the special educational needs categories in use and their local meanings. Social-political accounts of

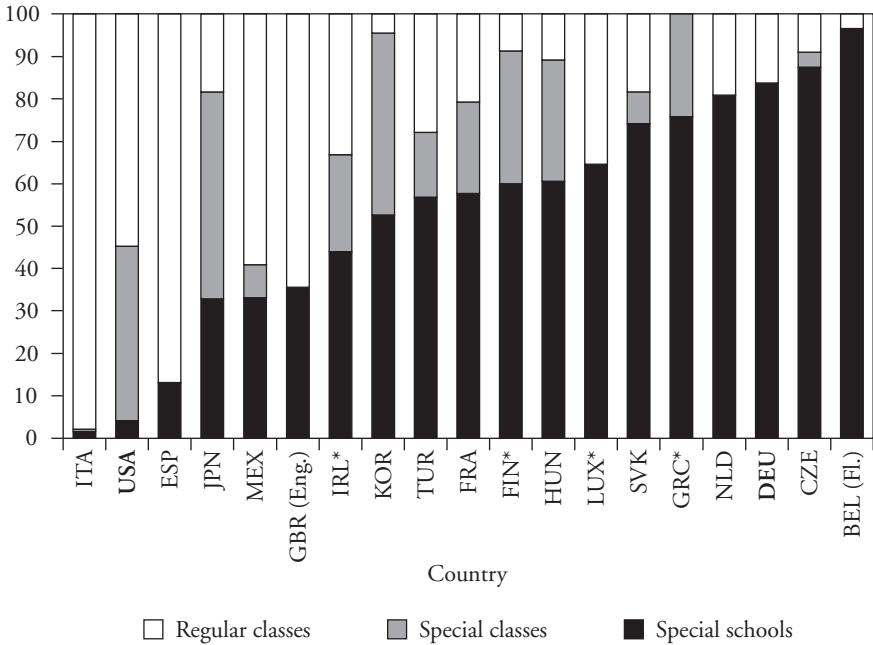
disability underscore that the power and authority of disciplinary professionals, decision makers at multiple levels of governance, and local bureaucrats determine who will be recognized as disabled or who will be considered to have special educational needs and in which contexts these students go to school.

The described cross-national disparities suggest that typologies and in-depth country comparisons are needed to explore such variance in population sizes and in provided learning opportunities by analyzing students' classification into special education and their allocation to school settings that grant or constrain opportunities—along a continuum from segregation and separation to integration and inclusion (see Chapter 3). Taking, as a test case, the group of students with special educational needs that most countries define, what is the share of students with disabilities (defined as impairments and illnesses) of compulsory school age who attend segregated special schools? In OECD countries, we find a range from Italy at 1.7% and the US at 4.3% to Japan, Mexico, and England at around a third, to Turkey, Finland, France, and Hungary at three fifths, and the Netherlands, Germany, and Czech Republic at more than four fifths (Figure 2.1). Among the sampled countries, students with perceived special educational needs are most likely to be segregated in Belgium's Flemish community (96.7%).² Such heterogeneity directly raises the question: What is the relationship between classification rates and levels of segregation? A European cross-national analysis of the proportion of students "with special educational needs" out of all students found that the group's size and the total segregation rate correlated only weakly: Lower segregation and higher inclusion rates cannot be explained merely as a function of a larger population of classified students that presumably includes more students with "mild" or "high-incidence" disabilities, who are more likely to attend general schools and classrooms (Powell 2006).

Although last century many asylums and special schools were closed in favor of students sharing in the mainstream of school life, segregating or separating disabled students remains part of policies and practice in most countries, despite international charters and national legislation that aim to increase school integration and/or inclusive education. The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE 1998: 178 ff., 2003) groups countries into a tripartite typology based on educational system structure: *two-track* systems with parallel development of general schools and legally and organizationally separate special schools (such as in Germany); *multitrack* systems offering a continuum of settings and services from special schools to schooling partially in separate schools or classrooms to full-time participation in general classrooms (like in the US); and *one-track* systems that aim for "full inclusion," and succeed in educating (nearly) all students in general classrooms (as in Canada's province of New Brunswick, Iceland, Italy, and Norway). Throughout Europe, while inclusion of disabled students in compulsory general education is agreed upon as desirable, such models have yet to be universally accepted as appropriate for *all* children and youth, especially due to issues of quality (Eurydice 2005: 129 f.) and because of institutional and organizational barriers that hinder provision of supports flexibly within general school settings.

Recent debates in Europe have centered on legislative advances prioritizing an increase in institutional flexibility (movement toward a continuum of settings and services), growing awareness of funding system consequences (e. g., incentives to classify,

Figure 2.1
Students With Disabilities Receiving Additional Resources During Compulsory
Education, by Education Environment (in %), Selected Countries, 2001



Note. OECD cross-national category A “students with disabilities” typically includes students who receive additional resources to access the curriculum related to perceived impairments, for example, seeing, hearing, physical, intellectual (see OECD 2004: 37–46). For Germany and Spain, students in special classes are included in the special schools category. For France, data includes students receiving support from both the Ministries of Education and of Health, which likely slightly inflates the special school proportion in comparison with countries that do not count students outside the educational system.

*1999 data.

Source. OECD 2004: 82 (Chart 5.2).

segregate, or separate), and the importance of parental choice (EADSNE 2003). Contemporary challenges to inclusive schooling after primary level consist of increased curricular and organizational differentiation, such as tracking or streaming and heightened awareness of educational standards and accountability for outcomes (EADSNE 2006). Unfortunately, despite the quantification and comparison of every aspect of schooling, comparable data on educational outcomes is almost completely lacking for students in special and inclusive education, thus “future data gathering exercises will focus on collecting outcome data” (OECD 2004: 131). Providing a model, the US National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS), commissioned by the US Department

of Education (US DoED), investigated the transition to adulthood of youth with disabilities from 1985 through 1993 (Wagner et al. 1993). US National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), a decade-long study, is based on data from parents, youth, and schools on the experiences and achievements of 12,000 youth nationwide who were 13 to 16 years of age in 2000 (Wagner et al. 2006). Such studies are crucial to chart the accumulation of disadvantages over entire careers and to understand the impact of disablement on personal, social, and economic outcomes as youth transition from adolescence to adulthood (Wells, Sandefur & Hogan 2003). Detailed investigations of the types of support provisions and programs offered in secondary schools are crucial because, even in those countries in which most students do attend a general school, the goals of individualized support for accessing the curriculum and for transitioning to vocational training, postsecondary education, and employment are not always met. These questions of access to learning opportunities, the impact of differing educational settings, and the progress in reducing social and environmental barriers to participation and their consequences for participation are key topics for stratification research, especially in life-course perspective, to which we now turn.

Educational and Social Stratification in Life-Course Perspective

Comparative stratification studies that utilize a life-course approach exemplify the strategy of connecting early inequities with differential life chances. To understand persistent social inequalities requires analysis of education policies and school systems to determine how these structures provide learning opportunities and how inequalities accumulate over time through distributions of educational attainments (Kerckhoff 1993, 1995, 2000, 2001). The main factor accounting for cross-national variations in a range of outcomes is the overall supply of education and the channeling of students through different institutions and transitions (Müller & Karle 1993: 19; Shavit & Blossfeld 1993). Throughout Europe and North America, educational reforms aiming to equalize opportunities have generally failed, with children from more advantaged class backgrounds having higher educational attainment levels than children from less advantaged backgrounds. In recent decades, some countries successful in increasing intergenerational mobility achieved this by reducing class inequalities in educational attainment and by lowering the impact of class among individuals with similar educational attainment (see Breen & Jonsson 2005). Many countries, however, have more than equalized educational participation and attainment rates for females (Smyth 2005), with girls underrepresented in special education programs in developed countries (OECD 2004). Among OECD countries, Germany has among the strongest linkages between parents' educational attainment, class origin, and children's educational opportunities (Mayer & Hillmert 2003). Two approaches help to explain these tenacious inequalities in opportunities and attainment. Cultural reproduction theory (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) emphasizes the impact of families' transfer of their social, economic, and especially cultural capital, which positively influences the development of children's abilities—before and during schooling—and their evaluation via the child's habitus or behavioral and communica-

tion styles. Boudon (1974) has called this impact “the primary effect of socialization,” whereas the secondary effect of socialization can be described as educational decision making in school careers based on abilities, aspirations, and ambition: An individual makes rational decisions as he or she invests in education and training and transitions through educational sequences, given differences in resources and constraints (Breen & Goldthorpe 1997). While the debate about the relative importance of these primary and secondary effects on social disparities in education continues, it is clear that globalization in the 1990s exacerbated many inequalities, with youth facing heightened uncertainty as they transitioned to adulthood (Blossfeld et al. 2005). In particular, less-educated youth as an ever smaller group in expanded educational systems bear proportionately more risk due especially to increased stigmatization (Solga 2002a, 2002b, 2005). The segregated schools and separate classrooms in which much professionalized special education is offered remain acutely stigmatizing. These students become a low-status associational group sharing a common culture within organizations (Collins 1977: 125 ff.) that convert social hierarchies into academic hierarchies of more gifts, merits, or skills defined by the educational system (Bourdieu 1990: 496). Not only outright exclusion and segregation but also participation in lower status educational tracks may lead to fewer learning opportunities and fewer or less valuable educational credentials. Disparities in families’ social and cultural capital and differential opportunities to learn within and between schools stratify each cohort of students (Sørensen 1996).

Beyond educational inequalities, sociological research has also emphasized modern nation-states’ increased institutionalization of individuals’ life courses as it exemplifies needs and risks addressed by authorized professionals in legitimate organizations (Mayer & Müller 1986: 234). Special education represents a paradigmatic case of such institutionalization as its particular and growing role reflects one of the most highly legitimated mechanisms of school stratification: More than ever before in education societies, being disabled means being less educated (Powell 2006). Moreover, if being less educated increases the risk of becoming disabled, both factors lead to social exclusion (e.g., EFILWC 2003). Those who are disabled early in life face a much greater risk of poverty, associated with their systematically reduced educational opportunities (OECD 2003b). This is no new phenomenon, as youth in special education have been considered “at risk” for well over a century (Sarason & Doris 1979; Gliedman & Roth 1980; Richardson 1999). The institutionalization—regulative but also often residential—of these individuals’ life courses had been steady until advocates of “normalization” and “deinstitutionalization” challenged this status quo in recent decades (e.g., Braddock & Parish 2001; Meister 2001; Johnson 2003).

As special education programs represent the lowest status track, they serve a subsidiary function within selective educational systems that are rooted in competing societal values of merit and equality. Yet, educational stratification research has largely ignored the fact that students in special education—whatever their social class background—are placed into a low-status group with limited access to certain learning opportunities and high expectations provided by teachers and classmates. As Sally Tomlinson (1985) has argued, special education should be analyzed as an increasingly prevalent mechanism of school stratification in technologically based knowledge societies in which labor markets

will not absorb all job seekers, and special needs are an “ideological rationalization” defending interests served by special education expansion.

Yet the question remains, to what extent does special education increasingly *substitute* for other less authoritative or legitimate low-status tracks or school types? The country case studies will emphasize national patterns of association between classification systems and rates that guide and measure selection processes, schooling structures that differ in the quality and quantity of opportunities they offer, and the resulting (low) educational attainments. This comparative and historical study contributes to a body of research that, contrary to conventional wisdom, argues that special education students are too often *disabled* by the very “special” educational programs and schools built for them, even if these were implemented with the best intentions and special educators are to be credited with reducing outright exclusion from schooling in the first place. Thus, the two country case studies ask how special education settings—authorized to offer *different* educational opportunities—may unintentionally *reduce* individual access to opportunities to learn and also lower expectations. These factors, in combination with well-known regulatory limits on certification, are hypothesized to reduce educational attainment. The emphasis here is on the organizations that structure learning experiences prior to leaving school; thereafter it is often too late for effective compensatory interventions due to the cumulative nature of learning.

From a life-course perspective, another significant negative consequence of segregation and separation that inclusive schooling aims to counteract is the loss of experience of the diversity of dis/abilities. Schools play a significant role in shaping each cohort’s views of human variations by structuring interactions between students in categories of very different status. School practices meld the developing identities of special education students and those who are not yet disabled. Because almost no one lives without experiencing disability at some point during their life, becoming acquainted with the issues of living with disability through personal contact provides useful knowledge (Zola 1982, 1989: 242). Understanding disablement reveals a social phenomenon whose supposed marginality is simply incorrect: Even among advanced industrial countries, an average of 14% of the population is considered disabled (OECD 2003b), making this one of any society’s largest minority groups. Variations and changes in abilities are a key feature of human life, constituting a universal human experience. Thus, learning about this variation from direct experience in classrooms should be a goal of schools as they prepare children and youth for their current and later lives. Because societies organize individuals’ perspectives on the life course—their own and others’—with considerable institutional support (Meyer 1986b, 1992b: 83), these choices can be revisited and reformed. Especially in its control over compulsory schooling, the state defines transitions, orders sequences, and creates incentive structures (Mayer & Schoepflin 1989). Thus, expanding (special) education systems have increasingly defined not only who will become disabled in schools but also after leaving school. Schools may reproduce disabling ideologies, or they may offer opportunities to change societal values about dis/ability and dis/advantage by explicitly or implicitly valuing the diversity of human abilities. As demonstrated here, the choices that have been made regarding special education and inclusive schooling differ sharply, from time to time and place to place.

Yet sociologists have only just begun to analyze how dis/ability is defined in each historical period, who defines it, in what contexts, and with what consequences (Barton 1998: 54f.). To accomplish this, however, requires attention to the dynamic symbolic and social boundaries of this heterogeneous group, the institutions within which disability is constructed, and the environmental conditions, organizations, and gatekeepers that disable or enable individuals. Among children and youth, special education is the main organization that dichotomizes students as it draws boundaries around dis/ability and ab/normality. Extraordinary shifts in how societies treat people who are classified disabled, often within just a few years or decades, highlight the importance of emphasizing such dialectical exchange of social structures and individual lives (Riley 1989; Giele & Elder 1998); of individuals' life courses embedded in and shaped by historical times and places (Hogan 1989; Elder 2001: 8820). Attempting to make sense of the complex relationships between disabled people's experiences and the opportunity structures and constraints of barrier-filled contexts, life-course concepts can help to gauge those changes (Powell 2003a). As each cohort develops particular meanings of disability, generational aspects allow us to not only analyze changes but also continuities in disabling policies, institutions, and environments. While Disability Studies' bold advances are signified by international multidisciplinary conferences, encyclopaedic publications (e.g., Albrecht, Seelman & Bury 2001; Albrecht 2005), and even by explicit connections with life-course research (Priestley 2000, 2001, 2003), social scientists have yet to fully acknowledge disablement's enormous effects on the life course and life chances, growing with extended longevity (Ravaud & Stiker 2001: 497; see Pfeiffer 2001).

Educational sociology can also profit from such a focus on human development within social structure and from Disability Studies' parallel emphasis on the attitudinal, organizational, and environmental barriers that disable people in every stage of the life course and in all societies. Although the patterns and trends of low-tracked students' school failure are better known than those for special education students, we know even less about the path-dependent development of the institutions and organizations that accomplish this sorting process, or how they have become institutionalized. A comparative and historical approach is well suited to address these kinds of issues. While the data analyzed here do not allow direct tests of the impact of special education on particular individuals' trajectories, examining differences in aggregate indicators makes possible an exploration of the institutional arrangements that clearly affect life-course pathways. These diverging trajectories then indicate future areas of research. This is crucial because not only has educational attainment research examined the "successful" much more frequently than those "at risk" but also stratification studies in general have usually ignored the heterogeneous group of disabled individuals (but see, e.g., Alexander 1976; Jenkins 1991). Furthermore, as disability has been neglected, special education's diverse educational environments that define children as disabled or abnormal have not garnered great interest among educational sociologists, with some notable exceptions.³

Pointing out the importance of examining special education as a form of tracking, Entwisle, Alexander and Olson (1997: 80) also offer an explanation for why it has long been ignored: "The tracks within schools created by retention and Special

Education ... are more problematic because these 'tracks' are so far below the level of social consciousness that they are not even thought of as tracks." The necessity and utility of special education is taken for granted. Yet the empirical findings presented here show that special education as it currently exists is not inevitable at all. By analyzing this fast-growing low-status track historically and comparatively, this book addresses a lacuna in educational sociology and in special education research. Indeed, even the special education field itself has thus far largely "failed to develop comprehensive historical and sociological analyses of special education issues. ... It is time to extend our analyses of the problems and pitfalls of special education to encompass sociohistorical/political perspectives" (Artiles & Trent 1994: 432). To accomplish this, the following analysis focuses on the complex realities of special education and student disability in the US and Germany. The next section presents the rationale for the choice of these two countries.

Why Compare the United States and Germany?

The German-American comparison offers particularly instructive insights due to the enduring transatlantic linkages in the development of science, statistics, and (special) education (e. g., Maennel 1907; Sarason & Doris 1979). On the basis of durable networks, these nations have continuously borrowed each other's educational ideas and concepts (Goldschmidt 1991: 139–187; Drewek 2002). The US and Germany unite the unusual mixture of federal democracies with decentralized control over education content and financing simultaneously with more centralized rules for special, often unequal, groups of students, such as disabled, disadvantaged, and immigrant children (Meyer 1992a: 236). Both educational systems produce graduates with an "absolute wealth of competencies" as well as school-leavers without any certificates—the educationally impoverished (Allmendinger & Leibfried 2002: 304). But over the postwar period, the group of less-educated individuals in both countries contracted considerably. By 1998, the US and Germany were among only seven developed countries in which the proportion of the population aged 25 to 64 who had completed upper secondary education equaled or exceeded 80 % (OECD 2000a: 26).

Despite acknowledging that "education is a civil right" (Dahrendorf 1965) and increases in educational opportunities and attainment, Germany's stratified and selective educational systems continue to differentiate children after a short period of primary schooling into separate schools (Solga & Powell 2006). As the lowest general education certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) has become ubiquitous, the group of youth without certification has changed significantly in composition, with higher proportions from lower class backgrounds, males, and ethnic minorities (Wagner 2005). The inadequacy of the lowest level school types to provide their students with certificates (and competencies) has left them in an increasingly serious "crisis of legitimacy" (see Preuss-Lausitz 1981: 11, 2001; Solga & Wagner 2001). Similarly, American youth's increasing attainment of (at least) high-school diplomas is "essential but not sufficient for occupational success" (Muller & Schiller 2000: 197), as half of all high-school graduates go on to some form

of postsecondary education for further study. Thus American high-school dropouts and Germany's school-leavers without a *Hauptschulabschluss* represent a residual category of shrinking proportion, but of increasing societal concern due to their lack of vocational training options and employment prospects (Alfeld & Schnabel 2002; Solga 2004, 2005). Visible in subsequent earnings disadvantages, the penalties for not completing upper secondary education are increasing (OECD 2006: 136). On both sides of the Atlantic, students who have participated in special education, given their low educational attainments and frequent stigmatization, continue to face bleak labor market conditions. Despite the access they have won to educational systems, school-leavers from special education represent a growing proportion of America's "working poor" and Germany's long-term unemployed and life-long social assistance receivers (Daly 1997). In the American life-course regime, the working poor, with low skills and low wages, suffer a vicious cycle of cumulative disadvantages, whereas in Germany the equivalent group faces long-term unemployment or may never enter the labor market (Mayer 2005: 37–42).

In two countries in which the competing ideologies of meritocracy (e. g., Young 1958; Lemann 1999) and egalitarianism (Marshall [1950] 1992) have been stoked by massive educational expansion, it has become ever more important for individuals to succeed in school. Only the attainment of credentials can leverage employment opportunities in these countries' competitive skill-based labor markets. But despite the goal of equality of opportunities, those for learning, for completion of schooling, for attainment, and for outcomes, are still distributed unevenly across a variety of status groups. Throughout the world, educational systems respond to individual and group disadvantages, but they do so in significantly different ways (Baker, LeTendre & Goesling 2005a). Policymakers' decisions about the provision of equal opportunities and the upholding of meritocratic principles will determine how much approval educational systems receive in the future (Fend 2001: 4266). Thus, special education offers a vital but neglected field to examine the trade-offs between these principles and the resulting social inequalities. Despite a plethora of reform efforts striving to implement inclusive education, the group of students participating in traditional special education settings in both countries has grown—and continues to increase. If the German and American special education institutions were originally quite similarly exclusionary, they have diverged over the postwar period, due to a host of factors.

Notwithstanding the world views derived from common religious traditions that Max Weber highlighted in his cultural comparisons as well as the similar patterns and trends described above, many aspects of these societies exhibit significant differences (Gerhards 2000). The most germane are those that influence educational system cultures and structures, manifest in the symbolic and social boundaries around dis/ability categories. Elaborated classification systems—of students, teachers, curricula, schools, and also of student dis/abilities—as institutional rules are in fact prerequisite for the organizational establishment and legitimated functions of public schools (Meyer & Rowan [1978] 1992: 76 ff.). American schools with internal differentiation and German externally differentiated school types are educational policy implementations of particular social and educational ideals. Stephen Hamilton and Klaus Hurrelmann (1994) have contrasted Germany's transparent but impermeable educational system and the

rather opaque but permeable American one. Attending to such differences in special education and their dynamics, the following chapters explore their histories of exclusion and segregation, their gradual divergence, and their increasingly unequal advances toward inclusive education.

Very few studies on special education have an extended historical reach or compare cross-nationally or cross-culturally. Exceptions include those by Rosemary Putnam (1979) and Gillian Fulcher (1989) as well as Kaz Mazurek and Margret Winzer (1994), who collected country contributions from around the world on limited, emerging, or segregated systems, those approaching integration, and integrated systems. In a similar vein, Alfredo Artiles and Daniel Hallahan (1995) edited a volume on special education in Latin American countries. Kathrin Wilfert de Icaza (1999) explicitly compared school integration in Germany and Spain. A variety of articles collected by Margaret McLaughlin and Martyn Rouse (2000) examined education policy reform in the US and Britain. In his article on those special education systems' evolution, it was James Carrier (1984) who prepared the path for explicitly comparative sociological analyses. He commented that "while sociological studies of special education are rare, comparative and historical sociological studies are even rarer" (Carrier 1984: 62) and called for a comparative approach to research on special education that focuses on the variety of categories and their historical elaboration. The goal of such analyses would be to illuminate the scientific and social forces shaping these categories, as he did for the case of learning disability (Carrier 1983a, 1983b, 1986a). Two decades later, Alois Bürlü (2006) concluded that, while comparative research on special education that reflects the contemporary state of the art in cross-cultural education research is desirable, its goals must be shifted away from purely normative concerns: The field suffers from too much naiveté, on the one hand, and too much objectification of superficial descriptions, on the other. Given the dearth of comparative-historical studies, large country-specific literatures will be melded together here, including social histories and studies that both critique and champion special education. While books by Günther Opp (1993) and Martina Jülich (1996) focused on contemporary American special education from a German perspective, contemporary analyses of German special education in English are even less common (Heyl 1998). This study goes beyond those mentioned in the timespan covered and in systematizing the comparative dimensions of special education's institutionalization. Overall, sociological analyses of special education systems may contribute to our better understanding of (1) the social construction of dis/ability especially among children and youth and (2) the often unintended or unanticipated consequences of participation in low-status school organizations for learning, identity formation, educational attainment, and later life chances.

Historical, Binary, and Within-Nation Comparisons

To provide the explicit comparison sketched above, this macrosociological study applies a threefold design—historical institutional analysis, two nation "binary" comparison, and analysis of within-nation variation—seeking to unite historical and comparative

approaches. First, through in-depth *historical institutional analysis*, I investigate the processes by which special education became institutionalized and embedded within increasingly complex educational systems over the 20th century. While these long-term institutional changes that (re)formed the organizational field of special education are an understudied subject, just such analyses can provide insights into the changes that greatly influenced school experiences of disabled children and youth and thus shape life-course patterns over time. “Initial historically given institutional differences shape the detailed regulations and policies pertaining to various areas, phases and transitions of the life course. . . . Across the individual life course early influences shape and direct later trajectories in a cumulative manner” (Mayer 1997: 222).

The focus on the growth of special education in two countries is an attempt to reach theory-oriented explanations, not a complete causal account of what happened in one time and place. Explicating “systematic process analysis” as a research method, Peter Hall (2003, 2006) emphasizes that the goal is to specify those mechanisms that produce the crucial elements in a causal chain generating the outcomes of interest. To reconstruct those causal processes, I intensively investigate structurally different, historically divergent special education systems by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (see Ragin 1987: 69–84). As Jürgen Schriewer ([1988] 1990, [2000] 2003, 2003) has delineated, more than ever comparative education methodology embraces complexity as researchers chart diverse developmental paths and map myriad interrelationships among levels of analysis and across geographic borders. Despite increased *global* diffusion and interdependence, *national* convergence is not a necessary outcome, as the above cross-national data on categories and organizational forms forcefully indicate. Furthermore, worldwide discursive and even institutional standardization at national level may not reduce *regional* categorical and organizational differentiation, but actually increase them as the potential models and combinations increase exponentially (e. g., when international categories of “special educational needs” were implanted into Germany’s existing highly differentiated classification system based on school types, see Chapter 4). Indeed, internationalization and nation-specific elaboration are interrelated in a dialogue of “challenges and responses, as processes and unintended consequences” (Schriewer [2000] 2003: 26). In her morphogenetic approach, Margaret Archer suggests to recount the conflicts of professional interest groups and political decision-making processes that are influential in the emergence and incremental structural elaboration of educational systems as well as their unexpected properties and unintended consequences (see Archer 1979, 1982, 1984, 1989). She argues that sociologists of education who wish to answer crucial theoretical questions about the origins and operations of educational systems should examine them cross-nationally (Archer 1979, 1982, 1984, 1989: 242 ff.).

To ensure that in comparing the US and Germany neither the specific nor the general are lost from view, I conducted a *comparative “binary analysis”* (Dogan & Pelassy [1984] 1990: 113–122). Selection of just two nations is justified in attempting to more fully understand their similar and dissimilar characteristics and the changing measurement of those features over time (Przeworski & Teune 1970). Yet, in carrying out such binary comparisons, we must avoid treating “differences of degree as differences of kind,” especially when “the field of comparison” is historically and ideologically charged

(Brubaker 1992: 2), as is the case of special education specifically and disability more generally. Nevertheless, Max Weber's approach of ideal types facilitates the evaluation of historical developments in search of adequate interpretations and explanations (see Kalberg 1994: 79–142; Ringer 1997: 110–120) of the distinctive characteristics of special and inclusive education in American and German contexts. Indeed, researchers implicitly or explicitly utilize a comparative approach in establishing the boundaries for arguments about individual explanatory variables (Lipset [1963] 1979: 9 ff.).

To better isolate specific causes and consequences of differing special education systems, I use a qualitative case study design (Ragin & Becker 1992) paired with descriptive statistics of available aggregate data to examine classification, allocation, and attainment probabilities. The comparative indicators presented here are not so much used for theory testing and falsification, but rather to enable the exploration of processes of institutional development (Peters 1998: 28 ff.). On both sides of the Atlantic and among international organizations, calls for further research and—in particular—for a unified collection and reporting of special education statistics are heard increasingly often (e. g., McDonnell, McLaughlin & Morison 1997; Cloerkes [1997] 2001: 18–25, 2003b; OECD 2004). Comparative work must address the hidden social contexts and processes that produce data and fill numbers with meaning, addressing the complexities of data-set collection and production with sensitivity to linguistic, technical, and epistemological issues (Glover 1996: 36 f.). Thus, detailed national and within-nation empirical results are embedded in discussions of special education's development and current contexts, informed by research stays in each country and participant observations in a variety of educational settings, from special schools to inclusive classrooms.

Third, *within-case analysis* (Mahoney 2003)—of categorical group, organizational, and regional differences—provides a deeper understanding of national particularities, adding further dimensions to the historical institutionalist and comparative binary analysis. Indeed, this book does not attempt to locate *the* universal cause of special education systems' expansion, differentiation, and persistence, but rather charts the diversity of factors and processes that shaped the historically and geographically variant institutionalization of special education and its organizational outcomes. While the national German-American divergence remains paramount in this study, a systematic comparison solely at the national level of analysis would not be sufficient to adequately explain the origins, growth, and stability of these systems. Especially due to these two federal nation-states' decentralized educational systems, the highest level of aggregation masks significant variance in states/*Länder* educational policies and practices, both the innovative and the conventional. Nation-specific institutional arrangements that on one measure show great similarity may produce very different results at lower levels of aggregation. Analysis on multiple levels is necessary, because the governance of education systems—spanning the school, district, educational authority, local, state/province, and national levels—fundamentally affects not only educational reform proposals but also research into schooling's inputs, processes, and outputs (Raudenbush & Willms 1991). Thus, this study's approach proceeds in three steps (on comparative analysis, see Ragin 1994). Qualitative research helps us understand the common increased worldwide salience of special educational needs, growing concern about “dis/ability” and “ab/normality” and standardized educational

performance, and important cultural differences in these concepts. Comparative research into the cases of American and German special and inclusive education highlights differences in organized responses to (student) dis/ability. For its part, quantitative research permits the identification of relationships that result from differing institutions, such as disparities in rates of inclusive education or disproportionate representation in special education along gender and racial/ethnic lines.

The state/*Land* comparisons will show that despite national debates about and commitments to school integration and then inclusive education, contrary policy implementations within the 50 American states and 16 German *Länder* emerged. These comparisons indicate considerable disparities in school structures and learning opportunities provided. The variance reveals not only institutional constraints on change in both nations but also myriad interests and decision-making processes that have facilitated both gradual and more rapid adjustments within these federal nations, especially at critical historical junctures. However, as Kathleen Thelen (2004) has emphasized in her comparison of skill formation in vocational training institutions in Germany, the US, Britain, and Japan, incremental changes may transform institutions even when historical crisis points, such as German reunification, do not. Similarly, whereas *negative attitudes* about disability, manifest in eugenic thought, seem less amenable to transformation even in the aftermath of world wars, *social reactions* to disabled individuals—evident in gradual steps toward ever more inclusive schooling—may exhibit an ultimately transformative cumulative shift. Exclusion from schooling is no longer legitimate; every child is expected to participate. As John Meyer (2001) has emphasized, around the world, education is taken to be a human right that states must provide, and nearly everyone supports the norm of universal educational access and equal opportunity, regardless of interindividual variations in ability. With the goal of tracking and isolating such institutional diffusion, on the one hand, and differing degrees of change, on the other, this study relies on a set of comparative dimensions and indicators, described briefly in the following section.

Comparative Dimensions and Indicators

The long-term institutionalization of special education and the divergence of the German and American systems can only be explained multifactorially. As delineated in the first chapter, transnational ideals of equality and merit as well as societal values, educational ideologies, and dis/ability paradigms are reflected in and reproduced by educational systems. It is these ideas, variously called cognitive paradigms, world views, norms, frames, and policy programs that guide the behavior that determines policymaking outcomes, yet to understand the effects of ideas requires the adequate specification of the causal mechanisms that link ideas via interests to policymaking outcomes (Campbell 2002). Over long periods of time, welfare states have developed complex linkages between social and educational policies that define and institutionalize personhood and citizenship (Soysal 1994). Additionally, citizenship rights and social movements have acted as mutual catalysts, enabling and encouraging each other (Landman 2000: 91 ff.).

Identifying corporate actors, such as social movement groups or professional associations as well as policymakers and individual gatekeepers, help us to understand how societal values and dis/ability ideologies are translated into interests that shaped special and inclusive education—and continue to reform them.

Having located the US and Germany in broader transnational patterns, the case study chapters blend secondary analysis for historical and institutional developments and statistical analyses of current counts available from relevant government agencies, also to demonstrate within-nation regional variation. The dynamic definitions and categories implemented in special education in both countries since the 1920s (as reflected in text books, laws, and official statistics) are analyzed and compared, attempting to understand the professional contexts and disciplinary discourses in which educational gatekeeping occurs. How have particular categories and their labels in classification systems been used? How were specific policy requirements implemented and complied with—or not? These are challenging questions that suggest a historical approach.

Institutionally, a variety of processes are crucial to trace: how special education imitated existing models in general education, how special education grew as part of an expanding system, and how the division of special and general education has been stabilized over time. Special education institutions determined the organization of special or inclusive educational programs. In each of these institutional phases, interests of professionals, parents, and advocates played a key role in the pace and extent of change. Social movements and interest groups acted not only in concert but also carried out conflict: The civil and disability rights movements, national professional associations, and advocacy organizations (often led by parents) effectively represented and supported initiatives in their lobbying efforts. At the levels of states/*Länder* and counties or districts, the federal politics and decision-making structures that constrain or facilitate particular ideas and interests affected the implementation, coordination, and compliance with national laws and/or recommendations. These represent another crucial explanatory factor of institutional persistence or transformation: Governance structures limit but also react to policy position paper formulations, lobbying efforts, and local protest actions, which have all proven extremely important mechanisms for conversion in special education, disability policy, and antidiscrimination legislation. In particular, decentralized control over education among the 50 American states and 16 German *Länder* and schools, as loosely coupled organizations, poses a barrier to inclusion.

Within educational systems, not only the available resources and conferred rights but also accountability measures and standards directly and indirectly affect both general and special educational systems. Such features as teacher training and certification, finance allocation procedures, and specific regulations like salary or tenure rules impact special education organizations and the personnel working therein. At the meso level of schools, organizational structures and differentiation by curricula, interests or abilities but also physical and communicative accessibility and stigmatization (due in large measure to separation and segregation) contribute to differing rates of classification, allocation, and attainment.

At school level, gatekeepers, including general and special educators, aides, school administrators and disciplinary specialists (such as psychologists, counselors, and therapists),

and parents cooperate or reach consensus after conflict to determine whether a student will be classified and which educational environment is appropriate among the available alternatives. In turn, these processes affect the individual identities, self-efficacy, and achievement a student will develop as he or she passes through schooling. Individual learning opportunities, identities, resources, and peer networks interact with regulatory constraints on attainment that determine which certificates each student will be eligible to attain.

Another dimension investigated are demographic groups and individual characteristics. The overall regional, school-aged, and special education populations are altered by such qualities as prosperity and poverty, population density, and economic development. These groups exhibit varying concentrations of characteristics, such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, migration experience, age—and dis/ability. Childhood poverty is an important indicator due to the negative impact it often has on health, well-being, and growth. Together, these sociodemographic indicators further specify and/or problematize the factors that contribute to explanations of special education population size and composition, distribution within school structures, and educational attainments of children and youth served in special education programs.

This brief depiction does not exhaust the types of qualitative and quantitative data needed to explain special education's institutionalization, but it does indicate the classes of explanatory factors discussed in the chapters to come. Before turning to the case studies, however, two framing chapters set the stage by presenting relevant theories and sketching the historical developments. Chapter 3 supplies a neo-institutional analysis of special education embedded in expanding compulsory schooling institutions. In turn, Chapter 4 reconstructs how classification systems evolved from the simple dichotomies of in/educability and ab/normalcy to the diverse categories of dis/abilities, disadvantages, and special educational needs that coexist in contemporary special education.

Compulsory Schooling for *All* Children: Learning Opportunities in Special Classes and Special Schools

Not only does compulsory schooling now include *all* children but also general and special education students participate in schooling for longer durations than previous generations. As educational expansion increased participation and attainment rates, differences in provided learning opportunities have become more significant. What is taken to be the standard educational career, definitions of success and failure, and accountability for results are crucial—and these reflect national, state/*Land*, and local perspectives, priorities, and policies. In this chapter, we first sketch the growth of special education before we extrapolate and integrate insights from institutional analysis with a Disability Studies perspective on the institutionalization of special education. The focus is on structured learning opportunities and educational inequalities. Linkages between educational stratification research and analyses of special education accentuate not only special education's organizational differentiation but also its persistent status as (usually) the lowest school type or track within comprehensive schools. This requires an explanation of the concepts of exclusion/inclusion and equality of educational opportunity that are crucial to explain the divergent institutionalization of the American and German education systems.

Early special education institutions ensured that many children who were previously excluded from public schooling altogether gained access to education, a major achievement of progressive policy initiatives. In Europe and North America, the 19th century witnessed the coevolution of professional interventions and institution building, with a plethora of schools and asylums established for people with physical, sensory, and intellectual impairments and mental illnesses. Developing in tandem with the disciplines of education, medicine, and psychology from the mid-1800s, these organizational structures provided specialized teachers and resources to meet needs that were just beginning to be defined. From the beginning, the history of special education institutions was closely connected to the expanding disciplines, so much so that their development was interdependent, each referring continuously to the other (Greving 2000). As myriad organizations and disciplines developed, early leaders and advocates played constitutive roles in the construction of the ideological components, group interests, and physical infrastructures of special education. Signaling the future, this early phase was rife with conflicts among nascent disciplines. When examining emergent educational systems, attention should be paid to the winners and losers in the institutionalization process—and to the margins of victory (see Archer 1989).

Originally heralded as innovative by bringing children classified as disabled into public schooling, the positive views of these segregating and separating educational facilities have given way to debates and challenges that have even rendered them unconstitutional. Since the Second World War, there has not only been an extraordinary

expansion of educational systems but also convergence in their ideological charters throughout the world (Ramirez & Boli-Bennet 1982). Nevertheless, such cultural forces that would lead to convergence must successfully challenge long-standing structures that bolster educational systems (Archer 1984: 203). The balance between utopian cultural ideals and tenacious structural conditions is conflict-ridden, exemplified in often vitriolic discourse about special versus inclusive education.

Following contentious reform efforts, educational provision in segregated special schools or the separated classrooms of general schools gradually replaced residential asylums for children and youth who were classified as disabled. While these organizations led to the further acceptance of the medical model of disability through clinical and educational “treatments” and grouping individuals with similar diagnoses, they simultaneously provided opportunities for connections and network-building that would generate the first disability political action groups (Braddock & Parish 2001: 39). Reinforced by the global disability rights movement (Charlton 1998), expanding citizenship rights, and notions of personhood, an unmistakable shift in emphasis from medical to social and political models of disability has redirected research and policy initiatives to barrier-filled environments, antidiscrimination legislation, and mechanisms of social control and exclusion. Ironically, special education organizations provided many disability activists with important first connections to other disabled people. Together, they made “disability culture” (Hall 2001) and broad “cross-category” coalitions possible, which buttressed the movement through successful protest activities (Barnartt & Scotch 2001). But before these activists and advocates succeeded in securing their rights and gaining access to integrated public schools and inclusive classrooms in the last quarter of the 20th century, they had to survive asylums, eugenic forces, and educational exclusion prior to and during the Second World War and in the immediate postwar period.

While debate in the 1960s and 1970s centered on whether and how to integrate children with perceived impairments into the educational system at large, the focus of attention since has increasingly been on which school settings can best serve these children (Sailor, Gerry & Wilson 1991: 179). Since then, disability activists, disabled children’s parents, and civil rights policymakers have fundamentally challenged the provision of special education services outside of general schools and classrooms, but with varying degrees of success. “Mainstreaming” or integration and inclusion advocates, national antidiscrimination legislation, and international declarations calling for inclusive education emphasize that special education has too often been found to increase rather than decrease the risk of school failure for students served (on the US, see Richardson 2000; on Germany, see Schnell 2002). Despite 30-year-old legal mandates to ensure their equal participation in schooling in these federal democracies, integration and inclusion of children and youth classified as disabled have not been fully realized. At the beginning of the 21st century, environmental, social, political, and ideological barriers to inclusion continue to exist at school, regional, and national levels.

Among the crucial differences are structural forms evolved over many decades and considerable institutional inertia in general educational systems themselves. As

Margaret Archer (1989: 258) emphasizes, “once state educational systems are in place, their differences in structure make the greatest difference to processes of change available, to who has access to these, and to their outcomes.” Uneven implementation of special education policies in states and localities emphasize path dependence in the development of school systems, especially given the decentralized German and American federal polities that preserve varying degrees of autonomy and control at state/*Land* and local levels. In the United States, social movements facilitated the abolition of educational exclusion and racial segregation with the assistance of legal and judicial decision makers. In Germany, conservatives reacted to the threat of reduced status privileges in the struggle over the democratization of secondary and tertiary education by using party politics to largely thwart a shift toward a comprehensive school system. Fundamentally, educational reforms in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) have failed to counteract social disparities in educational participation and attainment (Leschinsky & Mayer 1999a: 34). But also in the US, the National Council on Disability (NCD 2000) found most states noncompliant with federal special and compensatory education laws specifically designed to guarantee educational opportunities to disabled and disadvantaged students, despite a quarter of a century of closely monitored implementation and litigation to ensure compliance. In both cases, societal battles over access to educational opportunities affected not only the status groups of social origin and race or ethnicity that had originally led to conflict. These outcomes would influence the provided pathways and common trajectories of students classified as disabled. Therefore, special education must be understood within the historically evolved institutionalization of national educational systems, societal changes affecting them, and specific processes reshaping (special) education organizations themselves.

Institutions and Organizations

This section defines key concepts germane to theorizing institutional continuity and change in the (special) education systems sketched above and examined more fully in the case studies: institutions and institutionalization, organizations and organizational fields, and learning opportunity structures. Following neo-institutionalist theorizing, the “rules that constitute the nature of reality and the frames through which meaning is made” (Scott 1995: 40) are crucial elements to examine. Yet not only mimetic mechanisms (Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Kerckhoff 1993: 15), such as the spread of ideas about special educational needs or of competing models of disability, are central to the institutional approach taken here. The analysis also encompasses the normative and regulative mechanisms that emphasize social, legal, and political forces and their consequences. The three major phases in the institutionalization of learning opportunity structures and special educational needs categories introduced above are (1) the establishment of asylums, schools, and classes (*genesis*); (2) special education expansion and increasing differentiation (*diffusion*); and (3) the stabilization of boundaries at institutional, organizational, and individual levels (*persistence*). With the decreasing

exclusion of children with perceived impairments from public schooling, special education grew in size and stability. Educational systems in the US and Germany expanded especially quickly over the postwar period—due to both increased state provision and public demand for more schooling. Special education as a profession (but also as an academic discipline) was called upon to define new organizational types to carry out broadened norms of “educability” and ever more specific definitions of “student disabilities.” Recent failed attempts to align institutionalized special education with contemporary goals of equality and progress, evident in the global discourses of education for all and inclusive education, exhibit the tenacity of already institutionalized values, ideas, and interests in the multifaceted organizational field of (special) education and its diverse organizations.

Organizations and Organizational Fields

An organization is a deliberate social unit established to achieve explicitly specified goals through coordination or coalitions of members embedded in an institutional environment. Organizations have many features that have made them ubiquitous: They are durable, persisting to support members to carry out specific activities and meet certain goals over the long term; reliable, performing particular tasks routinely and continuously; and accountable, standardizing behavior with rules that both guide and justify activities (Hannan & Carroll 1995). Applied to education, many different occupational groups carry out the required routinized activities to meet regulated objectives within complex educational systems. The variety of special education organizations—preeminently American special classes and German special schools—will be described in greater detail below.

Moving to a higher level, the concept of the “organizational field” refers to the totality of actors in an institutional area, which emphasizes the interrelation of organizations, the multiplicity of networks within which each operates, and the structural equivalents of particular organizational forms that share similar positions in a network structure: Those organizations that together constitute a recognized area of institutional life (see DiMaggio & Powell 1983). As a synonym, the “organizational community” definition in Howard Aldrich’s work on evolving organizations further clarifies the concept as “a set of coevolving organizational populations joined by ties of commensalism and symbiosis through their orientation to a common technology, normative order, and legal-regulatory regime” (Aldrich 1999: 301). Within special education, for example, special schools established to serve students in different disability categories often occupy a similar position vis-à-vis the general school system and funding agencies, even if professional specializations—based on particular knowledge, technologies, or norms—demarcate boundaries between such schools. Other key players in the organizational field of special education include government agencies, professional associations, teacher training programs, and clinical specialists.

While the structure of organizational fields must be empirically examined, they only exist within institutions that are defined. As Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell

(1991: 65) explain, this “structuration” process includes increasing “interaction among organizations in the field; the emergence of distinct interorganizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an increase in the information load with which organizations in a field must contend; and development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise.” Again, applying this definition to special education: Its institutional boundaries evolved as interactions between general and special schools increased, not only cooperation but also conflicts between its diversifying organizations grew, and scientists professionalized their field by elaborating all of its aspects, such as diagnostics, treatments, training, textbooks, journals, and conferences. Policymakers, professional associations, and advocacy groups charted the terrain and established the networks through which special education ideas flow and interests are mediated (for an elaborated application of such structuration concepts, see the study of California’s health-care industry by Scott et al. 2000). In special educational systems, boundaries are drawn around dis/ability categories and organizational forms on the basis of prior choices that lead to particular paths of institutional development. Next, we apply differing conceptions of the study of institutions to the case of special education.

Institutions and Institutionalization

In modern societies, institutionalized rules act as powerful myths built into society as ways of interpreting the world that influence both the original formal structure of organizations and their ability to survive and retain their legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan 1977). Institutions, defined as webs of interrelated rules and norms that govern social relationships, comprise the formal and informal social constraints that shape the choice-set of actors. Conceived as such, institutions reduce uncertainty in human relations, as they specify the limits of legitimate action in a way that the formal and informal rules of a game specify structure for players (North 1981: 202 f.). The theoretical center of the neo-institutional paradigm is the concept of choice within constraints (Nee 2001: 9). Defining institutions, Ronald Jepperson (1991: 141–163) writes of “higher-order constraints imposed by socially constructed realities” and “stable designs for chronically repeated activity sequences,” which others have variously called “production systems,” “enabling structures,” “social programs,” and “performance scripts.” Indeed, institutions constitute, define, and regulate our very thoughts and identities (see Douglas 1986). As social reality is produced in social interactions, we must examine symbolic dimensions to understand “which actions are produced, repeated, and come to evoke stable, similar meanings in self and other” (Scott 1995: 13). Approaching institutionalization as a system-level process—more so than as an individual life course—emphasizes shared belief systems and knowledge as well as increasing transmission and routine maintenance.

Emphasizing the distinction between analyses that focus on the *genesis* of institutions and those that center on their *functioning*, Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel (1989: 342 ff.) argue for more attention to institutional change—and to organiza-

tional conflicts between powerful interests. In doing so, they revisit traditional institutionalists' concerns with power that maintains an organization's competence (see Stinchcombe 1997a: 17). This definition emphasizes that special education teachers and school gatekeepers are paid for their expertise in "student disabilities" that also authorizes them to define and distinguish these. From this viewpoint, special education institutions are "structure(s) in which powerful people are committed to some value or interest" (Stinchcombe 1968: 107). Reviewing the work of Charles Tilly, Arthur Stinchcombe (1997b: 391) distinguishes between institutions as "social structures and processes that make parts of the future solid enough to plan on" and institutionalization as the "process of creating solidity to the future." While much recent neo-institutional research in sociology emphasizes cultural-cognitive aspects of beliefs and professional norms as well as international organizations, states, and associations, historical institutionalists in political science and sociology have accentuated regulatory and governance mechanisms and regimes at state or industry levels (Scott 1995: 58 ff.; see also Hall & Taylor 1996). Recognizing the insights to be derived from both perspectives, especially given the saturation of meanings in disability and the complexity of educational systems, the goal here is to glean insights from these multiple approaches.

The "institutional logic" of educational systems reaches beyond the symbolic to specific organizational structures that are politically defended, constrained technically and materially, and thus historically specific (see Friedland & Alford 1991). From this perspective, there is not just one institution or "institutionalization" of special education, there are many, as the resulting nation- and region-specific continua of organizational forms and the diversity of corporate and individual actors involved attests. Rules and regulations represent a point of departure, not the ultimate solution to persistent problems in schools. Incentives created by policies often simply replace one problem with another, with many unanticipated or unintended consequences resulting from innovations imposed from above. Therefore, reforms of special education institutions should be closely monitored, especially since in recent decades their "special" status and their taken-for-grantedness have been called into question. Elements of special education institutions to investigate include not only special classrooms and schools, professional associations of special educators, academic disciplines that define the problems and offer solutions, but also bureaucracies that collect statistics on students and monitor the age-graded and performance-related transitions between school types or tracks.

The social (and environmental) act of *disabling* a person—or of *facilitating* his or her participation by removing attitudinal and physical barriers—is a crucial element of these institutions, as they maintain social patterns, order, and expertise around disability. In the case of special education, paramount are the school organizations in which children and youth of school age spend most of their time and begin to understand accepted cultural responses to their own varying abilities—and those of others. Allocation to learning opportunity structures results in the provision of resources and privileges, guaranteed by constitutional rights to participation in education, in particular organizational forms. These offer differing certificates that signal educational attainment and are

regulated by multiple levels of government. In making explicit the vested interests and decision-making processes that structure these aspects of special education institutions, we emphasize the power of those actors. Richard Scott writes that:

The power perspective and the more normative/cognitive view are not necessarily incompatible. DiMaggio (1991) and Brint and Karabel (1991) suggest that power is most apparent in the activities of those who construct the organizational field: those who create the categories, the norms, the rules and standards. Once such arrangements are in place, then local actors are likely to take them as given, as legitimate, and as authoritative. Their complacency helps to stabilize existing patterns (Scott 1995: 79).

As sketched above, the historical *origins* of special education institutions are crucial to explain contemporary patterns. Early special educators, relying on disciplinary developments in education as well as clinical and social sciences but who were also influenced by the eugenics movement, offered their expertise in specific impairments and dis/abilities to help schools address the organizational challenge heterogeneity posed and the problem of school failure. In establishing their subsidiary institution, special educators positioned themselves within the extant structures of educational systems, copying available logics in building and diversifying their organizational field of special education.

Organizing a research program relating to specific aspects of such complexity, Scott (2003: esp. Chapter 6) lays out the three conceptions of institutions: cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative (Table 3.1). Dimensions that specify these approaches are the bases of compliance, order, and legitimacy, as well as logic and indicators. By applying these concepts to special education institutions (Table 3.2), we show that each of the three conceptions highlights crucial elements to analyze when comparing the developmental dynamics of national and regional special education institutions and of organizations. Results of this exercise manifest how tightly interwoven these conceptions are.

Table 3.1
Conceptions of Institutions

	<i>Cultural-cognitive</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Regulative</i>
Basis of compliance	Taken-for-granted Shared understanding	Social obligation	Expedience
Basis of order	Constitutive schema	Binding expectations	Regulative rules
Basis of legitimacy	Comprehensible Recognizable Culturally supported	Morally governed	Legally sanctioned
Logic	Orthodoxy	Appropriateness	Instrumental
Indicators	Common beliefs Shared logics of action	Certification Accreditation	Rules Laws Sanctions

Source. Adapted from Scott 1995: 35, 2003: 135.

Table 3.2
 Conceptions of Institutions Applied to Special Education

<i>Application</i>	<i>Cultural-cognitive Disability paradigm</i>	<i>Normative Special education organizations, profession</i>	<i>Regulative Special education policies, litigation</i>
Basis of compliance	Disability = deficit: needs “treatment”	Assistance appropriate to meet needs	Maintain efficiency of general education; equality of opportunity
Basis of order	Disability = abnormality (binary categories)	Division of special/ general education	National and regional special education policies
Basis of legitimacy	Clinical professions; belief in natural, innate aptitude (relevance of IQ)	“Special educational needs”; compensatory rationale	Special education laws; Litigation to secure individual resources and rights
Logic	Medical model (within-individual deficits)	Only professional special educators can provide appropriate support	Guaranteed additional resources, specialized assistance
Indicators	Prejudices, negative stereotypes, stigmatization; discrimination; separation, segregation	Special education profession; training programs	Support contingent on meeting goals, abiding by rules, implementing policies

Cultural-Cognitive Conception

Beginning with the “disability paradigm” that refers to the *cultural-cognitive* conception, what is taken-for-granted is that in these societies the dominant functionalist paradigm and its counterpart, the medical model, consider disability to be a within-person deficit requiring treatment (Gabel & Peters 2004). Despite the irrelevance of impairment status or clinical treatments for many learning processes, this view of disability has retained its influence: With a constitutive schema that relies on binary categories—dis/ability and ab/normality—the tremendous diversity, cultural variability, and temporal contingency of these concepts are neglected (see Chapter 4). The clinical professions, their enormous cultural legitimacy, and their model of natural and innate ability, as measured in “normalized” IQ tests results, sustain the “orthodoxy” and provide the basis of authority of the clinical paradigm of disability as within-individual deficit. Its indicators are analogous to the hospitalization and residential institutionalization of thousands of people in asylums in the 19th century precursors to and variants of special education. Stemming from the fear of uncertainty or the unknown, these “common beliefs” include prejudices, negative stereotypes, and stigmatization leading to institutionalized discrimination that constitutes

handicapism (Bogdan & Biklen 1977) or ableism (Hehir 2002). Persuasively reasoned ideology is the principal tool that a discipline can access to gain political and economic resources; to build or sustain its status (Freidson 2001: 105). This suggests that giving up the idea of treating deficits would be costly for special education: What legitimacy would it then have? Other “shared logics of action” include the “special” organizational forms of classes and schools that lead to separation and segregation of students, but these depend on organizational boundaries to be authorized. Thus, we now move to the organizational level at which school structures are elaborated and distinctions are made between types of students as they are grouped according to educational ideologies.

Normative Conception

In organizations controlled by professionals, the mechanisms leading to institutionalization are primarily *normative*. There is a social obligation for special educators to provide “appropriate” assistance to meet individual needs. While its basis of order is the clearly demarcated division between general and special education, the logic behind this division is that only professionally trained and “specialized” educators are able to provide “appropriate support.” “Appropriateness” (March & Olsen 1984) is a concept considerably differentiated throughout modern educational systems that expanded their definitions of “educability” parallel to nation-states’ broadened citizenship arrangements. The profession of special education certifies holders of relevant knowledge and provides access to employment in a growing subsidiary sector within educational systems.

Although professionalism is the main way that modern societies have institutionalized expertise, expertise can also be located in commodities and organizations or in the civil service (Abbott 1988).¹ Another method is the existence of training programs, which for special educators are often separate or supplemental to general education training. Successful professionalization has been defined as (nearly) attained work autonomy, social status, and market monopoly—through the processes of producing practitioners or researchers and knowledge, applied or pure (Larson 1977: 49 f.). Science, teachers, and organizational forms are all enlisted in the cause of solidifying power and outlining clear boundaries around special education. Among the most salient norms relating to special education as a profession involves charity, undergirding the compensatory rationale that provided an original motive for it (Moser 2003). To justify its claims, professions mobilize myriad ideological means, such as public service, that “contradict the market orientation of the professional project and the monopolization of competence to which it necessarily tends. Ideologically, these claims deny the invidious implications of monopoly” (Larson 1977: 52). However, growing rates of special education participation in both nations manifest special education’s strengthened influence, as it assumes responsibility for serving students who deviate from the norm.

The historically evolved norms that guide the profession’s boundaries define not only the professional production (cognitive dimension) but also the organizational division of special versus general education and the logic of professional monopoly (social dimension). The result: Only special educators have the expertise to teach “abnormal” learners. Unlike general education, special education professionals and organizations provide assistance deemed appropriate according to current knowledge and technology available for

each particular category of special educational needs, which continue to be largely based on the notion of individual deficit. Yet special education's claims to professionalism have been repeatedly questioned because, even though special educators often provide valuable services and crucial support for children, the profession is ethically compromised due to its insistence on categorizing children with the profession's stigmatizing labels (Milofsky 1997: 206). Critical analyses may accept the innovative best practices that special educators develop to serve students' real difficulties as well as acknowledge the good intentions of individual special educators. However, they also question the view that enlightenment ideals of humanism or progress necessarily fostered concern for disabled people, as professional vested interests and institutional and organizational constraints have often led to unexpected or unanticipated consequences, such as segregation, stigmatization, and regulation (Bart 1984; Barton 1986). Furthermore, special education's core problem has been identified as its own marginality and powerlessness within highly political school organizations because it attempts to negotiate the structurally given alternatives of exploitation by or isolation from general education (Milofsky 1992).

Examining just this combination of constitutive problems of professional culture and educational organizations, Thomas Skrtic (1991, 1995a, 1995b), applies Mintzberg's (1978) distinction of organizational types to show that schools are managed as *machine* bureaucracies (divisions producing standard units) whereas teachers try to maintain a *professional* bureaucracy based on professionals catering to individuals' specific needs. Clarifying the challenge, Richard Scotch and Kay Schriener (1997: 155) explain that large bureaucratic institutions have difficulty dealing with the heterogeneity among students with disabilities because of the high value they place on efficiency and technologies that require standardized inputs. From this point of view, student disability results not from individual deficits but from school failure understood as *organizational pathology* (Skrtic 1991). Skrtic's (1992) model to meet the twin demands for equity and excellence would be to restructure schools into innovative organizations—"adhocracies"—that rely on teachers' collaborative problem-solving abilities and their invention of individualized learning strategies to optimally support each student's development. Standing in the way are traditional teacher training programs that maintain and only gradually and marginally shift the categorical knowledge basis of special education as these ideas are transmitted between generations of teachers. As James Carrier (1986a, 1986b, 1990) has emphasized, we must look closely at the normative process of identification: How are the relevant categorical differences explained and how were they shaped by social forces and educational practices (see Chapter 4). But not only the above normative bases of reproduction are crucial. Official rules and regulations may even more stringently resist or facilitate fundamental change, as they are built into complex legal frameworks maintained by multiple layers of political governance.

Regulative Conception

Turning to the *regulative* conception of special education as an institution, we find coercive mechanisms, including an elaborate set of policies and rules. Furthermore, courts (including the highest in the land) are repeatedly asked to attempt the nearly impossible task of adjusting boundaries between general and special education or adjudicating

claims that require making “disability” or “special educational needs” absolute when they are resolutely equivocal and relative by definition (see Minow 1990). As we shall see, legalization and litigation are hallmarks of special education history, especially in the American case (Neal & Kirp 1986). The basis of compliance of special education policies is to require general education to maintain “efficiency” while special education, conceived as compensatory, is to provide “equity” for classified students. But the indicators (rules, laws, sanctions) are implementations, not the actual outcomes for individual participants. Furthermore, these “actual” results arguably are not the basis of legitimacy for special education institutions. Rather, compliance with laws and regulations relating to inputs has been paramount: individual rights and resources for the group of classified students. Compliance pressure may be indirect, such as antidiscrimination legislation, or direct, such as the development of individualized education programs or standards-based reforms. Thus, the affirmation of special education’s growing responsibility proceeds as its “... innovations tend to gain legitimacy and acceptance on the basis of social evaluations, such as the endorsement of legislatures or professional agencies. School systems are highly sensitive to these social evaluations and tend to become isomorphic with them” (Meyer & Rowan 1978). “As a result, school structures tend to reflect current institutionalized beliefs about what structures are most appropriate” (Rowan 1982: 260). Special education reflects the diffusion of the individual right to education and the growing legitimacy of claims made by a variety of groups to guarantee this right and the corresponding resources provided.

Combining Conceptions

To review, the considerable homogeneity of organizational forms and practices can be examined through institutional diffusion processes operating via three main mechanisms—mimetic, normative, and coercive (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), which parallel the cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative conceptions. Organizations imitate successful others in response to uncertainty, conform to rules of professionalism fostered by associations and reinforced in school system standards, and comply with political rules enforced by the state. Educational organizations often orient themselves to “best practice” models, with consultants, academic conferences, professional journals, and personnel mobility among the crucial mechanisms for the spread of ideas and concepts between organizational levels and between organizations in educational systems (Hanson 2001: 649). Normative mechanisms are primarily regulated by the profession of (special) education through its college and university training programs, professional associations, and accrediting agencies. All of these act as the profession’s gatekeepers, socializing and imposing values and standards on its older and younger members. Special education has a common framework for understanding student disability and for dealing with school failure attributed to “abnormal” learning processes or behaviors.

As an institution, special education was defined and rationalized by the profession, lobbying interest groups, policymakers, and education agencies, all leading to its diffusion and, later, its stability due to legitimacy and embeddedness in local schools (Rowan 1982: 259). Educational organizations reflect rationalized institutional rules

prevalent in educational systems and in the national polity, but these organizations frequently remain only loosely coupled to those higher levels, retaining some measure of autonomy from coordination and control (see Meyer & Rowan 1977). John Meyer (1977) emphasizes that an institution's persistence may not require active agency, if structures and practices are so deeply embedded in procedures that such a change would require adjustments in many other elements. Not only the laws but also the moral codes regulating behavior ground institutions and hamper their transformation (North 1981: 205). Educational organizations are stabilized by deeply institutionalized rules, which challenge substantive educational reform (H.-D. Meyer & Rowan 2006). Thus, not only cultural-cognitive but also regulative and normative dimensions support institutional development and defend institutions as they evolve. Building on the above discussion, the case studies attend to all three of these conceptions, as each provides crucial pieces of the puzzle. The key theoretical insight of institutional analyses, whether they explain persistent differences or absence of variation over time or across cases, is that patterns in social life spring from institutions that structure action, not just from the sum of individual and organizational activities (Clemens & Cook 1999: 442). The institutionalization of special education indicates the salience of all three conceptions, even as variations suggest their differential contribution in particular phases and places. We now turn to the organizational structures of special education that not only reflect institutionalized classification systems of student dis/ability (to be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 4) but also determine which opportunities to learn are provided.

Structured Opportunities to Learn

In this section, we depart from theorizing the institutional conceptions of special education to prepare the American and German empirical cases. Picking up where the review of stratification and life-course research left off (see Chapter 2), the educational stratification literature specifies the consequences of tracking, ability grouping, or curricular differentiation for individual opportunities to learn. What part does special education play in maintaining the paradox of the expansion of all levels of education around the world over the 20th century and persistent inequalities remaining even in the wealthiest societies? To clarify, we elaborate the concept of *learning opportunity structures* and describe the range of special education organizations along the continuum from segregation to inclusion. The relevance of these variable settings also demands attention to different types of *equality*, especially of educational opportunity. Finally, we outline the range of possible results for students when they exit special education programs.

An opportunity structure represents differential access to the means for making contributions. Thus, in school terms, differentiated tracks or school types provide differing developmental pathways for learning and sharing what has been learned. As concepts, structural constraints and opportunity structures are complementary, as reduced constraints increase opportunities and reduced opportunities develop into constraints (Blau 1990: 145).² Though determined considerably by the conditions in which they live and develop, students' behavior and learning is constrained or facilitated by the school

contexts they experience, in a cumulative manner. Differentiating students categorically by dis/ability guides and facilitates their allocation to the variety of organizational settings within educational systems and schools, which each provide a distinctive set of opportunities to learn.

Growth in academic achievement can be understood as the product of (1) students' abilities and efforts and (2) their opportunities for learning (see Sørensen 1977; Sørensen & Hallinan 1977). Counterfactually stated, a student who is given no opportunities for learning will not learn, regardless of his or her dis/ability and efforts. Schools *directly* affect opportunities to learn since they are responsible for providing them but also do so *indirectly* by developing (or not developing) students' abilities and efforts to learn³ (Sørensen 1996: 213). Aage Sørensen acknowledges one of James Coleman's key contributions, of academic achievement being determined by individual family background, peers' family backgrounds, and schools. However, he also mathematically challenges research from the Coleman Report (Coleman et al. 1966) onward that seeks to measure school effects via the variance explained by schools relative to that of family background (genes as well as economic, cultural, and social capital). These additive models would only be valid if schools affected students' learning *solely* by influencing students' abilities and efforts (Sørensen 1996: 220). Instead, Sørensen argues that schools have their *main* impact on students' learning by their provision of opportunities to learn, multiplied by students' abilities and efforts. This model implies that learning depends on students applying their intellectual resources when given opportunities to do so and further suggests that this relationship is multiplicative, such that without learning opportunities, their academic abilities will not be productive (Sørensen 1996: 223). This suggests that in addition to measuring learning opportunities we should also evaluate different schools and classrooms by how well they motivate each student and convey high expectations.

Significantly, (special) education institutions and organizations have and continue to vary systematically in the learning opportunities they provide for students, regardless of the greatly increased duration of schooling. Opportunities differ in quantity and quality and each student may benefit most from a particular type of educational setting, though not all school systems—much less individual schools—are in a position to provide a full range of educational environments. This principle is reflected in the US special education's key concepts of "least restrictive environment" and "appropriate education," which state that the potential for educational benefits in defined settings must be determined on a case-by-case basis. For this study, a crucial aspect of this regulation is that it suggests that the inclusive education classroom is preferable because of the superior opportunities to learn it can provide for most children. In contrast, German states/*Länder* school laws have only acknowledged inclusive education as an alternative in principle since the mid-1990s, while the overwhelming majority of all students remain segregated full-time in special schools even a decade later. Clearly, such institutional and organizational differences affect the provision of learning opportunities.

Lacking comparable longitudinal individual-level data, direct analyses of individual achievement (or academic self-concept and other intraindividual characteristics) in

specific content areas in German-American comparison cannot be offered here. Yet, analyses of instructional, interpersonal, and institutional processes using data from the US National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) confirm that placement in higher level ability groups accelerates achievement growth, whereas placement in lower level ability groups has the opposite effect (Hallinan & Kubitschek 1999). Such questions as to the interactions between individual dis/ability, effort, and educational environments and their impact on transitions have been and are being pursued in successive waves of the US National Longitudinal Transition Studies (NLTS; see Wagner et al. 1993, Wagner & Blackorby 2002, Wagner et al. 2006). Organizational differences in learning opportunity structures are hypothesized to be crucial in explaining differences in educational achievement and attainment, shown by comparing outputs of different special education systems over time and geographically as well as by social groups. Linking official education statistics on learning opportunity structures and educational attainments does permit us to investigate the attainment constraints set by those learning opportunity structures, especially on the basis of national, state/*Land*, and regional institutional differences, such as certification standards or funding formulas, viewed through probabilities of attainment. Aggregated data analyzed here provides an indicator for the performance not so much of students but of the schools that they attend, and educational systems' provision of learning opportunities and certification constraints.

Over the past several decades, the concept of student "opportunity to learn" has become a prevalent concept in international comparative studies in which the weight of evidence shows that there is a positive association between opportunity to learn and student achievement in science and mathematics (Floden 2002: 231). As an important generative concept in education research, opportunity to learn is not only used to understand the relationship between schooling and student learning as outlined above, but to ask policy questions about school quality and student equality—contributing to the widespread acceptance of the principle that all students can learn advanced content, given sufficient time (Floden 2002: 232 f.). Sociology of education addresses these questions in an extensive literature on tracking that has, however, largely neglected special education. These findings are useful for understanding the consequences of differences in learning opportunity structures, of which special education represents the lowest track (except in those localities in which gifted and talented education was historically joined with it). Conversely, research on special education sheds light on the key issues of identification and understanding of differences in student performance, allocation within schools, and taken-for-granted notions of success and failure (Carrier 1986b, 1990).

Educational Stratification

The institutionalization of special education brought about tremendous changes in the *effects of schooling* but also contributes to considerable differences in *school effects*, according to the specific learning environments and opportunities provided for each cohort. There are massive effects on achievement of attending school versus not going

to school, with substantial cognitive advantages for each year of schooling a child receives, even holding his or her initial IQ constant (Baker, LeTendre & Goesling 2005b). Given that students with disabilities were the last group to gain widespread access to schooling, the effects of schooling is an important question even in two nations that pioneered compulsory schooling. Of course, the issue of different types of schools, the resources they are able to provide, and their effects is also crucial. The focus here is on two complementary issues regarding the rapidly changing structure of opportunities for learning: changing participation rates overall and within evolving organizations of special and inclusive education. When did students with perceived impairments begin to enjoy the positive effects of schooling and in which types of schools and settings?

Access to public schooling has considerably increased for such students. But a *relational* perspective on educational expansion and opportunities is necessary because all student groups have increased their educational participation levels and attainment rates, leading to devaluation of the educational certificates earned, what Randall Collins (1979) termed “credential inflation.” Furthermore, much of disabled students’ increased participation has been in segregated or separated organizations that often cannot match the learning opportunities offered in inclusive educational environments. This highlights the distinction between the effects of schooling and school effects as between the *quantity* of learning opportunities and their *quality*. Despite no longer being segregated in asylums or completely excluded from schooling, these students remain largely in the tracks or school types that too often lower expectations and stigmatize participants and offer less valuable credentials. Applying school stratification arguments to special education organizations, they usually (1) socialize students into the lowest levels of educational hierarchies, (2) allocate them into categories with lower attainment probabilities, and (3) legitimize inequalities by assuming that ability differences refer to individual characteristics instead of examining the disabling structures and attitudes that constrain students’ development. Yet special education is rarely included explicitly in the educational stratification literature, even though the latter’s analytical foci are the processes and outcomes of the (hierarchical) organizational structures of schooling and curriculum differentiation.

While empirical analyses have too often ignored the environmental opportunities and constraints that shape student (and parental) choices about schooling (Allmendinger 1989: 231 ff.), tracking research does examine how processes of differentiation and allocation distribute children into learning opportunity structures. Studies of the social organization of schools have found that within the same school or class low-aptitude children placed in high-aptitude groups not only have more learning opportunities than those paced more slowly but also that some children are paced too slowly: There are vast inequalities in educational experiences within schools (Barr & Dreeben 1983: 166). Furthermore, preferred locations are limited and mobility is mostly downward. Once in special education, a student’s further learning is determined in large measure by the curricula on offer, by interactions with classmates and teachers, and by services provided in the school, track, or classroom. Thus, comparative approaches that examine variance in these conditions in general and special education are necessary.

Tracking occurs in both American and German systems and they differentiate between academic, general, and vocational courses of study, but they do so to varying

extents and take very different forms: interschool versus intraschool tracking, also in special education. Jutta Allmendinger (1989) differentiates the dimensions *stratification* and *standardization*, with the US both less stratified and standardized and Germany highly stratified and standardized (on the eastern German states/*Länder*, see Below 2002). In other words, the extent and type of tracking in the US stratifies less than the clearly differentiated and hierarchical school types that students in Germany are allocated to early in their school careers. In the second dimension, the certification of teachers and students, resources provided to individual schools, and curricula in the US reflect local standards more so than in Germany, although emphasis on national standards has grown since the beginning of the 21st century in both countries. Also charting the impact of nationally differing educational systems on stratification processes, Alan Kerckhoff (2001) additionally identifies *vocational specificity* as the extent to which curricula prepare for employment and structure career paths. This can be described as a yardstick to evaluate the system's *capacity to structure* and to measure *students' choice* among the variety of credentials as well as the flexibility of educational linkages between curricula, credentials, and structural locations. The educational systems of Germany's states/*Länder* have more capacity to structure and offer less student choice than the systems in American states. While these distinctions are useful in understanding the differences between these national educational systems overall, special education settings for students who did not meet the standards set by policymakers and schoolteachers were institutionalized in both systems. This study addresses the particular features of special education as subsidiary organizational forms, even as it argues that special education should be analyzed as one further type of educational stratification.

While in Germany the learning opportunities are distributed unevenly among school types, primary and secondary schools in the US also continue to implement tension-laden curricular assignments (Loveless 1999), despite reductions following challenges to increase equality of educational opportunity (Wheelock 1992; Mehan et al. 1996; Lucas 1999). Increasingly, all American students are expected to master a common curriculum to meet national and state standards (Farkas 1996: 79 ff.), with school accountability for all students' performance emphasized in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (West & Petersen 2003). Simultaneously, in Germany since 2001, the PISA "shock" has placed national standards high on the agenda of educational policymakers (Pfahl & Powell 2005; Solga & Powell 2006). At the same time, teachers differentiate curricula according to a wide variety of educational interests, abilities, and needs (see Heubert & Hauser 1999).

Most studies show that tracking increases variation in student performance between groups without altering the average—higher tracks gain more than the lower due to cumulative dis/advantages from track placement (Kerckhoff 1995: 328). Nevertheless, the cross-national PISA study results show that tracking is not required to produce excellent school performance, as most comprehensive school systems outperform vertically differentiated systems (Deutsches PISA-Konsortium 2001). Indeed, evaluations of tracking demonstrate that "we do change children's academic intelligence all the time. The entire process of tracking is designed to do just that. . . . By these practices schools demonstrate the pliability of cognitive skills as well as the powerful effect social factors have on the

success of individuals. Policies alter intelligence” (Fischer et al. 1996: 167). Because curriculum differentiation has continuously been associated with achievement inequality (Oakes 1985; Pallas et al. 1994), we must investigate the policies and regulations, and the resulting organizational constraints that produce such changes, also in special education systems. Throughout their schooling, students are directly and indirectly affected by regional or local learning opportunity structures. Separate classes, resource periods, and other “special” times during the school day lead students to accept the unequal features of the larger society as legitimate and accept responsibility for their own structural location (Oakes 1985: 144f.). Already in primary schools, students are sorted in three ways—being held back (retention), being placed in special education, and being grouped for instruction by administrative decision. Thus, Doris Entwisle, Karl Alexander and Linda Olson (1997: 4) argue forcefully for a focus on children at very young ages because, although social sorting during early childhood may be overlooked, social stratification is observable even during these early stages of formal schooling. Such in-school practices as ability grouping undermine inclusive intentions, as general teachers, parents of strong students, and educational elites remain ambivalent toward or even reject democratic pressures to accept heterogeneous classes (Dar & Resh 1986: 148 ff., 1997: 191 ff.).

A National Research Council (NRC) review came to the conclusion that students are indeed worse off in low tracks than they would be in higher tracks: “The most common reasons for this disadvantage are the failure to provide students in low-track classes with high-quality curriculum and instruction and the failure to convey high expectations for such students’ academic performance” (Heubert & Hauser 1999: 102). Cross-national longitudinal research shows that rich academic curricula can indeed promote high levels of student achievement, even in lower tracks (e. g., Gamoran 1997). In sum, tracking does little to promote the development of quality schooling. Instead, it often restricts low-track students’ academic achievement and produces negative expectations among their teachers (Ansalone 2001). These varied research results from multiple countries strongly suggest that school types or tracks that fail to provide many learning opportunities, or fail to convey high expectations or a rich curriculum, disadvantage their students. Thus, we now proceed to define ideal types along the continuum of learning opportunity structures with which to locate, measure, and compare the specific organizational settings and the distribution of students within special and inclusive education structures.

Learning Opportunity Structures in the United States and Germany

Reduced exclusion and increasing inclusive education have led to conceptual revisions and changes in disabled students’ allocation among settings. Yet, case-by-case placement decisions remain challenging, especially given that all students have more or less demanding learning and developmental pathways at particular times of their school careers. During extended schooling careers, organized learning processes in schools play a greater role in supporting students’ learning, even as students exhibit various abilities, resources, and identities, as well as particular ways of dealing with the requirements and challenges of acquiring culturally valued knowledge and skills. Debates are ongoing about adequate,

appropriate, or desirable solutions for students who have different developmental trajectories or distinctive ways of learning. In practice, *inclusion*, *integration*, *separation*, and *segregation* are not absolute alternatives for schools, communities, or educational systems. Indeed, *exclusion* and *inclusion* must be understood in relationship to each other, as must other social dichotomies. We must examine who is included and how and to what extent they are included in different social groups and eras (Ravaud & Stiker 2001: 490).⁴

Tremendous diversity of responses to student disability over time and from place to place suggest that there is no one best system or school, especially given shifting educational ideals, norms, and policies. From an institutional perspective, (special) educational systems have had two significant consequences for the establishment, development, and stability of “student disability”: (1) the expansion and differentiation of the school population classified as having “special educational needs” and (2) the founding of new school structures (special schools, tracks, or ability groupings). John Richardson (1999) accentuates these two processes, reconstructing the ever more formalized *rules of access* and the increasingly regulated *rules of passage* through which “normal,” “deviant,” and “impaired” children first gained access to schooling, and for whose careers continuously new categories and corresponding school structures were developed.

Below, we briefly define the historical precursors and currently competing learning opportunity structures where special education services and support have been and currently are delivered. All of these terms are often used by parents, professionals, and politicians as if their meaning(s) were common, understood, or even universal. But participants in these discussions quickly discover undeniable differences when it comes to implementing their visions for education and their favored versions of school reform. Extensive lawmaking, prevalent litigation, and local compromises have not resolved these terminological issues because they imply not only divergent school practices but also contrasting moral, ethical, and philosophical positions. For the purposes of this study, the definition of approximate functional equivalents facilitate the comparison of national, regional, and local models, as well as inevitable conflicts between special and inclusive education. Pragmatically, we must acknowledge that societal visions and goal setting continue to outpace implemented reforms. However, the following comparison of school settings also emphasizes the significant institutional and organizational changes implemented over the past few decades, suggesting that more attention should be paid to processes of incremental institutional change (see Campbell 2004; Thelen 2004).

Exclusion

Educational exclusion refers to the complete lack of access to schooling. Its mechanisms, prevalent before special education policies and civil rights laws guaranteed any form of access, included explicit definitions of “ineducability.” School gatekeepers, acting in accord with the norms of the day, simply refused to enroll disabled children individually or as a group, or they admitted some but not all of those within an impairment category. Regardless of parental efforts to ensure their children’s attendance in local schools, most localities did not sufficiently fund alternatives to inaccessible schools, such as private tutoring. If schools formally allowed the enrollment of children with perceived impairments, they often implemented different admissions policies, offered

inadequate or inappropriate educational programs or services, or created waiting lists for limited programs. Common practices, such as fragmented policies, bureaucratic structures, and underfunded programs, all represented barriers to inclusion. Even after the Second World War, supposedly universal compulsory schooling laws continued to exclude many children, despite the explicit mention of children with impairments in some school laws as early as 1873 (Saxony) or 1885 (Massachusetts). More than a century later, groups that still may experience exclusion are children with serious illnesses, youth in the criminal justice system, (illegal) immigrants or asylum seekers, and homeless children.

Segregation, Separation

Segregation within educational systems most often refers to separating or isolating students in separate educational facilities or to barriers to communication and exchange. Classifying students as disabled or as having special educational needs has often served to authorize their segregation or separation for “special” treatment. In the US, educational segregation refers to “separate facilities,” such as separate day schools, residential facilities, and homebound or hospital settings. The terms segregation and desegregation have been used since the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board* (1954) to emphasize that separation, isolation, and discrimination due to “separate but equal” schools are unconstitutional. However, many types of segregation continue, and special education has in fact been used to undermine school desegregation efforts (see Ferri & Connor 2006). In Germany, most special education services are delivered in a differentiated school sector that remains administratively separated and physically segregated, although some schools do share a campus or a building with general schools. But being in the same building alone does not guarantee that contacts, much less meaningful relationships, will develop among students or teachers participating in organizationally distinct programs.

Table 3.3
Learning Opportunity Structures in the United States and Germany

<i>Learning opportunity structures</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Germany</i>
Segregation	Separate environment (separate day school, residential facility, and home or hospital setting)	Special school
Separation	Resource room (outside general class: >60%)	
Integration	Separate class (outside general class: 21%–60%)	
Inclusion	General class (outside general class: <21%)	General class (full-time)

Note. Although the German states/*Länder* also exhibit a range of educational environments, in most localities, the choice set remains basically either a special school (prevalent) or inclusive classrooms (rare, except in primary schools).

In Germany, the pair of terms *Separation* and *Integration* has been used to describe the range of educational settings: Full-time attendance was either in a special or a general school, with this dichotomy only challenged forcefully in recent decades. However, in this study, the term separation follows the American definition because learning opportunity structures that separate students, but are located within a general school, will increase as Germany gradually moves from a “two-track” to a “multi-track”/continuum system (recall the typology of national educational systems presented in Chapter 2). Specifically, the American definition of “separation” refers to the proportion of the school day spent in separate classrooms within general schools. As measured in the Annual Report to Congress, those students who spend less than two fifths of their school day in general classrooms are considered “separated” (see Table 3.3).

Integration, Mainstreaming

In the US, “integration” indicates that a student attends general classes between two fifths and four fifths of his or her school day, with the rest spent in such settings as “resource rooms” that provide special education support for a wide array of needs. More generally, integration means attending a general school. Integration or mainstreaming⁵ does not necessarily connote school-wide transformed pedagogical praxis, but rather aims to capitalize on the benefits of physical togetherness of groups or individuals. A similar concept in Germany is that of “individual integration” (*Einzelintegration*). These terms represent substantial progress made over the 20th century in expanding access to public education for nearly all disabled children and youth, regardless of the specific organizational form or educational environment connoted. But these solutions were increasingly challenged to more effectively and equitably reflect and utilize student diversity, not simply facilitate physical togetherness in settings that often failed to provide opportunities for meaningful contact between peers. Although in Germany “integration” (*Integration*) also refers to attendance in a general school, the students that do attend general schools generally spend most or all of their day in the general classroom. Thus, it is more equivalent to the American setting defined here as “inclusion.”

Inclusion

For the purposes of this comparison, the setting “inclusion” is defined as spending most (four fifths or more) of the school day in general classes. However, colloquially and in the research literature, inclusion is an increasingly popular position advocating the creation of one restructured educational setting serving the diversity of learners with a range of dis/ability, social class, ethnic or racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious characteristics. Ideally, each student would be entitled to an instructional program that meets his or her individual needs and learning characteristics within such diverse classrooms. “Full inclusion” represents a model in which all disabled students, regardless of the category into which they are classified, are taught and receive educational services in general age-appropriate classrooms in general elementary and secondary schools.⁶

Similarly, in Germany, inclusive education (*Integrationspädagogik*) challenges special education (*Sonderpädagogik*) by advocating for a unified system of educational provision, but there is a multitude of ways that inclusion can be implemented. An

important distinction in these efforts to educate disabled students in general schools is between the models that require the same curricular standards to be met by all students in a class (“same goal” [*zielgleiche Integration*]) or rather provide individualized curricular goals that replace certain requirements (“different goal” [*ziel-differente Integration*]). This difference was already acknowledged in the US regarding mainstreaming, but the question remains: How can we best achieve “learning membership” that enables active participation in meaningful curricula (Ferguson 1995)? Inclusion usually implies additional teacher hours (a second teacher, teacher’s aide, or additional efforts of a dedicated teacher) and/or technological aides that compensate for communication or learning difficulties, enabling students to make enhanced use of learning opportunities. A second teacher or assistant in the classroom often brings multiple benefits for all students, but team teaching remains rare. Different-goal inclusion refers to the inclusive participation of students with and without recognized special educational needs in the same classroom and with differing, often individual, instructional goals (similar to the individualized education programs, required for special education students in the US). Despite the differentiation into distinct learning groups, a major expectation of this type of instruction is that it stimulates all learners while the communal school and everyday situations promote students’ development of communicative, cooperative, and problem-solving strategies that are crucial not only for school success but also for life and work after leaving school. In the context of inclusive education, it is interesting to note that both German terms (same or different goal integration) suggest changed pedagogical praxis, one of the key distinctions between the American definitions of “integration” and “inclusive education.” As the OECD has emphasized in its comparative studies:

Inclusion goes beyond the integrative idea of assimilating children with disabilities into the existing ordinary school system, it requires instead changes to the school system itself which, *inter alia*, involve alterations in educationalists’ perceptions of children’s being, some re-thinking of the purposes of education and a reforming of the system generally (OECD 1999: 22).

According to these short definitional statements and operationalized definitions, these learning opportunity structures have specific emphases although they together constitute the currently existing continuum of educational settings in the two countries. Key differences between “integration” and “inclusion” lie in the meanings given to student disabilities and the pedagogical changes necessitated by ubiquitous classroom heterogeneity: The former relates to sharing a school or classroom in a physical sense, but the latter implies a revised curriculum, special education supports being delivered to the child instead of the reverse, and teacher knowledge and pedagogy making disability (or other characteristics, such as ethnicity or gender) a part of the learning process for all children in the classroom. While some think of inclusion as simply a further option along the above-described continuum of special education provisions already being offered, others view it as an emergent educational paradigm supporting social justice that requires school restructuring (on recent inclusion debates, see, e. g., Dyson 1999; Kavale & Forness 2000; Winzer & Mazurek 2000; Kavale 2002; Ware 2004). Clearly, inclusion cannot simply be another word for “integration” or “mainstreaming” and simultaneously symbolize

significant changes in the organization of schooling. Nor can “inclusive education” be viewed as consensually accepted when its goals, implications, and results continue to be so widely debated and contested. Across the spectrum, inclusion may be thought of as an alternative pedagogical strategy within schools, as a critique of traditional special education knowledge at the level of the profession, or as societal transformation countering prevalent ableism (see, e. g., Baker 2002; Hehir 2002). Positions for and against the inclusion of *all* children—with whatever student disabilities or special educational needs are currently inscribed in law or receiving considerable media attention (such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism)—exemplify cultural understandings that have simultaneously guided policymaking, public protest, and pedagogical practices.

The German debate shows some interesting parallels to the one in the US since the mid-1970s. While the American influence in Germany seems to fall mainly on the side of integration and inclusion proponents, the more complicated reality of special education in American schools is also often passed over in favor of an ideal type that does not exist in all localities or states. While discussions about heterogeneity and decategorization are common in both countries, there is considerably more available data on these issues in the US, which greatly affects academic, political, and public debates, as even the statistical offices of some German education ministries do not collect reliable data on integrated or inclusively educated students (Benkmann 1998: 346). Since the early 1990s in the US, inclusive schooling has become the dominant education discourse, one that questions the equity and efficiency of special education, even as the general education system is challenged to reform, restructure, and reinvent itself (Winzer & Mazurek 2000). While parents, legislators, educators, advocates, and others involved in schooling increasingly express their commitment to inclusive educational praxis—in which *all* children are brought together to learn in “general” classrooms—no consensus on inclusion has emerged from the competing perspectives, the diverse theoretical or ideological interpretations, or the sometimes divisive debates on classification and placement (Winzer & Mazurek 2000: 5). In Germany during the 1990s, a “pedagogy of diversity” was developed, aiming to plan and organize schooling to meet all children’s varied goals and needs in more responsive individualized ways than before (see Hinz 1993; Prengel 1993; Preuss-Lausitz 1993). Such efforts to further inclusive education represent a major challenge that educational systems around the world face (Ainscow 2005), not only those in the US and Germany.

Once the selection processes that draw on classification conclude, the country-specific pathways through stratified institutional arrangements of primary and secondary schools structure schoolchildren’s “diverging trajectories” (Kerckhoff 1993). As discussed earlier, poorer curricula or lower expectations and nonacademic or nonvocational programs (even if they are important for the child’s health and development in other ways) lessen learning opportunities, especially early in schooling when basic skills are won that are the gateway to all further learning. The likelihood of continued low tracking increases over time as classified children’s disadvantages harden and the others’ advantages accumulate. Classmates also determine what a child learns, not only socially, thus low tracking can have negative effects independent of whether services are better or student-teacher ratios are smaller. This observation contrasts with the view that special education provides

specialized and therefore improved curricula. But regardless of what proponents or critics claim, special education organizations provide varied academic support and nonacademic services, and structure activities in remarkably different ways. Therefore, empirical analyses are needed to better understand the alternatives: a concentration of students classified as having special educational needs of various types served in one diverse classroom setting, as in the US, or all students in a single category attending a particular special school type, as in Germany. Beyond the search for functionally equivalent settings, we will see that neither country has thus far universalized inclusive education.

The allocation process into special education settings for disabled children depends on national and regional educational institutions and on local school classificatory practices. Poverty rates, population density, cohort size, and other demographic factors also influence the probability that students will be removed from the general classroom and how (special) education resources are distributed. Students' transitions into and out of special education often have much to do with environmental and organizational conditions, independent of individual characteristics, although the latter have been and most often still are viewed as the causal factors (and individualism seems likely to further strengthen this tendency). Reviewing the above delineated ideal types of special education, segregation represents those students who attend facilities separate from the general schools, while integration means being enrolled in the same school as students not yet classified as disabled. Separation signifies being taught mainly in classes separate from general classes within a general school, and inclusion refers to participation in general classrooms. Some emphasize that inclusion is dichotomous, while others argue that inclusive education can also be along a continuum (e. g., spending most of the day in general classrooms is sufficient to consider a student's experience "inclusive"). These diverse learning opportunity structures are analyzed in the country cases to show the distribution of the special education population among them at national and state/*Land* levels. When examining the different options that special and inclusive education organizations offer, it is crucial to keep in mind the underlying philosophical differences regarding in/equality, especially in terms of how many and which resources are to be provided by educational and social policies.

Educational In/Equalities

Thus, we now turn to the question of which students *should have* access to a particular learning opportunity structure instead of another; in other words, which principles of equality extend to special education students. What is equality of opportunity in the context of the educational environments defined above? The ideologies of equality and merit guide the distribution of students into school structures as well as their resulting educational attainments. Such views help define which inequalities are "acceptable" and which are not, for whom, and at which stage of the life course. Because disablement underscores issues of in/equality and the moral commitments of democracies to compensate some, but not all, inequalities, it has been discussed as a democratic dilemma:

Democratic morality inveterately condemns artificial inequalities stemming from social arrangements, particularly if individuals are unwarrantedly penalized because they are identified with an unfairly disparaged group. In contrast, the democratic point of view does not likewise reject natural inequalities occasioned by individual disparities of talent, industriousness, or luck (Silvers, Wasserman & Mahowald 1998: 14f.).

Two issues relating to this dilemma that are particularly relevant to special education systems are: How is dis/ability constructed in schools and by whom, and what responses to classified students are socially accepted? As discussed above, values and ideologies, social interests, disciplinary perspectives, and organizational capacities largely determine what responses are deemed appropriate, but the facets of equality need further specification to better gauge shifts in the types of equality strived for—and achieved. Here, it is important to distinguish between equality of (educational) opportunity as a widely held ideology and as a theoretical concept that can be specified, applied, and measured.

Beyond inequalities in initial starting conditions, there are several stages at which equality in educational systems can be investigated as a cohort of students progresses through schooling: (1) Equality of *access* refers to the probabilities that children from different social groups will enter schooling (and into which learning opportunity structures); (2) equality of *survival* indicates the probability that students from different social groups will remain in schooling, continuing to some defined level; (3) equality of *output* signifies the probabilities that students from different social groups will attain the same educational credential; and (4) equality of *outcomes* denotes the probabilities that students from different social groups will live relatively similar lives subsequent to and as a result of schooling—in terms of incomes, employment, status, political power, or other variables (see Farrell 1982: 39–53).⁷ At times, all of these different dimensions of equality have been subsumed under “equality of educational opportunity,” making it a highly problematic term. When distinctions have been made, the most common has been between equality of opportunity (access and survival) and equality of results (outcomes). As we have seen, the first stage—of equality of access due to the elimination of exclusion through universalized compulsory public education—has been achieved since the 1960s in both the US and Germany. After primary education was universalized, attention turned to equality of access to secondary schooling, and so forth. The later stages of equality—the type of schooling accessed within educational systems, equality of survival, and equality of output—are examined in the following chapters.

As James Coleman (1990: 309) points out, European class-based educational systems were originally designed to provide *appropriate* educational opportunities for different status groups, thus no one sought *equality* of educational opportunity. In the US, the original idea of equality of educational opportunity originally meant simply a free education up to the level of principal labor force entry. Thereafter, the concept came to represent a common curriculum for all children, regardless of their backgrounds. Only over time did it begin to refer to the goal of integrating children from diverse backgrounds by having them attend the *same school*, as a method for achieving equality within a locality (Coleman 1990: 20).⁸ In Germany, the older commitment to provide

appropriate schools for different social classes and ability groups continues to override the newer idea of equality of educational opportunity, despite the latter's global diffusion.

Two crucial assumptions in the American concept of equality of educational opportunity that remain implicit are the belief that the *existence* of free schools eliminates economic sources of inequality of opportunity and the idea that opportunity lies in *exposure* to a given curriculum—the higher the curriculum that children are given, the greater their opportunities (Coleman 1990: 20f.). The landmark *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954, outlawing racial segregation in schooling, signaled not only a dramatic shift in societal values but also a remarkable change in the underlying concept of equality of educational opportunity. Indeed, race, more than any other characteristic, marked the discrepancy between the system's ideal of equality in American democracy and the reality of opportunity limited by factors other than merit (Lemann 1999: 156). The Supreme Court's decision reacted to the pervasive prejudice and discrimination faced by this minority group that limited its members' adult opportunities, not only differences in schooling. The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy played a crucial role, not only because its deceptively simple logic inspired social-psychological research that influenced that court decision but also because it has become conventional wisdom.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the revised concept is its articulation of a life-course perspective, as it extrapolates the child's expected future from his or her opportunities for learning in school. If the concept originally left a child's future completely open, now differentiation in curricula was assumed to determine children's life chances, and with "the change in the concept of equality of educational opportunity from school resource inputs to effects of schooling ... the school's responsibility shifted from increasing and distributing equally its 'quality' to increasing the quality of its students' achievements" (Coleman 1990: 30). Most important was the change to a focus on the *results* of schooling: Equality of educational opportunity should be *effective* (Coleman 1990: 23). Indeed, Michael Hout and Tom DiPrete (2006), in summarizing generations of stratification research results, emphasize that a fundamental shift has occurred, with the focus on equal opportunity replaced by the question of whether the returns to education justify the costs. This change would prove crucial in the debates and decision-making processes about the education of disabled children to follow. Had equality of educational opportunity remained focused on simply the *same* resources being made available, the disadvantages faced by many disabled children would be stabilized or exacerbated.

What does appear achievable and attentive to results is the idea of effective public schooling that leads in the direction of equal adult opportunities. Such a formulation implies that *public schooling is to reduce handicaps that children face* [emphasis JP] as a function of their early environments, without committing the educational system to an unachievable end (Coleman 1990: 63).

As discussed above, the organization of schools is of such great consequence because the structure of learning opportunities provided places direct and indirect constraints on what an individual student can learn, regardless of his or her currently recognized and measured dis/abilities.

In self-proclaimed meritocracies, culturally highly valued abilities, talents, or skills—evaluated formally or informally—are the only legitimate basis for the distribution of status and of scarce resources. Meritocracies replace the ascriptive principle of stratification resting on birth characteristics with that of achievement (Bell 1976: 427). Because of the competing goals of equalizing opportunities of *access* and *outcomes*, conflicts surrounding equality and meritocracy will continue. Schools are charged with supporting all students in developing their abilities through the provision of learning opportunities. Furthermore, they should ensure that all students achieve as much as possible—or at least to a set standard. “Traditionally, schools have established separate ability groups and tracks in order to meet the often competing demands of these ‘excellence’ and ‘equity’ agendas. This solution, unfortunately, has created its own problems: segregation, curriculum differentiation, unequal access” (Mehan et al. 1996: 230). These ongoing problems are antithetical to the primary *goal* of democratic educational systems, namely, to integrate heterogeneous individuals into society at the nexus of individual liberty and equal participatory rights (Heimlich 1999: 7 ff.).

Whereas nations sponsor educational equality of access, survival, and output through their investments in educational policies, they contribute to equality of outcomes through redistributive social policies (Wilensky 1975; Heidenheimer 1981). In Germany, there is less equality of opportunity than in the US: The more selective German system is oriented to a lower level of average education, with a smaller proportion of each cohort going on to tertiary education (Lenhardt 2005). The American educational system, especially due to its invention of the comprehensive high school, which is characterized by its openness and permeability, may be considered

both an institutional embodiment of the ideology of equal opportunity and a constant source of its reinforcement. By avoiding early selection and providing numerous opportunities to show one’s talents, the educational system reaffirms the national belief that any individual, no matter how humble the circumstances of his birth, can rise as far as ability and hard work will take him (Brint & Karabel 1989: 223).

This ideology inspires meritocratic values, as it seems to offer each individual opportunities to succeed—as long as individuals develop their abilities and work hard. It also seems to legitimate the resulting inequalities of outputs and outcomes through its individual focus, resulting in within-person responsibility for success or failure. Whether special education, by certifying student disability and providing specific learning opportunities in the variety of settings described, also reduces the educational attainments of its students is an empirical question addressed later (see Chapters 5–7).

Analyses of persistent disproportionate representation in special education of children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds (e. g., Carrier 1986a; Wocken 2000b) and ethnic minority children (e. g., Mercer 1973; Losen & Orfield 2002; Powell & Wagner 2002) suggest that these programs function as a sorting mechanism that transforms these stigmatized ascriptive characteristics into highly legitimated individual “special educational needs.” The findings of an NRC investigation (NRC 2002: 4 ff.) examined reasons for ethnic disproportionality and found four major factors. First are early developmental differences due to biological, social, and contextual factors. Minority children are disproportionately poor; have higher rates of exposure to toxins, such as

alcohol, tobacco, and lead; are more likely to be born with low birth weight; and are less likely to live in environments optimally supportive of early cognitive, emotional, and social development. Boudon (1974) discussed such types of causes of social disparities in demonstrated cognitive abilities as “primary effects,” whereas “secondary effects” were defined as the decision-making processes in educational careers given constraints, which was later developed into a rational choice model to explain educational inequalities in attainment. While the relative importance of these types of effects remains a source of continuing debate (e. g., Breen & Goldthorpe 1997; Nash 2006), the NRC (2002) emphasized that reducing poverty and its associated biological, social, and environmental disadvantages would be the most effective way to reduce the risk of school failure. Prevention promises to be more efficacious than later compensatory provision.

Shifting to school environments, the report found a second group of factors in the considerable disparities in school resources. Areas with higher poverty rates have less experienced, less well-trained teachers and offer fewer advanced courses. Furthermore, while the persistent trends in over- and underrepresentation seem clear, the multiple factors responsible for these (ir)regularities are not. As will be discussed in the following chapter, bias can enter the complex process of classification at any one of a number of decision points: identification, referral, diagnosis, assessment, and classification. The NRC Committee especially questioned the subjectivity, the conceptual and procedural basis, and the timing of the referral and assessment process. In this book, the emphasis is on how educational systems compensate or exacerbate these early differences by offering particular opportunities to learn, by conferring stigmatizing labels, and by facilitating the transformation of ascriptive characteristics into objective individualized “learning” deficits. These are the most, if not the only, legitimate basis for differentially rewarded educational outputs in meritocracies. Yet these often persistent differences between ascriptive social groups, but also considerable shifts and disparities between categories of students in learning opportunities and in attainments, question the oft-posed biological or genetic basis of special education students’ low rates of educational survival and output, and the resulting outcomes. From a sociological standpoint, the ultimate task is to specify how disparities result from the interaction of individual characteristics of mind and body and institutional contexts, as dis/advantages accumulate over school careers and affect life courses.

The outputs of these foregoing processes of differentiation and allocation to alternative tracks that provide differential learning opportunities will be investigated in the following country case studies, with differences linked to the contrasting institutionalization of special and inclusive education and their organizational forms. Such differences illuminate the social factors and forces responsible for stable patterns found in individual and group inequalities, which challenge both the American and German educational systems in their attempts to compensate disabilities and disadvantages. But what effects do these systems have on inequalities faced by those children and youth that teachers find most difficult to teach, due to recognized impairments, dissimilar cultural patterns, or distinctive developmental trajectories? Meritocratic but also democratic schools are supposed to provide all children equality of educational opportunity, but individual differences can only be compensated to a certain degree. The interaction of

these institutional and individual factors not only result in variance in population size and composition and in learning opportunities provided but also in the achievements and attainments of students.

Educational Attainment

Following individuals' differentiation and their allocation within school systems, what are their resulting probabilities of educational attainment? Comparing educational levels and corresponding certificates earned across national contexts and among states/*Länder* requires considerable knowledge of educational policies and structures. The partial exemption of special education from the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and from international school performance studies indicates the challenge. The various educational outputs of students who have participated in special education must be contextualized before matching the available data cross-nationally. To do so, we calculate the rates of students with individualized education programs or among special school-leavers in each state/*Land* to the range of destinations. Students may return to a general school or classroom, experience track mobility and no longer receive special education services and support, or they may simply age out or dropout. Alternatively, they may succeed to attain different levels of education, depending on the regulation of qualifications. Low-level attainment includes the American high-school certificate or the lowest German school-leaving certificate, the *Hauptschulabschluss*. Whereas the American high-school diploma is usually necessary for entrance into a tremendous range of tertiary education opportunities, in Germany the intermediate (*mittlere Reife*) and higher secondary school-completion certificates (*Fachhochschulreife*, *Abitur*) provide qualifications for specific postsecondary opportunities, from vocational colleges to universities of applied science to full-fledged universities, respectively. These credentials and their values reflect distinctions such as standardization and stratification, as delineated above, which will be monitored in the cases compared below. Although questions about the extent to which educational expansion has loosened the link between social status and educational attainment have not yet been conclusively answered, we do find marked group differences with regard to social class background and parental education. If disabled students' access to education has similarly become more open as a result of educational expansion, what differences remain? What is the current distribution of educational opportunities—and what are the resulting outputs?

A life-course approach emphasizes that learning difficulties and capabilities develop over time, as a student's past dis/advantages accumulate. Therefore, educational systems in which schooling begins later as well as those that sort students earlier, such as in Germany, place greater emphasis on family resources and socialization, and may be less forgiving of developmental delays. The life-course concept entreats us to look at lives not just in discrete segments but as self-referential contextual processes of development in which experience and knowledge accumulate differentially according to positions in stratified educational systems and societies. Thus, Charles Tilly (1998: 241) recommend a focus on "characteristically different life histories that produce people who differ

so greatly in knowledge, skill, style, motivation, and personal connections as to affect reward-generating performances deeply.” Because location in the prior educational hierarchy, not to mention the school form and type of certificate, will provide employers with proxy information when they lack measurements of individual skills, “even the very personal characteristic called ability may simply be inferred from structural information” (Kerckhoff 1993: 16). This is especially so for students participating in special education because, more than ever before, those students whom schools are failing to teach successfully are defined as “having special educational needs.” From this perspective, the investigation of a fast growing group of students, whose equality of access was only very recently achieved and whose considerable inequalities of survival and output continue (despite more schooling overall), will provide insights into the reproduction of social inequality through educational stratification.

In sum, this chapter has shown that without access to learning opportunities students will not succeed regardless of their abilities and efforts. As opportunities for students classified as disabled have increased dramatically over time, with compulsory schooling coming to include *all* children, the effects of schooling have risen. Both the US and Germany have regularly initiated and implemented a variety of educational reforms that aim to increase schooling quality and equality. Yet the varying institutionalization of special and inclusive education has led to considerable and persistent differences in the organization of American and German schools and classrooms, representing contrasting learning opportunity structures and visions of equality of educational opportunity. The analyses presented in the case studies help us to understand the complex structures and pathways made available and their consequences for students in terms of accessing learning opportunities, staying in school, earning valued degrees, and participating in society. Yet not only the above charted institutionalized educational organizations influence who participates in special education but also the competing paradigms and dynamic definitions of student dis/ability and ab/normality inscribed in the classification systems of “special educational needs,” to which we now turn.

Classifying Student Dis/Abilities and Dis/Advantages

Gradually shifting the level of analysis to the school level, this chapter portrays the constructions of student dis/ability by examining classification systems, categorical boundaries, and ascriptive processes. Significant differences between categories, over time, and by location demonstrate that who is selected into special education depends heavily on contextual factors mediated through official classification processes. While individual differences in capabilities, behavior, and functioning are crucial, and optimally these are recognized and acknowledged by individualized educational programs, the continued emphasis on “within-individual” deficits (less often, strengths) often obscures the considerable effects of institutional arrangements and school gatekeepers’ judgments on individuals’ educational pathways. If schools are where individual differences, during childhood and adolescence, are identified and appraised, it is in those settings that special educational needs are defined—as students transition through age-graded school systems. Sketching the origins and evolution of the categorical boundaries of student dis/ability as well as the culturally variable process of classifying students sets the stage for the American and German historical case studies to follow.

Understanding classification and categories helps us to address key questions, such as: How does an individual student become “disabled” in a particular time and place? Why do the rates of student disability or “special educational needs” vary so considerably by gender, class, racial/ethnic group, age, and region? How are new categories and related knowledge diffused throughout educational systems, giving rise to new groups of students and settings? These types of queries emphasize the contribution of research that compares educational and classification systems and the categorical boundaries existing in them. Categories often become the labels that define individual students, who then use these labels to describe themselves and each other. Official classifications, as a regulated standardized mechanism used to sort students, also provide the rationale and authority for the institutionalization of specific organizational forms. Based on categorical distinctions regulated by (special) education policies, both American school tracks and German school types are organizational, pedagogic, and political responses to student body heterogeneity resulting from the universalization of compulsory schooling. If we wish to understand the changing composition and status of this growing group, the meanings and measure of categorical boundaries offer a fruitful approach, as special education defines and reflects one of the most diverse groups in schooling.

Over the 20th century, societies around the world placed an increasingly high premium on intellectual abilities, emphasizing school performance in particular. In countries with mass schooling, intelligence (as measured in IQ test results) has risen so quickly since its measurement began that the most plausible explanation is schooling itself (Baker, LeTendre & Goesling 2005a). At the same time, rising egalitarian values required compensation for those children unfairly disadvantaged to compete

in school. How should we respond to unequal starting conditions and interindividual differences? This dilemma and its continual renegotiation relies, for solution, on the drawing of authorized legitimate boundaries around those groups eligible to receive specific supplemental resources. Exemplifying the responses to this dilemma, historical patterns in special education classification manifest the translation of particular social and individual dis/advantages into school dis/advantages. Yet individual ability measurements are nearly impossible to separate from exogenous dis/advantages as they emerge from interactions in social networks (Booth & Booth 1998). Dis/abilities and dis/advantages are produced by symbolic and social processes in interaction with individual characteristics. These processes rely on classification systems and categorical boundaries as students transition through the multistage process of classification leading from general to special education. The following discussion begins with definitions of classification, categories, and boundaries, and then outlines the rise of statistics, normality, and eugenics. Next, the developments of German and American classification systems applied in special education and their consequences are compared. Finally, school-level classification processes are analyzed for their contribution to the translation of individual differences into student dis/abilities and school dis/advantages.

Classification and Categorical Boundaries

At the beginning of the 20th century, Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss ([1903] 1963) identified classification as a promising methodological and theoretical path toward an understanding of societies. In their essay *Primitive Classifications*, they question whether relations of inclusion or exclusion could possibly be simple, innate, or individual, suggesting instead that social groups themselves are the origin of all grouping processes. A hundred years later, social scientists continue to mine diverse classifications and the categories, definitions, and labels that constitute them for insights into social worlds. Classifications and categories are shorthand ways of describing, monitoring, and dividing up the world; processes at the heart of social life. Social categories objectified in routines and everyday praxis of all sorts are ubiquitous, as they transcend the roles we play. Self-classifications are, indeed, the actual fabric of society—the way society is constituted—as we identify categories and reify them constantly in social life (Douglas & Hull 1992). So central are these institutionalized categories to our thinking that all this is done without being critically reflected (Douglas 1986). We have learned how to classify others without self-reflexively questioning the categories we apply; instead, we think and act *within* those categories (Starr 1992: 155).

Often invisibly, classification systems order human interactions, empower some points of view and exclude others, and confer advantages or disadvantages onto individuals, groups, or organizations (Bowker & Star 1999). Creating distinctions between individual students and status groups within schools, classification systems used in education also maintain the dichotomy between “special” and “general” education classrooms, teachers, and curricula. The following historical analyses show how these classification systems have helped to draw official boundaries around types of students.

How have these evolved as they provided the framework required in school decision making, from identification and assessment to classification and allocation? How did they stabilize professional distinctions, such as teacher training and specialization? Furthermore, how did they respond to advancing disciplinary knowledge, policy reforms, and social forces? In exploring such questions, we uncover the constructions of “special educational needs” as outgrowths of the earlier binaries “ab/normal” and “dis/abled.”

Classification is not only a constitutive process of identity formation but also of much bureaucratic and political work, not only in Western welfare states. Defining mental, physical, and intellectual “normality” and assessing populations has become a preoccupation of nation-states and international organizations alike (Marks 1999: 53). Over time, welfare states have shifted the focus of their interventions vis-à-vis disabled people from containment and compensation to care and to citizenship (Drake 2001). Yet a wide range of disability policies still coexists, even within the European Union, depending largely on institutionalization processes in national contexts (Maschke 2008). As with other Western administrations run by professional gatekeepers, special education and its classifications were originally based on the ideology of “normality” derived from statistical science (Davis 1997), which developed at the nexus of the modern social sciences, industrializing nation-states, and social policies (see Rueschemeyer & Skocpol 1996). The word “normal” entered the French, German, and English languages as Adolphe Quetelet, Wilhelm Lexis, and others established the new science of statistics in the mid-1800s (Davis 2001). Two sociological schools that have theorized “normality” critically are the phenomenological branch based on Alfred Schütz (1967) and *verstehende* sociology and the poststructuralist branch based primarily on the works of Michel Foucault (1977, 1979, [1965] 1988; Tremain 2005) that emphasize surveillance, power, discipline, and control by others and the self (Waldschmidt 2003: 83 ff.). Ab/normality’s categorical boundaries reflected the ideals and norms relating to concepts of statistical normality that derived from scientific advances during the “probabilistic revolution” (Hacking 1987; Krüger, Daston & Heidelberger 1987).

Such categorical boundaries refer to the lines by which particular people, groups, or things are cognitively distinguished from others, leading to their inclusion or exclusion. As they help us to represent and operationalize symbolic and social boundaries, classification systems do “boundary work” (Star & Griesemer 1989; Gieryn 1999), maintaining official lines and suggesting appropriate divisions across a wide range of fields, such as medicine with its International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the newer International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF; see Bowker & Star 1999 on the evolution of classification systems). The administrators and political decision makers who manage such classification systems have continuously responded to disciplinary developments, but the process of classification and the relevant categories persist, even when these are given new labels. Classification systems maintain the unquestioned division between “special” and “regular” education through their logic, objectivity, and scientific nature. The boundaries set forth stabilize divisions between “normal” and “abnormal” students and the institutionalized curricular offerings and support services that are linked to those categories in particular times and places.

Boundary objects are durable arrangements that span knowledge gaps between communities of practice, such as those between state bureaucrats and school gatekeepers; arise over time through sustained cooperation; and play a crucial role in naturalizing categories (Bowker & Star 1999: 297 ff.). A prime example is the “individualized education program” that mediates between special and general educators, school psychologists, rehabilitation therapists, administrators at various levels, parents, and students. Where the school requires external approval and resources to complete “special” assignments (professional support individualized for a specific student) inside the school, the individualized education program does boundary work as it facilitates communication and legitimitizes attention beyond everyday routines. As we shall see, the classificatory boundaries are crucial at every level of analysis of educational institutions, from the global diffusion of dis/ability paradigms to gatekeeping processes in local schools.

Indeed, every institution requires stabilizing principles to guarantee its own existence and one of the most important of these is the reification of social classifications (Douglas 1986). In sociology, classification as the symbolic dimension of social inequality has received increasing attention (Lamont 2001; Weiß et al. 2001); however, student disability and special education classifications have not (yet) benefited from sustained sociological analysis by scholars interested in boundaries. This is regrettable because, as Michèle Lamont and Virag Molnár (2002: 169) emphasize, these distinctions are crucial to the exercise of power and (re)production of social inequality. Such an analysis, presented here, focuses on the historical development of legitimated, institutionalized cognitive and organizational boundaries between groups of students classified as in/educable, ab/normal, dis/abled—or as “having special educational needs.”

Over time, classification procedures developed as a social mechanism of selective school systems with individual and institutional consequences. If symbolic boundaries are a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (Lamont & Molnár 2002), it was their increasing institutionalization in rapidly and vastly expanded (special) education systems that gave them such powerful consequences. Pierre Bourdieu (1984: 477) argues that classificatory systems are far from being solely means of *knowledge*, but rather also tools of *power*, reproducing social inequalities as they legitimate particular states of classification and class struggles with an apparent neutrality. Because of their ubiquity, their scientific rationality and supposed objectivity, and their interpretation by prestigious authoritative professions, such as medicine and psychology, these classifications—and the clinical diagnostics upon which they rely—defend the status quo with their legitimacy. Elaborate classificatory practices of student dis/ability make up one of the core components of schooling in contemporary education societies. Identifying a crucial feature of 20th century educational classification, Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star attest that classifying students according to measured achievement via standardized aptitude tests “valorizes some kinds of knowledge skills and renders other kinds invisible” (Bowker & Star 1999: 6). The increasing importance of cognitive processes and the premium placed on literacy (Silvers, Wasserman & Mahowald 1998: 206) resulted in ever more specific categories of special educational needs. These categories differentiated and grew through institutionalization as part of the reciprocal expansion of (special) education and related disciplines,

on the one hand, and the asylums, special schools, and special classes, on the other. Brian Rowan (1982: 268 f.) points out that, in the United States, school psychologists, psychometrists, and psychiatrists have played a central role in the diffusion of expanding special education programs (under various guises, such as health programs, the bureaus of mental hygiene, and psychometric testing) since the 1930s, growing rapidly in the postwar period, with consolidation in the 1950s followed by increasing federal government involvement. Then, as now, organizational structures and normative standards reflect the cognitive and cultural dimensions elaborated by the disciplines and by special education professionals.

In school systems' status hierarchies, classification systems help gatekeepers draw symbolic boundaries between individual students or groups. Providing categorical distinctions, these systems facilitate the sorting of students by creating scientifically legitimated symbolic and organizational boundaries between increasingly differentiated, statistically derived, "normalized" categories—primarily intellectual, linguistic, sensory, physical, and behavioral. Patterns and trends in classification, examined below, exemplify educational systems' shifting standards and professional projects. Classification systems of deviance, of impairment, and later of special educational needs have long been applied to students, but they have also been continuously adjusted with growing scientific knowledge and practical experience. Primarily, the psychological, medical, and educational disciplines have been responsible, but these all rely on statistical tools to measure and sort populations. Yet the national, state/*Land*, and local categorical boundaries adjust continuously to changing legal conditions (e. g., students' rights), resource levels (e. g., funding caps), and school contexts (e. g., local demographics). At the individual level, teachers and gatekeepers with particular knowledge and training continuously (re)interpret such boundaries. Furthermore, each category and label depends on the diffusion of categorical knowledge in the public domain. Significantly, these developments can be traced back to the origins of statistical science, national census-taking, and the continuous measurement of social phenomena.

Statistical Normality, Eugenics, and (Special) Education

The State, the Normal Curve, and Ab/Normality

During the "avalanche of printed numbers" of the hundred-year probabilistic revolution (Krüger, Daston & Heidelberger 1987), from 1830, statistics was transformed from an administrative activity describing the state, to being the numerical part of the state's description in the 19th century, to the 20th century's notion of statistics as a mathematical technique for numerical analysis of any data (Desrosières 1991: 200). Europeans shifted from thinking of themselves in natural to numerical terms—counting, categorizing, and ultimately believing in autonomous statistical laws: "They invented kinds of people, and thereafter people fell into those very classifications, made themselves into people who 'fit,' and so changed their very conceptions of themselves" (Hacking 1987: 392). Normality has become a ubiquitous, subconscious, "natural," but also flexible—and

to varying extents permeable—framework through which people in Western societies orient themselves and act, measuring each other and making sense of objects.

This way of understanding the world is guaranteed by and (re)produced in technologies, types of academic knowledge, and the institutionalized practices of the “normalizing society” (Sohn 1999). “Normality” has become a largely taken-for-granted orientation and a ubiquitous framework for action. Being “normal” is understood as being “natural.” While some societies make no such distinctions or revere exceptional individuals (Ingstad & Whyte 1995; Neubert & Cloerkes 2001), Western welfare states and science jointly placed primacy on normality and also on individuality, which have come to dominate policies affecting each stage of the life course.

Conceptions of “disability” or “special needs” also inherently refer to individualized ab/normality as both an ideology and praxis developed since the 19th century by nation-states, statistical science, and eugenic movements (Davis 1997; Waldschmidt 1998, 2005). In “norm” societies, some people will, by definition, be considered to deviate from policy-determined institutionalized norms (Albrecht 2001).¹ In contrast, “ideal” societies are oriented toward a supreme being whose idealized state mortals cannot attain, thus reducing the significance of human differences. Highly unusual, the normal curve as a statistical object itself became a standard, with the result that its meaning is contradictory, referring simultaneously to “usual” and “ideal” (Stigler 1999: 376). The “normal” has two opposing meanings. As Ian Hacking (1990: 169) elaborates, “normal” represents both that which is typical, as in averages, but also what is ideal, which has made this concept among “the most powerful ideological tools of the 20th century.” For Durkheim, the normal was good and deviation from the norm pathological; for Galton and his eugenic project of producing genius, normal was just average, needing improvement (Hacking 1990). But for people classified “abnormal,” “deviant,” or “disabled,” neither version leads to acceptance because the normal has become idealized.

Statistically derived normality gave rise to classification systems of student disability that represent deviance or abnormality in behavior, learning, and bodily characteristics within the context of schools. Furthermore, it lent scientific legitimacy to such distinctions and facilitated the establishment of boundaries between “special” and “general” education. Rapidly progressing Western rationality, coupled with scientific inquiry and legitimacy since the Enlightenment, resulted in ever more differentiated diagnostic and etiological classifications of the “ab/normal”—leading to specialized treatments and services and stabilizing the boundaries between normality and deviance (Braddock & Parish 2001). Implying value judgments, disability statistics “encompass an enormous range of concepts, methods of definition, and systems of surveillance” that also result in tremendous disparities, and emphasize the subjectivity of conceptualizations of disability at the same time that they too often force human variability into simple dichotomies that cannot adequately reflect the existing range of characteristics (Fujiura & Rutkowski-Kmitta 2001: 69).

Building on scientific developments and enforced by social policies, disability classifications supplemented biological pathologies with relational, statistical measures. These were based on the normal or Gaussian frequency distributions of human characteristics,

but especially of intelligence, usually represented by a bell-shaped curve symmetrical around the mean. Current debates surrounding the use of this probability measure continue a eugenic discourse about valued and disvalued human attributes raging since the mid-1800s (see Gould [1981] 1996; Duster 1990; Herrnstein & Murray 1994; Fraser 1995; Fischer et al. 1996). Few books published in the 1990s sparked as much controversy as *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray 1994), in which the authors proffer age-old essentialist arguments about genetically based racial differences in IQ with new calculations. Stephen Jay Gould ([1981] 1996: 176–351) had preempted these types of eugenicist, racist, and ableist arguments in a synopsis of IQ testing's constitutive parts: scaling and ranking by mental age and factor analysis of correlations among mental tests. He also summarized the ideological convictions of the small group of scientists who conceived of hereditarian theories of intelligence, including Galton, Burt, Spearman, Goddard, Terman, Yerkes, Brigham, Thurstone, and Jensen. From the beginning, IQ tests were not neutral scientific tools, but were instead designed to reflect Western societies' class structures (Rapley 2004: 201). The worldwide eugenics movement especially targeted groups of persons with intellectual difficulties or disabilities and categories relating to low measured intelligence. The diagnosis of learning difficulties and disabilities has greatly increased in significance due to the importance of education and information processing in postindustrial societies.

Measuring the distribution of intelligence in populations, psychologists conceptualized “normal” student intelligence by finding the mean, distributing students “normally,” and producing standard deviations on both ends of the curve. Advancing psychometrics brought standardized measures of intelligence and rapidly increased the use of newly constructed aptitude tests (Lemann 1999: 3 ff.). Developing in tandem, statistics and intelligence testing promised to guide the selection process needed to efficiently deal with masses of students. They served to justify the sorting and selection required in hierarchical school systems. However, the first widespread application of these tests came in the form of the Army “alpha” and “beta” tests to sort recruits into military hierarchies in preparation for the First World War (Lemann 1999). If such widespread psychometric testing legitimated specific definitions of intelligence scientifically, such instruments had also been used by eugenic movements to bolster their views from the beginning. It is noteworthy that these movements took, as their main concern, the epidemiology of genius (Kevles 1985; Simonton 1999), not intellectual disability (Parmenter 2001: 272). The influence of eugenic ideologies and Social Darwinism is key to understanding the historical evolution of early definitions and responses to (student) disability in the US and Germany, both nations that early-on enacted laws based on dubious scientific claims.

Eugenics: Selecting Inferiority and Superiority

Eugenics refers to the theory and practice of improving human heredity by selective processes and the international movement and national policies championing them. Derived from the Greek term for “well born,” eugenics was systematized as an applied

science in the West in the mid-1800s by Francis Galton, influenced by his cousin Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Eugenic beliefs include the exclusive power of genetic over environmental factors in determining traits (genetic determinism) and the genetic "inferiority" or "superiority" of particular dis/ability groups, classes, or races (Kevles 1985; Weingart, Kroll & Bayertz 1988). These have been continuously scientifically disproved with increasing genetic knowledge, yet its followers continued to implement policies based in eugenic ideals, despite their questionable and increasingly questioned scientific basis. Even if that knowledge base has repeatedly been proven incomplete or flawed (Allen 2001), eugenic policies have limited births and immigration, segregated people in asylums, and led to forcible sterilizations and mass exterminations. As disabled people came to be viewed as biologically deviant, proponents of eugenics devised therapies and techniques to advance their science (Snyder & Mitchell 2006). Technocratic elites and advocates of all political persuasions, from Fabian socialists to Scandinavian social democrats to status quo conservatives, dominated the movement, not racial purists (Paul 2001). For more than a hundred years in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, national eugenic policies have especially relied on support from professional middle classes, faith in science and medicine, and ideologies of efficiency and scientific management. These ideas and social movements have been anything but marginal.

Historically, eugenic appeals to science have legitimized prejudices and stereotypes, stigmatization and discrimination, especially those based on intelligence, impairments, race, and class. In the US, hereditarian theories and the developing science of psychometrics joined the everyday social theories of Social Darwinism to foster the eugenics movement, racism, restrictions on immigration, and disabled people's total institutionalization and sterilization (Sarason & Doris 1979: 138 f.). However, it was Germany's *Aktion T-4* and the atrocities of the Holocaust that finally discredited eugenics in the West, if not elsewhere (see Dikötter 2001 on contemporary eugenics in Asia).² Stringent implementation of eugenic policies ("applied biology") in the National Socialist racist and ableist regime (1933–1945) led to compulsory sterilization of around 400,000 people, with an earlier Californian law serving as a model. By 1945, 200,000 disabled adults and children—stigmatized as "life unworthy of life"—had been murdered by their doctors (Klee 1986; Burleigh 1994). After the Second World War, justice was subverted as the ultra-nationalist values, that had led to such ruthless killings, were not eradicated during a period in which medicine was "normalized" (Weindling 2002: 290). Similarly, special schools were implicated in this catastrophe, since they had been used as collection points for children and youth deemed "genetically unfit." In fact, special education also witnessed a "restoration" after the war, with the same leaders of the professional association maintaining their positions of power from which they rebuilt the special school system keeping with traditions and without reflecting sufficiently on the role that special education had played in the past regime (see Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a).

In distinct contrast to the eugenicist threat and discrimination of disabled children and youth before the end of the Second World War, progress has been made since then to reduce educational exclusion by extending human rights. The egalitarian ideology of personhood, surging after 1945, effectively robbed the "science" of eugenics of any

authority (Barrett & Kurzman 2004): Equality and rights discourses replaced those of racial hierarchy. As their human and civil rights were asserted over the postwar period, disabled children's exclusion was reduced. However, the "hunt for disability" continues, despite the shift from old (moral) to new (scientific) eugenic discourses, since they both maintain "ableist normativity" (Baker 2002: 663).

The contemporary challenge of sustained educational and social inequalities increasingly confronts the rise of genomics research and advancing medical technology whose power has led to fears of a "new eugenics" (see Galton 2001). While eugenic discourse continues in many social contexts in the nature/nurture debate, advanced molecular genetics and technologies vastly expand the scope of potential eugenic policies begun in the early 1900s, and threaten to renew genetic discrimination—using far more sophisticated techniques (see Duster 1990; Kevles & Hood 1992; Nelkin & Lindee [1996] 2004). Bioethicists struggle to bring these essential but complex social, ethical, and legal issues to the public at large (Asch 2001; Aktion Mensch 2003). Gregor Wolbring (2001) has called urgently for debate on eugenic "solutions" that he warns may unleash a "war of characteristics," pitting social groups against one another; undermining the human rights movement. However, egalitarian discourse, expanded citizenship rights and participation rates in all levels of education, and disability antidiscrimination laws indicate that many societies, including the US and Germany, have considerably altered their attitudes and beliefs about "disability"—in a positive direction—especially due to the successful actions of the disability movement. Yet scientists and special and inclusive education professionals continue to struggle over relevant definitions, organizational change, and policy reforms to achieve their goals.

Scientific Expertise and Professional Associations

Developing in conjunction with education, psychology, biology, medicine, and psychiatry from the mid- to late 1800s, new educational structures and increasingly specialized experts provided resources and professional services to the categories of people they had defined. The *Zeitgeist* of the *fin-de-siècle* brought biology into analogy with the state and society; furthermore, the idea of inferiority played a key role, as the primary goal was to diagnose morphological-functional characteristics (Schott 2002: 102). In the case of psychiatry, for example, the consolidation of terminology and classification in the decades before and after 1900 parallel the discipline's significant institutionalization: academic journals, diversification, professional organization, and academic establishment (Roelcke 1999, 2002: 116; see Abbott 1988: 280–314). Despite the continued relevance of the fundamental binary of "ab/normality" for both the life sciences and social sciences (Lepenes 1974), all these disciplines further elaborated categories of deviance from the norm. As school systems replaced outright exclusion with school differentiation and allocation by sorting within the system, these categories and selection processes had to be legitimated and accepted (Carrier 1986b). This feat was accomplished by special educators, increasingly organized in professional associations, and by the disciplines claiming jurisdiction over public schooling.

Professional organizations in both countries have been influential, especially in framing the debates among policymakers about how to appropriately respond to student disability. Germany's Association of Support Schools (*Verbandes der Hilfsschulen Deutschlands* [VdHD]) was founded in 1898 and has significantly shaped the development of German special education since (Möckel 1998). In encompassing the increased differentiation of special school types that its members had proposed, the Association of German Special Schools (*Verband Deutscher Sonderschulen* [VDS]) later added to its title "professional association for education of 'the disabled'" (*Fachverband für Behindertenpädagogik*). In 2003, the corporate identity shifted again, to the more neutral Association for German Special Education (*Verband Deutscher Sonderpädagogik* [VDS]). Its American counterpart is the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), established in 1922. Like the VDS, the CEC has significantly influenced the direction of special education reform through its public policy division, which was instrumental in the passage of the original mainstreaming law in 1975. As an umbrella association for myriad disability organizations across the political spectrum in the US, and internationally through its national and regional chapters and 50,000 members worldwide, the CEC also facilitates cross-disability communication and coalition-building.

Over time, such professional associations developed new areas of expertise to extend the pedagogic mandate of public schooling to students who earlier had often been completely excluded (Tomlinson 1982: 29), left to be cared for by their families without state support, or segregated in residential institutions. In response to compulsory schooling and the increase in scientific expertise, the rules of access were loosened (Richardson 1999). Access was and is determined by special education's classification systems at the nexus of expert scientific knowledge, the ideology of normality, and homogeneous ability grouping that together legitimate selection and stratification based on dynamic ideals of physical, intellectual, and social "normality." Changing (special) education institutions clearly reflect the evolving contest between conceptions and categories of intelligence, student dis/ability, and special educational needs.

Categories and Labels

Boundaries between categories in systematic classifications are policy choices with clear institutional and individual ramifications, just as the classifying of people among them represent a political process which can be empirically examined (Starr 1992). In practice, classification is simultaneously the main educational sorting mechanism that school gatekeepers use to identify children for referral and the scientific rationale that legitimizes students' evaluation, assessment, diagnosis, and allocation. Categorical change and continuity in how educational systems sort students emphasize that dis/ability can be understood as structurally assigned social status, rather than as fixed qualities of individuals (Rosenbaum 1986: 157). In schools, charged with evaluating student performances on a daily basis, this occurs as a matter of course.

In myriad ways, disability categories interact with other characteristics and their labels. Beth Omansky Gordon and Karen Rosenblum (2001) review considerable

evidence of similarities between disability and the statuses of race and ethnicity, sex, and sexual orientation. They argue that the social construction of all four statuses derives from the same key social processes. People in the same category are: named, aggregated and disaggregated, dichotomized and stigmatized, and denied culturally valued attributes.³ Sharing all four processes with the general status of disability, “special educational need” often replaces other disability labels; however, the participants in special education programs do not represent a census of all children and youth with impairments, chronic illnesses, or disabilities (Felkendorff 2003). Special educational needs are labels that cut across the others, even if some groups are disproportionately represented, suggesting certain underlying similarities or even symbolic substitutions among characteristics. The significant overrepresentation of certain racial and ethnic minorities in special education programs suggests such a substitution of clinically authoritative labels and settings for increasingly illegitimate racial, class or gender prejudice or discrimination (such as in segregated schools), but this must be empirically shown in micro-level studies (see the exemplary studies by Mehan, Hertweck & Meihls 1986; Kottmann 2006).

As the 20th century began, “the inferior status and attenuated social participation of women and people of color were portrayed as being natural consequences of their differences in talent and character,” but a hundred years later, these very disadvantages are instead interpreted as the result of power struggles and abuses that produced biased institutions (Silvers, Wasserman & Mahowald 1998: 15). More recently, other negatively valued statuses of alternative sexual orientation and disability have also experienced an epistemological shift, as both groups organized effective social movements to battle for recognition of the artificial biases they suffer, arguing for institutional change in a wide range of protest and lobbying activities. Given the regular patterns of considerable overrepresentation of boys and particular racial and ethnic minority groups in special education, these categories deserve more detailed attention here.

Hypotheses about gender inequalities in special education have focused on differences in biology, behavior, and bias; however, there has been too little research on gender equity and bias in special education, called the “double jeopardy” for the interactions between bias and stereotyping based on disability status and gender, to conclusively answer which of these factors is paramount (Wehmeyer & Schwartz 2001: 272 f.). Additionally, the conflation of race, class, and impairments and disabilities with special educational needs further problematize research findings on the various effects of individual and institutional bias, cultural behavior patterns, as well as genetic and developmental factors. Although with increasing coeducation and generally equalized participation rates, gender disparities in education declined over the 20th century, gender disproportionality in special education persists: Male participation rates in OECD countries range between 53 % and 73 % (OECD 2002: Table C5.4). In fact, not only the early categories of “backward” or “incorrigible” pupils and truants (“bad boys”) but also the connection to vocational training for industry linked special education to the male reformatory as “the genesis of special education was stamped with a gender difference” (see Sutton 1988; Richardson & Parker 1993: 385). While many studies report over-referral and overidentification of males (Lipsky & Gartner 1997: 22 ff.), the multiple

factors responsible and usually identified are behavioral stereotypes: Boys are loud and disruptive, whereas girls are quiet and acquiescent students. Hyperactivity, aggression, and disciplinary problems, typically thought of as more often “male,” all often lead to special education referral. Furthermore, gender stereotypes do not end with referral, but follow special education students beyond the school into communities and the world of work as they attempt to “manage” the stigma attributed to them (Pfahl 2004, 2006). Results from the *Beginning School Study* suggest that families facilitate the educational development of boys, but school practices favor the educational careers of girls (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson 1997: 121–144). The gender gap that develops during elementary schooling reflects teachers’ low ratings of disadvantaged boys’ reading skills and classroom behavior but also lower parental expectations in terms of boys’ school performance (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson 2007) as well as the predominance of women in the teaching professions. If one accepts the hypothesis that special education cannot adequately compensate for past school failure, this finding suggests that girls may be “better off” than boys, at least with regard to special education placements in primary and secondary schooling.

However, other researchers invert the charge against such disproportionality, emphasizing that girls who need special education services, but who have no concomitant behavior problems, are being underreferred or underserved by special education programs (Wehmeyer & Schwartz 2001: 278 ff.). Thus, these authors argue, it is not so much boys’ *over*representation in special education programs, but rather girls’ *under*representation that accounts for much of this gender disparity, one suggesting gender bias alongside gendered behavioral norms. But the process is similar, as the gendered socialization and gender-specific notions of acceptable behavior or learning potential of students, families, and gatekeepers interact with biological rates of impairment or disability to influence the evaluations of gatekeepers and their propensities to retain, refer to special education, or promote students. Every individual belongs to innumerable categories, but in meritocratic schools whose charge is to socialize, to differentiate, and to allocate each cohort of students, the most important characteristic is usually thought to be “intelligence,” as measured in IQ tests and school performance.

Classifying “Intelligence” in Schools

As discussed above, a variety of behavioral, linguistic, and cultural norms are used to determine special educational needs, with the majority of students in special education classified in categories relating to learning, speech, and behavior. In schools, ability is not so much a property of individuals, but rather a social status that peers, teachers, and administrators confer on the basis of the available social statuses and their criteria that are often imperfect, error-prone, arbitrary, and imprecise (see Rosenbaum 1986). Here, we are interested not so much in individual differences in ability that surely do exist and are more or less validly and appropriately assessed. Rather, we emphasize that such assessments of abilities are not easy inferences to make. Determining a (semi-) permanent individual attribute on the basis of a number of performances in complex

situations must remain an imperfect measure of potential and dynamic abilities. These performative situations are structured in ways that constrain certain individuals more than others through such factors as barriers to communication, lowered expectations, as well as linguistic and cultural bias. As Charles Tilly (1998) emphasizes in *Durable Inequality*, these categories rely on elaborate organizations, on belief systems, and on enforcement procedures even if they refer to characteristics thought to be biological, natural, or innate. He clarifies that significant and durable inequalities in advantages relate to unequal binary categories (such as female/male) more so than to individual differences in what we actually do in daily life (Tilly 1998: 7f.). Student dis/abilities must be included on the list of powerful categorical pairs producing inequalities. Despite the elaborate classification systems developed by science and (special) education, the institutionalization of special education has not eliminated more fundamental dichotomous categories, even if a plethora of labels has been added on top of them.

Over time, dozens of categories of student disability—deviations from statistically defined normal intelligence and learning progress—have been institutionalized at multiple levels of social policy and practice. Both American and German classification systems relating to disability and special (educational) needs have been influenced by international, especially transatlantic, concepts. However, within the two countries, a broad historically evolved and regionally specific range of often contradictory definitions exists, relating to an array of contrasting paradigms or models of disability and special educational needs. Nevertheless, “intelligence” and its measurement must be considered the key scientific development that led to the drawing of ostensibly precise boundaries between students, along a continuum facilitated by the ranking of individuals. As nearly all disability categories were aggregated into one half of the ab/normal binary, they became associated with low measured levels of intelligence. In direct opposition to the uses of intelligence tests that creator Alfred Binet envisioned over a century ago, most IQ test developers and popularizers used the tests to sort individuals based on supposedly “natural” talents, not to distribute pedagogical services among children, all of whom have specific individual learning potential and needs.⁴ Adding further dimensions to views of intelligence, psychologists increasingly argue for a transition from the original unitary view to conceptions that recognize context-dependent, multidimensional types of intelligence. Research on “multiple intelligences” (Gardner 1993), “successful intelligence” (Sternberg 1999), and “social intelligence” (Goleman 2006) demonstrates the extraordinary variety of human abilities and the arbitrariness and limitations of currently dominant concepts and psychometric measures (see Sternberg & Kaufman 1998).

Despite these critiques, teachers in special, gifted, and general education continue to rely on the normal distribution to distinguish intelligence and to define particular special educational needs or learning disabilities, a technique taught in teacher training textbooks (McLoughlin & Lewis 1994; Hallanan & Kauffman 2005). Low IQ test results serve as a sufficient indicator for most educational (and employment) assessments to ascribe a low status and thus constrain future opportunities based on that attribute, whether or not it is relevant to the tasks at hand. If IQ testing was an important expert-developed policy with an inegalitarian thrust, civil rights for disabled citizens were intended to equalize opportunities and have done so with some measure of success (Brint

1994: 148). Indeed, antidiscrimination legislation enacted since the 1970s in the US and since the 1990s in Germany recognizes and specifically addresses this categorical inequality. Thus far, however, neither newer diversified concepts of intelligence nor rights-based advances have successfully challenged the dichotomies of dis/ability and ab/normality into which students around the world are divided. In fact, an increasing proportion of all students are being classified as having special educational needs, as students participate in routine large-scale assessments of school performance and as the classification systems and categories that define the growing group have continuously evolved.

Continuity and Change in Classification Systems

Although classification plays a central role in nearly every aspect of special education, the merits or limitations of classifying practices and the importance of classification more generally remain to be fully appreciated in psychology, education, or even in special education research (Ysseldyke 1987: 253). This is unfortunate, especially given inconsistencies or changes in definitions and the application of general categories and their obfuscation of individuals and the contexts in which they learn (Mertens & McLaughlin 1995: 121 ff.). Recent attempts to include personal and environmental factors equally in the most powerful (medical) classification of “disability”—the ICF of the WHO (2001)—have not yet fully succeeded: Despite the significant progress in terms of the goal of acknowledging and responding to the complexity of disablement, personal experiences in highly variable life contexts as well as the relationality and culturally interpreted understandings of disablement confound systematization (Üstün et al. 2001: 9). Such projects to develop and revise international statistical classifications may influence German and American (special) educational classifications, yet in both countries a broad range of often contradictory and culturally specific categories remain, and these reflect a series of paradigms or models of disability that have been institutionalized in policies and bureaucracies at various times and at multiple levels of government. On the one hand, the rate of classification of children as “having special educational needs” has grown with special education expansion around the world, exemplified in UNESCO’s Salamanca Statement on Special Educational Needs (1994) and other charters calling for the provision of special education support. On the other hand, the national responses to special educational needs vary considerably at national and regional level, according to path-dependent developments of educational systems. Yet as Karl Ulrich Mayer (2001: 91 f.) emphasizes, “the uniformity of global change and ... highly stable national diversity are logically and empirically incompatible.” To address this paradox, it is helpful to analytically separate classification systems and their evolving categories from the ubiquitous and seemingly unavoidable social mechanism of classification. In this section, we examine continuity and change in classification systems, utilizing the American and German cases to provide a window onto the (re)production of student dis/ability and the performance of boundary work in education.

Once theoretically constructed, maintenance and management of dis/ability categories and classification procedures become core work of bureaucracies at all levels of

government, as Paul Starr (1987) shows in his sociology of official statistics. In fact, since bureaucracies are themselves elaborate classifications, their work centers on classifying and assigning, with variations in classification *practice* at various levels of government testifying to the political process inherent in officials (the classifiers) exercising power over subjects (the classified) through intermediate agents that apply classificatory rules (Starr 1987, 1992). State administrators, who shaped school structures at the outset by applying the “bureaucratic rationality” of official statistics’ systematization and categories, affected both the public and the scientific perceptions of the educational system (Zymek 1994: 129). For example, the US Department of Education (US DoED) was established in 1867 to gather information in order to make efficient school systems possible: Educational statistics serve primarily the administrative measurement and distribution of fiscal resources (Suter 2001). Since the mid-1960s, the measure of student performance and achievement has dramatically risen in significance, in part to increase accountability for educational investments by the state. More generally, statistics (as “political arithmetic”) and census-taking imply the nation-state’s increased data gathering efforts to quantify its entire populace. Benedict Anderson ([1983] 1996: 166 ff.) describes the fiction of the census as allowing each person just one categorical place, with no space for uncertainties or imprecision and the innovation of the census (as of the 1870s), not so much in the construction of ethnic-racial classification, but in *systematic quantification*. Yet special education, especially due to its relatively late universalization, could utilize a plethora of existing categories of deviance, of intelligence, and of medicine. These also conferred upon special educators a striking array of possible problems to address and labels to administer. School administrations on multiple levels can, through the actors that implement these classificatory rules, exercise power over classified subjects (Starr 1992), since the categories of education statistics are instruments of state action and implementation (Zymek 1994: 131 f.). Indeed, the shifting supply and meanings of categories charted below indicate that the choice of classification system as well as its categories is far from neutral; it is highly political.

Classifications of special educational needs provide a communication system for educators, scientists, and government officials for such variables as functioning levels, education and support needs, and etiology, whether or not these actually reflect an individual interacting with his or her environment. In the landmark study of the classification of children, the rationale for and benefits of their use were defined as more or less formal and systematic conceptual schemes to describe children and their problems—in short, as “the natural way to achieve economy of description, especially with such a diverse group” (Hobbs 1975a: 43). Contributing to these systems’ ubiquity and stability, many other features have been specifically mentioned as beneficial or positive (see Hobbs 1975a, 1975b; Ysseldyke 1987; Mertens & McLaughlin 1995: 61; Reschly 1996: 40–53). First, they facilitate communication among educators, policymakers, scholars, and the public. Second, they reduce complexity as they structure the identification and description of individuals. Third, they increase possibilities for advocacy and support based on specific claims and characteristics as they structure eligibility determinations, diagnosis and treatment decisions, and educational programs for labeled individuals, since each individual so categorized will be related to others in the category.

Fourth, they organize teacher training, licensing, and research on educational inputs and outputs. Fifth, they structure individual claims, legislative initiatives, and finance of educational services, thus increasing administrative and political efficiency. Finally, they facilitate identity, identification, common culture, and bonds among members of a category, such as among deaf individuals.⁵ Not just the dichotomy special/general, but rather the continuing, highly dynamic differentiation among categories in special education structures practically all activities relating to special education. Not only are students (dis)aggregated into instructional groupings within classes, even their classrooms and schools are divided along this cleavage. Universities train teachers, researchers conduct studies, professional organizations lobby, parents and activists advocate, and foundations raise money, and all based on dynamic disability classifications.

If historically evolved classification systems and their categories provide informational infrastructures that institutionalize particular ethical and political values, regional and local implementation further modulates and specifies them (Bowker & Star 1999: 321). Highly variant responses to heterogeneous student bodies and ascription to a category have been shown to be neither scientifically “objective” nor generated solely or even mainly by individual differences. As we shall see, the complex, relational process of classifying special educational needs leads to continual renegotiation in each classroom, school, and district. The probabilities of characteristics being ascribed vary considerably at each level of analysis, from schools to nation-states, depending on the classification system applied. In the context of special educational needs, the historical resilience of these systems and their function of sorting students into official categories emphasizes their successful institutionalization. Their taken-for-granted function, however, contrasts with culturally specific categories that they supply and apply. Thus, the next section delineates how and at which level these classification systems continue to operate, even as resistance to this stigmatizing boundary work has grown, despite the status of authorized professionals who carry out their responsibilities to maintain these boundaries. Categorical shifts toward less stigmatizing labels evince this trend, but some criticize these changes as mere euphemism. Even the comprehensive unitary category special educational needs, as a replacement for earlier classification systems, does not solve the original problem of the medical model because it retains the causal equation of deficit within the child instead of focusing on disabling institutional practices and barriers (Barton & Armstrong 2001). Regardless of one’s position on the decades-long controversy about labelling, classification systems must be analyzed as central to the institutionalized symbolic and social boundaries between “general” and “special” education that not only legitimate school systems’ separation or segregation of students but also produce the knowledge and norms that guide policymakers and gatekeepers.

Developing German and American Classification Systems

Charting historical changes in the socially constructed categories of student dis/ability shows how quickly its definitions have changed as compulsory schooling expanded to reach ever more of the population. Responding to the challenge of increased hetero-

geneity, classifications and their categories were differentiated, as were school systems themselves, informed by growing disciplinary knowledge and power. As we have seen, especially statistics not only defined social problems and categories but also the methods of measurement that determined, for nascent education societies, how diverse groups of children in schools should be sorted: through scientifically defined and administratively controlled classification systems.

Particular images of difference and models of provision are imposed through formal policymaking, processes of assessment and identification, and bureaucratic control. “Special education” and medically based categories of impairment, although highly contested, are the bastions that exclude many disabled children from ordinary social and learning environments (Barton & Armstrong 2001: 702).

Thus, understanding not only how American and German classification systems and their durable categorical boundaries persist but also how they change incrementally, enables us to unmask special education’s taken-for-grantedness and chart a path toward inclusive education, to which each nation has committed itself.

The special education class, originating in Saxony, influenced developments elsewhere in Europe and in the US by supplying ideas, curricula, instructional methods, and organizational principles (Sarason & Doris 1979: 268). The early sources of (special) education knowledge and praxis were transatlantic. However, American education research has been client-focused and influenced by the profession, administration, and psychology, whereas German educational science has oriented itself to the traditional hierarchical school system, the dual structure of teacher training, as well as the academic elites and philosophy (Drewek 2002: 187). The classification systems of student disability examined below reflect that growing scientific knowledge and the differentiated special education institutions and new categories that assisted gatekeepers to respond to increasingly heterogeneous groups of students.

German Special Education Classification Systems

Over time, German special education classification systems have shifted considerably from a focus on individual impairments to school types to individual support needs. Since the beginnings of the support school system (*Hilfsschulwesen*) before 1900, school administrations became increasingly bureaucratized as they established required official procedures in the form of keeping extensive student files whose contents determined transfer—and justified their decision making (Hofsäss 1993: 35). Beginning with the primary school law (*Reichsgrundschulgesetz*) in the 1920s and ending with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz* [KMK]) recommendations published between 1994 and 2000, Figure 4.1 clearly shows the development of social, intellectual, physical, and sensory categories—from individual deficits, such as “crippled” (*verkrüppelt*), “weakly gifted” (*schwachbegabt*), or “speech suffering” (*sprachleidend*), to educational support categories, such as those for “physical and motor development” (*Förderschwerpunkt körperliche und motorische Entwicklung*), “learning” (*Förderschwerpunkt Lernen*), or “speech” (*Förderschwerpunkt Sprache*). However, in between, we find an exceedingly important stage, as administrative-organizational categories were

defined into which individual students were to be sorted. In 1954, Germany's Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) began classifying students by the school types they attended. The equation was set that having "special educational needs" or being "disabled" required attendance in a particular type of special school. At least ten separate types of special schools were established, most reifying an impairment term into a new name for a school of that type (Statistisches Bundesamt 1954). This placed the school, not the individual student, front and center, and led to a supply-side logic of resource provision and professional specialization above individual support. Special educators even constructed three separate types of schools for people with hearing impairments: There were "schools for deaf-mutes" (*Taubstummschulen*), "schools for the hearing impaired" (*Schwerhörigenschulen*), and "schools for the deaf" (*Gehörlosenschulen*; see Schomburg 1963; Möckel 1988; Hofsäss 1993; KMK 2002b for more detail on the development of these German school categories).

In the 1960 Conference of Culture Ministers' "Recommendation on the Structure of the Special School System" (*Gutachten zur Ordnung des Sonderschulwesens*), several new school types were proposed—everything from the "special education life circle for children in need of care" (*Heilpädagogischer Lebenskreis für pflegebedürftige Kinder*) and the "observation school for 'problem children'" (*Beobachtungsschule für "Problemkinder"*) to the "special vocational school" (*Sonderberufsschule*). The name of "cripple schools" (*Krüppelschulen*) was changed to the "school for the physically disabled" (*Körperbehindertenschulen*). Otherwise, the same names were passed on to schools expanding dramatically during the so-called "special school miracle" (*Sonderschulwunder*). Almost without match internationally, West Germany afforded itself a tremendous number and range of special schools. By 1972, intellectual impairments and learning difficulties had been redefined, such that the "school for the mentally disabled" (*Schule für Geistigbehinderte*) and "school for the learning disabled" (*Schule für Lernbehindertel/Förderschule*), as an outgrowth of the former "support school" (*Hilfsschule*), were distinguished. In this classification, the school comes first, but the corporate groups of children with particular impairments and disabilities are deemphasized as they gain some autonomy from the school term. At the same time, some categories remain invisible despite ever more specific diagnostics and often meteoric growth in awareness, such as "dyslexia" beginning in the 1980s (Bühler-Niederberger 1991; Lischeid 2001). However, such new conceptions and understandings of individual impairments or special educational needs and the diagnostics to measure them did not by themselves much alter the institutionalized learning opportunity structures, as evident in the most recent classification system implementation more than two decades later. The most important characteristic of special schooling remained—and remains—being sent to one the segregated school types.

Not until 1994, when the antidiscrimination clause (Article 3) of the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) was extended to explicitly include disabled people, decades after other groups were specifically protected, did the KMK finally retreat from a deficit-oriented and organization-centric classification system with its definition of "need to attend a support/special school" (*Hilfs-/Sonderschulbedürftigkeit*). The change in classification system used in German special education was due in large measure to reactions to

the global discourse of inclusive education and direct challenges by advocates of school integration. This shift has been called a “Copernican revolution” as the special school types have, at least in official regulatory terms, been replaced by nine categories of educational support (*Förderschwerpunkte*; Ellger-Rüttgardt 1998: 8). Since then, the KMK has reevaluated each area of pedagogical support offered in the special school system in specific recommendations, ranging from national special schools (*länderübergreifende Sonderschulen*) in 1994 to the support category speech in 1998 to “autistic behavior” (*autistischem Verhalten*) in 2000, although the latter has not yet been granted the status of an official national category of support. In Germany, despite the continued existence of a plethora of special school types, these overarching categories of educational support (*Förderschwerpunkte*) reassert that educational support should have primacy in (special) education. Referring neither directly to special school organizations nor to specific impairments, the new classification system provided a significant symbolic shift. Yet it awaits complete implementation, along with other reforms, such as revised teacher training programs, all-day schools, and fewer regulatory limits on curricular offerings and on educational attainment in specific school types. In contrast, the American categories have always focused on individual learners, but ardently from a psychometric or clinical diagnostic point of view.

American Special Education Classification Systems

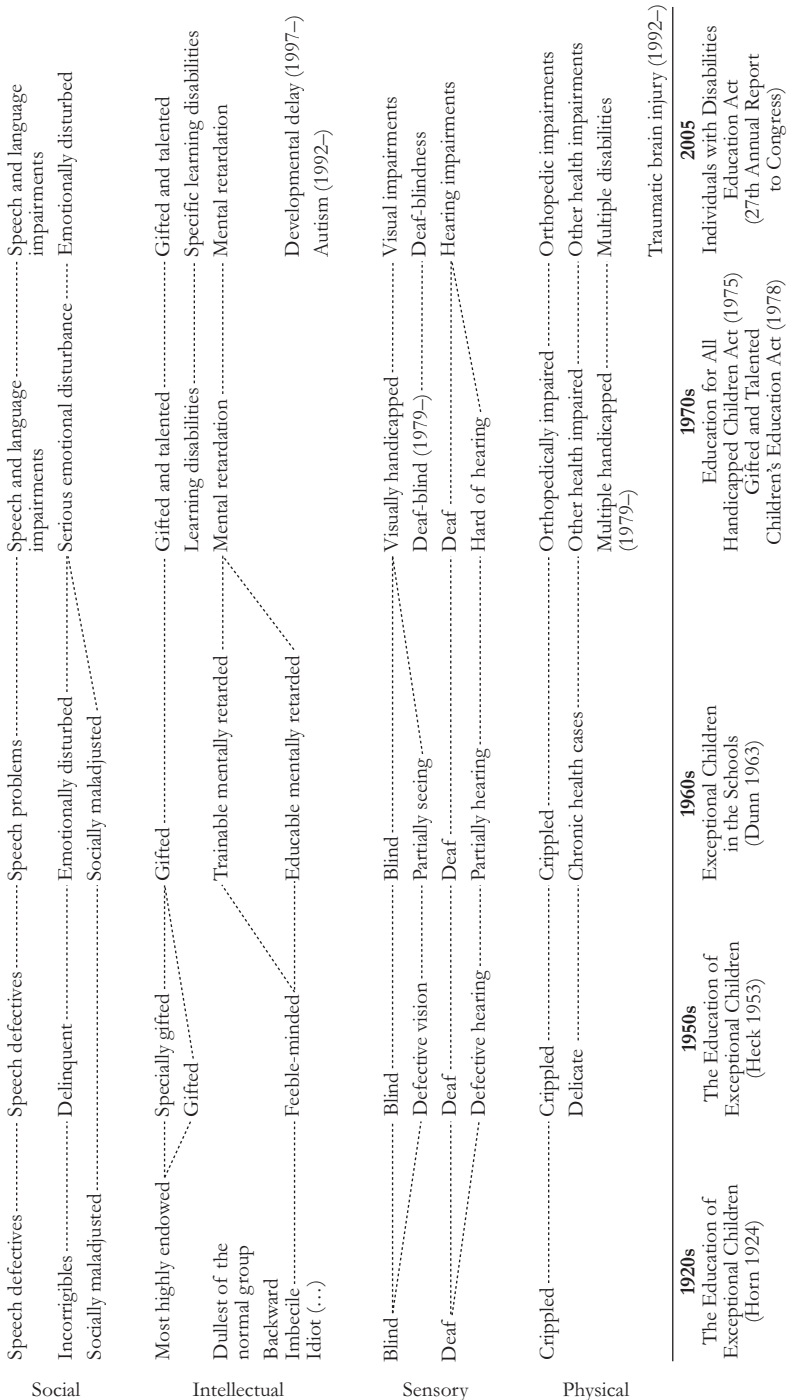
In American special education classification systems, the division social, intellectual, physical, and sensory has been differentiated, as many more categories are now officially inscribed in federal special education law than were well defined in the 1920s. Dozens of specific terms have been and continue to be used to label individuals with impairments and disabled people. The presented labels represent only a small sampling from influential special education textbooks and regulatory documents or special education policies. At the top of Figure 4.2 are the two social categories relating to communication and behavior. Over three quarters of a century, the categories have been transformed from epithets that obviously “blame the victim” by calling children “defective,” “incorrigible,” or “delinquent” to more sober or euphemistic descriptions of impairments and emotional or behavioral problems. The intellectual, mental, and cognitive categories show the statistical origins of classification systems most clearly, derived as they are from early psychometric testing. For example, James Trent (1994: 5) has analyzed the evolution of the categorical labels of “mental retardation” in the US: “Defectives” became “mental defectives,” “imbeciles” were differentiated to “high-grade/low-grade imbeciles,” moron was changed to “higher functioning mentally retarded” and “mentally retarded” shifted to “mentally retarded persons” before becoming “persons with mental retardation,” “persons with developmental disabilities,” or “persons specially challenged.” Despite what political correctness may dictate, the newer labels may not be more accurate or less stigmatizing. Sometimes new and revised categories reflect the power of assertions made by advocates and professionals more than increased genetic and biological evidence (Jenkins 1998: 8).

Widely distributed special education textbooks provide the key categories of “exceptional” children, as shown in Figure 4.2, for the period from the mid-1920s to

Figure 4.1
Special Education Classification Systems (Categories), Germany, 1927 to 2005

Sprachleidend	Sprachheilschule	Sprachheilschule	Schule für Sprachbehinderte	Förderschwerpunkt Sprache
Sittlich gefährdet	Erziehungsschwierigen- schule	Erziehungsschwierigen- (für Milleugefährdete) im Aufbau	Schule für Verhaltensgestörte	Förderschwerpunkt soziale und emotionale Entwicklung
(Übergreifend: Schulen in Heil- und Pflegeanstalten) (Übergreifend: Schulen in Erziehungsanstalten)	Beobachtungsschule für "Problemkinder" im Aufbau	Schule im Jugendstrafvollzug im Aufbau		
Schwachsinig	Hilfsschulen	Heilpädagogischer Lebenskreis für pflegebedürftige Kinder im Aufbau ("leichter, mittlerer, schwerer Schwachsinn")	Schule für geistig Behinderte	Förderschwerpunkt geistige Entwicklung
Schwachbegabt	Hilfsschulen	Hilfsschule (allgemeine Sonderschule)	Schule für Lernbehinderte/ Förderschule	Förderschwerpunkt Lernen
Blind	Blindenschulen	Blindenschule	Schule für Blinde	Förderschwerpunkt Sehen
Taubstumm	Schbehindertenschulen Taubstummschulen	Schbehindertenschule	Schule für Sehbehinderte	
Schwerhörig	Gehörlosenschulen Schwerhörigenschulen	Gehörlosenschule Schwerhörigenschule	Schule für Gehörlose Schule für Schwerhörige	Förderschwerpunkt Hören
Verkrüppelt	Krüppelschulen	Körperbehindertenschule	Schule für Körperbehinderte	Förderschwerpunkt körperliche und motorische Entwicklung
Krankhaft veranlagt	Krankenschulen	Krankenschule und Hausunterricht	Schule für Kranke (Sonderschule) und Hausunterricht	Förderschwerpunkt Kranke
		Sonderberufsschule im Aufbau		Förderschwerpunkte (mehrfach) oder nicht klassifiziert
1920 Deutsches Reich	1939-1945 Nazi Regime: forced sterilization; "euthanasia"	1960 Kultusminister- konferenz (KMK) "Gutachten zur Ordnung des Sonderschulwesens"	1972 KMK "Empfehlung zur Ordnung des Sonderschulwesens"	1994-2005 KMK "Empfehlung zur sonderpädagogischen Förderung in den Schulen der BRD"
1954 Statistisches Bundesamt Fachserie 11.1 (Hofsäss 1993)				
Social				
Intellectual				
Sensory				
Physical				

Figure 4.2
Special Education Classification Systems (Categories), United States, 1920 to 2005



mid-1960s (Horn 1924; Heck 1953; Dunn 1963). Especially in the early days of special education, these teacher training manuals were instrumental in professional boundary setting and specialization as well as knowledge transfer. Of course, textbooks still serve those roles. However, in more recent decades, the categories inscribed in federal special education law were redefined and the field became more consequently regulated, with categorical boundaries managed from the top down. Beginning in 1975 with passage of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) of 1975, the federal government not only mandated strengthened support and integration but also demanded that detailed data about those students in special education in all states be collected and reported annually by the US Department of Education in its Annual Report to Congress. This law was significantly amended, reauthorized, and renamed in 1997 as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and must be continuously reauthorized; the categories for 2005 are taken from that report (US DoED 2005). Thus, only the latter two columns in Figure 4.2 are statutory. In 1978, the *Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act* was passed to provide services to that category of "exceptional" children. However, not all states provide programs for such children. Furthermore, national categories are not always perfectly reflected in the classification systems in use at the state and local levels.

Prior to the 1970s, individual states provided special education programs and offered services, but centralized provision and funding for special education was lacking. The original federal legislation was based on a Massachusetts law—an early case of state-level innovation leading to federal-level change in special education (Budoff [1975] 1992)—and that state has continued to be a pioneer, not only in special education (see Osgood 2000). This was the first state to enact a compulsory schooling law (1852) as well as the first to have a compulsory special education law (1885) and has continued to be innovative ever since, such as in replacing the federal impairment-based classification with an overarching category of "special educational needs." Yet Massachusetts must redistribute these students among the official categories to comply with the federal statistical classification system. Thus, while some state-level innovations are transferred to national levels, others are blocked, and the differences between states/*Länder* remain considerable.

More than three decades after the passage of Public Law 94-142, a multitude of comprehensive systems of classification for student disabilities exist, such that none has been applied uniformly (McDonnell, McLaughlin & Morison 1997: 71). Classifications not only constitute structures, as they are also, at a more mundane level, the source of significant variance in the official statistics that we rely on to interpret social change: In order to make the data theoretically relevant, sociologists should be ready to explore the organizational and everyday conditions which determined the initial gathering and reporting of official information (Cicourel 1964: 140 f.). This encourages the analyses of states' educational policies and praxis, even as it confounds superficial quantitative analysis at the level of the nation-state (see Glover 1996). Yet, as we have seen, categories made "official" at federal level can powerfully redefine reality, not only by diffusing specialized knowledge but also by establishing fiscal incentives to fill the newly established and legitimated category or program with students.

American teacher training textbooks include detailed guidelines on calculating chronological ages, computing scores, and interpreting results based on sample norm tables with grade and age equivalents, percentile ranks, or standard scores, as well as depictions of the normal distribution curve. Responding to concerns about intelligence testing and disproportionality of racial and ethnic groups in special education, federal laws included two provisions to counteract testing abuses: (1) "Mental retardation" was defined not solely as intellectual performance but with adaptive behavior measures and (2) testing must be conducted in the student's native language, measures must be nondiscriminatory and validated for the purpose used, and special education placement may not be based solely on one test score (McLoughlin & Lewis 1994: 182). Yet not only those students who were scaled and ranked lowest received special education attention as "exceptional" or "abnormal" children. In the US, often those whose scores on IQ tests attested to a "high mental age" also were served in "special," "gifted" or "honors" programs. Not only the category "dullest of the normal group" but also the other end of the distribution, the "most highly endowed," were to benefit from the special educational needs that psychometricians divined. Germany and most other countries do not provide such services to students who score high on intelligence tests, if they use such instruments to measure student performance at all. Although there is federal legislation relating to "gifted" children, such as the *Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act* of 1978 (Public Law 95-561), and mandatory "gifted and talented" services are provided in over half the states, historically support for this group of students has been quite unstable (Silverman 1995). Its proponents have not been successful in institutionalizing such programs throughout the US, perhaps because it is not viewed as necessary by those advantaged students and their families, especially given other schooling options. Another plausible factor is that institutional separation or segregation of students classified "gifted and talented" may be stigmatizing and cause problems in everyday schooling, similar to the experiences of other children and youth in special education programs. However, in comparison with other classified special or exceptional students, they are much more likely leave school having had successful school careers and having earned valuable certificates.

In contrast to Germany, in which learning disability is primarily a marker of social and economic disadvantages, the US had no concept for "learning disability" institutionalized in special education until the 1960s. When it was defined in America, parent organizations championed it to serve mainly low achieving, but not the economically least advantaged, White students. The "specific learning disabilities" category is particularly interesting because, while it is the largest of all in proportion, its official definition is extremely narrow. It is a relatively young category, having first entered American discourse after the specific term learning disability was defined by psychologist Samuel Kirk (1962) in *Educating Exceptional Children*. A year later, the term was adopted by a group of parents for their organization, the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, now known as the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA). Within a few years, advocates of legislation succeeded in having the national *Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Act* of 1969 passed, which started specific pilot projects to serve students with specific learning disabilities. This umbrella term refers to a broad

array of difficulties in acquiring and applying information. The aim is to measure the discrepancy between a student's tested intelligence and actual school performance, thus is completely reliant on multiple assessments and diagnostics. As with other special educational needs, learning disabilities refer to judgments that teachers, scientists, and policymakers have made about who should receive additional or specialized resources to access the curriculum. In this case, evaluations of school performance and information processing result in particular learning differences being recognized as deserving attention. Conditions that preclude receiving services as a member of this category include other impairments or disabilities and general disadvantages, such as poverty or speaking English as a second language. Indeed, this is a social category that some see as functioning "to legitimate school failure for students whose failure would otherwise be inexplicable. It is created through the social practices of schooling, but medicalizing school failure and attributing it to individual pathology mask the role of these social processes" (Christensen 1999: 246). The relationship of social disadvantage and diagnoses of learning disability has shifted, with this category initially largely made up of children of relatively privileged parents, but less so over time (Ong-Dean 2006). By the late 1980s, the category was being used as a more "acceptable" category than mental retardation or emotional disturbance for students of color (Skrtic 1995a: 161). Viewed as less stigmatizing than most other categories due in part because it implies moderate to high IQ (a criterion for support), the learning disability category grew from a fifth of American special education students in the mid-1970s to more than half of all students in special education just a quarter century later (US DoED, various years), suggesting substitutional effects. Increasingly, students with a learning disability diagnosis in the US are continuing on to tertiary education.

A dilemma results from the fact that the official definition of learning disability is much narrower than it appears at first glance. In 1975, a "discrepancy" measure for learning disabilities was codified in national law in the precursor to the IDEA. This is still the primary, though not exclusive, criterion for determining eligibility. It requires that children be diagnosed as having a "severe discrepancy" between intellectual ability (shown by IQ test results) and school achievement (usually evaluated with standardized tests and grades) in such areas as basic reading skills or math reasoning. Thus, this definition requires a diagnosis of "underachievement," which is usually described "objectively" as the consequence of neurological dysfunction and processing deficits within the individual student. However, such evaluations depend on subjective expectations for "normal" learning performance and progress held in particular times and places. Thus, "slow learners" are not eligible for special education support, in contrast to Germany. In the American meritocracy, special education support is for those students who are not performing up to the level at which psychometric testing suggests they should be. In Germany, on the other hand, social and educational disadvantages and resulting prior school failure, for whatever reason, is the main criterion that leads to classification and special schooling.

The third group of special educational needs—referring to physical or sensory impairments—may be the smallest group proportionally, but the one most clearly identified with impairments and disabilities due to its specific clinical diagnosis (in contrast

Table 4.1
Special Education Classification Systems in the United States and Germany

<i>United States</i>	<i>Germany</i>
<i>Categories of student dis/ability, since 1992</i>	<i>Categories of special educational support, since 1994</i>
Autism (1992–)	
Deaf-blindness	
Developmental delay, 0–9 years old (1997–)	
Gifted and talented	
Hearing impairments	Hearing (<i>Hören</i>)
Mental retardation	Mental development (<i>geistige Entwicklung</i>)
Multiple disabilities	Multiple/unclassified (<i>mehrfach/nicht klassifiziert</i>)
Orthopedic impairments	Bodily and motor development (<i>körperliche und motorische Entwicklung</i>)
Other health impairments	Patients (<i>Kranke</i>)
Serious emotional disturbance	Emotional and social development (<i>emotionale und soziale Entwicklung</i>)
Specific learning disabilities	Learning (<i>Lernen</i>)
Speech or language impairments	Speech (<i>Sprache</i>)
Traumatic brain injury (1992–)	
Visual impairments	Seeing (<i>Sehen</i>)

Source. US: DoED 2005; Germany: KMK 2005.

to the list of behaviors that make up many of the “soft” or high-incidence categories relating to learning, speech, or behavior) and to its symbolic presence. In fact, blind and deaf children were the first to receive specialized training in (private) institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. In contrast, children with orthopedic or other health impairments were still treated in hospital-like settings long after educators had replaced medical doctors in providing services for other children. In many countries, including Germany and the US, the language of individual “deficit” has been softened, yet often individual blame and responsibility remain implicit. Next, categories applied since the early 1990s are directly compared to underscore the considerable national differences in special education classification systems (see Table 4.1).

Over the 1990s, several new categories were added, while the term “handicapped” has fallen almost completely from everyday parlance. Whereas in Germany “the disabled” (*die Behinderten*) seems most prevalent, in the US most use “people first” language, for example, “person with a (category) disability,” instead of “the (category) handicapped.” Based on a broadened understanding of the conceptual difference between impairment and disability, most recent amendments to the IDEA acknowledge

this distinction. However, the tripartite causal chain “*impairment-disability-handicap*” institutionalized since 1980 in the International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH) has been thoroughly revised (see Üstün et al. 2001; WHO 2001; Hollenweger 2003: 141 ff.). Despite significant changes in the international classification system to acknowledge environmental barriers and facilitators of participation, the newest American categories all derive from a clinical perspective that legitimates additional services for individuals by locating within-individual deficits, such as autism (1992–), developmental delay until age 9 (1997–), and traumatic brain injury (1992–). Several other categories have since been debated as possible additions, including “attention deficit disorder” and “attention deficit hyperactivity disorder” before age 7, which are notable for the increasingly prevalent use of pharmaceutical treatments, such as Ritalin (see Malacrida 2003 on the discourses and practices surrounding this category and the relationships between children, mothers, and professionals). Autism refers to differences in social interaction and communication facility that span geographic, racial, and social boundaries (see Biklen et al. 2005 for profiles of people with autism). Not only the news media have given such categories as attention deficit disorder, autism, and Asperger’s Syndrome a great deal of attention but also literary works and films have increasingly featured such characters. In official statistics, children and youth with a wide variety of diagnoses may be placed in the umbrella categories “other health impairments” or “multiple disabilities.” Overall, the categories currently in use are mainly based on a medical model of disability, as they provide specific services to groups of students with particular impairments or abnormal behavior patterns that are diagnosed with reference to specific genetic or biological origins. The further differentiation and continued application of these categories reflects incremental rather than transformative change.

In both legally inscribed federal classification systems, historically developed and standardized categories persist, even if the newer German categories of educational support do manifest a primarily pedagogical understanding of learning differences or difficulties. In contrast, the American classification system has maintained its medical and psychological approach, which discusses “development,” but continues to focus on “impairments” that are clinically diagnosed for the individualized education programs by multiple disciplinary experts. Since impairments need not necessarily have consequences for learning, the German and American classification systems both produce a selective group and thus do not fully represent the population of all children and youth with impairments who are of compulsory school age. In the US, categorical differentiation is increasing, not decreasing, as additional resources are sought for newly defined categories of students. Contrary to the institutional persistence of special schools in many German *Länder* and the stagnation of inclusive and integrative pilot school projects (Schnell 2002: 233), the KMK has attempted since 1994 to implement mainly educational categories of special educational support to replace the administrative-organizational categories tied to specific impairment-oriented types of special schools.

Given considerable change in population composition and group size, especially in the largest categories of learning disabilities, speech, and social development in both

countries, what do these classification systems ultimately represent? They provide evidence that the attempts to unify and classify according to categories of statistical normality are socially and historically contingent. As the case studies will show, often these classifications and categories reveal as much or more about the institutionalization of special education as they do about individuals who fall within their boundaries, especially due to the diversity of student bodies (even within categories) and as a result of each student's individuality and unique learning style and career. The processes leading to such different special education institutions include cognitive-cultural, normative, and regulatory dimensions, exemplified above in such factors as raising awareness through the media, in disciplinary knowledge, professional standards, school organizations, and special education laws. This cross-national comparison of the history of German and American classification systems provides further evidence that, as Sally Tomlinson found for Great Britain, "administrative categories . . . do not mysteriously develop in an evolutionary manner. Categories appear, change and disappear because of the goals pursued and the decisions made, by people who control the special educational processes" (Tomlinson 1982: 2). Despite different historical conditions, today the major questions of debate and contention surrounding special or inclusive schooling in Germany and the US concur: "decategorization" and its underlying acceptance of "heterogeneity" in classrooms (Benkmann 1994: 10; Eberwein & Knauer 2002). Yet how these boundaries are drawn in everyday practices requires us to look more closely at interactions within schools. Having discussed the classification systems and categorical boundaries of student disability, we now turn to the social mechanism of classification and the results of such selection into special education for individual students: provision of resources and rights but also frequent stigmatization and discrimination.

Classification as a Micro-Level Process

This section explicates the stages in the social mechanism of classification that affects students' educational careers within the diverse learning opportunity structures of (special) education (see Chapter 3). Mechanisms that stabilize and legitimate the sorting processes in stratified school systems include grading, teacher recommendations, and standardized tests. All are part of the continuous assessment by school professionals applying their best judgment and standards. At individual level, interactions between students and teachers or other school gatekeepers are the basis for selection. Here, hypothesized negative effects on individuals of stigmatization as "disabled" indicate the full costs of classification that must be weighed against the benefits of additional resources provided in special education programs. To fully appreciate how spatial and temporal disparities in (special) education come about requires investigation of the institutionalized practices and interactions that produce differences between students (Mehan et al. 1996: 231). Topics briefly appraised in the following include gatekeeping professionals' training in official categories of student disability and the consequences for individual students. We delineate the mechanisms that regulate students' stepwise transition into low-status schools or tracks. How do these distinctions facilitate resource

provision but also stigmatization and marginalization? Here, we review the functions of classification, address some of the psychological and social implications of participating in special education, and ask why devalued categories and their corresponding tracks continue to be used.

Gatekeepers Classifying and Individuals Creating Identities

Experts and specialists, serving as educational gatekeepers⁶ in American and German school systems, are authorized to define, identify, and classify special educational needs, applying professional knowledge and standards. Their good will and best intentions of helping children and youth are based in the offer of additional specialized resources that are to meet identified individual needs. To do so, however, gatekeepers must decide who will receive special education services and when. They may perform a routinized bureaucratic task, but for the individual student that transition into a lower track, ability group, or school type will affect his or her access to further education and thus his or her life chances (Cicourel & Kitsuse 1963: 16 f.). As reviewed above, special education has itself routinely reconceptualized and revised the categories into which students will be classified. Yet at status passages, such as the transition from general into special education, not only professionals and administrators are gatekeepers but also less formal significant others, including parents. Of course, parents exercise their rights and use their resources not only to protect their children but also to achieve their placement into particular school organizations that they believe will be appropriate and beneficial. While parents want the best for their children, they may not be (well) informed of the choices being made for their child by school gatekeepers, the services their child does or will receive, or the curricular track to which he or she has been allocated. Special education practitioners rely on the benefit of the doubt they are granted regarding their ability to determine appropriate interventions and to provide learning opportunities. Yet, especially when parents have limited social, cultural, and economic capital (Bourdieu 1986), they are at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis the professional interests and authority within the school that influence their child's career.⁷ This is especially true of special education, which marshals the diagnostic power of the clinical disciplines to bolster its decision-making processes. Whatever the level of parental investment and influence, school gatekeepers who make such decisions maintain considerable power to classify and allocate students among the learning opportunity structures offered in school systems.

At the level of schools, gatekeepers structure options by evaluating individual students, who respond with altered performances and aspirations, as they imagine not only how well they can perform but also what the opportunity structure itself allows (Kerckhoff 1972: 132; see Chapter 3). Educational classification systems, interacting with locational, cohort-specific, and generational notions of dis/ability and ab/normality, provide school gatekeepers with the official categories they may use to make sorting decisions about individuals' educational pathways, just as parents also have been socialized with particular visions of success and fears of failure. When and how these decisions are made depends on schools' institutionalized sorting processes. As the social mecha-

nism that links ideologies of ab/normality and beliefs about dis/ability with educational policies and school practices, classification solidifies the meanings, labels, and categories that establish lasting symbolic and social boundaries between groups, constructing but also legitimating inequalities. While special educational categories, their definitions, and demographics have shifted over time, these statistically based systems and the institutions they both justify and stabilize resist repeated attempts to replace them with inclusive and/or noncategorical education. Classification systems join everyday labels with specialized categories of student disability as they provide the knowledge required in school decision making to control status passages (e. g., referral to special education assessment), stabilize professional distinctions (e. g., teacher training), and respond flexibly to advancing disciplinary knowledge, policy reforms, and social forces.

These elaborate classification systems, whose history has been sketched above, bear witness to the rise of professional dominance in Western societies. Most often, classification of disabled individuals, and even students, relies on judgments based on clinical, but nevertheless subjective, reasoning of medical doctors, psychologists, and other trained professionals (Albrecht 1992). These systems borrow not only medicine's metaphors and methods but also its enormous cultural legitimacy (Stone 1991). Furthermore, the disparities between expert gatekeepers' ideology and self-presentation and their actual practice are often significant, as they sort people into fixed status categories that they themselves define in their professions' theoretical constructions (Stone 1984, 1991: 218; Horn & Wigger 1994). They operate within a model of clinical judgment and treatment that emphasizes individual assessment, diagnosis, placement (Biklen 1988: 129)—and failure, as the focus is too often on deficits instead of strengths (Bart 1984: 115). Students are categorized based on teachers' evaluation of individual competence or special educational needs in a plethora of diagnostics and assessments. This differentiation marks a turning point in those students' educational careers that henceforth impacts not only the services they receive and rights they enjoy but also the learning opportunities that teachers, classmates, and others will provide them in American school tracks and German school types.

Detailed ethnographic studies explore such decision making in students' educational careers as a crucial social mechanism creating stratification within schools (Cicourel & Kitsuse 1963; Tomlinson 1981; Mehan et al. 1986) and between school types (Hofsäss 1993; Gomolla & Radtke 2002). Implementing the categories prescribed in social policies and institutional arrangements, school gatekeepers, students, and parents all play key roles in the (special) education selection process—with its components of evaluation, identification, referral, assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, and classification, sketched below, that affect a child's future. Described as a "search for pathology" (Sarason & Doris 1979) or "hunt for disability" (Baker 2002) with fateful consequences (Langfeldt 1998), classification relies on prior teachers' evaluations and determines students' future trajectories (Kottmann 2006). Such studies illustrate complex micro-level interactions in schools between individual children, teachers, school administrators, psychologists, and parents as they provide thick descriptions of (un)official categories and their consequences for the developing personal identities of children and youth (see Eckert 1989).

New categories of people are divined all the time and these new groupings also create “new ways for people to be” (Hacking [1986] 1999: 161, 1999). Yet the classification process is by no means unidirectional. Classified persons self-identify (positively, indifferently, or negatively) with the category in which they have been officially placed. This is a dual interactive process that exemplifies “looping effects of human kinds” as classified persons not only conform to expectations and descriptions of their category but also challenge and change the meanings of labels they are given (Hacking 1995). While individuals are labeled from above by communities of experts, these labeled people create their own reality, which the experts must accept. Individuals construct what it means to be “disabled” or “have special educational needs” in a given school—using, modifying, or rejecting official categorical distinctions as these are modified in everyday interactions. Labeled students in each cohort construct their own meanings, making of these categories what they will, with the resulting boundaries and separations affecting growing identities as well as the categories themselves (Hacking [1986] 1999). As discussed above, categories are neither static nor solely imposed from above, they are how human beings make sense of themselves and each other in daily life. Indeed, the achievements of the disability movement underscore how important is disability identity and pride—accepting membership in a stigmatized group—to challenge discrimination and foster social change.

Some categories and boundaries between people are inevitable, since they are necessary to organize our perceptions and to adjust to the dynamic complex environments in which we live. But the available alternatives and the choices we make are anything but neutral. If special education categories are too often stigmatizing,

boundaries are also points of connection. Categories are humanly made and mutable. The differences we identify and emphasize are expressions of ourselves and our values. What we do with difference, and whether we acknowledge our own participation in the meanings of the differences we assign to others, are choices that remain (Minow 1990: 390).

In special education, disciplinary professionals apply official categories, parents may challenge such classification, and the students themselves may transform the meaning associated with particular labels. However, during the extensive official classification process, assumptions are made and expectations are held that lead to interpretations of behavior and responses that alter the circumstances of students’ development, with positive but also negative consequences for them (Meyen & Skrtic 1988: 465), exemplified in a distributive dilemma.

The Distributive Dilemma and the Resource-Labeling Trade-Off

Educational systems and their authorized gatekeepers in schools and educational bureaucracies legitimate the distinctions between students classified as special, disabled, or abnormal and those “normal” students who remain in general classes or schools. They do this by implementing and utilizing the classification systems and categories analyzed above. Crucially, these diverse performances are seldom called into question or

critically reflected by the participating actors. Yet classification furnishes students with specific rights and resources; simultaneously, it provides the bureaucratic legitimacy and accountability needed to justify the compensatory provision of additional expenditures and specialized services. This process of balancing positive and negative consequences represents the resolution of a form of the distributive dilemma surrounding the problematic concept of disability, which is hardwired into the welfare state (Stone 1984: 12 f.). The trade-off in special education between resource distribution and labeling has been identified as a resource-labeling dilemma (*Ressourcen-Etikettierungs-Dilemma*; Füssell & Kretschmann 1993) and as a need-supply deal (*Bedarfs-Angebots-Junktim*; Wocken 1996: 34). Regardless of the various names given to this prevalent quandary, the resolution hinges on contextually establishing the legitimacy of a deserving person's "needs" to which the state responds by providing additional or specific resources. The presumed benefits in enhanced school performance derived from considerable expenditures must be balanced with a variety of negative consequences of classification. Special education professionals and parents of students who are thought to need (and be deserving) special education must participate in extensive negotiations to manage this trade-off. This decision and deal making manifests the significant transaction costs associated with justifying provision of often substantial resources in schools (as in many other public programs). The costs of evaluation and diagnostics represent a considerable investment, which many criticize as reducing funds available for the provision of general learning opportunities. Still, misdiagnosis poses a potentially far greater problem, especially when the vicious cycle of accumulated disadvantages could have been stopped earlier, which is the rationale behind increasingly popular early intervention programs.

Weighing the benefits against the negative consequences requires a case-by-case analysis of individuals in context, but to discuss the general process in detail highlights many aspects needing attention. Research on gatekeeping processes has raised such issues as the influence of the "transition politics" of gatekeepers for individuals' life courses: To what extent do gatekeepers reflect on the rules and norms that they must consider and legitimate in decision making and whether gatekeepers develop "tight criteria" for their decision making (Struck 2001: 49 f.). In the everyday interactions in schools, as in social life more generally,

students are constructed in different ways, and their ascribed characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and social class influence the resulting representations. Students' intelligence, their access to educational curricula, their scholastic achievement, and options later in life are assembled from such practice (Mehan et al. 1996: 229).

Below, the typical transition process and the interactions at various stages is analyzed.

The Transition From General Into Special Education

To understand the interrelations between educational ideals and concepts, specific social interests within educational systems, institutionalized special education organizational forms, and educational inequalities, we must look closely at the transition process. The

rules and regulations surrounding the selection process include the following stages: (1) evaluation and identification, (2) referral and assessment, and (3) diagnosis and classification. The consequences include not only resources and rights but often also (4) stigmatization and institutionalized discrimination and (5) the transfer between learning opportunity structures. Decisions made in each of these phases determine how and which resources are distributed and/or rights are extended. Throughout this elaborate bureaucratic but also professionalized and often medical and psychometric process, students and their parents, general and special educators, school administrators, psychologists and physicians, and even attorneys negotiate the official classification systems, disability categories, and their criteria inscribed in national, state, and local laws. The outcome of this often several-month process determines not only the official label a student will carry but frequently also the learning opportunities a student will be offered in school.

Evaluation and Identification

Fulfilling one of their main assignments, schoolteachers continuously evaluate the progress of their students in specific domains of learning, including age-appropriate behavior, language skills, and social competencies. Some children are better off than others, with favorable abilities and resources, such as economic capital, speaking the dominant language well, or membership in advantageous networks. Due to genetic, biological, and environmental characteristics and experiences discussed above, some children will have higher risks of becoming impaired or disabled. While physicians at a child's birth, or parents themselves later, may perceive an impairment or disability, most special education students are selected into these programs upon the recommendation of general schoolteachers based on school criteria. Interactions with teachers, peers, family members, and others will determine how a child experiences his or her impairment or disability and whether behavioral characteristics have significance (negative or positive) or are irrelevant to school activities. If formal diagnosis and classification occurred prior to school entry, teachers may well have already formed opinions of the child and her or his capabilities. These views are modified according to a disability category, other ascriptive characteristics and forms of capital, and the child's performance, with teachers deciding whether individual or group learning and classroom dynamics are affected enough to warrant a response and of what that should consist. Where that variable context-dependent *classification threshold* lies is an empirical question to be answered in local contexts. Cultural values, educational ideologies, financial incentives, school organizations, and individual attitudes and training are among the many factors that affect such decision making.

Referral and Assessment

The general education teacher's referral to assessment for special education services is critical for students' pathways through schooling. That judgment not only often leads to more resources but also to more time outside general education (US) or transfer to a special school (Germany)—at least until the scope of inclusive education programs develops further to provide a ubiquitous alternative throughout these nations. For

each individual student, the attempt to maximize learning opportunities may result in the choice of any number of organizational settings in which particular curricula and services are provided. On referral, Anne Hocutt (1996) suggests that the main causes are (1) a teacher's perception of a child's "teachability"—as indicated by communication abilities, behavioral patterns or social skills, and emotional maturity; (2) classroom diversity and environment—when the goal of a relatively homogeneous classroom of students leads to the separation of a child with difficulties, referral due to school failure is programmed; and (3) school district factors, such as available resources and eligibility criteria, especially regarding required prereferral intervention (e.g., "child find" requirements). Given limited permeability between special and general education, the critical juncture for an individual student is the original teacher's referral. For example, of the 3% to 5% of the school-age population in the US referred in any given year, nine tenths are tested, and three quarters of those tested then receive special education services (Hocutt 1996: 83). Similarly, in Germany, those referred are highly likely to be classified and only those in the support category speech have a high probability to ever return to full-time general education (Preuss-Lausitz 2001).

Once referred for testing, a student is assessed by relevant gatekeepers. At this point, varying notions of performance, historically evolved procedures, and professional standards and expertise affect the disciplinary framework to be used, the techniques and norms applied, and the interpretation of results. Parents and guardians, who often have more experience with a child and her or his strengths and weaknesses, may resist, accept, or assist in such assessments. Referral is a critical decision point, given the high probability that professional diagnosis and classification will indicate an educational need that confirms the referring teacher's original evaluation and identification (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow 1992: 370): Even if all learners may well have some form of learning disability, only some of these are recognized. Thus, whether someone is labeled as having a learning disability in many respects resembles the results of a lottery (Sternberg & Grigorenko 1999: 3). With the multiplicity of abilities, learning styles, and living conditions, assessments would almost certainly find a far greater incidence of needs if all students were tested. Indeed, the prevalence of and reliance on standardized testing in the US means that most students are regularly and routinely tested, whereas in Germany teachers' evaluations and resulting school grades are the main source of assessments prior to referral. This difference helps explain the much larger special education population in the US. Yet because referrals and assessments are expensive and time-consuming, they may also further constrain learning opportunities or reduce funds available for general education instruction. Once referred and assessed, students are diagnosed and officially classified.

Diagnosis and Classification

At the point of diagnosis, professional judgment, categorical knowledge, and assessment results become especially crucial. What do the assessment results mean? If a child is deemed to have a special educational need, those in charge must decide whether the diagnosis is valid and/or acceptable. Bureaucratic and professional "treatment" begins with classification. Labels are assigned based on the categories understood and the

classification system applied at the local level. When individuals are classified based on the evaluations and diagnoses of teachers and other gatekeepers, an individual's educational career reaches a turning point. Students, their families, and their teachers face the resource-labeling trade-off at the threshold between general and special education, as classification draws symbolic boundaries between students, referring to a whole range of characteristics and behaviors codified in particular categories. Classification's multiple psychological and social implications and very real consequences for students' everyday routines in school include altered expectations among teachers, parents, peers, and within the self; potential stigmatization by others; shifts in identity; and changes in learning opportunities. Classification outside the bounds of normality often leads to stigmatization, prejudice, negative stereotype, as well as social and institutional discrimination (see Ainlay, Becker & Coleman 1986; Crocker, Major & Steele 1998; Swim & Hyers 2001; Gomolla & Radtke 2002). Such varied and momentous consequences call for closer analysis of a too often taken-for-granted process.

Consequences of Classification

Two immediate results flow from the decision to confer the label and receive the resources. First is the commitment of specialized schooling and the right to compensatory services that aim to enhance performance. The second major consequence of the classification process results not from levels of funding or services received but from changed educational objectives and expectations (lower or, in the case of the category "gifted and talented," often higher). For a host of reasons, primarily stigmatization and marginalization that usually accompany formal classification, the above-sketched process has been repeatedly called into question.

Despite the justifications of classification and its resultant labels for reasons of efficiency and legitimacy, "considerable evidence exists to suggest that current identification and classification practices are biased. ... There is no reason special education should be funded only after a student has been classified" (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow 1992: 371). Yet eligibility requirements of many educational and social policies require official classification as a mechanism of accountability and to reduce the free-rider problem, especially when the resources in question are considerable or are provided in separate organizational units. Whether or not the evaluations of called-upon experts are valid, evidence suggests that existing classification systems serve the purpose of diagnosis at the expense of treatment (McDonnell, McLaughlin & Morison 1997: 85; Kottmann 2006). Categorical labels often are misleading, allow misdiagnosis, and facilitate negative stereotyping (Mertens & McLaughlin 1995: 61). Criticized aspects of medical model diagnosis include not only depressed self-esteem and peer rejection but also the clinical approach of finding deficits instead of attending to strengths (Reiser 2000). Moreover, the effectiveness of any diagnostic categories have been seriously questioned because the intuitively appealing basic assumption behind them—that of increased treatment utility—has not been borne out by empirical research (Slate & Jones 2000: 69–74). Consistently, considerable overlap in both achievement and in intelligence measure-

ments is found between those children in special education and those who remain in general education (Wocken 2000b; Haeblerlin 2002: 93 ff.).

Furthermore, the differences between expert gatekeepers' ideology and self-presentation and their actual practices are often significant, as they sort people into fixed status categories that they themselves defined in their profession's theoretical constructions (Stone 1991: 218). Detailed critiques of German definitions and categories of student disability over the past few decades show that the classifications do not succeed in precisely distinguishing between disabled and not yet disabled students; they do not adequately reflect the fluid transitions between disability types; and the criteria upon which classification is based remains unclear (Prenzel 1993: 152; Sander 2002). Beyond the "impossibility" of a correct diagnosis, being classified has unfortunate consequences for the labeled individual when it robs all participants of the possibility to imagine future developments because it seems to define what is and is not possible (Prenzel 1993). For these reasons, classificatory judgments must be seen as highly subjective. Nevertheless, they wield the power to alter individual life trajectories. Social processes that may especially affect classified students include prejudice, stereotype, stigma, self-fulfilling or self-sustaining prophecies, and institutionalized discrimination.

Judging by the prohibition of disability discrimination inscribed in American, German, and European laws, as well as international conventions, the prevalent unfair treatment suffered by disabled people is not only widely recognized but also found to require legislative and judicial action. However, what are the factors leading to such ongoing systematic discrimination in schools? The stigma concept, in broadly referring to socially constructed negatively valued differentness, offers one explanation as it clarifies the consequences of individuals being classified into low-status groups. Based on cognitive processes of categorization, prejudice, and negative stereotyping in social interactions, stigmas are created through the evaluation of an individual's attributes by others. As in the shift from clinical to social-political models of disability, the negative social consequences of differentness that impact the social acceptance of and respect accorded a stigmatized individual have received increasing attention over bodily attributes themselves. However, bodies, behavior, and speech are all symbolic differences that we use to locate others in stratified social worlds, and these are reflected in the meanings accorded categories used in special education. Insights from the social and behavioral sciences regarding the significant cognitive and social consequences of stigma increasingly inform policymaking and reform, including inclusive education that aims to reduce stigmatization by reducing the need for official classification from the start.⁸

Resonating with researchers in many disciplines since Erving Goffman (1963) first conceptualized an elaborated theory in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, the concept has been differently defined, framed, and applied in innumerable research projects. Stigmatization as a social phenomenon can be understood as the negative consequences of an otherwise adaptive, functional, even unavoidable process of managing our environment's overwhelming complexity through differentiation. Research on stigma analyzes not only social roles and comparisons in individual interactions and the aggregate consequences of exclusion, separation, or segregation but also institutionalized discrimination of particular social groups: the systematic production

of negatively valued differences. Special education represents a paradigmatic case for the study of stigma, as it is the institution authorized to deal with those children and youth whose differences are negatively valued in schools.

Stigmatization represents a process of social control and of normative priority setting that produces social inequalities, as it relies on asymmetrical power relationships. Social-psychological research has shown that stigmatized persons may be openly covertly or unconsciously avoided or actively denigrated, with others' reacting to them not as unique individuals but as members of disvalued categories, such as special education students in achievement-oriented schools. Stigma is relational: No attribute can be negatively valued without another, usually opposite, attribute being accepted or highly valued. Thus, stigma is context-dependent, relying on environmental and socialized values, preferences and often unstated norms. Since norms are continuously changing, attributes need not always be thoroughly stigmatized (e. g., participation in special education within a school in which a third of all students do so). Yet stigmatization is "entirely contingent on access to social, economic, and political power that allows the identification of differentness, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labeled persons into distinct categories, and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination" (Link & Phelan 2001: 367). Social policies and the institutions they establish maintain social control and norms, reify prejudices and stereotypes, label and separate people into categories, and determine who is and is not stigmatized.⁹ In present-day meritocracies, perceived or demonstrated cognitive abilities are paramount; individuals without them are stigmatized. Isolating stigmatized persons while ignoring stigma's real consequences of social exclusion shifts responsibility from the stigmatizers to the stigmatized ("blaming the victim"), which allows nonstigmatized people to maintain the status quo of power relations (Ainlay, Becker & Coleman 1986).

Too often, special education policies have institutionalized these prejudices, negative stereotypes, and discriminatory practices, as they organize student populations based on clinically diagnosed and hierarchical distinctions, which are not always of relevance to learning or amenable to schools' limited capacity to compensate for disadvantages. Stigmatized individuals, to protect their threatened personal identity, may invest heavily in a variety of psychological and behavioral coping strategies to counteract lowered self-esteem (see Krappmann [1971] 2005). Furthermore, negatively stereotyped groups suffer "stereotype threat"—that others' judgments or their own actions will negatively stereotype them. These have been shown to adversely affect group members' intellectual identity and academic performance, leading even to disidentification, a retreat from valuing school as a basis for conceptualization of the self (Steele 1997: 614). But, as Claude Steele makes clear, this encompassing condition of societal stereotyping threatening school performance is a predicament that is amenable to intervention.

In particular, reducing such bias has been carried over into policy priority-setting via the concepts of self-fulfilling and self-sustaining prophecies as well as the "Matthew Effect," defined by Robert K. Merton (1988).¹⁰ Researchers have found these concepts useful to theorize about differentials in students' learning within and between schools. Consciously or unconsciously, gatekeepers limit mobility out of special education. This is due, in part, to the mechanism of the self-fulfilling or self-sustaining prophecies

of low expectations begetting low achievement in low-status tracks (Eder 1981). The conception of self-fulfilling prophecy pinpoints an individual gatekeeper's *false* definition of a situation that guides his or her behavior, such that the situation is brought into conformity with the definition. Only the test of time will show whether a situation was being (mis)guided by such a process; however, this requires that those who bear the costs of barriers to full participation or suffer limits to their opportunities show the definitions of those with power to define situations to be false. This is not so with the self-sustaining prophecy. In this case, low early performance results in less positive evaluations and expectations and these continue to be *true*. As referral and track mobility rates demonstrate, both prophecies (as well as the Matthew Effect among students deemed gifted and talented) operate in special education.

Indeed, these ideas have become so thoroughly diffused throughout American society that they are accepted as common sense. This is not so in Germany, where belief in "natural talent" and faith in teacher evaluations are strong. In the US, "the self-fulfilling prophecy has become both a concept and a phrase that occupies a central position in the thought and language of teachers, policymakers and others who discuss the practice of education" (Wineburg & Shulman 1990: 261). At least since equal rights litigation—from *Brown v. Board* onward—the goal of understanding these processes, to reduce them, reflects aspects of liberation and welfare state attempts to achieve a better society. Historically, desegregation and mere physical integration have failed to solve the myriad challenges that disadvantaged students face. Transforming school organizations alone is not sufficient; rather, a concomitant shift in teachers' minds is crucial to affect change (Wineburg & Shulman 1990: 265). Clearly, reforms must address not only structural but also cultural factors. Teacher training plays a key role in social change as these programs instill professional values along with disciplinary tools. In turn, these methods and perspectives affect the socialization of children, whose beliefs and orientations reflect such ideas—a key tenet of inclusive education's vision of reducing stigma. To shift attitudes requires intervention and interactions, just as showing the self-fulfilling prophecy to be false requires opportunities to perform better than expected. Once in special education, however, such opportunities for students are reduced, both attitudinally and organizationally, as are the beneficial aspects of learning from positive role models and others whose abilities differ from one's own. For such reasons, the disability movement and advocates of inclusive education believe that enhanced contact will provide more opportunities. Just as one cannot learn without opportunities, one cannot prove prejudices or negative stereotypes to be wrong without such chances to interact.

Although increased contact usually does lead to a more positive stance vis-à-vis others, it does not always, resisting easy solutions to the challenge of heterogeneity. Qualitative aspects that have direct bearing on the outcomes of such interactions include their intensity, emotional foundation, and voluntary nature (Pettigrew 1998). In terms of schooling, findings confirm the "contact hypothesis," showing that inclusive education can and often does lead to more tolerance toward potentially stigmatized groups and individuals as well as an increased acceptance of difference (Markowitz 2001: 210 f.) and less abusive behavior and increased advocacy for disabled peers (Bunch & Valeo 2004).

Ulf Preuss-Lausitz's (1994) representative survey of the views of students, teachers, and parents who participated in inclusive classes in Brandenburg (the first German state/*Land* that placed primacy on inclusive education in its school law) demonstrated that parents and children respond more favorably the longer they have experienced inclusive schooling. The implemented multilevel model for realizing inclusion contextualizes the networks and relationships at the level of the classroom, school, county/district, and state/*Land* (Preuss-Lausitz 1994: 302–309). Similarly, other studies of participants in inclusive education programs emphasize that these promote “destigmatization”: They had no seriously negative consequences; they can support the necessary social closeness and distance as preparation for social realities outside of school better than separating or segregating special education organizations; nondisabled students are not hindered in their learning by the presence of disabled students; and inclusion usually has a clear positive effect for disabled students' achievement (Markowitz 2001: 208–231). This is so because most students participating in special education are quite capable of reflecting their own (low-status) position in the achievement-oriented society in which they live. In fact, they know very well where they stand, both in terms of simple dichotomies and differentiated social and school hierarchies: They are at the boundaries of normality (Wocken 1983: 79f.).

Among the serious consequences for classified students are marginalization and even institutional discrimination, which refers to structured unfair treatment in organizational settings, such as special schools or low-status tracks in comprehensive schools (see Chapter 3). Disadvantages can be reproduced or exacerbated regardless of the intentions and desires of those individuals who unwittingly contribute to its maintenance because the problem lies in unreflexive, stereotypical, and prejudicial thought. Significantly, maliciousness on the part of those who define the situation leading to these processes is not necessary. Unfortunately, simply carrying out biased institutionalized routines is sufficient. Policies or programs may deny opportunities or equal rights to individuals or groups on the basis of a stigma, which can be a self-fulfilling or self-sustaining judgment, without the benefit of it being obvious or conscious. Here, stigmatization occurs when social control is imposed, usually legitimated by professional or disciplinary power: The “undesired differentness” of being a special education student leads to some restriction in physical and social mobility or in less access to opportunities that allow an individual or group to develop their human potential. Education systems produce stigma early in the life course by continuously selecting, classifying, and sorting students. Yet despite all these potential and realized harms to children who are so classified, these processes remain largely taken-for-granted.

The landmark studies by Nicholas Hobbs (1975a, 1975b) argued that the survival of these classification systems has been ensured by the benefits of communication, inquiry, and service delivery that they provide to gatekeepers, bureaucrats, and political decision makers. Furthermore, establishing, revising, or eliminating categories within classification systems has not resolved the distributive dilemma or resource-labeling trade-off. The evolution and elaboration of the analyzed American and German classification systems reflect the transformation of broader views of disability, citizenship, and equality. More so in the US than in Germany, categorical changes have remained

incremental. Regardless of the pace of change or of one's judgment on the merits and risks of labeling, the process of classification in both societies continues to legitimate the expenditure of additional funds for increasingly large differentiated groups of students found to "have special educational needs." At national level, neither country has yet succeeded to allocate the needed resources to schools without requiring the stigmatizing classification of individual children.

This chapter analyzed the origins of special education classification systems and how they carry out boundary work that distinguishes particular student groups. Classifications define the differences that matter and the categorical boundaries between children, facilitating their allocation into standardized pathways through schooling, regulating transitions within expanding educational systems, and determining life chances. They serve a multitude of interests and organizational goals, including facilitating communication, securing disciplinary authority, and legitimating resource distribution. Nation-states and their social policies, administrations, professions, and science and education systems contributed to the idealization of statistical "normality," which undergirds the definitional power of classification systems of ab/normality, dis/ability, intelligence, and, more recently, of "special educational needs." Through the challenge of universalized compulsory schooling and more diverse student bodies, social, intellectual, and physical characteristics were systematized and "normalized." The clinical model of "dis/ability," diffused with the rise of statistics and monitored by international agencies and state governments, lead inexorably to a focus on the clinical professions' diagnosis (understood as objective and necessary) of individual deficits. While often the bodily "nature" of impairments and disabilities have been emphasized symbolically, the majority of students participating in special education are members of categories without an etiological basis that result from a variety of social, economic, and cultural disadvantages. Yet whatever their basis, we emphasize that while these socially constructed categories may be relative and subjective measures, they can be analyzed as social facts because, defined as real, they are real in their consequences (see Thomas & Znaniecki 1918). On both sides of the Atlantic, the group of students classified has grown continuously since the beginnings of special education, but especially since the 1950s, yet with considerable disparities in the "classification thresholds" and participation rates in special education between and within nations.

The institutionalization of contrasting classification systems had a host of consequences. These systems not only structured the regulations of access to schooling and of transitions within schools differently, they were used to conceptualize and legitimate specific types of (special) educational systems and their variable learning opportunity structures for a growing group of students. Delivering the criteria needed for school decision-making processes of student differentiation and allocation, these systems developed and stabilized the scientific, occupational, and professional boundaries between "special" and "general" education. The mechanism of classification, embedded in increasingly complex social and educational policies, represented in the resource-labeling trade-off, persists. At the same time, changing categorical boundaries have considerable impact—on students, schools, and society. In continuous though not always rapid adaptation, classifications and their categories have reflected paradigm shifts and disciplinary

progress and exhibit changes in power relations as this symbolic dimension of educational systems has been used to steer, bolster, or even undermine educational reforms. Yet the primary achievement of these evolving classifications is this: In institutionalizing the symbolic boundaries between the students of each new generation, they help define who will become “gifted,” “disabled,” or “normal.”

The Development of Special Education in the United States

In the United States, the effective universalization of primary and secondary education—including children with disabilities—was only achieved during the 1970s. Since then, school integration and inclusive education have developed continuously. In reducing or removing the barriers to educational participation, education policies and court decisions were crucial as they transformed the principles guiding special education. American special education has been shaped by conferred rights and committed resources, which directly and indirectly influence population size and composition, learning opportunities, and attainment rates. The civil rights movement, the transition from “cooperative” to “coercive” federalism, as well as teacher training and professionalization led to the reform of special education. Tracing the process of institutionalization of student disability and the development of (special) educational systems in the United States, this chapter focuses especially on the phases since the critical junctures of the Second World War, the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board* (1954), and the disability movement’s participation in the civil and human rights revolution.

From Asylums to Every School in America

Custodial institutionalization in America’s asylums, hospitals, and reformatories spread over the 1800s (see Trent 1994; Richardson 1999), as these residential institutions became the main focus of policies and programs relating to disability. Since enactment of state compulsory public schooling laws during the mid- to late 1800s, the integration of diverse population groups into American society was an idealized, yet contested, priority (Nasaw 1979). The notion of educability would be continuously broadened, producing new groups to be educated. Among the earliest educational efforts to provide schooling for Americans with impairments was the founding in Hartford, Connecticut, of the American School for the Deaf (1817). In Boston, the Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind (1832) and the Massachusetts School for Idiotic Children and Youth (1849) were funded by the Massachusetts legislature and directed by Samuel Gridley Howe (Pfeiffer 1993: 725). In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln authorized the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind to confer college degrees, making Gallaudet College, as it would come to be known, the first college in the world established expressly for disabled students (Burch 2001: 214 ff.). However, these educational advances in special schooling from rudimentary training to college education developed simultaneously with penitentiaries, orphanages, and other custodial institutions whose mission was not so much dedicated to education, but rather to productivity and control, as child-students became adult workers—within the segregated institution (Trent 1994: 10–39). Without community-based jobs for individuals

trained by these early schools, the institutions became self-perpetuating, maintained resolutely by the interests of their superintendents, the medical profession, and the state. Even as such schools became part of the public educational system, many schools maintained the treatment of children as their primary goal, with learning a secondary concern (Liachowitz 1988: 96 ff.).

But the 20th century was to bring a transformation of views and treatment. Vocal criticism of residential institutions reflected the development of mass public schooling and expanding state responsibility. If programs within asylums and residential institutions dominated the educational offerings, even as special schools and separate classes appeared with increasing frequency in the early 1900s, public day schools began to accept responsibility for educating disabled children (Mackie 1969: v–vi). The motivations for special education held by educators and government officials developed within the context of growing public provision of schooling for all children. Enacted in different eras, depending on region, compulsory schooling laws marked a turning point in the institutionalization of special education, as they did for general education (Richardson & Parker 1993: 375). Special education, developing slowly but steadily from 1900, focused primarily on children with cognitive disabilities. In contrast to institutionalized youth with physical or sensory impairments, they found accommodation in separate classrooms within neighborhood schools—primarily because of their large numbers relative to children with other types of impairments and the corresponding resources that would be required to build and maintain state institutions to house them. Students with visual, hearing, and physical impairments often remained segregated, not just separated, in special classrooms; the latter were the most often excluded. Deaf, blind, and “crippled” children were simply kept out of public schools because their “special needs” were thought to be too difficult and costly due to necessary specialized professional assistance and treatments. Moreover, existing residential institutions and segregated schools had long-standing jurisdictional claims to treat and educate such persons.

From these beginnings, the main cleavage regarding special education has remained the same: Efficiency arguments hold that controlled segregation of the disabled student population will ease both the burdens and costs of educating a group of students with special needs. In contrast, equity arguments show concern for the lives and life chances of disabled children when they are separated out of general classrooms as well as the loss of the benefits that diversity entails (Chambers & Hartman 1983: 3). The determination of equal educational opportunity only gradually began to apply to marginalized groups. Another persistent conflict in American education is that of the competing aims of ensuring that students share common experiences in socially diverse environments, while acknowledging and valuing student individuality. Referring to this debate, status quo and reform movements continuously challenge each other, attempting to influence who teaches and learns, what is taught and learned, and how teaching and learning progress (Nasaw 1979: 243). In staffing programs, devising curricula, and organizing student groups, teachers and school administrators must react to myriad social problems, to parent and student expectations, and to individual needs and abilities. These reactions and the provisions secured in education policies have varied considerably not only

over time but also tenaciously between states and localities and from school to school, especially due to decentralized governance of education.

Building on decades of immigration waves from all parts of the world and socialization as Americans in common schools, the struggles for racial equality and for social integration provided a model for the eventual integration of disabled students into local neighborhood schools. Special education policies and the organization of special classes, originating as they did to solve organizational problems surrounding school failure, reflected attempts to manage the growing heterogeneity of student bodies, particularly in urban schools. These classes were an organizational response that grew out of the conflict between the ideal of common schooling and practical concerns for efficient schooling (Richardson 1999: 65). Educational ideals and norms, models of dis/ability and notions of ab/normality in society, and nascent classification systems addressed this growing group of students. Reducing exclusion as a major goal of the American public educational system only *gradually*—by extending “educability” to ever more children and youth through universalized compulsory schooling laws (and increasingly stringent child labor laws)—came to include students with impairments. By the time of the Great Depression in 1929, 66 cities had special schools and/or special classes for children with impairments (Liachowitz 1988: 103). In the 1930s, a sociological study of special education admitted that, while progress had been made in providing educational opportunities, very few states provided coordinated educational programs for all disabled children, since many programs existed only due to the active leadership of groups and organizations dedicated to the education and welfare of one category of children (Wilson 1933). Despite the ideal of a common school for all children, present from the beginning of American public education (Coleman 1990: 309), most disabled children and youth remained excluded from this ideal. Segregated facilities and separate schools for disabled children were typical until long after the Second World War, when these types of organizational forms and practices were increasingly called into question. Instead of a uniform system of similar schools, public education in the US consisted of heterogeneous groups of organizations that reflected deeply embedded economic and social inequalities—and hundreds of thousands of disabled children remained excluded from school, classified as “uneducable” (Tyack & Cuban 1995: 22).

Outright exclusion persisted, as meritocratic ideology, embodied in the populist everyday vision of the “American dream,” fostered ways of thinking that put at-risk students considered socially inferior by the biological determinism and eugenic movement especially influential in the early 1900s. Alongside other ideological currents, “Social Darwinism had provided the ‘scientific’ justification for the schools to treat the children of various groups differently” (Oakes 1985: 27). These earliest forms of tracking, put in place in many states early in the 20th century to process the diverse groups of immigrants with American ideals, were, for students with perceived impairments, often only a prelude to transfer to state institutions. A leading presumption was that it was not worth investing in the education of these children. Yet, egalitarianism, the American “creed” or belief in the importance of equality of educational opportunity and participation and individual freedom, has reigned in purely meritocratic competition. Integration as an ideology emphasizes individual equality, independence, and achieve-

ment that are part of the American civil religion (Lipset 1990), and this slowly extended to disabled children (Carrier 1986a, 1986b). The tension between these views continues unabated, especially visible since the end of the Second World War in the standardized testing and continuous assessment of school performance, on the one hand, and the rights revolution and legalization, on the other.

In contrast to its earlier history, the US set an international standard in protecting minorities and enforcing individual civil rights over the postwar period (Kairys 2001: 1878 f.). However, compliance with the diverse array of civil rights and special education laws, in particular, have varied considerably from state to state. Only from the 1960s and 1970s onward was rapid progress in school integration made, with these developments often requiring tremendous struggle between levels of government and causing local conflicts. By the mid-1970s, a critical mass of advocates among activists and policymakers had developed that would succeed in establishing broad federal mandates and civil rights to education (see Melnick 1995). The Supreme Court—reversing much earlier decisions legitimating segregation based on race and disability—deemed this solely realizable through same-school integration.

Powerful due process provisions in the federal laws, especially after passage of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) in 1975, were necessary to give disabled students and their parents the tools, if not always the means, to contest bureaucratic hesitancy at school, district, or state levels, or outright restrictions on the “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) guaranteed by that law. American school districts, considerably consolidated over the 20th century, operate within a complex environment in which parents, community groups, professional associations, state education agencies, and the federal government influence developments (Meyer, Scott & Strang 1987: 186). The comprehensive high school increased educational authority for principals and teachers, bureaucracy in centralized school districts, and professional educators’ dominance (Rubinson 1986: 537). The federal government’s power in expanding educational systems did increase from 1940 onward (Meyer et al. 1994), but centralization is limited, occurring mainly with regard to the goals of equality and standards-based reforms that demand accountability of schools and teachers. Especially visible in debates over the *No Child Left Behind Act* early in the 21st century, special education occupies a key position in attempts to balance the competing educational goals of excellence, efficiency, and equity. Nevertheless, residence patterns and the minimally redistributive social policies contribute to the maintenance of considerable disparities between states, regions, localities, and districts in resources that often produce inequities in learning opportunities and life chances.

The range of special education’s organizational forms has broadened along a continuum from home or hospital schooling to segregation in special schools; from mainstreaming and separate classrooms in general schools to integration in general classrooms; and to inclusion in pedagogically reformed classes in restructured schools. The concepts of placement, educational environment, institutional setting, or learning opportunity structure all refer to this continuous range but also clearly demarcate divisions and boundaries between and within programs of “regular” and “special” education that govern the educational pathways available to children and youth. Significant policy

interventions and institutional changes succeeded in educating more than 95% of all students classified disabled in general schools by the end of the 20th century—whereas five decades prior millions of disabled children and youth were excluded from public education altogether. Just after the Second World War, less than 15% of the estimated number of children needing special education was reported enrolled, while two decades later, a third of all exceptional children were enrolled in special education classes (Mackie 1969: 5). During this gradual transformation, the main organizational model was the special class, not the separate school.

To explain the influence of various social interest groups, how political conflicts and legal battles directly affected special education, and which of many proposed or mandated institutional changes were (im)possible to implement, we must analyze not only special education policies but also the disability movement and civil rights legislation that influenced their reform. Social movements of women, African Americans, people with disabilities, and linguistic minority groups have used a similar strategy to advance their cause:

to bypass educational authorities by working directly with sympathetic congressional committees and by gaining judicial supervision. Each victory led to the imposition of mandates on school and university officials, requiring them to do promptly what they otherwise would have done slowly, reluctantly, or not at all (Ravitch 1983: 311).

The Disability Rights Movement Gains Strength

The development of rights for disabled citizens has to be understood in the context of broader shifts in American society, especially the social, political, and legal changes brought about by the human, civil, or minority rights movement (see, e.g., Pfeiffer 1993; Shapiro 1994; Skrentny 2002; Switzer 2003). Legislative mandates were required to directly confront taken-for-granted educational and societal segregation and demand the dismantling of cultural and structural barriers to inclusion. Aiming to end racial segregation and discrimination, the civil rights movement evolved from the mid-1950s and grew through the turbulent 1960s to encompass diverse minority groups. Along with public protest, the legal and judiciary system became a powerful tool for social change, available to these disenfranchised and politically underrepresented groups. Many battles were won by constitutional interpretation and solidified by legislative mandates. In many states, students attended racially segregated schools. As these schools were desegregated from the 1960s onward, sometimes by force of the armed National Guard, all segregating schools were potentially stripped of their prior legitimacy. Interest groups united in the civil rights movement relied on mostly peaceful, but tenacious, public protest to achieve their goals.

The precedents set by the civil rights movement in terms of organizing and legal changes became the basis for the comprehensive reform of special education that have been realized since the 1960s. For disabled children and youth, it was a coalition of parents, advocates, and disability movement activists that waged successful political campaigns to secure access to public schooling and guarantees of their civil rights. This

coalition faced minimal political or public support for special education, which was usually on the periphery of school issues. Yet, increasing numbers of parents organized interest groups over the postwar period and began to mobilize against gatekeepers in the educational system who had successfully blocked disabled students' entry into school or had attempted (successfully) to remove those exceptional students during their school careers. Embedded in larger social changes, nationally coordinated parental lobbying efforts helped to convince policymakers to strengthen their commitments to provide special education in local public schools and thus extend educational access to all children.

Diverse disability organizations had been working on local and state levels to realize their goals. To succeed, however, these groups would need to join forces and collectively advocate for their interests as a minority group, which they began to do. But in the decentralized American polity, laws and monies for special education from the national government were not sufficient to implement mainstreaming programs in every district. Access to every public school had to be guaranteed and, in many cases, fought for with litigation against state and local education agencies, districts, and schools. Significantly, these judicial rulings were then fed back into the legislative process when new bills were considered. With determination and conviction, advocates took their case to decision makers in the nation's capital, as had prior members of the civil rights movement. In 1978, they won the establishment of an advisory committee within the federal government, still operating as the National Council on Disability (NCD), that lobbies decision makers from within the government—organizing, coordinating, and supporting legislative action to increase the inclusion, independence, and empowerment of all Americans with disabilities (NCD 2000). As of the mid-1960s, well-intentioned efforts to reform, improve, and regulate educational institutions increased, with every level of government and private organizations participating. Federal categorical programs, such as special and compensatory and bilingual education, facilitated interest group activism aiming to realize specific goals related to particular programs. Education reformers, activists and politicians striving for legal changes in disability rights, and parents litigating to determine or ensure access to public education (or even to particular types of individualized educational programs) have negotiated complex legal systems, policy frameworks, and institutional arrangements in which special education is embedded.

The US disability rights movement has been politically salient at all levels of government (Scotch [1986] 2001; Percy 1989, 2001), building on the prior successes of the women's movement and especially that of African Americans. According to Sharon Barnartt and Richard Scotch (2001), this influence can be seen in two main effects: (1) the successful framing of disability protests and activism in the general accepted notion of fighting for civil rights, such that these could "resonate" within US society and (2) the social movements that contributed direct and indirect support for the disability rights movement through such shared mechanisms as tactics, rhetoric, symbols, ideas, personnel, and support. Parental and advocacy organizations, along with national and international disability rights organizations, also successfully followed these strategies in mobilizing to demand equal rights (Switzer 2003: 61 ff.). Disabled people, increasingly organized in a global social movement, challenge the medical model of disability and have made antidiscrimination legislation and inclusive schooling two pillars of their

political struggle and of disability policy reform. As Anita Silvers, David Wasserman, and Mary Mahowald (1998: 253 ff.) emphasize, justice for disabled people “is predominantly compensatory, and the question is whether formal or distributive reasons more appropriately ground the requisite reparation” while the path toward achieving justice is “most consistently and compellingly motivated by recognizing disabling circumstances to be mainly the outcome of thoughtless and oppressive social choices.” Beginning in the 1970s, disability advocates waged political campaigns and protested for both federal protection and compensation that would revolutionize the legal and educational status of disabled students, indeed, all disabled citizens, much as the organizing in the 1960s had achieved for African Americans. As the Vietnam War came to an end, major questions about special education—the links between race and disability; the equity, efficiency, and excellence of schools segregated by race and ability group; and the growing presence of special education within public school systems—were left unsatisfactorily answered. However, tremendous federal involvement in establishing and defining equal rights for disabled Americans was emerging that would address these very challenges.

From Cooperative to Coercive Federalism

Since the 1970s, disability and special education policies have been among the most significant new policy developments, with continuous litigation ensuring that issues of integration and inclusion are at the forefront of school changes and of general and special educational reforms. While the judiciary established the basic constitutional framework of the rights revolution in education, it has been continuously elaborated and refined by federal legislation (Kirp & Jensen 1986). Crucial initiatives to reform schooling, from racial desegregation and immigrant and bilingual education to special education and youth services to school finance reform and performance mandates, have all been significantly defined by laws (Heubert 2000). In special education, legalization empowers what was previously an out-group, as disabled children can no longer be excluded from school: Disabled students benefit from the availability of moral authority and state power (Neal & Kirp 1986). Both of these factors in political struggle have been decisive in securing enhanced participatory rights in education.

Federalism in the US emphasizes the vertical division of power and competition between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The division of competencies with clear constitutional mandates retains federal lawmaking competence while stressing state administration, not a distinction by policy field. Further, the political tradition reflects the desire for a strong society, not state, and rejects centralization tendencies—except to guarantee civil rights, integration, and equality of opportunity (see Cameron & Valentine 2001 on federalist nation-states and disability policy). In fact, these very principles directly affect (special) education and have led to increasing national regulation and discourse that influence decision making in school districts and schools. Citizens have not waited for the state to act; they have demanded rights and resources, despite Americans’ long-standing hesitance to give the state more powers or even their outright resistance to state interference. Pressure on the nation-state to

deliver group demands falls largely on the US Congress, significantly mediated through professional lobbyists and membership organizations.

Groups that mobilized to secure rights and resources were often satisfied with legislative and judicial advance, but the work at local and state levels to ensure implementation and compliance have been much more difficult. The results of legislative policy-making, commissioned accountability reports, and legal decisions must be carried out in local school systems. American national, state, and local education agencies share responsibility for education, yet federal and state governments have no strong institutionalized mechanism to influence each other's decision making. Financial transfers and regulatory directives from higher levels of government restrict the autonomy of localities (also of school districts), despite their formal constitutional mandate. National policy development and programs for state (and local) delivery have considerable impact, but individual claims are increasingly important. The civil rights movement precipitated "coercive" federalism, as it demanded federal action to end state and local oppression and facilitated liberal sociological jurisprudence that emphasized judicial responses, if not always solutions, to social problems (Switzer 2003: 151). As the federal government forcibly racially desegregated the American South, the shift in power would have a lasting impact for all minority groups.

In threatening to withhold funds if states and districts do not comply with anti-discrimination laws or even policies that support education in the "least restrictive environment," the US federal government can sanction lower levels of government, although the executive branch does not usually have the regulatory power to carry through these threats when goals are not met. While the US Department of Education (US DoED) routinely monitors progress made in special education, short of finding nearly every state in noncompliance with federal laws, it cannot force states and localities to act in particular ways. Nevertheless, the threat of losing federal government funding, even when it provides only for a modest portion of the educational programs and changes that it mandates, is often used as a lever to bring about change. To avoid this risk, lower levels of government have preferred to make progress on specific goals mandated in legislation. However, advances have frequently been limited to bureaucratic compliance, not the achievement of lasting organizational change. Federal mandates have often been central to program development at state and local levels as well as for research on implementation and outcomes. Yet, overall, the funds to carry out categorical regulatory directives, such as special education, are only marginally provided by the federal government. Instead, states and localities must provide the necessary funds, which may well restrict local authority choices. To bolster progress toward the far-reaching goal of inclusive education, Congress has repeatedly reacted to judicial decision making regarding special education by further strengthening the relevant federal laws. The ever stronger connection between special education reform and legalization also results in the history of special education being one of policymaking and litigation (Smith 2001). Furthermore, general disability laws also affect children, youth, and young adults who receive special education services and support (see Tucker 1998; Colker & Milani 2006). The principles set forth in special education legislation have continuously evolved as have the programs mandated, to which we now turn.

Transforming the Principles of Special Education

Special education has permanently intertwined law and education through legislative, administrative, and judicial activity allowing or excluding disabled children from public schooling, with the congressional mandate of integrating historically segregated groups the most controversial issue in special education and the subject of much debate and litigation (Daniel 1997: 397). The beginnings of judicial and legislative answers to the questions of access to special education and other service provisions and concerning integration, came in 1972 and 1975, as the landmark *Brown v. Board* decision was reinforced by two cases, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education*. These stipulated “consent decrees” as constitutional support for integrated schooling, as school systems agreed to provide appropriate services and programs for disabled children while including them within general school classrooms to the maximum extent possible (Minow 1990: 30). Congress also declared in Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act* of 1973 (for veterans) and in the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) of 1975 that disabled citizens have civil rights protecting their full social participation and integration in general public schools, which must provide the necessary accommodations. Although no consensus existed on the mechanisms to achieve these goals, these bills stated, in much the same language as other civil rights legislation, the imperative of equality of opportunity.

The following legal statutes and judicial decisions were critical in the institutionalization of special education and provided the principles that have guided special education’s expansion as well as growing integration and inclusive education: Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal (1954), “zero-reject” principle (1972), prohibition of disability discrimination in federal programs (1973), guaranteed educational rights for children/youth with disabilities (EAHCA, 1975, renamed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* [IDEA] in 1990), and mandated accessibility and barrier-free environments (1990). All of these steps were fundamental building blocks of expanding participation and access to individualized services and support and to school integration for special education students (Martin, Martin & Terman 1996; Turnbull & Turnbull 2000). This group has grown beyond the 12% of all students originally set in 1975 as the limit for federal special education funding. This expansion in numbers has largely contributed to the funding “crisis” and accountability, two other decisive issues in the contemporary reform movement. While many conventional schools manage student heterogeneity by various forms of curriculum differentiation, increasing sensitivity and concern about the role of tracking in maintaining, promoting, or exacerbating existing inequalities have led to various forms of school restructuring. Although many schools have minimized explicitly differentiated instructional structures or stopped separating children into ability groups, this goal is much more often stated than realized, and this has occurred simultaneously with special education expansion (Mehan et al. 1996).

Whether as instigator or not, special education must respond to such changes and challenges on many levels during continuing school reforms. Pressures coming from a variety of differing levels of government and administrative decision making, coupled with diverse vested interests, have hindered implementation or restricted full

compliance with many of the tenets of special education policies. While some states have moved beyond the federal guidelines and standards, paving the way for other states to follow, others remain in flagrant noncompliance. In the following section, crucial passages from court decisions and summaries of key policies chart the development of special education, placing it at the nexus of conflicts about education and democracy.

Separate Educational Facilities Are Inherently Unequal (1954)

In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), surely the most important education decision written in 20th century America, the Supreme Court acknowledged the centrality of education, equality, and integration for a democracy:

Education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. . . . it is doubtful that any child may be reasonably expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all in equal terms. We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does. . . . To separate . . . solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone (347 U.S. 483, 1954).

In this finding, the Court reversed one of its most far-reaching decisions of postbellum America, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which had permitted "separate but equal" public facilities legalizing racial segregation. Furthermore, the *Brown v. Board* verdict accepted the political responsibility for legally sanctioned segregation and located the harm done by segregation in the interpretation by others of an individual's inferiority, which adversely affects psychological development and well-being. The argument implies the self-fulfilling prophecy of low status, identifying the consequences of educational system structures on individual learning, aspirations, and self-efficacy (see Chapter 4):

The effect of this separation on their educational opportunities was well stated by a finding in the Kansas case . . . "Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of the law, therefore, has a tendency to (retard) the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial(ly) integrated school system" (347 U.S. 483, 1954).

Finally, the Justices stated clearly that segregated educational facilities are inherently unequal and banished the institutionalized "separate but equal" principle:

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment (347 U.S. 483, 1954).

In that courtroom, a social and political watershed in American history was tapped that demanded the end to exclusionary policies on the basis of skin color. In historical perspective, the *Brown v. Board* decision marked a critical juncture for public education in the US, as it shifted the balance of the federal system toward the federal government (Turnbull & Turnbull 2000: 12). Signaling the national government’s emerging major role in public education, it made inroads into an area that was formerly reserved almost completely for state and local governments. The decision provided more than just legal support and definition to the ongoing struggles of minority parents and advocates. In taking away the states’ “right to segregate,” this decision fundamentally altered the relationship between the levels of government. *Brown v. Board* has not only served as the legal foundation for federal education and other civil rights legislation but also as the precedent for other school desegregation cases. Unfortunately, these have remained necessary and commonplace because in many regions, and for most racial and ethnic groups, resegregation is dismantling earlier progress (Orfield & Lee 2004), due not only to courts but also through residential patterns and school district management.

The federal government had begun to respond vigorously to socially undesirable conditions in the nation’s public schools. The continuation of racial segregation and resulting inequalities was interpreted as intolerable—and necessitated a reduction in the powers of states and localities. Since then, the federal role in education has expanded, not as much fiscally as in policymaking and judicial decision making. One response to forcible desegregation was to transfer minority children into special education schools and classrooms, which have retained their legitimacy as part of the continuum of settings. Importantly, it is the consistent overrepresentation of some racial and ethnic minorities in special education programs that sustained public debate and acknowledgement of the similarities between these groups’ oppression (Losen & Orfield 2002). For decades, no other issue has fueled criticism of special education as much as this one. The processes of identification, assessment, diagnosis, and classificatory mechanisms were and are continuously criticized for these biases. Some cultural biases related to race and ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status seem to be substituted by “special educational needs” that more legitimately serve as the authoritative basis to teach these students outside general classes or schools.

Incentives for State Innovation (1965)

Remarkable increases in public school systems’ operation of special education programs occurred, such that by the mid-1960s, half of the school districts in the US had their own or a cooperative arrangement with another school district (Mackie 1969: 29). However, many American children still did not have access to special education services by the year of passage of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (1965), the first

concerted effort by Congress to encourage the states to provide education to disadvantaged and disabled children. This federal block grants program, which would be the first of many, aimed to assist states to begin, develop, or improve their nascent special education pilot projects or programs by consolidating resources and hiring personnel. However, this legislation did not succeed in many states, especially given the division of powers and responsibilities between levels of government. Inertia in most local school districts and schools blocked special education provision, such that individual citizens had to bring cases against the states and school districts to demand access to public schools. If the 1960s was the decade of “equality of educational opportunity,” it also saw the rise of education research as a policy tool aimed at measuring every aspect of schooling, which was crucial to understanding the effects of implemented policies and to justify further reform. Court interventions also ruled that a child’s education could not depend on familial or neighborhood wealth (“fiscal neutrality”). However, very different treatment, across states, of students receiving compensatory education or special education services has continued (Berne, Moser & Stiefel 1999: 167 ff.).

Demanding a Free Appropriate Public Education (1972)

Two 1972 court cases—*PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*—established the “zero-reject” principle, demanding that public school officials provide to *all* students, regardless of their disabilities, a “free appropriate public education.” These cases also brought procedural safeguards for families of disabled students to formally challenge school districts that do not comply with court orders. The *Mills v. Board* ruling found that students’ exclusion from a free and appropriate public education violated due process and equal protection clauses of the US Constitution’s 14th Amendment. Both established precedents for a federal mandate for public school education available to disabled students that had been sought for decades. These cases defined the new right as a publicly supported educational program suited to an individual student’s needs. The rulings were based on the presumption that, among the alternative programs of education, placement in a general public school class with appropriate ancillary services is preferable to placement in a special school class. These decisions gave disability rights and parent advocates, professional associations, and policymakers crucial support for comprehensive special education reforms to come.

Prohibiting Disability Discrimination in Federally Supported Programs (1973)

Another crucial element in protecting disabled citizens was Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act* of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against a qualified “individual with a disability” in all federally funded programs, including local education agencies (LEAs) or vocational education programs that receive funds from the federal government. The law defines such an individual as any person whose physical or mental disability

substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of disability, or is regarded as having a disability. Significantly, the law went beyond defined needs or activities of daily living (ADLs) to recognize the subjective social dimension of disablement since the perception of disability was considered wholly sufficient to warrant protection. Furthermore, Section 504 requires that disabled students receive a free and appropriate public education, including individually designed instruction. They should be educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Public education providers must make reasonable accommodations, such that disabled students have the “opportunity to participate in or benefit from the aid, benefit, or service” provided to other students. The law prohibits federal agencies, federal contractors, and recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating against otherwise qualified persons on the basis of disability.

When Congress passed Public Law 93-112, an otherwise routine piece of legislation reauthorizing vocational rehabilitation, its Section 504 inspired no public debate or discussion on the floors of the Senate or House of Representatives. No new public funds were deemed necessary to carry out the mandated mission of the provision which stipulated that “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the US . . . shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (29 U.S.C.A. §794). Yet, the far-reaching impact of this law would become almost immediately apparent as the legislation affected public (and much of private) educational systems, public housing, mass transit, public accommodations, and all federal employment. However, the new law suffered from extremely slow executive branch interpretation—until disability rights activists successfully demonstrated at government office buildings to force the release of the final regulations (Scotch [1986] 2001). This law is crucial because it protects *all* disabled children of school age from discrimination in elementary and secondary schools, whether or not they require or receive special education services at any given time.

Guaranteeing Educational Rights for All Disabled Children (1975)

While *Brown v. Board of Education* prohibited racially segregated schools, federal law did not bar the nearly automatic segregation of disabled children until Public Law 94-142, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) of 1975, which was amended and reauthorized in 1990, 1997, and 2004 under the title *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). This is the cornerstone of federal policies for disabled children and youth and must be continuously reauthorized, providing a built-in renewal function, but one that also allows opponents to question its programs and attempt to reduce its funding levels. A year prior to the passage of Public Law 94-142, Congress had already substantially increased federal aid to the states, while requiring them to provide “full educational opportunities to all children with disabilities” (Public Law 93-380). In these acts, Congress (1) responded to the *PARC v. Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education* cases and enforced the US Constitution’s 14th Amendment

and equal protection guarantees for disabled students, (2) provided some assistance for states to comply with their own laws and provide all children with education, (3) worked to counteract the routine practice of total and functional exclusion of disabled children by securing their legal rights, and (4) initiated a process of systemic change geared to reforming the nation's public school system to accommodate disabled students (Turnbull & Turnbull 2000: 16). These federal interventions were required because over half of the more than 8 million children with disabilities in the US were not receiving "appropriate educational services which would enable them to have full equality of opportunity" while 1 million of those children were excluded entirely from public school systems (20 U.S.C.A. § 1400[b][3]).

In the EAHCA, Congress responded to the prior failure to bring about change in school systems and to the cases cited above, among others, by codifying six principles that must be supported: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, appropriate education, least restrictive environment, as well as procedural due process and parent participation. States must provide "full educational opportunity" and individualized special educational services to all disabled children—including infants and toddlers at risk of experiencing a "developmental delay," who become eligible for early intervention services. All eligible disabled students, classified in 13 specific disability categories as in need of special education or related services, are to receive a free appropriate public education and an individual education program tailored to their learning needs. Public education providers must make reasonable accommodations, such that students with disabilities have the "opportunity to participate in or benefit from the aid, benefit, or service" provided to other students. While a full continuum of placement alternatives must be available, the team responsible for the individualized education plan should ensure that their decision enables the child to be educated in the "least restrictive environment" not necessarily full-day attendance in general education classrooms. Because it provided a mechanism for measuring individual students by their own strengths and weaknesses as well as one that could be used to claim individual rights and resources, the mandate of an individualized education plan for each student receiving special education was among the most important developments—and one that continues to define the delivery of special education services in the US. If a student's individualized education plan fails to specify some other arrangement, the child must be educated in the school he or she would attend if he or she did not have a disability. Of course, this must be determined on a case-by-case basis. To the maximum extent possible, disabled and nondisabled children should be educated together.

With this path-breaking legislation, Congress has addressed a host of problem areas since 1975: (1) Disabled children's outright exclusion from public education; (2) school districts' resistance to providing special education services; (3) suspension (rescission) of students' rights and educational opportunities for reasons of discipline or (mis)behavior; (4) evaluation limitations, such as culturally biased tests or single-instrument diagnosis; (5) the centrality of placement in certain special education environments, which resulted in the lack of individualized instruction and monitoring; (6) segregated and separate settings as the rule in special education; (7) related services were made part of

special education when students need them to benefit from instruction; and (8) denial of parents' rights and roles in special education decision making and lack of access to school records were replaced by elaborated due process regulations (NCD 2000: 246 ff.). The EAHCA profoundly altered not only special education but in so doing affected most schools in most districts, as the legislation conferred visibility, force, and grip to special education reforms: It did so whether or not state laws already included the basic provisions of the law (Singer & Butler 1992: 164). Although it did provide a legislative base, personal struggles, legal precedents, and local actions were still necessary to move districts into compliance with the broad statement and jurisdiction of the bill. The joint effects of the two sets of interrelated regulations from the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, one for Section 504 and the other for Public Law 94-142, cumulatively have had a profound impact on the delivery of educational services to students deemed disabled. While the former prohibits discrimination against disabled persons, the regulations for the EAHCA made receipt of federal funds for special education contingent upon delivery of free and appropriate educational services. Schools could resist, but then they would lose all federal funds. Yet, just as individual lawsuits were necessary to achieve mainstreaming at the local level, so too have individual battles been required to ensure that certain schools or classrooms are made more inclusive. Even though EAHCA, in contrast to other disability rights laws, specified both school systems' responsibilities and mechanisms to guide compliance, local school districts still have substantial decision-making power (Percy 1989: 160), yet EAHCA also empowered bureaucrats and was overly procedural. Meeting the extensive bureaucratic requirements of the law has turned out to be an insufficient guarantee of excellent and equitable education, as "the letter of the law has become the principal barrier to achieving the spirit of the law" (Skrtic 1991: 148).

The original prointegration sentiments of the bill are understandable in the context of expanding entitlements and civil rights that characterized the decade starting in the mid-1960s. Since then, many school systems' interpretations have resulted in the provision of adequate or even exemplary services. But the law has also produced unanticipated consequences that do not reflect its good intentions. Certain categories of students, types of (special) educational programs, and schools/districts receive more or less than their fair share, with controversies about these consequences, inadequate implementation, and noncompliance continuing to the present day. Extensive regulations have fundamentally shaped the institutionalization of special education in nearly every public school in the US. Unfortunately, these legalistic procedures can even lead to "over-compliance" in the sense that school districts introduce bureaucratic and administrative requirements that do little to directly meet the needs of students for whom Public Law 94-142 was made, but that will defend the district against litigation by auditors, advocacy groups, and parents (Kagan 1986: 83). On the other hand, the fact that special education laws have been "subject to extensive ongoing public review and to occasional revision throughout this period has helped to maintain inclusive education at the forefront of educational reform" (OECD 1999: 265). The debate between special and inclusive education has been heated at times, while it too often has remained marginal to general education discourse and reform.

Regular Education Initiative (1986)

In 1986, the Regular Education Initiative (REI) proposed a restructuring of American education to become a unified system for all children. Also in that year, Public Law 99-457 highlighted the importance of early supports for children growing up in poverty by expanding special education programs to include preschool children aged 3 to 5 with impairments or those “at risk.” The merger of special and general education would encourage “shared responsibility,” such that children would be served without the stigma of being educated in segregated schools or separate classrooms. The proposal generated considerable public debate, at least within special education, as its leaders emphasized that the public school as an institution would be required to change substantially to realize their vision of inclusion. Others warned that a merger could possibly reduce or eliminate disabled students’ additional or specialized services. While the debate continued with more or less vitriol within the field, it largely bypassed general education itself (Fuchs & Fuchs 1994), and special education provision continued to be a separate categorical program in most schools in the nation. This continued boundary drawing between special and general education would be, indeed must be, eliminated in inclusive schooling (see Villa & Thousand 2005 for profiles). Faulting special education for focusing on legal compliance above all else, Thomas Skrtic (1992: 203 ff.) argued that the bureaucratic school organizational structure, coupled with its professional culture, are inadequate and fail to meet the demands for equity and excellence. Thus, restructuring of schools into “adhocracies” based on teachers’ collaborative problem solving is required to achieve those goals, a topic returned to later.

Accessibility Mandated (1990)

Despite the above delineated legislative acts, until passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) in 1990, no federal law prohibited the majority of employers, program administrators, or owners and managers of businesses from discriminating against disabled people once they had left school. Disabled Americans had continued to suffer discrimination in all domains of life, losing ground in their struggle for equal employment opportunities over the 1980s: Employer discrimination was so common that estimates suggested that more than 8 million disabled Americans who wanted to work were denied jobs and thus were forced to depend on government subsidies (Smith 2001). The ADA is significant, in particular, because it was designed to reduce barriers in advance, for example, by ensuring physical access to potential sites of education and work. By giving disabled people the right to challenge discrimination, the ADA also encourages future investments into the education and training of disabled children and youth—at both institutional and individual levels. Such laws not only help to shift perceptions of disability but also can improve self-esteem and enhance career aspirations of people with disabilities (Engel & Munger 2003). However, despite the guarantees promised, disability policies aiming to increase access to employment by making the workplace more accommodating have met with resistance both from employers and judges called upon to interpret the ADA (O’Brien 2001). The

justified high hopes for this groundbreaking law have subsided because, as Ruth Colker (2005) argues, the public acceptance of persons with disabilities and their participation results not just from policies and laws but also from societal perspectives on disability in general and the attitudes of judges and juries specifically. Increasingly negative reactions to the ADA by federal judges and the press have amounted to significant retrenchment, even “backlash” (Krieger 2003). If Congress had passed a broad statute to protect 43 million disabled Americans, then court rulings, especially those by the Supreme Court, have since significantly narrowed the definition of disability and thus reduced the protection the enacted ADA intended to offer (Colker 2005).

Nevertheless, the ADA has served, and will continue to serve, as a model for anti-discrimination legislation in many other countries. In fact, Theresia Degener (2005) suggests that the ADA’s influence around the world is less in question than its domestic impact. In Germany, the *Federal Equality Law for Disabled People (Behinderten Gleichstellungsgesetz [BGG])* passed in 2002 (Drewes 2003) and a *General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz [AGG])* enacted in 2006 to implement European antidiscrimination charters have been more or less closely modelled on American statutes. Internationally, the disability rights movement continues to grow at different paces and with different groups at the forefront (Driedger 1989; Charlton 1998; Herr, Gostin & Koh 2003). In the US, the expansion of rights has been accompanied by rising entitlements, with rights and resources closely related. However, the direction of development in special education has shifted from reforms aimed at guaranteeing rights to those controlling resources and implementing standards that demand certain outputs.

From Rights to Resources to Outputs

Reforms Emphasizing Accountability, Standards, and Outputs

During attempts to fully implement federal special education policy, the US Department of Education has shifted from a regulatory stance to more cooperation with states, as its focus on “rights” and “oversight” were increasingly replaced with emphasis on “outcomes” (called outputs here) and “efforts”—with the result that noncompliance is commonplace and persists due to lack of sanctions (NCD 2000: 180, 219). Yet, fiscal retrenchment and accountability measures for schools, not only for special education programs, have increased the results orientation of education funding and of schools. With the enactment in 1994 of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* and the *Improving America’s Schools Act*, a set of laws was passed that aimed to improve schools through reforms that impose uniformly high standards and universal public accountability for student performance (including students in special education) combined with increased flexibility for local education agencies.

Since the 1960s, the federal government has increasingly attempted to change school structures to ensure equity among students through reduction of disparities between school districts. The federal government’s role has grown with strengthened mandates.

In so doing, it has encroached on state and local control, especially through “unfunded mandates” that do not meet the full fiscal commitments necessary to complete such reforms. State and local actors struggle to meet the increasing federal requirements with the provided funds. At local level, general and special education frequently compete for limited resources in a zero-sum game, since districts risk litigation if they fail to provide free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. With further increases in the special education population and discontent about continuously rising costs, the funding of services for these students will continue to become more important in special education and standards-based reforms. At the same time that policymakers reacted to financial crises, due in part to the increasing proportion of students who receive special education and related services, they have increasingly embraced standardization and accountability measures. Fairness in distributing resources, their productive use, and attention to outputs are ongoing key themes in debates and decision making relating to the finance of educational systems. Indeed, educational financing mechanisms may be as important as the amounts allocated in defining programs, but fiscal policy changes alone are usually not sufficient to result in program change (Parrish & Chambers 1996: 121 ff.).

Standards-based reforms present a dilemma for special education because schools are to be held accountable for all students’ achievements while new performance and content standards may create less tolerant schooling conditions (Parrish & Chambers 1996: 135). Usage of large-scale achievement tests in making “high-stakes decisions”—assigning students to particular schools or programs based on achievement, determining promotion to the next grade level, and regulating certification—has increased (Heubert & Hauser 1999: 189 ff.). While the main goals of standards-based reform are to improve educational outputs, strengthen curricular content, and raise expectations for all students, meeting certain academic standards may not be of equal relevance for all students. Indeed, accountability and standards pose both an opportunity and a threat to students in special education. On the one hand, high expectations and including special education programs in overall evaluations are helpful, given that low expectations and stigmatization have been major negative consequences of special education participation. On the other hand, the demand for standardization contradicts the individualization of educational programming at the core of current best practices. Thus, the individualized educational programs must be strengthened to ensure that necessary modifications can be made on an individual basis, and participation of students receiving special education services and support is neither hindered nor special education used as a mechanism to elude accountability. In 1997 and 2004, reauthorizations of the IDEA required states and districts to provide for students’ full participation in assessments as a condition of eligibility, in order to promote high expectations commensurate with needs and to hold school systems accountable for meeting those needs. Nevertheless, surveys indicate that only half of all disabled students were included in past assessments, with states ranging between 0% and 100% and districts also varying widely in student participation rates and in the types of accommodations made, while alternate assessments were rarely offered (Heubert & Hauser 1999: 189). In the Nation’s Report Card or National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), students with disabilities and English-language learners,

or those with limited proficiency in English, can receive certain testing accommodations, but states continue to vary widely in their inclusion rates (AIR 2007). Once again, the federal legislation challenges local praxis to develop relevant procedures, technology, and research to accomplish these goals. Likewise, participation rates in each type of program and stage of implementation will continue to vary widely for children and youth who receive special education services. If the key to the IDEA is to individualize educational programming to respond to specific learning needs, this emphasis confronts the problems of feasibility, reliability, and validity of uniform standards, even if they are required by standards-based reforms and amendments to the original legislation.

Special Education Resources

The increased focus on high standards in educational outputs for all children and youth has yet to be fully implemented in accountability systems that continue to struggle with difficult issues of standardization, certification, and evaluation. Furthermore, each type of special education finance has advantages and disadvantages that proponents and critics have argued will be produced by such formula incentive structures. The relevant indicators about funding formulas include whether or not they are: adequate, flexible, identification and placement neutral, equitable, predictable, understandable, cost-controlled and cost-based, fiscally and student-results accountable, linked to general education funding, politically acceptable, and without unreasonable bureaucratic burden (Hartman 1992; Parrish 2001: 31 f.). Since the early 1990s, many states have attempted or completed significant reforms of these finance systems. Yet, many of these policy reforms continue to play out at state, regional, and local levels—and most states cannot or do not report program expenditures with a high degree of confidence (see Parrish & Chambers 1996; Parrish 2001; Chambers et al. 2002). In special education funding, issues of adequacy and equity with which education services are delivered to various categorical groups of students are paramount. As total and current expenditures per student have risen continuously, the US has consistently outspent other industrialized countries on public education per capita (OECD 2006). While special education programs have contributed to these increases, they represent only a small proportion of the larger trend. These expenditures must be seen within the context of the diverse services that American public schools provide not only for their students but also for the neighborhoods in which they often operate as community centers. Litigation has ensured that related services, such as therapies, must be provided within the context of public school organizations. When federal and state funds are not forthcoming, localities must provide the resources, even if general education programs may have to be trimmed as a result. Increasingly, this conflict has led to state attempts to reform special education funding formulas, even as the challenge to meet those claims has resulted in a crisis of special education systems, not just their finance.

The majority of states have discussed major changes in special education policies because the rising costs associated with them and the funding mechanisms in place have led to widespread acknowledgement of the need for reform. The main issues, and

solutions, of this reform movement include: (1) greater flexibility in using funds: A consensus emerged that fiscal disincentives for placement in less restrictive placements (in other words, incentives to reduce the time spent in general classrooms) need to be eliminated; (2) reduced administrative and assessment costs: Decades of research question both the equity and efficiency of assessment, showing that it has too little treatment utility (e.g., Reschly 1996; Sternberg & Spear-Swerling 1999; Slate & Jones 2000), while consuming a considerable portion of special education funds; (3) elimination of the categorical funding of special education services: Reformers call for flexibility in meeting all students' needs to replace the strict limitations and programs' separation requirements and/or incentives; (4) rising special education population and costs; and (5) lacking efficiency of special education services. Numerous studies indicate that special education programs' extensive administrative reporting requirements reduce the funds available for direct services to students: Only three fifths of special funds are used to provide direct services to students (Parrish 2001: 13).

Increasingly, states acknowledge and attempt to reform their finance systems, funding formulas and allocation bases to reduce structural incentives to overidentify, misclassify, or separate students. Whether a student with an individualized education plan, whatever the disability category to which he or she is allocated, attends a segregated facility or is included fulltime in general classrooms with services provided there, varies by state, region, and district. The ongoing challenge is "to balance the diverse educational needs and rights of all students against limited financial resources" even if finance reform alone will remain insufficient to solve the problems faced (Parrish 2001: 39). Not only the removal of (dis)incentives but also ongoing professional development and support will be needed. Thus, we now turn to the professionalization of special education to better understand the interests and practices of teachers and administrators.

Professionals and Administrators in Special Education

A diverse group of professionals and administrators is responsible for teaching the students, providing the services, and maintaining special education programs.¹ We have seen that resource provisions constrain how well these individuals can accomplish their jobs, but the quality of special education programs and instruction depends even more on the ideals, training, interests, and teaching styles of teachers and the other occupational groups, as well as guidance via curricula, methods, and evaluations (Tomlinson 1982: 82–155; Lipsky & Gartner 1997: 117–172). Student/teacher ratios, staffing and salaries, and parental and community involvement are some of the other characteristics useful in comparing (special) educational systems and the implementation of special and inclusive education programs. Systematic policy attention to help transform teacher training is needed. Special education reforms that ignore training and professional practice are problematic because this seems to have reduced the coherence and multidisciplinary of national training strategies (OECD 1999: 319 f.).

Over the 20th century, American students were taught by progressively better educated, trained, and credentialed teachers; most often middle class, middle-aged, married

White women (Spencer 2000: 74). Their salaries and social status in comparison with other similarly educated professionals remains low on the whole, even if there are significant disparities between states and districts. The US Department of Education has projected teacher shortages to worsen due to demographic factors, such as more school-age children and retirements, efforts to reduce class sizes, and tightened teacher training standards (US DoED 1997). These factors affect the willingness and opportunities to respond to reform movements, especially those that call for significant restructuring. Indeed, few general education teachers in the US have been trained formally to work with disabled students in inclusive settings, posing a major barrier to the practical realization of inclusive schooling.

Cross-national survey results show that in many countries special education (training) systems are in flux, although teachers as an occupational group remain divided along the general/special cleavage (OECD 1999: 296). In the US, not all training programs for general educators require special and inclusive education courses, but some higher education institutions have merged teacher preparation courses of study. Partnerships continue to develop between schools and higher educational institutions, furthering professional development. Such programs are particularly important because the country lacks an adequate number of special education teachers, with the shortage called “enduring, significant, chronic, and complex” (COPSSE 2003). Around a tenth of all teachers in special education are not fully certified, which relativizes the claim to “special” knowledge and skills needed to serve students in such programs.

Teacher salary data reflects the main component in any country’s educational costs; however, the US spends less on both general and special educators’ salaries than Germany or many other industrialized countries. The comparatively lower wages of American teachers, measured in per capita GDP, is inconsistent with high overall spending on primary and secondary education in the US (NCES 1996b: 38–45), a major reason being that teacher training requirements in the US are lower than in other comparable countries. Also, the US has more nonteaching staff than teaching staff, which clearly relates to the diverse tasks and responsibilities of the American public schools—from providing all-day care, meals, transportation, special education and related services, psychological counseling, myriad extramural activities, vocational education and training, and a host of other individual and community services. Private expenditures cannot be neglected, however, as these constitute up to one fifth of total education spending in the US, as in Germany.

Not only salaries and school resources but especially teacher training and quality have been identified as critical issues in meeting state educational goals. Training and certification emphases made clear that some educational areas, special and bilingual education in particular, are having difficulty attracting qualified individuals. Special and inclusive education will have to deal with the shortage, especially of “culturally and linguistically diverse” teachers, and attrition. Increasing numbers of students referred to special education, fewer graduates of special education training programs, coupled with increasing retirements, increasing overall enrollments, and class size reduction efforts have all been reported as causes of the teacher shortage (Nelson & Schneider 1998: 47). Even fully funded special education positions have often been either left

vacant or filled by substitutes because suitable candidates could not be found (SPENSE 2003). On the whole, these studies suggest that the special educational systems and the profession are not prepared for the continuing growth in classification rates and transfer into special education programs. They emphasize that joint teacher training and cooperative or team-teaching in schools offer promising responses to these trends. Increased collaboration, reduced bureaucratic requirements, and enhanced teacher preparation may reduce teacher attrition, whatever the specialty. These factors will also determine how quickly and fully the transition from special to inclusive education is made.

From Special to Inclusive Education?

Increasingly, integration and inclusive education have been politically supported and scientifically validated as preferable to segregated or separated schooling, even as the law declares that the “appropriateness” of inclusion must be decided on a case-by-case basis. In the reauthorizations of IDEA, the negative consequences of segregation and separation for disabled students were again observed, with the response of strengthening nondiscriminatory evaluation, parent participation in decision making, and least restrictive placements. Although not well defined in special education laws, integration and inclusion have been central concepts in these laws, with the reauthorizations affirming the federal government’s commitment that, unless a child’s individualized education plan specified another placement, he or she must be educated in the school that he or she would attend without being identified as having a disability. Disabled and nondisabled children should be educated together to the maximum extent possible. Segregating special classes or separate schools are only justifiable when a student’s education cannot satisfactorily be achieved with supplementary aids and services in general classrooms. The 1992 case, *Oberti v. Board of Education*, summarized the state of research:

Inclusive public education for children with disabilities offers substantial benefits for children with disabilities, for their non-disabled peers, as well as for the community at large. This type of education increases the opportunities for individuals with disabilities to become fully-functioning, co-equal members of society. ... Inclusion is a right, not a privilege for a select few. Success in special schools and special classes does not lead to successful functioning in integrated society, which is clearly one of the goals of the IDEA. ... We take particular notice of the potential for harm when a child with a disability is educated in a segregated milieu (cited in Tucker 1998: 395 f.).

The court rounded out its decision by indicating three potential limitations that school districts may place on inclusion: (1) The child in question would benefit little or not at all from inclusion, (2) the child’s behavior is such that the education of the other children in the classroom would be “significantly impaired,” and (3) the costs over other options would significantly affect other children in the school district (Tucker 1998: 396). Thus, despite the fact that IDEA does not explicitly allow cost as a criterion in educational decision making, the cost of special services may well play a role.

Recent discourse mirrors earlier controversies and ideological debates about the specific settings in which disabled students could and should be educated. Inclusion proponents—among disability activists, parents, teachers, professional organizations, researchers, and politicians—advocate for a merger of these two arenas of educational praxis, which in many schools and districts would require more than minor organizational changes, even restructuring. Its opponents (among the same interest groups) argue that, while a desirable goal, inclusion cannot be readily achieved and that attempts to realize this ideal are bound to fail, at least in the short or medium term. Others think that inclusive education, in threatening status quo praxis and process, will risk the hard-won resources achieved over the past several decades. Thus, deep challenges within education about the division of general and special education continue. Not only within the ongoing public debates but also within the special education research communities, major strands of debate *for* and *against* inclusion may be grouped among the following rubrics: general or special education reform, moral imperative, civil rights, parallel educational systems, or all teachers can teach all children (Winzer & Mazurek 2000). The mobilization of parents, and battles for the education they deem most appropriate for their children, are a constant feature of the politics of special education, with the current debates but another step in the continuous process of social interests initiating education reforms. The discursive, political, and social struggles would be far less dramatic were it not for the firm beliefs of advocates of each position that schooling matters, not only for what children learn but also how they will (be able to) lead their lives as adults. In which institutional settings or organizational forms they should learn has been a central concern throughout the history of (special) education.

Professional and advocacy organizations' statements respond to current debates with contrasting answers to the difficult questions raised by the cleavage of special and inclusive education. Some organizations define inclusive schooling as a moral and educational imperative, with services to be delivered in general classrooms. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the major professional and policy association, argues for maintenance of all options currently available along the continuum of educational settings. But, the CEC also supports inclusive education in schools and communities, reflecting its alliance with a broad range of disability coalitions and advocacy organizations: "The concept of inclusion is a meaningful goal to be pursued in our schools and communities. . . . Children, youth, and young adults with disabilities should be served whenever possible in general education classrooms in inclusive neighborhood schools and community settings" (cited in Boudah & McCorkle 2000: 928 f.). Even among the advocacy and professional organizations that have considerable impact, through their lobbying efforts, publications, and members, the spectrum of views and perspectives spans the continuum from segregation to full inclusion.

The legislation and litigation discussed above has not only been advancing sequentially but also cumulatively. Principles, such as "zero reject," the individualized education plan, and parental rights, were strengthened over time by legislators guided by education research and praxis and responding to judicial opinions. The once ambitious goal of guaranteeing access to free appropriate public schooling has been met.

Nevertheless, implementation difficulties continue, especially regarding inclusion, with reality outpaced by the rhetoric of general and special education reforms. Public school reforms are neither a necessary evolution nor a repetitive process, but instead result from long-term patterns of institutionalization, social change, value cleavages, and discourses. David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995: 58 ff.) have written that “the rhetoric of reform has reflected the tensions between democratic politics, with its insistence on access and equality, and the structuring of opportunity in a competitive market economy.” As in past decades, states have undertaken education reforms that affect when and how long students are in school, what their curricula contain, to what standards they are held, and who teaches them in which classrooms and schools.

The 1990s were marked by reforms replacing an input focus with one on educational outputs, and this trend has quickened since the turn of the century. Special education has been and will continue to be buffeted by broad-based changes in the factors analyzed above, such as standards, assessments, and accountability; educational finance; teacher training; and shifting societal values evident in the inclusion and school choice debates. As requested by Congress, state educational reforms are closely monitored (Abt Associates 2003) with the results of the study of state and local implementation and impact of IDEA to clarify not only the current state but also the foreseeable future directions of institutional and organizational change in special and inclusive education. Nearly all states reformed aspects of their setting of academic standards, in both content and performance. Student progress and achievement are measured against statewide standards on the basis of assessment systems, some of which specifically include students in special education, while others make exceptions for particular groups of students, such as those children and youth with considerable cognitive disabilities. Standards-based reforms hold all levels and persons involved in the educational system accountable for results. Thus, educational finance and issues of fiscal provision and control are closely linked to the enhanced importance of assessments and the increased specificity of accountability systems. Resources are needed to fund infrastructure and services, but the relevant question is not only how much is needed but also which specific programs best help students and teachers achieve the higher standards written into law. General revenue reforms, but special education reforms in particular, have remained high on the agenda in many states.

The US federal government’s National Council on Disability (NCD), in reviewing a quarter century of special education development since IDEA was first enacted, found that

failure to ensure compliance with IDEA is widespread and persists over time . . . sanctions have rarely been used. Some authorities available for enforcement have not been utilized; others have been under-utilized. . . . Parents expressed frustration and disappointment at the slow progress in the implementation of IDEA (NCD 2000: 219).

Often programs are not evaluated from an educational benefit perspective, but rather with a view toward regulatory compliance and minimizing litigation. Evidence has shown that programs often not only provide too few benefits but also block facilitating educational reforms (Allington & McGill-Franzen 1995: 21). Increasingly, advocates on both sides of the political spectrum, and experts on the historical development

of special education, question whether the ever greater funding provided would not simultaneously achieve more equity and excellence for *all* students through redistribution and restructuring of general education than the perpetuation of a separating and segregating educational system.

Within the American educational system of unified comprehensive schools, special education has grown tremendously, decreasing the exclusion of disabled children due to federal “mainstreaming” and integration mandates. These policy changes—brought about by increasingly powerful disability advocacy groups and policymakers concurrently with other social and educational transformations, such as the forced racial desegregation of many schools—diffused special education by turning it into a categorical entitlement program within most public schools in the US. Expanding special educational opportunity structures and pathways through schooling were developed by powerful civil rights laws and cases, by increasing resource allocation and distribution, by professional interests in a new department in nearly every public school, and by bureaucratization. The resulting heterogeneous regional and local institutionalizations affect not only the effectiveness and quality of education provided for each individual child but also the inequities and disadvantages he or she faces.

From the 1970s, reality was forced to catch up with the rhetoric of integration, with schools reflecting the egalitarian ideology of the comprehensive American schools. But inclusive education, a deep transformation in pedagogical praxis and in school organization—valuing diversity for its contributions to the intellectual and social growth of all participants—remains a challenging goal yet to be achieved throughout the US. Disability paradigms emphasizing human variation, minority, or sociopolitical perspectives, and an egalitarian ideology supporting equalized participation in educational systems, further strengthened the movement toward inclusive education. If these factors impact special education policy, directly and indirectly, other crucial aspects, such as the level of policymaking, political centralization, special education finance and professional and parental demands, also channel individual interests and provide the institutional conditions within which expanding state special education systems continue to evolve. The remainder of the chapter presents trends in and indicators of special and inclusive education development.

Special Education Trends and Indicators

As we have seen, the historical development of education policy and legislation in special educational systems exemplifies a patchwork of principles and measures. It reflects the difficulty of reforming complex (special) educational systems as it does successful innovations in educational programs across the country. To better understand contemporary strengths and weaknesses, the following sections analyze: (1) trends in student disability demographics, (2) learning opportunity structures and educational services provided to students in special education, and (3) educational attainment (certification) or school failure (dropout).² Embedded in historical perspective, these indicators provide evidence of change in the barriers to, and facilitators of, inclusive education.

To better understand the extremely heterogeneous group of students served, the special education population will be disaggregated by calculating the rates of classification into different categories. Given significant differences along the dimensions of race and ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status, we address the controversial issue of over- and underrepresentation in special education. Secondly, the participation rates of students who have individualized education plans in different learning opportunity structures will be examined. These are not only significant due to differing physical locations but also because placements reflect pedagogically variant classroom environments and educational resources, concepts, and expectations or goals. Next, the outputs of these programs, specifically secondary school certification rates, are measured (albeit indirectly) by disability category and learning opportunity structure. Classification and learning opportunities affect the probability that special education students will experience mobility back to general education, drop out, or graduate from high school with a certificate or diploma.

Special Education Demographics

Who is classified as a student with special educational needs in the US? What do these patterns tell us about how student disabilities are constructed and how they relate to other characteristics, such as gender, race or ethnicity, and socioeconomic status? Historically, children who do not “fit,” who interfere with “normal” classroom processes, or who fail to meet teachers’ learning and behavioral expectations have been selected for placement in special education environments or to receive services within general education classrooms. However, significant temporal and spatial differences among categories demonstrate that the selection processes into special education are intensely social, dependent on innumerable contextual factors as much as genetic constitution or biological and cognitive functioning. As important as such individual differences are, judgments on the part of school gatekeepers within institutionalized educational organizations influence special education demographics to a considerable extent. Turning here to the US aggregate data, we can also ask whether there is less variance in classification rates, educational environments, and attainments in certain categories than others.

Special Education Expansion and Population Growth

The continuous expansion of special education is vividly demonstrated in steady growth in the overall proportion of all enrolled children and youth who participate in federally supported special education programs. In 1958, approximately 890,000 students in city school districts received special educational support, with the proportion of all children of school age amounting to 2.7% (Richardson 1999: xiii). In 1965, only an estimated two fifths of all “disabled” children were thus schooled, an estimated 1 million children and youth with “severe disabilities” of school age were completely excluded from public schooling, while many more did attend school without services that they needed (Nazzaro 1977). All categories that are inscribed in federal law have grown since the late 1980s during the ongoing special education expansion. Quantitatively, the

development of special education disability categories over the past decades emphasizes the shifting relative weight of categories, and points out that common cultural images of disabled students, such as the wheelchair-using or blind student, misrepresent their modest numbers. In fact, since the early 1960s, inception of the “learning disability” concept, the group of children and youth classified with “specific learning disabilities” has grown to constitute over half of all students with an individualized education plan. What is the demographic composition of this growing diverse group?

Disability, Age, Gender, Socioeconomic Status, and Race and Ethnicity

The largest minority group in the US consists of people with disabilities, with at least 15 % of the population self-reporting experienced limitations in “activities of daily living” (Census Bureau 2003). Disability is found in every culture, at every age, and among all genders, socioeconomic statuses, and racial or ethnic groups. Although the incidence and prevalence of impairments rise with increasing age, the special education population in each country has distinct incidences and durations in (special) education (see OECD 2000b: 97 f.; Chapter 2). National enrollment data for the US shows that the age group most likely to participate in special education is 9 to 10 years old, declining steadily thereafter due to drop out at later ages (NRC 1997: 71). For states with middle schools, that age group corresponds to the children transitioning or having just arrived from a 4-year elementary school. Yet, even for other educational system structures (such as 6- or 8-year elementary schools), the increase in academic requirements especially uncovers reading difficulties. The largest *increase* in special education classification occurs between the ages of 6 and 8 (NRC 1997: 71). Given that few impairments are congenital, with most defined in relation to developing peers and according to behavioral and academic performance norms in schools, it is not surprising that rates fluctuate and differ by disability category.

For decades, boys have been overrepresented in special education programs. Not surprisingly, the interpretation of which side of gender inequity to focus on—whether this represents a disadvantage for girls or not—depends in large measure on whether you believe special education adequately meets needs or solidifies prior disadvantages (see Rousso & Wehmeyer 2001). The high-incidence category “specific learning disabilities” was 68 % male, “mental retardation” was 58 % male, and “emotional disturbance” was 78 % male, while the category “gifted” was nearly at parity at 49 % male (NRC 2002: 73). This finding is particularly interesting given that, overall, boys receive lower grades than girls, are more likely to be grade repeaters and dropouts, and lag behind in reading and writing proficiency at all educational levels (Flood 2001: 217). Special education thus more often serves boys, who seem to be disadvantaged in contemporary school environments, in contrast to earlier eras.

Relative to the general population, we find a higher rate of poverty among the households of students in special education, despite the fact that parents of students in general and special education were equally likely to be employed (Wagner & Blackorby 2002). Indeed, considerable differences in general health were found to exist between students in different income levels: Half of students living in households with incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 had “excellent health,” compared to 34 % in households

with incomes of \$25,000 or less (Wagner & Blackorby 2002). In no other industrialized nation are low-income children as bad off as in the US (more than one fifth of American children live in poverty) because adults in the US are more unequal in both income and wealth than they are in many other societies, and the US government does less than any other advanced nation to reduce poverty through public programs (Fischer et al. 1996: 132 ff.). While different types of health conditions, impairments, and disabilities may have more, or less, impact on learning, fewer family resources have been shown to have direct and indirect negative effects. An example is the growing disparity between richer and poorer children over the months of summer vacation, during which poor children do not benefit from school resources and may have fewer possibilities to compensate with family resources (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson 1997: 93 f.). Individual students disadvantages can be effectively compensated by schools during the school year, and poor children catch up to their middle-class peers while school is in session; in fact, the entire Black-White reading achievement gap is due to differences that develop over summer vacations (Fischer et al. 1996: 163).

New groups were continuously added as potential candidates for special education, with school gatekeepers including in special education those children who might be “at risk” of behavioral, learning, or physical disabilities due especially to growing up in poverty, which is described as an “environmental risk” (Stone 1991: 216 f.). Older group categories have also been differentiated, receiving new organizational identities, attention from education professionals, and categorical funding streams, such as Head Start and Title I. For example, special education for “slow learners” was refined and broken down into several categories, with compensatory education for disadvantaged children (many of whom are also eligible for free or reduced-price lunches) and special education for disabled children. Beyond programs that aim to reduce the effects of poverty on student ability to participate and learn effectively in school, special education has continually been used as a means to secure additional resources to compensate for socioeconomic disadvantage.

Thus, in distinct contrast to Germany’s special schools, whose general mission included educating all students having learning difficulties and impoverished children from the beginning, American special education only over time developed away from its primary focus on low-incidence, hard, or nonnormative categories of student disability and toward including disadvantaged children—via categories previously defined as compensatory or remedial (Allington & McGill-Franzen 1995: 16). Federal, state, and local programs were established to partially redistribute resources and reduce such economic and environmental disadvantages. On the other hand, special education programs were based on authorized disability categories, well funded, and professionalized, all factors contributing to its legitimacy. It seems rational that school gatekeepers respond to incentive structures by referring poor children and minority youth as well as those with impairments or disabilities which emphasize bodily (higher incidence of health and some other impairments), social (new categories with which to identify students), and political (policies) factors at the nexus of disadvantage and disability. As for disproportionality in other ascriptive categories, race and ethnicity have been shown to be a highly significant factor in special education placement rates.

There are important interactions of race and ethnicity and dis/abilities as ascriptive characteristics with histories of inequality. Together, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians/Pacific Islanders increasingly challenge the proportional dominance of Whites in the US. Some of these racial and ethnic minority groups have been and continue to be disproportionately represented among students classified disabled, without a clear etiological medical basis to explain these decades-old trends. Clearly, poverty and impairment are associated (NLTS 2003), but socioeconomic status alone cannot explain racial overrepresentation. The differing risk indices in some categories, between boys and girls and among some racial and ethnic groups, suggest that further explanations are necessary. Factors, such as family background, cultural norms and values, or bias on the part of teachers and other gatekeepers—among whose tasks it is to sort students into dis/ability categories that are not culturally neutral—affect who participates in special education. High-incidence categories of specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, and emotional disturbance make up three quarters of the entire special education population. But it is these very categories that rarely have a clearly defined etiological base in genetics or biology. Student dis/ability must be interpreted via cultural cues, skills, and behaviors that are linked to socioeconomic and other status, even where there is no diagnosable clinical basis for referral to special education.

If the essential inequalities that people face correspond less to their individual differences and more to categorical differences like male/female or Black/White, as Charles Tilly (1998: 7 f.) reasons, then we see the systematic confluence of certain halves of such unequal categorical pairs in special education. However, it is nearly impossible to disentangle these factors or measure the impact of each characteristic in isolation. Resources by themselves also do not necessarily equalize other categorical differences that are relevant in (special) education. Moreover, “residential, social, and school segregation is so profound, especially for Blacks, that it often overrides middle-class advantages that some minority children may have” (Fischer et al. 1996: 196). Educational segregation or separation for all three groups (race and ethnicity, gender, and dis/ability) demonstrates how schools distribute opportunities unequally as they sort students.

As the equalization of educational opportunities for women and African Americans rose on the agenda, the former were in a much better position to realize their aspirations. It was race that “threw the contradiction between the idea of the system (that it would fully deliver on the promise of American democracy) and the reality of it (that it apportioned opportunity on the basis of a single, highly background-sensitive quality) into the starkest relief” (Lemann 1999: 156). The impoverished Southern schools would not continue as racially segregated much longer, but the desegregation efforts of *Brown v. Board* and the IDEA have not succeeded in eliminating disproportionality. The regional component of racial segregation may contrast with the higher variance of dis/ability segregation, yet two consistently found correlations are of primary interest here: between race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and urbanicity (Massey & Denton 1993) and between ethnicity, school failure, and special education placement (Artiles & Trent 1994: 422). The interaction between these characteristics is so strong because they have been features of the American landscape for so long that they became

self-reinforcing (Ogbu 1978). Just as the dominant medical model in defining disability looks within the individual, so too are racial and ethnic categories abused as cultural, linguistic, and social differences are essentialized. However, conflicts have often not been about group membership per se, but rather about the consequences thereof for educational and other opportunities and outcomes.

The stigmatization that too often accompanies special education placements as well as the conflicts of group interests regarding educational resources are problems that bear directly on the vitriolic issue of racial and ethnic disproportionality. Specifically, for decades, African American boys have been overrepresented in particular special education categories. Indeed, the most controversial issue of special education for decades has been racial and ethnic disproportionality (Dunn 1968; Mercer 1973).

Arguments about overrepresentation of minority and poor students and the overreliance on the medical model still remain as critical issues to be resolved. Furthermore, these issues have continued to surface as a source of conflict among special educators, advocacy groups, and policymakers (Artiles & Trent 1994: 410).

Following closely behind the racial desegregation of American public schools, overrepresentation of Black children and youth in special education programs mocked integration efforts, as institutional segregation was often only replaced by separation within schools. The problem of disproportionality arises when the results are stigmatization, lowered expectations, and low educational attainment (NRC 2002: 20). Some argue that overrepresentation in special education classes is indicative of the continued reliance of both general and special education on school structures and programs that have been shown to endanger the life chances of many African American youth (Patton 1998: 25).

The causes of such disproportionality are multifactorial, including poverty, cultural bias or discrimination (in curricula, referral and assessment, or evaluation), and other specific factors related to race or ethnicity (Reschly 1996: 40–53). For the latter, such symbolic and social features, such as language, dress, and behavior, are hypothesized to impact these rates through teacher perceptions and expectations. Institutionalized and statistical discrimination on the basis of race and dis/ability commingle, with interaction between these ascriptive characteristics. Recent analyses (Meyer & Patton 2001: 5 f.; Losen & Orfield 2002) harkened back to original studies of disproportionality (e. g., Dunn 1963) closely followed by the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Poverty, and the Coleman Report and the surveys of the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights since the 1970s. Its authors summarized the main factors in racial and ethnic disproportionality in the US as institutional and classificatory. Institutional factors (discussed in Chapter 3) include programmatic and organizational differences, teacher training and experience, resources, and demographics. Classificatory aspects (discussed in Chapter 4) include definitional difficulties, school procedures, social evaluations of others, and oppression and discrimination. Two additional crucial issues regarding over- and underrepresentation and special education hypothesized to lead to its persistence are the "mismatch" between teachers and students, since they are often *not* of the same racial, ethnic, or cultural background, class, or gender. The double failure of universities' teacher training programs to attract members of culturally diverse

groups to their programs and to educate teachers-to-be to recognize and positively utilize students' cultural, class, and gender diversity in their teaching are challenges for the future (Meyer & Patton 2001). The complexity of the empirical findings on disproportionality resist simple explanations, given not only underrepresentation but also overrepresentation of particular racial and ethnic groups.

Studies by the Harvard Civil Rights Project and the NRC collected and published research results using data at national, state, district, school, and individual levels analyzing which groups of students are over- and underrepresented in special education programs. These studies' primary analytical focus was on the overrepresentation of African American children, especially boys, which could not solely be explained by reference to measured abilities or social background characteristics. The principle findings illuminate the complex individual and institutional causes—such as the aforementioned resource inequalities along class and racial boundaries, subconscious race bias, overreliance on IQ assessments that measure only one type of “intelligence” and associated inappropriate responses to high-stakes testing and related pressures (Losen & Orfield 2002; NRC 2002).

Overrepresentation is found in very few biologically based categories, with the vast majority occurring in categories—characterized as “judgmental,” “normative,” “soft,” or “high-incidence”—in which subjective evaluations (of students by teachers) and contextual factors (such as educational program size and demographic features and resources of communities and schools) rather than biological bases are responsible for the disproportionality (MacMillan & Reschly 1998). When ethnicity is treated as an independent variable and used to compare outputs across groups, we must be reasonably sure that the categories are exclusive and easily bounded, but, within the American multicultural society, this is increasingly less given. Dis/ability definitions and categories are also subject to considerable, often fast-paced, change. For example, since enactment and implementation of IDEA, research consistently shows that between half and three quarters of students identified by schools as having learning disabilities do not reflect standardized federal and state definitions (MacMillan & Reschly 1998: 9). Further, experts argue that the “inter-correlation between ethnicity and social class would be moderately high and that social class, and not ethnicity, would explain more variance in the rates of detection for these high-incidence disabilities” (MacMillan & Reschly 1998: 7). The NRC sponsored research into disproportionality in the early 1980s and again two decades later (NRC 1997, 2002), at a time when over a third more racial and ethnic minority students were enrolled in American schools. The later report, *Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education*, found that disproportionality in special education persists. While “only” 5% of Asians or Pacific Islanders are identified and receive special education services, the rate for Hispanics is more than double, at 11%. Twelve percent of White students participate in special education programs. Among American Indians/Alaskan Natives, 13% are special education students, and more than 14% of Black students are identified and receive special education (NRC 2002: 1 f.).

If we ask how likely a member of a racial or ethnic group is to be classified in a special education category, the relative *risk index* provides answers by presenting the number of students in one of the five racial/ethnic categories served in one of the 13 federal disability categories divided by the total enrollment for that racial/ethnic group in the entire

school, district, state, or national population.³ Among the half of all special education students identified as having “specific learning disabilities,” American Indians/Alaskan Natives have by far the highest risk, with over 7% of all students of that category in special education. In contrast, only 2.25% of all Asians/Pacific Islanders are classified with “learning disabilities.” The other racial/ethnic groups register between 6% and 6.8%, which over time represents a more than fivefold increase for all racial/ethnic groups (all with risk index scores between 1% and 2% for 1974 and between 6% and 7.5% for 1998) apart from Asians/Pacific Islanders, whose risk grew less rapidly from 0.52 in 1974 to 2.23 in 1998 (NRC 2002: 49). In another large category, speech or language impairments, there are more than a million students. Surprisingly, Whites, Blacks, and American Indians/Alaskan Natives have higher risk index scores than Asians/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics, despite the fact that many of the latter are more recent immigrants to the US.

The most debated and stigmatizing of all the categories is “mental retardation” and its related labels (Corrigan & Penn 1999; Hinshaw & Cicchetti 2000). Responding to that considerable social stigma, the rates of classification into this category have declined substantially over time. For decades, Black students’ considerable overrepresentation in this category has been vociferously criticized. Data from the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights shows that the trend has continued, such that, according to the risk index, Black children and youth are more than twice as likely to be classified into this category than White children and youth. American Indians/Alaskan Natives had nearly the same rate as Whites in 1998, considerably lower than the rate shown in earlier surveys. In the fourth-largest category, “emotional disturbance,” we find considerable variability by race/ethnicity, with a pattern similar to the one delineated above for “mental retardation.” Of the total 460,000 students, 60% are Whites, a quarter are Blacks, 10% are Hispanics, and the other groups make up 1% each. “Other health impairments” constitute the next largest special education group, with 220,000 students. In this growing category, several trends come together, including the dramatic rise of “attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder” (AD/HD) and the usage of this category as general or miscellaneous given its less stigmatizing label. Other groups are less at risk, compared to White students.

Moving to the “low-incidence” categories, two groups were underrepresented in the category “multiple disabilities” (109,000 students): Asians/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics, while the other groups had similar risks. Among those children and youth with “orthopedic impairments,” a category of 70,000 students, Whites had the highest risk index score. The groups of students with “hearing impairments” (71,000) and “visual impairments” (30,000) manifest low prevalence and relatively similar risk indices, except for lower rates among American Indians/Alaskan Natives in the first category and higher rates among Asians/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics in the second. Affecting 53,000 students, classification in the category “autism” did show some disproportionalities. Whereas Hispanics had a risk of .08 and American Indians/Alaskan Natives had an even lower ratio of .07, Asians/Pacific Islanders (.14) and Blacks (.14) were slightly more likely to be identified with “autism” than Whites (.12). Among the 13,000 students identified with “traumatic brain injury” in 1998, only the group of American Indians/

Alaskan Natives had a slightly higher classification rate than Whites; the other racial/ethnic groups had less than Whites. “Developmental delay,” another category made statutory in federal law during the 1990s, had nearly 12,000 students, with risk twice as high for Blacks as for Whites. This category is often used prior to or as a euphemism for “mental retardation”; however, it is only considered for children aged 0 to 9 and is not used in all states. As with all newer categories, fluctuations and irregularities are likely. The smallest of all the categories, “deaf-blindness,” represents less than 1,600 students from those states that maintain this category. Asians/Pacific Islanders had nearly three times and American Indian/Alaskan Native one and a half times the likelihood of classification; however, given the small group size, interpretation is difficult.

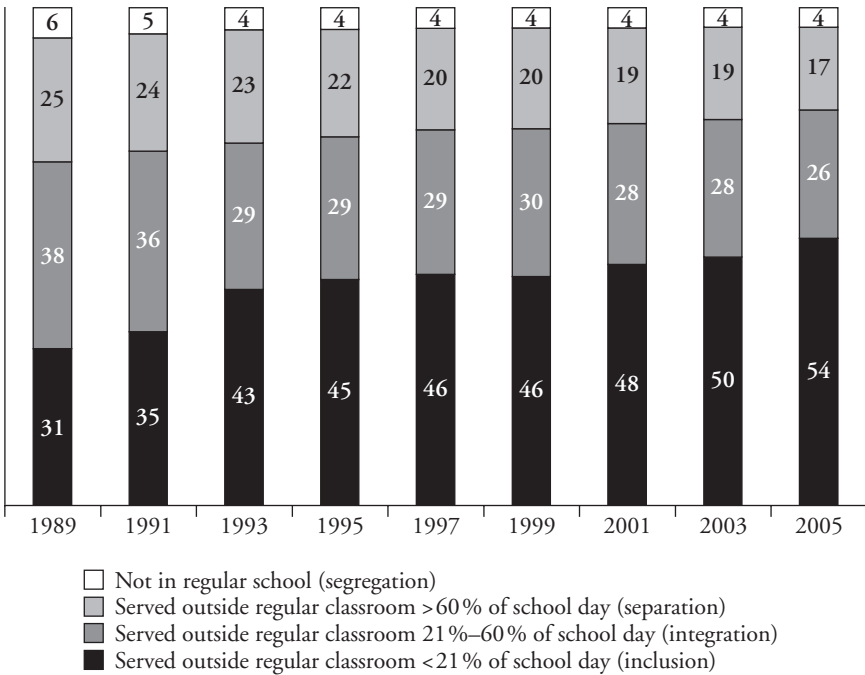
To summarize these categorical differences in special education participation, while American Indians/Alaskan Natives and Blacks had higher risks overall, compared to White students, Hispanics had a slightly lower relative risk and Asians/Pacific Islanders had a much lower relative risk (less than half that of the White students). No racial/ethnic group consistently had a higher or lower relative risk, but despite declines in magnitude, the considerable overrepresentation of Black students in the “mental retardation” (and “emotional disturbance”) categories and the overall underrepresentation of Asians/Pacific Islanders persist. Demographically, special education may be characterized as a program that serves boys of lower socioeconomic status in their early teens, with racial and ethnic groups disproportionately represented, sometimes considerably.

Variance in Segregation, Separation, Integration, and Inclusion

Once a student is classified as having a disability, in which educational environments or settings is he or she taught? During (special) education expansion and the growth of the mainstreaming and inclusion movements, the settings in which disabled students have been educated changed considerably—and continue to do so.⁴ Under current conditions, for some students, the “least restrictive environment” or the one in which he or she can profit most educationally, may not be the general classroom. The law guarantees a continuum of educational options for this very reason. If transnational discourses and social movements as well as international charters and educational policies on multiple levels of governance increasingly emphasize inclusive education, pointing to the benefits of such models hardly known several decades ago, how do these different settings compare? Why do some categories of children educated in particular settings succeed more than others? Which differences are most pronounced and which linkages persist between categories and settings?

The US Department of Education’s 23rd Annual Report to Congress (2001) summarized the accumulated research findings on learning opportunity structures and their consequences for individuals participating in special education programs. Firstly, social interactions between disabled and nondisabled students are enhanced when disabled students are served in general classes and are supported all the more when teachers use techniques designed to promote interaction. Secondly, many of the changes in pedagogical and didactic strategies that help to meet disabled students’ learning needs benefit

Figure 5.1
Students (Aged 6–21) Served Under IDEA Part B, by Learning
Opportunity Structure (in %), United States, 1989 to 2005



Note. Not in regular school includes public and private separate facilities, public and private residential facilities as well as home and hospital (see Table 5.1, note a rounding).

Source. US DoED 2007; author's calculations.

all students. Thirdly, since the 1996–97 school year, nationally over 95% of students with an individualized education program attended school in general school buildings, and less than half of those children and youth were removed from general classes for more than one fifth of the school day. For their part, teachers with experience teaching nondisabled and disabled students together repeatedly mention increased acceptance or tolerance, compassion and sensitivity, and willingness to work together between all students, while “studies have shown no increase in disruptions or decline in standardized test performance among nondisabled students when children with disabilities are placed in the classroom” (DRA 1997: 44 f.). Despite these positive findings, raising the proportion of students with individualized education programs who spend four fifths or more of their school days in general classrooms has not proved equally possible to realize across student disability categories or across the nation.

Since the 1990s, the trend toward more inclusive education has continued, shown in the aggregate national distributions over the school years from 1989 to 2005 of students

aged 6 to 21 (see Figure 5.1). Three decades after passage of the EAHCA, more than half of the more than 6 million students served with individualized educational programs were educated in general classrooms for four fifths or more of their school day. Those schoolchildren who spend between one fifth and three fifths of their day in resource rooms, a diverse special education classroom with multiple ability levels, declined from 38 % to 26 %. The proportion of separated students who are outside the general class more than three fifths of the school day declined from 25 % of all students to 17 % in 2005. The small proportion of segregated students also declined, from 6 % to 4 %, with these students learning instead in public or private separate facilities, in public or private residential facilities, or in hospital or home environments (US DoED 2005). Despite the extraordinary reduction of exclusion over the past half century through expanded access to public education, inclusion in general classrooms remains a more or less challenging goal, depending on the special education category and other ascriptive characteristics, pedagogical and gatekeeping practices, school conditions, and regional contexts. Yet, in comparison with Germany and many other countries (see Chapter 2), the considerable increases in integrative schooling and inclusive education since reauthorization of IDEA in 1990 is remarkable.

Variance in Learning Opportunities by Disability Category

Significant differences exist in learning opportunity structures by disability category. However, stereotypical assumptions are not always confirmed by empirical analyses. For example, as Table 5.1 demonstrates, the assumption that children with “visual impairments” need to be separated is not borne out, with these students enjoying the second highest inclusion rate (48 %). Another example: Despite the centuries-old legacy of separate institutions, less than 1 % of children in the categories “mental retardation” and “orthopedic impairments” were schooled in residential facilities in the 1998–99 school year. Although two thirds of the students in the very small category “deaf-blindness” attended general schools, this category also had the highest segregation rate (at 36.2 %), followed by the category with “multiple disabilities” (27.7 %). Nearly 40 % of those with “hearing impairments” spent less than a fifth of the school day outside the general classroom. Among the high-incidence or so-called normative categories, students receiving support for “speech and language impairments” were nearly all included in general classes 80 % of the day or more, while those with “specific learning disabilities” were most likely to spend 40 % or more of their school day integrated. Students in the category “emotional disturbance” who remained in general schools were relatively evenly distributed from separation to inclusion, but their segregation rate, at 16.3 %, was in the middle to high range, similar to students with “hearing impairments” or those in the category “autism.”

Among categories, the inclusion rate varies dramatically, from 10 % to 88 %. The category “speech or language impairments” has the highest rate, with nearly 9 of 10 students included. Students classified in all other categories were less than half as likely to be in the general classroom for almost all of the day. Students with “visual” or “orthopedic impairments” but also those with “specific learning disabilities” and “other

Table 5.1
 Students (Aged 6–21) Receiving Special Education Services, by Category
 and Learning Opportunity Structure (% of School Day), United States

<i>Special category</i>	<i>Not in general school</i>			<i>Total</i>	<i>In general school (% outside general classroom)</i>		
	<i>Segregation</i>				<i>Separation</i>	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>
	<i>Home/ hospital</i>	<i>Resident. facilities</i>	<i>Separate facilities</i>		<i>>60 % of the day</i>	<i>20%–60 % of the day</i>	<i><20 % of the day</i>
<i>All categories</i>	0.6	0.7	2.9	4.2	20.4	29.0	46.4
Speech or language impairments	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.4	4.4	7.3	87.8
Visual impairments	0.7	7.1	6.7	14.5	17.3	20.1	48.1
Orthopedic impairments	2.0	0.3	3.7	6.0	26.2	21.3	46.6
Specific learning disabilities	0.2	0.2	0.6	1.0	16.0	39.3	43.8
Other health impairments	4.7	0.3	1.7	6.7	18.3	33.8	41.4
Hearing impairments	0.2	9.2	7.4	16.8	25.4	19.1	38.8
Traumatic brain injury	2.5	1.6	9.8	13.9	30.1	26.2	29.8
Emotional disturbance	1.6	1.6	13.1	16.3	33.5	23.3	25.0
Autism	0.5	1.8	14.6	16.9	52.1	12.7	18.3
Deaf-blindness	1.5	14.8	19.9	36.2	39.0	11.3	13.6
Mental retardation	0.4	0.6	5.2	6.2	51.7	29.6	12.6
Multiple disabilities	2.5	2.9	22.3	27.7	45.1	17.3	10.0

Note. 1998–99 school year. Due to rounding, not all categories may sum to 100 %.

Source. US DoED 2000; author's calculations.

health impairments” had more than a 40 % chance of being included, while those with “hearing impairments” were almost that well represented. Less than a third of those in the category “traumatic brain injury” and only a fourth of those labeled with “emotional disturbance” spent 80 % of their school day in general classrooms. Moreover, less than a fifth of students classified in the following categories experienced inclusion as defined here: “autism” (18 %), “deaf-blindness” (14 %), and “mental retardation” (13 %). Only 10 % of children and youth with “multiple disabilities” spent as much time in general

classrooms. Analyzing the other extreme along the continuum, we find that three of these last categories also had the highest rates among those children who did not attend general schools. However, the students in the “mental retardation” category were less likely to be segregated than those with “hearing impairments,” which is due, in part, to many deaf individuals choosing to be with peers with whom they can communicate and to ensure that American Sign Language (ASL) is transmitted intergenerationally (see Bragg 2001: 163–211 on long-term controversies surrounding “deaf” education). Students classified with “emotional disturbance,” “traumatic brain injury,” or “other health impairments” were also more likely than students identified with “mental retardation” to be segregated.

The presented data on learning opportunity structures reveals stark differences between categorical groups. These results reflect the extraordinary heterogeneity of this group even as they may challenge the conventional wisdom as to which categories of students are most often placed in particular educational settings. Categories with the highest segregation rates are “deaf-blindness,” “multiple disabilities,” “autism,” “hearing impairments,” and “emotional disturbance.” In contrast, the categories of students most likely to experience inclusive educational settings are “speech/language,” “visual,” and “orthopedic impairments,” followed by “specific learning disabilities” and “other health impairments.” Depending on the state of residence, the variance in learning opportunity structures found is similarly considerable, the topic addressed next.

Variance in Learning Opportunities by State

Despite all these categorical differences and their impact on educational experiences and probabilities of educational attainment, geography also affects the types of educational careers that students in special education will have: Regional variations in rates of placement in the educational environments along the continuum from segregation to inclusion are substantial. While some American states have forged ahead to implement inclusive schools, others have less substantially reformed their educational systems. Differences in educational structures, implementation of policies, and variable classification practices in the district, locality, region, and state in which a student attends school interact with his or her bodily, social, intellectual, or linguistic characteristics and abilities, which together influence learning. The degree to which national policies have affected state and local special education institutionalization requires enhanced attention to regional and local conditions.

As shown above, with regard to categorical differences in sorting into learning opportunity structures, the US is among those countries that maintains a continuum of educational environments for students classified as disabled. Another way to examine the states’ distributions along the continuum of learning opportunity structures is to rank the states according to their segregation and inclusion rates or an integration index constructed out of the proportions of students in the three settings offered within general school buildings (Table 5.2). The tremendous range in inclusion, from 26 % in Delaware to 81 % in Vermont with a national 50-state average of 50 % is matched by the

Table 5.2
Inclusion, Integration, Separation, and Segregation (in %), United States

<i>Inclusion</i> (students spending 80 % or more of school day in general classroom)		<i>Integration index</i> (inclusion + integration + separation)		<i>Segregation</i> (not in general school building)	
US (50 states)	50	US (50 states)	65	US (50 states)	4.0
Vermont	81	North Dakota	78	West Virginia	1.3
North Dakota	77	Vermont	78	Alaska	1.5
Colorado	70	Oregon	75	Wyoming	1.5
Oregon	70	Colorado	74	Hawaii	1.5
Massachusetts	68	Idaho	74	Kentucky	1.7
Idaho	65	Wyoming	72	Wisconsin	1.7
Minnesota	63	Massachusetts	71	New Mexico	1.8
Ohio	60	Kansas	71	Georgia	1.9
North Carolina	59	Minnesota	71	Texas	1.9
Kansas	59	South Dakota	70	Oklahoma	1.9
South Dakota	58	Kentucky	70	Washington	2.0
Indiana	56	Montana	70	South Carolina	2.2
Wyoming	55	Ohio	70	Indiana	2.2
Connecticut	55	Alaska	69	Alabama	2.5
Kentucky	54	North Carolina	69	Kansas	2.5
Michigan	54	Oklahoma	68	Montana	2.6
Montana	54	Washington	67	Mississippi	2.7
Florida	53	West Virginia	67	Florida	2.7
Nebraska	53	Maine	66	North Carolina	2.9
California	53	Alabama	66	Arizona	2.9
Maine	52	Florida	66	Nevada	2.9
New Hampshire	51	Iowa	66	Tennessee	2.9
Washington	50	Nebraska	66	South Dakota	3.0
Iowa	50	Connecticut	65	Louisiana	3.0
Oklahoma	50	Tennessee	65	North Dakota	3.3
Rhode Island	49	Indiana	65	Virginia	3.4
West Virginia	48	Arizona	65	Iowa	3.7
Alaska	48	Michigan	65	California	3.8
Tennessee	47	Nevada	64	Missouri	3.8
Arizona	46	Hawaii	64	Colorado	4.0
New Jersey	46	California	64	Oregon	4.5
Maryland	46	New Hampshire	64	Pennsylvania	4.9
Alabama	45	Arkansas	63	Idaho	5.2
Hawaii	45	Wisconsin	62	Arkansas	5.3

Continued on next page

Table 5.2 (continued)
Inclusion, Integration, Separation, and Segregation (in %), United States

<i>Inclusion</i> (students spending 80 % or more of school day in general classroom)		<i>Integration index</i> (inclusion + integration + separation)		<i>Segregation</i> (not in general school building)	
New York	43	Utah	62	Rhode Island	5.7
Utah	43	Missouri	61	Connecticut	5.7
Nevada	42	South Carolina	61	Minnesota	5.7
Virginia	41	Rhode Island	60	Utah	5.9
Arkansas	40	Delaware	60	Delaware	6.0
Wisconsin	39	Virginia	60	Massachusetts	6.1
South Carolina	39	New Jersey	60	New Hampshire	6.2
Pennsylvania	38	Georgia	59	Vermont	6.5
Louisiana	38	Maryland	59	Illinois	6.6
Georgia	37	Mississippi	59	Ohio	6.7
Illinois	37	Texas	59	Nebraska	6.8
New Mexico	36	Pennsylvania	57	Maine	7.0
Mississippi	35	New Mexico	56	Maryland	7.8
Missouri	35	Illinois	55	Michigan	8.2
Texas	28	New York	54	New York	9.0
Delaware	26	Louisiana	53	New Jersey	9.3

Note. Inclusion refers to the proportion of students (aged 6–21) receiving special education services under IDEA, Part B, that spent 80 % or more of the school day in general classrooms; the integration index combines the proportions of students in various settings within general school buildings; and segregation refers the proportion of students attending separate facilities, residential facilities, and in hospital or at home. District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, outlying areas, Bureau of Indian Affairs excluded.

Source. US DoED 2000; author’s calculations.

variance in segregation rates, from 1.3 % in West Virginia to 9.3 % in New Jersey with a national 50-state average of 4 % in the 1997–98 school year. Overall, low segregation rates in rural and Sun Belt states compare to the high prevalence of segregated provision in the older school systems of the Mid-Atlantic states and New England as well as in several Midwestern states. New Jersey has more than seven times as many students in segregated settings as West Virginia, while Alaska and Hawaii, along with Wyoming, segregated only 1.5 % of special education students.

Examining the states ranked on the basis of their rates of inclusion reveals that some of the states with the highest segregation rates are also those with the highest inclusion rates. Despite the contextual relational quality of classification shown above, the special education population is frequently bifurcated into two distinct groups: those that teachers and school administrators think it possible to support in general classrooms and

those that must receive schooling in separate facilities. The latter group is larger in states that institutionalized compulsory education, asylums, and special education programs earlier (Richardson & Parker 1993; Richardson 1999). Despite sharing this legacy, both Vermont, with four fifths of all students with individualized education plans spending more than 80 % of their school days in general classrooms, and North Dakota, with over three quarters, rank among the top five states in inclusion with Colorado, Oregon, and Massachusetts, all of which serve more than two thirds of the students with individualized education programs in regular classrooms for most of the school day. Further, state-level research into institutionalization processes is needed to fully understand these differences.

While the provided learning opportunity structures vary considerably from state to state, inclusion rates in the nation as a whole did increase over the 1990s by nearly 50 %. All other educational settings continued to decline through 2005, with the exception of separate facilities, which have remained stable. While it seems that there is a group of students that is more difficult to integrate into general schools, some states have shown that they can integrate almost all students. The variance in inclusion from 26 % to 81 % demonstrates that institutional and organizational changes could facilitate further increases in inclusion rates. Rejecting the often stated hypothesis that a larger group could more easily be included, the results shown here indicate that the size of the classified population does not have such a clear relationship with the distribution of learning opportunities provided for students in special education. Although these patterns need to be further disentangled, the evidence is sufficient to counter claims that special education expansion automatically brings about higher integration and inclusion rates. Acknowledging differences between disability categories is crucial, as the variance among these in learning opportunity structure participation ranges from nearly none to almost all. This variance leads to the question: What are the outputs—educational attainments—that result from these starkly varying rates of classification and participation in differing educational environments?

Educational Attainment

The importance of educational attainment for future employment and life chances is among the most secure findings in sociological and educational research. Yet, for special education, many questions have only recently begun to be answered: If special education students have higher dropout rates than the general population but also considerable age-out, how does this affect their education attainments? If particular categories have higher inclusion rates, are their probabilities of educational attainment correspondingly high, as the overall trend suggests? To address such questions, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), in 2003, surveyed youth with disabilities aged 15 to 19 years who had left high school since the 2000–01 school year, finding that whereas 28 % of school-leavers had not completed, 72 % had graduated or received some certificate of completion (Wagner et al. 2006). Furthermore, the study found no significant differences in completion based on gender or race or ethnicity,

Table 5.3
 Special Education Exiters by Disability Category, Learning Opportunity Structure,
 and Standard Diploma Graduation Rate (in %), United States

<i>Category</i>	<i>Standard diploma</i>	<i>Segregation</i>	<i>Separation</i>	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>
Visual impairments	75.1	14.5	17.3	20.1	48.1
Traumatic brain injury	70.3	13.9	30.1	26.2	29.8
Hearing impairments	69.4	16.8	25.4	19.1	38.8
Other health impairments	66.8	6.7	18.3	33.8	41.4
Speech or language impairments	64.8	0.4	4.4	7.3	87.8
Orthopedic impairments	63.4	6.0	26.2	21.3	46.6
Specific learning disabilities	63.3	1.0	16.0	39.3	43.8
<i>All disabilities</i>	<i>57.4</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>20.4</i>	<i>29.0</i>	<i>46.4</i>
Deaf-blindness	54.2	36.2	39.0	11.3	13.6
Autism	47.1	16.9	52.1	12.7	18.3
Multiple disabilities	47.0	27.7	45.1	17.3	10.0
Serious emotional disturbance	41.9	16.3	33.5	23.3	25.0
Mental retardation	41.7	6.2	51.7	29.6	12.6
Correlation (standard diploma)		-0.276	-0.749	0.096	0.623

Note. These percentages were calculated by dividing special education exiters 14 years of age or older who graduated with a standard diploma or dropped out by the number of students 14 years of age or older who are known to have left school (i. e., graduated with a standard diploma, received a certificate of completion, reached the maximum age for services, died, or dropped out). 1997–98 school year.

Source. US DoED 2001: I-4.

but youth with disabilities from higher income households were much more likely to complete high school.

In the national aggregate data, of all special education exiters 14 years of age or older, we find that 57% had attained a standard high-school diploma. Receiving a standard high-school diploma ranged from 42% for students in the category “mental retardation” to 75% for those with “visual impairments,” with other categories’ attainment rates evenly distributed between these points (see Table 5.3). Examining attainment rates in relation to learning opportunity structures indicates that those students who remain in general education for most of the school day had the highest attainment rates overall. Being separated or segregated is negatively correlated with graduating from high school with a standard diploma. Even if these educational settings also provide learning opportunities necessary for certification or for the return to general education, students who spent most of the school day in special classrooms or were segregated had the lowest probabilities of graduating with a standard diploma (Table 5.3).

As with allocation to learning opportunity structures, there is considerable categorical and state variance in educational attainment. Among individual categories, “speech” had the highest inclusion and attainment rates, “emotional disturbance” the lowest attainment, but “multiple disabilities” and “mental retardation” the lowest inclusion rates. Examining nonattainment, whereas in the category “emotional disturbance” half of the students dropped out, the average dropout rate in all disability categories was less than a third (28.9%), and students in the categories “autism,” “deaf-blindness,” and “visual impairments” were least likely to drop out, at less than 12% (US DoED 2001: I–4). Remarkably, the three largest categories, “specific learning disabilities,” “speech/language impairments,” and “mental retardation” had similar dropout rates of about a quarter of all students. Regarding dropout rates, it seems plausible that the overall trend to remain in school, until eligibility for services ends, also has an effect here, with the benefits of special schools’ smaller classes and targeted services inducing students, even in those in categories with higher dropout probabilities, to stay on. A limitation of this cross-sectional data is not knowing the probability of educational attainment of those students who do return to general education. Yet, given the 10% dropout rate from general education in the US, which is about half the rate for special education students as well as the considerably higher diploma graduation rates found in the NLT2 survey of youth with disabilities, the attainment rates should be higher than in this official data. However, regardless of which data set is used, attainment rates vary dramatically by state.

Variance in Educational Attainments by State

Even a brief overview of state variance in learning opportunity structures demonstrates how considerably life chances depend on how state educational systems were institutionalized. For example, despite the growth to ubiquity over the 20th century of psychometric tests and standardized national tests that govern access to college education, some states additionally require exit examinations of all students, such as New York’s Regents Examinations. In these states, lower proportions of special education students graduate than in those states without such requirements (US DoED 2001). Whereas in New Hampshire 43% of special education students dropped out, in California only 16% left school early. While in South Dakota 38% of students returned to general education in the 1997–98 school year, none did so in Washington state, where in the same year 70% of special education students graduated with a high-school diploma. By contrast, only 11% of Mississippians did so, but half did receive a high-school certificate. Certificates were not issued at all in seven states. These few figures manifest the remarkable variance in the opportunities available to children and youth, whether in general, special, or inclusive education.

Despite increasing emphasis—especially since the *School-to-Work Opportunities Act* (1994)—on transition services that assist disabled youth in finding opportunities for postsecondary education, occupational training, and employment, the dropout rate of students in special education remains twice as high as for those in general education. The proportion of special education exiters dropping out ranged from under

13% in California, Nevada, and Texas to over 40% in Louisiana, South Carolina, and New Hampshire (US DoED 2001). Thus, the risk of the least favorable school outcome differs between states by a factor of four. Whatever skills and resources an individual student has, these factors alone cannot explain the regional differences in the probability of dropping out, demonstrating instead the effects of state educational systems' institutional arrangements and selection processes on school success or failure. Disabled students' lower probabilities of dropout and higher probabilities of competitive employment after high school were correlated with having had access to vocational training in high school, yet these programs are offered much more often in general education (NLTS 2003). Promising practices integrate academic and vocational learning or provide expanded opportunities for work experience that include school supervised work and functionally oriented curricula that systematically connect academic, employability, and occupationally specific skills (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell 1997: 217).

State educational policies and school districts determine which certificates may be offered and the curricular requirements for these. If not all states have graduation exams, others do not offer a high-school certificate. According to the US Department of Education data (2001), the following states had *no* exiters leaving with a certificate: Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas; while 1% of exiters in Vermont and Illinois received a certificate. State graduation standards impact the distribution of opportunities among each cohort of students. Growing reliance on standardized testing suggests that the controversial issue of whether and to what extent—with what modifications and for which categorical groups—special education students are included in such assessments will become more controversial, not less. Emphasis on accountability, standards, and high-stakes testing has steadily increased, especially since the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001). Summarizing these destinations and their student attainment rates by disability category and state shows not only the extraordinary heterogeneity but also persistence in the special education outputs for residents of different states. Decades of federal policymaking and extensive litigation to ensure equity for students in special education have not yet fully succeeded in bringing about equality of opportunity or outputs. Finally, the question arises whether and how the students who are successful in attaining the necessary but not sufficient certificate for postsecondary education gain access to further vocational and educational opportunities.

Postsecondary Educational Options for Disabled Students

After the Second World War, college education gained dramatically in importance, driven in large measure by the *Servicemen's Readjustment Act* of 1944 (commonly known as the G.I. Bill) that enabled war veterans, many of whom had become disabled in action, to attain tertiary educational certificates by studying with the assistance of government stipends. But we have seen that students in special education are less likely to attain a high-school diploma needed to access higher education. However, despite a high-school dropout rate twice as high as for those students not in special education,

disabled students are attending colleges and universities in increasing numbers. Indeed, nearly one tenth of all college students in their first year self-reported a disability in 2000 (NSF 2003). This suggests that although the proportion of students with an officially recognized disability status declines from secondary to tertiary education, today's college students are much more likely to have experienced special education or to claim a disability status than students in the past.

Despite these advances, American comprehensive high-school leavers who had an individualized education plan face constraints on their choices in postsecondary education. According to the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 and 1994, disabled students were less likely to have gone on to postsecondary education within 2 years of graduation, much more likely to enroll in a 2-year institution, and were much less likely to enroll in a 4-year institution (Horn & Berkold 1999). This finding was elaborated in a nationally representative survey focusing specifically on disability in postsecondary education subsequently undertaken by the NCES. When only students that identified themselves to their institution were included, nearly half of the estimated 430,000 disabled students enrolled in 1996–97 or 1997–98—mostly at public 2-year or 4-year, medium- or large-sized institutions—identified themselves as having “learning disabilities,” followed by 59,650 students with “mobility or orthopedic impairments,” 49,570 students with “health impairments or problems,” and 33,260 students self-identified with “mental illness” or “emotional disturbance” (Lewis & Farris 1999). This study reported that a further 23,860 enrolled students had “hearing impairments,” and 18,650 students were “blind or visually impaired.” In distinct contrast to its status as the second-largest category in elementary and secondary education, only 4,020 students had self-reported “speech and language impairments.” Emphasizing the caution needed when interpreting data based on self-reports, the NLTSS2 found that among the surveyed postsecondary students with disabilities, around half do not consider themselves to have a disability, only 40% have informed their institutions about their disabilities, and about a third receive accommodations (Wagner et al. 2006: 14).

If we look at further outcomes, such as the occupational trajectories, disabled youth suffer high unemployment, underemployment, or find employment in sheltered workshops (Wagner & Blackorby 1996: 103 ff.). Among those surveyed in the NLTSS2, around two fifths were employed, a rate far below the more than three fifths of same-age out-of-school youth in the general population (Wagner et al. 2006: 8). Furthermore, very few interviewed youth reported that their employers knew about their disabilities and only a quarter of this small group receive workplace accommodations (Wagner et al. 2006: 9). The majority of disabled people are not even in the labor market due to such factors as low educational attainment, few training opportunities, attitudinal and structural barriers, and disincentives to work. Disablement affects socioeconomic and personal outcomes: There are important differences between youth with and without disabilities in terms of status reached after leaving high school, years that reflect social and environmental barriers (Wells, Sandefur & Hogan 2003: 826). Although many disabled individuals do successfully transition to adulthood, a large gap remains between their experiences and those of their nondisabled peers. More so than such factors as race

and ethnicity or family structure, disablement and disability category affect life chances (Wells, Sandefur & Hogan 2003).

Continuous legislative and judicial efforts, and pressure by the disability movement and advocates, entail advances in inclusive education which promises to raise educational attainments. Yet, path dependent developments in educational systems, standards-based reform and high-stakes testing, changes in special education finance, as well the continuing lack of (licensed) professionals entering and staying in the field will likewise affect the probabilities of school success and failure for the growing group of students in special and inclusive education.

The indicators shown here evidence the disparities in population size, in learning opportunities, and in educational attainment by disability category and state, indicating that barriers to inclusion exist on multiple levels. Answers to the questions of how and why the variance in these indicators persist cannot be fully answered by examining solely the federal level, despite the lasting impact of federal laws on state and local special education policies and praxis. Disability category, gender, racial and ethnic, income, and regional disparities analyzed above underscore how far removed social realities remain not only from the rhetoric and discourses of the ideals of equality and inclusion but even from the laws and more than a thousand court decisions relating to special education that have mandated integration since 1975 or demanded more inclusive education. In conjunction with individual skills, needs, and resources and school-specific teaching and learning, the variable institutionalization of special education in the US will continue to determine the life chances of disabled students. As we turn to the case of Germany, with its elaborate system of special schools, it is useful to keep in mind the barriers to and facilitators of inclusive education in the US.

The Development of Special Education in Germany

In Germany over the 20th century, one of the world's most differentiated special educational systems developed, with many more types of special schools than exist in other countries. Why have integrative alternatives to segregated special schooling not (yet) succeeded, although these other models have always had advocates? Common strands of argument about the failure of historical alternatives to special schooling in Germany include professionalization, organizational, and political economy arguments (Bleidick & Rath 1987: 49). The support school (*Hilfsschule*) teachers, increasingly organized in their own professional association, successfully resisted integration attempts. Those in charge of the general school system, despite its increasing organizational differentiation, refused to accept responsibility for disabled and disadvantaged children, preferring to select and defer such learners to special schools. Advocates of the *Hilfsschule* won out over advocates of special classes within general schools. A school type was established that produced a group of low-wage workers to enter the workforce when this was required by business cycles. Such views indicate the normative commitments and social and political forces that built the *Hilfsschule*, which became a powerful model for all other special schools in Germany. Special education has been considerably shaped by the ideological foundations, historical antecedents, and political contexts of a vertically differentiated class-based general educational system.

From the beginning, the legitimacy of special education derived from the separateness of the special school sector. Traditionally, special educators have justified this organizational autonomy from general schools with three key arguments: that general schools cannot adequately serve certain children; that these children require the support of special schools; and that, to ensure the efficacy of this support, the special school must be independent (Hänsel 2003: 593, 2005). Importantly, a similar logic undergirds the structures of the general school sector. Instead of a comprehensive secondary school as in the United States, in Germany, a range of hierarchically ordered school types exists to serve students, grouped according to varying abilities as well as social background. Thus, the development of special and inclusive education reflects larger social and political conflicts over schooling, the legacy of attitudes about dis/ability and treatment of disabled people, and emergent educational disciplines, professions, and specialties. This chapter traces the development of special schools and the process of student disability's institutionalization in Germany, focusing especially on the phases since the critical junctures of the Second World War, the influential recommendations of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz* [KMK]), and the reunification of the two Germanies.¹

After the Second World War, European countries embraced global models of citizenship and personhood and dramatically expanded their educational systems. Yet, while

some nations transformed their systems to reflect democratic ideals through comprehensive school reform, West Germany, after much struggle, hesitated (Leschinsky & Mayer 1999a). Not only did the introduction of comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschulen*) falter; other sectors of the educational system similarly resisted integrative initiatives. After both World Wars, special education, and disability-related organizations more generally, were devastated. The agonizing gradual rebuilding process undermined reform efforts in education inspired by international and progressive domestic models—to the point of restoration (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a: 358 f.). This continuity, recalling the compulsory schooling law of the German Reich (*Reichsschulpflichtgesetz*) and other educational statutes of earlier regimes that viewed special schooling as separate, settled the more than century-old debate of segregation and integration definitively—in favor of segregation. After the nadir of National Socialism, the public supported the building of an elaborate special school system, according to the suggestions and concepts of the special education profession, partially as reparations for the devastating treatment disabled people had suffered (Preuss-Lausitz 2001: 210). Special education was institutionalized, as it had been before the Second World War, in segregated facilities as the lowest tiers in a differentiated educational system.

Continuity in the overall logic and ideals of German schooling—namely, natural talent, homogeneity, appropriateness, selection, and segregation—hindered reformist policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and parents to succeed in giving its antitheses room to prove themselves as viable alternatives: developmental dynamism, heterogeneity, high expectations for all, cooperation, and inclusion. As this discussion emphasizes more continuity than change, it is not the story of rapid progression toward inclusive education in every public school. Quite the contrary, it chronicles considerable hesitance or outright resistance to change. Although a vocal group of parents and disability movement advocates has succeeded in some states/*Länder* to bring about significant changes to school laws and to support pilot integration projects in general neighborhood schools, the German (special) educational system exhibits considerable institutional inertia to this day. The following historical sketch focuses on the ideas, interests, and institutions that constructed, maintain, and defend a notably stable unique pathway, a *Sonderweg*. Ironically, the German segregating school system that, at the end of the 19th century, served as an especially caring supportive model of special education for other nations is now considered antiquated, ineffective, socially undesirable, and, not least, expensive compared to its outputs (Preuss-Lausitz 1999: 45).

From Asylums to Separate Special Schools

Expanding “Educability” Before 1900

Germany was a pioneer in special education, with the history of special education spanning more than two centuries. Asylums had gradually expanded their responsibility for children deemed disabled vis-à-vis families and communities. Out of early attempts to educate, new teaching occupations sprang which shaped special schools that increas-

ingly challenged the asylums, relying on broadening notions of “educability” (Möckel 2001b: 9 ff; Tenorth 2001) that these professions themselves generated, often with the support of, but sometimes in resistance to, psychology and medicine. Special education began in earnest in church or private philanthropic asylums with attached schools or homes for children with visual impairments and those who were deaf and did not speak. Within Europe, such programs in Germany joined similar efforts in France at the forefront (Möckel 1988: 40 f.). Yet, public special classes and schools were not established to a notable degree until the late 1800s and early 1900s, when disabled children began to be included in Germany’s regional compulsory schooling laws. It was through this broadening of public education’s mandate that children were evaluated and classified in the disability categories of the day. By including these children in compulsory school laws, the state acknowledged its own responsibilities to build schools and train, hire, and pay teachers also for newly recognized groups of children (Möckel 2001a: 41). Early intervention, by civil servant educators, was quickly added to public education’s responsibilities for some groups of children deemed at risk.

The first German special education class, auxiliary to general instruction, was founded in Halle in 1859, followed by classes offered in Chemnitz (1860) and Dresden (1867). Many German cities began to establish special classes, such that 23 cities had one or more by 1891. Two years later, 110 classes in 32 cities registered a total of 2,290 students, and by the turn of the century, special education was expanding even more quickly (Maennel 1907: 22; Dannemann 1911: 732–752). Thus, not the independent special school, but rather the special class within general schools was the dominant organizational form of special education; however, this relationship would reverse as the 20th century proceeded.

Resistance to the segregation of children whom teachers find (more) difficult to teach is no recent phenomenon. In fact, it has been a continuous feature of the German (special) educational landscape from the beginning (Willand 1989); however, it has remained a minority stance. How should students considered difficult, disadvantaged, or disabled participate in general education? Often ardent advocates of integrating these children and youth in neighborhood schools for all have repeatedly countered the supporters of separate organizations. If some parents of disabled children have attempted to reduce their children’s segregation and separation from their peers through integration and inclusive education, others have preferred provision in special schools. Though often highly contentious, reform movements did succeed in gradually exchanging disabled children and youth’s institutionalization in asylums with education and training in special schools or separate classes in general schools (Möckel 1988). These new types of schooling were lauded as progressive, compared to the custodial nature of the asylums, which were far removed from education. Yet, which type of educational organization should replace them has been a lasting source of conflict.

New organizational forms in the schools, created alongside the developing theory and praxis of a “therapeutic” or “special” pedagogy (*Heil-/Sonderpädagogik*), derived from a *Weltanschauung* that was clearly determined by notions of selection and efficiency—not one primarily interested in individuals’ education and human development for its own sake, but rather in ensuring public health and economic prosperity (Speck 2001: 25).

The concept of educability gradually broadened. The growing educational rights of poor children and those with perceived impairments were increasingly acknowledged, generating further special education institutionalization. The control of this population by asylums was challenged and reconfigured by the addition of special schools. These organizations had contrasting missions and distinct professional interests. However, the roles and training of educators have changed dramatically. Their shifting cooperation and collaboration with other disciplines has had significant consequences for the school experiences and life chances of children participating in special education programs.

Competing Organizations Before 1945

For a few decades before and after the *fin-de-siècle*, several types of special education organizations competed: The aforementioned residential asylums with the primary charge of caring for blind and deaf-mute individuals, special classes or schools for persons with sensory impairments, and the *Hilfsschulen*, which derived from the asylum for mentally disabled persons, were for those children who were considered “weakly gifted.” The latter became the place where children with a variety of learning and behavior difficulties and other impairments were sent for schooling, in particular to reduce the demands on schoolteachers in other school forms. Thus, the establishment of the *Hilfsschule* represents an important precedent for the organizational forms that characterize German primary and secondary education up to the present day: Heterogeneous classes with students of diverse ability levels are not tolerated. The educational system’s answer to this “problem” is selection into independent school types based on performance and behavioral norms (Liebermeister & Hochhuth 1999: 20 f.). At this time, state-sponsored educational opportunities for children with significant mental or physical impairments were still nearly nonexistent. Families remained the main source of support and care for these children. Those asylums that did exist were controlled by the discipline of medicine, with education not central to their mission; therefore, their organizational goal was to treat or heal, not to educate (Möckel 1988: 89).

Schools were founded with the conviction that focusing specifically on particular categories of children would be most efficient in providing support. Their hope was that targeted assistance might compensate learning difficulties such that some of these students could return to general schools. However, this has remained a myth, since such permeability has not been prevalent in Germany, with only a tiny fraction ever returning full-time to general education. By 1933, most cities with more than 20,000 persons no longer had only a special class, but an actual *Hilfsschule* (Schomburg 1963: 97). There were successful instances of helping children learn in special schools, yet even the most extensive efforts of highly motivated teachers could not stop the early *Hilfsschulen* and similar organizations from essentially collecting the most disadvantaged children, whose multitude of needs could hardly be compensated with meager resources available in the overcrowded learning environments. One celebrated exception portrayed by Sieglind Ellger-Rüttgardt (1997b) was the *Hilfsschule* (and later university) teacher Frieda Stoppenbrinck-Buchholz, who called the *Hilfsschule* a stopgap measure. She

emphasized school organizational and social factors as the primary causes for children's failure in general schools, that achievement is relative and talents diverse, and that it was unfair to make any child suffer the stigma of attending a *Hilfsschule* because these children are not fundamentally different (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997b: 26–48, 77 ff.). However, this was a minority position developed in conjunction with progressive school reformers.

Another division of children deemed significant at the time included the difference between those “weakly gifted” children living in the countryside versus those dwelling in cities (Dannemann 1911: 1407–1418). Reform movements focused on special school organizations offering support in cities, but there was less development in villages and small cities, as these authors maintained that only cities had the population density necessary to sufficiently fill special schools. Thus, in the countryside, special education was also institutionalized in classes within general schools or in asylums. Often, little more than extra after-school tutoring (*Nachhilfeunterricht*), these special education programs were often justified as being a wise long-term investment. To educate these youth would develop their self-sufficiency, which would lead to doubled savings: for the individual and for the community, which could lessen its support for these individuals through payments of funds for the poor (Maennel 1907: 121). In the countryside, the use of special classes within the public elementary school (*Volksschule*) was facilitated by lower population densities, a factor that continues to be analyzed as one of the most important variables in explaining geographic differences in segregation/integration rates in Europe (Meijer 1998: 162 ff.).

Considerably expanding in both responsibility and organizational complexity, special education marked a change in German society's treatment of those children that the emergent professions chose to classify. Rejecting pessimistic views, special educators pursued the goals of preparing their students for better lives, as they showed that these children could learn and become citizens. They may also have believed in the principle that educational organizations that separate and segregate could provide the necessary conditions and skills for *later* integration into society, despite the fact that segregation and separation oppose community integration or social inclusion. Whatever its ideological *raison d'être*, special education succeeded in establishing a boundary between special and general education and in legitimating its professional practices through these special schools and asylums.

At the confluence of additional support, efficiency considerations, and professional interests, the *Hilfsschule* was a significant subsidiary school form to existing educational organizations. Not only did it further differentiate and stabilize the multitiered general school system—public elementary school, intermediate secondary school, upper secondary school (*Volksschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium*)—but it also referred to the tradition of the older “therapeutic” asylums. These emergent organizations aimed to be *schools* for children found to have learning difficulties, for whom, several generations earlier, the first residential institutions had, with great difficulty, been established. If the first hundred years of “therapeutic or healing pedagogy” represented increased access to public schooling for children who before had been considered uneducable, the *Hilfsschule* admitted children who already attended or could attend school. They offered children

a different type of schooling, seen as “appropriate” or “less demanding,” within the existing school system. *Hilfsschulen* served to relieve teachers and administrators of the other school types; especially the *Volksschule*.

However, this new type of school was not welcomed wholeheartedly. Two sources of resistance—those who advocated integrative schools and those with vested interests in the older residential school and asylums, in which medicine and psychology were influential—attempted to block the expansion of the *Hilfsschule* (Möckel 2001b: 85 ff.) But the *Hilfsschule* shared advantages of the other school types, including the lower costs of half-day instruction and neighborhood location. Moreover, it would be an institution controlled by educators, not the experts of other professions. Outright conflict between the old and new organizations of special education lasted decades, facilitating the founding of the Association of German Support School Teachers (*Verband Deutscher Hilfsschullehrer* [VdHD]) in 1898. This professional Association’s goals were to “further the recognition of the *Hilfsschule* as a public, state compulsory school, to grant the new school type a special construction, and to undertake its diffusion in all German lands” (Myschker 1969: 208). It succeeded, especially in serving the interests of its members, shutting out alternative pedagogical concepts, and institutionalizing segregated schools, which from then on would be defended by the “illusion of necessity” (Rohr & Weiser 2002: 97). Once again, the process of professional specialization and differentiation led to a new school type that promised to contain systemic school failure. Organizations, originally conceived to teach children with hearing and visual impairments, now addressed a far larger group of children—those students’ schoolteachers found it challenging to successfully teach. In fact, increasingly normed achievement criteria required the *Volksschulen* to select ever more students to be transferred to other schools if they were to meet the standards of their achievement profile, demanded by the industrializing nation-state that had initially implemented compulsory schooling (Hofsäss 1993: 35 f.).

In providing the disciplinary arguments for a separate, not simply a reduced, curriculum for children classified as “weakly gifted” as well as the procedural processes and documentation only its members were trained to interpret, the VdHD secured its professional license to judge students through official bases of selection to special schools at the same time that it ensured more special schools would be built. Within a decade of its founding, the VdHD had also achieved a wage scale higher than that the *Volksschule* teachers enjoyed (Myschker 1969: 168 f.). Despite the Association’s attempts to have the *Hilfsschulen* join the ranks of the other special schools in salary and prestige, school authorities refused this on the grounds that the schools for children with sensory impairments had a clearly defined area of expertise (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997b: 60), while the boundary between “normal schools” and *Hilfsschulen* was more fluid. But, as Georg Feuser (1995: 135 ff.) makes clear, the processes of selection and segregation pioneered by special educators represent the critical historical development for the future institutionalization of special school systems.

The *Hilfsschule* simultaneously achieved its independence and its isolation in the Weimar Republic. In gaining official status, the *Hilfsschule* became disciplinarily and administratively responsible, visible in specialized teacher training courses that began to

include knowledge about medical and psychological assessments, and developed diagnostic methods to determine the ability levels of weaker students in public elementary schools (see Hofsäss 1993: 65 f.). Arguably, that the most important educational policy event during the short-lived Weimar Republic was the German Reich School Conference (*Reichsschulkonferenz*) in 1920, during which the decision was made to establish a democratic primary school in which *all* children would be schooled together (Heyer 2000). Yet, the new law hardly mentioned disabled children. Increasing recognition of the right and the duty of disabled children to participate in compulsory schooling was neither immediate nor sought everywhere. In fact, only after 1945 did the *Länder* include the rights of disabled children in general school laws, which determined the developmental path of the special school sector (Möckel 1988: 236). If in 1920 the tasks and foci of each school type were decided, the most important change was primary schooling with a duration of 4 years, instituted throughout the country. However, children were still sorted into different secondary school types at the end of that short period.

Traditional interests, in favor of early selection and placement decisions made during primary school, succeeded in hindering the breakthrough of a comprehensive unified school concept. Reformers who attempted to counter the early selection-oriented organization of schooling, such as Peter Petersen with his *Jena-Plan-Schule* or Maria Montessori with her pedagogic concepts, which spread quickly from Italy to the German-speaking countries, were not successful. Instead, the *Hilfsschule*, representing the opposite of reform pedagogy, developed (Preuss-Lausitz 2000: 81 ff.). As Thomas Hofsäss (1993: 39–55) has shown, the VdHD played the central political, administrative, and disciplinary roles in determining the bureaucratic procedures leading to transfer from a public elementary to a special school: (1) achievement test, (2) medical examination, (3) psychological evaluation, (4) observation, (5) survey of environment and personal history, and, when necessary if the first criteria were not clear, (6) special schooling for a trial period. While medicine and psychology still legitimated transfers out of general education, their concepts and procedures were integrated into or supplanted as special educators took over such key decision making.

During National Socialism (1933–1945), the *Hilfsschule* served at least three main functions. As an achievement-oriented school, it was to unburden the *Volksschule* so that it could succeed in producing qualified workers; it was (ab)used as a collection point for those ineducable and educable students who were to be further differentiated according to eugenic (“race-biological”) policies; and it was charged with producing economically viable workers (Hofsäss 1993: 68) or provide enlisted men to serve in the military (Poore 2007: 84). Centralized policymaking and rapid further institutionalization of *Hilfsschulen* transformed the classification process and selection mechanisms literally into a matter of life and death. The National Socialist regime implemented these selection policies not only as schooling and placement decisions but also as control mechanisms of human and social reproduction. Based on Weimar precedents and North American (Californian) exemplars, the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Progeny of 14 July 1933 sanctioned compulsory sterilization of people with supposedly “hereditary” conditions, such as blindness, deafness, epilepsy, chronic alcoholism, and feeble-mindedness, the last of which was easily and continuously extended to anyone

the regime regarded as socially deviant, including gays and lesbians, Roma and Sinti, and others (Plant 1986: 183; Burleigh 1997: 130 ff., 160 f.). Hereditary Health Courts (*Erb- und Gesundheitsgerichte*), which financially rewarded public health professionals and asylum workers for reporting people who might fall within the purview of the Law, ordered the sterilization of an estimated 320,000 to 350,000 people between 1933 and 1945 (Burleigh 1997: 161). Many other Western industrialized countries, such as the US and Sweden, also implemented such policies, but nowhere else were as many people the victims of this tragic precursor and concomitant policy to the extermination of “lives unworthy of life” (*lebensunwertes Leben*)—Hitler’s first and last victims. National Socialist ideology obliterated egalitarian and democratic ideals as its eugenic and euthanasia programs were touted in propaganda, and cultural representations of disability served to encourage severe discrimination against disabled persons, or their murder, often committed by those who were originally trained to provide care. Yet the War increased the prevalence of people with impairments, not only among civilians, but especially soldiers injured in battle returned to communities throughout a defeated country in need of physical and psychological rehabilitation (see Poore 2007: 67–138).

The Postwar Development of the Special School System

The Third Reich left a fierce bequest for disabled people and for special education more specifically. If the situation in schooling generally was dire, the condition of special education was catastrophic. Not only had many of the children been killed but also many teachers had perished. Teacher training programs had been closed. With so much of the country’s infrastructure destroyed, even the fundamentals of instruction were missing, from school buildings to books. Special schools were not quickly reestablished and, when they were, much depended on local infrastructure and resources. As in other domains, special education attempted to continue traditions developed during Germany’s first democracy, making the Weimar Republic’s educational structures a crucial model for the new Federal Republic. With some measure of pride, special educators looked back on developments and achievements of the era before the National Socialist regime, when Germany was a leading nation in science and education. Yet the lack of self-critical and open dealings with the traumatic legacy of Hitler’s regime and its tabooization, in particular for a profession and a discipline whose “charges” (today: clients) were the first group killed in the Holocaust, led to many continuities in ideology and praxis (Feuser 1995: 151 ff.; Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a, 1997c).

After 1945, all *Länder* did pass laws that mandated the compulsory schooling of disabled children; however, until the early 1970s, there were still some *Länder* in which children with physical or mental impairments were excluded from these laws. Many of these children and youth only began to receive some form of public education in the early 1980s, when the overall student population declined and many general schools kept children they would otherwise have transferred to special schools. This historical pattern emphasizes that organizational supply has a crucial impact on the range of learning opportunities available to the entire school-age population.

Not only the failure to take the necessary steps toward a comprehensive school system foreclosed the opportunities to develop integration but also the lack of interest in special education's history that signaled a restorative undemocratic "therapeutic pedagogy" was further exacerbated by similar insularity as German postwar special education focused on its particularity and independence (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a: 358 f.). As mentioned earlier, the German Reich School Conference (*Reichsschulkonferenz*) of 1920 may well be interpreted as the most important educational discussion of the 20th century also for special education because, although disabled children were not specifically addressed, the *Hilfsschule* was *not* seen as contradicting its ideal of a unified school "for all children in the community" expressed in Article 146 of the Weimar Constitution (Muth 1986: 15 f., 23). The special school system that would reach the apex of its differentiation in the 1960s represented the realization of models from the 1920s that in other countries were considered long outdated by the end of the Second World War (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a: 359). Attempts at education reform and increased cooperation between general and special education as well as the import of tested innovations from other countries were largely ignored:

The denial of the National Socialist era and thus of one's own history and lacking internationality continued to determine developments until the beginning of the 1970s ... in special education, whose 'Western integration' occurred later than in general education, and only when past and current developments were questioned as the reform movement looked to other countries (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a: 359).

Americans may have been an important presence in postwar Germany, but their attempts to support implementation of a comprehensive secondary school form largely failed. Indeed, the Western Allies' goal of structural transformation in education failed because these reform efforts were to be advanced by administrative fiat via military governments—against the teaching profession's authority and against political and parental resistance (Dierkes 2003).

The restoration of special education in West Germany, lasting until the 1960s and including the adoption or continued validity of laws from the Weimar Republic and even the Third Reich, is manifested in the independence of special education organizations and in the emphasis of the principles of selection and "natural talent." The KMK's 1960 expert report on the organization of the special school system was a critical juncture for these ideals and organizational attempts at differentiation and independence. In an era of special school expansion and differentiation, driven in large measure by teachers wanting upward mobility, the quantitative development and institutional independence of the *Hilfsschule* was unquestioned—and unquestionable (Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997b: 166). In West Germany, the *Länder* organized the special school system based on impairment and disability categories, with medical and psychological models developed to count, treat, and distribute students (see Chapter 4). Associations of parents and other not-for-profit organizations successfully battled for provision for their disabled children (often in special schools), but parental rights in choosing their children's schools and educational pathways remained limited by *Länder* laws, with educational administrations blocking innovations (Schnell 2003: 27). In East Germany, children classified disabled were included in its compulsory schooling law (*Schulpflichtgesetz*) of December

1950, with the development of segregated special schools mandated by law a year and a half later. In West Germany, social interest groups, such as the parents for integration and the “cripple movement” (*Krüppelbewegung*), have ensured continuous public attention to issues of integration and fought against the “natural” selection of disabled children outside and within the educational system since the early 1970s (Roebke, Hüwe & Rosenberger 2000; Preuss-Lausitz 2001: 210 ff.). Integration attempts in education can be found in the comprehensive school and the second phase of secondary schooling as well as regarding children of non-German descent and disabled children—and all are fundamentally based on democratic ideals and consciousness (Muth 1986: 13 ff.). The last movement, toward school integration and inclusive education of disabled children, grew from 1970 through the cooperation of parents, scientists, general and special educators and their associations, school administrators, and political decision makers (Schnell 2003: 30 ff.).

Cultural Sovereignty: *Länder* Control of Educational Systems

Undergirded by constitutional and state traditions and enshrined in the German Constitution or *Basic Law* (*Grundgesetz* [GG]) since 1949, German federalism fundamentally guarantees the principle of cultural sovereignty (*Kulturhoheit*) of the *Länder* in educational and cultural matters, which maintain long-existing regional differences. Supported by federalist principles reaching back before the founding of the German Reich in 1871 and the first democratic state, the Weimar Republic (1919–1933), the *Länder* (re)constituted before the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1949, reassumed primarily responsibility for science and culture and became the highest educational authorities. Not only did the *Basic Law* carry forward these constitutional traditions within a democratic state but it also marked a purposeful deliberate break with the forced centralization of the National Socialist state.

In (western) Germany, state competencies have been stronger in education and culture than in most other arenas of public life. As a consequence, there are different developmental paths, definitions, and organizational forms, all subject to change when state/*Land* (and local authorities [*Kommunen*]) enact education policies or support initiatives. Educational reforms can be major innovations or minor steps, but it is often unclear which is which, depending largely on existing regional conditions, political perspectives, and timespans in question. When analyzing developments in German schooling, it is crucial to investigate not only the policies of national government but also those of the 16 individual *Länder* that constitute the FRG, including the 5 new states that, in 1990, brought their historical legacies (altered by 40 years of Communist regime) into a reunified Germany. If Germany and the US have federal political systems, important differences remain. The German constitutional state regulates the division of national and *Länder* competencies, requiring coordination across and within the two levels, whereas the US has a clearer separation between national and state competencies and the American system of checks and balances demands that conflicts within the legislative branch and between executive and legislative branches be solved through

extended, often partisan and contentious, negotiation leading to eventual compromise (Glaeßner 1999: 33 ff.). Called “the cooperative state” for its particular type of consensual multilevel governance, Germany has established several significant institutions that cooperate in forging agreements in education and cultural policies and assist in coordinating implementation, while retaining self-administration and independence from federal tutelage. Foremost among these in education and culture is the Conference of Culture Ministers (KMK), founded in 1948. The KMK laid the foundation for several framework agreements between the *Länder*, coordinating standardization as well as organizational and curricular reforms at all levels of education, beginning with the *Düsseldorfer Agreement* in 1955 (Friedeburg 1989; KMK 2001b).

At the lowest governmental level, local authorities (*Kommunen*) provide education, from kindergartens and school buildings to transport services for schoolchildren. Similar to the US, where real-estate taxation commonly funds local schools, local taxation in Germany can have significant impact on available funding, the quality of school provision, and class sizes, alongside the influence of a district’s social composition. However, a major difference is that teachers’ salaries are paid by the *Land*, along with significant resource (re)distribution between the German *Länder*. Local authorities, designated “school maintaining bodies” (*Schulträger*), are responsible not only for school construction but also for their maintenance and financing. Exceptions include most special schools when their catchment area is larger than one locality (KMK 2001b: 49), or Bavaria where the *Land* maintains all public schools, but where private schools play a more important role than elsewhere, especially in special education (Avenarius et al. 2003: Table A3/3). Sending students classified as having special educational needs out of the district or locality represents an opportunity to transfer often substantial costs. Especially for that reason, the actual costs of segregated special schooling are usually underestimated (Preuss-Lausitz 2002). Given the *Basic Law*’s delegation of educational prerogatives to the *Länder* and localities, the “national” educational landscape is a rather uneven territory reflecting contrasting or even conflicting regional policies and developments. Nevertheless, as demonstrated below, the interregional coordinating bodies in educational planning and national interest groups can have considerable impact, especially at the genesis of particular institutional arrangements, such as the diffusion and differentiation of the independent special school system.

Policies Differentiating the Special School System

Building Differentiated Special School Systems

As early as 1949, teachers from *Hilfsschulen* reorganized under the broadened umbrella of the Association of German Special Schools (as of 1955 called *Verband Deutscher Sonderschulen* [VDS]), which began to lobby government officials, and Ministers of Culture in particular. In 1954, the association sent *Länder* educational ministers its white paper (*Denkschrift zu einem Gesetz über das heilpädagogische Sonderschulwesen*) that clearly delineated the school types and clarified the legal basis of the special school

system. Although the original document included only several special school types, leaders and members in the VDS subsequently conceptualized more than a dozen category-based schools.

The KMK and the German Committee for the Educational System (*Ausschuss für das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen*, 1953–1965) as well as its successor the German Education Council (*Deutscher Bildungsrat*),² until 1975, were established to clarify and help resolve substantive issues of comparability and unity among West Germany's 12 *Länder*, but they did not address special education in equal measure, to the point of contradiction. The KMK school committee's 1960 recommendation mentioned the joint instruction (*gemeinsamer Unterricht*) of disabled and nondisabled children only twice because the necessity of special schools was taken for granted. It called for the following 12 types of special education facilities:

- school for blind students (*Blindenschule*)
- school for visually impaired students (*Sehbehindertenschule*)
- school for deaf students (*Gehörlosenschule*)
- school for hearing impaired students (*Schwerhörigenschule*)
- school for speech therapy (*Sprachheilschule*)
- schooling in hospital or at home (*Krankenhauschule, Hausunterricht*)
- support school (*Hilfsschule*)
- school for monitoring students (*Beobachtungsschule*)
- school for behaviorally difficult students (*Erziehungsschwierigenschule*)
- school in youth penal system (*Schule im Jugendstrafvollzug*)
- special school for vocational education (*Sonderberufsschule*)
- therapeutic education living community (*Heilpädagogischer Lebenskreis*)

Germany's highly differentiated system of school types represents a clear victory for the VDS, and a clear defeat for integrative initiatives. Additionally, Jakob Muth (1986: 23) argued that the segregated special school system's differentiation was the source of the unified primary school's deterioration into a selective talent-oriented school—through the mechanisms of school readiness tests, retention, and transfer to a special school. Germany's failure to fully implement reform in secondary education via the comprehensive school model (Leschinsky & Mayer 1999b: 13 ff.), unlike the successful structural shift from class-based school types to a comprehensive school in Scandinavia (see Erikson & Jonsson 1996; Jonsson 1999 on Sweden), signaled the victory of conservative opinion and those who hoped to return to the haloed days of the well-educated bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürgertum*; Lenhardt 2002). The West German battle over the comprehensive school aimed to replace the traditional class-based sponsored-mobility system (Turner 1960), but was hindered by higher status groups using party politics (unlike the direct lobbying and protests favored by US social movements). This barrier to reform was so effective that, when the two Germanies reunified in 1990, the East German comprehensive school system was substantially dismantled and vertically differentiated, seeking legitimation through copying the Western system. Some *Länder* joined lower secondary schools (*Hauptschulen*) and intermediate secondary schools

(*Realschulen*) into what are variously called middle schools (*Mittelschulen*), secondary schools (*Sekundarschulen*), and regular schools (*Regelschulen*)—or emphasized the integrative comprehensive schools (Baumert, Watermann & Schümer 2003: 70 ff.). Solely Brandenburg anchored the primacy of inclusive education over the special schools in its school law, building largely on the experiences and expertise of inclusive education projects in neighboring Berlin. Although the rising criticism of the vertically differentiated school system can be seen simultaneously in proponents' arguments for comprehensive schools and inclusive education, advocates of the former hesitated to reach out to include those children who would have profited most from such "compensation" (Preuss-Lausitz 2000: 86 f.). Later, attention shifted to cooperation between primary and special schools, since most children attending special schools were (and still are) transferred from primary school at the transition to secondary schooling.

Reform Proposals in the 1970s

The discussion of arguments for and against increasing integration was enlivened by recommendations of the German Education Council in the early 1970s that pointed to the dangers of segregation. The Education Council called for the provision of the necessary supports for children with special educational needs with the least possible institutional segregation and for flexibility between school types (Deutscher Bildungsrat 1973; Hüfner et al. 1986; Friedeburg 1989: 281 ff. on individual *Länder*). Similarly, the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Funding (*Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung* [BLK]) in 1973 also spoke out for close collaboration between special and general schools and for the increasing presence of special education in general schools.

Although there have been special education organizations in German territory for nearly two centuries, these were not mentioned once in the German Education Council's 1970 structural reform plan for the educational system (Rosenberger 1998: 14). A year before, however, the school integration of disabled children had been demanded as part of the comprehensive school debate on equal opportunities (Preuss-Lausitz 1998a: 12). In a section of the 1972 KMK recommendation on the relationship between special and comprehensive schools (KMK 1972: 20 f.), the authors elaborately justified their hesitance, arguing that: (1) both the educational discussion and praxis were not sufficiently advanced to present general statements on the matter; (2) research would be necessary to test whether the usual reasons given for the necessity of individual special school types—general schools did not serve disabled students sufficiently well, thus special schools were founded with their own missions, methods, and specially trained teachers—will be absolved by the comprehensive school; (3) although comprehensive schools aim to differentiate and individualize by replacing inflexible school forms and classroom groupings, the degree of possible integration will depend on the category and the prevalence of disability and the "specialness" of the assistance needed; and (4) because the comprehensive school must solve several problems to realize its goals, and its ultimate form has not yet been determined, it would be unrealistic to recommend

a course of action at this time. Taken together, these lines of thought indicate best the boundary drawn to maintain the dichotomy between disability and ability as between general and special education that limit individualization and differentiation. But why did the KMK refuse to make a recommendation on special education, well within its purview? While it does suggest a shift away from the taken-for-grantedness of earlier documents, it did not counteract the invisibility of special schools and students, still manifest today in the marginal position of special education in public discourse and in educational research.

Despite the Education Council's recommendation to systematically expand the common schooling of all children in general schools, not all *Länder* encouraged or even permitted school integration or inclusive education. Such models were tested in several continuously scientifically evaluated pilot projects over the next two decades throughout the FRG. However, *Länder* school laws and the many vested interests in the independent special school system posed and still pose considerable barriers to such reforms.

Beginning in the 1970s, the focus of special education extended to include "prevention" of student disabilities very early in the life course. This new area of special education brought the first special educators into general schools. The Education Council suggested in 1973 that the German *Länder* should attempt as much inclusive teaching of disabled and nondisabled children as possible. Furthermore, special schools would no longer be the sole location for education, teaching, and special support for disabled children. Pedagogical support should be a combined task of the special and general schools. The "cooperative school center" (*kooperatives Schulzentrum*) was designed to allow, even encourage, variable organizational forms to meet children's special educational needs.

In fact, the KMK attempted to establish a flexible system of support regulations to counter the segregationist tendencies of general schools, to make joint learning opportunities possible, and to address individual strengths and needs of disabled youth. The KMK recommended the transfer of some responsibility to general schools, which had previously resisted this due to the existence of the highly differentiated and well-funded special schools as well as their strengthened position within the educational system. The KMK foresaw a flexible system of support programs for the education of disabled children and those "at risk" of becoming disabled (*von Behinderung bedroht*) that may counteract the selection processes of the general schools (see Kottmann 2006) while reacting to the individual potentials and meeting the needs of disabled children and youth. Finally, the KMK recommendation also stressed that schools should reduce the social isolation of disabled children by increasing their peer contacts. However, it would take a decade for the recommended organizational forms to even begin to break through.

Integration and Inclusion Pilot Projects in the 1980s

Increasingly, social forces in favor of school integration and inclusive education called on schools to recognize inclusion as a human right. These developments followed the successful precursors that brought girls and boys and students of different religious beliefs together in public schooling, attempting to equalize opportunities (Schnell 2003: 11).

Länder established so-called “integration classes” in primary schools—often serving disabled and nondisabled children who had been classmates in preschool or kindergarten. In some cases, entire primary schools became integrative schools. In many of the old *Länder*, parliaments attended to the integration of disabled children, especially in general primary schools. However, only a few *Länder* have supported these programs to the extent that a substantial minority of children classified as disabled remain in general schools, especially after the transition to secondary schooling. The KMK position paper in the early 1980s blocked nascent integration attempts by recommending that “proven successful instruction” in special schools should not be eliminated until it could be guaranteed that special educational needs could be similarly met in general schools.

Ironically, the skeptics’ demand for proof of effective instruction and positive results of inclusive education led to an array of empirical studies that have shown inclusive education’s benefits for all students, whereas empirical results showing the benefits of instruction in special schools are either completely lacking or indicate outputs demonstrably poorer (see, e. g., Wocken 2000b: 500 ff.; Markowitz 2001: 190 ff.; Preuss-Lausitz 2002: 458 ff.). The view that segregated special schooling is preferable evidently primarily recognizes the contribution of specific learning supports and smaller class sizes that special schools are well equipped to provide, emphasizing the effect of those services more than the impact of a stimulating learning and social environment within a general school class in which all children profit from peer learning (Krappmann, Leschinsky & Powell 2003). The latter, more holistic perspective of students, has long been crucial in the integration and inclusion debates. In a segregated school, based on one impairment or disability category, students are continuously confronted with classmates with similar needs, not the broader range of perspectives, views, and learning opportunities of his or her age or peer group.

Grassroots parental organizations increasingly questioned the highly differentiated segregated special school system from the 1970s onward (Heyl 1998). However, the parents’ movement was bifurcated between those parents who acted to ensure continuation of special educational services already provided in special schools and those who worked to establish model inclusion projects in neighborhood schools. The latter group faced not only the historical legacy of exclusion of disabled children and their ongoing segregation but also the formidable obstacles of a federalist political system in which educational reform battles must be fought and changes implemented at the *Land* and local levels.

The first inclusive education projects vowed to ensure that all students are respected and accepted as individuals, such that they could progressively develop their intellectual and social competencies. Berlin’s *Fläming* and *Uckermark* primary schools in the early 1980s not only responded to parental demands but also drew attention to the integrative potential even as they provided inclusive education researchers and teachers with useful test cases to refine methods and expand the knowledge base. Results derived from inclusive education projects were mainly positive: If disabled students profit, so do the nondisabled secondary school students, who either had comparable or better achievements than peers in noninclusive settings (Dumke 1998: 241 ff.).

The major issues in education around 1970 were visionary school reform aimed at equalizing educational opportunities for all children and youth, long-range planning

including the elimination of divisions between school types, and increasing education funding (Bleidick 1998). The reformist period, facilitated by global models of equity in education, economic prosperity, and social movements, was not long lived. By the mid-1980s, these goals had already been replaced by budget cuts, short-term crisis management focusing on consolidation, and skeptical realism (Bleidick 1998). If the former era signaled optimism regarding the potential of equality, the latter indicated resignation, as individuals were to be given “suitable” opportunities according to their measured past abilities, and comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschulen*) were not accepted as a legitimate school type in all *Länder*. Such shifts in social and political forces and economic conditions hindered transformative change in the educational system, exemplified by the failed comprehensive school reform.

Reunification of the two German states in 1990 might have provided an unparalleled opportunity for a reevaluation and renewal of special and inclusive education. Yet, this transformative historical moment did not bring about a radical break with the past. Instead, the West German special educational system was implemented in the new *Länder*, facilitated by the relative similarity of the types of special schools and the dominance of this organizational form within the special educational systems of the two countries. Nevertheless, several decades after the first national attempts to support inclusive education, successful programs in primary schools, concerted advocacy, and active policymakers did achieve the building of coalitions needed to argue for a decisive shift in official policy.

KMK Recommendation on “Special Educational Needs” (1994)

On May 6, 1994, one day after the annual political and social action day of Germany’s disability rights and independent living movements, the KMK passed its recommendations for special education. It would bring about substantial reform in official education goals and principles. Beginning with language, moving on to organizational structures, and ending with a significant shift of focus from the school and teacher to the individual learner, this consensual document drafted and agreed upon by the Ministers of Culture represented a key milestone in special education policy. In its 1994 recommendation, the KMK distinguished six forms of special educational support: (1) preventive measures, (2) joint instruction, (3) special schools, (4) cooperative forms, (5) special education service centers, and (6) transition from school-to-work measures and vocational training. Yet, just as its predecessor recommendations, the political structures and cultural autonomy of the *Länder* determine how much, and how soon, integration and inclusion will be achieved throughout Germany. The continuing challenges of implementation and noncompliance require resolve to realize reforms at the *Land* and local levels. In the years since, two differing, not necessarily contradictory trends—transformation and expansion—have become visible.

Intensive dialogue within special education but also in school administrations all the way up to the KMK increasingly attempts to bridge the distance between general and special schools, exemplified in the institutionalized equation of recognized special

educational needs and special school attendance. Indeed, the reorientation since the mid-1990s, from individual deficits to support categories, challenges such diagnoses and the immediate resulting allocation to a different organization. Insights that encouraged the reevaluation of the older classification system include that disability and special educational needs categories actually become more difficult to ascertain with sharper clinical diagnosis and precise instruments, such that supports and services can less often be delivered by one specialized organization alone. Furthermore, impairments often do not have relevance for learning, especially in newer universally designed barrier-free schools, or are given sufficient technological support and assistance that can be delivered to students in any classrooms. Attempts to develop inclusive schools extend to embrace children with all kinds of learning needs—in fact, some advocates in Germany and the US argue for the elimination of the traditional categories altogether (Benkmann 1994: 4 ff.). Several European countries provide services for children who need additional learning support without classifying them (see Chapter 2). Yet, disability categories have been, and still are, central to special educators' self-conceptions: Specializations define not only the children but also professional, disciplinary boundaries, even the very school forms in which teachers teach and students learn.

Recent calls for inclusion embrace *all* children and youth, since no impairment affects learning to such a degree that makes integration in a general school impossible, given pedagogical willingness and well-established teaching techniques. Increasingly, one of the fundamental assumptions of segregated special schooling is called into question: That students' impairments require fundamentally different learning styles and instructional methods (Preuss-Lausitz 2001: 211). The older "common goal" (*zielgleich*) integration that requires each student to meet the standard curricular goals has been challenged by "multiple or different goal" (*ziel-different*) pedagogy that emphasizes individualized education programs and inclusive educational models. From *Land* to *Land*, variable proportions of children and youth in need of support will continue to attend general and special schools. Not only legal stipulations, financial transfers, and eligibility criteria and procedures but also the influence of parents on transfers to special schools consistently result in differing local conditions in support of inclusive education (Frühauf 1999: 63 ff.). A further mechanism of central importance in the US as in the European Union (EU) that has the potential to redefine special education in Germany: recent laws that have delegitimized and even barred discrimination experienced by citizens with disabilities.

Advancing Equal Rights for People With Disabilities

Since the amendment to the *Basic Law* in 1994 to include disabled people as an explicitly protected class, lawyers and judges proceeded to determine how the prohibition of discrimination can be interpreted in conjunction with special and inclusive education of disabled and nondisabled students. Among inclusion proponents, much hope is placed in using legal guarantees to secure inclusive educational forms instead of cooperation that mixes integration and separation (see Chapter 3). In an often cited legal brief on the

subject, Joachim Frowein (1998: 157 ff.) analyzed whether children classified as disabled have the right to attend general schools. He comes to the conclusion that they do indeed have a constitutional right to be integrated in public schools, basing his recommendation on Article 1 of the *Basic Law*, which protects personal dignity and that of the free development of an individual's personality. Based on Article 3, Frowein further argued that being excluded from general schools represents a form of discrimination and thus the state must (re)act accordingly:

With the ban on disadvantage on the basis of disability, all differentiations are prohibited that exemplify a social value judgment. ... Thus, it is without a doubt that a disabled person who is excluded from general public educational facilities is being discriminated against in the sense of Art. 3, §3, 2 GG. His or her attending an institution especially designed for disabled people does not alleviate this person's discrimination. In fact, it is precisely therein that the discrimination lies, inasmuch as attendance in the public school attended by others is possible (Frowein 1998: 164f.).

Disabled children are unconstitutionally disadvantaged when they are excluded from the general public schools or segregated against their will.

Beyond the individual rights of a disabled student, parents also have the right—based on the *Basic Law* and the constitutions of the *Länder* (*Landesverfassung*; see Füssel 1987, 2002). However, all *Länder* limit such “rights” when they allow fiscal considerations to infringe upon them. Not only is “automatic” transfer to a special school untenable but also parents have the right to choose inclusive education for their children, following Article 6, §2, *Basic Law* and Additional Protocol of the European Human Rights Convention. In fact, a German *Land* cannot prohibit integration of disabled children without directly contradicting binding European Law, which established the inclusion of disabled students in general public schools as a priority.

According to the courts, to do justice to an individual's needs and specific situation, all aspects of his or her case must be weighed in the context of possible solutions. Only then can the decision be taken whether instruction in a general school, a special school, or other setting is recommended. However, for that choice to be possible, a continuum of learning environments must be available—and this diversity of institutional arrangements has not, and is still not, available throughout Germany. Parental rights of school choice have, in effect, been repealed, since, in most *Länder*, committees regulate access to school integration and inclusive education. Inclusion levels have stagnated due to fiscal constraints or because new forms of integration or “social contacts,” seen as cost neutral, have been prioritized over inclusive education. Examples of school integration models, which guarantee different levels of interaction without school restructuring, are external classes in Baden-Wuerttemberg, special education support classes in North Rhine-Westphalia, or Hamburg's inclusive general classroom. Yet, these alternatives altogether remain quantitatively marginal, compared to special schools: In 2006, fully 84% of all students with special educational needs attended one of the traditional special school types (KMK 2008).

In a case concerning the admittance of a disabled student in a general secondary school that was finally heard by the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht* [BVerfG]), the highest German Court, set forth that every school administra-

tion must specifically prove in each individual case why admittance of a disabled child to that school is not possible. Following Hans-Peter Füssel (2002), rights set forth in social policies must also be evaluated, as these may provide personal assistance or other services for individual students, paid not by the school, but via other programs. Moreover, cooperation between school administration and social assistance offices must define responsibilities and detail available services. The Court did, however, also emphasize another perspective by referring to other children and youth, whose interests must also be taken into consideration, requiring a careful determination of the required financial means for inclusive education. Given scarce resources or even financial crises faced by towns and cities that primarily fund schools, a balance must be found between the claims of the public in general and the interests of particular disabled children.

The Court's decision made eminently clear that inclusive education of all children is to be considered the "normal" case and special schools as exceptions to the rule: It stated that inclusive education has been "positively judged by a majority of educational researchers and relevant political bodies and as an alternative to instruction in special and support schools that should be more often realized (BVerfG 9/97, 8 October 1997). Yet, *Länder* are not required to force schools to realize integration or inclusion, even if the Court did strongly support this solution. Transfer to a special school against the wishes of parents or of the students themselves is only "legal" if personnel, material, or organizational resources and the conditions of the individual general school hinder the instruction of a disabled student. The Court found the past and current practices of the *Länder* regarding the "actually feasible and fiscally defensible" allowable. Criticizing this decision, Theresia Degener (2001: 45) emphasized that, in raising the "informed average citizen" to the measure to resolve all conflicts, the German legal order—in contrast to that of human rights that protect all people—legitimizes discrimination.

Given the different priorities and interests of the *Länder*, the realization of inclusive education is an extremely difficult political task, even if the antidiscrimination clause has been ratified through amendment in every *Land* constitution (Dietze 2002). Even the Federal Constitutional Court rules only on specific cases of integration, never declaring a constitutional position on segregation or integration. While Hans Eberwein (1998: 66 ff.) optimistically sketched the consequences of the *Basic Law* amendment prohibiting discrimination against disabled citizens, courts' interpretations of the *Federal Equality Law for Disabled People (Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz [BGG])*—passed in 2002 on the basis of texts developed by the Association of Disabled Attorneys (*Bund behinderter Juristen und Juristinnen*)—have yet to transform special education. Aiming to secure equal rights for disabled citizens, the German Parliament (*Bundestag*) enacted the BGG on February 28, 2002, stipulating that its "goal is to remove and prevent disabled persons' disadvantages, to guarantee disabled persons' equal participation in societal life and to enable their self-determination. Throughout, special needs are to be recognized" (BMAS 2002). These parliamentary decisions are in large measure the consequence of the initiatives, following the American model codified in the *Americans with Disabilities Act* of 1990, of the German branch of the international disability movement (Heiden 1996: 15 ff.). Antidiscrimination and

inclusive education legislation in both Germany and the US—as well as at European and global levels—increasingly acknowledge these costs and promote integration and inclusion as the preferred types of schooling.

From Special Schools to Categories of Special Educational Support

Resisted Structural Reforms and Limited Accountability

Germany, in many ways, represents an unusual case in cross-national comparisons of education. These include not only the German educational system's early sorting of students (after only 4–6 years) into vertically differentiated secondary schools (and very little permeability between them) as well as the relatively modest and declining overall investments in education, especially, compared to the relatively generous funding of special schools, and limited accountability for its outputs. The 2001 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report showed unmistakably that German 15-year-olds perform below the mean level of OECD countries, confirming earlier reports of educational malaise (Baker & LeTrendre 2005). This instigated a “PISA shock” followed by considerable public discourse on the problems of Germany's educational system, though with a marked tendency to avoid the most controversial proposals—those arguing for structural democratizing reforms that other European countries implemented decades ago (Deutsches PISA-Konsortium 2001, 2002). The KMK collected countless strategies and officially proposed many to be implemented, such as all-day schooling, long taken-for-granted by other industrialized nations. Yet individual *Länder* governments are in charge of implementing reforms that are politically acceptable there. Encouraged by the societal resonance and requests by government officials, the KMK, for the first time in 2003, released a National Report on Education (*Bildungsbericht für Deutschland*; Avenarius et al. 2003), an attempt to develop indicators to evaluate the German *Länder* educational systems (see Cortina et al. 2003 for a comprehensive overview; Klös & Weiß 2003 for benchmarks; Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006).

Despite its reliance on exports of highly technical goods and services and its few natural resources, Germany fails to match other major industrial nations in education expenditures (Schmidt 2003: 6 ff.). In reality, Germany considerably *lowered* spending during the last quarter of the 20th century, from 5% to 4% of GDP, representing a reduction of nearly 20 billion Euros per year (Klemm 2003: 231, 247). In one of the very few studies of special education expenditures, Ulf Preuss-Lausitz (2002) compared costs for three school districts (one each in the *Länder* Berlin, Brandenburg, and Schleswig-Holstein), counting all costs incurred, including such budget lines as transportation. He found inefficiencies and high costs for segregated provision and therefore calls for regular evaluations and monitoring of actual regional costs, arguing that (special) educational finance should rely on census-based budgeting (similar to the direction of policy reform in the US; Preuss-Lausitz 2002: 523). For example, Schleswig-Holstein's development of inclusive education has been possible, in part, due to reviewing costs and benefits of

different organizational solutions (Pluhar 1998: 89 ff.) and finding that Germany can afford inclusive education, especially if it reduces its reliance on expensive small special schools as overall cohort size declines. However, since special schools remain taken-for-granted or unquestionable in many localities, policymakers have balked at providing the funds to support and expand inclusive education. Other arguments no longer hold: After 25 years of inclusive kindergarten upbringing and schooling in Germany and many other countries, reasons other than financial ones—such as learning theory, social policy, or even socialization—are hardly scientifically legitimate (Preuss-Lausitz 2002: 514). Yet, as with the other rationales, the finding that inclusive education in two of the three cases does not cost more than segregated special school provision, and only marginally more in the third, awaits broad acknowledgement, replication, and consequential action. Whether or not inclusive education is more efficient or not, Germany's *Basic Law* and European laws now require that discrimination be eliminated, regardless of the costs it may incur. Those who argue for maintaining segregating schools in spite of educational research results, legal support, social movement demands, and potential financial savings, suggest motives at odds with most students' best interests. Furthermore, these arguments for maintaining segregation often deny children's potential for growth—and their teachers' competence to support them in realizing their learning goals.

Professionals and Administrators in Special Education

Many experts emphasize that special schoolteachers' defense of segregation or separation is clearly related to their material interests and the organizational form that enhances their professional autonomy: "Not the children, but instead the special schoolteachers need the special school as an independent institution" (Hänsel 2003: 605). Special schoolteachers work in smaller schools, teach significantly smaller classes, and they receive higher salaries, in some *Länder* up to the level of a *Gymnasium* teacher (Heyl 1998: 684). But these higher salaries have not eliminated shortages of special educators in many *Länder*, with half of all educators currently working in special education settings without having completed specialized training (Stoellger 2001: 494 ff.). Although demographic projections show that the school-age population will continue to shrink in the foreseeable future, this demographic factor will be balanced by continuing serious teacher shortages. If indeed the especially valuable support offered in segregated schools is based on the specialized professional training of its teachers, the shortage of such educators questions whether that support is actually available. In reality, in many *Länder*, special educators and teachers with specialized training and the resultant additional competencies are lacking—in both special schools and in inclusive educational programs. Teacher training and continuing education in this area must be strengthened and its content broadened, since special educators require qualifications for such inclusive settings, and additional general schoolteachers should have the opportunity to develop their competencies in teaching diverse groups of children. The relevant teacher training programs thus must move closer together and cross the boundary between general and special education. Calls for cooperation between teachers of general schools,

special educators, therapists, and other professionals have intensified, but await broad implementation.

While some *Länder* allow special educators to complete a portion of their practical training in inclusive settings, Berlin and Saxony-Anhalt additionally require general teachers to take an inclusive education course as part of their training (Preuss-Lausitz 2001: 213). As civil servants, most teachers receive very little incentive pay, maintain a considerable degree of autonomy, and enjoy life-long tenure. While in-service training is not systematic, special schools offer a wide range of voluntary programs, with general teachers asked to attend continuing education seminars to learn more about special and/or inclusive education (OECD 1999: 277 ff.). In sum, the conditions needed in universities and teacher colleges to unify special and general education to support existing and emerging inclusive education programs seem to be lacking throughout Germany. In the meantime, not even special schools and resource centers are free of the problems resulting from the inadequate training offered by tertiary educational institutions. Given that Germany's public educational investments are not rising quickly, if at all, without compensatory private expenditures, the challenge of the zero-sum game pitting special against inclusive education seems likely to increase.

From Segregated Schooling to Inclusive Education?

The German educational ideology of “homogeneous” learning groups that receive instruction “appropriate” for their talent continues to drive the selection process, producing unequal education opportunities through segregation, lack of mobility between school types, and stigmatization. In fact, selection begins before schooling has started, with “school readiness” evaluations determining which children are fit for school and a corresponding lack of priority for early education—preschool and kindergarten—as critical learning stages. Similarly, the concept of “in/educability” determined access to school in, and of, itself. This selection process prior to school is followed by the shortest durations (internationally) for children from all backgrounds to learn together. Children may have only 4 years to “prove” themselves (6 years in Berlin and Brandenburg), disregarding the diversity of individual developmental trajectories among all children regardless of measured dis/abilities. The German educational system remains resolutely selective; the primary response to school failure is not an increase, but a reduction in learning opportunities (Lenhardt 2002).

As soon as schooling has begun, retention becomes possible if children do not meet certain goals or behavioral norms set by teachers and schools. Particularly problematic for many families is half-day schooling, which magnifies the influence of family resources on childhood development, as parents' wealth and wishes determine students' educational pathways more than their own ability and efforts (Schaub 2004). Schools' short school day limits their potential beneficial and compensatory effects and magnifies parental involvement and resources as a crucial factor in learning. The home and neighborhood environments in which children grow up are that much more important. After completing primary schooling of short duration, students are sorted into second-

ary school types with curricular plans that vary considerably and are highly regulated. Germany's vertically stratified educational system reflects the belief that individuals will not develop beyond their "natural capacity"; thus curricula must be appropriately programmed.

The German educational system is charged with funding, finding, fostering, and distributing existing talents in its students. This world view—which may seem pessimistic, compared to American optimism regarding each individual's developmental potential—also calls the skill and importance of teachers' work into question: No matter how well prepared or inspired teachers are, they will have difficulty bringing their students much above their natural level of talent (*Begabung*). In contrast, comprehensive school reform, the increasing popularity of life-long learning, and alternative educational pathways through continuing education programs indicate that abilities are dynamic (not innate or immutable) and that development need not occur at a particular age in a particular school type. However, the comprehensive public school (with internal differentiation) that is the dominant model in the US has thus far not been implemented broadly in Germany, given social and political resistance.

While many German inclusive education projects implemented thus far are ambitious, in the US, special educators serve students in nearly every school and can collaborate with general educators on an ad hoc basis with preventive measures, but full-inclusion is difficult to realize because the special education classrooms are readily available, which lowers the classification threshold and facilitates transfer for some part of the school day to separate classes. In Germany, those instances of inclusive education overcome the institutional logic of selection without the intermediary American step of special classrooms. The *Gesamtschulen* in Germany that recognize a broader conception of integration, including disabled students, remain exceptional.

Broad-based transitions toward integration or inclusion face considerable inertia in the German educational system, which Ingo Richter (2001: 10 ff.) has called one of the deadly sins of German educational policy. The barriers include the lack of political will among education policymakers to address structural issues, speculated (but not proven) high/er costs of accessibility and inclusive education, and fundamental commitments to professional specialization (Maikowski 1998: 35 ff.). The vested interests of not a few special school teachers and directors stand in the way of the increased implementation of inclusive education as they perceive their competencies, working conditions, and salaries to be at risk. Given that the alternative secondary school type for many, if not most, special school students would be a *Hauptschule*, which is a similarly troubled school type, many parents and special educators worry about these children's educational futures. There are also proponents of special schooling among disabled students; for example, deaf students who wish to learn sign language and need time and continuous interactions to learn how to communicate with others who sign. However, as discussed below, there are *Länder* who have shown that successful inclusive education is possible to a much greater extent than thus far realized—if it is desired.

In fact, some *Länder* are gradually transitioning from segregated schools to support centers that provide resources directly to students and their teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents. Reversing the direction of provision, support now moves to the students

instead of students being transported over long distances to receive support. Furthermore, these flexible resource centers may more readily address frequently inadequate or inappropriate staffing levels, training, or material resources within general schools, preventing needs from going unnoticed until it is often too late to effectively compensate. Yet these models, as we will see later, are not being implemented in all *Länder* and, where they do operate, they face the system's vertical differentiation.

The tragedy of special education, as Annedore Prengel (1993: 152) has accentuated, is that at the same time that it provided many of the conditions—be they pedagogies or technologies—necessary for the social participation of disabled students, it also had separating or segregating effects, which it did not resist, successfully or at all: Without acknowledging and accepting this deep ambivalence, we cannot understand special education. As long as disabled children in Germany have been included in public schooling, they have continuously been separated from their peers and placed into special schools. Two assumptions have been used to justify this continuing process of selection and segregation. First, disabled children require additional services or specific pedagogical techniques and/or medical or psychological treatments to be taught (or learn), and these can be better provided outside the context of general schools and/or by specially trained teachers. Second, separating these children and youth from the general schools or classes benefits the remaining children, who can be taught (or learn) “unhindered” by the disabled children (Muth 1986: 16–27). Both accounts rest on shaky empirical and ethical grounds. Moreover, these widely held beliefs have led many to discount the high costs—personal, social, moral, and fiscal—that school segregation causes. The burden of supplying proof should be shifted from those who advocate integration and inclusion to those who simply want to maintain their status privileges (Maikowski 1998: 35 ff.).

Findings of the PISA school performance studies since 2001 have helped to shift attention to the stark categorical inequalities that remain in the German educational system, despite decades of debate about the need to reduce inequities and cross-national research results that reconfirm dramatic disparities across nations in educational opportunities, achievements, and attainments (see Baker & LeTrendre 2005). If disparities along the lines of gender have been reduced, but not eliminated, those relating to socioeconomic status and migration experience have not markedly declined. “All three problems thus will be on the education policy agenda and especially on the agenda of pedagogical praxis, in schools and in instruction—when Germany finally wishes to begin to get closer to the ideal of justice in its school system” (Avenarius et al. 2003: 233).

Yet the KMK-sponsored National Report on Education, in its summary of the problems facing the German educational system, does identify the fundamental difficulties facing special education and disabled students. The situation of disadvantaged groups has become more complicated, due to (1) cumulative and multiple disadvantages, (2) lacking data, and (3) regional differences. The report's response centered on the regular evaluation of inequalities in competence acquisition that could help to avoid a return to the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, in which these social disparities were largely ignored (Avenarius et al. 2003: 234). However, if student disability as a dimension of inequality is no longer to be ignored, the Ministers of Culture should not only collect

the necessary data (a process now under way), but education research should include this data in its analyses, such that education policymakers can make informed decisions.

We have seen that the Federal Constitutional Court found that educational, political, and rights-based rationales all support inclusive education, but that the Court refused to force the *Länder* to transform their educational systems to achieve this goal. However, does public opinion support such inclusive schools? How accepted is inclusive education, especially given the historical legacy of responses to disabled people? Not surprisingly, historical shifts in the acceptability of school inclusion, and disability more generally, have been reported, especially as citizenship rights grew over the post-Second World War period. Survey results from the opinion research institute EMNID in 1969, 1983, and 2000 on the question of which kinds of organizations disabled children should experience shows that over three decades the proportion of people in Germany who believe that these children should be able to remain in their parental home and receive individual support in schools increased, representing clear growth in the acceptance of disabled children (Daele 2003: 30 f.). Similarly, of 934 responses to the question: “Should disabled children attend the general primary school and join the same class with nondisabled children or also sit at the same school table?” Eighty-two percent agreed, 7 % said that it depends, 3 % were indifferent or did not know, and only 8 % responded negatively (Wocken 2000a: 293 ff.). The study also found that two thirds of all respondents know a disabled person, but the categories “learning disabled” and “emotionally disturbed”—that represent over half of all students with special educational needs—play comparatively no role in the public’s consciousness, as only 1 % of the respondents mentioned these categories (Wocken 2000a: 294). The survey findings suggest that the *Zeitgeist* is ambivalent, neither fully supportive nor completely hostile, toward disabled people. More than four fifths of the respondents affirmed that they would send their own nondisabled child to an inclusive school. Yet, trends and indicators in special education reveal that very few regions offer inclusive schooling, with special schools remaining clearly dominant.

Special School System Trends and Indicators

The continuity of special schooling stands in contrast to incremental increases in inclusive education: No country-wide transformation has yet occurred. To illuminate this persistence, trends and indicators of special school system development, especially since the 1960s expansion, will be examined empirically in three steps, as was carried out in the American case (Chapter 5). The following sections analyze the incidence and prevalence of special educational needs and sociodemographic characteristics of students served in special education; the learning opportunity structures and educational services provided for them; and patterns of educational attainment and dropout that indicate the outputs of Germany’s special schools. Official data on school integration and inclusive education, only recently made available, will be discussed where possible.

A hundred years after the first special schools were founded in all larger cities in the German Reich, around 1900, there were over 3,400 such organizations in West Germany

alone, many of which were well equipped, offering all-day schooling, small class sizes, and a range of support services. Yet, while many parents decided in favor of such placements for their children, others feared their child's stigmatization and the negative effects of segregation, going to great lengths to avoid such special schooling. In 1999/2000, the first-year national statistics on the number of integrated students (*Integrationssschüler*) were officially published, only around 10% of all children and youth diagnosed as having special educational needs attended general schools.³ The following section addresses the size and composition of the population in special schools (and of those in general schools, where possible). Data limitations make a comprehensive analysis of demographic dimensions of age, gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status more difficult than in the American case, where a range of data sets and results from federally sponsored research and annual accountability reports exists. Although such research, under the rubric of educational benchmarking, has emerged in Germany in the wake of the "PISA shock" in 2001, such reporting remains less well developed for special education (Pfahl & Powell 2005).

Special Education Demographics

Who is classified as a student with special educational needs in Germany and how have student dis/abilities been historically defined? How do they relate to other characteristics of individuals, such as gender, nationality, social background, or place of residence? Without a doubt, a multitude of contextual and individual factors determine the classification as having special educational needs (see Chapter 4). Until 1994, selection was legitimated by deficit-model classification systems that defined the "need to attend a special school" (*Hilfs-/Sonderschulbedürftigkeit*). Since the education and support of disabled children and youth long occurred exclusively in special schools that were distinguished by impairment and disability categories, the types of support merged with the settings in which these were provided: Children and youth were categorized according to institutionalized school types. As a result, student disabilities were equated with attendance in such schools. In the FRG until the mid-1990s, organizational, not individual, categories were dominant. Germany's organizational-administrative definitions of student disability provide a paradigmatic case of how highly institutionalized and regulated the categorical boundaries of student disabilities can be. While this position has changed somewhat since 1994, since recommendations by the KMK, this classificatory shift has not threatened the existence of special schools. In official documents, the differing school types were replaced by nine categories of special educational support: "emotional and social development," "hearing," "(chronic) illness," "learning," "mental development," "multiple/not classified," "physical and motor development," "seeing," and "speech" (KMK 2008). This step from an organization-oriented definition to one that focuses on an individual learner's strengths, opportunities, and needs confirms legislative attempts to emphasize that all general schools have responsibility for students with special needs, not only special schools. This definitional transformation leaves the support setting open, at least symbolically. Although the KMK recommenda-

tions attempted to break the close connection between organizational setting and type of special educational need with these new categories of educational support, the vast majority of these students continue to attend special schools. The categorical definitions applied as labels to individual students in schools and classrooms have changed more than the educational environments provided. Further, disability categories not only vary considerably in size in different places but also by other characteristics, such as ethnicity or foreign nationality, which similarly exhibit starkly different rates of classification and placement among special schools.

Special Education Expansion and Population Growth

The number of students attending special schools has grown continuously. In 2005, about 1 in 20 children of compulsory school age participated in special education programs in Germany. While the number of students attending special schools has risen, so too has the number of children with special educational needs who are integrated in general schools. Educational expansion, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, saw a broad range and large number of special school types built, a trend that continues. In 1960, there were about 133,000 students taught by approximately 6,200 teachers, for a student-teacher ratio of 21:1 (see Table 6.1). Forty-five years later, in reunified Germany, approximately 416,200 students were taught by nearly 64,400 teachers, with a student-teacher ratio of just 6.5.⁴ The number of special schools reflects the system's remarkable expansion, which also resulted in a reduction in average school population size to about 120 students per school through the early 1990s. Despite rising integration rates in many *Länder*, the number of special schools reached its peak of 3,468 in the year 2005. Between 1975 and 1990 in West Germany, the overall number of students attending special schools fell, due to smaller cohort sizes, by more than a third. But over the 1990s and into the new century, the special school population again rose continuously. With these demographic shifts and despite gradual advances in school integration, the rate of special school attendance grew to nearly 5% of all students. Studies have shown that increasing school integration and inclusive education does not necessarily automatically reduce the special school attendance rate because the overall proportion of students who are classified as having special educational needs is growing (see Markowetz 2007). In part, this is due to a lowered classification threshold: Receiving special educational support in many *Länder* no longer requires transfer to a segregated school, thus lessening stigmatization. Germany has begun to transition from a "two-track" to a "continuum" educational system, similar to the US.

The proportion of children and youth of compulsory school age (grades 1–10) who attended special schools in (West) Germany from 1975 to 2005 shows the dynamic relational aspect of disability classification as the proportion of all students attending particular special school types fluctuates, in total and within categories (Table 6.2). With the new definitions of special educational support categories and increases in inclusive education, the student population receiving additional resources to access the curriculum has grown, but is more difficult to reliably count, as German educational

Table 6.1
Special Schools, Teachers, and Students, (West) Germany, 1960 to 2005

	<i>Absolute</i>			<i>Ratios</i>		
	<i>Students</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Students/ school</i>	<i>Students/ teacher</i>	<i>Students/ class</i>
<i>West Germany</i>						
1960	133,087	6,237	1,106	120	21.3	20.5
1965	182,415	9,599	1,469	124	19.0	18.5
1970	322,037	19,399	2,381	135	16.6	16.7
1975	394,016	32,787	2,645	149	12.0	14.3
1980	353,867	40,979	2,856	124	8.6	11.8
1985	270,999	39,800	2,826	96	6.8	10.1
1990	251,679	39,726	2,692	93	6.3	9.8
<i>Germany</i>						
1991	343,527	50,208	3,367	102	6.8	9.6
1992	360,425	56,188	3,395	106	6.4	9.8
1995	390,444	58,598	3,397	115	6.7	10.2
2000	419,474	61,177	3,123	134	6.9	10.3
2005	416,219	64,392	3,468	120	6.5	10.0

Note. Not including students with special educational needs who attend general schools.

Source. KMK 2008 and prior years; BMBF 2001 and prior years; Statistisches Bundesamt 2006.

gatekeepers and bureaucrats adjust to the new classification system of special education supports. The proportion of all students in grades 1 to 10 attending special schools rose from 4.1% to 4.9% over the three decades ending in 2005. The proportion of all students in the learning support category declined in West Germany, only to rise again, especially due to expansion in the eastern *Länder*. Whereas the learning category declined from 3.2% to 2.5% from 1975 to 2005, the proportion of students in the other categories taken together grew from under 1% to nearly 3% of all students in the same period. Of these smaller categories, the largest gains were a fourfold increase in “speech,” a threefold increase in “physical and motor development,” and more than twofold increases in “emotional and social development” and “mental development” as well as slower growth in “illness,” “hearing,” and “seeing.” Such trends underscore the subjectivity of special education classifications and the ever changing awareness and understanding of particular categories as well as the institutional structure and organizational differentiation of school systems.

We now turn to examine distributions by category and region, which highlights spatial differences in categorical knowledge and in the supply and demand for special schooling. The proportion of special school students in the support category

Table 6.2
 Special School Students by Support Category (% of All Students),
 (West) Germany, 1975 to 2005

Support category	West Germany				Germany		
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
<i>Total</i>	4.14	4.19	4.20	4.03	4.28	4.60	4.85
Learning	3.21	2.89	2.53	2.13	2.42	2.53	2.50
<i>Others subtotal</i>	0.93	1.30	1.66	1.90	1.86	2.07	2.93
Mental development	0.40	0.55	0.64	0.59	0.62	0.71	0.85
Speech	0.10	0.17	0.28	0.36	0.34	0.38	0.43
Emotional & social development	0.14	0.12	0.13	0.25	0.24	0.28	0.37
Physical & motor development	0.10	0.16	0.21	0.24	0.21	0.23	0.28
Multiple/unclassified		0.08	0.12	0.17	0.21	0.19	0.27
<i>Hearing</i>	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.13
Deaf		0.05	0.05	0.04			
Hearing impaired		0.08	0.09	0.08			
Illness	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.12	0.09 ^a	0.10	0.11
<i>Seeing</i>	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.06
Blind		0.02	0.02	0.02			
Seeing impaired		0.03	0.04	0.03			

Note. From 1975 to 2005, percentages of all students in grades 1 to 10 attending special schools.

^aWithout Saxony.

Source. KMK 2008 and prior years; Statistisches Bundesamt 2006 and prior years.

“learning”—the largest category for over a century due in large measure to the early development and expansion of the *Hilfsschule*—is highest throughout the country, but the variance among *Länder* is considerable (Table 6.3). In particular, the eastern *Länder*, without a tradition of school integration, have the highest overall special school attendance rates, driven largely by the “learning” category. In 2006, Saxony-Anhalt and Meckenburg-Western Pomerania, with more than 5 %, had a higher proportion of students attending schools in the category “learning” than the western *Länder* had in all their special schools put together.

The classification rate in the second largest category “mental development” ranges by a factor of three from Rhineland-Palatinate to Saxony-Anhalt. Whereas Bremen no longer operates segregated schools to serve students in the support category “speech,” Thuringia places more than 1 % of all its students in segregated settings to provide such support. Classification into the category “emotional and social development” differs

Table 6.3
 Special School Students by Support Category (% of All Students), German Länder, 2006

State/Land	Total	Learning	Other Categories	Mental	Speech	Emotional & social	Physical & motor unclassified	Hearing	Illness	Seeing	
Baden-Wuerttemberg	4.55	2.00	2.55	0.73	0.48	0.51	0.42	.	0.15	0.17	0.08
Bavaria	4.42	1.03	3.39	0.80	0.27	0.17	0.15	1.64	0.13	0.17	0.05
Berlin	4.47	1.93	2.54	0.74	0.88	0.12	0.38	0.02	0.14	0.17	0.10
Brandenburg	5.98	3.68	2.30	1.49	0.26	0.28	0.11	.	0.11	.	0.06
Bremen	4.22	1.01	3.21	1.01	.	0.11	0.18	1.60	0.20	.	0.11
Hamburg	4.82	2.52	2.29	0.63	0.90	0.10	0.38	0.04	0.14	.	0.10
Hesse	4.28	2.17	2.10	0.77	0.35	0.25	0.22	.	0.13	0.35	0.05
Lower Saxony	4.29	2.50	1.79	0.70	0.40	0.30	0.24	.	0.12	.	0.02
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	8.65	5.33	3.32	1.75	0.59	0.29	0.32	.	0.12	0.22	0.04
North Rhine-Westphalia	5.07	2.30	2.78	0.88	0.57	0.64	0.36	0.00	0.14	0.13	0.07
Rhineland-Palatinate	3.84	2.31	1.53	0.61	0.16	0.20	0.37	.	0.15	.	0.04
Saarland	4.01	2.04	1.97	0.70	0.19	0.09	0.28	0.35	0.11	0.16	0.09
Saxony	6.91	4.13	2.78	1.30	0.44	0.58	0.25	.	0.13	.	0.08
Saxony-Anhalt	8.46	5.06	3.40	1.83	0.40	0.49	0.40	.	0.21	.	0.08
Schleswig-Holstein	3.54	2.13	1.41	0.99	0.15	0.07	0.15	.	0.05	.	*
Thuringia	8.00	3.66	4.34	1.67	1.18	1.00	0.30	0.03	0.08	.	0.09
Total Germany	4.85	2.26	2.59	0.87	0.44	0.39	0.29	0.28	0.13	0.12	0.06

Note. Percentage of all students in grades 1 to 10. "Illness" (*Kranke*) data for 2005.

* Ambulant support in general schools.

Source. KMK 2008.

by a factor of 15 from Schleswig-Holstein to Thuringia, while, nationally, a third of all students in this category remain in general schools. Whereas nationally 17% of all students in the category “physical and motor development” remain in general schools, Baden-Wuerttemberg serves three times as many students in such special schools as does neighboring Bavaria. Yet, there are significant *Länder* differences even among the arguably more objectively measurable impairments, such as “seeing” or “hearing.” These categories, in which around a quarter of all students are served in general schools, further emphasize the impact of institutional factors over individual characteristics alone: In Schleswig-Holstein, children with visual impairments receive ambulant support services in general neighborhood schools, while, in other *Länder*, many of these children attend special schools; all the more remarkable since this category has the second highest national integration rate (27%) after “social and emotional development,” in which a third of classified students attend general schools. Bremen had twice as many students attending schools in the support categories “seeing” and “hearing” than Brandenburg. Only half of the *Länder* classify students into the categories “(chronic) illness” or “multiple disabilities/unclassified.”

As in the US, Germany exhibits often considerable categorical differences in segregation rates. The range is from two thirds of all students in the support category “emotional and social development” to around three quarters in the categories “seeing,” “speech,” and “hearing.” Next, the categories “physical and motor development,” and “learning” have the same segregation rate as the overall total of 84%. Finally, members of three categories—“mental development,” “multiple/unclassified,” and “illness”—are nearly always segregated. Such categorical disparities indicate that the boundaries between these categories remain fluid and are open to interpretation. Classification praxis responds to institutionalized special school supply, to choices made in educational policies, and to teacher training. Despite the prioritization of integration in recommendations by the KMK and in decisions by the Federal Constitutional Court, the autonomous *Länder* maintain their segregated special schools. At the same time, these regional differences indicate clearly that there are no types of special educational support that, as a matter of principle, cannot be provided in general schools.

Disability, Age, Gender, Nationality, and Poverty

The proportion of all students who attended special schools is clearly affected by the ever increasing supply of special schools and demographic changes along with the behavior of teachers, gatekeepers, and students. If both growth and differentiation in special education participation since the 1960s exhibit complex patterns, so too does the composition of this student population in terms of age, gender, nationality, and childhood poverty. Here, demographics shed light on which student groups are served by special education programs. In Germany, classification into disability categories not only varies considerably in different places but also by other characteristics, such as ethnicity or foreign nationality, which exhibit starkly divergent rates of classification and allocation to special schools.

In life-course perspective, the question of appropriate support begins with assessments of a child's readiness for school. A child not allowed to enter school may, according to the rules of the specific *Land*, postpone entry and join a school preparation group for a further year. If recognized learning needs or behavioral difficulties continue, the child may be retained once again, but, in such cases, transfer to a special school usually results (Langfeldt 1998). While in both West and East Germany special kindergartens were operated as part of the special educational system, many children with disabilities also attended general kindergartens. Since reunification, an increasing number explicitly focus on inclusive education, offering mixed ability groups and support for children with varying ability levels in heterogeneous groups. The successful inclusive education of kindergarten-age children has led many parents to demand that their children be allowed to transition together into primary schools and thereby maintain the level of inclusive education achieved: In fact, this model enabled a large proportion of the inclusive settings and institutions that exist in Germany (Roebke et al. 2000).

As Germany's most inclusive school type, primary schools usually avoid explicit tracking, assisting children as they learn at different paces. Diverse programs offer additional instruction in smaller classes designed to support a child sufficiently, such that he or she need not be transferred to a special school. However, the lack of resources, too few special educators on staff in general schools, and limited teacher training in inclusive education principles often dampens the willingness or potential to adequately address special educational needs within general education settings. Policy-determined limits as well as increasing demand for such inclusive placements force many children and youth—who have grown up participating in the life of a general school—to be segregated as they transition between elementary and secondary school. This mandatory separation from classmates occurs even in *Länder* such as Berlin and Brandenburg, in which school laws have, in principle, prioritized inclusive education. Secondary schools have been challenged to develop forms of differentiated instruction as they increasingly emphasize and instruct academic content, yet proven models successfully address such challenges (Dumke 1998).

Analyzing the historical development in relative special school attendance, we find that among both 10-year-olds (at the common age of transition from primary to the orientation stage or secondary schools) and 13-year-olds (at an age when few students have left the general educational system), the proportion of special school students was highest at the beginning of the 1970s, after an expansive special school building phase in the 1960s (Krappmann et al. 2003). The rate declined noticeably before stabilizing between 1980 and 1990. The proportional reduction in student numbers did not correspond to lacking financial resources in the special school sector, but rather to declining cohort sizes. Remarkably, the proportion of special school students in all three age groups increased over the 1990s, even as inclusive education had considerably expanded in several *Länder*, especially for the youngest children. The higher rates of special school attendance in the new *Länder*, despite their smaller and declining population, drive this overall trend. The population in each country's (special) education programs exhibit both distinct categorical distributions and durations. For each German cohort, special

school attendance rates rise over time, declining only through dropout, not through return to general schools (“track mobility”).

Data on poverty, gender, and foreign nationality, in relation to special education and disability more generally, is limited, despite attempts by the federal government to produce indicators and report on these social groups. Nevertheless, the available literature on socioeconomic status and the risk of becoming disabled (including those studies of particular disability categories) conclusively show that disability and poverty are so closely related that those who are poor become disabled and those who are disabled become poor (Cloerkes 2007; Maschke 2008). Since the 1970s, studies have shown that the vast majority of students in special schools for so-called learning disabled youth live in difficult social conditions; indeed, it can still be considered a school type that serves mainly children of poor and unemployed people and social assistance receivers (Begemann 1970; Wocken 2000a: 501).

Consistently in both West and East Germany, roughly two thirds of all special school students were male, reflecting an empirically found regularity in many countries, of boys’ overrepresentation in special education programs (Krappmann et al. 2003: 769). In West Germany, in 1970, 40 % of the special school population was female, while a few years after Germany reunified, the proportion of females attending special schools stabilized at around 36 % (Statistisches Bundesamt 2002: 54). Boys are not only more likely to attend special schools and *Hauptschulen* but also to repeat a grade; however, boys’ overall school disadvantage vis-à-vis girls declines as they progress through schooling (Avenarius et al. 2003: C3.1).

Of the other dimensions of difference that exhibit considerable disproportionality, foreign nationality and ethnicity have been shown to be important factors in assessing the probability of special school attendance. With few exceptions, children and youth of non-German nationality or ethnic origin and those whose native language is not German are overrepresented in special schools (Kornmann & Neuhäusler 2001; Powell & Wagner 2001, 2002; Wagner & Powell 2003). Disproportionality in the special education population relating to nationality, ethnic background, and migration experience is one of the most controversial issues in the field. Most examples of overrepresentation in disability categories are found not in the “hard” low-incidence categories, such as “deafness,” but among the more judgmental “soft” or high-incidence categories, such as “learning disability,” that rely more on teachers’ subjective evaluations of students and school and community contextual factors than on biological bases (MacMillan & Reschly 1998). Empirical patterns of categorical disproportionality illuminate the relationships between student special school attendance and nationality in Germany’s educational system.

Considerable immigration from eastern and southern Europe occurred over the post-Second World War period to West Germany, whereas ethnic minorities are a very small group in the eastern German *Länder* (less than 1 % of the school-age population). Ethnic Germans from eastern Europe (*Aussiedler*) came to Germany en masse after reunification in 1990, and automatically received German citizenship, benefitting from favorable integration policies (Söhn 2008), even as they disappeared from the official statistics as a result. Since 1990, around 1 in 10 students in all German general

(nonvocational) schools have not held a German passport (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006 and prior years). In the special school sector, the proportion of non-German students in special schools continues to rise (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006 and prior years). Since the mid-1960s, the number of non-German special school students has increased more than twentyfold: If, in 1970, West Germany registered only 3,900 non-German special school students, by 2005 there were 65,600 in Germany. Almost 15 % of all students in special schools were not German, although their share among the total school population was only 9.4 %. To examine the disproportionality of particular national groups in special schools, a “relative risk index” is calculated by dividing the proportion of students of one nationality attending special schools by the proportion of students of the same nationality attending all general schools. Then, that ratio can be compared across nationalities. Children and youth from countries that sent so-called guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) to West Germany during the economic miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*) all have a high relative risk of attending a special school: Italy (2 times higher risk to attend special schools than Germans), Portugal (1.64), Turkey (1.53), Greece (1.25), and Spain (1.20; see Table 6.4). While children and youth growing up in families from the war-torn regions of the Balkans, such as Serbia and Montenegro (3.42) or Macedonia (1.61), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1.38) had higher relative risks of being segregated, Croatian nationals were just as likely to attend special and general schools (1.00). German children and youth were underrepresented in special schools (relative risk of 0.93).

Children without German citizenship, even if they were born in Germany, are clearly overrepresented in special schools, although this is not equally true for all nationalities. As in the US, there is significant variance among ethnic groups and nationalities in classification rates depending on such factors as migration experiences and labor market conditions. Differentiation of the overall group is necessary to understand the situation for non-German individuals and categorical subgroups. Two thirds of non-German special school students attending special schools were classified in the “learning” support category, while the proportion of German students in that category has declined from four fifths in the 1970s to about half, increasing that main category’s non-German constituency (Wagner & Powell 2003). Whereas nearly 20 % of students in the support category “learning” were not of German nationality, less than 12 % in the other categories were (KMK 2008: xvi).

Called “the prerequisite” for integration (Katzenbach de Ramírez 1997: 6), linguistic competencies of non-German children and youth are often lacking and thus taken to be responsible for school failure. Language difficulties do often lead to allocation to special schools. Yet these schools have not been shown to have particularly effective curricular or didactic capacity to assist non-German youth in learning the German language. In fact, the opposite is the case: Special schools are the school type in which the least instruction occurs in a language other than German (Statistisches Bundesamt 2001: 68). Children and youth whose native language is not German face a heightened risk of being selected and allocated to lower school types early in their school careers, though the risk depends in large measure on the *Land* and locality in which they live: Student bodies of special school systems do not perfectly reflect the composition of the

Table 6.4
Special Education Students by Nationality, Germany, 2004

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Total students in all schools (absolute)</i>	<i>Total students in special schools (absolute)</i>	<i>Nationality's % of total school population</i>	<i>Nationality's % of special school population</i>	<i>Relative risk index: % in special schools/% in total school population</i>
Serbia & Montenegro	61,542	9,284	0.63	2.16	3.42
Italy	65,987	5,876	0.68	1.37	2.02
Portugal	13,256	960	0.14	0.22	1.64
Macedonia	7,134	507	0.07	0.12	1.61
Turkey	418,065	28,298	4.30	6.59	1.53
Other nationalities	315,284	19,369	3.24	4.51	1.39
Bosnia & Herzegovina	20,398	1,240	0.21	0.29	1.38
Greece	33,760	1,856	0.35	0.43	1.25
Spain	7,200	381	0.07	0.09	1.20
Croatia	20,209	892	0.21	0.21	1.00
Germany	8,764,199	360,662	90.10	84.01	0.93
<i>Total</i>	9,727,034	429,325	100	100	1.00

Source. Statistisches Bundesamt 2004, 2005; author's calculations.

general educational system; rather, their students are more often male, non-German, and of lower socioeconomic status (Powell & Wagner 2001, 2002).

These patterns in disproportionality reflect economic factors, age shifts in the population, regionally specific cutoff dates as well as incentives or barriers to migration, age at immigration, and differences in linguistic competencies and life experiences (BBBA 2000). Other factors include lack of knowledge of inclusive education programs and parental rights; experiences with (special) education provision in the country of origin; individual and family migration experiences; or cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds (Merz-Atalik 1998; Wagner 2005). Further research should focus on the migration experiences, language competencies, and socioeconomic status of non-German students to disentangle these effects on classification rates, since few systematic studies exist of ethnic group and regional differences in participation rates in special schools and other school types and probabilities of educational attainment (Herwartz-Emden 2003: 690 ff.; but see Kronig, Haerberlin & Eckhart 2000). As in the other indicators presented here, the probability of a non-German student attending a special school differs by the category into which a student is classified and by the region and *Land* in which he or she lives. The regional variance in disproportionality is joined by other disparities, of educational processes and outcomes: learning opportunities and educational attainments, to which we now turn.

Variance in Segregation and Integration

What are the special education provisions that students receive and what are the school types that students attend in Germany once they have been classified as having a special educational need? How have schools and pilot projects of inclusive education evolved and which categories of students have become more integrated? During (special) education expansion and the growth of the inclusion movement, the settings in which disadvantaged students and those with disabilities are educated have changed—and continue to do so. However, these gradual incremental changes have yet to amount to a transformation. After decades of successfully operated inclusive education programs, educational policy effects on school laws and their consequences for quantitative developments in each *Land* are salient dimensions to analyze; however, there are few sources of reliable data and current information on inclusive education trends (but see Markowitz 2007: 207 ff.).

In both East and West Germany, almost all disabled students attended segregated special schools. In 1994/1995, in the whole of reunified Germany, only an estimated 15,000 children with disabilities, or 4 % of the population of all schooled children, attended general schools, while 382,000 others were enrolled in segregated special schools (Frühauf 1999: 114). If estimated inclusion levels in the early 1990s varied around 4 % of all disabled children and youth (BMAS 1998: 44), and later national averages ranged around 5 % (Schnell 2003: 15), more recent calculations, based on KMK data and *Land* statistical offices, indicate an increase from 11.6 % in 1999/2000 (the first year these data were published by the KMK) to 16 % in 2006.

Despite the many categorical differences, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and poverty, delineated above and their impact on educational experiences, another variable also greatly affects the types of educational careers that students in special education will have: place of residence. Some *Länder* have implemented inclusive education programs, whereas others have resisted reforming their educational systems. As demonstrated above, differing institutionalization and variable classification practices—interacting with bodily, social, intellectual, and linguistic characteristics—affect the distribution of learning opportunities that each student receives. Especially due to their cultural sovereignty, different *Land* educational policies and institutionalized educational systems result in large disparities in classification rates, learning opportunities, and educational attainments, by way of such mechanisms as school laws, organization of service delivery, and curricular plans. Recognized as forerunners in inclusive education, Berlin, Bremen, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, and Hesse educate up to a third of all children with special educational needs in general schools (Schnell 2003: 14 ff.).

All the formerly East German *Länder* show higher segregation rates than the West German *Länder*, but the factors responsible for these differences are multiple and only explainable with a deeper understanding of the specific regional conditions and the organizational forms allowed by *Land* school laws and regulations. One factor responsible for such differences is the institutional differentiation of West Germany's primary and secondary schools and the rapid expansion of the special school sector since the 1960s—and this system's forceful export to eastern Germany after reunification. The

two to three times greater proportion of segregated students in eastern *Länder* is due, in large measure, to the pull factor of the resultant special schools, the rapidly dwindling total student population there, fewer secondary school types, and continued resistance to implement school integration and inclusive education in many general schools (Cloerkes 2003b: 21). In county-level (*Landkreise*) distributions of special school students (as a percentage of all students in grades 1–10), the variance is even greater, ranging from 1.1 % up to 10.5 %, with the main visible patterns of higher proportions of special school students not only in the eastern *Länder* but also higher than average percentages in the western *Länder* of Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, and North Rhine-Westphalia (Krappmann et al. 2003: 771). Historical patterns of segregated schooling continue to affect contemporary classification rates. This distribution confirms the regional and local heterogeneity of classification rates observed elsewhere for both Germany and the US, emphasizing the importance of contextual, not individual, factors in classification.

Examining segregation rates from 1999 to 2006 shows that the range has increased, from a spread between 73 % in Berlin to 95 % in Saxony-Anhalt in 1999, but 55 % in Bremen to 95 % in Lower Saxony in 2006 (Table 6.5). While all *Länder* have reduced segregation rates somewhat, only Bremen and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania have done so by more than 10 percentage points since the first official statistics were published on school integration. Although the numbers on school integration/segregation presented in this section are a considerable step toward accountability reporting for Germany's educational system, they must be interpreted with caution because the time series upon which they are based fluctuates considerably. Günther Cloerkes (2003a: 11–23, 2007: 21 ff.) questions both the levels and the shifts in *Land* integration rates, suggesting that the lack of consensus among the Ministries of Culture, insufficient standardization in data collection, and public relation strategies problematize these rates of school integration and inclusive education. Additionally, the types and duration of services provided vary considerably, as some hybrid organizational forms and newer educational environments may not be sufficiently recognized or quickly acknowledged due to the continued dominance of the special schools (Maikowski 1998; Rosenberger 1998; Markowetz 2007). Recognizing that these figures represent disparate types of special and inclusive education programs, the official data for 2006 suggests that the overall segregation rate has remained stable in most *Länder* and in Germany overall.

Differences between the *Länder* and their educational policies and local organizational forms reflect school laws and regional approaches to the challenges of achieving school integration and inclusive education. Legal precepts should not be mistaken for actual conditions currently faced by students, yet these principles do exemplify important differences in models and values regarding learning opportunity structures. While Baden-Wuerttemberg's school law allows inclusive education in theory, thus far such arrangements are exceptions, with "external classes," a form of school separation, preferred. Furthermore, parents of nondisabled children can now request placement in a special school. Parents may prefer such an option if the special school is closer to home, operates a full day, and offers smaller class sizes. In neighboring Bavaria, multiple-goal inclusion is legally possible, though difficult to realize. Despite long-term successful inclusive education programs, some German *Länder* governments, such as

Table 6.5
 Segregation Rates of Students Receiving Support (in %), German *Länder*, 1999 to 2006

<i>State/Land</i>	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Baden-Wuerttemberg	77	76	76	77	76	75	76	74
Bavaria	89	88	88	87	92	89	88	88
Berlin	73	71	68	71	70	68	68	66
Brandenburg	83	82	81	78	77	75	75	72
Bremen	76	62	49	44	51	55	54	55
Hamburg	90	84	86	85	83	83	84	85
Hesse	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	89
Lower Saxony	97	97	97	97	96	96	94	95
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	95	94	95	91	90	90	86	79
North Rhine-Westphalia	93	92	92	91	91	91	90	90
Rhineland-Palatinate	86	89	91	91	93	89	88	87
Saarland	80	79	79	77	76	76	75	74
Saxony	97	96	95	94	93	92	90	89
Saxony-Anhalt	98	99	98	98	97	97	96	94
Schleswig-Holstein	76	76	74	74	73	74	72	68
Thuringia	95	95	91	91	90	89	89	87
<i>Total Germany</i>	88	88	87	87	87	86	85	84

Source. KMK 2008.

North Rhine-Westphalia, instead support “school integration” programs, analogous to the American model of resource rooms offering a separate classroom setting within general schools. However, these and other organizational forms among the *Länder* are heterogeneous and remain quantitatively marginal, compared to traditional special schools (see Markowitz 2007: 207 ff.). As integration and inclusion experiences grow, future analyses should explore the diversity of learning opportunity structures and compare the consequences.

Although Berlin has one of the highest integration rates, the parental right to choose the school for their child is restricted by financial considerations, as indeed are all levels of the educational system in the financially strapped capital city. Surrounding Berlin, Brandenburg codified inclusive education in its innovative school law as a priority over special school attendance. Bremen supports inclusive education as the rule; special schools are to become exceptions. In Hamburg, inclusion is still advanced in pilot projects. As in Berlin, Hesse restricts parental rights due to fiscal considerations. In Lower Saxony, the school law states that inclusive education is possible, but it is not often realized. School laws have hindered inclusive education in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. In North Rhine-Westphalia, inclusion is possible in primary school, if the

necessary conditions can be met, while some general secondary schools offer multiple-goal inclusion. In Rhineland-Palatinate, inclusive education is not included in the school law. By contrast, in neighboring Saarland, known as an inclusive education pioneer, it is seen as part of the instructional and educational mandate of general schools, but restricted by fiscal considerations. In Saxony, which was the first *Land* to offer special classes and include special schooling to its compulsory schooling law—one and a half centuries ago—inclusive education is currently not part of the school law, but related school regulations do exist. Saxony-Anhalt has made the inclusion of disabled children part of the instructional and educational mandate of all school types, but it still has among the highest classification and segregation rates in Germany. Disabled and nondisabled children in Schleswig-Holstein should be taught together as much as conditions allow; thus far, perhaps a third of all students with special educational needs are taught in general schools. In Thuringia, inclusive education is legally possible and, as in Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg, parents of nondisabled children can request placement in a special school. However, few parents have chosen this form of “reverse integration” for their children. While the impossibility of “partial” inclusion and the conclusion of all pilot projects has been recognized in Schleswig-Holstein, Saarland, Hesse, and Brandenburg, the other *Länder* have very different legal statutes, except that all, to some extent, make inclusion contingent on having sufficient funds (Markowetz 2001: 201). In sum, the legal provisos in *Länder* school laws show significant differences; few have led to widespread inclusive education. While most *Länder* continue to constrain the implementation of inclusive education, they do so in disregard for the KMK statements of support for inclusion as well as the *Basic Law* amendment (1994), the *Federal Equality Law for Disabled People* (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz* [BGG]; 2002), and the *General Equal Treatment Law* (*Allgemeines Gleichstellungsgesetz* [AGG]; 2006) that forbid discrimination. This brief review of policies and expert opinions raise doubts about the accuracy and reliability of official data reports. Despite recent movement toward more accountability and emphasis on educational standards and reports, specific information on both administrative counting procedures and local practices remains exceedingly difficult to obtain. This holds less for educational attainment data on special school-leavers, which is readily available.

Educational Attainment

The above overview of *Länder* variance in students’ participation rates in special schools and in their learning opportunities shows how considerably educational pathways differ in Germany’s decentralized educational systems. Transfer to a special school considerably alters any child’s further educational trajectory. Given Germany’s high classification threshold, including the prerequisite of 2-years’ retention in some *Länder*, return to a general school occurs infrequently. The German educational system seems to be permeable, but only in one direction, thus, few studies discuss at length or measure the return to general schools of students who have been transferred to a special school (but see Frühauf 1986). With the exception of students attending special schools in the

support category “speech,” only about 5 % of all special school students return to any type of general school (Preuss-Lausitz 2001: 211), but data on mobility between school types (“track mobility”) and by category has not been officially reported. Unless or until a comprehensive unitary school system exists throughout Germany, one of the key tasks of school integration or inclusion programs will continue to be the development of possibilities for students to return to general education with support and services, and this seems most likely to be possible in multiple-goal inclusion models that develop individual education programs.

Turning now to aggregate probabilities of attainment: In 2006, of 50,862 special school-leavers, 77 % (39,262) left compulsory schooling without a qualified secondary certificate (KMK 2008). Most of the students who did attain a certificate received the lowest secondary certificate, the *Hauptschulabschluss* (21 %). A small proportion of students attained the intermediate secondary certificate, *Realschulabschluss* or *mittlere Reife* (2.2 %). A few dozen (0.2 %) of special school-leavers each year do attain the upper secondary school-leaving certificate (*Fach-/Hochschulreife, Abitur*), which are the prerequisites for tertiary education at universities of applied science and universities, respectively. Therefore, particular attention must be devoted to identify those factors that act as barriers—but also facilitators—of transitions beyond secondary education or into employment. Without a doubt, people with disabilities in Germany are excluded from employment because of physical and attitudinal barriers in workplaces. However, for many, the vocational education and training and labor market disadvantages they face are the result of “cumulative disadvantage” (Mayer 2004) acquired during their compulsory schooling careers. The low quantity and quality of learning opportunities, expectation levels, and status of lower educational tracks, such as special schools, result in low educational achievement and attainment, which are key prerequisites for successfully gaining access to postsecondary education and employment.

That some youth do attain the *Hochschulreife* despite attending special schools demonstrates that there are youth with disabilities who successfully learn in the academically oriented upper secondary school form (*Gymnasium*) or other secondary school forms—and that some few *Länder* allow it. Similarly, integrated students also succeed, even if their attainments are not counted in official special education statistics. Furthermore, students with disabilities often perform well despite facing many remaining barriers and receiving little support and assistance. Their struggles mainly result from the continuing concentration of most resources, support, and services in segregated organizations instead of providing these wherever students need them.

The large majority of special school-leavers do not reach so much as a *Hauptschulabschluss*, with the national average rising to a high of 80 % in 2002, but declining slightly to 77 % in 2006 (Table 6.6). Thus, with transfer to a special school, the probability of going on to an apprenticeship or postsecondary education is considerably reduced, if not completely foreclosed. In keeping with the above presented large disparities in classification rates and learning opportunities, the proportion of special school-leavers without certification also varies considerably by *Land*. From just after reunification (1990) until 2006, the striking range in the rate of school failure—from around half to nearly all school-leavers from special schools—was not narrowed: Whereas 42 %

Table 6.6
 Special School-Leavers Without *Hauptschulabschluss* (in %), German *Länder*, 1992 to 2006

State/ <i>Land</i>	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
Baden-Wuerttemberg	74	76	75	77	80	80	78	78
Bavaria	85	84	85	86	87	88	85	84
Berlin	84	84	81	80	66	60	65	58
Brandenburg	77	79	81	85	87	89	92	94
Bremen	85	85	79	85	89	84	84	79
Hamburg	74	71	81	80	81	84	83	86
Hesse	89	88	90	89	87	86	87	83
Lower Saxony	81	79	80	78	78	80	79	75
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	93	95	91	86	87	88	85	81
North Rhine-Westphalia	52	54	51	56	60	65	68	69
Rhineland-Palatinate	85	83	82	80	82	83	78	78
Saarland	89	82	88	90	92	86	79	74
Saxony	6	93	91	86	88	85	85	82
Saxony-Anhalt	94	90	85	82	81	85	82	76
Schleswig-Holstein	95	96	97	96	97	98	98	97
Thuringia	91	94	92	89	84	80	72	65
<i>Total Germany</i>	73	78	78	78	79	80	79	77

Source. KMK 2008; author's calculations.

of Berlin's special school-leavers attained a *Hauptschulabschluss* or greater in 2006, in Saxony-Anhalt 3 % received some certificate that qualifies school-leavers (KMK 2008). These figures reveal the substantial impact of very different school laws and educational policies, unequal integration and inclusion rates, and regional disparities in the demographic composition of student bodies.

These results must be referred back to both the learning environments and starting conditions of individual students in need of support, even if no linear relationship can be inferred from these cross-sectional data (Avenarius et al. 2003: C3.1), as we await the results of the longitudinal German National Education Panel Study (NEPS) to begin in 2009. Whether objectively measured or not, the performance deficits of students with special educational needs, compared to those of students in the *Hauptschule*, is about 2 years. Although this empirical finding contradicts the logic of, and investment in, small specialized schools, it may not be that surprising in view of most students transferring to special schools only after one or more repeated school years, although grade retention's beneficial impact on student learning is questionable. As the follow-up study of the longitudinal "Investigation of Bases for Learning" (*Aspekte der Lernausgangslage und der Lernentwicklung*) in Hamburg clearly showed, these segregated students did

not close the gap to their former classmates despite the specialized professional help and the smaller class sizes offered in special schools (Wocken 2000b). Hans Wocken found that, while these same students may have performed less well had they remained in the *Hauptschule*, the fact remains that the gap between the two groups widened over time, with students in the *Hauptschule* performing better than those in the special schools—even when they had started with identical school grades or measured intellectual abilities. The explanation lies in the fact that the “learning disability” category in Germany represents mainly disadvantages or problems relating to low socioeconomic status and labor market marginality. Unsurprisingly, special schools and their teachers find it difficult to adequately compensate these social inequalities and individual disadvantages. Furthermore, even if resources and personnel were plentiful, the school-leavers would face stigmatization and institutionalized discrimination as they transition into vocational training programs or (low-wage) work.

Postsecondary Educational Options for Special School-Leavers

Of more than 45,000 special school-leavers annually in Germany in recent years, only a few dozen attain the *Abitur*, which is required to access educational opportunities at tertiary level. Special school attendance remains a deeply stigmatizing experience in particular because the outcomes for those who attend this school type are so meager. While empirical studies of the vocational trajectories of these youth are rare, smaller longitudinal studies underscore that special school-leavers face very difficult transitions to vocational training and work (Friedemann & Schroeder 2000). Their relatively bleak prospects—of social assistance, workshop placement or low-wage work—and career patterns do not differ markedly from the school-leavers from *Hauptschulen*. Unfortunately, representative surveys, in which special school students in Germany are oversampled, are lacking. However, the NEPS, in the planning stages, will begin to fill this knowledge gap. Comprehensive data is needed to show how special school-leavers manage their transitions into employment, compared to those who continued in general schooling, and to reveal which factors cause these often starkly different trajectories.

Evaluating a pilot project in Germany’s largest *Land* (North Rhine-Westphalia) to test the benefits of “job coaching” of special school students or school-leavers in their attempts to find vocational training opportunities or work, we followed their transition experiences.⁵ These youth, half of whom had repeated at least one school year and most of whom had transferred to the special school (category “learning”) by age 11, well understand the institutional constraints they face as students who have been labeled as abnormal and segregated. Many of these youth aspired to an apprenticeship and were motivated to participate in a vocational training program (Wagner 2005). Yet, as they attempted to transition from school to training and were confronted with the “reality” of their stigmatization as special school-leavers, they were forced to adjust their vocational orientations and aspirations accordingly (Pfahl 2006). In anticipating continued failure in vocational training, many of these youth retreated and became passive (Pfahl 2004): While the job coaches could provide assistance with these youth’s “stigma management”

(Goffman 1963) and even effectively offer compensatory support to individual participants over several years, these youth remained without much hope of fulfilling their often unrealistic aspirations. Their low status continues in vocational training and state employment offices that offer specific programs for special school-leavers.

If pathways into vocational training are not open, chances at the following stage, into Germany's certificate-oriented and training-focused labor markets, will be considerably constrained. As Yossi Shavit and Walter Müller (2000) have argued, secondary education tracking systems and vocational education can play two *simultaneous* roles—as a safety net but also as a mechanism of social exclusion. However, as shown above, four fifths of school-leavers from Germany's special schools do not attain the minimum necessary credential for entry into any but the most rudimentary school-based vocational education or the "transition system" (*Übergangssystem*) of prevocational training measures. Indeed, this elaborate set of programs—that has developed to support a growing group of youth, many with disadvantages and disabilities, during their transitions—challenges the quantitative dominance of the dual system of apprenticeship training itself (Baethge, Solga & Wieck 2007). The proportion of participants in this array of programs who attended special schools is considerable. In 2003, around 20,000 youth with disabilities took part in a supported vocational course (*Förderlehrgang*) that includes the development of an individualized support plan, which defines goals to be reached through participation in the training program (Schier 2005: 157). Analyzing good practice in transition planning for youth with disabilities in Germany, Stefan Doose (2005) identified programs that respect individual priorities and preferences, document interests and decisions of students and families, detail current abilities, and include all relevant persons in a process that holistically views the individual's future, including work, continuing education, living, participation, mobility, and self-advocacy. However, despite a large collection of well-planned and successful concepts, methods, and materials in the field of transition supports and employment integration available in Germany, the synthesis as well as the transfer into policy implementation and praxis to accomplish such goals is lacking (Koenig 2005).

Unfortunately, compensating for social disadvantages and lost learning opportunities is often a losing proposition, with many youth simply passing from one program to the next in what becomes a career of participating in one special program after another (*Maßnahmekarriere*; Kraheck 2004). Evaluations of contemporary policies and programs present a variety of relatively successful transition supports for less-educated youth (e. g., DJI 2004, 2005); yet, not only do these programs reach a very small proportion of those in need but also prevention would be much more cost effective and equitable (Richter 2005). Furthermore, regardless if such supports are available, many barriers remain in the structures of postsecondary educational institutions for those who do have the credentials necessary to apply (especially individuals, such as those with chronic illnesses, who attended general schools with or without receiving special education support). Even those youth who did achieve the goal of a *Hauptschulabschluss* would not have the higher intermediate secondary school credential that has become the standard when competing for jobs. Thus, the definition and production of "less education" depend, in large measure, on institutional contexts that structure educational

failure (Solga 2002a, 2002b, 2005). For these youth, not Germany's dual system of vocational training is the relevant mechanism of social exclusion but rather their prior segregated special schooling.

Revisiting the development of special education in Germany, it becomes clear that the genesis of the highly differentiated segregative special school system was not in the period immediately following the Second World War. Rather, the developmental path must be traced back to the early conflicts around 1900 between integration advocates and opponents and to the successful professionalization project of the *Hilfsschule* teachers as civil servants with authority over a group whose needs were not met in the *Volksschule*. The denouement of 1945 only confirmed the authority of professional special educators; it did not lead directly to equal citizenship rights and educational opportunities. As we have seen, the special-school teachers in West Germany lobbied for and guided the construction of highly differentiated special education systems. Their expansion and differentiation began in the 1960s, although this was conceptualized already in 1954 by the VDS, which had proposed 12 types of special school organization. These, in turn, became administrative-organizational categories in special education as well as the specializations of university and teacher college training, further diffusing categorical knowledge. In East Germany, policymakers and educators implemented a similarly elaborate set of special schools on the basis of impairment categories.

The scattered successes of the comprehensive secondary school reform delayed the possibilities for school integration and inclusive educational models. Where such reforms failed, there also tends to be less inclusive education, reflecting regional constellations of ideologies, interests, and institutions. Which interest groups won the educational policy battles of the 1970s and 1980s that determined the fate of the *Gesamtschule* can still be read in the numbers of inclusively educated disabled children. Beyond the primary school level, in which two thirds of all inclusively educated students with special educational needs are schooled, the secondary school types with a relatively high proportion of students with special educational needs are *Hauptschulen* or comprehensive schools (including those with multiple tracks). The vertical differentiation of secondary schooling not only limited the development of comprehensive schools but also of inclusive education, which was tested in pilot projects demanded by parent activists, then supported (and evaluated) by educational researchers throughout the FRG.

The promise of reunification as an opportunity to renew Germany's (special) education systems failed; the result has been continued segregation, particularly in the eastern *Länder*. Despite these obstacles to reform, the collective strength of engaged parents, advocacy groups, inclusive educators, and the disability movement has grown steadily. In the 1990s, a new classification system of special educational supports replaced organization-centered definitions, and the *Basic Law* proscribed disadvantages faced by disabled citizens. Yet, even the numbers of integrated students (*Integrationschüler*) were not published until 2001, a few months before the results of the international PISA tests of school performance reawakened the nation to examine an educational system performing modestly in international comparison. Exemplifying the ideological challenges surrounding postwar educational policymaking and research, recent comprehensive studies of German schooling have continued to largely exclude students who attend

special schools from analysis. Yet, the data presented above is sufficient to show that the outputs of Germany's elaborate and regionally variant special school systems contradict the view that segregated schooling succeeds where other school types fail. Especially the long-term negative consequences of attending stigmatized special school types for the life chances of disabled students call these schools' legitimacy into question.

Despite the multitude of effective and equitable programs tested and operating in different parts of the country, which are the accomplishment of advocates and educators willing to defy the logic of the German educational system, cultural, normative, and regulatory barriers to inclusive education in Germany persist. In contrast to the US, in Germany, neither national policymaking, judicial decisions, or educational research have succeeded in transforming the main model of provision of special education services—from special to general schools. Regional disparities as well as those in classification rates, in learning opportunities, and in attainments continue to exist. Tenacious differences by disability category, gender, nationality, and socioeconomic status manifest the challenges that reformers face as they attempt to raise school performance levels of growing groups of segregated and integrated students diagnosed as having special educational needs. Next, the development of special and inclusive education in Germany and the US will be compared to better understand how these systems in two federal countries diverged over time.

Special Education in the United States and Germany Compared

Along with most other countries in the world, the United States and Germany witnessed massive educational expansions gaining in scale and scope after the Second World War. First, universalized primary schooling increased literacy, then more secondary schooling facilitated higher graduation rates, which was followed by augmented access to tertiary education and labor market entrants with more years of schooling and higher educational credentials. Indeed, educational attainment of the adult population in 2006 in both countries was nearly equal: Just over half of all 25- to 64-year-olds had attained at least the upper secondary level of education (OECD 2008: 42). However, this expansion success story also has a bittersweet chapter, one that is less often told, of those left behind. Thus, this chapter systematically compares the size and composition of special education populations, the variations in their learning opportunity structures, and the resulting levels of educational attainment. Finally, differences with respect to social groups and regional variations will be highlighted before we turn to similarities and differences in the institutionalization of these special education systems.

Special Education Systems in Comparison

With some delay, special education shared in the overall expansion of schooling, both in terms of organizational development and in participation rates. For much of the 20th century, special education's absence from public discourse and in research on educational expansion was conspicuous. This is no longer tenable. Despite, or due to, increasing emphases on achievement, attainment, and accountability in educational systems, ever more students are being classified as having "special educational needs" and are being taught in special classrooms or schools. The endogenous growth of special education in the US and Germany resulted from the reduced exclusion of children with physical, sensory, or mental impairments, in other words, broadened definitions of "educability." Thus, children with perceived impairments and students falling outside of the shifting boundaries of "normality" in terms of school performance or behavior were served in these countries' special education systems. Yet, the comparison of special education expansion in these two countries reveals an important countervailing trend. For example, in the main category of special educational needs, that of "learning disabilities," a contemporary linguistic and quantitative similarity masks considerable differences. Whereas, in Germany, differentiation has led to a decline in the proportion of students in this category among all students in special education, in the US, an IQ/school performance discrepancy category of "specific learning disabilities" has grown dramatically. While each group now represents about half of the special education

population, they reflect persistent differences in special education's categories of disability and disadvantage, professional knowledge, and organizational structures.

Both societies claim to be democratic meritocracies, combining orientations to achievement and equality of educational opportunity. Disciplinary influences in special education are common to both, mirroring long-standing transatlantic exchange in educational and scientific theory and praxis (see, e. g., Goldschmidt 1991; Fallon 2001; Drewek 2002). Political structures of federalism in Germany and in the US exhibit particularly pronounced decentralized control over education content and financing (Meyer 1992a: 236). These countries have similar levels of economic development. Perhaps most fundamentally for the questions raised here, similar ideologies, interests, and institutions relating to dis/ability and ab/normality resulted in the exclusion—in both countries—of a majority of children with impairments from schooling until after the Second World War. The legacies of that legitimated exclusion, amounting to selection based on disability categories at the school gate, are evident in national and states/*Länder* educational policy and organizational responses. These continue to affect which children in Germany and the US will become disabled and when, who will be integrated or included and where, and what learning opportunities they will have while in school.

The school structures established to provide special education to those children and youth with student disabilities have increasingly diverged over time, as Germany retains segregation and the US became integrative and moves toward inclusion. By comparing Germany's highly differentiated special school system and American special education programs, the burgeoning lowest comprehensive school track, we see educational expansion's impact on the distribution of educational opportunities not as is usual—from the top—but from the bottom. Here, empirical indicators show similarities and differences exploring these dimensions and summarizing group and geographic variations as well as divergence in rates of differentiation, allocation, and attainment.

As presented above, today's special education institutions differ considerably across these countries (summarized in Table 7.1). Whereas less than 4% of special education students in the US attend segregated special schools, more than 85% of German students identified with special educational needs do so. On the one hand, special education students in both countries receive specialized professional services and are educated in smaller classes. On the other hand, these students have lower educational attainment, associated with lessened opportunities to learn, lowered expectations, and reduced self-esteem due to stigmatization. Four fifths of those youth leaving Germany's segregated special schools do not even attain a *Hauptschulabschluss*, the lowest of the general secondary school-leaving certificates. By contrast, nearly half of American special education exiters graduate from high school with a regular diploma, the credential necessary for entry to postsecondary education and most entry-level jobs. Despite the challenge of comparing the value of specific certificates, especially cross-culturally, the American rate of special education students exiting without any certificate is one third of the German rate.

Confirming other comparative studies that delve below the national level using within-country case studies, the data presented here shows considerable variance in

Table 7.1
Differences in German and American Special Education Population and Attainment

<i>Comparative Indicator</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
<i>Population</i> Classified students (2006)	5.8 % of all students of compulsory school age in general schools have special educational needs	12 % of all students aged 6 to 17 have an individualized education program
<i>Learning opportunity structure</i> Integration in general schools (2006)	< 17 % of all students with special educational needs attend general schools	> 96 % of all students with an individualized education program attend general schools
<i>Attainment</i> Certificates (2003)	School-leavers from special schools attain: 0.1 % <i>Abitur</i> 1.9 % <i>Realschulabschluss</i> 20 % <i>Hauptschulabschluss</i> 78 % no certificate (dropouts and age-outs)	Exiters from special education programs attain: 49 % high-school diploma 12 % high-school certificate 17 % return to general education (no longer receive special education) 26 % no diploma or certificate (dropouts and age-outs)

Note. United States percentage of all exiters age 14 and above without moved, died, known to continue elsewhere, and unknown. “Age-out” refers to students who exit special education services due to maximum age, beginning at age 18 depending on state law or practice or order of any court. “Dropout” refers to the total who were enrolled at some point in the reporting year, were not enrolled at the end of the reporting year, and did not exit through any of the other bases described.

Source. KMK 2008; US DoED 2006; author’s calculations.

(special) education participation, learning opportunities, and attainment indicators. Solely national-level aggregate comparisons of German and American education conceal important differences at the levels of states/*Länder*, regions, and districts (see, e. g., Richardson & Parker 1993; Bauerreiß, Bayer & Bien 1997; Below 2002). Particularly due to the federal political systems that govern the educational systems analyzed here, state/*Länder* diversity would enable us to learn from both pioneers and laggards which factors are most likely to explain persistent institutional differences in special and inclusive education.

Another major dimension requiring disaggregation is the group served in special education programs and their distribution among institutional settings. The characteristics age, gender, poverty, race/ethnicity, or nationality differ between and within these two diverse societies that have experienced considerable immigration and have ethnically diverse populations, showing considerable regional and group variability. Both countries register around one tenth of their populations as foreign-born and have witnessed tremendous migration flows throughout their histories. While the US is currently the country in the western hemisphere with the most immigration, Germany

has the largest share in Europe. Each country has cities in which more than a quarter of the population is foreign-born but also other regions that have very few non-native-born residents (e. g., the Plains states and the eastern German *Länder*). Commonalities include the disproportionality of adolescents, boys, poor children, and particular racial/ethnic or national groups in particular disability categories and in less inclusive settings on both sides of the Atlantic.

The development of special education will be traced by contrasting specific national trends in educational expansion and differentiation with particular attention paid to the shifting professional and bureaucratic constructions of dis/ability and special educational needs. Why does the US have a special education population more than twice the size of Germany's? How have this population's categorical compositions varied over time in both countries? To answer these questions, we will next view the results of that differentiation in the allocation of students to specific, more or less inclusive, educational environments. These learning opportunity structures stretch along a continuum from segregation and separation to integration and inclusion. These offer students in special education vastly divergent ranges of experience, expectations, and examinations. Finally, temporal, national, and regional dimensions shed light on change in these special educational systems, especially since the mid-1970s.

National Developments in Dis/Ability and Special Education

As the case studies show, arguments for and against school integration and conflicts have accompanied attempts at organizational change. Yet, integration, like dis/ability itself, is context-dependent and fluid—a student may be more or less integrated in the general classroom. At the nexus of culture and structure, body and identity, categorical boundaries define which individuals may be considered or self-identify as “disabled.” Ever broader notions of “educability” and reduced exclusion from public schooling resulted in more disability categories with which to classify the growing “disabled” student population, which led to further bureaucratically regulated categories applicable to students. This interaction between the general and special educational expansions exemplifies but also influences much broader shifts in societal disability paradigms and policies, interest groups, and organizational forms. The self-reinforcing dynamic of disability differentiation and allocation within (special) educational systems simultaneously reflects and changes institutionalizations of student dis/ability at local, state/*Länder*, and national levels.

From Asylums to Public Educational Systems

Based on wide-ranging literature and historical case studies, three key periods in Germany and the US can be distinguished—before 1900, through the 1960s, and from around 1970 onward—to demonstrate remarkable social changes in dis/ability and schooling. This overview emphasizes nation-state and policy developments, profes-

sions and academic disciplines, social movements and disability organizations, special education institutions and conceptions of “disability,” and the consequences for life chances of disabled individuals (see Table 7.2). This periodization, notwithstanding overlaps, focuses on the dominant concepts and ideologies, organizational settings, and empirical trends that accompany and contribute to special education’s continuing diffusion and its impact especially on early phases of the life course.

The first era refers to a period of early nation-state building of industrializing societies, the increasing formalization of educational systems, and (total) institutionalization in asylums of individuals considered “abnormal.” Established throughout the Western world, asylums were justified as serving functions of “protection,” “cure,” and “treatment” (Foucault [1965] 1988: 241–278). However, they also constructed stigmatized identities and deviant behaviors of those inside the total institution (Goffman 1959, 1963). Stigma was the price to be paid for receiving public resources, but menial labor was often also part of the bargain. Although the educational profession, as then constituted, was dominant in this period, emphasizing basic educational and vocational activities, modest state involvement in such developments left responsibility for care and training mainly with families—or in the realm of charity and philanthropic organizations. Few specific “disability” organizations existed as yet to provide assistance or advocacy.

From around 1900 onward, medical and then rehabilitation professions became the key players in the expanding world of disability: Especially medicine, psychology, and psychiatry applied their clinical concepts to transform “impairment” and “disability.” Statistics, gaining authority within the nation-state, undergirded not only nascent social sciences and state bureaucracies but also the worldwide eugenics movement. Here, transatlantic exchange of ideas, concepts, and even legal texts is particularly evident. Ever more elaborate statistical classification systems and their normalized categories established scientifically legitimated boundaries between people. In turn, these justified status differentiation and allocation of individuals to different educational, psychological, or medical “treatments.”

Warfare increased the incidence and prevalence of impairment and mental illness. Veterans organized into powerful lobbies and became the beneficiaries of large social insurance programs designed to meet states’ responsibility toward those who served the nation; in Bismarckian Germany as well as in the post-Civil War United States.¹ Through eligibility determination, such programs increased the power of clinical professionals and the health-care industry vis-à-vis the responsible federal and state governments, who became increasingly involved in disability policy: Disability was institutionalized as an integral part of national and state policies and social provisions (see, e. g., Albrecht 1992; Skocpol 1995). Disability policy was enacted for the following groups, in chronological order: wounded soldiers, injured workers, disabled adults, and children with physical impairments (Liachowitz 1988: 8). Over the 20th century, disability-specific organizations emerged, but most focused only on one type of impairment and were not run by disabled people themselves; they remained firmly in the mode of charity.

From the late 1960s, disabled people—and their advocates, along with progressive professionals—have increasingly rejected the medical, deficit, or functional limitations

Table 7.2
 Historical Periods of Disability in the United States and Germany

Through c. 1900^a

Industrialization,
 institutionalization

- High mortality rates, relatively few people with impairments survive.
- Alms, charity, or family responsibility assist those with impairments; beginning of state intervention.
- Nation-states develop social policymaking and bureaucratic administrations influenced by scientific management and nascent professions.
- Institutionalization in asylums or hospital-like settings (custodial care), but educational profession dominant, mainly focused on sensory impairments or education, labor, and protection for “incurables.”
- State compulsory schooling laws include children with impairments: Saxony (1873), Massachusetts (1885).
- No “cross-disability” organizations or schools.

c. 1900 to c. 1970

Disability policy,
 medicalization,
 rehabilitation,
 school exclusion
 declines

- Increased hygiene and medical advances increase prevalence of people living with impairments and life expectancy generally.
- Wars and polio epidemics lead to high incidence of impairment.
- Rehabilitation organizations and major social programs meet state’s responsibility toward veterans; growing welfare state provisions.
- Medicine, psychology, and psychiatry transform impairment and disability as clinical concepts: Differentiated classification systems and legal definitions determine benefits and allocate categories of individuals into need-based social programs; medicine and law become key arbiters of individual claims vis-à-vis the state.
- Statistics and psychometrics facilitate global eugenics movement; forced sterilization programs.
- “Educability” expands; exclusion from schooling gradually declines.
- Disability organizations emerge.

c. 1970 to present

Disability (rights)
 movement, social-
 political models of
 disability, school
 integration and
 inclusive education,
 technology and
 accessibility

- Disabled people reject medicalization and sole rehabilitation focus, asserting instead their social, political, and civil rights.
- Disabled people’s movement has two main foci: (1) civil rights and (2) independent living.
- International organizations (e. g., UN) devote attention to disability as a global human rights issue.
- Welfare states develop a broad range of programs and services; recently, neo-liberal retrenchment reduces provision or protection in some policy areas.
- School integration and inclusion assisted by advances in technology and pedagogies.

Continued on next page

Table 7.2 (continued)
 Historical Periods of Disability in the United States and Germany

c. 1970 to present (continued)

- Communicative and architectural accessibility mandates and universal design enhance social and political participation.
- Autonomous and cross-category advocacy organizations of disabled people emerge, challenging stigmatization and fighting for disability rights and service provision.
- Disability rights legislation is passed in over 40 countries worldwide by the late 1990s, and in 2006 the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is adopted with the overarching goal to promote and protect the human rights, dignity, and freedom of disabled people.

^aSome dimensions' periods overlap.

Source. For further details, see, for example, Stiker ([1982] 2000); Peters (1993); Barnartt and Scotch (2001); Braddock and Parish (2001); Cameron and Valentine (2001); Scotch (2001); Groce (2002); Quinn and Degener (2002); and UN (2006, 2008); author's compilation.

("within-person") model of disability with its focus on treatment or rehabilitation. Instead, they assert their social, political, and civil rights as citizens, arguing for social-political, minority group, or universalist human variations models (e.g., Zola 1993; Scotch & Schriener 1997). Recognizing the growing strength and demands of the disability movement and concordant social-political models of disability, international organizations began to devote attention to disability as a global human rights issue. The United Nation's International Year of Disabled Persons occurred in 1981 and the European Year of Disabled People occurred in 2003. European and North American welfare states broadened disability programs and services. Yet, these evolved in convoluted, often contradictory, ways that hampered their effectiveness and efficiency (see, e.g., Hahn 1985; Berkowitz 1987; Percy 1989; Bickenbach 1993; Drake 2001; Maschke 2008).

More recently, neo-liberal politics in many Western countries have attempted, and partially succeeded, in reducing provision in some areas of disability policy, often called "backlash" (Cameron & Valentine 2001; Fleischer & Zames 2001; Krieger 2003; Colker 2005). Autonomous advocacy organizations of, and for, disabled people emerged, challenging stigmatization and fighting for disability antidiscrimination (rights-based) legislation as well as service provision that enables independent living (Barnartt & Scotch 2001; Drewes 2003). The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990) has a twin in Germany since 2002, the *Federal Equality Law for Disabled People* (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz* [BGG]). Further, in 2006, the *General Equal Treatment Law* (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* [AGG]) was passed to protect against and eliminate disadvantages on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion or world view, disability, age, or sexual identity. Protected individuals can make claims against employers or private persons

when this prohibition of discrimination is violated. The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006, promotes and protects the human rights, dignity, and freedom of disabled people worldwide.

Moving beyond this brief historical sketch, the process of dis/ability's evolving transatlantic meanings and institutionalization reflect the particularly rapid and specific development of (special) educational systems, especially since the 1960s. Steadily over the 20th century, growing criticism of asylums, of life-long institutionalization, and of eugenic social policies, such as forced sterilization, signaled changing social values relating to impairment and disability. Early welfare states' social policies responded to individuals' work- and war-related impairments and disabilities, institutionalizing administrative categories of disability (in all phases of the life course). Education policies reformed Western notions of childhood: Schooling, not labor, would preoccupy children. These nation-states, in developing new formal administrative categories of childhood and disability (Stone 1984: 27), created and legitimated conceptions that reflected their dominant values. These categories were institutionalized in state educational systems.

Compulsory Schooling and Early Educational Systems

The development of compulsory schooling and that of special education are intertwined. The former, when universalized, increased the heterogeneity of the student body such that formal differentiation was increasingly viewed as necessary, and implemented. It solidified the idea of entire cohorts attending school. In stages, but with some delay, compulsory schooling came to also include children with recognized impairments. In the German vertically differentiated status-based educational system, natural talent and academic achievement have been paramount. Learners adapt to the fixed demands of the standardized curriculum of the school type offered by the paternalistic state for their particular group, with the exception of 4 to 6 years of joint primary school—a revolutionary school reform implemented during the Weimar Republic (primary school law [*Reichsgrundschulgesetz*] of 1920), leading Peter Heyer (2000) to call this inclusive primary school the most significant educational reform of the 20th century in Germany. In contrast, the support school (*Hilfsschule*), a German innovation from the 1880s, completed the vertical differentiation and allowed public elementary school (*Volksschule*) teachers to remove students who could not keep up or caused disturbance in the extremely large, ever more heterogeneous, classes, as the scope of compulsory schooling increased to include working class and poor children. The concept of “ineducability” was crucial in legitimately limiting access of children with impairments to public schooling before they even had the chance to enter.

The ideal of homogeneous ability grouping continues to influence educational policy and pedagogical praxis to this day. Not strictly related to birth date, the principle of age grading is modified by school entrance qualification based on tested “school readiness,” a form of preschool retention. Thus, selection processes begin even before a child has formally begun school. Students attend relatively small schools, remain with their classmates for most subjects, and, until recently, most attended for a half day only.

Instructionally, there is little differentiation, students are taught content and grades reflect mastery of the teacher-presented material. The historic educational ideal was of a whole person “naturally unfolding” through self-study and lectures (Cummings 1999: 424), with discipline-specific content valued most highly, even among school teachers. The educational system’s logic leads to *early* selection and separation based on “dis/ability.” Oriented to the past accomplishments of the student, schools base their recommendations for transfer to a secondary school type on grades achieved by age 10, not on an individual’s future potential.

While children with impairments in the US were also excluded, the American educational ideal has been focused on the continuous development of well-rounded individuals, integrated in a diverse comprehensive school. Yet, they too are measured, with “intelligence” continuously monitored by psychometric (IQ) tests, resulting in two “abnormal” groups, those farthest below and above the mean. This dual perspective—as a result of reliance on the normal distribution curve—is evidence of psychology’s heightened power to define merit through intelligence testing in American schools (see Lemann 1999; Bradley & Richardson 2005). Individualized instruction and courses focused on “aptitude and growth” have been key components of American schooling (Cummings 1999: 424). Students enter school based on their birth date and are likely to graduate with their age cohort 12 years later, if they do not drop out. They participate in differentiated courses with curricula coordinated and oriented to learning groups formed on the basis of abilities and interests, during a full day of classes and extracurricular activities, including athletics. The well-rounded individual prepared for an uncertain future in which he or she must compete is an important goal. Maintaining an egalitarian ideal, official selection in the US is delayed until very late in the school career (except where tracking is rigidly maintained), until the transition from secondary to tertiary education. This resulted in the high-school diploma gaining in significance as the norm in educational attainment in most states. Permeability between tracks and flexibility and choice in course selection has individualized school experiences, success, and failure.

Summarizing these comparative dimensions, Germany’s early selection process reflects an emphasis on natural talent, differentiated educational status groups, and graded academic achievement. In the US, the late selection reflects the ideals of equal opportunity and integration through participation in age-graded comprehensive schooling that ranks entire student bodies individually. In both societies, the boundaries of “in/educability” and educational “ab/normality” or student “dis/ability” were drawn at the school gate for some children, but for others these boundaries developed within schools as teachers sorted these students according to the local norms of the day.

Expanding Special Education Since 1945

After the Second World War, education expanded nearly everywhere, as countries and individuals increased their investments in all levels of education—from early intervention in preschool to college and professional training.² This massive growth in

schooling also affected special education, albeit with some delay. Especially since the 1960s, schooling structures, in particular for categories of students with disabilities, were developed along a broad continuum from highly differentiated segregating special schools to partial integration (or even full-time inclusion) in general classrooms. The special education expansion in the US as of the mid-1950s and in Germany as of the 1960s would eventually universalize participation in primary and secondary schooling also among disadvantaged, racial/ethnic minority, and disabled children. However, as these previously excluded children and youth entered public schooling in larger numbers, German and American special education systems diverged.

Shifting categorical boundaries and eligibility criteria but also differing risks of daily living and school failure ensure the dynamism of the concepts of dis/ability and the permeability of the group of disabled people. While people with disabilities constitute one of the largest minority groups in society, the risk of becoming disabled early in life remains small. When disabled people joined together as the “last civil rights movement” (Driedger 1989), they did so to battle the remaining vestiges of exclusion, segregation, and abuse inherited from the eugenic forces in the first half of the 20th century, in both Germany and the US. Yet, despite these sketched similarities in long-term growth in disability and education, substantial differences exist in the institutional responses to these social and political developments. Dis/ability paradigms, classification systems of special educational needs, forms of governance and legal systems, and the power of social movements all represent crucial factors in the institutionalization of educational systems; its ideals, organizational structures, and policies (Table 7.3).

In the US, the visibility of persons with polio (most notably President Franklin D. Roosevelt) and Vietnam veterans, allied social movements activated during the 1960s, and disability advocacy organizations laid the groundwork for a paradigm shift to a model of disabled people as a minority group emphasizing their human and civil rights. Social and political actors challenged the dominant charity, medical, and rehabilitation discourses surrounding dis/ability. In many states, the typical comprehensive schools had to be forced to become racially desegregated after the critical Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board* (“separate is not equal”) in 1954. Nearly a century after the Civil War, this landmark decision finally legally opened public schools in the American South to all children regardless of skin color. The 1960s was a watershed for social and school change, with civil rights, the federal government’s “War on Poverty,” and social movement mobilization contributing to the reaffirmation of the American ideology of egalitarianism—and the abolition of Southern exceptionalism. Attempting to realize integration in society and schools, the victorious movement that fought for civil rights laws provided a model that disability rights activists would successfully emulate.

Yet, it would take two decades after *Brown v. Board* for a statute of similar weight to ensure comparable access for disabled children to public schooling, with the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) of 1975. While most US states had already passed laws mandating that special education programs be established for disabled students, there was little or no enforcement. The right to a “free appropriate public education” that other children enjoyed was not guaranteed for those with impairments or disabilities. Parents’ associations played a crucial role in securing their children’s

Table 7.3
Special Education Development in the United States and Germany,
1945 to 2006

Year	Germany	United States
1945	Defeat; <i>restoration</i> in special education	Victory; (disabled) veterans are heroes
1954	VDS White Paper legitimates segregation (extend the special school system)	<i>Brown v. Board</i> : "Separate is not equal" delegitimates school segregation
1960	KMK follows the VDS suggested differentiation	
1972	KMK recommendation reaffirms status quo	<i>PARC v. PA</i> ; <i>Mills v. DC</i> : Cases solidified individual rights to education and school integration
1973	Educational Council recommendation: "As much integration as possible" rejected	<i>Rehabilitation Act</i> (Section 504): Federal funds contingent on equality; antidiscrimination clause
1975		<i>Education for All Handicapped Children Act</i> (EAHCA): "Free appropriate public education" affirmed
1980s	Inclusion model projects (<i>Integrationspädagogik</i>); comprehensive school type added in western Germany	Regular education initiative: Inclusion, not mainstreaming
1990	Unification: eastern comprehensive school system replaced; vertical differentiation	<i>Americans with Disabilities Act</i> (ADA): Remove barriers; reauthorization of IDEA (EAHCA)
1994	<i>Basic Law</i> , Article 3, § 3, Sentence 2 (antidiscrimination clause); KMK replaced classification system (now: special educational needs)	Goals 2000; accountability for outcomes of schooling
2002	<i>Federal Equality Law for Disabled People</i> (<i>Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz</i> [BGG])	<i>No Child Left Behind Act</i> signed into law: Standards-based education reform sets standards and measures goals
2006	<i>General Equal Treatment Law</i> (<i>Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz</i> [AGG])	

integration in local public schools, using the judicial system when necessary to enforce these hard-won rights. Legislators responded to the social movements' demands and to judicial decisions in their policy making. The role of legislation and federal involvement in educational matters grew continuously. However, the impact of the federal government has not been equal in all regions of the country. Considerable disparities remain throughout educational systems, which are controlled by state and local decision makers and school gatekeepers.³

In Germany, after the Second World War, special educators (re)built special schools, reaching back to earlier models and traditions and its once leading position in the world.

Justified by charity, by relieving general teachers and schools, and by economic rationality, special school teachers restored their profession and their independent school type. These continuities occurred, also with personnel, despite their direct and indirect contributions to the atrocities committed against disabled people during the National Socialist regime. Organizing in a reestablished professional association, special school teachers and administrators lobbied for the reconstruction of the special school system, starting with the pre-Weimar model of the *Hilfsschule*. Its mission soon included the construction of a variety of special school types, of professional distinctions, and of academic subdisciplines. White papers prepared by the Association for German Special Education (*Verband Deutscher Sonderpädagogik* [VDS]) for wide distribution in 1954 became the policy document that effectively presented the need for five (later: ten) independent school types. Each school would assume responsibility for a group of students who “lacked the aptitude” for a general school career and could be classified with a particular student disability. The long-standing deep tension in German education of selection versus integration continued and expressed itself not only in the increase and reduction of years of inclusive primary school and in demands for, but failed implementation of, the integrative comprehensive school reform as well as in the limited number of inclusive education pilot projects in general schools that *Länder* allowed (Heyer 2000: 97–105).

Industrial prosperity in the 1960s proved fortuitous, as special school advocates suggested a generous elaborated independent special school system. Educational policymakers, parents, and nascent disability organizations also made claims for the state to meet the educational needs of disabled children. These arguments remained congruent with the logic of the German educational system: a school type for children with each level of natural aptitude, measured in terms of his or her ability to meet the curriculum of the school, their religion, social status, and impairment. However, the late 1960s and early 1970s were also a time of shifting values, notably in the student movement and the “68 generation.” Similar to the US, these social movement experiences gave inclusion proponents (especially parents) tools to question the selective system that would segregate their children with impairments. Broad social and political demands for equity, flexibility, and integration in the educational system as a whole were joined by such calls for inclusive schooling. These voices are reflected in the debate about comprehensive school reform, but the *Gesamtschulreform* did not meet its extensive catalog of goals (see Leschinsky & Mayer 1999b) and did not take on the challenge of inclusive education. Some reforms were successful: generalized educational expansion, coeducation and equal opportunities for girls, and reduction of disparities between religious groups. However, the failed system change to a comprehensive school system also hindered the integration, much less inclusion, of disabled children. Indeed, vertical differentiation extended downward with special school types for so-called learning disabled and mentally disabled students, even as the most rigorous secondary school type (*Gymnasium*) was massively expanded.

In both countries, 1972 to 1973 would prove to be a critical juncture for integration. Despite Germany’s Education Council proposal for “as much integration as possible” of disabled students in general schools, defined as a major task of any democratic state (Deutscher Bildungsrat 1973), the Conference of *Länder* Culture Ministers (KMK)

preemptively issued their recommendation a year earlier (1972). This consensus agreement, to be developed based on the original recommendation a dozen years earlier, accepted the continuation of the differentiated special school system. In the same year, the US *Rehabilitation Act* (1973) outlawed discrimination on the basis of disability in all programs receiving federal funds, including most schools. Unlike American policies of the 1970s, the German recommendation, which would not be thoroughly revised until 1994, reaffirmed segregation. Instead of a declaration to attempt to realize social integration through school integration, vested interests in the established school types successfully lobbied for maintenance of the segregated special school system.

However, from the mid-1970s to German reunification in 1990, demographic declines in school-age populations, increased integration emphases, and fiscal crises placed limits on the continued growth of the segregated system. Even if the German Education Council's 1973 recommendation did provide proponents of integration with major intellectual and political support, model projects implementing inclusive education did not get underway until the early 1980s. Contradicting the selective logic of the educational system, they succeeded in some *Länder*, beginning in Berlin and Saarland. Since then, inclusive education has been realized in different forms and with varying pedagogies throughout Germany. These processes and their outcomes have been well documented, as most inclusive education projects were accompanied and scientifically evaluated by educational researchers.⁴ Ironically, not until the mid-1990s would the other parts of the educational system be so rigorously scrutinized and held accountable for their results. Yet, large-scale international assessments, such as TIMSS and PISA, excluded many students with special educational needs, problematizing cross-national comparability and lessening special education accountability.⁵ Another two decades and a paradigm shift—marked by the long fought for addition of a disability antidiscrimination clause to Germany's *Basic Law*—were required before the KMK would officially replace its special school categories with those of special educational needs (KMK 1994). The special schools, however, continue to operate largely as before, due to powerful vested interests and institutional inertia.

Thus, for children and youth receiving special education support and services, participation in both German and American educational systems has greatly expanded, but their educational opportunities have not been equalized—despite the additional resources—because students classified disabled continue to face separation or segregation, lower expectations, and stigmatization. As in the US, social movements in Germany transformed collective identities of ethnicity, gender, and disability into something positive, as they replaced hierarchical and limiting status differences with egalitarian principles (Friedeburg 1997: 42 ff.). However, interest group claims for more special schools/education were translated into the logic of the educational system: early selection and segregation. In the US, egalitarianism generally forbids segregation, such that the reduced exclusion of disabled children occurred within comprehensive schools. In Germany, such schools were only established in some *Länder*, with more or less success. The failure of this reform also hindered other integrative reforms, with the KMK in 1994 finally agreeing that integration should be a goal, 40 years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that American separate schools are inherently unequal. Inclusive education

programs, though increasingly fulfilled—to varying extents throughout state educational systems—still serve a minority of special education students. Despite anti-discrimination laws, disability movements, and international agreements calling for inclusion (such as Article 24 of the 2006 International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), the primacy of integration and inclusion over separation and segregation remains a challenge to accomplish in practice.

In the remainder of this chapter, indicators of special and inclusive education development will be compared, summarizing the trends presented in the country chapters.

Special Education Population

Population Size and Growth

Germany and the US witnessed dramatic growth in their special education populations over the 20th century (see Figure 1.1). Around 1900, both countries reported around 12,000 “abnormal” children being served with additional or specialized attention, either in special classes or schools (Maennel 1907: 22; Mackie 1969: Table 1). In Germany, the numbers available before 1945 include only those students in the support schools (*Hilfsschulen*), which were institutionalized from the late 1880s. Between 1931 and 1942, they served slightly more than 1 % of all primary school students in Prussia and just over 4 % in Bavaria (Hofsäss 1993: 70). The (slight) drop just after the Second World War indicates the destruction of people and places, territorial transformation, and vast migration flows. As Sieglind Ellger-Rüttgardt emphasizes, slow rebuilding included substantial continuity in special education theory and leadership. This led to the restoration of Weimar educational and organizational models in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG; Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997a) as well as in the German Democratic Republic (GDR; Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997c); both countries built new special schools on the ruins of the old (Preuss-Lausitz 1998b), despite the rhetoric of transformation and good intentions.

Special education’s renewed growth began within years of armistice, but especially rapidly as of the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁶ The West German special school population in 1960 was 2.1 % of all general school students in grades 1 to 10. The building of ten independent special school types, constituting one of the most differentiated (special) school systems in the world, brought further growth. Along similar lines, the GDR established nine school types based on impairment categories. By 1965, the proportion of special school students in West Germany had risen to 2.6 %. Five years later, 3.7 % of children and youth attended one of the special school types. Between 1975 and 1990 the proportion remained at around 3.8 %, despite considerable demographic declines in the total school-age population. In other words, the reduction in overall cohort size was not matched by a reduction in the special school population.

After German reunification, this group’s proportion of all students rose again to 4 % by 1994. Explanations for this trend include the lack of a similar quarter-century history of model projects in inclusive education in the GDR (Heimlich 2000), the existence of many segregated facilities in East Germany, and the massive social and economic

difficulties associated with societal transformation. Western Germany primarily exported its institutional arrangements to eastern Germany without acknowledging useful and important developments of the old system, such as early intervention (Koch 2000: 212) and full-day childcare. However, both regions traditionally had highly differentiated special school systems, such that special education was forced to change less than other educational institutions. One symbol of more recent change is official statistics. Since the 1999–2000 school year, the national statistical series on special education collected and published by the KMK includes data on integrated students (*Integrations Schüler*), those students with special educational needs who attend general schools. By adding these students, the overall participation rate in special education had risen to over 5 % of the student population in general schools. Over four decades, the proportion of students attending special schools has more than doubled: Now, at least one in twenty children of compulsory school age participates in special education.

In the US, growth has also been continuously upward, but in absolute numbers as well as in proportion, where one of nine public school students ages 6 to 21 receives special education services. By contrast, in the 1931–32 school year, only 0.6 % of the public school enrollment was noted as needing special education. Yet, a few years after the Second World War, the rate had already nearly trebled to 1.5 % (1950). It did so again by 1965–66 (4.3 %), having surpassed West Germany's level. By the enactment year of the “mainstreaming” law (1977), which guaranteed all disabled children in the US access to their local public schools as a civil right, the population had almost doubled again, to 8.3 %. Over the past few decades, between 10 % and 13 % of public schoolchildren in the US have received special education services (half of these students classified in the category “specific learning disabilities”). These numbers indicate that the Second World War was a critical juncture for (special) education in both victorious and defeated nations in terms of population size, but not in school structures.⁷ In West Germany, growth in the number of participants peaked by 1975, but the US population in special education was already more than double that in German special schools—and continues to rise.

Looking for explanations that could account for the divergence in the proportions of students in special education since the early 1950s, we find a multitude of mechanisms that foster or limit special education growth: values relating to education and disability; legal mandates for provision, resource availability, and the resulting incentive structures; school and student population characteristics; professional knowledge and training; and a bundle of other local-level factors that reflect gatekeeping practices. These factors operate within and through the existing (and self-reinforcing, expanding) national and state/*Land* educational systems and their institutionalized organizations. It is crucial to distinguish between growth in the supply of schooling as a reform and changes in demand for it that affect the distribution of opportunities and credentials (see Chapter 3; Lundgreen 2000, 2003; Walters 2000). Thus, I contrast resources, incentive structures, and policy provisions with school and student characteristics in special and general education. Further, given special education's subsidiary relationship to general education, school gatekeepers making decisions about students' educational careers mediate supply and demand. Their decisions also result in the often considerable variance in composition of the student bodies in special education.

Welfare States, Social Policy, and Childhood Poverty

As Jutta Allmendinger and Stephan Leibfried (2002: 291 f.) have argued, Germany's sectoral division between educational and social policy produces educational deficits in comparison with other countries. While many Anglophone countries invest more in education than in (redistributive) social policies and the Scandinavian countries spend similar amounts on each, Germany invests less in education, but spends large sums on "educationally impoverished" youth *after* they have left school and are unsuccessful in finding adequate training opportunities or work. Nevertheless, Germany's income support payments do protect most children and youth from poverty. One might argue that the population at risk of school failure in the US is far larger, given limited and fragmented means-tested redistributive welfare programs and high poverty rates, especially in distressed inner cities and among racial and ethnic groups who have long suffered discrimination. The larger proportion of needs would suggest that rates of social disadvantage affect not only learning and health but also consequently the probability of special education classification.

While children in both countries are the age group most likely to suffer from poverty, German welfare state programs do considerably more to reduce poverty than American programs (such as free and reduced-price lunches), which largely fail to raise low-income families above the poverty line. *Title I* of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (1965) has been a large "compensatory" education program, designed to help socially and economically disadvantaged children succeed in school, but its overall educational effects have been extremely heterogeneous (Borman 2002: 241), not well compensating for large disparities in family, school, and community resources. In terms of the child poverty rate (based on relative incomes), Sweden had a rate of 2.6%, Germany was in the middle of the field among 25 OECD countries with 10.7%, while the US, with 22.4%, had the highest rate behind Mexico at 26.2% (Beisenherz 2002: 37). Other estimates are slightly lower, with nearly 17% of all children under 18 years of age in the US living below the poverty line in 1999 (Land & Legters 2002: 5; Conley 2003: 83–95), which is double the 8% rate of children ages 0 to 7 in Germany (Holz 2002: 24–38). Furthermore, more than half of all children in the US living in single-parent households suffer from poverty—even after income subsidies (NCES 1996a: Figure 35). This is especially glaring since American longitudinal studies demonstrate the strong negative association between poverty, especially in early childhood, and school achievement (see Chapter 8; NLTS 2003). Similarly, disadvantaged children in Germany are much more likely to be transferred to special schools (Wocken 2000b). Often, special education represents the placement of last resort for poor children whose material, cultural, and social disadvantages have not been sufficiently compensated by redistributive social policies that fail to elevate them out of poverty.

American efforts to achieve social justice aim at equality of opportunity, whereas Germany primarily attempts to redistribute risks—and maintain achieved occupational status—through welfare state coordination of labor markets. Access to education is fundamental to the liberal ideology, thus programs to help poor children to participate are among the least controversial American social policies (Wahl 1999: 361). The criteria of need over achievement for distributive justice is somewhat more important in

Germany than in the US, but both societies support the market-oriented and welfare state social justice principles as implemented in their own system (Roller 2000: 107). Based on the country-specific definitions of poverty, about half as many German children suffer economic disadvantage as American children, though with considerable regional variation.

Yet, many *Länder* in Germany maintain another school type that is increasingly associated with disadvantaged children and youth; the *Hauptschule* which shares with special schools the bottom rungs of the achievement hierarchy of school types. Analysis comparing the effect of poverty and other variables on special education placement rates must examine the commonalities among the students of both special schools and *Hauptschulen* (see Wagner 2005). While available official statistics do not permit detailed analysis of the association of disadvantage with special education classification, they do support the well-known linkage of school, family, and individual disadvantages and the probability of special education placement after “compensatory” measures—mainly grade retention—have failed. Despite a long-term trend toward lower poverty rates in both countries, demand for special education has almost continuously increased over the 20th century.

Special Education Policy and Resource Provisions

Most importantly for supply-side arguments, some *Länder* provide funding based on special education student enrollments, not on the overall student population. Once schools are built or programs developed, these exert a pull function. Additionally, some categories are reimbursed at a higher rate than others, leading to conscious and subconscious (re)classification to receive more funds. The consequences of such input finance models have been well documented: They are incentive structures that influence school gatekeepers’ decision making as they reward higher rates of classification (which in Germany until recently almost invariably led to segregation)—with higher funding. Overall funding affects population size and composition and placements.⁸

Cost estimates as a proxy measure for special education supply are even more difficult to calculate for the American states. The institutional settings where services are offered are extremely diverse. Amounts of time and resources spent per special education student—and how much is provided by general educators—varies. Furthermore, considerable (if not exorbitant) amounts spent on bureaucracy, diagnostics, and litigation, not on actual instruction or services, are difficult to calculate. Yet, these difficulties do not change special education law’s guarantee of a “free appropriate public education” in the “least restrictive environment”—officially without regard to cost. The individual classified student and his or her educational participation and learning potential are the fundamental criteria. There is no regulative limit on funds devoted to special education in the US, and the federal courts have repeatedly declared such considerations unconstitutional. This is in stark contrast with the Germany situation. On 8 October 1997, the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) decided that such cost calculations (limitations) of what a school system could/should pay (*Finanzierungsvorbehalte*) for a particular individual are constitutional (BVerfG, 1BvR 9/97, §5, from 8.10.1997). This specific decision allowed the school system

administration (in Lower Saxony) to reject a student's repeated application to attend a comprehensive school, despite the fact that the Court found that inclusive education was pedagogically preferable and without negative effects for any participants (see Dietze 2002; Füssel 2002). In other words, educational participation in the most integrative setting, that in the US is a civil right of individual students, is not an unqualified right in Germany, despite the embedding in the *Basic Law* (Article 6, §2) of parental choice as to the schooling of their children (see Füssel 1987). The effects of Germany's ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, taking effect in 2009, which clarifies the right to educational integration and calls for inclusive education, remain to be seen.

Many American states reformed their special education funding formulas as a response to special education expenditures that have risen rapidly. Demanding accountability due to these increases, nonimplementation of mandates, and regional and categorical (e. g., racial/ethnic) disparities documented in the Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), the Congress responded by funding a large-scale national study on state special education expenditures (SEEP 2003). Consistently over the past quarter century, the US Congress has funded the research base needed to make—or at least to justify posthoc—policy decisions within its purview. These research projects reflect the current state of political discourse about schooling. Finance, as an aspect of accountability, is growing in importance in the US; whereas, in Germany, special education finance is still almost taboo, with few researchers willing to make it part of the economics of education (exceptions: Preuss-Lausitz 2002: 514 ff.; Klemm 2003: 232 ff.; Klemm & Preuss-Lausitz 2008).

Although further research will be needed to calculate internationally comparative special education expenditures, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE 1999: 81–89, 151–170) and the OECD (2000b) have begun this research. Overall, expenditure per student in public and private educational institutions are higher in the US, with the highest German-American differentials in primary and tertiary education. The initial sources of public education funds by level of government are also helpful in understanding how important local resources are: Germany and US federal governments both provide less than 5 % of all public education funds. Whereas, in Germany, only around 20 % of the funding comes from local sources, over 40 % are local in the US, with the remaining funds coming from higher levels (OECD 2000a: 104). Whatever the source of additional resources provided for special education, the need to balance the benefits of specialized services and stigmatizing labels remains, and this affects the classification threshold and the rate of classification that also depend on the characteristics of the local school, teachers and staff, and student bodies.

School Characteristics and Professional Salaries

Alongside the supply of education and constraints on funding for special education, an array of school and student characteristics are deemed relevant by educators that necessitate special education. How variable this can be is shown by the reduced rate of

transfers to special schools from the mid-1970s until reunification, during a period in which fewer children were of school age, and gatekeepers in primary schools (*Grundschulen*) and *Hauptschulen* reduced the number of students transferred, although early intervention contributed to stabilize the overall rate (see Chapter 6). Given the small size of German schools, administrators were motivated to secure their existence and avoid consolidation in the face of declining enrollments. When administrators' salaries increase or decrease with the numbers of children served in their school, there are incentives to maintain the size of the student body. Special education services offered in general schools provide different incentives.

Another incentive that has produced resistance to change is that German special school teachers earn more than general teachers (in some *Länder*, the equivalent of *Gymnasium* teachers), as do their American colleagues (especially in the earlier grades). Thus, while vested interests in the German special school system relate not only to teachers' status as certified tenured civil servants but also to their successful distinction from teachers of less specialized school types, they achieved this by establishing their own school types and relying on clinical professions, not through university-based content learning. On the other hand, the inclusion movement played an important role in publicizing integrative model school projects and has repeatedly questioned the necessity of separate school buildings for the delivery of special services to students. Many families moved to neighborhoods that supported an inclusive school, a reason for residential mobility that is common in the US, where schools depend heavily, though less and less, on local property taxes (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow 1992: 344 f.). Even if the limited capacity of Germany's model inclusion programs could not substantially reduce the special school population, their innovative impact through media portrayals of change, diffusion of pedagogical concepts, and successful reframing of the issues seems likely to also have contributed to keeping special education classification rates well below that of many other OECD countries, including the US.

We now turn to school gatekeepers who make the decisions and regulate the supply of students transferred from general to special education.

Gatekeeping, Retention, and Classification Thresholds

Special education referral often represents teachers' choice of last resort, to which they turn when their attempts to effectively differentiate their teaching to accommodate the diversity of children have not succeeded sufficiently. At micro level, factors that affect the rate of students' identification, referral, assessment, and classification include not only the incentive structures and the incidence of impairment and disadvantage but also the interaction of these with teachers' and other school gatekeepers' evaluations of performance and behavior as well as administrative procedures. In Germany, the "threshold" for classification remains high due to its equation with segregation: through nearly assured allocation to a segregated school type following classification. By contrast, the institutionalization of special education as a program within nearly every American school may lessen the stigma and reduce the number of broken ties due to the transfer to a different school and thereby reduce transportation and other logistical problems and costs. However, in both countries, classification is a multistage

process that involves deliberation and decision making by a group of individuals with very different interests.

For Germany from the *Kaiserreich* to today, the fundamental elements of the administrative transition process from general to special school (category: learning) involves not only retention but also: (1) medical diagnosis, (2) preliminary decision by the special school, (3) status and/or process diagnoses (individual or group; standardized only under the National Socialist regime and in West Germany), (4) recommendation by a special school teacher, and (5) the final decision made by the school administration (see Chapter 4). Relatively new aspects include the importance accorded to parental choice (Füssel 1987) and increasing knowledge and experience of successful inclusive education programs.

In the US, although retention is not required to precede special education classification, many of the above-mentioned techniques also apply, but parents are given an even stronger legal standing to demand their preferred educational placement. Special educators' presence in general schools encourages identification by diffusing categorical knowledge among all teachers (e. g., which behaviors can be classified under "attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder," a rapidly growing category in both countries). The US Congress in fact responded to reports of children with impairments being excluded from public education by legislating "child find" activities in federal special education laws. These *require* educational administrators and teachers to search for "at-risk" children. Specific laws emphasizing early intervention programs followed these requirements for early identification. Furthermore, individuals classified as needing an individualized education program are entitled to special education services from birth to age 21, independent of school type, such that the incentive to leave school (on time) is reduced. Another factor is continuous psychometric testing within American schools, as these offer teachers routine, seemingly objective, and independent evaluations that provide information about student progress and also decision-making opportunities that facilitate referrals to special education assessment.

German teachers' (and parents') resistance to sending students to special schools may be understandable, but special education transfer rates must also be seen in conjunction with retention, used as a complement, as a functional equivalent, or as a prerequisite to special education. Yet, the PISA results show that there is no favorable relationship between retention and performance. Around a quarter of all students in Germany have experienced the pedagogically unproven mechanism of retention during their school career, however, the aggregate national cumulative risk tables show considerable variance by school type and *Land* at secondary level (Cortina & Trommer 2003: 371 f.).⁹ If teachers may well resist transfer to special schools for these reasons; retention remains an accepted commonplace practice.

Teachers evaluate their options for assisting students who are experiencing difficulties not only according to the availability of support and services but also with regard to their acceptance; if these norms have shifted, they have gradually. In their longitudinal study of Baltimore, Maryland elementary school students, sociologists Doris Entwisle, Karl Alexander, and Linda Olson (1997: 86–89, 2007) showed that some children were not only placed in low-tracked reading groups but also retained

and/or began to receive special education services: A third of first graders had one or more of these placements. Indeed, three quarters of special education students were retained *before* they received an individualized education program, suggesting that special education is considered to be a “second-best” alternative in the US. Similarly, in Germany, retention also often precedes special education, which remains a “last resort” that represents a decision most often with the fateful consequence of segregation. One recent response to both has been inclusive primary schools that teach children of different ages together.

The complexity of analyzing these stigmatizing organizational decisions’ effects on individual students’ careers and their social-psychological and achievement ramifications needs to be further untangled. For this German-American comparison, most important is the relative *ease* with which these within-school tracks, retention, and special education are selected, combined, and implemented by school teachers and administrators. They suggest important organizational variables to explain special education classification rates nearly three times higher in the US than in Germany.

Population Composition

If size was the first crucial dimension of differences in the special education population in the two countries, the second are these groups’ compositions. Here, I review the results of my comparison of German and American special education classification systems since the 1920s, offering explanations for considerable differences in the changing probability of a child being classified into country-specific categories of student disability (see Chapter 4). Student heterogeneity in learning and behavior immediately raises questions about cultural norms of ab/normality, dis/ability, and intelligence. Defined in transatlantic developments of the disciplines and professions relating to special education, these concepts have been increasingly linked in elaborate institutional arrangements. Endogenous feedback processes between statistics and the disciplines also furthered differentiation and specialization. The resulting definitions of dis/ability and ab/normality are inscribed in legal, clinical, and administrative categories of “special educational needs” (see Chapter 2). Social service administrations institutionalized ever more complex classification systems and disability categories, legitimating them. Authorized boundaries stabilize divisions between “normal” and “abnormal” students and the different curricular offerings and school settings connected to the categories. Classification systems function as the switching station between paradigms of ab/normality and dis/ability, academic expert knowledge, and school gatekeepers as they differentiate and allocate their students.

The dialectic of dis/ability can clearly be seen in US special education. It originally defined those students needing special services as those whose IQ results are several standard deviations above and below the mean on the normal distribution curve. Thus, both low and high scorers on psychometric tests became “treatable” in educational programs for “exceptional” children. In Germany, an equivalent to the American “gifted and talented” education, *Begabtenförderung* is becoming more popular, but is not considered

part of special education, even if the issues of classification, learning opportunities, and attainment are similar.

Nationally, the distributions have converged, with the major category “learning” making up half of all students. Historically, however, American special education students have been much more evenly distributed among categories. In fact, although based on precursors, such as “backwardness” or “incompleteness,” “learning disabilities” as a fully distinct category was defined and diffused throughout the US in the early 1960s (see Carrier 1986a; Danforth 2009). Over the past decades, this category has grown from a fifth to half of all special education students, while, in Germany, the opposite trend occurred, from four fifths in 1970 to less than half by the mid-2000s. Considerable differences in their official definitions problematize the meaning of this quantitative convergence. Germany’s category signals low achievement, but is simultaneously a marker for socioeconomic disadvantage, the lack of language skills, and especially reading problems. The American category theoretically includes only those with a discrepancy between their IQ as measured by an intelligence test and their school performance. Thus, it is an antipedagogical and pessimistic category that individualizes failure and blames children instead of problematizing structured inequalities and institutionalized discrimination. In the American meritocracy, special education support is for those students who are not performing up to the level at which psychometric testing has declared possible. In Germany, the widespread belief in immutable natural talent makes social and educational disadvantages and resulting prior school failure the main criterion leading to special educational needs. Researchers in neither nation have yet succeeded in locating the causal etiological basis for “learning disabilities.” Thus far, they have uncovered innumerable biological, cognitive, and contextual factors that are associated with the performances thus classified (see Sternberg 1999).

In both countries, impairment categories (e. g., seeing and hearing) constitute far less than a third of all students. It is the categories, such as learning, speech, and emotional development, that make up most of the students receiving special education services. New categories diffuse, exerting a pull function as governments supply resources to meet new administratively defined and legitimated needs (e. g., “autism,” “developmental delay,” “traumatic brain injury”). Yet, interpretation varies considerably more at each subsequent lower level of aggregation because “dis/ability” is a fluid process of identification, referral, definition, assessment, diagnosis, and labeling that depends on student-teacher interactions and the relative evaluation of students. Differences by school, region, and other ascriptive categories are so considerable that institutional explanations are required to address them. While policies define classification, bureaucratic procedures implemented by gatekeepers determine who will, in the end, be classified (see Chapter 4).

Joining research challenges at the micro level are macro level policy-related problems. Neither federal educational system has produced a national unified classification system that each state/*Land* utilizes consistently. Disciplines, interest groups, and policymakers compete for the recognition of new categories—or the abolition of them all. International comparisons suggest that dis/ability, deeply embedded in culture and social structure, will continue to defy all attempts to classify it completely; this despite

the best efforts of the WHO with its thoroughly revised International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF; Üstün et al. 2001; WHO 2001), although recent attempts have begun to provide crosswalks from the ICF to the world of schooling (see Florian et al. 2006; Florian & McLaughlin 2008).

A most significant difference between the German and American classification systems is the logic underlying their categories, which relate to nation-specific ideologies, professional knowledge, group interests, and institutional developments. Persistently from the beginnings of special education, US policymakers and gatekeepers have added new medical and psychological impairment categories, resisting attempts to replace them with one general category. From the late 1940s to 1994, Germany emphasized organizational settings, not individuals, even in its definitions of disability: Special educators implemented categories of "*Sonderschulbedürftigkeit*" that represent a child's need to attend a particular school type. This classification system demonstrates the professional authority and the institutional logic behind the differentiation of ten school types, also based on impairment definitions. Only as the German disability rights movement achieved the addition of an antidiscrimination clause in the *Basic Law* (Article 3, §3, Sentence 2: "No one may be discriminated against on the basis of disability")—40 years after other groups—did the KMK finally retreat from a deficit-oriented school-type-centric classification system. Germany's new system consists of nine categories of educational support; however, the special schools remain.

Thus, despite similar ideological commitments to individual achievement and the specification of "ab/normality" and impairment-based categories, in both countries divergence in relative weight of the categories, especially so-called "learning disabilities," underscores the relativity and subjective qualities of "student disabilities." Rapid developments in dis/ability concepts, definitions, and labels exhibit the shifting boundaries between special and general education students. Yet, all the changes in categorical labels, despite new diagnoses and evolving understandings of individual needs and the tools to measure them, have not transformed the settings in which students so classified spend their school days—the German special school and the American separate class remain the main school settings. Thus, the organizational sources of (special) education stigmatization—segregation and separation—have continued to this day. Children may be differentiated through the application of categories and labels, but the result is allocation to learning opportunity structures, to which we now turn.

Special Education Learning Opportunity Structures

This section compares the allocation of classified special education students to the variety of learning opportunity structures available. As we have seen, the institutionalization of special education differs because the rapidly expanding special education programs were institutionally isomorphic to the general education system: "interschool segregation" in Germany in contrast to "intraschool separation" in the US. Thus, German and American special education diverged during the massive expansion of all levels of educational systems. In each case, social conflicts brought integration and equality, as

expressed in school structures, to the forefront of these societies' concerns. By battling the American South's exceptional, racially segregated, school system by court order and military presence, both equality of educational opportunity and integration for its own sake were upheld as fundamental American values, to be defended with force if necessary. However, special education and conceptions of student disability were abused after the *Brown v. Board* decision, effectively resegregating schools (Ferri & Connor 2006). By contrast, the German comprehensive school reform succeeded only in those *Länder* in which the voters supported the challenge to the inherited class-based educational system. Here, equality of educational opportunity referred to children of lower socioeconomic status, and it did not transfer directly to all disabled children. Thus, efforts to increase school integration in Germany were mainly focused on compensating material disadvantage, not on ensuring that disabled children could enter or remain in general schools. In the US, the expansion of compensatory and special education were both pathways toward more equality.

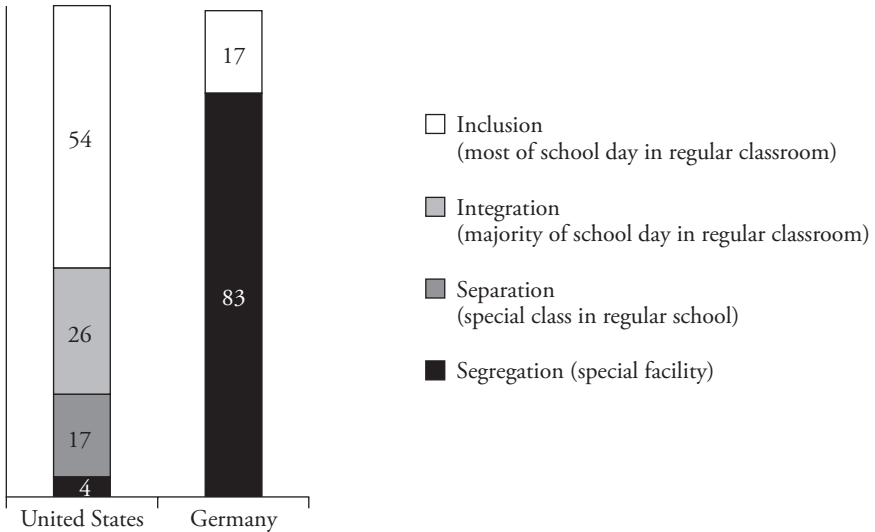
Each country's long history of multiple levels of governance in education had allowed states to develop school systems based on state and local values, traditions, and extant organizations. The actions of central government in education were limited; however, ideological battles were fought on all levels. In the US, the federal government's role—through legislation and judicial action—has grown considerably. In Germany, the *Länder* have maintained control over their educational systems, moving toward, or effectively blocking, fundamental reform toward comprehensive schools through party politics. These larger battles not only framed the debates about special education but also directly affected the structures of schooling developed for children classified disabled. In both nations, the logic of the educational system was maintained, with poor children and some ethnic and national groups overrepresented in special education.

To summarize, the case study analyzes structural continuity and change and the resulting continuing segregation or separation (vs. integration or inclusion) of children classified disabled. Germany, along with many neighboring countries, such as Austria and Switzerland, institutionalized highly differentiated special school systems, whereas in the US, the primary goal was the participation of individual children in the comprehensive schools themselves, as an extension of the core values of equality of educational opportunity and "meritocratic" competition, not equality of outcomes in later life. German and American students have been, and still are, distributed between and within schools according to very different patterns. Empirically, the calculated rates of segregation, separation, integration, and inclusion at national level manifest the clear structural divide between American comprehensive schools with internal tracking and those that allocate status groups to separate school types in Germany.

Organizational Forms

Despite a growing diversity of organizational forms in Germany, there is as yet no significant "continuum" as in the US. Rather, the institutionally constituted either of special or general school continues. The lowest general secondary school form (*Hauptschule*) faces similar challenges and serves similar students as the special schools in the social categories. However, most classified students who are integrated then spend

Figure 7.1
Special Education Learning Opportunity Structures, 2005



Note. In some German *Länder*, there are also “integration” developments, but these remain marginal and similarly difficult to aggregate. Since the validity and reliability of these data have been seriously questioned (see Cloerkes [1997] 2001: 11–23; Markowitz 2007), they should be interpreted with caution. Figures may not total 100 % due to rounding.

Source. KMK 2008; US DoED 2007; author’s calculations.

most, if not all, of their school days in the general classroom (“inclusion” in terms of the US operationalization). Vertical differentiation has effectively blocked three decades of integration attempts through its rigid segregative system of school types with continuous selection—all with the goal of building supposedly homogeneous student groups. The American model’s comprehensive schools are outwardly democratic and egalitarian, but many schools continue to stratify within via tracking, also aiming to produce more homogeneous classes. Nevertheless, the comprehensive school allows flexibility in curricular planning and permeability in allocation to courses; the German structure does not,¹⁰ a key factor in their different classification thresholds and allocation patterns (Figure 7.1).

Since the very beginning of German (special) education, the separation/integration debate forms a key discourse. The struggle between proponents and opponents of integration continues unabated. Since the 1980s, growing criticism of Germany’s highly differentiated special school system has led to increases in inclusive education (*Integrationspädagogik*), which accepts and values student body heterogeneity. Multiple organizational forms designed to reduce segregation include individual integration (*Einzelintegration*), integrated classes (*Integrationsklassen*), ambulant services (*mobile*

sonderpädagogische Dienste), resource centers (*sonderpädagogische Förderzentren*), and a host of other evolving concepts (Sander 1998; Wocken 2003). These school reforms attempt to meet individual needs without segregation; however, they differ considerably in the amount of peer contact they provide and in the curricular goals they offer. The diverse forms of “integration,” most of which do enable children receiving services to take part in general classes all day, only reach an estimated 17% of all students in special education in Germany as a whole.¹¹

Similarly, American schools’ noncompliance with the IDEA amendments mandating inclusion have led to repeated calls for internal school reform or even “restructuring,” with the goal of reducing separation and maximizing the time all students spend together in the general classroom. Although conceived of in a variety of ways, “inclusive education” envisions teachers replacing the institutionalized separate schools and classrooms with diverse general classrooms, although the academic level of these classes in restructured schools may not be well specified. Where such programs have been effectively realized, students benefit from enhanced attention in well-supported classes with multiple educators collaborating and special education providing additional resources. The latter would provide flexible part-time support services to ensure students’ learning progress or offer provision in more restrictive environments as necessary on an individual case-by-case basis.













To understand country-specific strategies and proposals for change, it is helpful to understand how these structures were built in the expansion over the 1960s and 1970s. Since the mid-1980s, policy elites, nongovernmental organizations, and interest groups at local, regional, and national levels shifted the debate to a similar ambitious goal, that of inclusive education. In both countries, attempts to realize this goal are significantly challenged, especially for secondary education. Beyond primary schooling, in which even children with low incidence or multiple impairments can, and are, included in general schools classrooms, as academic achievement and behavioral performance grow in importance, schools identify more students as needing special education services.

Special Schools or Inclusion

Despite increasing inclusive education, in fact the special school (*Sonderschule*) population has grown and the number of special schools peaked in 2002/2003 at 3,487 schools (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006: 53). Since reunification, the new *Länder* have had the highest special school attendance rates. The structure of Germany’s provision of special education has negative societal effects because it reduces all children’s opportunities to learn about the diversity of human abilities. In opposing directions, it specifically disables children who fall on either side of an ever fluctuating norm: (1) Many children in general schools do not receive the support they need and (2) most children attending special schools are sent only after a “wait-to-fail” period of retention of 1 to 2 years; a considerably at-risk group bears the brunt of stigmatization and school failure (see Figure 7.2).

Teachers seem highly reluctant to send their students to special schools, preferring retention (historically, a legal prerequisite), at which point for many children it may be

Figure 7.2
Special Education Continuum From Exclusion to Inclusion

Phase	Types of schooling				
	Exclusion	Segregation (special schools)	General schooling	Separation/ integration (special classes)	Inclusion (inclusive classrooms)
Germany and US before 1900: exclusion					
Germany before 1960s: exclusion segregation					
US before 1960s: exclusion segregation separation/integration					
US since 1970s, Germany since 1980s: segregation separation/integration Inclusion					
Ideal supported by EU and UN, but not achieved throughout the US or Germany: inclusive education					

Note. This figure shows the gradual development toward inclusive education in both countries. The International Symbol of Access, as the most common representation of disability worldwide, is used here to signify students with disabilities. Elsewhere, this symbol's design, history, and functions have been critically discussed (see Ben-Moshe & Powell 2007).

Source. Author's representation.

too late to make up their past lost learning opportunities. Since there are still very few general schools that have special educators on staff, general educators may not receive sufficient assistance to adequately teach classes. Conversely, those that are sent become part of a highly negatively selected group in the special school system. They suffer all the more stigma, low expectations, and learning or behavioral problems. This not only magnifies the challenges faced by special school teachers (despite the much smaller classes) but also removes positive peer role models for the segregated students. Special school attendance is generally seen as “without perspective” (*aussichtslos*) for good reasons, especially given the current dearth of vocational training opportunities for youth.

Tracking in Comprehensive Schools

In the US, nearly all students in special education attend their local, not necessarily neighborhood, public school. Children and youth in four categories, however, have a higher likelihood of attending a private or public residential school than others—"emotional disturbance," "mental retardation," "deaf," and "blind." Similar to the German expansion, in 1948 only 15 % of disabled children in America were estimated to be attending public schools; while special classes existed for those students whom teachers felt could not be effectively taught in general classrooms of the day. By 1966, one third of the estimated "exceptional" children were schooled; 3 % to 4 % of whom were segregated in publicly operated institutions (6 % counting segregated private residential settings). "By 1977, over 90 % of all special education students attended general schools, and two thirds received most of their instruction in general classes" (Singer & Butler 1992: 169), representing a remarkable increase in public school systems that had special education programs. Some researchers suggest that the mainstreaming law actually reduced inclusion at the outset because it institutionalized official bureaucratic systems and separate programs that destroyed much informal, autonomously organized, general class attendance for exceptional children (Weatherly & Lipsky 1992). However, because of the multitude of course schedules and individualized education plans in special education, the class sizes and time spent in each environment is difficult to calculate. As in German special schools, where the student-teacher ratio has remained between 6 and 7 for the past four decades, American special schools have a similar student-teacher ratio overall, one much lower than general schooling (NCES 1996a). Whereas the student-teacher ratio in American schools was much higher than in the average German school for many decades, this was equalized for secondary schools while US primary schools had a lower aggregate student-teacher ratio (NCES 1996a: 198 ff.). Most students choose their course schedule according to their interests with the help of guidance counselors, teachers, and parents. Special education students' individualized educational programs further specify and codify their courses and classrooms, as multidisciplinary teams and parents help to define the student's learning goals.

Structurally, the 4 to 6 years of primary school for all children and the integrated comprehensive schools with integration classes or some forms of individual integration offering inclusive education in Germany are similar to the organizational patterns of inclusion within general schools in the US. The attempts of several *Länder* to establish cooperation (*Kooperation*) and external classes (*Außenklassen*) instead reflect the American setting of resource rooms in which special education students spend most of their day separated from their peers despite attending a general school. The plethora of settings in Germany reflect *Länder*-specific attempts to provide integrative and inclusive education to parents and students who demand it, as in the US with its continuum of settings. The major difference remains the default or automatic setting offered due to Germany's interschool segregation and the intraschool separation in the US.

Two years prior to the passage of Public Law 94-142 in the US, the German Education Council (*Deutscher Bildungsrat*) in 1973 published its recommendations for fundamental reform of the special education system, demanding more permeability

(*Durchlässigkeit*) between special schools and general schools. The result was a widening rift between skeptics and proponents of integration and inclusion of disabled children in general schools. The emotionally charged, value-laden, cleavage between these two groups in both countries developed similarly, as arguments of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) mirror those of integration pedagogy (*Integrationspädagogik*), especially the identical demand for the replacement of traditionally divided special and general education in favor of inclusive education for all children.

Had the German *Länder* reorganized special education in special classes in general schools according to the Education Council recommendation, instead of maintaining and extending its independent special schools, inclusive education would be much farther advanced in Germany today (Opp 1993: 119; Schnell 2003). That the *Länder* did not do so relates to the lack of power of social movements striving for integration, perspectives on disability, and the overall logic of the educational system (discussed in Chapter 8). Additional crucial players were the professional organizations and categorical teacher training programs that lobbied for particular organizational solutions, socialized teachers to take on certain roles, and trained certain pedagogical methods. We now turn to these influential associations and their contributions to the institutionalization of special education.

Teacher Training and Professionalization

Over the past century, “ordinary teachers’ interests in the removal of special pupils ... have proved an enduring and crucial force behind expansion. Then, as now, the public status of ordinary teachers was dependent on their ability to ‘raise standards,’ which called for the removal of defective and troublesome children” (Tomlinson 1985: 160). As special education was institutionalized, the profession relied on general teachers to provide a steady supply of students and on psychologists and physicians to assess and diagnose children in whatever “disability” categories were available. As shown above, the diffusion of special education throughout both countries’ educational systems since the beginning of the 20th century placed the authorized special education profession in a position to advance its interests—especially over the course of the postwar educational expansion. The integration of children with impairments increasingly deemed “educable” provided another source of growth.

With ongoing professionalization, the training of special educators in Germany and the US shows similarities in the requirement of specialized training (frequently of longer duration than general educators’ training) to work in the field, in the hindrance of mobility across states/*Länder* due to state-specific credentialing that has exacerbated teacher shortages, and in the fact that not all general teacher training programs require special education courses (Magrab 1999: 277–302; OECD 2003a). In neither country are “regular” education university students required to take more than a minimal number of substantive courses on special education (if any), although a few universities have designed innovative combinational courses of study or completely eliminated the division. The vast majority of special educators in both countries are women. Differences include the length of courses of study (longer in Germany) and the autonomous and most often tenured civil servant status (*Beamter*) that special educators enjoy, whereas

American teachers are longer subject to local and state evaluations without tenure. The authority and autonomy of this professionalized group of civil servants combined with the traditional acceptance of the half-day school help to explain why the system has been resistant to change.

Furthermore, diversification in the types of integration in Germany, such as increased emphasis on ambulant services provided to students in their neighborhood schools by teachers working from a regional resource center, will also require increased flexibility of young special educators. Yet, most teachers are still being trained in programs differentiated on the basis of individual special school types, which refer to categories defined by the profession. Importantly, it was the profession, not a pedagogical theory, that came first. Profession and discipline were unified, constituting themselves based on the same arguments and eventually collaboratively building the ten special school types (Moser 2000). Even comparative special education (e.g., Klauer & Mittler 1987) and special education history (e.g., Möckel 1988) often delineate their scholarly analyses according to disability categories that I have shown to be context-dependent; historically highly contingent. Arguments for specialization are questionable because special educators have not been able to show how their instructional methods differ from those that general educators implement. Nevertheless, in Germany, teachers are trained to work in specific types of schools, demonstrating the impact of institutionalized organizational structures on teacher training and identities.

Another relevant dimension is teacher beliefs, since they affect which children teachers refer to special education—and which teachers realize inclusive education. Despite such differences in teacher training as duration of training and organizational divisions, comparisons of teacher beliefs in the US, Germany, and Japan indicate that there is hardly any cross-national variation in perceptions of fundamental learning processes or in the organization of teachers' work (LeTendre et al. 2001). Yet, in responding to the central challenge of student body heterogeneity, solutions are institutionally shaped. Teachers interpret children's performance and behavior according to the categories they understand. It is up to teachers to decide how they will teach, but training is central to these choices. If teachers are willing and trained to use heterogeneity productively and create inclusive classrooms, all students will have more chances to be successful (see Sapon-Shevin 2007). There is substantial local and state variation in tolerance and willingness to realize inclusive education. This is only partly because not all teachers are specifically prepared to work with disabled children in their university-based training due to the special/general division in such programs (as elsewhere in educational systems). Special education in most industrialized nations addresses the challenges and resolves the conflict through a combination of individualized attention within classrooms, retention, and special education services provided outside the general classrooms. How important the latter is depends on the historically evolved local institutional arrangements embedded in the logic of the state and national educational systems.

In Germany, retention (and delayed school entry) is a more significant mechanism than special education, unlike in the US. Teacher beliefs and training and organizational

solutions to heterogeneous student bodies interact. Teachers' political and ethical values affect their teaching, but these are infrequently critically reflected or theoretically justified (e. g., see Gehrmann 2000 on inclusive educators' notions of "humanity" and "democracy" in Germany). To discover why inclusive education differs from classroom to classroom, school to school, and locality to locality, requires not only research into structural constraints but also the ideological commitments and perspectives of teachers, gatekeepers, and parents, as well as characteristics of student bodies themselves.

In the next section, national findings on the educational attainments of all students in special education indicate institutional conditions' dramatic effects on individual attainment probabilities.

Special Education Student Attainment

Especially the German *Hauptschulabschluss* and the American high-school certificate (where offered) have declined in value due to educational expansion. Indeed, even higher general education certificates are increasingly being taken for granted, and they have become a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for gaining access to further education or even most low paying jobs. Heike Solga (2002b, 2003, 2005) has demonstrated how educational expansion paradoxically led to the increasing exclusion of less-educated youth, whose group size has declined, from vocational training and from many occupations. The intermediate-level secondary school-leaving certificate (*mittlere Reife*) has largely replaced the lowest secondary school-leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) as the minimum accepted formal certificate of general education for many occupations, leaving the *Hauptschule* in a severe crisis of legitimacy (see Solga & Wagner 2001, 2008). German special school-leavers make up two fifths of youth who do not attain even the lowest certificate, without which their vocational training opportunities and hence labor market chances are extremely limited. Similarly, American special education students were more likely to drop out, less likely to complete a general equivalency diploma (GED) later on, and less likely to participate in postsecondary education or have paid employment—and if so, these jobs were more likely to be low-status and/or part-time (Marder & D'Amico 1992: 47 f.; NLTS 2003). While outcome data, especially in Germany, is lacking, the importance of learning opportunities throughout schooling and vocational education and training for life chances is clear. The first indicator is the return to general education.

Return to General Education

The "return" indicator measures not only the permeability in the special educational system and the opportunities to access general curricula but also the (re)evaluation of special educational needs or student disability status: To what extent do students who participate in special education return to full-time general education? Once transferred to a special school, German students' educational pathways are likely to remain in such "special" institutions. With the exception of those in the support category "speech," few students ever return to general schools in Germany (less than 5%), largely due to the

curricular differences and rigid plans for each school type (see Wilkens & Schuck 1986; Preuss-Lausitz 2001: 211). Given the continuum of educational settings that most American schools have, the structural conditions for return to general education (track mobility) would seem to be very good for the 95 % of students in special education who remain within the general school building. Indeed, compared with Germany's differentiation by school type, the US has a highly permeable system that responds to individual differences (Roeder 2001: 211).

However, my analyses indicate that, despite the greater possibilities of returning to full-time general education, less than one tenth of American students no longer required or received an individualized education program in any given year (see Chapter 5). Thus, while remaining in the general-school building is positively associated with inclusion and educational attainment, it does not often lead to "declassification" or to the termination of special education services. Arguably, the necessity of return to general education is less pressing because attainment is much more likely and students' peer relationships can be maintained within the same school. For some, a return to general education full-time may not be preferable if it would mean receiving fewer resources and leaving their friends behind in the smaller special education classes. The stigma of having received special education may well remain. By contrast, inclusive education proponents suggest that support be universalized within general classrooms, offered on an immediate ad hoc basis without the formal procedures and labeling that are sources of stigmatization and of inefficiency. In such programs, individuals are not socially penalized for receiving additional assistance; indeed, such resources are often distributed on a classroom basis, thus benefiting all students learning there. For educational attainment, this has important benefits not only beyond curricular and peer access but also in terms of certificates and their signals.

Especially in Germany, inclusive education aims to remove the overreliance on segregated special schools, but it also contradicts the educational system's overall logic of separate school types. If inclusion is to occur in all other school types, a further step is necessary: to allow students to access a range of curricular options and to no longer be subject to special school curricular plans, which in many *Länder* constrain placement in intermediate or higher school types and reduce eligibility for higher level certification. In contrast, the American high-school diploma is the uniform standard for access to postsecondary schooling, allowing and encouraging special education students to strive to attain this. Since half of all American high-school graduates go on to some form of college in a highly differentiated postsecondary educational system, the final selection for adult status positions is, at least officially, deferred. Many students, however, do not complete their studies on time or at all.

A student's school record, directly affected by tracking within schools, is the most important consideration alongside the standardized tests, such as the SAT or ACT, required for most college applications. As meritocratic selection processes are the only legitimate ones to promote students, they are also the only legitimate ones to retain students or to place them in special education. Once in special education, students' curricular options are reduced and expectations may also decline. Since graduates are much more likely to attend a 2-year or less prestigious 4-year institution, their low

status within the educational system is maintained. As discussed earlier, the group of students in Germany's special schools is much more selective, with even fewer chances of return to general schools within the stratified system that sorts students very early in their educational pathways, at grade 6 or earlier.

Dropout/Lack of Certification

High-school dropouts (US) or school-leavers without a *Hauptschulabschluss* in Germany represent a residual category who face serious risks of not completing vocational training or postsecondary education and the resulting poor employment prospects. In part, these limitations on educational attainment are legal and policy-driven constraints. Many American states and German *Länder* simply do not offer special education students the curricular conditions necessary to complete any type of qualified certification, even if their special education services would not limit their taking part in academic or vocational courses.

Emphasizing the structural differences between the two educational systems in terms of stratification, dropout rates of special education students in the US are less than one third as high as in Germany. Not only the greater (negative) selectivity of the German special school population but also the belief among American students within their comprehensive school that the high-school diploma or certificate is within reach plausibly results in higher expectations for themselves (as well as among their teachers, parents, and classmates). In contrast to Germany's rigidly structured school system, the American comprehensive school makes far greater curricular flexibility and mobility possible, effectively postponing the judgment of a student's future opportunities to the transition to further education or employment, which exemplifies the difference between a "sponsored" and a "contest" mobility system (see Turner 1960).

Age-Out

An important rationale for American youth with individualized education programs not to dropout, but to remain in school longer—to "age-out" at around age 21—is clearly related to the provision of services in school. For individuals and families, this extension of institutionalized support offers at least a short-term solution to the difficulties of the school-to-work transition for youth facing discrimination in labor markets. Although individualized education programs should now include a "transition plan," this aspect of already overburdened teachers' work remains mostly bureaucratic or even rhetorical due to the lack of connections with vocational training providers and potential employers. For those students who do not drop out, and move from high school to further, mainly school-based, programs, special education participation can delay entry into the labor market. US longitudinal data show that the more vocational training disabled youth have received in high school, the more likely they were to succeed in finding paid work (Wagner et al. 1993), yet vocational training plays a comparatively minor role in contrast to Germany.

In Germany, being enrolled in school is not a prerequisite for receiving social services. If students are officially classified disabled and thus eligible independent of student status, they may have little incentive to remain in school. Conversely, integrated

students who have access to social services, but need no assistance during school hours, may well not be considered “disabled.” In other words, the US invests in services for students to enable their attainment, but makes their participation in certain tracks difficult by providing services during class times even when this competes with instruction. Germany does not often provide services in general schools, and these are the domain of social policy, thus are not incentives for gatekeepers to retain them in general schools or for students to remain in school. From a life-course perspective, this comparison highlights the different weight accorded to educational and social policy and helps to explain why German students leave secondary schooling earlier than those in the US.

Vocational Training and Postsecondary Education

Since four fifths of German special school-leavers do not receive a *Hauptschulabschluss*, they are likely to remain in a holding pattern (“cooling-out”) in state-sponsored vocational training programs. Given the traditional importance of Germany’s dual system of in-school and in-firm vocational education and training, we might expect this combination of schooling and practical training also to be offered to graduates of special schools. However, with the exception of vocational training sites (*Berufsbildungswerke*) and specially operated workshops, most students remain in, or return to, a full-time school setting, if at all.

The German system of vocational training is lauded for providing young adults relatively smooth school-to-work transitions. After 1980, the majority of youth beginning vocational training held an intermediate (*mittlere Reife*) or upper secondary school-leaving (*Hochschulreife*) certificate; indeed, vocational training is more popular than going to college, especially as apprenticeships increasingly offered in the white-collar commercial sector promise higher status jobs (Pollmann-Schult & Mayer 2004). Indeed, ever fewer school-leavers without certificates (*Hauptschule* level) are able to secure a dual system training opportunity, even in the lower status craft sector (Solga 2008). Immigrant youth who have less schooling and lower qualification levels face daunting labor market transitions; however, should they succeed in finding an apprenticeship, this often compensates and increases their labor market chances (see Seibert 2005). As almost all youth and young adults who enter the dual system of vocational training have at least the lowest school-leaving certificate, special school-leavers similarly face greater difficulties at this transition to vocational training. Longitudinal studies of educational and labor market trajectories of special school-leavers are needed to conclusively answer questions about the effects of schooling and training (see Powell & Pfahl 2009).

In the US, more than half of all high-school graduates go on to some form of post-secondary education. Despite considerable attrition rates, even having “some college” is helpful in finding work and is reflected in higher salaries. The premium rewarded to Bachelor’s degree holders is far greater. American longitudinal studies show that high-school special education students who participated in school-based vocational training have better chances of finding work (see Wagner et al. 1993). Disabled students are increasingly likely to go on to higher education, but more than their nondisabled peers, they attend a 2-year junior or community college. There, students may attain an Associate’s degree before going on to a 4-year college or university. However, mirroring

the overall population, the vast majority do not complete their studies at a 2-year community college or transfer to a college offering the Bachelor's degree, which generally have higher graduation rates. In the US, the focus has been only on gaining entry to college, not on completion. Further, low high-school graduation rates are outdone by even lower college graduation rates.

While only suggestive, studies do indicate that the barrier of not having the necessary certificate for tertiary education does impact German special school-leavers more than American special education students. More than 9% of 1st-year students in American postsecondary education institutions self-reported being disabled in 2000 (NSF 2003); however, self-reports are a problematic measure especially in postsecondary education (see Wagner et al. 2006). In Germany, the national organization providing services to students (*Studentenwerk*) conducted a survey in which only 2.3% of students considered themselves as disabled, but a further 10.4% reported a chronic illness in 1994 (BMAS 1998: 47; Hurst 1998: 85). These figures once again highlight the fact that many secondary students with impairments and illnesses are integrated in general schools without receiving special education services. They may simply remain hidden due to state bureaucratic counting procedures and differential self-reporting patterns. Because children with impairments or illnesses need not necessarily have special educational needs and vice versa, administrative procedures and official statistics should not be mistaken as a full "census" of all disabled children and youth (Felkendorff 2003). Apart from individual-level differences in dis/abilities, efforts, and aspirations, comparing Germany and the US manifests the importance of opportunity structures, not only for learning but also of attaining credentials necessary for employment, further study, or even to access basic vocational training needed to secure work in low-status occupations. As expected, disabled men in both Germany and the US with at least a high-school degree have higher median earnings and higher income (before and after government transfer payments) than less-educated disabled men (Daly 1997: 115; see Büchtemann, Schupp & Soloff 1994 for German-American postsecondary and labor market trajectories).

Variance in Special Education Systems and Indicators

Who participates in special education? In this section, the special education population will be disaggregated to better compare each national educational system's patterns of differentiation and the variance found in the country analyses. The groups of disabled students and those with special educational needs are not one and the same, but official statistics report only those students who receive services, whereas student surveys rely on self-reporting. The relativity of disability manifests itself in highly variable classification rates, historically, nationally, and by region. The group dimensions age, gender, poverty, and race/ethnicity vary according to disability category and to region, as individual and environmental characteristics interact.

In terms of age, in both Germany and the US, early intervention programs have become increasingly important as research shows how crucial early learning experiences

and preventive measures are. Especially transitions between German school types have consequences due to the lack of permeability. Students' risk of transfer to a special school rises continuously and then declines, with the rate peaking at age 14, at the end of first secondary stage, and falling off sharply thereafter by age 19. In the US, national enrollment data show that 9- and 10-year-old children are most likely to be classified as having student disabilities as they transition from primary to secondary schools. The remaining nonclassified students' probability of receiving an individualized education program declines steadily thereafter, but services are guaranteed until age 21 in most states.

Reflecting a pattern of gender distribution found in many developed countries for decades, nearly two thirds of special school students in these two countries are boys (OECD 1999). Whereas boys, in the US, are overrepresented in special education, they are slightly underrepresented in "gifted and talented" education. In Germany by 2002, the proportion of girls attending special schools had declined to 36% (Statistisches Bundesamt 2002) and their lead in the top school form (*Gymnasium*) has increased. Thus, boys in both Germany and the US seem to be increasingly at an overall disadvantage given their, at times, considerable overrepresentation in special education and slight underrepresentation in the top American school track or German school type.

Low socioeconomic status not only adversely affects health; it is "the most consistently associated indicator of poor academic achievement and school failure" (Land & Legters 2002: 4f.). A large proportion of special education participants are children from low-income families. Yet, the US has much higher child poverty rates than Germany (double by most estimates). In the US, compensatory education (e. g., *Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, "*Head Start*") was conceived to reduce the adverse effects of childhood poverty, minority status, and other characteristics on learning. However, special education provides far greater resources targeted to individual students and their individual needs. More importantly, it replaces the "cultural deficit" model with a medical "individual deficit" model legitimated by clinical diagnosis and cloaked in a "therapeutic morality without parallel in any other area of civil society" (Gliedman & Roth 1980: 302). As mentioned earlier, while the official definition of "learning disability" in the US expressly rejects classification of children who are having difficulty learning due to material disadvantage, in Germany, this category mainly reflects the effects of low socioeconomic status, including culturally specific interpretations of behavior. Even if classification is based on clinical diagnosis, the vast majority of students sent to be evaluated are found in need of special educational services. Studies confirm that today, as a century ago, nearly all students attending German special schools (category: learning) belonged to the lowest socioeconomic status group (Begemann 1970; Wocken 2000b). This special school type seems to serve teachers in the *Hauptschule* by giving them another school to which they may transfer those at-risk students whose disadvantages cannot sufficiently be compensated for. Yet, the rationale of increased resources outweighing the stigmatization of attending a special school has not been borne out by research (Wocken 2000b: 494), although this cleavage affects most dialogue about special education. Because less education is also strongly associated with less occupational success and thus with lower income, and conversely less wealth with more disability, the failure to effectively compensate

for these material, cognitive, and physical disadvantages early in life results in a confluence of social and health trajectories. However, it is not only children living in poverty who face the highest probability of transfer out of general schools and classrooms. In Germany and the US, there is also significant disproportionality by racial or ethnic group in special education.

Turning now to race, ethnicity, and national origin, disproportionality based on such characteristics was calculated using several indicators, all of which highlight different aspects of the same social phenomenon that has attracted considerable criticism to special education and segregated special schools in particular. In a well-known finding in the US, Blacks have higher probabilities of classification in certain categories, such as “mental retardation” and “emotional disturbance,” but not in “learning disabilities.” One factor is that the psychometric tests are culturally biased in the same direction as teacher stigma or prejudice. Another is that the official IQ/school performance discrepancy definition of learning disabilities precludes classification of children due to disadvantage or other “cause” of learning problems. “Residential, social, and school segregation is so profound, especially for Blacks, that it often overrides middle-class advantages that some minority children may have” (Fischer et al. 1996: 196). Additionally, many American middle-class parents use learning disability classification to secure additional resources for their low-performing children. Having an official diagnosis of learning disability may well reduce the guilt or responsibility that parents feel for their child’s school failure. Most recent findings suggest that while “toxic social conditions” may indeed lead to higher impairment rates among children of some racial and ethnic groups, a significant source of overrepresentation may instead result from inappropriate interpretation of cultural differences and biased classification processes and instruments (Oswald, Coutinho & Best 2002: 2). In any case, sociodemographic factors are clearly associated with classification rates and with disproportionality among ethnic groups, but not necessarily in the same direction.

Indeed, the *underrepresentation* of particular groups in categories of lower educational performance seems to result from a combination of cultural patterns, beliefs in effort as being more important than natural talents, and perhaps even positive discrimination. For example, Asian-American students are clearly underrepresented in almost all student disability categories; they were one third as likely to be classified in the “learning disabilities” category as Whites. This seems to reflect the widely held “positive stereotype” that Asian students are high achievers, who make up America’s “model minority.” In Germany, children from Scandinavian countries are also consistently underrepresented in special education. Children from these countries and several other nations in western and eastern Europe are less likely than the Germans to be sorted out and sent to special schools. In part, this is due to a statistical artifact: the arrival since reunification of a large number of ethnic Germans from eastern Europe (*Aussiedler*), whose first language is not German (Powell & Wagner 2001, 2002; Herwartz-Emden 2003: 661 ff.). Children and grandchildren of large ethnic minority groups (guest workers [*Gastarbeiter*]) who came to Germany mainly in the 1960s during the economic miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*)—Italians, Yugoslavians, Turks, Greeks, Portuguese, and Spaniards—to work in Germany’s fast-growing industrial export economy face higher

probabilities of transfer to special schools and *Hauptschulen* than German citizens. Overall, non-Germans have 70% higher odds of attending a special school (*Sonderschule*), but more than double the likelihood of attending a special school in the category “learning.” Among the factors suggested to be responsible for this troubling regularity are the lack of language skills, early environmental risks, poverty rates, family structures, religious affiliation, and discrimination—similar factors as are mentioned as explanatory variables in the American case.

Summarizing these comparative findings, we more fully understand that special education represents children and youth at the nexus of multiple social inequalities with many ascriptive attributes, including dis/ability, gender, and race/ethnicity. However, the effects of social, economic, and cultural disadvantages are evidently hardly separable from impairments and learning difficulties that are identified during children’s school careers. In both countries, the cultural and gendered realities of special education student bodies are not reflected in the teaching staff, exacerbating the existing cleavage between school gatekeepers’ and students’ cultural, social, and economic capital. Higher poverty rates and greater racial and ethnic diversity, combined with the wide diffusion of special education programs in nearly every American school, lead to a higher proportion of students in American special education than in Germany’s special schools. The proximity and availability of special education also leads to American students being identified, referred, and assessed as having a disability somewhat earlier than German students.

Alongside the group dimensions of variance are those of time and space. As we have seen, the challenges presented by heterogeneity are dealt with in the US and Germany in distinct institutional arrangements. Here, ranges of variance emphasize the effects of path dependent developments of educational systems. Both countries have multiple levels of educational governance, and state and locality specific school structures are common. Historical patterns of classification and allocation of students but also attempts to further inclusive education in German and American school systems show continuing regional disparities—in special education participation and attainment. The 50 American states and the 16 German *Länder* exhibit often highly divergent degrees of organizational segregation, separation, integration, and inclusion of children who participate in special education. State-specific school structures and learning opportunities provide vastly different experiences for students in regular, special, and inclusive educational settings. Critical issues that demand further analysis include categorical boundaries and contextual conditions of inclusion in states and localities.

This chapter described similarities and differences in the population served in both countries, showed where these children and youth are educated, and compared what educational outputs and outcomes they attain. Each of the factors presented can be thought of as a barrier to—or facilitator of—inclusive education. The final chapter compares factors responsible for the expansion and divergence of the two systems since the early 20th century. It clarifies the multiplicity of currently operating special education programs analyzed above as it discusses the main barriers to inclusion that have hindered these countries from realizing the international charters, federal mandates (US), and recommendations (Germany) that call for inclusive education.

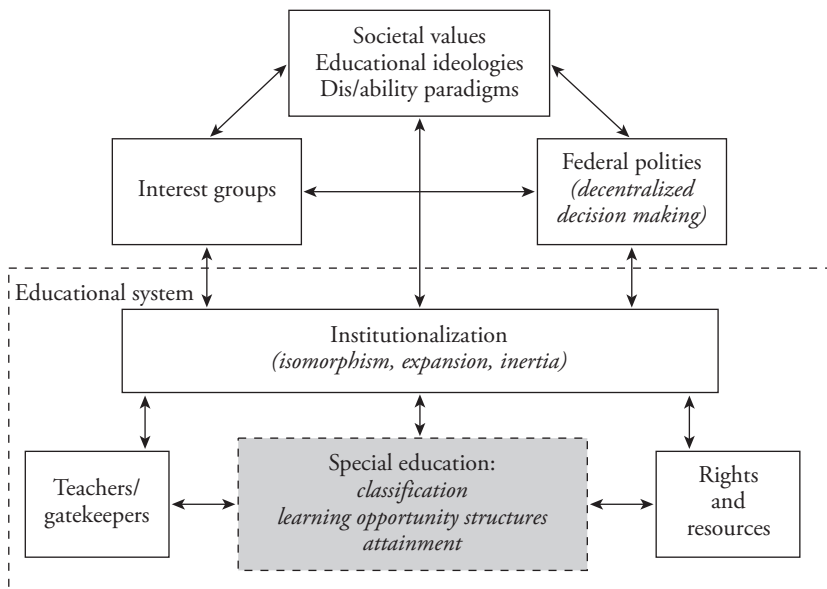
The Expansion and Divergence of Special Education Systems

This concluding chapter presents factors that account for the patterns observed in the previous classification, country case study, and comparative chapters. How can we make sense of the variable classification rates into special education, the dissimilar learning opportunity structures, and the disparities in educational attainment demonstrated in the German and American special education systems? Referring to similarities and differences, I propose explanations for the long-term institutionalization of special educational systems, specifically the opportunities for, and barriers to, reforms toward school integration and inclusive education. Institutionalized as segregated or separated over the past 200 years, special educational systems limit the opportunities that contemporary decision makers, interest groups, and individual gatekeepers and participants have to realize school integration and inclusive education. Despite a multitude of local, national, and international reform initiatives, Germany maintains its segregated special school system, whereas in the United States nearly all disabled children are integrated in general schools, though many spend part of their school day outside the general classroom. Why did these countries institutionalize school integration to such different extents—and continue to diverge?

The institutionalization of special education in the two countries but also differences between them and changes within them must be seen in the context of particular ideas, interests, and institutions. Ideologies of merit and equality guided interests, as the disciplines of psychology, medicine, and (special) education elaborated the binary concepts of in/educability, ab/normality, and dis/ability. Increasingly differentiated classification systems (re)defined symbolic and social boundaries—labels and school settings—between groups of children and youth and were institutionalized in educational policies and in schools. Policymakers, social movements, school gatekeepers, as well as parents and students accepted, challenged, or revised these concepts as they were implemented in myriad special education institutions across the US and Germany. These diverse educational settings range along a continuum from residential segregation to full-time inclusion in restructured classrooms that acknowledge and actively engage student diversity. Some disability activists, advocacy organizations, and parents' associations continue to emphasize the importance of maintaining separate settings as an option among many. An increasing majority calls for inclusive education. Both groups rely on scientific knowledge, authorized professional approaches to special educational needs, international conventions on the importance of education for all, and expanded citizenship rights to bolster their claims.

Factors that help account for the major differences found to exist between special education systems in Germany and the US (see Figure 8.1) are: (1) special education isomorphism, educational system expansion, and inertia in the institutional division of special and general education; (2) societal values, educational ideologies, and dis/ability

Figure 8.1
Factors in the Development of Special Education Systems



paradigms reflected in the educational system; (3) interests of professionals, parents, and advocates; (4) federal politics and decision-making structures; (5) rights and resources; and (6) school teachers and other gatekeepers. In particular, comparing considerable regional differences among the 50 American states and 16 German *Länder* emphasize that decentralized control over education and schools as loosely coupled organizations obstructs the achievement of goals, such as integration in general schools or inclusive classrooms, that serve all children regardless of their perceived and measured dis/abilities.

We focus on three key institutional processes (isomorphism, expansion, and inertia) over the 20th century to understand how special education organizations were institutionally embedded in national educational systems and why the German and American special education systems have increasingly diverged. If, in these federal systems, the regional variance reflects the origins and developmental paths of specific state/*Land* educational systems (Hofsäss 1993; Richardson 1999), the cross-national comparison here emphasizes the persistent institutional division of special and general education.

Embedding Subsidiary Special Education

Reflecting societal values and dis/ability paradigms at their genesis, special educational systems imitated general educational systems in each country. Even as both systems reduced the exclusion of children with disabilities, especially since the 1960s, they did

Table 8.1
 Institutional Processes Embedding Special Education in General Education Systems

<i>Process</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
Genesis	Segregated special school types within a hierarchical educational system (interschool differentiation)	Special education is one track within comprehensive schools (intraschool differentiation)
Expansion	First wave: universalized special education (growing, heterogeneous student bodies lead to special classes and schools)	
	Second wave: organizational differentiation (10 school types)	Second wave: individual differentiation (14 impairment categories)
	Relief for general educators; legitimacy for special educators	
Persistence	Special educators' professional interests (resources, authority); bureaucratization	
	Legitimate selection into high resource, lowest expectation/status school types	Legitimate selection into high resource, lowest expectation/status track

so without departing from the path that was established on the eve of the 20th century: the independent segregated support school (*Hilfsschule*) in Germany and the separate class within the general school in the US. Special education, dependent on transfers and serving those barred from, or selected out of, general education, assumed the institutional logic of each expanding, differentiated national educational system, becoming a subsidiary program (see Table 8.1).

Special education expansion derives from two sources, one largely exogenous, the other significantly endogenous. The first wave of growth followed universalized compulsory schooling mandated by laws in Germany and in the US that greatly increased the heterogeneity of student bodies in existing public schools. Schools and teachers responded to the challenge that diverse students pose for schooling efficiency by establishing new organizational forms, justified by the nascent academic and professional field of special education and related fields. Educational expansion facilitated affirmation of the goal of schooling for all children, yet growing diversity led to official differentiation and standardization, both attempts to resolve the tension between expanded access and organizational constraints. As John Richardson (1999) has shown, rules of *access* and of *passage* governed the exemption of those deemed “ineducable” or “disabled.” The second expansion wave was self-generating and self-reinforcing as special educators responded to the supply of students, provided by general educators, by elaborating the categories to identify these students and by increasing the organizational options to school them. In the German case, this led to more than a dozen special school types. In contrast, American special educators defined individual “exceptionalities” (later: “disabilities” and “special educational needs”), eventually including 14 categories of students attending

special classes, from “developmentally delayed” to “gifted and talented.” Furthermore, the contemporary developments of Germany’s stable segregated special school system and, in the US, the ever larger special education programs, mostly located within comprehensive schools, exhibit considerable path dependence. The American states, much more so than Germany’s *Länder*, have increased the permeability between these two branches of education.

Isomorphic Educational Structures

To explain isomorphic institutional change—structures becoming more similar over time—it is useful to distinguish three types of homogenizing pressures: *coercive*, from political influence and legitimacy needs; *mimetic*, as a response to uncertainty; and *normative*, through professionalization (see DiMaggio & Powell 1983, 1991; Scott 1995). All three help to distinguish changes in the subsidiary relationship between general and special education. As rationalized states gain dominance over (public) schooling, schools increasingly reflect rules, laws, and organizational forms legitimated and institutionalized by the state (Meyer 1992a). Directly imposed or not, standardization, compatibility, and coordination demands apply pressure on organizations that are dependent on the state for resources, authority, and legitimacy. Despite such *coercive* pressure, special education professional associations successfully mediated the myriad demands of governments, schools, members, and advocates to advance the interests of the profession.

Early on, Prussian civil servants created an administrative division within the central state bureaucracy for *Hilfsschulen*, the genesis of the German special school system. American local school boards instead set up special classes in city school districts. The resulting educational administrations emphasize formal ritual compliance, of which these special schools and classrooms are testaments, as their efficacy, and far more their equity, have been continuously questioned and debated since the very beginnings of special education. Especially since the human rights revolution after the Second World War that accentuated personhood, governments have been keen to ensure that local school systems include children with disabilities, mandating the provision of services for them.

Mimetic processes can be found in the modeling of new (special) education organizations on the successful ones already operating in the field, given such limited alternatives to special schools and classes as asylums and “state institutions.” The latter have lost their legitimacy as disability was demystified and ordered by special education, mainly in conjunction with the clinical professions of medicine and psychology.

The process of professionalization represents the third isomorphic pressure, *normative*. Professionals guard their occupational autonomy, attempting to control how and where they work. The establishment of specialized training programs, research to legitimate particular treatments or explore teaching methods, and professional associations to network the people and disseminate the results are another primary source of isomorphic change. For these reasons, the organizational forms established in special education programs—expanding beyond, but remaining dependent on general

education for most of its students—were institutionally isomorphic to those of general educational systems

The institutionalization paths of special education differ between Germany and the US. In Germany, the segregated school type that provided support for “abnormal,” mainly poor, children served as the model for later differentiation. In the US, these children may have remained in general schools, but in lower curricular tracks, with special education offering a further option (often in conjunction with grade retention) below the academic, general, and vocational. In both cases, special educators sought to care for and control children with disabilities, substituting for asylums, families, and for general education. The German competition *between* school types in a hierarchical educational system (interschool segregation) contrasts with the competition *within* American individual comprehensive schools (intraschool segregation) and between districts, due to residential patterns that produce considerable resource inequalities.

Special Education Expansion

In both Germany and the US, “functional” differentiation—responding to increasingly heterogeneous student bodies originally resulting from compulsory schooling and child labor laws—was later reinforced by changing pedagogical assumptions about individuals as learners with complex special needs (Garnier 1980: 91). Special education’s dependence on transfers from general education (representing demand) was complemented by its elaboration of classification systems (categories), lobbying activities, and offers of support (representing supply). The first waves of expansion were driven by policymakers’ decisions, such as the passage of compulsory schooling laws, industrialization, demographic changes (immigration, urbanization, increased life expectancy), and nascent disciplines, such as statistics and psychometrics. The second expansion phase resulted from (special) educators strengthening their profession through specializations they elaborated.

While these developments affected population size and composition, massive special education expansion (mid-1950s onward) was driven by the conflation of two distinct student groups associated with pedagogies and professional divisions: those with low-incidence or “hard” disabilities (such as blindness), and those with high-incidence or “soft” disabilities relating to learning or behavior standards. Such distinctions are highly problematic, especially given multiple disabilities, but they serve as the basis of professional specializations and the grouping of students.

In Germany, the national supply of special schools (*Sonderschulen*) peaked in 1999, a quarter of a century after the Education Council declared inclusion to be preferable to segregation. While some *Länder* have begun to consolidate or transform *Sonderschulen* into resource centers, others continue to build them anew (touted as infrastructure investments), producing yet more supply. Effectively, educational systems are stratified in five “dis/ability” tiers. Yet, some *Länder* serve a large minority of students in inclusive education, resource centers, or with ambulatory services, demonstrating that, even in Germany, special schools are not the only method to provide individualized support.

Model programs, which have proven effective, have encouraged some *Länder* to pass laws extending or even prioritizing inclusive education, even if adverse fiscal conditions and political priorities hinder their nationwide expansion.

In the US, inclusion may be a goal to which many school gatekeepers, school systems, and state educational agencies subscribe; however, innumerable court cases have been necessary since the original *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) was passed in 1975 to provide access for children with disabilities to their local public schools. Even as half of all students in special education remain in the general classroom for most of their school day, considerable differences between states remain. Nationally, still a quarter of all special education students are separated for most of their school day or segregated the entire day. In some local districts in the US, expansive definitions of special educational needs or risk, along with extensive “child find” activities, have led to such low “classification thresholds” for special education that up to a third of all students spend some portion of their school day in special education classrooms. The expansion, especially since the mid-1960s and with a recent surge since passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, resulted in special educational services being offered within nearly every school. But districts also must maintain, or fund, a continuum of placement options, often ranging from residential segregated facilities to full-time inclusion in general classrooms, providing the “least restrictive environment” for particular students at a wide range of costs.

As national and state/*Land* educational systems expanded, special education experienced both exogenous and endogenous growth as it became embedded within local schools and systems. Simultaneously, both German and American educational systems have witnessed struggles to reduce the outright exclusion, segregation, or separation of children and youth with disabilities. Increasingly, over the 20th century, children considered disabled participated in public schooling, but only since the 1970s (and not 1870 as many claim; see Meyer, Ramirez & Soysal 1992) was truly universalized primary and secondary schooling achieved. The contemporary challenge for proponents of inclusion is to restructure institutions once again to educate all children together full-time. However, this goal contradicts the logic not only of Germany’s vertically differentiated segregating system but also of the American comprehensive separating system. Although some localities and states/*Länder* have realized such fundamental change, opportunities for such path departure are constrained by the legitimacy of the respective segregating and separating structures of special education, by the specialized additional resources that special education provides, and by the authority of, and vested interests in, special education.

Persistent Separation, Resistance to Inclusion?

School systems and individual schools are deeply embedded in the ideologies and institutional arrangements of the state/*Land* educational systems. Specific historical structures in these educational systems exhibit considerable institutional inertia. Such factors as the enactment dates of compulsory schooling laws, as an indicator of the

“institutional age” of a state educational system (Richardson 1999), shaped the development of special education programs. Early establishment of particular asylums or special education facilities pioneered not only disciplinary ontologies and methodologies but also organizational strategies and structures.

Yet, innovative programs that challenged the status quo have been repeatedly realized, usually with extraordinary effort. There are national and regional differences not only in institutional embeddedness but also in vested interests and in the extent of centralization (see Archer 1984). The influence of these origins and historical paths on later development and persistence is heightened in the German and American decentralized systems because subnational policies provide the frameworks and the conditions within which local school systems operate. Further, the loosely coupled structure of schools restrict the impact that top-down reforms have on state and local education administrations and local schools: “Decoupling enables organizations to maintain standardized, legitimating, formal structures while their activities vary in response to practical considerations” (Meyer & Rowan [1978] 1992: 57 f.). In both countries, the reality in schools neither wholly reflects the law nor the restructuring that social movements and educational researchers have emphasized as key to realize inclusive education. This gap between the conditions necessary for inclusive education and standard operating procedures has raised doubts about its prospects for country-wide implementation (Kavale & Forness 2000). Nevertheless, a wide range of schools has examined taken-for-granted assumptions, moved beyond bureaucratic compliance, and become fundamentally transformed into inclusive schools (Ware 2004; Sapon-Shevin 2007). Special and inclusive education debates persist, although a settlement may be found in melding the systemic focus on necessary conditions for educational restructuring, with attention to reformed local practices that serve each child’s individual needs (Andrews et al. 2000).

Growth in existing organizations proceeds in educational systems along paths chosen long ago and influenced by the dynamics of which student bodies attend which schools and which teachers instruct them. Specialization and accessibility costs are traditional functional arguments brought routinely to justify separate organizational structures and to counter proposals for the shift to integration and inclusive education. However, educational access, elimination of physical and communication barriers, and technological advances, as well as antidiscrimination laws that emphasize individual rights, reduce the legitimacy of separation and segregation.

In Germany, integration has been exceedingly difficult to achieve against the legitimated segregated system and its vested interests, exemplified in the modest success of comprehensive school reform: *Gesamtschulen* were an addition to, not a replacement for, the traditional sponsored mobility system (Leschinsky & Mayer 1999a, 1999b; see Turner 1960). Higher status groups mainly hindered this reform through the mechanism of party politics but also supported model inclusive education programs in some *Länder*. Although this lost battle reduced the overall potential for integration, the comprehensive schools had also often refrained from including students with disabilities in their integrative vision.

In the US, internal differentiation is by track, with interests and ability paramount in the decision to take college preparatory, general, or vocational courses. Although

the opponents of tracking have been vocal, it continues to occur more or less informally. However, even the American comprehensive system has yet to implement fully inclusive educational programs for half of the student population classified as having special educational needs. In these contrasting institutional arrangements, segregation or separation are difficult to overcome due to institutional inertia and to each system's legitimated processes of differentiation and allocation (see Carrier 1986b). Institutionalized in path dependent fashion, these contrasting special education programs within expanding national educational systems reflect societal values, educational ideologies, and dis/ability paradigms.

Values, Ideologies, and Paradigms

To maintain democratic values and to enhance individual life chances are the most important goals of American public schooling. These are to be realized by (1) integration through participation in comprehensive schools that reflect the pluralism of the places in which they serve as community centers and (2) individual aptitude and achievement, continuously measured by standardized tests. Especially important in an immigrant nation, public schools were to create a unified American society out of myriad cultural, linguistic, and religious groups (“*e pluribus unum*”; see Bellah et al. 1985). Even if equal opportunities are not always forthcoming or realized in practice, especially due to residential segregation and disparities on the basis of wealth and ascriptive characteristics such as ethnicity, they are idealized. Meritocratic myths are among the most powerful of American beliefs. Large investments in education focus on leveling the playing field for individuals. On the other hand, unequal educational outputs and outcomes are not only tolerated but celebrated: Individual students are ranked by, and publicly rewarded for, their outstanding academic, athletic, and aesthetic achievements. Orientation toward the future emphasizes not only aptitude but also effort, and most especially personality development. This prospective view encourages belief in each person's unique potential, growth, and contributions. Within this logic, individual “exceptionalities” are to be acknowledged, compensated, or further developed to ensure the best possible performance. Thus, the federally authorized individualized educational programs that every student in special education receives can be understood as a thoroughly American “individualist” solution to the problem of school failure.

Both societies share meritocratic values typical of Western capitalism, with individual achievement and performance most important, but with social justice—providing for needs, compensating for disadvantages—also crucial (Roller 2000: 106 ff.). However, the balance of these values is dynamic and relative, as evidenced by considerable regional variance. Differing, often conflicting historical and contemporary education ideals, such as integration or segregation, are reflected throughout these educational systems. On the whole, American schooling has aimed for common egalitarian schooling to provide equalized educational opportunities that facilitate meritocratic competition, but with accepted large disparities of outcomes. German schooling, an aspect of the state's benevolent paternalism, historically aimed for appropriate status (and its mainte-

nance) in schooling, elaborate vocational training, and occupational careers. Whereas, in Germany, differences between school types are crucial, in the US, differences between regions and individual schools are highly influential. Moreover, this status versus ranking logic extends to individual schools and students. Special education in Germany has always served those deemed to have the least “ability.” Not so in the US, where both slowest and fastest learners were often included in education programs serving “exceptional” students. This highlights the difference between the German status-based system with teacher evaluations paramount and the American ranking system guided by continuous intelligence testing. That in each system some students will deviate from the norm emphasizes the importance of cultural definitions of “in/educability,” “ab/normality,” and “dis/ability” that were constructed in increasingly multifaceted statistical classification systems, based on the normal curve.

Within the German educational system, disability is usually defined as an individual deficit that must be compensated—by attendance at the specialized school established for the group of students classified into a particular special educational needs category (“*Sonderschulbedürftigkeit*”). German definitions of student disabilities from the early 1950s to 1994 were thus administrative-organizational. The institutionalized school type a student attended defined him or her. By contrast, social policies defined disabilities on a percentage scale (0–100 “degree of disability”), acknowledging that individuals can be more or less disabled (in increments of 10%), but with the concept of “severe disability” (*Schwerbehinderung*) the most important category. War veterans, highly organized in large powerful membership organizations and the *Contergan* (thalidomide) scandal of the 1960s emphasized disability discourses in which the disabled individual is not guilty for his or her own misfortune—those who were impaired by war or industry were easier to acknowledge (Freitag 2005). Guilt about the murder of several hundred thousand disabled people under National Socialism facilitated responses that were rational-technical, scientifically legitimated, and generous. Construction of one of the most differentiated special school systems in the world was an integral part of this charitable, but nevertheless discriminatory (Frowein 1998), response to differences of “ability.”

In American schools, classification into impairment categories usually occurs as part of a more complex process of producing an individualized education program. Transitioning into special education most often results in compensatory special class placement for some of the school day, but with many categories of students together. Because individualization is countered by later heterogeneous grouping, single categories are not as important as they are in Germany, where each category often not only represents a particular school type but also requires attendance there. Yet, in society generally, disability is also framed in social and political terms, due in large measure to the activism of the disability movement as an ever stronger minority group. Paradoxically, the US simultaneously prizes conformity and values multicultural diversity. Since the 1960s, dis/abilities have been increasingly included as one dimension of that diversity. American notions of “ab/normality” are multicultural and heterogeneous, with permeable boundaries between groups (see Table 8.2).

In both cases, individuals whose “abnormality” has been naturalized and legitimated as “student disability” by teachers and other gatekeepers applying clinical diagnoses (see

Table 8.2
Societal Values, Ideologies, and Paradigms in (Special) Education and Dis/Ability

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
Societal ideals	Homogeneity; status maintenance	Individualism; pluralism
Integrative power	Nation-state	Community; school
Educational goals	Appropriate education and individual achievement <i>Bildung</i>	Equal opportunities; participation
Disability (society)	Individual deficit	Minority group
Disability (school)	Institutional: Schools offer protection; status group “low ability”	Individual: Special education compensates deficits; ranking

below) are likely to suffer reduced educational opportunities, despite additional resources, and are less likely to attain educational certificates required to access postsecondary education. By espousing individual-deficit models of dis/ability, the disciplinary and professional power of psychology and medicine legitimate children's placement in low-status special education. Although disabled persons are frequently not highly regarded in either society, educational responses to individuals with perceived impairments and those who are considered “abnormal” vary considerably within the countries and over time, suggesting that additional factors are necessary to explain the divergent institutionalization of special education as well as tenacious regional variance. If the dominant German classification system over the postwar period reified impairments in many generously staffed, but segregated, special school types, the American system maintained medical model impairment categories to specify legitimate functional needs to compensate, even as society moved beyond the clinical deficit paradigm to include economic and more positive sociopolitical, minority, and human variation models of dis/ability.

Thus, differences in societal values and ideologies influenced educational systems as well as evolved educational and social policies and dis/ability classification systems and their categorical boundaries. As Linda Ware (2004: 185) emphasizes, inclusive education reforms must explicitly engage broader societal attitudes toward disability, especially as these shift from a clinical model to one that understands disability as an ascriptive category similar to race, gender, and class. Yet, the institutionalization of special education in Germany and the US reflects not only dis/ability paradigms and societal values but also depends on path-dependent developments in expanding national (special) educational systems. Despite postwar rhetorical commitments in both countries to democratic schooling with the twin emphases of merit and equality of opportunity, the institutionalized educational systems also contained highly inegalitarian elements, most notably the system of race segregation in the American South and the segregated, hierarchically differentiated, school systems in Germany.

Professionals, Parents, and Advocates

Certain interests in maintaining or changing special and inclusive education have been more successful in setting the political agenda and reforming special education organizations than others. The diverse interests of advocates for disabled students, professionals, parents, and policymakers have often led to conflicts. There have been winners and losers. Who mobilized to change schools to reduce the exclusion of disabled children and youth? How much did they influence policymakers in controlling the agenda and affect gatekeepers working within schools? An understanding of interest groupings and their victories and defeats is necessary to explain the institutionalization of special education. Political parties have played a less significant role in disability policy than in educational matters generally or in representing certain perspectives on values and ideologies, such as equality and social justice. More importantly, professional interests of special educators, physicians, and psychologists have had direct and indirect influences on the expansion of special education's organizational structures and defending these (persistence). The classification systems constructed and legitimated by these disciplines influence research agendas, teacher training, and gatekeeper knowledge. Furthermore, powerful membership associations have continuously lobbied national, state, and local policymakers.

While coalitions of parents and disability advocacy organizations have effectively used pressure and protest to limit the power or shift the goals of professional associations, they have done so most often according to the institutional logic of the education system. Nevertheless, the American disability movement, and the German movement following the US model with some delay, successfully utilized a rights-based strategy with both lobbying and protests crucial to achieve passage of antidiscrimination legislation. However, the judiciary in the US has treated disabled children as a "suspect class," whereas, in Germany, the interests of disabled children have consistently been weighed against those of the majority, in effect implementing cost-benefit analysis to the aim of inclusion (Degener 2001). Additionally, German public opinion, dominated by large neocorporatist organizations, is far more rigid than the American opinion, where innumerable flexible interest groups arise continuously to champion new issues and causes (see Savelsberg 2000: 203; see Table 8.3).

In Germany, the most influential group was, and is, the special school teachers and administrators, organized in an extremely successful membership association. Since 1898, the Association for German Special Education (*Verband Deutscher Sonderpädagogik* [VDS]) and its precursors have provided a strong voice and disciplinary legitimation for the special school system. In the postwar period, the VDS's 1954 white paper distributed to *Länder* cultural ministers facilitated a critical juncture, as it led to the discipline-inspired, not empirically validated, differentiation of separate school types. Since then, special educators have established, controlled, and defended up to a dozen discrete school types based on impairment categories. By contrast, a multitude of American advocacy organizations, the disability rights movement, and parent activists—building on the Supreme Court's integrative *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954—ensured that special education would be offered in comprehensive schools,

Table 8.3
Interest Groups

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
Dominant group	Special school teachers and administrators	Disability movement and advocates (parents, organizations)
Locus of power	Schools; lobbying <i>Länder</i> education ministries	Courts; lobbying Congress
Professional association	<i>Verband Deutscher Sonderpädagogik</i> (VDS)	Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

reducing segregation. Yet, the Supreme Court's conservative majority on June 26, 2007, partially rescinded that landmark decision that had ended state-sponsored school segregation in the US. At the national level, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), established in 1922, has coordinated the lobbying effort needed for the Congress to eventually pass legislation guaranteeing all disabled children a "free appropriate public education" in the "least restrictive environment" (EAHCA, 1975). Based on an unusual coalition of political actors, this consensus on the right to education brought special education law to the forefront of educational policymaking (see Melnick 1995). Special educators in a comprehensive school system mainly argued for mainstreaming, seeing in that type of program potential access to every comprehensive school. To guarantee that this categorical program would not be abused but also that public schools would no longer shirk their duty to this vulnerable class of students, an extensive and heavily bureaucratic program developed within each district, including "child find" recruitment requirements codified in law (Baker 2002).

The specific resources and rights demanded by the disability movements, parental groups, and advocacy organizations in Germany and in the US vary along with differences in group strength. The professional disciplines of special education, medicine (rehabilitation), and psychology, together with administrators at all levels, realized their interests in both institutional expansion and continuity. Professional associations have played particularly salient lobbying roles in national and state but also local contexts. The resulting social, political, and economic conflicts between levels of government and between special and general education led to increased legalization and bureaucratization of public schools.

In Germany, most parents and advocacy organizations argued for more resources for specialized schools. By contrast, in the US, demands for resources were secondary to participation in general schools itself, guaranteed as the right to a "free appropriate public education." Although in both cases advocates and decision makers aimed to meet individual needs *and* strive for "integration," they differed considerably in their preferred means to meet those needs manifest in the organizational forms established to realize integration—or inclusion. Reflecting the debates held since special education first emerged, some believed that social integration and later employment would depend on

the specialized training and services offered in special schools, while others argued that only integration in general classrooms (inclusion) would successfully prepare disabled children (and their classmates) for life-long inclusion in a more or less disabling society.

Special educators and allied professions operating under the clinical deficit paradigm of disability were ready and willing to utilize their special training and skills on a growing student population of classifiable children. In both countries, these professionals and their interest organizations profitably supplemented and expanded the general educational system with programs of their own. In the German case, this was an independent system with numerous school types and with the corresponding teacher training programs and civil servant career lines based on individual categories. They receive higher salaries and teach smaller classes than teachers in many other school types. In the US, although traditional special schools did not necessarily cease operation as mainstreaming increased, most special educators had favored special classes, not schools. They argued for expanded special programs within each school. Although their salaries today are roughly similar to those earned by general educators (except in primary grades), they teach smaller classes than other teachers; however, these classes are heterogeneous, with children and youth classified in many disability categories.

Disability organizations and the disability movement more generally have played an increasingly important role in politics and reform in both countries; however, here again there are important differences that reflect the society's particular historical experiences, legal traditions, and welfare state programs. Especially the American disability movement followed the civil rights movement in demanding rights, with legalization and litigation resulting from often vague policy guidelines (e. g., the words "integration" and "inclusion" are nowhere to be found in special education law) that require judicial review and interpretation. Parents and advocates have been unified in arguing for more services, but they have found no consensus as to the types of educational environments they deem most appropriate. The debate about placement in segregated schools versus school integration or inclusive education has been a constant, on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Germany, mainly self-help organizations have grown in parallel to the large powerful membership organizations that catered especially to war veterans, such as the *Sozialverband Deutschland* (formerly *Reichsbund*). These are especially important in helping individuals negotiate and navigate complex social programs to establish eligibility and administrative responsibility. However, building on the model of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) of 1990, the Alliance of Disabled Attorneys (*Bund behinderter Juristinnen und Juristen*) has had direct constitutive impact on German disability legislation (Drewes 2003). By formulating the legal text that the federal government would implement with minor alterations, the group succeeded in concretizing the antidiscrimination clause that had been added to Article 3, *Basic Law* in 1994. Both, the *Basic Law* amendment (Article 3, §3, Sentence 2: "No one may be discriminated against on the basis of disability") and the *Federal Equality Law for Disabled People* (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz* [BGG]) of 2002 aim to eliminate disadvantages and discrimination of disabled citizens. German special education developments cannot be fully comprehended without reference to these far-reaching legal changes. These parliamentary decisions are in large measure the result of the initiatives of the German branch of the international disability

movement (Heiden 1996), following primarily American models. As with Germany's ratification in 2009 of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it remains to be seen when and how these national legal developments will affect inclusive education, but it seems likely that if new cases (similar to one decided in favor of the *Land* in *BVerfG, 1 BvR 9/97*) are brought before the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), a more activist decision could be forthcoming (Graser 2004).¹ However, cases regarding school inclusion must first make their way through administrative courts, with lawyers paid by parents, not the state. Because cost considerations can be legitimately invoked to refuse integration, the German regulations work opposite to the American underspecified rights-based laws that have led to waves of litigation on behalf of individual claimants, often sponsored by the federal government.

In the US, the disability rights movement has been politically salient at all levels of government since the 1970s (see Scotch [1986] 2001; Percy 1989, 2001).² Disability organizations have an entrenched rights-based role in securing reforms. Following other minority groups, their focus is on civil rights protection, with a key strategy of judicial activism. Government consultation is weak; considerable lobbying efforts and political demonstrations have continuously played important roles in achieving passage of the disability rights laws, such as the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, the IDEA of 1975 (reauthorized 1990, 1997, and 2004) and the ADA of 1990. Neither country has a comprehensive disability policy regulatory framework, often resulting in ineffectual programs or those at cross-purposes.³ The American judiciary is called upon to interpret and define the boundaries of eligibility and make up for such lacking coherence. In special education, the courts have been active defenders of school integration as a civil right for disabled children for three decades. Throughout the 1970s, disability organizations joined the civil rights movement as a social and political force active at all levels of government and in many communities, followed by substantial, especially congressional, policymaking and federal judicial decision making.

Although the frameworks for school integration are marked by considerable national differences, innovative inclusive education programs in both countries have developed at the state/*Land*, regional, and local levels, where parent activists have worked with education administrators and teachers to develop strategies and take concrete steps to realize inclusion. Even if these often provide models for other schools and regions to emulate, best practices in inclusive education do not seem to transfer easily to schools in other contexts. Interest groups' impact on special education depends in large measure on the existing political structures. Within these federal nation-states, interest groups must negotiate multiple levels of governance and utilize an array of mechanisms to influence (special) education policy or bring about organizational change at local level.

Coercion, Cooperation, or Consensus?

Despite both being classified as federal democratiUc polities, the German and American decentralized decision-making structures determine the opportunities available for interest groups to affect existing policies, particularly in education, quite differently.

Especially the degrees of centralization, relevant educational regulations, and types of federal legislative and judicial action have structured the opportunities for change. While in Germany each *Land* retains tight control over its educational system, American localities and schools exercise far more autonomy vis-à-vis both state and national governments. However, national decision-making bodies also have had considerable impact on schooling, but in different directions. German consensus-building among the *Länder*, in securing *Länder* administrative control, leads to decision making oriented toward the lowest common denominator which hinders change. In the US, the federal government mandated civil rights relating to schooling, securing those individual rights by coercion when necessary. The crucial issues of funding (special) education, differently distributed among governmental levels in Germany and the US, but also the laws and regulations of education finance systems that produce certain incentive structures will be discussed below.

Germany's intrastate interlocking federalism divides powers exclusively: The division of competencies is by policy field with clear constitutional mandates, especially regarding education and cultural matters. While the federal parliament is responsible for civil rights legislation, *Länder* must also codify and implement these laws. Federalism supports national unity while guaranteeing state sovereignty and rights. Its political tradition has been marked by the desire for a strong state to establish national unity. Successful efforts to reduce regional disparities through considerable redistribution also work to maintain economic and cultural homogeneity. Individual *Länder* can influence federal decision making directly through the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), but education is not part of the competencies of the federal government due to the cultural sovereignty (*Kulturhoheit*) of the *Länder*, thus developments in special education are not a federal prerogative, whereas social policy programs, such as transfer payments to disabled individuals, are. Due to the experiences during the National Socialist regime, education has been purposefully and carefully protected against national government control. Thus, while the reduction of regional disparities and the support for redistributive social policies are legitimate, the federal role in education and cultural matters is circumscribed. Regional coordination through Culture Minister Conference (KMK) deliberations often leads to agreements oriented to the lowest common denominator (see Scharpf 1999 on the joint decision-making trap). "In sum, educational decision making in Germany is an open, but interwoven and fragmentary process; it favors consensus, but hampers innovation; it prevents the implementation of one-sided solutions, but is rather inflexible; it appears legally perfect, but very formalistic" (Avenarius 1995: 204). With no official constitutional mandate, German localities and schools have limited autonomy and are largely dependent on financial transfers from *Länder* governments.

By contrast, US interstate federalism emphasizes the vertical division of power and competition between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Federalism reduces central government's powers and secures individual freedom, which has led to the acceptance of social and cultural pluralism but also the existence of regional and economic disparities (Döring 2000). The American division of competencies with clear constitutional mandates is by function (e. g., federal lawmaking, state administration), not by policy field. Further, the political tradition reflects the desire for a strong society,

not state, and the rejection of centralization tendencies—except to guarantee civil rights, integration, and equality of opportunity. These key aspects affecting (special) education have led to increasing centralization, at least at the levels of discourse and policymaking; less so in the finance and control of school districts and schools, despite legalization.

Citizens have not waited for the state to act; they have demanded rights and resources, despite Americans' long-standing hesitance to give the state more powers or even their outright resistance to state interference. This pragmatic view toward applying pressure on the state to attain group goals fell mainly on Congress as the most accessible, already state/region-oriented, of the three branches of government. Increasingly, professional lobbyists and membership organizations proliferate to influence politicians, since party politics does not function at the multiple levels of the polity to organize specific interest groups (Kincaid 2001: 146 ff.). Groups that mobilized to win rights and resources were often satisfied with legislative and judicial advance, but have not always followed through in the arguably much more difficult task of state and local implementation and enforcement. Thus, within federal systems of decentralized political control, American advocates share with their German counterparts the necessity of ensuring that the formalities of legislative policymaking, commissioned accountability reports, and legal decisions are carried out in local school systems. The power of federal governments to support inclusive education and reduce school segregation and disability discrimination is restricted in both countries, but far more in Germany than in the US.

American national, state, and local education agencies share responsibility for special education. But federal and state governments have no strong institutionalized mechanism to influence each other's decision making. Financial transfers and regulatory directives from higher levels of government restrict the autonomy of localities (also of their school systems), despite their formal constitutional mandate. Creation of national policy development and programs for state and local delivery contrast with the increasing importance of individual claims. Coercive federalism was precipitated by the civil rights movement, as it demanded federal action to end state and local oppression and facilitated judicial responses to social problems (Kairys 2001; Kincaid 2001: 151). As the federal government forcibly racially desegregated the American South to secure civil rights (and school integration), the shift in power would have lasting impact for all minority groups.

In threatening to withhold funds if states and districts do not comply with anti-discrimination laws or even policies that support education in the least restrictive environment, the US federal government has more than just a symbolically significant negative sanction. Even though the federal government only pays for a modest portion of the educational programs that it mandates, few states and localities are willing to forego these funds. They have preferred to make progress on specific goals mandated in legislation. However, advances have frequently been solely in bureaucratic compliance, not in achievement of actual organizational change. Federal spending power, which previously was central to program development at state and local levels, has become increasingly "unfunded," leading to national legislation (*Unfunded Mandates Reform Act* of 1995) to reduce the cost shifts to lower levels of government. The monies to carry out categorical regulatory directives from the national level, such as special education, are

only marginally provided by the federal government. Instead, states and localities must provide the necessary funds: Their autonomy is further restricted. Litigation to ensure individual civil rights against recalcitrant districts found in noncompliance with special education laws is supported by the US Department of Education (US DoED), which provides families with attorneys free of charge (although this issue has become increasingly controversial). The Department of Education continually monitors progress, such as through the Office of Civil Rights, funds major research programs, and reports the results to Congress and the public, but has only partially succeeded in (1) restricting growth in special education classification rates (and in particular of certain racial/ethnic groups) and (2) increasing inclusive education, especially for students classified in high-incidence, “soft” categories. However, over the past decades, Congress has reacted to judicial decision making regarding special education by further strengthening the relevant federal law (IDEA) upon reauthorization.

As we have seen, competition among, and diversity of, interest groups in the US leads to continuous deals and attempts to gain advantage for each of a plurality of values. While the institutional rules emphasize equality of opportunity and public deliberation, the professionals in paid lobby organizations and associations marshal all empirical evidence to make their case, but with practical efficiency, not with the synthetic objectivity of technical expertise so valued in Germany (Münch 2000). There, emphasis on achieving broad consensus based on well-founded scientific findings, technocratic arguments, or rational understanding is exceedingly difficult in the case of dis/ability and education, especially given the conflicting ideologies and interests delineated above. To the extent that they even occur, special and inclusive education policy debates in Germany break down as vested interests in special schools and the status quo counter social movements fighting for school change and inclusion. These can lead to emotional conflicts that are anathema to the expertise-oriented consensual policymaking process. Although the empirical basis to make even special schools accountable is increasingly available, such data has not (yet) resulted in society-wide resolve to address the selective segregated school system, even in the wake of the PISA shock (Programme for International Student Assessment; Solga & Powell 2006).

Civil rights relating to public education and integration have been protected by innumerable affirmative federal court decisions, resulting in the legalization of American education. Indeed, special education is a paradigmatic case for “legalization” as Congress created a right for disabled children through a special categorical program with the mechanism of the individualized education program and imposed this right by court decree when lower level bureaucrats were unwilling to provide a “free appropriate public education” of their own accord (Meyer 1986a: 257 f.; Neal & Kirp 1986). Parents have effectively litigated against school districts that did not provide appropriate services or educate their child in the least restrictive environment. In stark contrast to the first half of the 20th century, disabled children have been considered a “suspect class” that the federal and state courts have protected, again and again. In over a thousand decisions (testimony of the need for litigation to ensure access), not only participation in public school systems themselves but also school integration and inclusion in general classrooms have been treated as an inalienable right.

This is not so in Germany, where parents must bear the costs of litigation and must first seek a decision from an administrative, not a constitutional, court. In those few cases in which the Federal Constitutional Court has heard cases relating to school integration, it has hesitated to require *Länder* to change their school laws to be more inclusive. The Court has preferred to decide on individual cases, without impinging on (fiscal) decision making in a specific *Land* and taking into account the “interests” of the other students, fiscal concerns, and political decision-making structures. Recent decisions have not (yet) carried over into federal parliament deliberations or into *Land* educational policymaking, which were the key to increasing school integration in the US. Despite European Union (EU) policies supporting further integration and inclusive education among member states, Germany’s KMK, based on policy coordination among the *Länder* and on their culture ministers reaching consensus, can offer only recommendations, not federal mandates. The range of legal statements and organizational solutions found in Germany is extremely heterogeneous, as *Länder* maintain their particular educational systems—one of the few competencies that the *Länder* alone control, especially since the Federalism Reform (*Föderalismus Reform*) of 2006 (see Table 8.4).

Each country’s national education department has little direct responsibility for special education, but they monitor developments, produce reports and statistics, or provide information, guidance, or incentive grants to develop new programs. On the one hand, federal political structures pose significant barriers to educational policy reform because of different state/*Land* policies and their variable implementation due to myriad vested interests, especially in the continuing division between special and general education. On the other hand, integration and inclusion reforms in both countries have developed at the regional and local levels where disability organizations and active parent advocates have worked with teachers and education administrators to develop strategies and plans for integration and inclusion—often providing models for other schools and regions. Thus, the uneven implementation of reforms ensures continuing disparities, not only in classification, learning opportunities, and attainment. However, as research continues, and if schools and decision makers receive feedback based on validated results, this plethora of regional experiments could lead to the diffusion of innovative best practices.

In sum, decision-making competencies and legal tenets affect the importance and determine the reform prospects of (special) educational policy. How possible changes are and how contentious are the conflicts over special education depends not only on decision making but also on the overall resource levels for education, reflecting the societal importance of education. While financial crises or lack of investment in primary and secondary education affects the provision of schooling, special education as a categorical program may not immediately or directly be affected, as fiscal support is mediated by such factors as civil rights in the US and special schools in Germany. Civil rights in the US are formal and not susceptible to fiscal considerations, but require individual litigation as the most legitimate recourse when they are violated. By contrast, not only does consensual federalism help the German *Länder* resist change but even the highest court has refused to reduce *Länder* power to guarantee individual rights-based claims to integration or inclusion. Such factors have facilitated the maintenance of regional

Table 8.4
Federalism and Political Decision Making

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
Control over education	<i>Länder</i> autonomy (<i>Kulturhoheit</i>)	Local
Decision making	Culture Ministers' Conference (KMK) recommendations (consensual)	Federal laws enforceable (coercive)
Law	School laws determine placement	Rights guarantee choice
Finance	Subject to <i>Länder</i> fiscal conditions (<i>Finanzierungsvorbehalte</i>)	Federal mandates unfunded (but special education has funding priority)
Outcomes	Regional disparities and uneven reforms (loose coupling)	

specificities, blocked national and regional reform initiatives' (rapid) implementation, and led to disparities in the development of special and inclusive education institutions and organizations.

Rights and Resources

We have seen that, in both countries, decentralized decision making supports the regionally specific status quo despite the continual strengthening of the right to education. However, which levels of government provide fiscal support for special education and how easily are budget cuts or increases passed on to special education? What incentive structures in general and special education exist that encourage teachers and other gatekeepers to classify or segregate students? Do students have the right to demand integration or inclusive education? Funding systems may reward classification, the provision of certain services, or particular placements, or all three. Vested interests in the expansion of special education led to higher classification rates in the US and higher classification and segregation rates in Germany.⁴ These, in turn, caused rapid spending increases that seem to be reaching their limits in the US, as ever more students receive resources guaranteed by the right to a “free appropriate public education.” In Germany, rising special school populations but also integration rates combine to absorb more funds, leading to a zero-sum game in which integration cannot increase due to the unwavering commitment in most *Länder* to the legitimated segregated special schools.

Whether education and social policy are unified, and their respective funding levels, determines the relative importance placed on education and opportunities and social assistance. The German separation of special and general school systems has a corresponding barrier at the policy level—the separation of social and educational policy. Because these policies are not usually considered together, the actual costs—not only

in terms of reduced life chances and risks of social exclusion—may remain hidden from policymakers' decision-making processes (as in special education). Unfortunately, many other vested interests and lobbies do not want the actual cost of the elaborate system of segregation to be calculated. With few exceptions, comparative studies of the actual costs of segregative versus integrative solutions have not been carried out (but see Preuss-Lausitz 2002).

In the US, costs have not been the primary consideration in judicial decision making on integration. Nevertheless, the continuously rising special education population seems to have reached a fiscal limit, with many states responding to the fiscal drain by reforming their special education finance laws over the 1990s to reduce incentives to classify and separate or segregate students. Limits on the proportion of students who may receive special educational services or on how many students may participate in inclusive education programs have led many interest groups to call for federal, state, and local policy reform (Sailor, Gerry & Wilson 1991: 188). Especially since the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, the discussion about special education expenditures has reached an encompassing debate as funds to realize high standards have not been forthcoming from the national government. Special education finance often provides incentives to (1) classify students as disabled and/or (2) to segregate or separate students out of general schools or classrooms. The incentive structures of funding systems may inhibit integration and inclusion, as these systems often link finances and service provision with particular educational settings, thus rewarding segregation. Increasingly, over the postwar period in the US, rights have come before resources, with decisions about individual cases decided on the basis of the special education student and his or her needs. Innumerable cases setting precedents, together with Congress-commissioned educational research, have encouraged legislators to generalize innovations in required congressional reauthorizations of special education policies.

Changes in special education finance (i. e., from flat grants to enrolment-based) could remove a major barrier to inclusive education because these models reduce the need to classify by providing additional resources for services directly to schools, to allocate when and where necessary. Multiple funding models provide ways to modify bureaucratic procedures that foster flexibility in meeting individual needs instead of focusing attention mainly on diagnosis and procedural compliance. Incentives for teachers to serve children with more diverse learning needs include team-teaching (shared responsibility), special educators' support in inclusive classrooms, equalized salaries among colleagues working in inclusive education, and lower class sizes. Shifting professional interests from the maintenance of special schools to realize inclusive education requires modifications to state/*Land* policies that have built-in incentives to classify and/or segregate students. Indeed, calculations of all costs associated with special education have only just begun to be performed in either country. Comparative studies of special and inclusive education costs and benefits are similarly lacking. Germany's below-average financing of its educational system in international comparison likely reduces the effectiveness of German schooling, a charge more frequently mentioned in critiques of German education since publication of the PISA results in 2001.

Conflicts of interest are common among school types and schools as all organizations struggle to respond to demographic fluctuations in the school-age population. In the US, special education has increasingly put itself in the center of scrutiny because increases in the proportion of students served have led to cuts in general education funds. Many districts need to allocate significantly more funds if they are to provide quality basic education to all students in the public schools (Chambers, Levin & Parrish 2006). Despite investments in compensatory education, unsatisfactory support of disabled, disadvantaged, and immigrant children leads to more students being found in need of special education. Because these funds are guaranteed and participation in this low track is highly legitimated by clinical scientific reasoning and diagnosis, students “at risk” due to such factors as poverty, minority status, migration experiences, or lacking language skills are overrepresented in special education programs. Lowering class sizes to deal with these varied groups of students with learning difficulties has been the main response. However, investing in more teachers and teaching assistant staff may be easier in the US where all teachers are not civil servants with life-long tenure.

Germany’s general and special schools have traditionally been smaller, and none have improved their student-teacher ratios as dramatically as the special schools since the 1960s, yet the students with most learning difficulties coalesced there still pose a nearly insurmountable challenge to educators, regardless of their specialized skills, technical devices, and good intentions. In Germany, the argument that integration costs more than decision makers are willing to spend because it is viewed as additional, not as alternative, to special schools and has been a ubiquitous feature of educational discourse. Clearly the most expensive option of all would be to proceed with integration while maintaining the highly differentiated segregative system (Preuss-Lausitz 2002: 514 ff.), yet this is the option that most German education policymakers have chosen.

Both countries face an increased emphasis on standards—on schools’ outputs, as measured by students’ performance, achievement, or attainment—but this occurred in Germany later (Pfahl & Powell 2005). For large-scale assessments, the methodological problems relating to the inclusion of students classified disabled and accommodations during testing are becoming increasingly apparent, given that student participation in special education ranges from less than 1 % to a fifth of all students in OECD countries (OECD 2004). However, differing ideologies and especially culturally specific definitions of dis/ability cross-national research is difficult. Generalized monitoring and evaluation of students seem to have had the effect of increasing the special education population, as general teachers attempt to increase the mean class results for the remaining general education students: a largely unintended consequence of amplified accountability systems. Thus, the US National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) now requires states to ensure that students in special education also take part in assessments, so that schools are also held accountable for meeting the goals for these students. Individualized education programs are not only important in ensuring that students receive effective education and services; they may also provide a means to monitor student progress if individualized curricular standards are permitted and accepted (see Table 8.5).

In international comparison (and especially vis-à-vis the US), Germany’s general education resources are low and have repeatedly been subject to budget cuts, with

Table 8.5
Rights and Resources for Special Education

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
Levels	General education resources lower; special school resources high; integration resources stagnating	General education resources higher; special education resources high, rising
Limits	Special school provision (<i>Länder</i> regulatory and fiscal limits)	Participation $\leq 12\%$ (Federal limit); states and localities provide additional funds
Sources	State and local funds	Local, state and federal funds
Poverty	Less childhood poverty; <i>Länder</i> redistribution reduces disparities	More childhood poverty; regional disparities sustained
Incentive	Segregate (allocation between schools)	Classify (allocation within schools)
Basis	Institutional provision	Individual needs

education policy priorities less important than effective social policies that lessen poverty and redistribute funds between *Länder*, reducing regional disparities in wealth (Schmidt 2003). General and special education funds are provided by the *Länder* and by local funds. Special education finance allocation rewards segregation, especially given the long-term infrastructure investments in the small special schools. In contrast, American investment in general and special education is high—and rising. Yet, childhood poverty rates remain dramatic (at around one fifth of the population), and both family and individual poverty but also great disparities in wealth are widely accepted. Local, state, and (modest) federal funds are spent on special education. Finance allocation rewards classification, but not necessarily segregation, depending on the state and district. Unfunded mandates are a significant issue because many localities are unable to meet the established needs of all students in general and special education, which can lead to expensive special education placements that further reduce the “carrying capacity” of already burdened general education, particularly in urban areas. Whereas, in Germany, the decision-making process regarding participation in special education (still) centers on institutional provision, in the US, the question concerns providing individuals with needed special education services, (largely) independent of where they are delivered since this nearly always occurs within the comprehensive school building.

School resources per student, in class sizes, in the student-teacher ratio, and in nearly every other variable of educational provision differ by state/*Land* and to considerable degrees. Among most German *Länder* and many American states, the belief that disabled students should be taught in special schools or classrooms that offer additional resources provided by specialized professionally trained educators remains widespread. Yet, community support for inclusive education is prevalent, present, or lacking, depending on local conditions, values, and organizations. As discussed above, societal ideologies of

integration, equality, and merit, as well as paradigms of “ab/normality” and “dis/ability” within a community or school, affect whether more or less radical policy reform and school restructuring projects can be realized.

At the individual level, not only ideological issues, federalism, education policies, and organizational structures determine who is identified as having a student disability. Decisions made about which students will receive resources depend on interactions between teachers and other gatekeepers; values, norms, and professional interests; and students’ behavior, school performance, and sociodemographic characteristics. To better understand the regional variance in classification, learning opportunity structures, and attainment, we must also address the school decision makers, since teachers and other gatekeepers interpret behavior, monitor aptitude, grade achievement, and ultimately control trajectories, particularly at status passages.

Opening the School Gate—or the Classroom Door

Given special education’s embeddedness within complex educational systems, the variety of its interest groups and decision makers, and the many resources and rights provided, reform difficulties and implementation problems can be expected. However, some schools, districts, and even states/*Länder* have effectively changed the organizational structures of their special education institutions, while others have not been able to overcome the barriers delineated above.⁵ At the school level, interactions between gatekeepers, such as teachers, experts and administrators, and individual students determine trajectories. Indeed, despite the increasing legalization of education in both countries, these measures of centralization have not eliminated regional or group disparities. Beyond the elimination of outright exclusion, German and American reforms to shift the organizational allocation of students among learning opportunity structures have only partially succeeded. Especially guarantees of state and/or local autonomy in public schooling and institutional path dependence and inertia, as intervening factors between ideologies and interests, shape the opportunities for change.

Individual school trajectories result from specific opportunity structures within schools and the decisions made by parents, teachers, and other school gatekeepers. Especially teachers’ values and beliefs, their training, and their personal and practical experiences with diverse student bodies and dis/abilities influence whether and how they will react to students’ diverse range of abilities. Their options for dealing with students and their knowledge of particular categories will directly influence their decisions.⁶ At the individual level, the continual challenge is to weigh the supposed benefits of additional resources, but often lower expectations, and the supposed costs of low status and stigmatization, but potentially higher self-esteem. Teachers’ normative expectations of students differ according to the category into which they sort students. This is particularly important because special education often reduces learning opportunities instead of increasing them (“self-sustaining prophecy”). Thus, the “labeling-resource dilemma” (Füssel & Kretschmann 1993) is ever present, as demonstrated by nationally and regionally variant “classification thresholds” (Powell 2003b). As long as resources

for special education services are bound to classification and labels that are stigmatized in schools and society, this dilemma—inherent in social and educational policies of all kinds—will remain operative. However, in both countries, human variation models that can be implemented on an ad hoc basis, without necessary categorization, are not as far off as they may seem (see Benkmann 1994: 4 ff.).

Although in 1994 Germany's KMK established a new special educational needs classification system—rhetorically matching international usage—the organizational structure of the special school system has changed only at the margins. Seen from the perspective of Germany's high segregation rates, however, this official change indicates that the challenges to the legitimacy of segregation since the late 1960s and continuous pressure by the global disability movement and parent advocates for inclusion and equality are having some effect. Thus far, solely primary schools have succeeded relatively well in reducing segregation, due in large measure to their inclusive design since the Weimar Republic. However, the educational system's selectivity continues to operate and, despite limited data, it has been documented that special education does not reduce the achievement gaps between students with special needs and other students, seriously limiting the incidence of return to general education. Bowing in part to international isomorphic pressures exemplified in international school performance studies, the KMK has begun to attempt counting students, who receive special education services in general schools, as of 2001. A preliminary step toward greater accountability, this reflects international standardization efforts.

The process of institutionalizing a new classification system over the past decade highlighted (1) the intractable difficulties of defining dis/abilities, (2) considerable *Länder* and local variability beyond any biodemographically explainable variance, and (3) the desire of *Länder* culture ministries to appear as if they were “prointegration” when in fact few of them have given the go-ahead for broad-based integration and inclusion even after completing successful inclusive pilot projects (see Cloerkes 2003b: 17–22). Loose coupling has allowed these school systems to meet exogenous demands without changing their bureaucratic or organizational structure beyond a few marginal additions to existing arrangements. The ideologies of equality and integration, extended to disabled children and youth, challenge the bureaucrats in education ministries and individual school gatekeepers and teachers, but thus far not enough for them to abandon the competing ideologies of homogeneity and status-appropriate education. Increasingly, nations face international pressure to support integration and inclusive education, especially due to international organizations in favor, such as the OECD and governments like the EU. However, Germany's *Länder* continue to place primacy on the interests of those who operate the special school system, rejecting the path taken by Italy in the 1970s or Norway in the 1990s to *close* special schools in favor of inclusive education. Thus far, policymakers, teachers, and other gatekeepers have instead responded by changing categories and labels, easily accomplished, and reacted to local or regional demands for more integration in highly idiosyncratic ways on the basis of existing organizational structures or favored concepts.

In the US, integration and equality as ideals facilitated the victory of the special class over the special school in the early decades of the 20th century. Since the 1960s, despite

the broad diffusion of sociopolitical paradigms of disability, impairment categories in special education were maintained, leading to an incongruence between societal rhetoric of multiculturalism and acceptance and actual school praxis. Indeed, classification systems of student disabilities are being further differentiated, except in a few states, such as Massachusetts, the American special education pioneer for over a century that has an umbrella category of “special educational needs”. As a self-reinforcing process, new specializations and categories within special education are professionally legitimated. With the goal of securing additional resources, teachers and other gatekeepers utilize these new categories to justify the ever increasing resources required for an expanding population due to school failure. Within American comprehensive schools, heterogeneity is unavoidable, as integration is the *raison d’être* of public schooling in the US. Options for support or transfer to special classes favor classification and, subsequently, separation along a continuum of general and special class time distributions. Thus, group diversity is also reflected in special education programs that segregate only a small proportion of students. Formally, the system favors, maintains, and mandates individualization, yet despite small class sizes, the group of students sharing special education classrooms or “resource rooms” brings students with myriad learning needs together. This process of accepting extraordinary heterogeneity, even in special education, is antithetical to Germany’s process of homogenization, elaborate differentiation, and immediate allocation to segregated school types, which reifies legitimated organizationally specific disability categories into individual ascriptive characteristics (see Table 8.6).

Along with the considerable disciplinary and professional power they enjoy, German teachers are state employees with much autonomy and often permanent tenure (*Beamter*), placing them in strong position vis-à-vis parents. Children of migrants, adolescent boys, and poor students are multiply disadvantaged in decision-making processes regarding school placement (Kottmann 2006), if their parents are even aware of the full ramifications of what usually ends in formal, certified, and legitimated marginality or inferiority. By contrast, parents in the US can always threaten litigation or leverage minority status to ensure their child’s access to the least restrictive environment, and they may want the additional resources of special educational needs while fearing stigma less than parents in Germany. Multiple bases of identity upon which a student

Table 8.6
Special Education Selection by Schoolteachers/Gatekeepers

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>United States</i>
Ideal	Homogeneity; status	Additional resources; individual support
Threshold	High	Low
Decision	Late; last resort	Early; reversible
Mechanisms	Grades; retention	Continuous psychometric screening; retention
Gatekeepers	Teachers; psychologists; doctors; administrators	

may rely (not solely that of the school types he or she attends), but first and foremost the American ideal of pluralistic community, seem to reduce teachers' and other gatekeepers' inhibition to identify and classify, since in most cases the student will remain in the same school.

Minority and sociopolitical models of difference and dis/ability are diffused throughout society, resisting (not always successfully) prejudice and negative stereotype. Furthermore, the additional resources from district, state, or national level remain within the American school (although perhaps in a different wing of the building). German schools, significantly controlled by the *Land*, are without many other decision-making powers and few, if any, of that magnitude. Reactions to broader social forces and situations influence gatekeepers' perspectives and opinions. For these reasons, such gatekeeping decisions may well reflect individual student differences less than the contexts and conditions of resources, power, and authority in educational systems.

More so than the American educational system, Germany's system can resist change through the legitimation that results from the congruence between the societal *and* educational idealization of homogeneity within status groups. Teachers and other gatekeepers well know that referral for diagnosis nearly always led to classification. Until 1994, this implied immediate allocation to one of the low-status school types. The German "classification threshold" is correspondingly high, an option of last resort. This has led to retention as the preferred solution: Options for support or transfer to special schools favor retention, then segregation. This addresses teachers' recognition that attendance at special schools is highly stigmatizing and ultimately seriously reduces life chances. Without a societal value or educational ideology of pluralistic integration or teacher training that instills the willingness and skills to utilize student diversity to increase learning opportunities, the orientation to the selection of homogeneous ability status groupings will likely continue.

Instead of the German reliance on overall grades and teacher referrals, schools in the US use general standardized testing as a built-in screening device for special education but also retention, while maintaining subject-based flexibility in placement. While tests can also be used to "declassify" students, this is not commonplace. Nevertheless, the continuum of special education settings contributes to the permeability of tracks within comprehensive schools and a low "classification threshold" due to reduced segregation and lessened stigma. Unlimited as long as resources are available, gatekeepers view special education as a viable alternative for a large group of students having difficulties, and parents do not resist but actually demand the additional services it offers. However, in both societies, disadvantaged groups are overrepresented in special education, as general education teachers' difficulties in teaching these students leads them to legitimately send these students out of their classes into the legitimated organizational responses to school failure—mainly retention and special education—that have developed over the 20th century to serve an ever larger population.

Ethnic minorities' integration has proven particularly difficult. In Germany, children and youth from Southern Europe and Turkey are overrepresented in special schools. Similarly, in the US, the odds-ratios of some racial and ethnic minorities (especially Blacks and American Indians) to be found in need of special education services can reach

three times the classification rate of the majority. However, in the US, most of these students do remain in general schools, transitioning between grades with their cohort or with a year or two delay. Officially, selection occurs at the end of the secondary school, at the transition from secondary school to tertiary education. Opponents of tracking emphasize that access to higher tracks is often limited by curricular prerequisites and other rules of passage, such that not all student groups actually have opportunities to achieve a high-school diploma or go on to postsecondary education. In both countries, retention and special education are the main mechanisms used to respond to low achievement or behavioral problems. Based legitimately on meritocratic criteria, these pathways ascribe abnormality to individual students; often foreclosing their learning progress.

Learning for Life

Reflecting shifts in ideologies, institutional changes, and interest group power dynamics, educational reforms in general as well as special education in both federal democracies were primarily implemented at the state/*Land* and local levels. A cleavage tenaciously resisting resolution exists between laws that recommend or even require integration to the maximum possible extent and authorized school gatekeepers in loosely coupled organizations. Social movements, financial crises, as well as standardization and testing pressures, amid calls for increased accountability for outputs and outcomes, have made special education even more controversial, as demands for integration and inclusion grow. However, while the tenor of school reform discourse may have recently lost some of its vitriol, the inclusion and school restructuring debates mirror each other in rejecting only one of the two necessary assumptions that defend special education as standard educational praxis. Whereas some proponents reject the deficit model of disability, but retain special education for organizational reasons, other proponents argue for restructured “untracked” schools, but would maintain special education because school failure can be objectively and usefully diagnosed by clinical science (Skrtec 1995b: 770 ff.). Thus, key strands of debate in the conflict special versus inclusive education depend on assumptions shown above to be highly questionable.

Student dis/abilities are historically, culturally, and geographically relative. Special education organizations in both societies have dealt with a population of students continuously changing in size and composition, but representing especially poor boys, children belonging to racial/ethnic, migrant, or linguistic minorities, together with increasingly integrated children with perceived impairments. It is these diverse student bodies—among the last to be fully recognized as citizens—that most challenge rationalized standardized organizational structures and bureaucracies of the German and American (special) educational systems.

These differentiated school structures, bureaucratic divisions, and the interests of professional gatekeepers resist the reform and restructuring of the existing segregating (Germany) or separating (US) special education systems necessary to successfully realize inclusive education. This resistance relies on the legitimated institutional logic of each national education system, which reflect fundamental societal values and educational

ideologies as they frame the interests that have successfully fought for special education's diffusion and differentiation. Over the 20th century, special education expanded, especially as educational exclusion was eliminated. Yet, ever more complex organizations, developed by the nascent discipline of special education, were embedded into existing educational institutions, in a subsidiary relationship—whether in the same school system or building. No matter what their structure, special education provides functional “relief” from school failure for general teachers. Yet, the state/*Land*, regional, and district variance demonstrates that political conflicts (not general consensus) and professional choices (not widespread certainty) are responsible for the distribution of opportunities to the diverse group of special education students. These require continuous dialogue about, and understandings of, complex individual and institutional interactions—exemplified in the “labeling-resource dilemma,” the special education variant of the distributive dilemma in democratic polities.

In Germany, the short duration of inclusive primary school and highly stratified secondary school types provided the model for special educators to successfully lobby for, establish, and legitimate a *special* school system. Fully developed, this segregated system of ten school types simultaneously served a highly selective, relatively small, group of students and hindered general schools from providing special education services more flexibly, in a preventive manner. Guarding the logic of early selection and “appropriate support” of the German educational system, many *Länder* education ministries have successfully resisted parental demands for widespread adoption of inclusive education. Yet, these have been continuously scientifically monitored and evaluated (the majority positively) since the early 1980s. School laws as well as fiscal and administrative considerations are persistent barriers to the struggles for inclusion of parents and advocates. The dominant deficit paradigm of disability has been countered with constitutional antidiscrimination protections since reunification, but most students classified disabled still are segregated. Thus, each cohort of students learns that homogeneous groupings are preferable and that status accrues to those who have the resources and innate abilities to perform well early in their school careers. The stigma of segregated special schooling is reproduced.

Disabled Americans, acting as a minority group based on the successful model of the women's and civil rights movements, had already won extensive rights and anti-discrimination protection by the mid-1970s. Growing to include all disabled children, compulsory primary and secondary schooling was truly universalized by the 1980s. From the beginning, American advocates for school integration benefited from the comprehensive school system's integrative organization and function but also from the focus on individual participatory rights. The primacy of parental choice, substantial independence from cost considerations (if mainly from the threat of due process litigation), and lessened stigma contributed to the largely unanticipated continuous expansion of special education. The major cause of this expansion is the vastly increased availability of a legitimate—indeed morally justified—organizational response to school failure. Thoroughly embedded in the bureaucratic administration and day-to-day operations of nearly every American school, special education programs grew unfettered over the 20th century. Yet, ambivalence about special education is exempli-

fied in continuing disciplinary conflicts, in federal and state legislation and litigation, and in local struggles. Like notions of ineducability and dis/ability definitions, what constitutes a “free appropriate public education” remains highly contested. However, explicitly integrative schools have socialized all students for three decades in the belief that integration, not segregation, is the appropriate answer to the diversity of human abilities. Inclusive education advocates seek to go one step further: to teach all children together, no matter what their currently recognized dis/abilities are.

In both countries, contemporary conflicts surrounding special education’s students, their learning opportunity structures, and their educational attainments cannot be understood without analyzing the long-term institutional developments in the educational systems that brought forth highly differentiated special education organizations to serve a plethora of interests, guided by powerful ideas about ab/normality and dis/ability. Special education’s self-reinforcing expansion continues—enabled primarily by general educators’ authorized continual supply of students—as many parents value the additional resources and specialized professional services of special education more than the potential stigma of such participation.

Widely diffused categorical knowledge, increasing standards and accountability, and (inter)national comparative research that emphasizes student achievement and educational outcomes also compel “slow learners” to be transferred out of general education, or at least out of official testing situations. In the US, policymakers are increasingly questioning the high costs of existing organizational responses to school failure, not so much in terms of lessened life chances, but in terms of rising special education expenditures. Average per student expenditure is around twice the rate for general education students, as it is in Germany. Critiques of segregated special schools call the German educational system’s fundamental assumption of the benefits of homogeneity into question, which has remained largely a taboo topic, even after PISA. Indeed, including special education and its students in growing accountability systems would reveal a system long hidden from view, ignored, or misunderstood—and understudied.

Finally, I argue that special education’s variable institutionalization more accurately reflects patterns of authority and regulation, of decision-making structures, and of vested interests of (special) educators, psychologists, and doctors who certify student disabilities than it reveals pedagogically relevant characteristics of individual students classified and allocated to disparate special education settings. Holding special education accountable would require recognition of the consequences of persistent separation, segregation, and stigmatization of children and youth who more often than not are already among the disadvantaged. However, the resulting additional disadvantages in learning opportunities, educational attainments, and life chances are something that neither society, despite egalitarian rhetoric, has been eager to confront. Multiple efforts over the past three decades to address and reduce the overrepresentation of male students, ethnic minorities, and poor children and youth in special educational programs have largely failed, as these three categories remain the core client groups of special educational services and support. German debates about the quality of (special) education and about the organizational settings in which children and youth with special educational needs should be educated mirror American discourses. Building

on the successes of other civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the American disability rights movement and parents of children with disabilities achieved the passage of antidiscrimination and school integration legislation, which shifted from intents to mandates. In Germany, disability activists and parental groups have also fought for such policies since the 1980s. However, given the regionally variable institutionalization of special education and considerable inertia in educational systems as a whole, change has been much more gradual in Germany than in the US.

There are significant differences between and within these societies in the ways in which groups of disabled students are socially defined, sorted into educational programs, and to which degree they are segregated or integrated into general school systems. In the US—with mainly comprehensive public schools in which most students attend neighborhood schools—increasing proportions of students are spending time in special but also in inclusive education. In Germany—with its hierarchically differentiated and highly specialized educational system—more children are being segregated into special schools, despite increases in inclusive education offered mainly in general primary schools. Student “abnormality” is becoming increasingly “normal.” A major challenge to special and inclusive education alike is that people are *not* unified about which is more desirable. There is no consensus in public discourse, among academic disciplines, or in educational and social policies, and ideologies of ab/normality, integration, meritocracy, and equality require interpretation in local contexts to draw the boundaries that guide individual actors to make these often difficult choices.

This book examines the impact of these particular institutional arrangements in schooling as well as the impact of often contradictory national (special) education policies that affect the educational experiences and attainments of disabled students. Like the federal decentralized political structures that enact policies requiring lower level implementation, the strength of these societal values also varies considerably by region and group. Institutional inertia and organizational loose coupling constrain the opportunities for reform. Not only in Germany do the persistence of special education interests and the legitimated special school system pose a considerable challenge to the restructuring of schools to become inclusive.

International and national conventions and statements by such organizations as the UN, the EU, and the OECD support inclusive education programs as the next step in the project of schooling for all; of access to learning opportunities and educational outputs. Thus far, neither in Germany nor in the US have national, regional, or local calls for inclusive education been realized to the degree hoped for by advocacy groups, made up mostly of parents of disabled children and the disability movement—despite educational integration and antidiscrimination recommendations and legislation in both countries. Inclusive education promises to more fully utilize the diversity of interests and abilities found among all groups of children to develop each individual’s intellectual and social competencies, a goal close to the ideal of egalitarian meritocracies. National path dependent developments and institutional inertia in educational systems have hindered efforts to implement inclusive education reforms. To convince skeptics and opponents will require further research, documentation, and dissemination about the benefits resulting from inclusion for all students but also the continued activism of

social movements, parents' associations, and educators and administrators at national, state, and local levels. In information societies, the value of education has continuously increased. Even youth with disabilities, whose employment opportunities are seriously limited in both countries, partake in ever longer school careers on the path to certified adult citizenship, if not salable competencies.

Individual investment in one's own abilities is becoming ever more crucial. Without learning about the variability of human abilities, children lose a significant opportunity to prepare adequately for (the later stages of) their own life courses. Only by training the ways to productively engage diverse interests and abilities in school will students have the ample opportunities necessary to develop the collaborative skills and respect needed to work and live together in multicultural, multiability, democratic communities. This comparative-historical analysis emphasizes that each society's educational system is distinctly shaped by choices made long ago. To realize democratic participation in schools and support the rights of all students to fully develop their potential, these societies must continue to overcome the remaining institutionalized barriers to inclusion.

Notes

1 Special Education and Student Disability Over the Twentieth Century

(Notes to pages 1–11)

- 1 This and all following translations of German primary and secondary source documents were carried out by the author.
- 2 The term “special educational needs” and categories of “student disability” are problematic (see analysis in Chapter 4). Categorical labels, used in identifying, defining, and grouping self and others, are contested as their meanings shift with (mis)use. Further, regionally specific linguistic preferences ensure continuing controversy within, around, and about respective disability communities. Recently, debate contrasts “people first” language, for example, “people with disabilities”—preferred and commonly used in the US—with the term “disabled people,” advocated by many social theorists and political activists, especially in the United Kingdom. The latter’s argument is that their favored term emphasizes society’s active disabling of people and encourages minority group identity politics (Albrecht, Seelman & Bury 2001: 3). “Disabled people” clearly focuses on society excluding certain people because of the ways their mind, bodies, or senses function; stressing exclusion rather than individual characteristics (see Thomas 1999). This distinction is also made in German, with “*Menschen mit Behinderungen*” and “*behinderte Menschen*” equivalent to the English alternatives. In this book, I use the terms “people with disabilities” and “disabled people” interchangeably to reflect current usage (on disability discourses, see Corker & French 1999; on methods used in examining disability discourses, see Haller & Ralph 2001; for disability terminology and stigmatizing language, especially the recently rejected usage of adjectives as nouns, e. g., “the handicapped,” see Dajani 2001).
- 3 Disablement as an increasingly prevalent experience faced mainly by elderly people has received more attention from policymakers, scholars, and media than the disadvantages that disabled children and youth face (for a life-course approach to disability, see Priestley 2001, 2003; Powell 2003a). Verbrugge and Jette (1994) argued that increasing disability prevalence rates in all age groups (due especially to advances in medicine’s detection and management of life-threatening chronic diseases, and due to rising proportions of oldest age women) will emphasize the prevention of disability in public health policy. In contrast, American special education has been discussed primarily in terms of budgets and funding that raise fairness issues, and as a troubled educational program requiring reform—at the expense of alternative frameworks, such as citizenship, civil rights, participation, social justice, empowerment or self-determination (Rice 2006).
- 4 For recent analyses of competence using historical, cross-cultural, and ethnographic/interactionist methods, respectively, see Trent (1994), Jenkins (1998), and Rapley (2004).
- 5 Indeed, controversial exchanges between those educators and educational researchers who favor either special or inclusive education continue unabated in both countries (for the American debate between “traditionalists” and “inclusionists,” see Brantlinger 1997; for a recent German debate, see Hänsel 2003, 2005; Ellger-Rüttgardt 2004; Möckel 2004).
- 6 The use of the slash indicates the dialectical quality of the binary categories in/educable, ab/normal, and dis/abled (see Chapter 4). As Charles Tilly (1998) has argued, such categorical pairs are the source of much durable social inequality, and relational approaches are helpful in analyzing the work carried out by categories (see Chapter 4).
- 7 Thomas Janoski (1998: 9) defines citizenship as the “passive and active membership of individuals in a nation-state with certain universalistic rights and obligations at a specified level of equality.” His work is particularly helpful here because he explicitly includes disability in his analysis of the conceptions of citizens’ legal, political, social, and participatory rights, and how these affected welfare state development.

- 8 Ableism refers to discrimination, the oppressive or abusive treatment of people with disabilities, and the favoring of people who are able-bodied, based on the belief that disabled people are inferior. As Thomas Hehir (2002) has argued, programs to counteract ableism in education would acknowledge disability within schools' diversity programs, help disabled students develop in ways most effective and efficient for them as individual learners, ensure the relevance of special education supports to learning goals and teacher training development to accomplish the goal of individualized education, shift the focus from placements to results, and promote high standards as well as universal design in schooling. Universally designed schools would be constructed to be usable by all children, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation (see Mace 1997).
- 9 On standards-based reform and high-stakes testing, see the US National Research Council (NRC) reports (McDonnell, McLaughlin & Morison 1997; Heubert & Hauser 1999) and recent international studies (McLaughlin & Rouse 2000; Peters 2004).

2 Comparing Special Educational Systems

(Notes to pages 16–25)

- 1 Other counts are possible, if categories are further differentiated, by schools and classes (in which case Switzerland, with 19 categories, would have the highest number, see OECD 2004: 155 f.).
- 2 In some countries, such as Switzerland, the reported segregation rate may approach or equal 100 % because the official definition of receiving special education resources refers to attendance at special schools, but this need not match the number of children with impairments, and it would misrepresent the provision of services in integrative classes or inclusive education in some of Switzerland's language communities and cantons. For this reason, data for Belgium's French and Flemish language communities and Canada's provinces were reported separately.
- 3 Sociologists such as Sally Tomlinson (1981, 1982, 1985, 1995, 2004), James Carrier (1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1986a, 1986b, 1990), John Richardson (1986, 1999, 2000), and Len Barton (1996, 1998) writing in English, and Walter Thimm (1972, 2006), Wolfgang Jantzen (1981, 1987), Günther Cloerkes ([1979] 1985, [1997] 2001), and Ulf Preuss-Lausitz (1981, 1993, 2001) writing in German, have specified the social interests in and consequences of special education, emphasizing its myriad effects from socialization and stigmatization to stratification. Useful collections of special and inclusive education country case studies include Klauer and Mitter (1987), Benkmann and Pieringer (1991), Armstrong and Barton (2000), and Hans and Ginnold (2000).

3 Compulsory Schooling for All Children: Learning Opportunities in Special Classes and Special Schools

(Notes to pages 43–58)

- 1 These distinctions are important because, as we will see in the case of Germany, special education expertise is institutionalized simultaneously in civil servants and in school types, whereas, in the US, most special education professionals work independently within general schools. Thus, they represent contrasting models for providing more or less exclusive "jurisdictional claims" (Abbott 1988: 34) and legitimate authority for special education within a system of professions responsible for dealing with "student disability" or "abnormal" learners.
- 2 In summarizing Stinchcombe's synopsis of Merton, Peter Blau (1990: 144) states that "the institutional structure governs alternatives and, depending on location in the social structure, the chances of realizing various alternatives; the rates of alternative choices vary, therefore, according to people's position in the social structure."
- 3 For extended discussions of Sørensen's approach to modeling how school performance is shaped by societal characteristics, organizational opportunity structures, and individual ex-

periences and resources, see the essays in his honor (Hallinan 2004; Hauser 2004; Kubitschek 2004).

- 4 Analyzing disability history, Jean-François Ravaud and Henri-Jacques Stiker (2001) developed a typology of forms of exclusion of disabled people through the ages: exclusion through elimination, abandonment, segregation/differentiated inclusion, conditional inclusion, marginalization, and discrimination.
- 5 This was a popular American term for efforts to shift the location of delivery of special education services to general schools beginning in the late 1960s. Since 1999, “gender mainstreaming,” with a more activist meaning, has been codified in European law (the *Amsterdam Treaty*) to acknowledge the importance of a gender perspective and assess its implications in all policies and programs, with the goal of promoting gender equality.
- 6 Long before the widespread use of the term inclusion in place of integration, which diluted its meaning, full-inclusion was to signify the following principles: neighborhood placement; natural proportions of disabled students at the school site; zero-rejection (all students regardless of impairment may participate in heterogeneous learning groups); age- and grade-appropriate school and classroom placements; strong site-based coordination and management; and cooperative learning and peer instructional models in general education (Sailor, Gerry & Wilson 1991: 175). However, the diversity of dimensions to inclusion has grown along with the term’s popularity. In the United Kingdom, the influential *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools* by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow (2002) specifies an inclusive vision that aims to minimize all barriers to learning and participation by activating staff, administrators, parents, and students to better utilize their resources, including student diversity.
- 7 The first three stages of equality refer to the workings of school systems described in the American and German cases, while the fourth refers to transitions from schooling to vocational training, labor markets, and beyond, not examined at length here. While we do ask whether different learning opportunity structures affect the attainment probabilities of students in special education programs, and will show how serious the constraints placed on special education students are, there is a lack of cross-nationally comparable individual-level data to analyze transitions to postsecondary education or vocational training or employment (but on the US, see Wagner et al. 1993, 2006).
- 8 Yet this democratic practice was limited to the North and West of the US until after the Second World War. In fact, in 1896, the Supreme Court ruled that the southern states, developed from a feudal agrarian society with a caste system, could maintain racial apartheid in public schools (see Ogbu 1978). School structures were legally differentiated based on skin color until the 1960s and since then through residential segregation, despite extensive busing of students. Similarly, in 1893, the Massachusetts Supreme Court handed down a decision that children “weak in mind” could be excluded from schools. Not until the 1970s would exclusion on the basis of disability be officially outlawed, but segregation remains prevalent in many states. Thus, the meanings of equality have not only been interpreted very differently by region but have shifted continuously, and considerably, over time.

4 Classifying Student Dis/Abilities and Dis/Advantages

(Notes to pages 70–100)

- 1 The US government maintains dozens of definitions of “disability” and “special needs” (Albrecht 2001). In Germany, “disability” is measured along a scale from 0% to 100% in increments of 10 (with the major distinction of 50% = “severely disabled” [*schwerbehindert*]). But the duality of disability definitions, focused on the body (impairment [*Beeinträchtigung*]) or on society (disability [*Behinderung*]), dominates academic and social discourses (Bendel 2000; see also Schildmann 2000 on the development of German disability statistics and categories over the 20th century).
- 2 The systematic killing of disabled children and adults (Burleigh 1994), Jews (Burleigh 1997), homosexuals (Plant 1986), Roma and Sinti, and political opponents led to public rejection of

eugenic ideologies in many world regions. However, the majority of American states, many European countries (e. g., Scandinavian nations), Japan, and China, legalized the sterilization of people classified as genetically “unfit,” with some laws not yet repealed as the 21st century began. Debates about the rise of the “new eugenics” is driven by the power of genomics research.

- 3 Indeed, Gunnar Myrdal ([1944] 1958: 180 f.) discussed race as a disability, while rejecting the use of the terms race, minority group, or even class—preferring caste as the appropriate term to describe the situation of “Negroes” in the American South at that time.
- 4 Life-course perspectives highlight additional effects beyond the individual student’s own deflected trajectory on the basis of categorical membership. Each cultural group and cohort is socialized to think of dis/ability and special educational needs using particular more or less stigmatizing categories. For example, Japan does not maintain a “learning disability” category, preferring to believe in each child’s potential effort and ability (Heidenheimer 1997: 96). Perhaps especially visible in recurrent education reforms, each cohort of students experiences an environment in which specific types and measures of dis/ability, intelligence, and competence are valued or applied. Although some school systems emphasize commonalities, cooperation, and individual strengths instead of weaknesses, most continue to emphasize and fulfill their sorting function. Cognitive processing has become ever more important, and special education programs reflect that the stigma and disadvantage of having a “learning disability” is growing apace, but not equally even among the wealthiest societies (see, e. g., Jenkins 1998).
- 5 Considerable transnational debate for nearly 200 years surrounds the linguistic, cultural, and identity consequences of oralism, sign language communication, and biligualism among deaf people and in their communities (Groce 1985; Padden & Humphries 1988; Davis 1995).
- 6 In educational systems, gatekeepers include not only general and special educators, teacher aides, speech pathologists, psychologists, and school social workers but also supervisors and administrators, diagnostic and evaluation staff, counselors, occupational therapists, physical education teachers, physical therapists, interpreters, vocational education teachers, work-study coordinators, rehabilitation counselors, and recreation specialists.
- 7 Phillip Brown (1997: 393) argues that, increasingly, a “meritocracy” should be understood as a “parentocracy,” in which a child’s education again depends upon parental wealth and wishes more than student ability and effort—a renewal of the importance of ascription over achievement. Maryellen Schaub (2004) has shown how middle-class parents adapt their child-raising strategies to confer advantages to their children as they invest heavily in additional learning opportunities for their children.
- 8 Nation-states categorize individuals at each stage of the life course, influencing not only economic and social well-being but also which differences will be more or less stigmatized. Frequent bases for stigma have been: (1) differences of the human body and appearance (e. g., impairments), (2) social status differences with negative associations (e. g., impoverishment), or (3) belonging to particular groups based on dis/ability, age, ethnicity or race, sex or gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or other characteristics regarded as inferior by a majority or dominant social group. Dimensions that affect whether stigmatization occurs—as a social relationship in a particular setting—are the origin or cause (responsibility), concealability (hidden vs. visible), duration and (im)permanence, disruptiveness, riskiness, and aesthetic qualities of a stigmatized attribute. These aspects can influence social acceptance and policy determinations at individual and group levels.
- 9 Although stigmas are always culturally interpreted by individuals, even if they are not themselves prejudiced or hold no negative stereotypes, understood as oversimplified exaggerated beliefs about members of a group. On the level of human interactions, discrimination is exemplified in a prejudiced individual maintaining social distance between him- or herself and members of minority groups or “out-groups”. “In-groups”—to which a person feels

loyalty—tend to ascribe inferiority to members of other groups as they ascribe superiority to themselves, rationalizing their views with stereotypes (Pettigrew 1998).

- 10 Merton's "Matthew Effect" among "gifted and talented" students is the corollary of his self-fulfilling or self-sustaining prophecy for students deemed less bright: cumulative dis/advantage or "an institutionalized bias in favor of precocity" in the reward system of scientific communities. "The advantages that come with early accomplishment taken as a sign of things to come stand in Matthew-like contrast to the situation confronted by young scientists whose work is judged as ordinary. Such early prognostic judgments, I suggest lead in some unknown fraction of cases to inadvertent suppression of young talent through the process of the self-fulfilling prophecy" (Merton 1988: 613). Those from lower social class backgrounds are more likely to be disadvantaged, and age-based systems of education favor precocity, especially those that differentiate into tracks or school types early, as in Germany. The analogy is especially apt since special education in some American states includes the "gifted and talented" who may experience the Matthew Effect (see Lucas 1999: 103 ff.).

5 The Development of Special Education in the United States

(Notes to pages 124–137)

- 1 Alongside teachers, personnel who provide special education and related services to students age 3 to 21 include: teacher aides, psychologists, speech pathologists, psychologists, non-professional staff, school social workers, supervisors/administrators, diagnostic and evaluation staff, counselors, occupational therapists, physical education teachers, physical therapists, interpreters, vocational education teachers, work-study coordinators, supervisors/administrators (state education administration [SEA]), audiologists, other professional staff, rehabilitation counselors, and recreation and therapeutic recreation specialists.
- 2 Most data presented here are calculations based on the Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) of the US Department of Education (US DoED), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). Several major longitudinal studies supplement the aggregate national data. For example, the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) of Special Education Students (1987–1990) followed a nationally representative sample of 8,000 youth who were 13 to 21 years of age in the 1985–86 school year (see Wagner et al. 1993 for a summary of results). The second wave (NLTS2) provides crucial data for the time period in which inclusion has increased substantially (Wagner et al. 2005, 2006).
- 3 This differs from the "composition index" that is calculated through division of the number of students in a racial/ethnic category classified in one of the 13 federal disability categories by the total number of students (all racial/ethnic groups) enrolled in that disability category. This indicator shows the proportion of all children classified in a particular disability category who are identified, or identify themselves, with one of the racial/ethnic categories.
- 4 Within general schools there are at least three distinct quantitative measures interpretable using the official statistics. Spending less than 40 % of the school day within a general classroom counts as "separation." "Integration" is defined as spending between 40 % and 80 % of the school day in general classrooms. And the "inclusion" measure refers to those special education students who spend upward of 80 % of their time in classrooms among their non-yet disabled peers. The various educational environments not in a general school building are defined as "segregation."

6 The Development of Special Education in Germany

(Notes to pages 151–192)

- 1 Longer historical trends and events before 1949 and after 1989 refer to Germany; in-between those years, the focus is on developments in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Although the German Democratic Republic (GDR) did implement a comprehensive

- school system, they also founded nine segregated special school types (see Preuss-Lausitz 1993: 187–203; Ellger-Rüttgardt 1997c: 233–254; Rosenberger 1998; Ellger-Rüttgardt & Wachtel 2000; Heimlich 2000: 176–191). In her cultural comparison of disability in the FRG and the GDR, Carol Poore (2007) emphasizes the diversity of policies, categories, and treatments of disabled people in the two Germanies.
- 2 The Conference of Culture Ministers (*Kultusministerkonferenz [KMK]*) responded to the necessity of coordinating and harmonizing education to ensure some measure of comparability between regions and individual mobility. Despite the unanimity requirement, its recommendations are nonbinding resolutions that need ratification and transposition into state laws, administrative initiative, ordinances, or legal mandates by *Länder* parliaments or administrations. The German Committee for the Educational System and the German Education Council focused on education development and reform and were then joined in 1970 by the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Funding (*Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung [BLK]*), a state agency in charge of overall plans and joint developmental concepts for the national educational system. While these institutions delivered on their promise to devise coherent structural reform proposals, the challenge of building consensus among diverse interests and fiscal limitations hindered the implementation of core aspects of these plans (KMK 2001b: 26), as exemplified by the broad range of concepts and their quantitative representation throughout the *Länder* in general, special, and inclusive education.
 - 3 Although since 1999/2000, the KMK has published the number of students classified as having special educational needs who attend general schools in national school statistics, mainly the figures for special schools will be presented here since this school form remains dominant. How these administrative reports will develop and to what extent attempts to interpret developments in the individual states/*Länder* will succeed remains an open question (Cloerkes 2003b: 7 ff.) because recent pressures to increase accountability and educational standards have largely excluded special education students.
 - 4 Thus, by 2000, the number of students in special schools had already trebled, while the number of teachers has risen by a factor of ten. While this led to a remarkable reduction in average class size, considerable differences by category and by state/*Land* remain (e. g., classes in the “learning” category are larger). In the GDR, classes were also quite small and, in 1989, nearly 64,000 students attended special schools. Since reunification in 1990, special education expanded particularly rapidly in the eastern states/*Länder*.
 - 5 The Independent Research Group “Lack of Training” at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development conducted the multiyear evaluation of a transition project based at the University of Cologne’s Special Education Faculty. In the “Job-Coaching Project,” 106 special school students or school-leavers (category “learning”) in North Rhine-Westphalia completed an 80-item life history questionnaire, and 40 job coaches also responded to a standardized questionnaire (www.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/en/forschung/nwg/arbeitsberichte.htm). Additionally, a series of narrative biographical interviews were conducted that provided further insights into family backgrounds, school experiences, and reactions to special school attendance (Pfahl 2004, 2006).

7 Special Education in the United States and Germany Compared

(Notes to pages 201–222)

- 1 The first national disability-related law in the US was the *Pension Act* of 1776, which offered compensation for service-connected disability for veterans of the Revolutionary War, the second was the *Act for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Seamen* of 1798, and the third was the *General Law* of 1862 for Civil War veterans. Additionally, workmen’s compensation was imported from Germany, where such a law was implemented as early as 1884 (Albrecht 1992: 96–99). Significantly, Northern Civil War veterans’ pensions became the “first social

- security program” for disabled people and the elderly in the US, amounting to an “astounding 41.5%” of US national government revenue by 1893 (Skocpol 1995: 69).
- 2 Special education’s expansion is intertwined with general education’s expansion, but remains hidden from view due to the boundaries drawn around students classified disabled and the programs established to serve them in separate settings. Ironically, as US federal programs and monies for returning war veterans’ funded access to tertiary education (the “G.I. Bill”) that would spur the growth of American higher education institutions (along with university-based science), so too increased access for children with impairments stimulated federal government involvement in expanded public schooling at preprimary, elementary, and secondary levels.
 - 3 In terms of levels of governance and decision making in education—particularly important given the challenge of inclusive education reform, which requires school “restructuring”—the US and German national governments play a modest role. While a quarter of the decisions are made within American schools and almost all the rest were made by the district level, German localities made around two fifths of the decisions, the *Länder* nearly a fifth, schools a third, leaving only a residual 7% for the national level (NCES 1996a: 133, Table 23a). However, special education policy frameworks and civil rights guarantees, managed and monitored on the national level in the US, have considerable influence on all levels of governance and decision making.
 - 4 Much research on inclusive education, social participation, and disability is made available throughout the German-speaking world in the digital open access library “*Behinderung Inklusion Dokumentation* (bidok)” of Austria’s University of Innsbruck (<http://bidok.uibk.ac.at>).
 - 5 National differences have increasingly been examined in the context of internationally comparative studies of student achievement. The growing importance of educational performance and attainment has made schools and teachers more accountable for the difficult-to-measure output of their work. Special education’s growth—and its students’ disparate participation rates, domestically and internationally, in large-scale assessments—demonstrates its function as a “safety valve” for educators and schools (Sapon-Shevin 1989: 92f.). In both the US National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), nations, states, and localities have highly variable rates of including students classified disabled in such assessments. Even principal investigators often remain unsure which children participating in special education will be, or have been, included, and the data collection guidebooks offer more school autonomy than substantive help in such decision making. Such “exclusions” problematize comparisons of student performance at highly aggregated levels. Educational systems differ greatly not only in their integration and inclusive ideologies but also in relating to assessments and accountability in their everyday gatekeeping practices.
 - 6 For German special education statistics referred to here, see Hofsäss (1993: 70); Statistisches Bundesamt (1951: 13, 1957: 22–25); Myszker (1969: 161, 1983: 120–166); and Krappmann, Leschinsky & Powell (2003: Figure 17.1); for US special education statistics, see Mackie (1969: Table 1); NCES (1996a: Table 11); Trent (1994); Richardson (1999); and US DoED (2007 and prior years).
 - 7 For example, the United Kingdom witnessed similarly steep growth in special education enrollments since 1945 (Tomlinson 1985), as it (more or less) transitioned from an inegalitarian to an egalitarian educational system (Carrier 1984). By 2000, the United Kingdom’s general category “special educational needs” included 20% of all students in some regions.
 - 8 The costs per annum expended to send one student to a German special school was estimated by the KMK at €10,500, more than twice as much as the average *Gymnasium* student (€5,100) and three times the average primary school (*Grundschule*) student (€3,500; KMK 2002a: 144). While €4,700 were expended per *Hauptschule* student and €4,300 for the average *Realschule* student, it costs €5,300 to educate the average comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) student (KMK 2002a: 144). The *Grundschule* is at once the most integrative

school type (more than two thirds of all integrated students [*Integrationssschüler*] are in primary school). It is also the least costly. These figures reflect that special school teachers are civil servants who earn higher salaries than general teachers and serve fewer students and teach small classes in small schools that are more likely to be full-day schools than general schools. It remains to be seen how successful recent reforms, such as more full-day schools, will be over the long run—and how this reform will affect the comparative advantage that some special schools derived from opening longer.

- 9 For example, among the states/*Länder*, *Hauptschule* cumulative risk (grades 7–9) ranged from less than 10% to more than 40%, in the *Realschule* (grades 7–10) from 13% to more than half, and in the *Gymnasium* (grades 7–10) from 3% to 28% (Cortina & Trommer 2003: 371).
- 10 Japan provides an interesting contrast: There, innate abilities are believed to be significantly enhanced by intense effort, thus no tracking or separation of students occurs before age 15. Furthermore, establishment of special schools (category: learning) were effectively opposed by the Burakumin Liberation League, an organization that promotes the interests of a group that for centuries was a pariah caste (Heidenheimer 1997: 96). Japan has no official category for “learning disability” and its educational system segregates about half as many students in special schools as in the US and one quarter as many as in Germany (OECD 1995; for a comparison of American, German, and Japanese teaching styles, see LeTendre et al. 2001).
- 11 Due to definitional challenges and conflicts over the interpretation of educational environments’ quality and impact, “inclusion” rates are exceedingly difficult to estimate, in both countries. The American definition used here is a basic guideline that simply measures the time spent in general classrooms without referring to the commitment to inclusive education or the pedagogical methods implemented there. In the even more tentative German aggregate statistics, it is very difficult to reconstruct which children and youth are schooled in which settings, given states/*Länder* bureaucrats and politicians’ “self-promotion” interests and marketing strategies (Cloerkes 2003a: 11–23).

8 The Expansion and Divergence of Special Education Systems

(Notes to pages 248–257)

- 1 On August 18, 2003, the highest administrative court in Rhineland-Palatinate argued that the school law fundamentally supported integration if the necessary conditions could be met, and the court required social welfare agencies to pay for the student’s personal assistance during school hours, which will enable him or her to attend the general primary school instead of a special school.
- 2 This influence can be seen in two main effects: (1) the successful framing of disability protests and activism in the general accepted notion of fighting for civil rights, such that these could “resonate” with US society and (2) the social movements contributed direct and indirect support for the disability rights movement through such mechanisms as tactics, rhetoric, symbols, ideas, personnel, and support (Barnartt & Scotch 2001). In succeeding, the civil rights movement provided all minority groups, including disabled Americans and their advocates, with a model upon which to build their activism, protests, and political coalitions. The goal was nothing less than forcing the American constitutional democracy to finally live up to its precepts of equality of opportunity, integration, and diversity, extended to public schools and for all children.
- 3 Disability policy in both countries is highly fragmented (or even conflictual) across differing domains and agencies, differentially implemented across regions, and confusing for consumers, such that a great deal of effort on the part of individuals and disability organizations must be targeted to raising awareness, assessing eligibility, and arguing for more integrated service delivery, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity. Not only do local government and the not-for-profit sector in Germany play large roles but also insurance funds do. Both

the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) and the *Federal Equality Law for Disabled People* (*Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz* [BGG]) have broad mandates that cover such vital areas as employment and transportation, yet litigation has tightened eligibility criteria of the former (“backlash”), and the latter is still too new to assess the depth of its impact even as it promises more integrated service provision through enhanced interagency coordination, for example, service/resource centers (*Integrationsstellen*). Even with these recent more comprehensive legal statutes, no overarching, authoritative, or unifying model of disability serves as the fundamental basis of disability policy (see Maschke 2008). Instead, tensions continue between the medical, economic, and sociopolitical models inscribed in policies of different generations and with contrasting goals (especially of add-ons to existing policies). Stigmatization remains a part of many of these programs, such that many persons do not apply for, or benefit from, services for which they would qualify. Depending on the state/*Land* of residence, state programs may be more or less generous and may be more or less consistent with national policy recommendations or mandates.

- 4 In the US, the special education population rose very quickly over the 1990s—by 30%. Special education expenditures are an area of increasing concern. However, despite the much lower spending on education, Germany’s special school population also grew by 22% (even excluding the integrated students [*Integrationschüler*] from the calculations).
- 5 In further research, these district, regional, and state/*Land* differences should be investigated to better understand why some (special) educational systems, but not others, have gone from separating or segregating to integrating or even include reeducation.
- 6 Categorical knowledge is diffused throughout educational systems primarily by central decision-making bodies (KMK, Congress) that control statistical classification and by mass media that distribute everyday theories about “student disabilities.” State-implemented classification systems stabilize both clinically approved categories and diagnostic procedures, as teachers select students to receive special services or to be allocated to specific settings.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Country Codes, OECD

<i>Code</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Country</i>
BEL-FI	Belgium: Flemish Community	LUX	Luxembourg
CAN-BC	Canada: British Columbia (BC)	MEX	Mexico
CZE	Czech Republic	NLD	The Netherlands
FIN	Finland	POL	Poland
FRA	France	SVK	Slovak Republic
DEU	Germany	ESP	Spain
GRC	Greece	SWE	Sweden
IRL	Ireland	CHE	Switzerland
ITA	Italy	TUR	Turkey
JPN	Japan	GBR	United Kingdom
HUN	Hungary	USA	United States
KOR	Korea		

German States/*Bundesländer* Codes

<i>Code</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>English</i>
BB	Brandenburg	Brandenburg*
BE	Berlin	Berlin(*)
BW	Baden-Württemberg	Baden-Wuerttemberg
BY	Bayern	Bavaria
HB	Bremen	Bremen
HE	Hessen	Hesse
HH	Hamburg	Hamburg
MV	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania*
NI	Niedersachsen	Lower Saxony
NW	Nordrhein-Westfalen	North Rhine-Westphalia
RP	Rheinland-Pfalz	Rhineland-Palatinate
SH	Schleswig-Holstein	Schleswig-Holstein
SL	Saarland	Saarland
SN	Sachsen	Saxony*
ST	Sachsen-Anhalt	Saxony-Anhalt*
TH	Thüringen	Thuringia*

*Until 1990 part of the German Democratic Republic; since reunification, new states/*Bundesländer* of the Federal Republic of Germany (West and East Berlin merged).

United States Codes

<i>Code</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>State</i>
AL	Alabama	LA	Louisiana	OK	Oklahoma
AK	Alaska	MA	Massachusetts	OR	Oregon
AR	Arkansas	MD	Maryland	PA	Pennsylvania
AZ	Arizona	ME	Maine	PR	Puerto Rico
CA	California	MI	Michigan	RI	Rhode Island
CO	Colorado	MN	Minnesota	SC	South Carolina
CT	Connecticut	MO	Missouri	SD	South Dakota
DC	District of Columbia	MS	Mississippi	TN	Tennessee
DE	Delaware	MT	Montana	TX	Texas
FL	Florida	NC	North Carolina	UT	Utah
GA	Georgia	ND	North Dakota	VA	Virginia
HI	Hawaii	NE	Nebraska	VT	Vermont
IA	Iowa	NH	New Hampshire	WA	Washington
ID	Idaho	NJ	New Jersey	WI	Wisconsin
IL	Illinois	NM	New Mexico	WV	West Virginia
IN	Indiana	NV	Nevada	WY	Wyoming
KS	Kansas	NY	New York		
KY	Kentucky	OH	Ohio		

List of Acronyms

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Term</i>
ACT	American College Testing
AD/HD	Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADLs	Activities of Daily Living
AGG	General Equal Treatment Law (<i>Allgemeines Gleichstellungsgesetz</i>)
AIR	American Institutes for Research
ASL	American Sign Language
BBBA	Federal Government Commissioner for the Interests of Foreign Nationals (<i>Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für die Belange der Ausländer</i>)
BGG	Federal Equality Law for Disabled People (<i>Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz</i>)
BLK	Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Funding (<i>Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung</i>)
BMAS	Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (<i>Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung</i>)

Continued on next page

List of Acronyms (continued)

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Term</i>
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (<i>Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung</i>)
BVerfG	Federal Constitutional Court (<i>Bundesverfassungsgericht</i>)
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
COPPSE	Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education
DJI	German Youth Institute (<i>Deutsches Jugendinstitut</i>)
DRA	Disability Rights Advocates
EADSNE	European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
EHA/EAHCA	Education for all Handicapped Children Act
EFILWC	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EMNID	Opinion Research Institute (<i>Meinungsforschungsinstitut</i>)
EU	European Union
FAPE	Free appropriate public education
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GED	General equivalency diploma
GG	Basic Law (<i>Grundgesetz</i>)
ICD	International Classification of Diseases
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairment, Disability, and Handicap
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KMK	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the <i>Länder</i> in the Federal Republic of Germany (<i>Kultusministerkonferenz</i>) Short form: Conference of Culture Ministers (<i>Kultusministerkonferenz</i>)
LEAs	Local Education Agencies
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCD	National Council on Disability
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NELS	National Education Longitudinal Study
NEPS	National Education Panel Study
NLTS	National Longitudinal Transition Study
NLTS2	National Longitudinal Transition Study-2
NRC	National Research Council

Continued overleaf

List of Acronyms (continued)

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Term</i>
NSF	National Science Foundation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
PARC	Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
REI	Regular Education Initiative
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SEA	State Education Administration
SEELS	Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study
SEEP	Special Education Expenditure Project
SPENSE	Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study (<i>Dritte Internationale Mathematik- und Naturwissenschaftsstudie</i>)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US DoED	US Department of Education
VdHD	Association of German Support Schools (<i>Verbandes der Hilfsschulen Deutschlands [1898–1945]; Verband Deutscher Hilfsschulen [1948–1955]</i>)
VDS	Association of German Special Schools/Special Education (<i>Verband Deutscher Sonderschulen [1955–2003]; Verband Deutscher Sonderpädagogik [2003–]</i>)
WHO	World Health Organization

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