THE MATRIX OF RACE

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THE MATRIX OF RACE

Social Construction, Intersectionality, and Inequality

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BRIEF CONTENTS

PREFACE x

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xiii

ABOUT THE AUTHORS xvi

PART I. INTRODUCTION TO RACE AND THE SOCIAL MATRIX 1

Chapter 1. Race and the Social Construction of Difference 2

Chapter 2. The Shaping of a Nation: The Social Construction of Race in America 46

PART II. THE MATRIX PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS 77

Chapter 3. The Social Construction and Regulation of Families 78

Chapter 4. Work and Wealth Inequality 114

Chapter 5. Health, Medicine, and Health Care 156

Chapter 6. Education 194

Chapter 7. Crime, Law, and Deviance 228

Chapter 8. Power, Politics, and Identities 268

Chapter 9. Sports and the American Dream 302

Chapter 10. The Military, War, and Terrorism 332

Conclusion 370

GLOSSARY 372

REFERENCES 380

INDEX 448

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DETAILED CONTENTS

PREFACE x

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xiii

ABOUT THE AUTHORS xvi

PART I. INTRODUCTION TO RACE AND THE SOCIAL MATRIX 1

Chapter 1. Race and the Social Construction of Difference 2

The Social Construction of Race 4

Defining Race 5

Constructing Race around the World 6

Constructing Race in the United States 8

The Role of Ethnicity 14

Racial and Ethnic Compositions in the Future 19

The Social Matrix of Race 22

Race Is Inherently Social 24

Race Is a Narrative 25

Racial Identity Is Relational and Intersectional 28

Race Is Institutional and Structural 29

We Are Active Agents in the Matrix 30

The Operation of Racism 31

Prejudice and Discrimination 31

Racism 32

Understanding Privilege 34

Our Stories 36

Rodney 38

Abby 40

Dave 42

Key Terms 43

Chapter Summary 44

Chapter 2. The Shaping of a Nation: The Social Construction of Race in America 46

Race Today: Adapting and Evolving 48

Changing Demographics 48

The Influence of a Changing World 51

Revising the Experience of Work, Gender, and Race 52

Sources of Change and Diversity 52

The Evolving Narrative of Popular Culture 53

The Impact of Social Media and Technology 53

Indigenous Peoples: The Americas before Columbus 54

The Earliest Americans 55

A Rich History 56

Discovery and Encounters: The Shaping of Our Storied Past 58

Understanding Colonialism 58

Spanish Colonialism (1492) 59

French Colonialism (1534) 62

British Colonialism (1587) 65

Borderlands and Frontiers 68

The U.S. Matrix and Intersectionality—Where Do We Go from Here? 71

Investigating Institutions and Their Narratives 71

Examining Intersecting Identities 71

Analyzing Historical Roots and Geographic Differences 71

Appraising Difference, Resistance, and Transformation 72

Key Terms 74

Chapter Summary 74

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■ PART II. THE MATRIX PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS 77

Chapter 3. The Social Construction and Regulation of Families 78

Historical Regulation of the Family 80
Early Families 80
Domesticity: The Emergence of the Ideology of Separate Spheres 83
The Legacy of Immigration 84
Changing Families, Changing Attitudes 88
Family Inequality Theories 89
Stock Stories and Assimilation 89
Concealed Stories: The Legacy of Slavery 92
Applying the Pathology Narrative to Latino/a Families 94
Family Inequality through the Matrix Lens 96
Women's Concealed Stories 97
Invisible Fathers 99
Oppression and Privilege: Support for White Families 100
The Socialization of Children 103
Transforming the Ideal Family Narrative 104
When the Ideal Family Is Not Ideal 105
Transmigration 105
New Reproductive Technologies 106
Interracial Marriage 107
LGBT Families 109
Key Terms 112
Chapter Summary 112

Chapter 4. Work and Wealth Inequality 114

Recent Trends in Work and Wealth 116
Increasing Inequality 116
Economic Restructuring and Changing Occupations 120
A Disappearing Social Safety Net 122
Race, Recession, and Recovery 125
The Wage Gap and Occupational Segregation 128
Theories of Economic Inequality 130
Neoliberal Theory 130
Marxist Theories 132
Applying the Matrix to the History of Economic Inequality in the United States 133
The Shifting Organization of Work and Wealth 134
The Effects of Social Policy 137
Transforming the Story of Race and Economic Inequality 141
Workplace Discrimination 142
Immigration Stories 145
Many Stories Lead to Many Solutions 149
Transforming a History of Wealth Inequality 152
Key Terms 153
Chapter Summary 153

Chapter 5. Health, Medicine, and Health Care 156

Patterns of Inequality in Health and Health Care 158
Traditional Healing 159
Modern Medicine and Discrimination 160
The Social Construction of "Fit" and "Unfit" Bodies 162
Theorizing Inequality in Health and Health Care 168
Historical Advances in Health and Life Expectancy 169
The Role of Objectivity in Medicine 170
Applying the Matrix to Health Inequity and Inequality 171
An Intersectional Approach to Health and Health Care 172

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A Legacy of Mistrust 181
The Role of Place and Environmental Racism 182
The Human Genome Project 184
Resisting and Transforming Inequality in Health and Health Care 186
Urban American Indian Health Care 186
Race, Reproduction, and the Women's Health Movement 187
A Path to the Future 190
Key Terms 192
Chapter Summary 193

Chapter 6. Education 194
The Shaping of the Matrix of U.S. Education 196
Education Today 197
A Short History 200
Theories of Education 205
Social-Functional Theory: Education as a Socialization Process 205
Human Capital Theory: Education as Skills Acquisition 205
Examining the Concealed Story of Race and Education through the Matrix 207
Education as a Conversion Tool 208
Education as a Site of Class Construction 209
Education as a Means of Creating Workers 210
Education as a Citizen Machine 212
Education, Race, and Intersectional Realities 214
Alternative Educational Movements and the Future of Education 223
Imagining New Educations 223
Education as a Human Right 225
Key Terms 226
Chapter Summary 227

Chapter 7. Crime, Law, and Deviance 228
A History of Race, Crime, and Punishment 230
Building a Foundation of Whiteness 231
A Legacy of Racial Profiling 235
Sociological Stock Theories of Crime and Deviance 237
Biosocial Theories of Deviance 238
Ecological Perspectives on Crime 239
Applying the Matrix to Crime and Deviance 242
The Spaces and Places of Crime and Deviance 243
The Structure and Context of Crime and Deviance 245
Identifying Types of Crime 252
Transforming the Narrative of Race, Crime, and Deviance 260
Scientific Advances 262
Alternatives to Incarceration 263
Emphasizing Choice 263
Adjusting the Narrative of Race and Deviance 264
Key Terms 265
Chapter Summary 265

Chapter 8. Power, Politics, and Identities 268
Contemporary Political Identities 270
Understanding the Electorate 270
Regional Differences 270
The Role of Race, Class, and Gender 273
Analyzing the 2016 Presidential Election 274
Critiquing Sociological Theories of Power, Politics, and Identity 276
The Pluralist Approach 277
The Power Elite Model 278
The Class Approach 280

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Applying the Matrix of Race to U.S. Political History 282
Building a Nation's Identity 283
Civil War and Its Aftermath 287
The Rise of Coalitional Politics and Social Movements 290
Building Alternatives to the Matrix of Race and Politics 292
The Power of Political Activism 293
Creating Change 296
Key Terms 299
Chapter Summary 299

Chapter 9. Sports and the American Dream 302
The State of Sport Today 304
The Sports Industry 304
Sports Media 305
Players and Coaches 308
Examining Stock Sociological Theories of Sport 310
The Nature Perspective 311
The Nurture Perspective 312
The Functions of Sport 315
Identity through Competition 316
Applying the Matrix to Sports in the United States 316
Analyzing Space and Place: Early American Sports Narratives 317
Institutionalizing Sport: Industrialization, Immigration, and Team Sports 319
Identities and Resistance 321
Creating a New Playing Field 325
The Role of Agency and Resistance 325
Closing the Athlete Graduation Gap 326
Creating Change 328
Key Terms 330
Chapter Summary 330

Chapter 10. The Military, War, and Terrorism 332
Class, Gender, and Race in the U.S. Military 334
Socioeconomics and Recruiting 336
Gender and Enlistment 336
Racial Minority Representation 337
Military Sociology Stock Theories 339
Functionalism 339
Symbolic Interactionism 342
Monopoly and Materialist Perspectives 342
Applying the Matrix Approach to U.S. Military History, War, and Terrorism 345
Revolutionary War 346
Wars and Native Americans 348
Civil War 351
World War II 354
Vietnam War 359
Wars on Terrorism 361
A More Inclusive Future 365
Strength through Diversity 365
World Security through Sustainable Economies 366
Key Terms 367
Chapter Summary 368

Conclusion 370

GLOSSARY 372
REFERENCES 380
INDEX 448

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PREFACE

Almost 16 years ago, the three of us (Rodney, Abby, and Dave) began a series of conversations that led ultimately to the production of this volume, *The Matrix of Race: Social Construction, Intersectionality, and Inequality.* Two events, separated by more than 7 years, served as stimuli for these conversations. These events, not quite bookends, but rather landmarks, served to highlight the need for such conversations. The first of these events was 9/11, with all of its associated terror; the second was the election, in November 2008, of the first African American to the presidency of the United States. Collectively, these landmarks and the events surrounding them challenged our notions of race, its relevance, and its continual transformation. Scholarship on race and ethnicity exists to help humanity think through collective events such as these and how they move us forward or further entrench us. As we considered contemporary and classic work on race and ethnic relations along with the prominent textbooks on race and ethnicity, we began to question whether a better approach was needed.

Our review of these works identified a significant group of texts that provide a plethora of theoretical expositions of race in the United States. Most provide syntheses of theory, histories, and structures that present cross-cultural analyses of race and ethnicity involving multiple groups—opting, often, for approaches that offer voyeuristic walks through the "races" and "ethnicities," as if readers were walking through a museum. Some of these texts highlight a concern for hate crimes, racial conflict, structural and systemic patterns of animosity, segregation, and inequality that duplicates racial and ethnic hierarchies across histories and societies. We also note the prevailing logic that racism and ethnic discrimination are bad, and multiculturalism, diversity, and integration are good. Since the terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, there has also been increased attention given to the changing nature of racism, particularly as many additional groups have now become racialized, such as Muslims and other Middle Easterners. Similarly, increased attention has been paid post-9/11 to issues such as immigration, assimilation, racial profiling, terrorism, domestic security, and globalization. The election of Barack Obama was heralded by many as evidence that we, the United States, had made a significant step toward, if not actually arrived at, a postracial society. Such reactions were not only naive but also harmful, as they served to marginalize and minimize ongoing racial and ethnic problems that have developed over centuries, as seen in wealth gaps, education gaps, entrenched poverty, and inequities in criminal sanctioning and policing. Once again, as we were writing this textbook, we began witnessing protests and riots, charges of police brutality and political indifference, and the killing of people of color. These events and realities, then and now, convinced us that what we were witnessing was not limited to a simplistic concern for race and ethnicity—it was something far deeper, more complex, and nuanced.

We began envisioning a different approach: one of increased breadth and scope; one that would more closely reflect people's personal and lived experiences; and one that would dispense with the static categories of race and ethnicity, looking instead at the intersecting, multilayered identities of contemporary society. Not only are racial and ethnic groups socially constructed, but they also intersect with other aspects of identity (including gender

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and sexuality, age, and social class) that vary across both temporal and geographical spaces. We decided to use the core concept of *the matrix* to capture these complex intersections. Many texts concerned with race and ethnic relations are written by academics who provide excellent scholarly treatments of the subject, but all too often students perceive such treatments as removed from their own lives, or sterile. We decided to also add a concern for the reader's personal identity and its intersection with society. It is our view that such an approach will not only stir emotion but also compel self-appraisal. We believe that this approach will enable our discussion to be closer to the reader's lived experiences. We have deliberately tied our text not only to current research but also to a wide array of media and other supplements, making it more dynamic than what is typically offered. In the process, we have discovered that our identities are not separate from the various social settings and structures that occupy us from birth to death. These social settings and structures, which govern our personal and lived experiences, are typically associated with the major institutions of our society.

The Matrix of Race is a textbook that helps instructors navigate the diversity of students in their race/ethnic relations courses—both members of minority groups who have experienced the impact of race in their own lives and members of dominant groups who might believe that we now live in a "color-blind" society, in which race and racism are relics of the past. Our goal is to make race and racial inequality "visible" in new ways to all students, regardless of their backgrounds.

The "matrix" in the title refers to a way of thinking about race that can help readers get beyond the familiar "us versus them" arguments that can lead to resistance and hostility. This framework incorporates a number of important theories and perspectives from contemporary sociologists who study this subject: (a) Race is socially constructed—it changes from one place to another and across time. (b) When talking about racial inequality, it is more useful to focus on the structures of society (institutions) than to blame individuals. (c) Race is intersectional—it is embedded in other socially constructed categories of difference (like gender, social class, ethnicity, and sexuality). And (d) there are two sides to race: oppression and privilege. Both are harmful, and both can be experienced simultaneously.

We are sure that as you work through this text while considering your own story, you will come to the same conclusions that we have: We are all active agents in maintaining or challenging the matrix of race. How successful have we been? Tell us your story.

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RODNEY'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DAVID'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my longtime brother Rodney Coates for reaching out to me in the summer of 2011 to ask if I wanted to join him in creating a unique, critical, and intersectional race textbook. Our early discussions centered on changing the way we teach race and ethnicity to undergraduate students and inspired this textbook. I was equally enthralled when Abby Ferber agreed to join us on this journey. The journey has been a long one, with many twists and turns. Along the way several people have been there to lean on, to discuss with, to commiserate with, and to bounce ideas off of. No list is ever complete, but I would like to acknowledge my deeply supportive partner, Rachel, and my three wonderful children, Karina, Thomas, and Henry—I love you all more than you will ever know. I also must acknowledge the following people for their support along the way: David Embrick, Jennifer Wyse, James Michael Thomas, John Ryan, Sarah Ovink, Jaber Gubrium, Ellington Graves, Minjeong Kim, Petra Rivera-Rideau, Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Slade Lellock, Nate Chapman, Hephzibah Strmic-Pawl, Megan Nanney, Carson Byrd, and Anthony Peguero. All of these people, and many, many graduate students and undergraduate students, have heard me discuss "the textbook" that I am writing—well, here it is. I also want to thank my inspirations, among many: Gloria Anzaldúa, Charles Mills, Patricia Hill Collins, Immortal Technique, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Lauryn Hill, Michael Omi, Paulo Freire, Joey Sprague, J. R. R. Tolkien, and my grandfather, Wilbur Nachtigall.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION TO RACE AND THE SOCIAL MATRIX

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CHAPTER 1

RACE AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE

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David Rae Morris / Polaris/Newscom

The city of New Orleans's decision to remove this statue of Robert E. Lee, and three others celebrating Confederate figures, led to protests, with some celebrating the removal and others claiming the move was disrespectful of the heritage of the South.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Social Construction of Race
- *Defining Race*
- *Constructing Race around the World*
- *Constructing Race in the United States*
- *The Role of Ethnicity*
- *Racial and Ethnic Compositions in the Future*

The Social Matrix of Race
- *Race Is Inherently Social*
- *Race Is a Narrative*
- *Racial Identity Is Relational and Intersectional*
- *Race Is Institutional and Structural*
- *We Are Active Agents in the Matrix*

The Operation of Racism
- *Prejudice and Discrimination*
- *Racism*
- *Understanding Privilege*

Our Stories
- *Rodney*
- *Abby*
- *Dave*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

LO 1.1 Explain how race and ethnicity are socially constructed.

LO 1.2 Evaluate the relationship between social contexts and race.

LO 1.3 Identify the concepts and operation of racism.

LO 1.4 Examine the link between our personal narratives and the broader "story" of race.

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Our country has a history of memorializing wars and the people who fought them with medals, holidays, and monuments. The Civil War (1861–65) between the North and the South was quite possibly the bloodiest and subsequently the most commemorated four years in U.S. history. After the final shot was fired, some 1,500 memorials and monuments were created, including many commemorating the heroes of the Confederacy, the seven slaveholding Southern states that formally seceded from the Union in 1861 (Graham 2016). Over the past few years, protests around the appropriateness of these monuments have highlighted the racial fault lines in America.

In 2016, New Orleans, Louisiana, became a racial seismic epicenter as protests rocked the city. At issue was the city's decision to remove four landmark Civil War–related monuments: a statue of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy;

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statues of Confederate generals P. G. T. Beauregard and Robert E. Lee; and a monument memorializing a White supremacist uprising during the Reconstruction era.

As the city pondered how and what to rebuild after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, anti-Confederate sentiment began to simmer. It reached a boiling point in June 2015 when nine Black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, were killed by a gunman waving a Confederate flag (Wootson 2017). To many, these monuments represented not only the racially-based terrorism of groups like the Ku Klux Klan but also a sanitized history that "whitewashed" the Confederacy cause and glorified slavery and White supremacy (Landrieu 2017). After the monuments were successfully removed, under the cover of darkness and with snipers stationed nearby to protect the workers, lawmakers in Louisiana and Alabama immediately responded by passing laws to make it more difficult to remove Confederate monuments in the future (Park 2017).

Confederate monuments are a symptom of a much deeper set of issues that mark our nation's troubled history with race. The mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu (2017), remarked that we as a nation continue to confuse the "difference between remembrance of history and reverence of it." Our collective memories often reflect this same distortion as we attempt to reconcile our democratic principles of freedom, justice, and equality with the racial realities of prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination. Landrieu's statement and the controversy surrounding the removal of Confederate monuments mirror concerns that are deeply rooted within the social fabric of our country. They highlight the promises and the problems associated with race in the United States. What is race, and how has it become so central to our experiences? Is race so ingrained in our basic identities that it is now a permanent fixture of our social landscape? Alternatively, if race is a social invention, with a set of origins, purposes, and realities, then is it within our ability to influence, change, or eliminate it? The answers to these questions drive the purpose of this book.

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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

Nothing better demonstrates the complexity and social dynamics of race than performing an Internet image search using the term "biracial twins." When most children are born, they are assumed to belong to particular races because of the color of their skin. But race is not so simple. Even twins can have very different skin colors, and this can raise some interesting questions. Some twins who have one Black parent and one White parent are routinely asked to produce their birth certificates to prove that they are not only related but also twins. So are they White, or are they Black? It depends. In some cases, the twins self-identify according to their perceived racial identities (Perez 2015).

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Defining Race

AP Photo / Ken McKay

Lucy and Maria Aylmer are twins, born to a half-Jamaican mother and a white father. Lucy identifies as white and Maria as black, despite their shared parentage.

The term **race** refers to a social and cultural system by which we categorize people based on presumed biological differences. An examination of genetic patterns across the major world population groups reveals that while Africans have some genes unique to them as a group, all other groups share genetic patterns with Africans. This leads to the conclusion, held by most geneticists, anthropologists, and sociologists, that all humans are derived from Africans and that Africa is the cradle of humanity. Geneticists go further, declaring that the differences we observe between various groups are the results of geographical and social isolation, and that if such populations were to mix freely, then even these differences would disappear (Yudell, Roberts, DeSalle, and Tishkoff 2016).

Since human genes have changed, or mutated, over time, we must question if race is either natural or static. If race were indeed a fact of nature, it would be simple to identify who falls into which racial category, and we would expect racial categories to remain static across history and societies. Differences in physical features, such as skin color, hair color, eye color, and height, exist both within and between groups. And as we've seen, physical features can vary even within families. However, these differences are not due to an underlying biological basis of race. There is more biological variation within our so-called racial groups than there is between them. Race must derive from human interventions. These interventions reflect the social construction of race.

Racial classifications have persisted as a means of advancing specific hierarchies through attention to the reputed differences in behaviors, skill sets, and inherent intelligence attributed to people according to their classifications. As a consequence, what social scientists and geneticists alike have come to understand is that race and **racial categorizations** are uniquely social creations that have been purposefully constructed. Specific rewards, privileges, and sanctions have been used to support and legitimate race. The systematic distribution of these rewards, privileges, and sanctions across populations through time has produced and reproduced social hierarchies that reflect our racial categorizations. We collectively refer to these systematic processes as the **social construction of race**.

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Constructing Race around the World

If we examine the social construction of race across geographical spaces and historical periods, then an interesting range of constructions is immediately apparent.

South Africa

Many countries have historically instituted laws that dictated where the members of different racial groups could live and work, and how they must behave. Once such system, known as apartheid, existed in South Africa until 1994. One of the measures of determining race in South Africa was the so-called pencil test. If a pencil pushed through the hair stayed put, the person was deemed to have Afro-textured hair and might be classified as Black or Colored (of mixed racial heritage). If the pencil fell to the floor, the person was classified as White. A Colored classification allowed a person to have significantly more rights than those who were considered Black, but still fewer rights and responsibilities than those considered White. Given the multiple products and processes used to "straighten" Black hair, and the social benefits associated with enhanced social status, is it any wonder that many Black South Africans sought to have their identify changed to Colored? Apartheid allowed a racial hierarchy to be reified into law—an illustration of how race was socially constructed in South Africa. While technically illegal, these racial hierarchies are still a part of South African cultural identity and heritage, and the legacies of apartheid still haunt South Africa more than 20 years after the system officially ended.

South America

The Southern Cone of South America is a geographic region composed of the southernmost areas of the continent, including the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay (see Figure 1.1). Among these Latin American countries, **phenotypical traits**—physical traits such as skin color, hair texture, and facial features typically used to characterize people into racial groups—are linked to socioeconomic status.

At the top of the hierarchy are White Hispanics and others with light skin. Mixed indigenous and African ancestry, often referred to as *mulatto,* is associated with less opportunity, higher levels of poverty, and lower social status. Those individuals who claim both indigenous and Hispanic ancestry, called *mestizos,* occupy a middle position and tend to have slightly more opportunities for social and economic advancement than do mulattos.

There are also nation-specific racial categorizations. The Brazilian census identifies six racial categories: *Brancos* (White), *Pardos* (Brown), *Pretos* (Black), *Amarelos* (East Asian), indigenous, and undeclared. Such categories and their links to the social and economic hierarchies in Latin American countries exist to this day in what scholars

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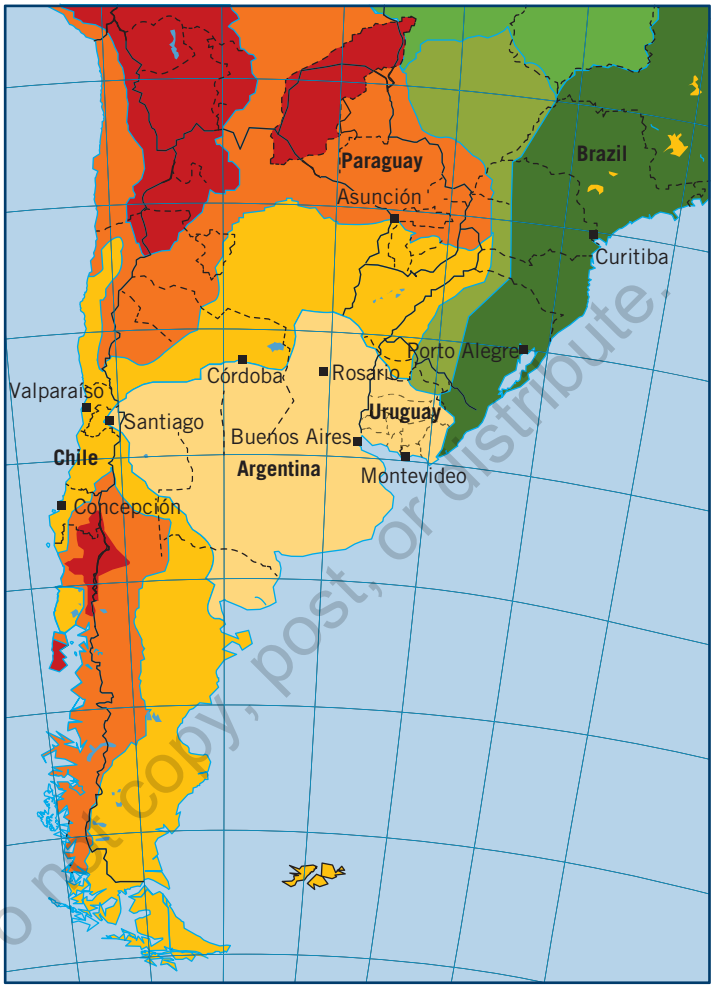
Figure 1.1 ■ The Southern Cone of South America Has Unique Racial Categories



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Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern_Cone_Ethnography.jpg.

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refer to as **pigmentocracies**—governments and other social structures that grant political power based on a hierarchy defined by skin tone, regardless of race or social status (Telles and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America 2014). But these are not exclusive categorizations. One study conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the governmental entity responsible for the census, asked people what racial categories they would place themselves in, and the researchers received 134 different answers (Fish 2011).

Australia

Race was similarly constructed in Australia when Britain began to colonize and marginalize the indigenous population in 1791. In the early phase of colonization, Britain declared much of Australia's most valuable land to be *terra nullius,* or "empty land." Under this determination, all of the natives, or Aboriginals, saw their rights to land revoked, as the Europeans declared the indigenous population's 50,000 years of residency null. Thus began an apartheid-like social structure, where Europeans were accorded all the rights, privileges, and status, while Aborigines were reduced to living in poverty on settlements. This segregated racial structure has been successfully challenged only in the last 20 years, as courts have begun to grant rights and privileges to Australia's Aborigines. The historical legacy of such a racialized structure has not been limited to Australia. Of note, several European nations used the declaration of *terra nullius* as a means of justifying colonial expansion and the subsequent racialization of indigenous peoples in many places, including, but not limited to, New Zealand, Grenada, Singapore, South Rhodesia, Tobago, Trinidad, Guano Islands, Burkina Faso, and Niger. In each case, a racial hierarchy favoring Europeans was socially constructed. Indigenous populations were subject to subjugation, isolation, or genocide. The United States is another one of these cases.

Constructing Race in the United States

Whiteness came into being as a way for European colonists to explain and justify imperialism, genocide, slavery, and exploitation. In Chapter 2, we will discuss the extent to which the construction of race in the United States follows the pattern of European settler colonialism and imperialism. For now, we present a brief explanation of how racial categorizations became significant within the United States.

The Significance of Where and When

The United States has its roots in three separate colonial settlements. These settlements, associated with the Spanish, French, and English, developed different types of racial classification structures. While all of them reserved the highest category for Europeans, they varied in how they accommodated other groups. This variability accounts for the slight differences we can still often observe between the former

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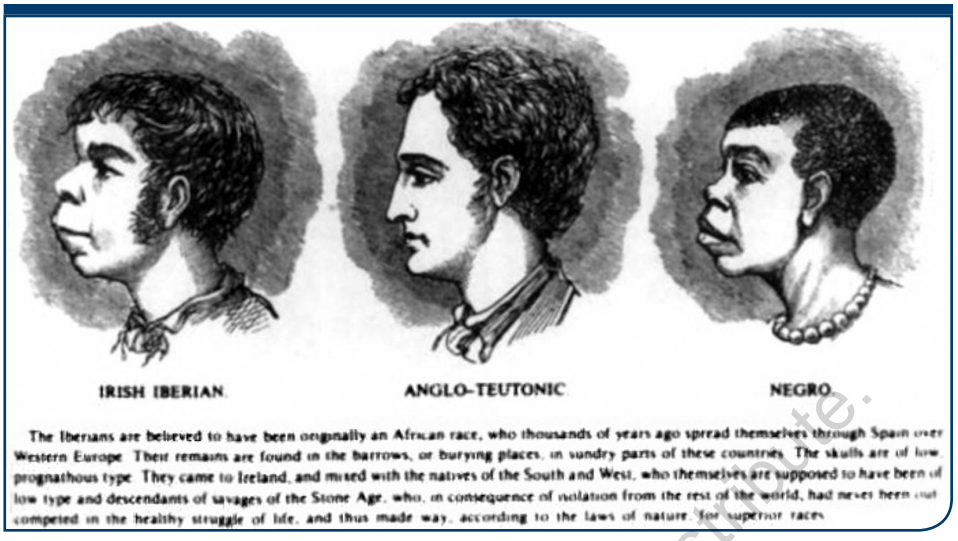

Drawing by: H. Strickland Constable. 1899, Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View

Constructing race in 1899. The caption that appeared with this image in an 1899 edition of *Harper's Weekly* reads: "The Iberians are believed to have been originally an African race, who thousands of years ago spread themselves through Spain over Western Europe. Their remains are found in the barrows, or burying places, in sundry parts of these countries. The skulls are of low prognathous type. They came to Ireland and mixed with the natives of the South and West, who themselves are supposed to have been of low type and descendants of savages of the Stone Age, who, in consequence of isolation from the rest of the world, had never been out-competed in the healthy struggle of life, and thus made way, according to the laws of nature, for superior races."

Spanish and French colonial regions (e.g., in California and Louisiana) and the former English colonial areas. These differences are most reflected in the heightened status of Creoles (people of mixed race, European and indigenous) in the former Spanish and French colonies and the more rigidly defined racial categories within the English. The reasons for these differences, as we will discover, are associated with the differences in settlement types. Here, it is important simply to note that these differences were real and that they further demonstrate the processes of the social construction of race.

The social construction of race also varies across time, as the sets of descriptors used to create racial categories have varied in different historical periods. At an earlier time in U.S. history, for example, the Irish were considered to be of African descent. The "Iberian hypothesis" purported that the "Black Irish" were descendants of Africans and those from the Gaelic island. Although the Iberian hypothesis has since been discredited (Radford 2015), in 1899 it was considered fact. Irish immigrants experienced a tremendous amount of prejudice in the United States and were not considered to be among the country's elite White ethnics. In Chapter 2 we shall see that these biases underscored many of our attitudes toward race and how Whiteness came into being.

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In 1924, the Racial Integrity Act defined a "colored person" as anyone with any African or Native American ancestry at all; this is often referred to as the **one-drop rule**. The rules for defining who falls into what racial categories have long been inconsistent across the United States. Over time and in different states, the amount of ancestry required to make someone Black has variously been defined as one drop (of Black blood) and by fractions ranging from ¼ to ⅛ to 1/32. A person could "change" races by simply stepping over a state line. Why did having 1/32 Black ancestry make someone Black, yet having 31/32 of White ancestry not make someone White? And why have such clear-cut rules never been established for other racial groups? How many Asian ancestors are required to define someone as Asian? These inconsistencies exist because racial classifications are based not on biology but on social, political, and economic dynamics and power relationships. Under the one-drop rule, Native Americans of mixed ancestry were systematically classified as Negro (or Black) and denied tribal rights, and those who crossed the color line were subject to criminal punishments.

Race in the Contemporary United States

So what does this racially constructed system look like in the contemporary United States? Try this exercise: First, create a list of the racial groups in the United States. Then, write down your estimate of the percentage of the U.S. population that is accounted for by each group.

When we ask our students to attempt this exercise, the answers we get are varied. Some list four races; some list ten. Some include Hispanics/Latinos, and some do not. Some include Middle Easterners, while some do not. Some include a category for multiracial identity. Race is something we assume we all know when we see it, but we may in fact be "seeing" different things. Race cannot be reduced to physical features like skin color—in fact, while skin tone is often the first item we "check off" on our racial checklist, we then move to other social and visual clues.

The U.S. Constitution requires that a counting of the nation's population be conducted every 10 years—a national census (see Figure 1.2). The purposes and uses of the census have both changed and expanded across the years. The census was originally necessary to determine voting representation, including the numbers of representatives states could elect to Congress, the allocation of federal and state funds, and more. Over time, the census categories of race and other cultural and language groups have changed to reflect the nation's evolving population as well as, importantly, the political interests and power relations of the time.

So what have we discovered? Race is a social construction that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestry, culture, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs, desires, and relations of a society at a given historical moment (Adams, Bell, and

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Griffin 1997; Ferrante and Brown 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau, for instance, currently recognizes five racial categories, along with a "some other race" option (which was added in 2000 in response to public pressure). The five categories are as follows:

1. American Indian or Alaska Native
2. Asian
3. Black or African American
4. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
5. White

Not only have our official designations for race and ethnic groups differed over time, but how people identify themselves has also shown a great deal of variability. For example, from the 2000 census to that of 2010, almost 10 million U.S. residents changed how they identified their race when asked by the Census Bureau (Linshi 2014). This clearly demonstrates the fluidity of racial groups.

People often associate an elaborate array of behaviors, attitudes, and values with particular racial groups, presuming that these reflect innate or culturally specific traits. As one observer has noted: "What is called 'race' today is chiefly an outcome of intergroup struggles, marking the boundaries, and thus the identities, of 'us' and 'them' along with attendant ideas of social worth or stigma. As such, 'race' is an ideological construct that links supposedly innate traits of individuals to their place in the social order" (Rumbaut 2011).

We often assume that racial differences have existed throughout history, but race is a relatively new concept. Human differences exist along a continuum, and racial classifications have been arbitrarily imposed on that continuum, separating people into seemingly distinct groups, much as we separate the color spectrum into distinct categories that we have selected to label red, orange, yellow, green, and so on—though there is only one spectrum of color.

Recent genetic evidence presents a much more varied set of human identities. For example, most of us derive from multiple ancestries. Genomes reveal that the average African American can identify not only with African ancestry (about 73.2%) but also with European (24%) and Native American (0.8%). Latinos average about 18% Native American ancestry, 65% European ancestry (mostly from the Iberian Peninsula), and 6.2% African ancestry. And about 3.5% of European Americans carry African ancestry. These are more likely to be in southern states, such as South Carolina and Louisiana (where 12% of European Americans have at least 1% African ancestry). In Louisiana, about 8% of Europeans derive at least 1% of their ancestries from Native Americans (Wade 2014).

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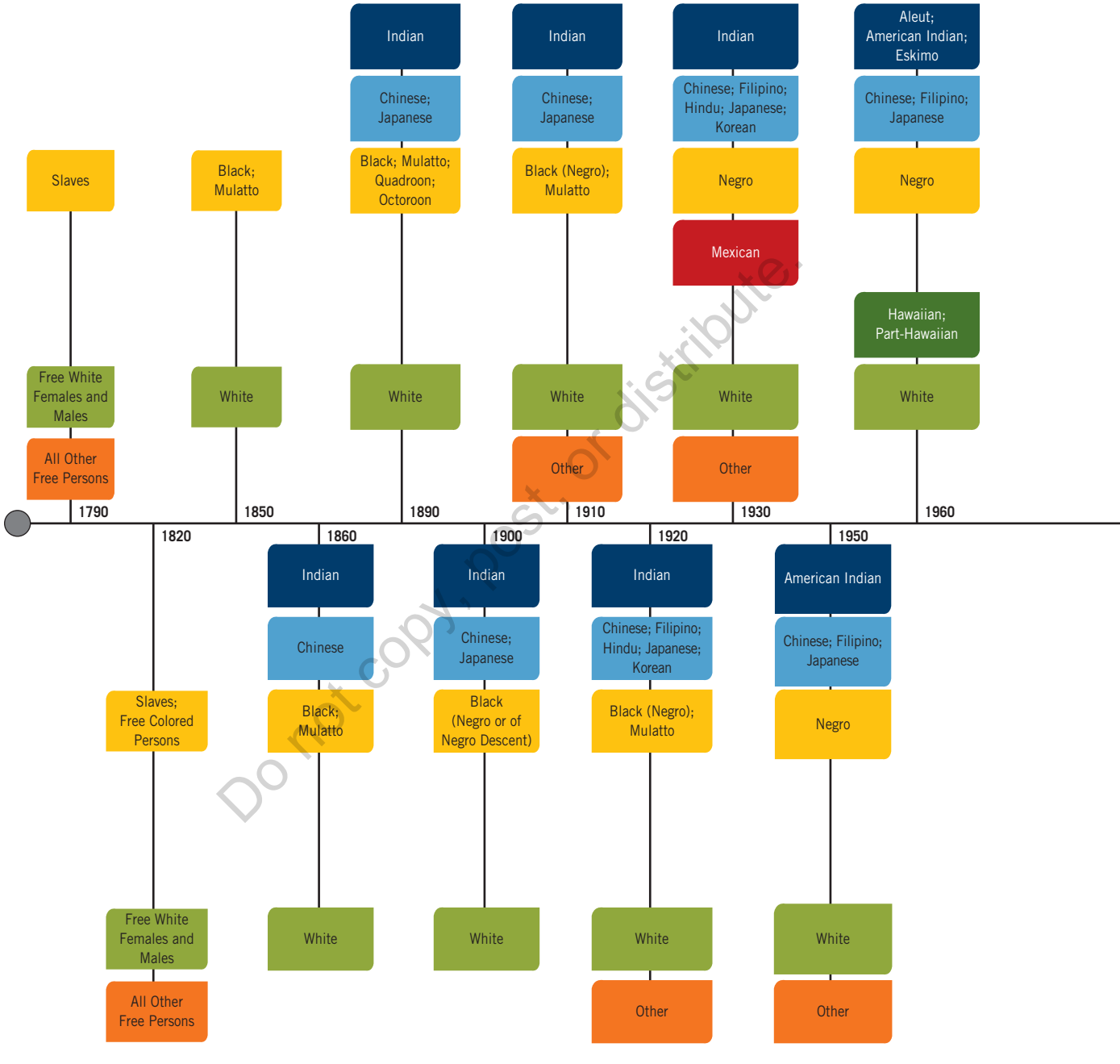
Figure 1.2 ■ Racial and Ethnic Categories Have Changed Over the Past 220 Years



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Measuring Race and Ethnicity across the Decades: 1790–2010," http://www.census.gov/population/race/data/MREAD_1790_2010.html.

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Note: According to the 2000 Census, as the 2010 Census did not ask questions about ancestry. Please note that respondents may have selected more than one ancestry group.

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The Role of Ethnicity

While race has been imposed on physical bodies, **ethnicity** encompasses cultural aspects of individuals' lives, including religion, tradition, language, ancestry, nation, geography, history, beliefs, and practice. Ethnic groups often see themselves, and are seen by others, as having distinct cultural identities. Physical characteristics are not usually tied to definitions of ethnicity. For example, Blacks in the United States come from many different ethnic backgrounds, including African Americans whose ancestors arrived enslaved generations ago and recent immigrants from Ethiopia, Jamaica, and other parts of the world. Often we confuse ancestry with ethnicity and race. The term **ancestry** typically refers to point of origin, lineage, or descent. For instance, Abby, one of the authors of this text, is racially White, ethnically Jewish, and of Eastern European ancestry. Ancestry is often one characteristic in definitions of ethnicity or race (see Figure 1.3).

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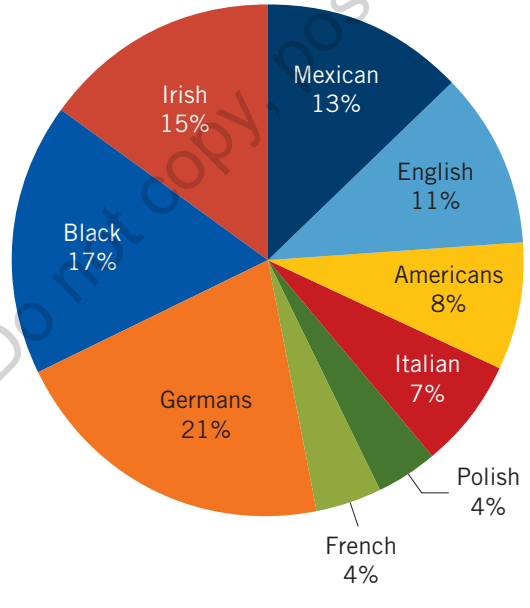
Figure 1.3 ■ The Nine Largest Ancestry Groups in The United States



Source: Derived from data in Liz O'Connor, Gus Lubin, and Dina Spector, "The Largest Ancestry Groups in the United States," Business Insider, August 13, 2013, http://www.businessinsider.com/largest-ethnic-groups-in-america-2013-8.

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Often when we concentrate on large racial groups in the United States, we tend to ignore just how diverse we are as a nation. Although the most recent census, in 2010, did not ask a question regarding ancestry, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey tracks most major ancestry groups on an ongoing basis. The data collected by that survey reveal that Germans and Blacks make up the largest single ancestry groups within the United States.

When we focus on racial groups as distinct groups whose members supposedly have much in common while ignoring the ethnic and ancestral diversity within the socially constructed categories, we further exaggerate the significance of racial designations. Furthermore, we erase the differences among the various and diverse ethnic peoples grouped into these racial categories. The only thing that people grouped together under a racial designation share is a history of oppression based on their racialization. Other than that, racial categories themselves tell us very little about the people classified into them.

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Native Americans

The original, indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, Native Americans (or American Indians) and Alaska Natives, do not constitute one single race. As of the 2010 census, members of these groups made up 2% of the total U.S. population. Of these, about 49% exclusively defined themselves as either American Indians or Alaska Natives. The remaining 51% identified as some combination of American Indian or Alaska Native and one or more other races (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). A total of 630 separate federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native reservations existed in 2012, excluding the Hawaiian Home Lands. There are 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, with the five largest tribal groupings being the Cherokee, Navajo, Choctaw, Mexican American Indian, and Chippewa groupings (see Figure 1.4). At the time of the 2010 census, the majority of Native Americans were living in 10 states: California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Washington, North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan (U.S. Census Bureau 2012).

Asian Americans

All racial categories can be described as "panethnic." Yen Le Espiritu coined the term **panethnicity** in 1992 in reference to Asian Americans (see Espiritu 1994). It is generally applied to regional groups who are placed into a large category. As Espiritu points out, many Asian groups—including Chinese, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Bangladeshi, Asian Indian, and Vietnamese—have been lumped together and viewed as an artificial whole.

Asians make up 5.8% of the total U.S. population. While many Americans are aware of the increasing presence of Hispanic-origin immigrants, Asians actually now make up an even larger share of immigrants to the United States. In 2014, the Asian share of the U.S. foreign-born population increased to 30% of the nation's 42.4 million

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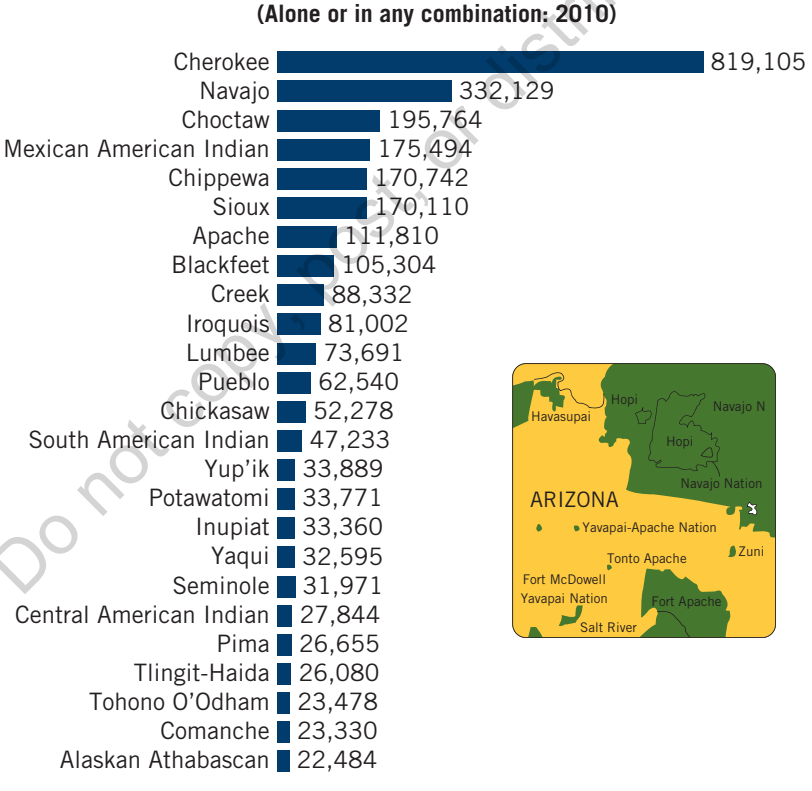
immigrants (Zong and Batalova 2014). In that year, most of the 4.2 million Asians entering the United States came from Southeast Asia, followed by East Asia, South Central Asia, and Western Asia. India and China accounted for the largest share of these immigrants (17% each), followed by the Philippines (15%), Vietnam (10%), and Korea (9%). Asian immigrants also come from dozens of other countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian continent (Zong and Batalova 2016).

Figure 1.4 ■ American Indians and Alaskan Natives Identify Across Different Tribal Groupings



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "25 Largest Tribal Groupings among American Indians and Alaska Natives," 2010, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff26_aian_graphic.jpg.

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Black Americans

Historically, scholars have rarely discussed ethnicity among Blacks. This further highlights racial designations while marginalizing the differences among various ethnic groups. Some Blacks in the United States can trace their roots back to slavery, while others are recent immigrants from Africa. People defined as Black may have African, Caribbean, Haitian, Filipino, and other diverse ancestries. In fact, racial designations based on geography become meaningless as we attempt to apply them to North Africans, such as Egyptians, Moroccans, and Algerians (groups frequently defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as White). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), in 2014 Blacks constituted an estimated 13% of the U.S. population.

As of 2015, 2.1 million African immigrants were living in the United States, accounting for 4.8% of the U.S. population, compared to just 0.8% in 1970. While typically these immigrants are lumped into the racial category of Black, Figure 1.5 shows that such racial homogenization hides much of the ethnic diversity among them (Anderson 2017).

White Ethnic Groups

White ethnics, who have until recently provided the largest share of immigration to these shores, derive mostly from European countries. Many of these today simply refer to themselves as "American." In fact, major streams of European immigration can be identified during the colonial era, the first portion of the 19th century, and the period from the 1880s to 1920. European immigrants were granted increased access to the United States as stipulated in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This quota system was not effectively ended until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. White ethnic groups include people of British, Greek, Russian, German, and Norwegian ancestry, as well as many others. Figure 1.6 shows that European immigration has been relatively stable over the past 20 years. In 2010, the top five countries of origin for European immigrants were the United Kingdom (670,000, or 14%), Germany (605,000, or 13%), Poland (476,000, or 10%), Russia (383,000, or 8%), and Italy (365,000, or 8%) (Russell and Batalova 2012).

Hispanics

If an individual identifies with an ethnic group that speaks Spanish, then the U.S. Census Bureau labels that person as Hispanic. Hispanics may have families that came to the United States from Spain, Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, or one of many other Spanish-speaking countries (see Figure 1.7). They may be White, Black, or some other race. Other than language, they may have nothing in common. Hispanic is a category created by the government, and many people classified as Hispanic prefer to define themselves as Latino/a, Chicano/a, or Mexican American, Cuban

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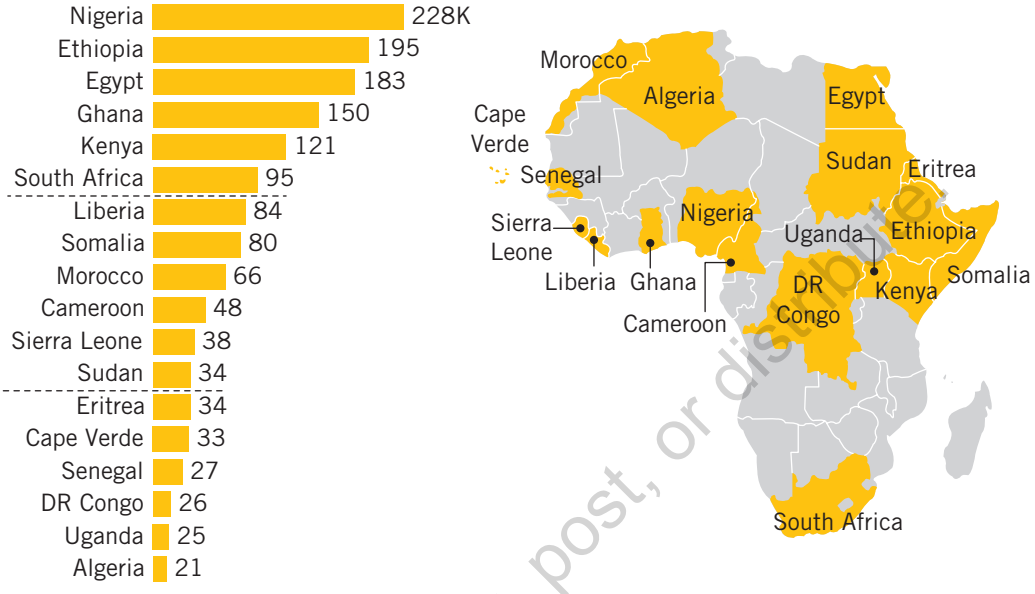
Figure 1.5 ■ African Immigrants in the United States are Ethnically and Geographically Diverse

Leading countries of origin for the foreign-born African population in the U.S. (2013, in thousands)



Note: Africa includes North African and sub-Saharan African countries as defined by IPUMS.

Source: Chart and Map: "Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt are top birthplaces for African immigrants in the U.S." From African immigrant population in U.S. steadily climbs by Monica Anderson, Pew Research Center Fact Tank, February 14, 2017.

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American, or the like. Some sociologists argue that Latino/as have been historically racialized and defined as inferior by Whites and should be classified as a race rather than an ethnic group. Much of the rich contemporary literature on racial inequality in the United States adopts this definition of Hispanics/Latino/as as a racialized group (Feagin and Cobas 2013; Ortiz and Telles 2012). We also generally treat them as a racial group in this book, and, indeed, many Hispanics have recently organized to push for categorization as a racial group in the next census, in 2020. Throughout this text, we will frequently use the terminology adopted by the research under discussion, thus referring at times to Hispanics and at other times to Latino/as (also, at times we will refer to Blacks and at other times to African Americans).

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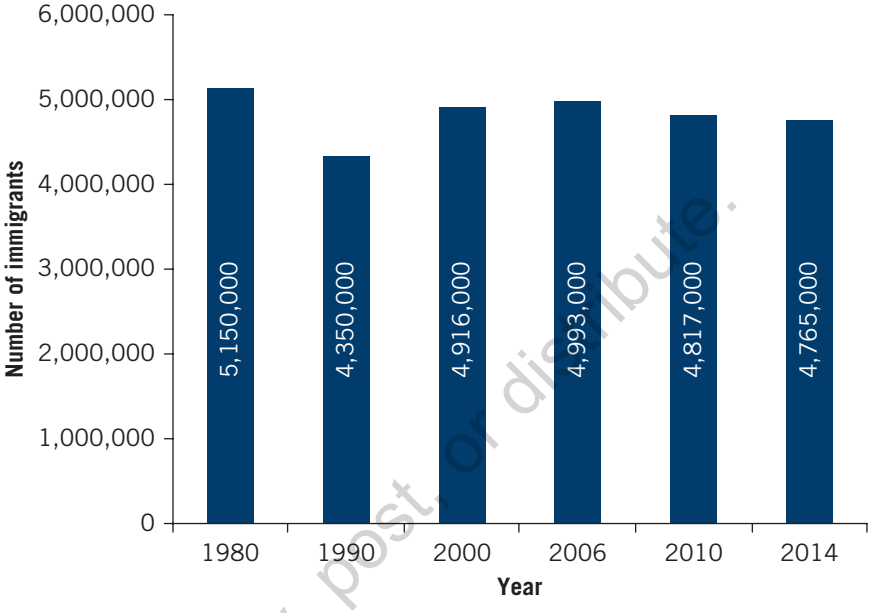
Figure 1.6 ■ European Immigration to the United States Has Been Steady Over the Past Twenty Years



Source: Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "European Immigrants in the United States," Migration Policy Institute, December 1, 2015, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/european-immigrants-united-states. Data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2006, 2010, and 2014; and Campbell J. Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850–2000," Working Paper 81, U.S. Census Bureau, February 2006.

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Although it is surprising to many, the U.S. Census Bureau does not currently list Hispanic as a race, instead defining Hispanics as an ethnic group. The census includes a separate question specifically about Hispanic origin, asking self-identified Hispanics to select Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other. The census form then asks them to identify their race.

Racial and Ethnic Compositions in the Future

So what will our country look like in the next 50 years? Projections of population growth indicate that minorities (including Hispanics, Blacks, Asian Americans, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders) will make up slightly more than 50%

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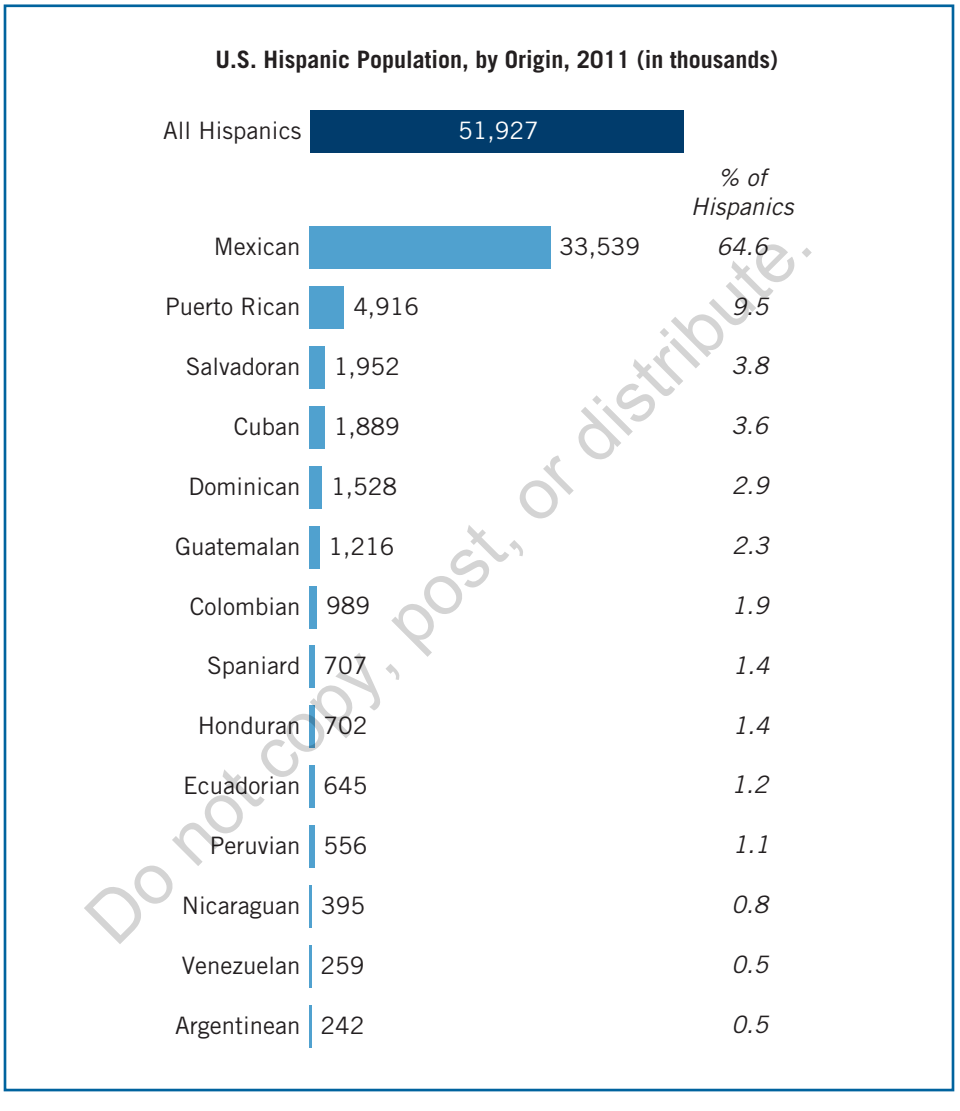
Figure 1.7 ■ The United States Census Labels Individuals From any Spanish Speaking Country as Hispanic



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Source: Figure 2, "U.S. Hispanic Origin Groups, by Population, 2013. In The Impact of Slowing Immigration: Foreign-Born Share Falls Among 14 Largest U.S. Hispanic Origin Groups, by Gustavo Lopez and Eileen Patten, Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends, September 15, 2015.

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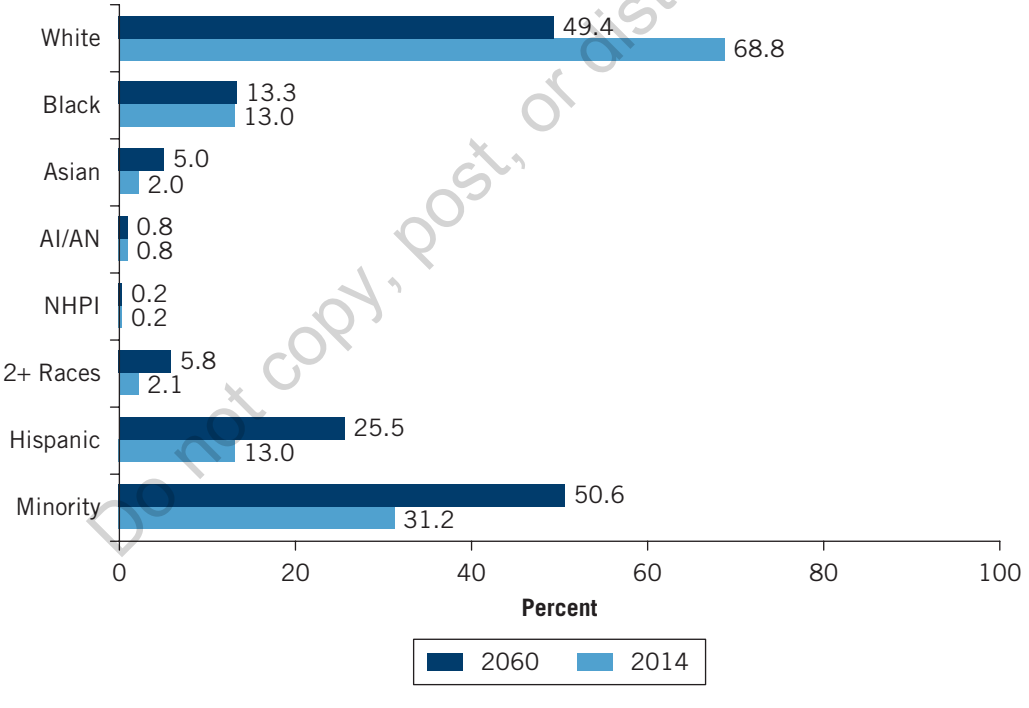
of the U.S. population. The most significant changes will be seen in the reduced numbers of Whites and the almost doubling of the numbers of Hispanics and other minorities. We often read headlines predicting that Whites will become a minority. However, these are misleading. Whites will still be the single largest group in the United States, constituting 49.4% of the population in 2060 (Figure 1.8). The United States will become a minority-majority nation, which means that the total of all minority groups combined will make up the majority of the population. We may see little change in the dynamics of power and race relations, however, as the proportion of Whites will still be nearly twice that of any individual minority group.

Figure 1.8 ■ Population Growth Projections Over the Next Fifty Years Predict a Minority-Majority Nation



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014–2060," Population Estimates and Projections, Current Population Reports, March 2015.

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CRITICAL THINKING

1. History has shown that race and ethnicity are socially constructed. What do current trends suggest about how these social constructions may change in the future?
2. How might these changes affect social institutions such as marriage and family, education, and the military?
3. In what ways might these changes affect how we, as Americans, view ourselves? How might this affect how individuals categorize others and how they self-identify?
4. Can you trace your roots? What different racial and ethnic groups are in your family tree? What does this say about how we define racial and ethnic groups?

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THE SOCIAL MATRIX OF RACE

Our goal in this book is to provide you with historical perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and diverse views of race and racial ideologies so that you can intelligently participate and contribute to such dialogues. We will offer you a variety of ways in which you can understand your identity, your environments, the relationships between those, and the ways you can change yourself and your society with dignity and self-determination. We focus particularly on race and the way it shapes our identities, society and its institutions, and prospects for change. But we also examine race within the context of gender, class, and other social identities that interact with one another and reflect the way we live as social beings.

A number of scholars have embraced the image of racial identity as a matrix (Case 2013; Collins 2000; Ferber, Jiménez, O'Reilly Herrera, and Samuels 2009). Generally, a **matrix** is the surrounding environment in which something (e.g., values, cells, humans) originates, develops, and grows. The concept of a matrix captures the basic sociological understanding that contexts—social, cultural, economic, historical, and otherwise—matter. Figure 1.9 is our visual representation of the social matrix of race, depicting the intersecting worlds of identity, social institutions, and cultural and historical contexts, connecting with one another on the micro and macro levels.

If our primary focus were gender, we could center the gendered self in such a matrix. In this text we center the concepts and experiences of race within the context of our many shifting social identities and systems of inequality. Our social identities are the ways in which our group memberships, in such things as races, classes, and genders,

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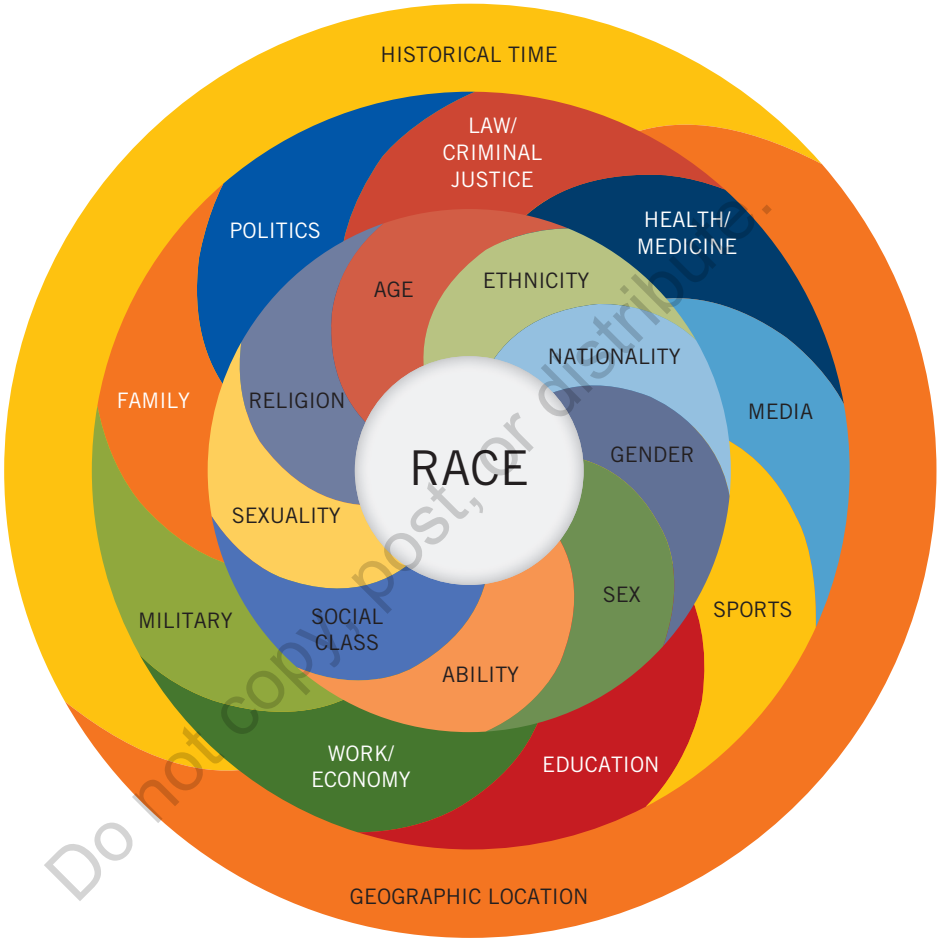
Figure 1.9 ■ Race Intersects with Cultural and Historical Contexts, Social Institutions, and Other Identities



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help define our sense of self. While we often assume a concrete or single group identity, the reality is that identity is seldom so simple. For example, while many of us identify as being White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American, few of us are racially or ethnically homogeneous. Consequently, how we derive our racial identity is actually a result of both historical and contemporary social constructions.

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The same can be said regarding our social status, class, gender, and other identities. We also recognize that these identities interact in ways that produce extremely nuanced and complex, dynamic identities. The third ring of the social matrix of race consists of the social institutions in which we live and interact. **Social institutions** are patterned and structured sets of roles and behaviors centered on the performance of important social tasks within any given society. These institutions help order and facilitate social interactions. That being so, many of our activities happen within social institutions such as marriage and family, education, sports, the military, and the economy. In Figure 1.9 we have included only the social institutions we examine in this text; this is not an exhaustive list. Finally, all of these systems are shaped by place and time.

To support an understanding of race within the context of a social matrix, in the following sections we introduce the five key insights about race that we will develop throughout this text (see Table 1.1).

Race Is Inherently Social

We have already introduced the argument that race is a social construction. As race theorists Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer (2010, 51) put it, "You do not come into this world African or European or Asian; rather, this world comes into you." If races are constructed, it makes sense then to ask: When does this happen,

Table 1.1 ■ Five Key Insights about Race

Race is inherently social.	Race has no biological basis, and it varies both cross-culturally and historically.
Race is a narrative.	We learn narrative story lines that we draw upon to interpret what we see and experience, and these stories become embedded in our minds as truth, closing off other ways of seeing and sense making.
Racial identity is relational and intersectional.	Our racial identity is defined in our relationships to others, based on interactions with them and our reactions to our experiences and socialization. Further, our racial identity is shaped by, and experienced in the context of, our other social identities, such as gender, class, sexuality, ability, and age.
Race is institutional and structural.	Independently and together, various institutional structures, including family, school, community, and religion, influence our actions and beliefs about race.
We are active agents in the matrix.	We move among a variety of social institutions, and as we do, we contribute to their reproduction. We make choices every day, often unconsciously, that either maintain or subvert racial power dynamics and inequality.

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and why? The creation of "races" occurred at a specific point in time to advance specific relations of inequality. The classifications were invented by those they were created to serve, not by those who came to be defined as "Others" by Whites. We will examine this history in Chapter 2.

Race Is a Narrative

As we have established, race is not real; it is a fiction with very real consequences. Because it is fictional, scholars across many disciplines have used the language of storytelling to discuss race. For example, perhaps one of the most dominant stories we hear today is that race is a taboo topic. When children ask their parents about racial differences, they are often hushed and told not to talk about such things in public. Perhaps the most significant racial narrative is the story that races exist in nature. We have just shown that this is not true. Yet until we are taught otherwise, most of us go through life assuming that biological racial differences exist. This is the power of narrative in our lives as social beings.

Anthropologist Audrey Smedley (2007) has identified some of the key features of this narrative. In it, racial classifications are constructed as follows:

1. They are exclusive, discrete classifications.
2. They involve visible physical differences that reflect inherent internal ones (such as intelligence, disposition, morals).
3. They are inherited.
4. They are unchanging, determined by nature and/or God.
5. They are valued differently and ranked hierarchically (in terms of superiority, beauty, degree of civilization, capacity for moral reasoning, and more).

This narrative makes clear that the ideology of race privileges some groups by dividing people into artificial, hierarchical categories to justify inequitable access to resources.

The ideology of race is part of what Joe Feagin (2010) identifies as the "white racial frame." In societies characterized by racial hierarchies, **racial frames** are constructed from the ideological justifications, processes, procedures, and institutions that define and structure society. They are the "comprehensive orienting structure or tool kit by which dominant racial groups and others are understood," and their actions are interpreted within social settings (Feagin 2010, 13). According to Feagin (2010, 10–11), a racial frame consists of the following:

1. racial stereotypes (a beliefs aspect);
2. racial narratives and interpretations (integrating cognitive aspects);

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3. racial images (a visual aspect) and language accents (an auditory aspect);
4. racialized emotions (a "feelings" aspect); and
5. inclinations to discriminatory action.

The repetition of the White racial frame over generations, in fact since the founding of the United States, is the key to its power. When the same messages are repeated over and over, they appear to be part of our social being; they become "natural" to us.

In her popular book *Storytelling for Social Justice* (2010), educator and activist Lee Anne Bell provides a model for analyzing stories about race. She argues that there are essentially four different kinds of stories that we encounter in our lives: **stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories,** and **transforming stories**.

- *Stock stories:* "Stock stories are the tales told by the dominant group," but they are often embraced by those whose oppression they reinforce (Bell 2010, 23). They inform and organize the practices of social institutions and are encoded in law, public policy, public space, history, and culture. Stock stories are shaped by the White racial frame.
- *Concealed stories:* We can always find concealed stories if we look closely enough. These consist of the data and voices that stock stories ignore and often convey a very different understanding of identity and inequity. In the case of concealed stories, "we explore such questions as: What are the stories about race and racism that we don't hear? Why don't we hear them? How are such stories lost/left out? How do we recover these stories? What do these stories show us about racism that stock stories do not?" (24).
- *Resistance stories:* Narratives that directly challenge stock stories are resistance stories. They speak of defying domination and actively struggling for racial justice and social change. "Guiding questions for discovering/uncovering resistance stories include: What stories exist (historical or contemporary) that serve as examples of resistance? What role does resistance play in challenging the stock stories about racism? What can we learn about antiracist action and perseverance against the odds by looking at these stories?" (25).
- *Transforming stories:* Once we examine concealed and resistance stories, we can use them to write transforming stories that guide our actions as we work toward a more just society. "Guiding questions include: What would it look like if we transformed the stock stories? What can we draw from resistance stories to create new stories about what ought to be? What kinds of stories can support our ability to speak out and act where instances of racism occur?" (26).

Many people claim **color blindness** in regard to race and ethnicity—that is, they assert that they do not see race or ethnicity, only humans—and the idea of color blindness informs many of our most prevalent stock stories today. According to this ideology,

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if we were all to embrace a color-blind attitude and just stop "seeing" race, race and its issues would finally become relics of the past. This approach argues that we should treat people simply as human beings, rather than as racialized beings (Plaut 2010). In fact, White people in the United States generally believe that "we have achieved racial equality," and about half believe that African Americans are doing as well as, or even better than, Whites (Bush 2011, 4). But pretending race does not exist is not the same as creating equality.

Just when the blatantly discriminatory policies and practices of **Jim Crow racism**, the laws and practices that originated in the American South to enforce racial segregation, were finally crumbling under attack, the early foundations of a "new racism" were taking form (Irons 2010). This new racism is much less overt, avoiding the use of blatantly racist terminology. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) has labeled this ideology **color-blind racism**. According to Bonilla-Silva, color-blind ideology has four components:

- *Abstract liberalism:* Abstract concepts of equal opportunity, rationality, free choice, and individualism are used to argue that discrimination is no longer a problem, and any individual who works hard can succeed.
- *Naturalization:* Ongoing inequality is reframed as the result of natural processes rather than social relations. Segregation is explained, for example, as the result of people's natural inclination to live near others of the same race.
- *Cultural racism:* It is claimed that inherent cultural differences serve to separate racialized groups.
- *Minimization of racism:* It is argued that we now have a fairly level playing field, everyone has equal opportunities to succeed, and racism is no longer a real problem.

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Color-blind ideology leads to the conclusion that we've done all we can in regard to racial inequality. Many Whites invoke the election of Barack Obama to the presidency as confirmation of their assumptions of a color-blind nation (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Cunnigen and Bruce 2010). The concealed story revealed by sociology, however, is that racial inequality has been and remains entrenched in the United States.

While many embrace color blindness as nonracist, by ignoring the extent to which race still shapes people's life chances and opportunities, this view actually reinforces and reproduces the subtle and institutional racial inequality that shapes our lives. Throughout this text, we will examine the extent to which racial inequality is still pervasive, as well as many stock stories in circulation today that make it difficult for us to see this reality. We will challenge many stock stories by exploring concealed

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and resistance stories, and by considering the possibilities for constructing transformative stories.

Racial Identity Is Relational and Intersectional

As philosopher Elizabeth Spelman (1988) points out, we often think about our various identities—race, gender, sexuality, class, ability—as though they are connected like the beads of a necklace. But unlike the beads of the necklace, our separate identities can't just be popped apart. They intersect and shape each other; they are relational and intersectional (Crenshaw 1991).

The **relational aspects of race** are demonstrated by the fact that categories of race are often defined in opposition to each other (for example, to be White means one is not Black, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American) and according to where they fall along the continuum of hierarchy. Race is also relational in its intersections with other social identities, such as gender and class.

Intersectional theories argue that race, gender, and other salient social identities are intertwined and inseparable, and cannot be comprehended on their own. Sociologist Ivy Ken offers a useful metaphor. If we think about race as sugar, gender as flour, and class as baking soda, what happens when we mix them and a few other ingredients together? If we are lucky, we end up with cookies; we "produce something new—something that would not exist if that mixing had not occurred" (Ken 2008, 156). When these ingredients are combined, they are changed in the process.

David J. Connor (2006), a special education teacher in New York City, provides an example. He wondered why his classes were filled overwhelmingly with African American and Latino males despite the fact that learning disabilities occur in both males and females across class and race. Connor found that he needed an intersectional perspective to understand: "I noticed that the label [learning disabled] signified different outcomes for different people. What seemed to be a beneficial category of disability to middle-class, white students, by triggering various supports and services—served to disadvantage black and/or Latino/a urban youngsters, who were more likely to be placed in restrictive, segregated settings" (154). Here, race, class, and gender intersect to produce different consequences for differently situated youth.

As this example demonstrates, sources of oppression are related, and interrelated, in varied ways. There is no single formula for understanding how they work together. We are all shaped by all of these significant constructs, whether they privilege us or contribute to our oppression; we all experience specific configurations of race, class, and gender that affect our subjectivities, opportunities, and life chances.

Although its name is new, intersectional theory has a long history. Early theorists like Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and Anna

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Julia Cooper struggled with the ways race divided the women's suffrage movement, and gender limited Black women's participation in the antislavery movement. Decades later, women of color waged battles for full inclusion within the civil rights and women's movements. African American sociologists like Belinda Robnett (1999) and Bernice McNair Barnett (1995) have examined the ways in which the foundational leadership activities of Black women in many civil rights organizations have been ignored or written out of history (becoming concealed stories). Vicki Ruiz (1999) has examined similar dynamics in her research on the work of Chicanas in the Chicano movement. We can find many resistance stories in the lives of women of color who have refused to direct their energies toward just one form of oppression, arguing that their lives are shaped by their race and their gender simultaneously.

An intersectional approach does not require that we always examine every form of inequality. Instead, we need to recognize that intersectionality permeates every subject we study, and that even when we choose to focus on a single system of inequality, such as race, we must bring an intersectional lens to the work or we will never get a full picture of the experiences and dynamics of race.

Over the past few decades, research involving explicitly intersectional analysis has accelerated. Sociologists and others have examined the ways our various social locations intersect and interact in shaping our lives and society at every level. These represent interconnected axes of oppression and privilege that shape all of our lived experiences (Collins 2000).

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Race Is Institutional and Structural

To say that race is institutional is to recognize that it operates alongside and in tandem with our dominant social institutions. For instance, education is a social institution in which there are roles (e.g., teachers and students) and expected behaviors (e.g., teaching and learning) that come together as a social structure to educate. But schools also contribute to other important social tasks, including socialization and social control (Spade and Ballantine 2011).

From the perspective of an individual in a human community, we might think about an institution by completing the following statement: "In this society/community, there is a *way* to do [fill in the blank]." In a society, like the United States, there is a *way* to do marriage, for example. When we mention the word *marriage* we are invoking a cultural script as well as a social structure—certain bodies come to mind, certain expectations, certain relationships, certain beginnings and outcomes. This is, perhaps, why gaining the right to marry has been such an amazing uphill battle for same-sex couples—as "same-sex marriage" runs counter to the prevailing sense of the institution of "marriage" (Baunach 2012). All of our dominant social institutions organize our lives, and they do so in deeply powerful ways that are intimately

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tied to how race (as well as gender, class, and sexuality) fundamentally structures and organizes our lives within society.

We Are Active Agents in the Matrix

While constructs of race and ethnicity shape us, we also shape them. Stories are often simply internalized, processed and made sense of by individuals and groups. Human beings, as active agents, have the potential to question inherited stories. Throughout this text we will examine various kinds of stories so that each of us may be better educated and informed in order to develop and support the stories by which we want to live our lives. It is only in this way that we can contribute to the construction of transformative stories that might produce a more equitable society.

Once we realize that race is socially constructed, it follows that we recognize our role as active agents in reconstructing it—through our actions and through the stories we construct that inform our actions (Markus and Moya 2010, 4). Emphasizing the concept of agency is also essential to creating social change. If race is something we *do,* then we can begin to do it differently. Yet many people believe that race is biological, and so they believe it is inevitable. If people believe that they can make changes, then they inherently understand the complex factors that shape their own possibilities (Bush 2011). Such agency empowers people to resist and transform the economic, political, and social realities associated with racial frames and other forms of inequality.

It is because we, too, embrace the concept of agency that we have written this text. We hope to make visible the stock stories that perpetuate racial inequality, and to examine the ways in which those narratives govern the operations of organizations and institutions. All of us, as individuals, play a role in reproducing or subverting the dominant narratives, whether we choose to or not. While we inherit stories about race that help us to explain the world around us, we can also seek out alternative stories. All of us, as individuals, play a role in the reproduction of institutional structures, from our workplaces to our places of worship to our schools and our homes.

Each of the key insights that inform our framework, discussed above, is essential. Each provides just one piece of the puzzle. Further, these elements interact and work together, constantly influencing one another from moment to moment, so that it is often difficult to look at any one piece in isolation. Racial attitudes and racialized social structures need to be examined in relationship to one another. For example, many scholars have argued that economic insecurity and resource scarcity often fan the flames of race prejudice. Critical knowledge is gained when we understand how dominant discourses and ideology preserve and perpetuate the status quo. Understanding how these dominant discourses are framed and how they are buttressed by our institutional practices, policies, and mechanisms allows us to see not only how these patterns are replicated and reproduced but also how they can be replaced (Bush 2011, 37).

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CRITICAL THINKING

1. If race is a social construction, how might different institutions affect how race is perceived? How might these perceptions vary across time and place?
2. Using yourself as an example, how has your identity changed as you shifted from being a preteen to a teen to a college student? Do these changes remain constant across different institutions? (Think about the various clubs, committees, and groups to which you belong.)
3. What kinds of impacts can you have in the various groups to which you belong? In what ways do your possible impacts reflect your various identities?
4. Are there some groups to which you have greater or lesser access? What does your degree of access suggest about your level of agency?

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THE OPERATION OF RACISM

In the first half of this chapter, we have examined what race is, how it is constructed, and how it is reproduced. We now shift our focus to the concept and operation of racism.

Prejudice and Discrimination

Anyone can be the victim of prejudice. **Prejudice** is a judgment of an individual or group, often based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, or other social identities. It is often shaped by, and also leads to, the promotion of **stereotypes**, which are assumptions or generalizations applied to an entire group. Even seemingly positive stereotypes put people in boxes, like the myth of Asian Americans as the "model minority," which includes the stereotype that all Asian Americans are gifted in math and science. How might this stereotype affect Asian American students who are not doing well in school? How does it prevent us from seeing the poverty that specific Asian American groups, such as the Hmong, Cambodians, and Thais, are more likely to experience (Takei and Sakamoto 2011)?

Prejudices and stereotypes are beliefs that often provide foundations for action in the form of **discrimination**—that is, the differential allocation of goods, resources, and services, and the limitation of access to full participation in society, based on an individual's membership in a particular social category (Adams et al. 1997). Prejudices and stereotypes exist in the realm of beliefs, and when these beliefs guide the ways in which we treat each other, they produce discrimination. Anyone can be

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the victim of prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, including White people, and for a wide variety of reasons, such as clothing, appearance, accent, and membership in clubs or gangs. Put simply, discrimination is prejudice plus power.

Prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination are probably what first come to mind when we think about racism. But the study of racism goes far beyond these. Like sexism, racism is a system of oppression. **Oppression** is more than simply individual beliefs and actions—it involves the systematic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identity groups in contrast to a privileged norm (Ferber and Samuels 2010). Oppression is based on membership in socially constructed identity categories; it is *not* based on individual characteristics.

One sociologist describes racial oppression as a birdcage: an interlocking network of institutional barriers that prevents escape (Frye 2007). Alternatively, others point out the **systemic nature of racial oppression**. This view posits that core racist realities, values, and ideologies are manifested in all of the major institutions within society (Feagin 2001, 6). Throughout this text we will demonstrate how race exists both historically and contextually as an ongoing form of inequality that pervades every major social institution, including education, employment, government, health care, family, criminal justice, sports, and leisure. Thinking about oppression as a birdcage helps us to understand how it limits people's lives. For example, the gendered wage gap is just one wire in the birdcage that constrains women. If it were the only wire, women could fly around it and escape. However, women face inequality in the home (in domestic labor, child care, elder care, and more), in education, in health care, in the workplace, in the criminal justice system, and more. They are trapped by an entire system of wires that form a cage.

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Racism

Racism is a system of oppression by which those groups with relatively more social power subordinate members of targeted racial groups who have relatively little social power. This subordination is supported by individual actions, cultural values, and norms embedded in stock stories, as well as in the institutional structures and practices of society (National Education Association 2015). It is inscribed in codes of conduct, legal sanctions, and organizational rules and practices. Specifically, racism is the subordination of people of color by those who consider themselves White; by implication, the practice of racism defines Whites as superior and all non-Whites as inferior.

The Sociology of Racism

Racism is systemic. It is not about isolated individual actions; individual actions take place within a broader, systemic, cross-institutional context. People of color may

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themselves harbor prejudices and discriminate on the basis of race; however, without the larger social and historical context of systemic, systematic differences in power, these individual actions do not constitute racism. While this may seem counterintuitive, keep in mind that we are looking at racism from a sociological perspective, focusing on the importance of social context, research, and group experience, rather than on individual behavior. Individual experiences of race and racism will vary. We find it less important to focus on "racists" than on the social matrix of racism in which we live. Additionally, while White people do not experience racism, they may face oppression based on sexual orientation, class, or other social identities.

Who Practices Racism?

Racism in the United States is directed primarily against Blacks, Asian Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans. Some argue that Muslims may also be considered targets of racism, as they are becoming a racialized group. Racism is the basis of conflict and violence in societies throughout the world, and the forms it takes are varied. Racism is practiced by Whites against Blacks, Coloreds, and Indians in South Africa; by Islamic Arabs against Black Christians in the Sudan; by East Indians against Blacks in Guyana; by those of Spanish descent against those of African and Indian descent in Brazil and Paraguay; by White "Aryans" against Jews and the Romani (Gypsies) in Germany; by the Japanese against the Eta, or Burakumin, in Japan; and by Whites against Africans, Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus in Great Britain. Racism can take many forms, and it changes over time.

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Types of Racism

Formal or overt racism occurs when discriminatory practices and behaviors are sanctioned by official rules, codes, or laws of an organization, institution, or society. Many of the most obvious forms of racism are no longer legally or openly accepted in U.S. society. Such racist practices as slavery, Jim Crow laws, the Black codes, the Indian Removal Act, the internment of Japanese residents during World War II, and the Chinese Exclusion Act are now condemned (but also too conveniently forgotten). Debate is ongoing regarding whether or not other practices—such as immigration policy, the display of the Confederate flag, and the use of American Indian sports mascots—are racist in intent or impact.

Informal or covert racism is subtle in its application, and often ignored or misdiagnosed. It acts informally in that it is assumed to be part of the natural, legitimate, and normal workings of society and its institutions. Thus, when we discuss student learning outcomes we may talk about poor motivation, inadequate schools, or broken homes. We ignore that these characteristics are also typically associated with poor Black and Latino/a neighborhoods (Coates 2011). Microaggressions are subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward individuals

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The subtle insults known as microaggressions are common in everyday interactions, like at the post office, even when things seem fine on the surface.

of oppressed social groups, sometimes made unconsciously. Research on college campuses finds that even when things look fine on the surface, inequality and discrimination still manifest themselves in "subtle and hidden forms" that shape interactions and experiences in dorms, classrooms, dining halls, and student health centers. Over time, these can affect students' performance, and even their mental and physical health (we discuss microaggressions in more depth in Chapter 5).

Understanding Privilege

When we study racism, we most often study the experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups. However, everyone's life is shaped by race. **Privilege** is the flip side of oppression—it involves the systemic favoring, valuing, validating, and including of certain social identities over others. Whiteness is a privileged status.

The Privilege of Whiteness

To be White is to have greater access to rewards and valued resources simply because of group membership. Because they exist in relationship to each other, oppression and privilege operate hand in hand; one cannot exist without the other. Just like oppression, privilege is based on group memberships, not individual factors. We do not choose to be the recipients of oppression or privilege, and we cannot opt out of either one. A White person driving down the street cannot ask the police to pull her over because of her race. Experiences of racism can affect some people and not others independent of their desires and behaviors.

Making Whiteness visible by acknowledging privilege allows us to examine the ways in which all White people, not just those we identify as "racist," benefit from their racial categorization. Accepting the fact that we live in a society that is immersed in systems of oppression can be difficult, because it means that despite our best intentions, we all participate in perpetuating inequality. In fact, privilege is usually invisible to the people who experience it until it is pointed out. The reality is that White people do not need to think about race very often. Their social location becomes both invisible and the assumed norm.

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Research on White privilege has grown over the past three decades, along with the interdisciplinary subfield of **Whiteness studies**. Works by literary theorists, legal scholars, anthropologists, historians, psychologists, and sociologists alike have contributed to this burgeoning field (Brodkin 1998; Case 2013; Jacobson 1998; Haney López 2006; Moore, Penick-Parks, and Michael 2015; Morrison 1992). However, people of color have been writing about White privilege for a long time. Discussions of White privilege are found in the works of writers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, and Ida B. Wells.

David M. Bennett / Getty Images Entertainment / Getty Images

Whites are seen as the average, normal, universal human: the "mythical norm" (Lorde [1984] 2007). Descriptions in newspapers and books assume that subjects are White unless other racial identities are made clear. Some were outraged when Noma Dumezweni was cast as Hermione Granger in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, despite the character's race being neither relevant nor specified in the Harry Potter series.

Peggy McIntosh's (1988) classic article "White Privilege and Male Privilege" was one of the first attempts by a White person to document the unearned advantages that Whites experience on a daily basis. For example, White privilege means being able to assume that most of the people you or your children study with in school will be of the same race; being able to go shopping without being followed around in the store; never being called a credit to your race; and being able to find "flesh-colored" bandages to match your skin color. McIntosh also identifies a second type of privilege that gives one group power over another. This conferred dominance legitimates privileges that no one should have in a society that values social justice and equity, such as the right to "own" another human being.

Most of us are the beneficiaries of at least one form of privilege, and often many more. Recognizing this often leads people to feel guilt and shame. However, privilege is derived from group membership; it is not the result of anything we have done as individuals. We are born into these systems of privilege and oppression; we did not create them. Once we become aware of them, though, we must be accountable and work to create change. We can choose whether to acknowledge privilege as it operates in our lives, and whether to use it as a means of creating social change. As Shelly Tochluk (2008, 249–50) notes, this requires that we "begin with personal investigation. . . . If we are going to take a stand, we need to feel prepared to deal with our own sense of discomfort and potential resistance or rejection from others."

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The Impact of Stock Stories

The enduring stock story of the United States as a meritocracy makes it very difficult for us to see inequality as institutionalized (McNamee and Miller 2014). An "oppression-blind" belief system ignores the reality of inequality based on social group memberships and sees the United States as the land of equal opportunity, where anyone who works hard can succeed (Ferber 2012).

It is no wonder that individuals, especially those who are most privileged, often resist acknowledging the reality of ongoing inequality. We are immersed in a culture where the ideology of oppression blindness is pervasive. The news and entertainment media bombard us with color-blind "depictions of race relations that suggest that discriminatory racial barriers have been dismantled" (Gallagher 2009, 548). However, these institutionalized barriers still exist. Individuals often experience some cognitive dissonance when confronted with the concept of privilege. We often turn to our familiar stock stories to explain how we feel, countering with responses like "The United States is a meritocracy!" or "Racism is a thing of the past!" Table 1.2 lists some common responses, informed by our stock stories, to learning about privilege (Ferber and Samuels 2010). Do you share any of these feelings?

While our stock stories serve the interests of the dominant group, they are a part of our socialization and social fabric and become perceived as natural, normal, and the way of the world. It is easy to forget that these stories were created at specific moments to justify specific sets of interactions. Race, as part of our structured social system, has become realized as residential segregation, differential educational outcomes, income gaps, racially stratified training and occupational outcomes, social stigmas, and restrictions on social relationships (Smedley 2007, 21–22).

It is only through a deliberate process of critical inquiry that we can deconstruct these seemingly normal relationships to reveal the intentional and unintentional processes of construction and their underlying context. Critical sociological inquiry into the creation and maintenance of difference helps make the familiar strange, the natural unnatural, and the obvious not so obvious, and, in a world where things are often not what they seem, it allows us to see more clearly and deeply.

OUR STORIES

As we learn to understand ourselves and others, we can break down the divisions between us and build a foundation for transformative stories and new relationships. That is our goal for you, and we have designed this textbook to guide you through that

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Table 1.2 ■ Feeling Race: Understanding Privilege	
"I don't feel privileged, my life is hard too!"	This is an example of minimizing or denying privilege (Johnson 2006). We often focus on our oppressed identities as a means of ignoring our privilege.
"My family didn't own slaves!"	As historians have documented, "Into the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of whites—in the elites and among ordinary folk—either participated directly in slavery or in the trade around slavery, or did not object to those who did so" (Feagin 2000, 15). The economies of many northern cities were based almost entirely on the slave trade, and generations of Whites have reaped "undeserved enrichment" from the forced labor of slaves, the cheap labor of other minority group members, and the land and resources taken, often violently, from Native Americans and Mexicans. These practices contribute directly to today's tremendous racial wealth gap.
"I treat everyone the same!"	This type of response shifts the focus to prejudiced and bigoted individuals and allows us to ignore systemic oppression and privilege, and our own role in their reproduction.
"Anyone could succeed if they would just try harder!"	This adherence to the myth of meritocracy attributes the failures of an individual solely to that individual without taking into account systemic inequalities that create an unfair system. It is a form of blaming the victim (Johnson 2006).
"We need to move on! If we would just stop talking about it, it wouldn't be such a big problem!"	Systemic inequalities exist, and ignoring them will not make them go away. As Justice Harry Blackmun stated in his opinion in the U.S. Supreme Court case of *University of California v. Bakke* (1978) some 40 years ago, "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way" (para. 14).
"Stop being so sensitive! I didn't mean it."	Speaking in a derogatory manner about a person or group of people based on social group memberships can have a devastating impact (Sue 2010). Disconnecting our own language or actions is another form of resistance because it minimizes the indiscretion and sends the message that anyone who challenges the language or behavior is simply being overly sensitive.
"I am just one person, I can't change anything!"	Seeing ourselves as incapable of creating change is a means of excusing ourselves from accepting any responsibility and denies agency.

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CRITICAL THINKING

1. Racism is dynamic across geographic and social places and across historical periods. Consider some recent events either in the news or at your university: How do they reflect these dynamic processes? (*Hint:* Do you believe that the same types of events would have taken place, say, 50 years ago?)
2. Consider some common stereotypes about athletes, academics, or other professionals. Can you identify any racial stereotypes about which groups might be better at certain sports, disciplines, or professions? What might account for the prevalence of these stereotypes? Do you believe that they have changed over time, or that they would be similar to those in, say, England or Nigeria? What may account for either the similarities or the differences you observe?
3. At your institution are there any student groups that appear to have greater access to rewards and resources than other groups do? If so, what might account for their privilege?
4. Are there any common features (racial or gender or class) among the privileged student groups that you can identify? If so, what does this suggest about privilege?

process. We will journey together to see ourselves, each other, and our society at a deeper level. Our goal is not only to share information and knowledge about the dynamics of race and racism but also to connect this knowledge with our individual lives.

Now, we want to share some of our own stories. Race is deeply personal for each one of us, yet, as sociologists, we have learned much more about ourselves by situating our own lives within a broader context. We hope to help you do the same. We are all situated somewhere in the matrix, so this text is about each of us. We are all in this together.

Rodney

My grandfather was a sharecropper from Yazoo, Mississippi. In 1917, he arrived in East St. Louis, Illinois, a city with a robust industrial base that benefited significantly from World War I, and where much of the mostly White labor force was either in the military or on strike. Many Black men were migrating to East St. Louis at the time, looking for work.

White organized labor, fearful of losing job security, became hostile and targeted the new arrivals. On May 28, at a White union meeting, rumors began circulating that Black men were forcibly seducing and raping White women. A mob of more than 3,000 White men left this meeting and began beating random Black men on the

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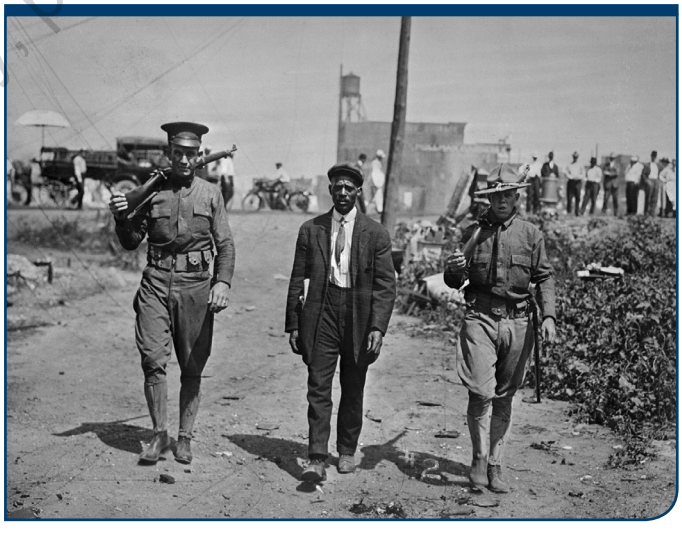
street. The violence claimed the life of a 14-year-old boy, his mother was scalped, and 244 buildings were destroyed—all before the governor called in the National Guard. Rumors continued to circulate, and Blacks were selectively attacked by roving groups of White vigilantes.

Rodney Coates

But it wasn't over. On July 1, 1917, a Black man attacked a White man. The retaliatory response by Whites was massive, and an entire section of the Black community was destroyed while the police and fire departments refused to respond. My grandfather said that "blood ran like water through the streets." Many residents were lynched, and the entire Black section of the city was burned. No Whites have ever been charged with or convicted of any of these crimes. For the next 50 years, segregation maintained an uneasy peace in this troubled city.

Racial segregation, not only in housing but also in hospitals, dictated that I could not be born in the city where my parents resided (East St. Louis, Illinois), because the only hospital that would allow Negro women access was in St. Louis, Missouri. I grew up in a segregated city and went to all-Black elementary, middle, and high schools. Since mainstream educational institutions tended not to hire Black professionals, many of my English, math, and science teachers had advanced degrees, so I received the equivalent of a private education. Given my Blackness and the presumption that I would be a laborer and not a scholar, I also was equally trained in carpentry and sheet metal work. A system designed to keep the races separate provided an outstanding education—one that I was more than ready to take advantage of during the height of the civil rights movement.



Bettmann / Bettmann / Getty Images

After the first wave of racial violence in East St. Louis in 1917, in which hundreds of buildings were burned and a boy was killed, the governor called in the National Guard, seen here escorting a Black citizen through the rubble.

The landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) had desegregated the schools, and suddenly places like Southern Illinois University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Chicago were open to someone like me, a kid from a city that would soon become

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defined as a ghetto. As Blacks asserted their rights and the courts supported them, more doors opened to Blacks, and many Whites began to flee to the suburbs. This **White flight**, and the loss of business and industries, served to create ghettos where just a few short years before there had been thriving urban centers. I eventually obtained a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees, and a PhD from some of the best educational institutions in this country. My story has sensitized me to the ways in which race, class, and gender are intertwined in the great American narrative. I specialize in critical pedagogy, critical race theory, race and ethnic relations, stratification, human rights and social justice, educational sociology, political processes, urban sociology, political sociology, and public sociology.

Abby

I never had reason to think about race, or my own racial identity as White, until I became a graduate student. Instead, throughout my childhood, my Jewish identity was much more salient. My family was not very religious, but we were "cultural Jews." Growing up in a White, Jewish, upper-middle-class suburb of Cleveland, Ohio (one of the most segregated U.S. cities), I attended religious school on Sunday mornings and services at the synagogue on the High Holy Days. I learned about the Holocaust, the Inquisition, and the long history of pogroms. When I was in elementary school, the school building was bombed one night, and anti-Semitic epithets were scrawled on the walls. The message I internalized was that Jews were the universal scapegoat, and even when they were fully assimilated and successful, their safety was never secure. So even though I have never considered myself religious, I learned that what often matters more is whether other people see me as Jewish.

Abby Ferber

My great-grandmother fled her small Russian village when she was 16 years old to avoid an arranged marriage. Her parents disowned her, and she never spoke to them again. After she immigrated to the United States, she learned that her entire family had perished in concentration camps. My grandmother grew up in a Catholic community where her Jewish family was ostracized. At Ohio State University in the 1960s, my mother's roommate asked to see her horns. Last year, on a family vacation with my adolescent daughter, another member of our tour group took the guide's microphone and entertained the group with anti-Semitic jokes.

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Yet I am also the beneficiary of White privilege, and this has had a greater impact on my life. I have never had to worry about being pulled over by police, not getting a job, or not being able to rent or purchase a home because of my race. I did not have to teach my daughter how to behave around the police for her own security. As Jews became defined as White, my grandparents were able to take out loans and start a small business. My parents were both able to attend college. Today, Jews are accepted as White in the United States.

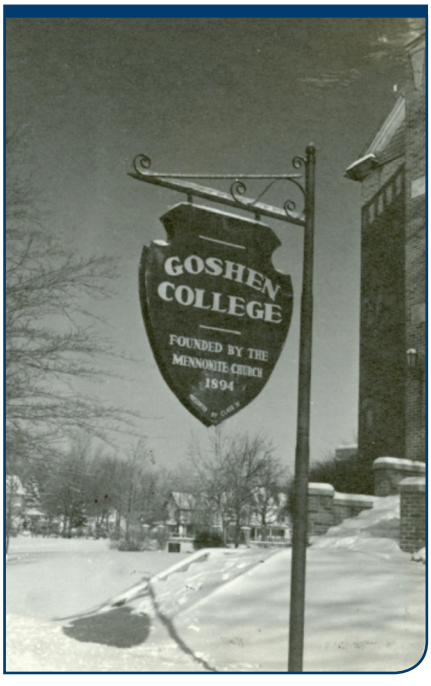
Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy Stock Photo

In the years before and after World War II, many Jews fled their homes in Russia and Europe. These Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe sought visas at the U.S. embassy in Paris, hoping to reach the United States.

My dissertation research examined the construction of race and gender in the context of the organized White supremacist movement. My research made my White privilege much more visible and real to me, ironically, because for White supremacists I am *not* White. Their ideology lumps Jews into the broad category of non-Whites, along with African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Studying this movement was the first time I really became aware of my White privilege, as I finally understood that it could be taken away. Privilege and oppression are not the result of anything a person has done as an individual. For instance, I have no control over who recognizes me as White or non-White, or when.

I also grew up acutely aware of gender oppression, even if I did not have the language to name it. I experienced sexual harassment at every job I held between middle school and graduate school, experienced numerous attempted rapes, and have received unequal pay compared to men doing the same job as me.

As a graduate student, I first learned about privilege and intersectionality, and this provided a framework that allowed me to better understand the complexity of who I am, not only a Jewish female, but a White, heterosexual, middle-class, temporarily able-bodied and -minded, Jewish woman. I now have a greater understanding of



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Goshen College is a Mennonite institution that focuses on outreach, study abroad, and missionary and/or "development" work.

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David Brunsma

how all of those identities intersect in shaping my life experience. And I now realize, as a person who benefits from White privilege, that it is my responsibility to work to reduce racial inequality. I never experienced guilt or shame when I learned of my privilege, but instead started asking how I could be a part of the solution.

Dave

I was born in Des Moines, Iowa, to a Puerto Rican mother and a largely unknown White father. My mother and her brothers and sisters had been adopted and raised by my solidly White, privileged, Christian grandparents in mostly White neighborhoods. While there were some variations in the degree of Puerto Rican identity felt among my family members, by and large they were White. I too was raised White. I have come to embrace my Puerto Rican identity, but I did not really know about it until the stories and structures of my life were already quite fully built along White lines.

As I grew up, although I delved into critical literatures, music, and film outside the scope of public school and family, it was expected that I would be White—talk White, dress White, and, ultimately, think and live White. I was also destined to reproduce the structures of White privilege and racism, despite the fact that I could see them then, and can see them even more clearly now. My life as a White American preordained my complacency and tacit agreement with the exploitative racial contract in White America, even while I fully disagree with it.

I went to a Mennonite college that preaches a kind of liberation theology, from which many go on to serve in missionary or "development" capacities all around the world—with good intentions but often ending up as color-blind extensions of American (or Jesus) imperialism. There were few people of color there, or in graduate school. Meanwhile, my critical, social justice lenses were becoming more sharply focused. I am still learning to "see" myself, my story, my place in the matrix; this is an important step in seeing others deeply as well. My research is focused on (multi)racial identity, race and ethnicity, human rights, sociology of education, and the sociology of culture.

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CRITICAL THINKING

1. Each of us has a story. In what ways does your story reflect a particular narrative? How might your story be different from the stories of your parents or grandparents, or from those of your peers?
2. Are you a first-generation college student or did your parents also attend college? How are your college experiences different from their experiences (either as students or not)?
3. In what ways might your race, class, and gender affect your experiences? What does this suggest about how time and space interact with identity?
4. What changes do you envision for your children or the next generation? What stories do you think they will tell? And how might they interpret your story?

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KEY TERMS

1

ancestry, p. 14
color blindness, p. 26
color-blind racism, p. 27
concealed stories, p. 26
discrimination, p. 31
ethnicity, p. 14
formal or overt racism, p. 33
informal or covert racism, p. 33
intersectional theories, p. 28
Jim Crow racism, p. 27
matrix, p. 22
one-drop rule, p. 10
oppression, p. 32
panethnicity, p. 15
phenotypical traits, p. 6
pigmentocracies, p. 8
prejudice, p. 31
privilege, p. 34
race, p. 5
racial categorizations, p. 5
racial frames, p. 25
racism, p. 27
relational aspects of race, p. 28
resistance stories, p. 26
social construction of race, p. 5
social institutions, p. 24
stereotypes, p. 31
stock stories, p. 26
systemic nature of racial oppression, p. 32
transforming stories, p. 26
White flight, p. 40
Whiteness studies, p. 35

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

LO 1.1 Explain how race and ethnicity are socially constructed.

Race changes over time and across geographical spaces. It is an unstable and shifting concept. The U.S. Census Bureau attempts to identify the major racial groups in the United States, but it changes its definitions often. Defining a race is an example of the process of "Othering." Ethnicity and panethnicity are much more nuanced and layered concepts than those reflected in typical race categories. Within the United States, White ethnics have consistently been dominant, in terms of power as well as in numbers. This dominance owes its origins to practices, ideologies, and institutions that derive from our colonial past. And these practices, ideologies, and institutions have served to reinforce racial categorizations while obscuring the fluidity of race and ethnicity. Race definitions, structures, and practices are not applied consistently across the globe.

LO 1.2 Evaluate the relationship between social contexts and race.

The social context of race illustrates the reality of race in our society. Our focus on race helps us to understand how it shapes our identities, institutions, societies, and prospects for change. We use the concept of the matrix of race to help us see how the social construction of race is realized within our society. Our identities intersect along race, gender, and other axes, and these intersectional identities operate across various institutional and geographical spaces and historical periods. Looking at race in the social matrix highlights it as a social construct, as narrative, as relational and intersectional, and as institutional and structural, and it also emphasizes the role of humans as active agents in the process of racialization.

LO 1.3 Identify the concepts and operation of racism.

We use a variety of narrative types to highlight the operation and potential for transformation of race and racial structures. Our stock stories narrate how reality works. These stories often obscure or legitimate various types of oppression. Concealed stories are uncovered as we attempt to understand the actual ways in which race operates. By uncovering these narratives we often become aware of stories of resistance (where individuals or groups have attempted to circumvent or overcome racial structures) and/or stories of transformation (where individuals or groups have actually facilitated changes to race and racial structures). Prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, which anyone may encounter, are part of racism, but racism reaches beyond those practices and is systematic and institutional. Racism is a system of oppression.

LO 1.4 Examine the link between our personal narratives and the broader "story" of race.

We all have stories. Understanding our own narratives helps us examine how race, the matrix, and intersectionality operate within our lives.

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