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the MATRIX of RACE

second edition

Social Construction, Intersectionality, and Inequality

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Second Edition

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The Matrix of Race

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Second Edition

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PREFACE

OUR STORIES

We (Dave, Abby, and Rodney) have studied, researched, published, and taught in the fields of race and ethnic studies, critical race theory, and pedagogy collectively for over 75 years. In that time, we have seen how the field of race and ethnic studies has morphed into critical race and ethnic studies. We have seen how social movements, activism, and political processes have not only shaped our discussions but shaped how we view the world. In the process, we have learned that race and ethnicity are not static, but dynamic. This dynamism is based upon the observation that we can change not only the parameters of race and ethnicity, but also the structures, practices, and policies as well. As active agents, we can and must be aware if we are to make these changes substantive, informed, and inclusive. For this to happen, we must all be willing to engage. The first step of engagement is to tell our stories. It is our stories that define not only our realities but ourselves. As we retell these and other stories, we construct the building blocks that give value and meaning to and for our lives. These stories help us to understand each other and provide bridges that link us into the fabric of our communities and societies. Our stories are important, they tell of not only our past but can point to a different future. They are therefore our legacy and our hope. The story of race has shaped our nation, both our past and present, but it need not shape our future. 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. We begin with our own stories.

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 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.

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.

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 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 was raised to not recognize my whiteness. Instead, throughout my childhood, my Jewish and gender identity felt much more salient. Growing up in a White, Jewish, upper-middle-class suburb of Cleveland, Ohio (one of the most segregated U.S. cities), I was taught about the Nazi Holocaust, the Inquisition, and the long history of pogroms. My elementary school building was bombed 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. I learned that my own sense of identity was less important than how others saw me.

The whitening of my ancestors is part of the story of race. My great-grandmother, Anna, whom I am named for, fled her small Russian village when she was 16 years old to avoid an arranged marriage. Her parents disowned her, and never spoke to her again. She immigrated to the United States, and years later learned that her family had been killed in Nazi concentration

camps. Her husband, my great-grandfather, learned the same story about his own family. Successive generations have experienced anti-semitic incidents.

Yet, I have always been the beneficiary of White privilege, *every single day*. 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 safety. As Jews became defined as White, my grandparents were able to take out loans and start a small business, and my parents both attended college.

As a graduate student, I learned I was a White, heterosexual, upper middle class, and temporarily able-bodied, Jewish woman. My dissertation research on the organized White supremacist movement made my White privilege much more visible and real to me, ironically, because these White supremacists believe I am not White. Studying this movement was surreal as I spent my days immersed in writings that proclaimed I was not White, while simultaneously being steeped in White privilege. I recognized that I felt safe and protected *because* of my Whiteness.

I contribute to the construction and reproduction of White privilege and White supremacy whether I intend to or not. Rather than experiencing guilt or shame, I work to be a part of the solution. I feel the urgency of the many issues we examine here, and hope White readers will as well.

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 disagreed 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. I use these now to work to reclaim those stories that have been ignored, to lay bare the structures of White racism, and to help rewrite the stories toward racial justice.

Now, we encourage you to join us.

ROAD MAP OF THE MATRIX

Chapter 1: Race and the Social Construction of Difference

The Matrix of Race provides a lens by which we can critically evaluate and understand how race, intertwined with such things as class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity across history, geography, and institutional structures produces a racialized system and hierarchy favoring some, particularly European Americans, at the expense of others, particularly Native Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. History, the reality of our shared past, reflects a series of choices. These choices, once made, often take on a life of their own, but we should always remember that they were and continue to be choices. Nothing demonstrates the accuracy of this assessment than the particular set of choices that served to shape our nation having to do with race. Social scientists and geneticists alike have come to understand 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. White supremacy and privilege, systemic racial oppression and segregation, racially motivated hate crimes and criminal sanctions are deeply rooted in our Nation's history. Racial inequity permeates every part of our lives: schools, housing, medicine, workplaces, our criminal justice and political systems all continue to reproduce racial inequity and drastically different opportunities, experiences, and life outcomes based on 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 dialogues and practices that will ultimately dismantle race and racial structures.

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

The next chapter will explore the shaping of our Nation. It will highlight the patterns, practices, and realities created through the shaping of our nation were a set of choices that established the racial templates for the matrix of race. These racial templates, varying across the different colonial systems, account for the different racial trajectories that came into being. In this chapter we will see how the decisions by French and Spanish colonial powers decided to establish settler colonies that precluded the initial immigration of European women. Within these colonial situations there was an increased likelihood that marriage unions would form with women from various indigenous tribal groups and imported Africans. These choices meant that the racial structures created were more likely to be more diverse and fluid. Creolization, reflecting multiracial family structures, were the obvious outcomes. The racial hierarchies that developed tended to reflect these decisions, as gradations of skin tone favoring lighter skinned individuals and groups were accorded higher status. Alternatively, within the English colonies, where the decision was to colonize, English women were encouraged to immigrate. Within these structures, more rigid racial rules were established that discouraged interracial unions. These rules were particularly aimed at preserving the rights and inheritance of children born of European unions, while delegitimizing the children of interracial ones. Racial hierarchies based

upon the presumption of Whitehite purity resulted. As a consequence, we see the creation of intersectional identities. These identities, favoring either skin tone or presumed White purity, by definition asserted the primacy of White males and the secondary status of females, regardless of color. Within the more rigid cluster of English colonies, White women were deemed more attractive and desirable than lower status women of color. Alternatively, within either the French or Spanish colonies, biracial and multiracial females with lighter skin tones were perceived as more attractive and higher status.

Chapter 3: The Social Construction and Regulation of Families

As we broaden our understanding of what counts as a family, we must reassess historical narratives that have excluded certain family formations. Researchers are not exempt from the prejudices and assumptions of the broader culture. As family researcher Stephen Marks (2000, 611) reflects: "Most family scholars continue to be White, heterosexual, married persons such as myself. The research published . . . reflects the interests of those who do the studies." However, as more and more research is conducted by scholars previously excluded—men and women of color, White women, LGBTQ+ people, and working-class people, for example—the kinds of subjects that are being studied, the questions that are being asked, and the concealed stories and voices of resistance that are being brought in are changing the field. As Marks goes on, "These scholars have challenged their exclusion." Family structure is embedded in the wider social structure defined by race, class, and gender. In fact, historically what constituted family and kin, who could become a family, and who were "illegitimate" continues to reflect our racial designations and problems. Thus, we see broadening recognition and research on a wide array of family formations and experiences. At the same time, we need to cultivate more curious citizens who will ask the unasked questions and challenge narratives that distort the realities we see all around us.

Chapter 4: Work and Wealth Inequality

The workplace and the economy, like other institutions, are structured by, and actively reproduce, racial inequality. Historical inequality, occupational segregation, discrimination, inequitable application of social policy, immigration policy, and economic restructuring are some of the significant factors contributing to racial inequality in the workplace and the economy. While the impact of income inequality on families today should not be underestimated, it is essential that we also understand the concept of wealth inequality. Wealth inequality reveals the lasting impact of our history of state-sponsored racism. These factors are concealed by stock stories that blame individuals or cultures for their own lack of economic success. Finding solutions that will work is not the primary problem we face, however; rather, the problem is changing attitudes. Our stock stories about American meritocracy and color blindness must be challenged.

How do we explain the fact that the intersections of race, class, and gender are so fundamental to the shaping of inequality, power, and privilege—yet members of the dominant group so firmly assert that race no longer matters and that the gender revolution is over? There is increased recognition of "diversity in American society," and yet there is also a persistent belief

among privileged groups that race does not matter. This belief keeps people blind to the continuing differences in power and privilege that characterize U.S. society, making it difficult to generate public support for programs designed to reduce inequality.

Chapter 5: Health, Medicine, and Healthcare

Today's disparities among racial and ethnic groups in health and mortality are evidence of the historical and ongoing effects of structural racism. Racial disparities exist in healthcare access, disease prevention, identification of disease, treatment, care coordination, outcomes, patient satisfaction, and more. Today's health disparities have been significantly shaped by historical patterns of White privilege and White supremacy. Modern medicine displaced traditional methods of healing in many cultures and played a central role in the construction of racial classifications and corresponding notions of difference. History is replete with examples of resistance to health inequities. African Americans developed their own healthcare systems in response to their exclusion from segregated institutions.

The matrix perspective highlights various social factors contributing to racial health inequity and inequality, including stress, social relationships, socioeconomic factors, residential segregation, environmental factors, and mistrust, as well as the interactions of race, class, gender, age, and more. The field of social epidemiology highlights the relationships among race, class, and health, and explains the "epidemiological paradox" of better *overall* health among Asians and Latinos, racial groups with significant numbers of immigrants.

Disenfranchised groups have created many organizations to address and act as advocates for their health needs. Urban Indian health organizations and a wide array of health organizations founded by women of color place these groups' health needs within the broader context of social and institutional factors shaped by a history of racism. These organizations argue that health disparities cannot be remedied without broader structural changes. Organizations started and run by women of color and disabled women have fought for a more inclusive understanding of women's reproductive health needs.

Chapter 6: Education

Schools and institutions can liberate or oppress, and their roles are still debated today, as the matrix of race still matters in education and vice versa. The institution of education in the United States has been shaped by decisions, definitions, and declarations about differences. In this chapter we will explore the history of U.S. public education and its expressed and concealed functions, and we will reflect on who gets an education and why. Regardless of type or level of schooling, the institution of education in the United States has almost always been the site of conflict, debate, and confrontation over access, meanings of education, and what is taught, why, and to whom (as well as whose knowledge counts as knowledge worth having). This conflict is often between dominant (White, male, upper-class, heterosexual) groups and Blacks, Latinos, women, poor and working-class families, sexual minorities, and those with physical and mental disabilities. To understand current educational realities, we must first understand the formative moments in the shaping of the matrix of education. The institution of education is both vital

and complex. While some see education as a solution for inequalities of all sorts, others see the education system as rife with inequalities—especially for those who are not White or affluent. Educational opportunities are not the same for all. In this chapter, we examine how educational segregation is woven into the fabric of the United States, how different educations are creating different identities, and the important role of the matrix of race in this reality.

Chapter 7: Crime and Deviance

Race, gender, and class disparities are represented in who gets defined as either criminal or deviant. Historically these differentials can be traced to the slave codes, immigration policy, and the development of reservations for Native Americans. Taken together, these practices, policies, and laws account for the racially differentiated criminal justice system. Whiteness was created as a means of assuring that the racial state would be preserved. Laws were created to fortify this structure at the expense of people of color. Contemporary trends in scholarship on crime and deviance highlight the racial, gendered, and class differentials in how justice is administered across the United States. These disparities are observed throughout the justice system, in differential policing, racial profiling, and differential sentencing and incarceration rates.

The matrix of crime and deviance starts by recognizing that the assumptions about crime and deviance are intended to ensure that race, gender, and class differentials are preserved. The matrix informs us that certain socially defined people and groups (reflecting the interactions of race, class, and gender) situated in particular spaces and places are more apt to be labeled deviant than others. It also informs us that the nexus of various spaces interacts with social identities to produce different types and definitions of deviance. As we consider the various dimensions of the matrix lens, space and place help us to understand that crime and deviance are situationally and contextually specific. Therefore, urban areas produce different types of deviance possibilities than do corporate spaces. Hate crimes, which constitute a particular type of deviance, are utilized as means of social control. Among the outcomes of the linking of national and corporate policies around crime and deviance have been the militarization of the police and the creation of the prison-industrial complex. These policies have called for increased surveillance, criminalization, and incarceration of the members of designated racial and ethnic groups. Ultimately, this process also accounts for the fact that Blacks, Hispanics, and the poor are more likely to receive the death penalty.

Chapter 8: Power, Politics, and Identities

The U.S. electorate is made up of various identity groups that reflect the matrix of race, class, gender, and region. These identities do not share equally in political outcomes, as witnessed by the significant number of Black and Hispanic felons who have been disenfranchised in recent years. Gender cannot be ignored, as we see how it interacts with race, education, and class, which helps to explain some recent political outcomes. One of these is that Black women, and women in general, are more likely to vote than their male counterparts but less likely to hold political office.

Resource scarcity often underlies political struggles, and political systems come into being to regulate conflicts over these resources. In the process, differences associated with race, class, gender, and geography often become politicized. Our application of the matrix allows us to see how these political processes have played out over time, producing both de jure and de facto outcomes that have unique impacts.

Millennials may change the very course of this country as they become the largest generation and as they become more economically viable and politically active. More diverse than any preceding generation, and with a strong understanding of the effective use of social media, millennials have a huge potential for bringing about political change. The question is not if they will create change, but when and what forms these changes will take.

Chapter 9: Sports and the American Dream

The matrix, with its focus on intersectional differences, helps fill the gaps in our understanding of how sport and athleticism create institutions that have differential impacts on racial, class, and gendered groups within U.S. society. The perspective anticipates that geographic and social locations, identities across time, and agency provide necessary insights into how this process operates. Institutional analysis demonstrates that sport and sporting events produce medial and cultural products. Through these processes race, class, and gender interactions are manifested. Space and place concerns within the matrix approach highlight the importance of geographical and historical spaces that affect social identities within sport. Identities are constantly affected by sports as they legitimate, modify, and re-create racial hegemonies. Finally, both agency and resistance have been demonstrated by multiple individuals and groups who have utilized their status within sport to transform both sport and the nation. An examination of U.S. sport through time reveals many concealed stories. Native Americans, long before European colonization, were active creators of sport and games. Most of these were directly associated with the needs of hunting and gathering communities. Consequently, stick games, racing, hunting, and archery were frequently vital parts of youth socialization. Industrialization served to transform the U.S. sport landscape as it drew an increasingly large number of immigrants and others into the urban centers. One of the significant outcomes of this transformation was the rise in team sports. From the early 19th century, elite sport clubs catering to White ethnics were established throughout the Northeast. Baseball and other team sports were soon to follow.

Chapter 10: The Military, War, and Terrorism

The contemporary U.S. military accounts for 16% of the total U.S. budget, which represents a third of all moneys spent globally on defense. Although it is predominantly male, White, and young, the U.S. military is one of the most diverse institutions in the nation. Race, gender, and age differences occur across all the branches. Younger recruits tend to join the Marine Corps, while the Air Force attracts older recruits. Women are underrepresented in all branches, but they are most likely to enlist in the Air Force. Close to a third of all enlisted personnel are

members of racial minority groups. While racial minorities constitute 23.4% of those eligible to enlist, they make up 32.9% of enlisted ranks. Middle- and upper-class individuals are least likely to be found among enlisted personnel. Clear gender differences are evident across the various services. Women of color are more likely to serve in either the Army or the Navy than in other military branches. Immigrants continue to join the military as a means of becoming naturalized citizens. Our military institutions, the most diverse institutions in the nation, hold the key to the effective and efficient use of all our human resources. Encouraging all citizens to serve in, participate with, and provide oversight of our military institutions can be the greatest deterrent to abuses, the greatest safeguard to peace, and the most effective weapon against terrorism. Wars are more likely to occur where lawlessness, hopelessness, and helplessness prevail. The most likely to suffer are those most vulnerable, regardless of whether they are in the United States or abroad. In such situations it is difficult to determine who is right or wrong, evil or good. In reality, none of these terms make any sense in the face of devastated lives, pain, and suffering. We should realize that during our own Revolutionary War, we were the extremists, the terrorists, and the discontents.

Chapter 11: Media

All of the different forms of media have a role in the construction of difference in our lives. Media not only transmits, but it also reproduces our values, ideas, ways of being, and histories. The exciting thing about media is also the daunting thing about media – it is always morphing and shifting as it always morphs and shifts us. Every ethnic group that ventured upon these shores brought with them a range of symbolic communications that told their stories, captured their identities, and projected their values. We look at several approaches to understanding the *whys* and *hows* of media development, as well as how mediated realities reproduce and/or challenge the racial status quo through the information and messages it deploys throughout society. One approach has been to focus on the shape of the media form and the kinds of relationships it encourages, since media is an extension of ourselves and our communities, perhaps the medium, itself, is the message. Often the media and its messages are expressions of the dominant class and the ruling relations of its power—in order to secure that power, dominant messages and controlling images are esigned to etch themselves into the psyche and consciousness, and effectively internally and cognitively colonize a population.

The media are embedded within our society and our relations in a variety of ways; yet, these ways are more or less enhanced and effective depending on our exposure to and our engagement with those forms of media. Whether books and magazines, news, advertising, or film, our position within the matrix affects how we choose (and are able) to engage with those media. The matrix not only impacts individual use and interpretation of these mediated forms, but our positions in the matrix also determines who writes, produces, distributes, and markets such messages and information to which communities, and, with which desires (e.g., profit, power, empowerment, etc.). In order to make media an effective tool of liberation and community organization, we need to develop our media literacy and learn how to harness it in order to create

a more just world for all. This is done through hard work, study, and practicing critical media literacy skills. Many minority and racialized groups who have learned how to harness the power of media are using that power to create social movements to effect change for themselves, and ultimately, for all.

Chapter 12: Transforming the Matrix, Transforming the Future

Emerging and transforming stories are all around us, if we learn how to recognize them, acknowledge them, and celebrate as well as amplify them. Doing so will help remake the matrix of race to one that is more inclusive and validating for everyone. Recognizing that some stories serve the status quo, that the stock stories often are only so because they are repeated the most, ingrained within our dominant institutions, and, therefore, wrapped up with power and privilege is crucial to building a new future. Understanding the past and its stories, both those dominant ones and those concealed ones, and why, will help us move forward in strength as a society. This also involves recognizing the connections between the global, the regional, the national, and the local.

When people band together in common desire to affect change, to fight for rights, to amplify and raise their experiences, their stories, their hopes and dreams in a society that has squashed and made them invisible, these are social movements for social justice. People can also band together to attempt to reclaim their oppression over others, pass legislation that supports only a small echelon of society (e.g., White men), and otherwise push against those crying out for social justice—these are social movements of backlash, designed to further bolster structures of oppression and power. The #BlackLivesMatter movement is an excellent example of social movements for social justice and the White supremacist movement, in all its various guises, is a good example of movements against social justice. It is important to understand the power of social movements and compare those organized for racial justice and those designed to maintain the racial status quo in order to work to transform the matrix.

Transforming the matrix where the dizzying variation of experience can come together to create a society that works for all involves recognizing that we are all implicated in the matrix of race—it connects (and works to separate) all of us, it affects each and every one of our lives, identities, communities, and opportunities. As such, we all have a part to play in understanding and then working to change the matrix of race. Activism for racial justice and the involvement of allies in the fight for racial justice is crucial. Equally crucial is to understand the differences between activism and allyship and evaluate your own engagement in transforming the matrix of race. We are all in this together and it will take us, each one, to work to change the matrix.

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FROM ALL THREE AUTHORS

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PART

I

INTRODUCTION TO RACE AND THE SOCIAL MATRIX

1 RACE AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE

Black Lives Matter and other protests make us aware of racial inequities and point to solutions.

Credit: Ira L. Black/Corbis via Getty Images

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Explain how the concept of race is socially constructed.

1.2 Summarize the operation of racism.

1.3 Analyze the relationship between social contexts and race.

In June of 2020, the deaths of African Americans at the hands of police triggered widespread social protests in every state, and around the globe. These racially motivated deaths, both recently and over the past decade, have not been isolated incidents. People around the world are recognizing that they are part of the larger historical, systemic oppression of African Americans and other people of color in a nation founded on White supremacy.

There are overwhelming problems that will not be changed quickly, and they are not new to us. In 1968, the Kerner Commission, as it became known, released their now infamous report declaring that the country was "moving toward two societies, one Black, one White—separate and unequal." The report identified actions to address institutionalized racism and change the path we were on. Unfortunately, few people heeded their warning. Now, more than half a century later, we find we are back in the same place. Former mayor of New Orleans Mitch Landrieu writes: "We cannot continue to go over, under or around the issue of race. We have to go through it." (2020).

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

History, the reality of our shared past, reflects a series of choices. These choices, once made, often take on a life of their own, but we should always remember that they were and continue to be choices. Nothing better demonstrates the accuracy of this assessment than the particular set of choices that served to shape our nation on questions of race.

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. 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.

As a consequence, what social scientists and geneticists alike have come to understand is that race and any categorizations based on it 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**.

Defining Terms

The term **race** refers to a social and cultural system by which we categorize people based on presumed biological differences. While the term has biological overtones, it has virtually nothing to do with biology and everything to do with society. Race exists as a system by which we, as a nation, have categorized various population groups. With these classifications have come a whole series of stereotypes, presumed attributes, behaviors, attitudes, and identities.

The very idea of race requires us to actively engage it, grant it its powers, and facilitate its presence throughout our society. We do all this through our various accepted societal rules and social structures. Institutions are both **norms** (or rules that govern behavior within society) and

Skin color exists along a continuum. Attempts to divide this range into a limited number of boxes is part of the construction of race.

Credit: iStock.com/LeoPatrizi

sustained social structures that serve to regulate our most basic roles and tasks such as family, politics, military, criminal justice, economy, health, and more.

Race operating both within and across these various institutions constitutes what we call a system. When this system of race operates to deny rewards, apply sanctions, and otherwise discriminate against some while rewarding others, we call such a system **systemic racism**. We recognize that systems of race do not operate alone, but in tandem with other systems such as sexuality and gender, class, ability, and age. These are the realities that shape our identities within and across institutions.

When we talk about race, and other major **identity** terminology (i.e., referring to specific socially constructed groups), we often reduce the idea to two opposites. Binary constructs typically present race, and other major categories, as two opposing realms:

- White/Black
- female/male
- gay/straight
- rich/poor
- young/old

These kinds of binary constructs oversimplify the realities of these various identities, and obscure and confound the multitude of identities that do not exist along this binary continuum. This is yet another reason why we utilize a matrix approach.

Our approach to all of these identities, while recognizing the multiple ways in which our various identities intersect, focuses on race. This primacy is more to facilitate our discussions, rather than an indication of the importance of race over any of the other categories. That being said, we recognize that if we were to start from a different identity category, our analysis would be different.

During our exploration of race, we will think about how race intersects with several identities, including but not limited to:

- **Gender**: A broad range of identities that reflect both social and cultural differences which include female, male, transgender, gender-neutral, nonbinary, agender, pangender, genderqueer, two-spirit, third-gender, some combination of all of these, or none of these.
- **Sexuality**: How a person identifies, who they are attracted to, how they define their sexual feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward others, and how they conceive of themselves.
- **Class**: A set of categories that reflect wealth, occupation, and income. This identity defines an individual's economic position within society.
- **Ethnicity**: A designation that identifies a social group that shares a common cultural or national tradition.

Finally, we would like to comment on the terms we have elected to use in this book. We have decided to capitalize all racial and ethnic identity groups. Thus White, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Latinx, and Asian, are all capitalized. We also recognize the distinctions between various Hispanic, Latinx groups and have struggled to be honest in the representation of that distinction. Part of the dilemma is that while Hispanic makes reference to a language group, Latinx makes reference to geographical groups. Making this even more complex, not all Latinx are Hispanic and not all Hispanics are Latinx. Then there are the various distinctions such as Latino/Latina and Latinx, which reflects both political and normative conventions that are continually in flux.

We have therefore decided to avoid presuming that one size fits all and have tried to use terms that reflect the specific identity that we are referencing. Therefore, when we are talking about the language group, both pan-ethnic and multiracial, as used by the U.S. Census, we use the broader term Hispanic. Alternatively, when we are referring to a specific group who originates from or identifies with a particular geographical area within Latin America, we use the designation Latinx. Similarly, when we are talking about those from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Caribbean, we use explicit designations. We also respect the terminology used by the authors of specific research that we discuss.

Constructing Race in the United States

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.

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/Latinx, 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.

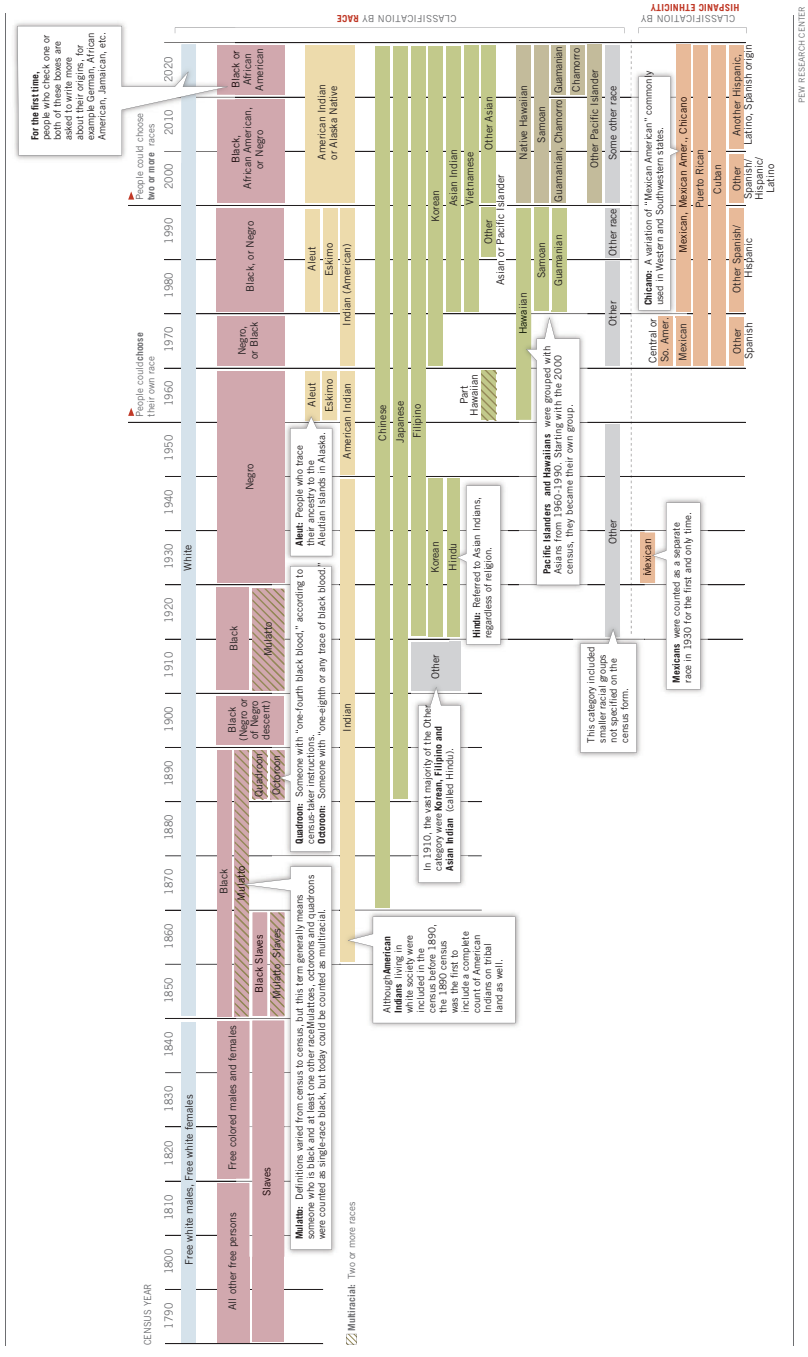
The United States Census

The U.S. Constitution requires that a counting of the nation's population be conducted every 10 years—a national census (see Figure 1.1). The purposes and uses of the census have both changed and expanded across the years. The census was originally necessary to

Each of us is part of a racial story that begins early in our lives, a racial story that has also been written long before we were born.

Credit: MBI/Alamy

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Census Categories Have Changed Over Time



Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PH_15.06.11_MultiRacial-Timeline.pdf

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.

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 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 2020 in response to public pressure). The five categories are as follows (derived from U.S. Census 2020):

1. *American Indian or Alaska Native* includes individuals that identify with the original population groups of North and South America (to include Central America) and who continue to maintain tribal affiliation or community. It includes such groups as Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, and Nome Eskimo Community.
2. *Asian* category refers to all individuals who identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups deriving from the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. It includes, but is not limited to, those who identify as Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese. Others included in this category are Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, Thai, Bengali, Mien, and others.
3. *Black or African American* includes all individuals who derive from or identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups that originate from any Black racial groups of Africa. This group includes African Americans, Jamaicans, Haitians, Nigerians, Ethiopians, and Somalis. It may also include those from Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, Kenyan, Liberian, and Bahamian backgrounds.
4. *Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander* includes all individuals that identify or originate from nationalities or ethnic groups from Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. This category also includes, but is not limited to, Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Saipanese, and Yapese.
5. *White* includes all individuals that identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. These groups may include, but are not limited to, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Polish, French, Iranian, Slavic, Cajun, and Chaldean.

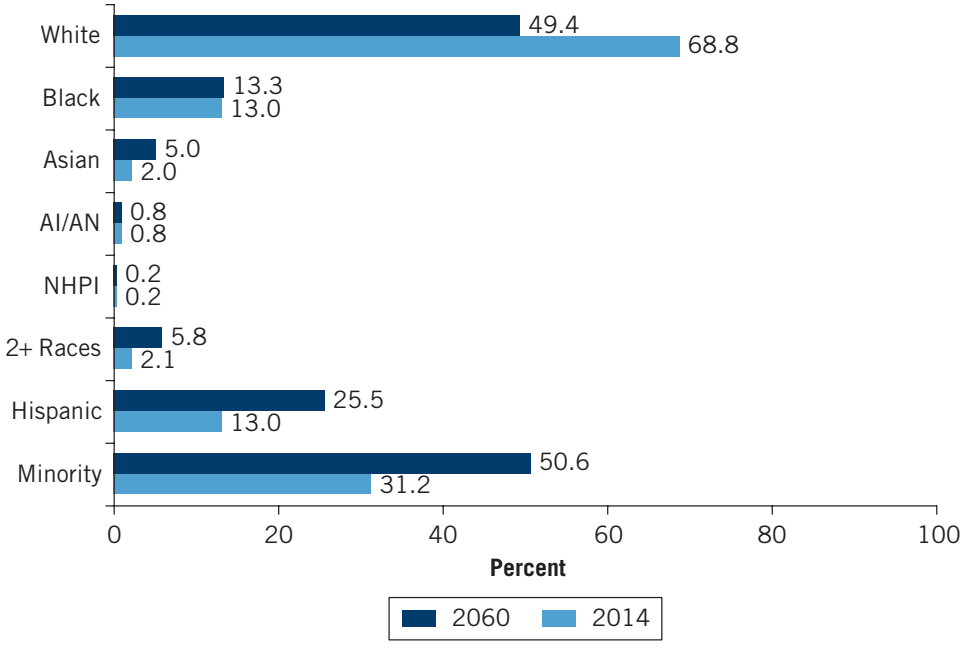
Not only have our official designations for race and ethnic groups differed over time, but how people identify themselves has also shown a great deal of variability. For example, from the

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 identity.

Future Race and Ethnic Demographics

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% 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 1.2). 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 1.2 ■ Population Growth Projections Over the Next Fifty Years Predict a Minority-Majority Nation



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.

Critical Thinking

1. Explain why biology does not explain race. Why are simple, binary constructions of identity problematic?
2. 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?
3. 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?

THE OPERATION OF RACISM

We have examined what race is, how it is constructed, and how it 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 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 racism. This view posits that core racist realities, values, and ideologies are manifested in all of the major institutions within society (Feagin 2001). 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, healthcare, family, criminal justice, sports, and leisure.

The Contours of 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.

There are specific sets of responses typically associated with race:

- *Racial prejudice, or racial prejudgments*, reflect not only our fears but also our ignorance of racialized others and those that appear to racially identify like ourselves.
- *Racial identifications* are a set of attitudes, cultural and normative values, and presumed shared histories that establish group boundaries. These group boundaries are enforced by people both within and external to the group.
- *Racial boundary enforcements* are structural or institutional mechanisms that serve to preserve those boundaries, such as segregation (Frankenberg et al., 2017); marriage (Samuel and Whitehead, 2015); laws, police, and the courts (Steinmetz et al., 2017); and economics (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; Marable, 2016).
- *Bigotry (intolerance toward those who are different from ourselves) and discrimination*, deriving their power from institutions, are the mechanisms by which racial hierarchies are developed and preserved.

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 themselves harbor prejudices and discriminate on the basis of race; however, without the larger social and historical context of systemic 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.

Racism in the United States is directed primarily against Blacks, Asian Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans. Some argue that the hatred and discrimination faced by Muslims should also be classified as racism, and that 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 Romani 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.

Formal and Informal Racism

Formal or overt racism occurs when discriminatory practices and behaviors are sanctioned by the official rules, codes, or laws of an organization, institution, or society. Many of the most obvious forms of racism are no longer legal or openly accepted in U.S. society. Such racist practices as slavery, or the harsh set of laws that came into being in the aftermath of the Civil War that stripped the newly freed slaves of their rights, or the act of Congress that stripped Native Americans of their land rights and forced them to relocate onto reservations, 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 Latinx neighborhoods (Coates 2011). Recent work has helped us to understand the many ways that these subtle forms of racism are manifested.

Implicit Bias

Implicit biases are unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that affect how we perceive others, and their and our actions and decisions. It was not until 1998 that we began researching and documenting degrees and forms of bias. Almost all of us possess various form of bias. They reflect not our conscious values, but rather the cultural and social messages about race that we have unconsciously learned (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998). Implicit bias tests can provide a snapshot of those unconscious, learned beliefs, which can impact our behavior in ways we are not aware of.

Bias, prejudice, and discrimination are learned as part of the social environment that we live in. Therefore, despite the laws, expressed attitudes, and programs aimed at effecting change, we continually discover the problem shaping our everyday lives.

Tests have been developed to not only measure but track our attitudes and beliefs about other identities. These tests, called implicit bias or association tests, can also be mapped across the country, revealing geographical differences and a more nuanced variability.

The expression of implicit bias is a function of both the individual and certain situations that "encourage discrimination more than others, largely independently of the individual decision makers passing through those contexts" (Vuletich and Payne 2019, 859). In order to understand the basis of implicit bias, we must understand the situational context of the actions. Scholar Allan Johnson (2012) describes these as "paths of least resistance." He argues that most of the time, we follow the paths of least resistance, the patterns and processes that are already established within institutions. It makes sense; most of us do not want to make waves. He argues that to change people's behaviors, we need to alter the paths of least resistance. Rather than changing the attitudes of the majority of people within an institution, the rules of the game need to be changed. Individuals will then begin following a new playbook in order to succeed, whether at school, work, or in any organization.

White 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 inclusion of certain social identities over others. Whiteness is a privileged status. **White privilege** refers to how all Whites collectively benefit not only as individuals but as a group.

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 membership, 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**—how a group or individual is represented across various social institutions that reflect privilege, status, and power—becomes both invisible and the assumed norm.

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.

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 scholar 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."

Color Blindness

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, 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.

As we have learned, a new form of racism has shifted the more overt forms of racism to the more covert forms (those racial discrimination/actions that are often hidden or subtle that serve to marginalize racialized individuals or groups). One of the leading elements of these more subtle forms of racism are associated with **microaggressions**, the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that insult persons or groups that can be both intentional and unintentional. This new racism is much less overt, avoiding the use of blatantly racist terminology. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2018) 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.

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

Credit: Education Images/UIG via Getty Images

- *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.

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

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 2018; Cunnigen and Bruce 2010). The concealed story revealed by sociology, however, is that racial inequality has been and remains entrenched in the United States.

Credit: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Critical Thinking

1. What are some of the ways that race operates?
2. 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?)
3. 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 those stereotypes have changed over time, or that they differ geographically? Would they be similar to those in, say, England or Nigeria? What may account for either the similarities or the differences you observe?
4. 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?

THE SOCIAL MATRIX OF RACE

Diversity is a process, not an event, and inclusion is an action, not a slogan. Many of you have likely heard both these words—diversity and inclusion—often. Many public organizations offer multiple "diverse" and "inclusive" events. These programs, which frequently face resistance, have traditionally focused on recognizing and appreciating diversity and creating a climate where marginalized individuals feel included and welcome. Yet as hard fought as many of these programs have been, they are frequently limited. Our intention is not to blame or shame anyone.

Our goal is to do more than superficially examine diversity and inclusion. We want to give you the tools to understand why, how, and under what circumstances our diverse society has come into being. In the process, we hope to help you alter both the conversations around race and the structures that preserve the hierarchies that differentially reward and punish individuals solely due to classifications of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

A camera has several lenses and potentially filters. Imagine that the camera is the matrix, the framework for our realities. Depending on what lens, or identity (race, gender, etc.), we use as our vantage point, our subject will look different. Different types of filters, or intersections, highlight differences in perceptions, actions, and outcomes.

Credit: Borges Samuel/Alamy

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.

For example, college-educated women of color between the ages of 18 and 26 are more likely to have different experiences within political, economic, educational, or sport institutions than, say, older White males with only a high school education. Therefore, within the matrix, using the lens of race, in this example we would be concerned with how the intersections of gender, class, and age impact one's ability to obtain an education, participate in political campaigns, or participate in sport.

A number of scholars have embraced the image of racial identity as a matrix (Case 2013; Collins 2000; Ferber, O'Reilly

Herrera, and Samuels 2009). Generally, a **matrix** is the surrounding environment in which something (e.g., a value, cell, or human) originates, develops, and grows. The concept of a matrix captures the basic sociological understanding that contexts—social, cultural, economic, historical, and otherwise—matter. Figure 1.3 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.

In this text we center the concepts and experiences of race within the context of our many shifting social identities and systems of inequality. As we learned earlier, our social identities are the ways in which our group memberships, in such categories as race, class, and gender, 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.

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, 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 1.3 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.

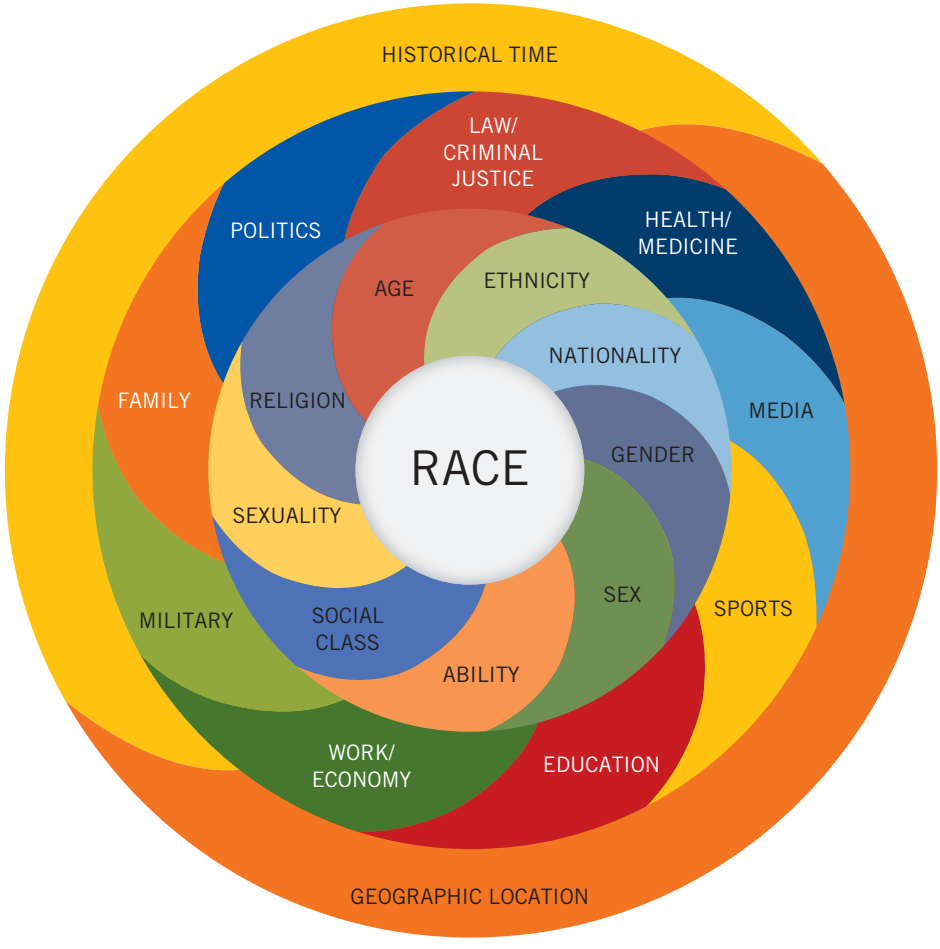
To support an understanding of race within the context of a social matrix, in the following sections we introduce the five key insights about race that we will develop throughout this text (see Table 1.1).

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, 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.

We have already demonstrated the range of ways that reveal to us the constructed nature of race. In the next chapter, we will discuss at length the idea that race and racial meanings are constructed through narrative, and the many different stories we tell about race. Here, we will discuss the other three dimensions of this Social Matrix.

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Race Intersects with Cultural and Historical Context, Social Institutions, and Other Identities



Source: Copyright Rodney D. Coates, Abby L. Ferber, and David Brunsma.

Race Is a Narrative

Too many people believe that **diversity**, the amount of social variability within a specific social context, is a binary construct. Diversity is actually a multilevel, multidimensional, multidirectional highway with many on- and off-ramps. We are not either/or; our realities are more complex than us/them. This journey starts by understanding that race, as part of our collective stories, is a kind of 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

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 on 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.

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.

In her important 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 they 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).

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 a necklace made of pop beads. But unlike the beads of the necklace, our separate identities cannot 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, or Native American) and according to where they fall along the continuum of hierarchy. We also construct and reconstruct racial meanings and views through our relationships with others—whether of the same race or of a different race. Our first knowledge of race usually comes from our relationships with our immediate family members. We develop a sense of our own racialized self, and many come to discover, through their relationships with others, that their ascribed racial identity is different from their self-identification. Through these interactions, people often expect multiracial people to choose one identity, or even tell them that their own self-definition is wrong. President Obama often spoke about his White mother who raised him, but that he still saw himself as Black, because he was Black to the rest of the world.

Our cross-racial interactions with each other frequently have the effect of disrupting some of our stereotypes about the other. For example, because we live such segregated lives, for many students, college is the first time they really experience diversity and spend time with people from different racial groups. 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