

INTRODUCTION

PART

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INTRODUCTION

Race as an Uneven Road

In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race.¹

—U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain working definitions and theories of race, racism, and ethnicity.
- Describe how race developed as a social construct in Europe and the Americas.
- Interpret demographic and economic data on the racial status of various groups.
- Demonstrate the impact of racial and ethnic barriers on social and political equality.
- Summarize the approach and structure of this book.

In early January 2021, two extraordinary events occurred that represented signs pointing in opposite directions on the road of American racial and ethnic politics. The first event occurred in the state of Georgia and pointed in the direction of greater racial/ethnic minority participation in a more diverse and democratic U.S. government. The other event occurred in Washington, D.C., and pointed in the opposite direction toward the suppression if not the overturning of American democracy, including the electoral choices of many citizens who are racial/ethnic minorities.

The first event or signpost was the historic election of the first African American, Rev. Raphael Warnock, and the first Jewish American, Jon Ossoff, to represent the state of Georgia in the U.S. Senate. Their election was also the first time in nearly thirty years that this Southern, once predominantly Republican, state elected Democrats to these posts. With the November 2020 general election, neither Warnock nor Ossoff won an outright majority of the vote as required by Georgia law, and thus both had runoff elections against Republican incumbents. On January 5, 2022, Warnock won the runoff election against incumbent U.S. senator Kelly Loeffler by a margin of 51 percent to Loeffler's 49 percent, or some ninety-three thousand votes. Ossoff won against the other U.S. Senate incumbent, David Perdue, with 50.6 percent of the vote to Perdue's 49.4 percent, or a margin of fifty-five thousand votes. With a record Georgia runoff election turnout of 66 percent, support for Warnock and Ossoff versus Loeffler and

Perdue divided along racial and ethnic lines. These party divides by race are common in U.S. politics, as we will later explain.

Exit polls revealed that whereas 70 percent of White Georgians voted for Loeffler and 71 percent for Perdue, Warnock and Ossoff received only 29 percent of the White vote. But very strong support from racial/ethnic minority voters determined the victories of these Democratic candidates—about 93 percent of the African American vote, 64 percent of the Hispanic vote, and 59–60 percent of the Asian American vote. A CNN exit poll from the November 2020 general election provided an indication of how views on race served as a dividing line in this Georgia election. Of the respondents who voted for Warnock, 70 percent of them believed that racial inequality was the most important issue, while only 6 percent of those who voted for Loeffler held this view.² The election of Warnock occurred along a long road of the election of African Americans and other people of color to national office. Of the nine other African Americans elected to the U.S. Senate in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, Warnock was the only Black Democrat to represent a Southern state. Prior to Warnock, two of the most notable other African Americans elected to the U.S. Senate included Barack Obama of Illinois (the first Black American to be elected as U.S. president in 2008 and again 2012) and Kamala Harris of California (the first woman of color to be elected as U.S. vice president in 2020). Warnock and Ossoff provided Democrats fifty out of one hundred seats and the number needed for President Joe Biden to possibly pass his legislative agenda in the Senate—with Vice President Harris breaking any ties. During the 2022 congressional elections, there was a marked increase in the numbers of Republican candidates who identified as African Americans and other people of color.³

The second event or signpost was the January 6, 2021, riot or insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building. Outgoing president Donald Trump and his supporters claimed he only lost re-election because of “massive fraud.” In order to forcibly stop or delay the congressional certification of Electoral College votes for Joe Biden as the forty-sixth president of the United States, Trump allegedly spurred on more than two thousand insurgents, many of whom were armed. Hundreds of them physically overran police barricades around the U.S. Capitol; attacked, injured, and in a few cases killed police officers (either during the event or later due to suicides); breached building entrances; and rampaged through it. Before security forces regained control these rioters entrapped the electoral count presiding officer, Vice President Mike Pence (who some considered a “traitor”), and all the members of Congress and staffers who were present. Despite the “Stop the Steal” mantra of Trump and his supporters, multiple sources including verdicts from more than sixty federal court cases and dozens of state officials concluded that Biden legitimately won the election and there was no evidence of fraud. With more than 159 million people voting and a record 67 percent voter turnout, Biden received more votes than any other presidential candidate in U.S. history—over 81 million, or 51.3 percent of the total votes cast. Trump won the second highest number of votes ever cast of over 74 million, or 46.8 percent. Biden carried the crucial states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, winning 306 electoral votes to Trump’s 232 electoral votes (whereas the threshold is 270 electoral votes).⁴

For all the ways the January 6 insurrection exemplified deep political divides in the United States, it is vital also to understand the racial divides it exemplified. Throughout his presidency, Trump frequently used racialized rhetoric to defend not only his actions or his administration’s policies—including a ban on immigrants from Muslim nations or the building of a wall on the Mexican border—but also to give muted comments to White supremacist groups that supported

him. Among other examples, Trump began his 2016 presidential campaign for the Republican nomination by referring to undocumented Mexican immigrants as “rapists” and murderers. In 2017, he gave a muted critique of neo-Nazis who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, and chanted “Jews will not replace us,” as they protested the removal of Confederate monuments. One of them rammed his car through a crowd of antiracist counterprotesters, injuring several and killing a woman named Heather Heyer. Trump implied that neo-Nazis and antiracist protesters were equivalent when he said it is important to condemn “in the strongest possible terms this display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides.” Later, at a September 29, 2020, presidential debate against Biden, Trump was asked by the moderator whether he accepted the support of openly White supremacist groups such as is allegedly the case with the Proud Boys or Oath Keepers paramilitary groups. His ominous response was for them to simply “stand back and stand by,” possibly implying he needed their support due to an election that would be “rigged.” As a backdrop to the January 6 riot, which some of President Trump’s comments might have endorsed, was a conspiracy theory popularized by far right-wing activists and commentators—the “**Great Replacement Theory**”—that asserts Democrats and liberals want to use immigration and other means to spur the racial and ethnic diversity of the nation so as to replace the White majority who support conservatives. At a rally only hours before hundreds of rioters breached the Capitol entrances, Trump told the crowd, “You’ll never take back *our* country with weakness. You have to show strength. . . .”⁵ One of the many rioters who took these words to heart as they invaded the building was Kevin Seefried of Delaware. He brandished a Confederate battle flag—an emblem that never flew inside the Capitol even during the military conflict of the Civil War.⁶



Jessica McGowan/Getty Images

Democratic Georgia U.S. Senate candidates Raphael Warnock (left) and Jon Ossoff (right) wave to supporters on a November 15, 2020 rally. Their elections demonstrate how minority and other voters can form effective coalitions even in the Republican-leaning South.



ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP via Getty Images

Supporters of President Trump attack police officers at U.S. Capitol barriers on January 6, 2021. Some of the groups that took part in this insurrection harbored White nationalist sentiments.

After four years in office, Trump’s racially tinged rhetoric may have reinforced the thinking and behavior of a right-wing fringe of American politics but may have also affected the thinking and behavior of mainstream leaders and constituencies. Political scientist Robert Pape and his team analyzed the backgrounds of the 716 people who were arrested for the U.S. Capitol attack as of January 2022. About 93 percent of those arrested were White (almost 10 points higher than the percentage of 2020 Trump voters); 85 percent of them were male (more than 30 percentage points higher than 2020 Trump voters); and 14 percent of them belonged to “Militant groups & gangs” (10 points higher than 2020 Trump voters). But contrary to conventional beliefs, Pape states, “The people who stormed the U.S. Capitol weren’t poor, unemployed red-staters [persons in Republican-controlled states]. Many were middle-class professionals motivated by the ‘great replacement’ conspiracy theory.” In fact, 26 percent of them were business owners (double the percentage in the U.S. electorate); 43 percent of them had white-collar or professional occupations (almost 10 points higher than the composition of 2020 Trump voters); and a majority of them resided not in rural, predominantly White, and Republican areas but in urban areas undergoing White population losses and that were evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Pape and his team calculated that based on a 2020 American National Election Survey as many as twenty-eight million Americans may believe in the “great replacement theory” and/or supported the January 6 insurrection partly because they do not believe Biden was legitimately elected president.⁷ Table 1.1 presents results from the 2020 Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Study (CMPS)—an extensive racial and ethnic politics study we will cite throughout parts of this book. It presents strong evidence that there is a racial divide in opinions about the January 6 insurrection and provides information about who different groups blame

TABLE 1.1 ■ Attitudes about the January 6, 2022, U.S. Capitol Riot by Race

	% White	% Latino	% Black	% Asian
[Was] a coordinated act of insurrection against the United States	43	50	67	51
Trump encouraged or incited the attack, he shares blame . . .	41	62	73	61
Many [rioters] were White supremacists and racism was an underlying factor in their actions	26	45	54	42

Source: Lorrie Frasure, Janelle Wong, Edward Vargas, and Matt Barreto, *Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey* (CMPS), United States, 2020.

for it. Whereas only a minority of Whites believed January 6 was a coordinated insurrection (43 percent), that Trump shares the blame for the violence (41 percent), or that many of the rioters were White supremacists (26 percent), either a majority of Latina/Latino, Black, and Asian American respondents believed the previous statements or were twice as likely to believe these statements as compared to White respondents.

We presented the above two opposing road signs—from Georgia versus Washington, D.C.—as they occurred nearly on the same day of January 2021 to suggest that race can create contrasting and/or uneven roads in U.S. politics—full of promise or peril. In a world wracked by the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic and various social and economic disturbances, it is vital for students to understand when, why, and how race has mattered and still matters in shaping American citizenship and opportunities.

DOES RACE MATTER?

The central purpose of this book is to explain *when*, *why*, and *how* race has mattered in shaping the journeys of various racial/ethnic groups in the United States on the road toward full citizenship and equal opportunity. We do not presume, however, that race always has mattered or always does matter—or even that it matters in exactly the same way in every situation. A close look at Table 1.2 reveals that since the 1970s there has been a persistent racial division in American political party support and identification, with Whites leaning Republican and minorities increasingly leaning Democratic. This holds true no matter the race or gender of the candidates. Later in this chapter we discuss when race, gender, and other identities matter at the same time, or the concept of intersectionality. In 2008 and 2012, Obama and later in 2020, Biden, received a minority of the White vote, just as has every other Democratic candidate since 1972. However, Hillary Rodham Clinton, as a White woman, received a smaller share of the White vote in 2016 than did Obama, as a Black man, in 2008 and 2012, or than did Biden, as a White man, in 2020. Obama and Biden were elected president because Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans turned out to vote in greater numbers than they had in the past and were

more solidly behind one of the candidates than were Whites. In this regard, minorities—most especially Blacks—played a pivotal role in a clear electoral balance of power. Clinton lost by a narrow margin in several states primarily because a solid majority of Whites, and ironically White women, voted for Trump despite the sexual harassment allegations against him; but secondarily, Clinton lost because racial/ethnic minorities' turnout was somewhat lower than was true in 2012 or 2020 due to their lesser enthusiasm with Clinton's candidacy.⁸ In this regard, race and/or gender worked against Clinton.

In 2020, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden would later apologize for telling a popular radio host that those African Americans who vote for his Republican opponent, President Trump, "ain't black." Since the Republican and Democratic Parties have quite different racial/ethnic coalitions of voters—due, in part, to the different policy views of party candidates—do you think Biden's misstatement was true, partly true, or entirely untrue? (See Table 1.2.)

Moreover, in the present era it can be very difficult for students to have a civil and/or objective discussion about when, why, and how race matters in U.S. politics because of the presence of conflicting points of view and conflicting indicators of racial progress. Consider two subtle ironies of the Obama and Biden administrations versus the Trump administration. On the one hand, President Obama made an impassioned address at the 100th Anniversary Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), stating, "I understand there may be a temptation among some to think that discrimination is no longer a problem in 2009. And I believe that overall, there probably has never been less discrimination in America than there is today. I think we can say that. But make no mistake: the pain of discrimination is still felt in America." Obama held such views up till the end of his term even though under his administration a number of racial/ethnic minorities were appointed heads of federal departments and federal court judges, including Sonia Sotomayor, the first Hispanic woman to serve as a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. Likewise, Biden stated that he decided to run for president because of what he perceived as President Trump's tacit approval of White supremacists during the 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia, fracas as it imperiled "the soul of America." Likely due to the lobbying of Biden supporters, such as Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC), and Black women advocates, Biden ran on the pledge to nominate the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court; and he fulfilled it in 2021 with the confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson. Again, Biden's running mate, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris, is the first woman, as well as the first woman of Black and Asian American heritage, to be elected vice president.⁹

On the other hand, President Trump, when he was a candidate in 2016, was criticized for not addressing any of the traditional civil rights organizations, including the NAACP or the National Council of La Raza (also known as UnidosUS). Later, these same groups strongly criticized Trump for appointing Stephen Bannon, former executive chair of Breitbart News, an online publication that openly advocated notions of White superiority, as White House

TABLE 1.2 ■ Presidential Votes by Party across Racial/Ethnic Groups, 1972–2020

		1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
White	Democrat	31	47	36	35	40	39	43	42	41	43	41	37	41
	Republican	67	52	56	64	59	40	46	54	58	55	59	58	58
	Independent	–	–	7	–	–	20	9	3	–	–	–	–	–
Black	Democrat	82	83	85	90	86	83	84	90	88	95	93	88	87
	Republican	18	16	11	9	12	10	12	8	11	4	6	8	12
	Independent	–	–	3	–	–	7	4	1	–	–	–	–	–
Hispanic	Democrat	63	–	56	62	69	61	72	62	53	67	71	65	65
	Republican	35	–	35	37	30	25	21	35	44	31	29	29	32
	Independent	–	–	8	–	–	14	6	2	–	–	–	–	–
Asian	Democrat	–	–	–	–	–	31	43	54	56	62	73	65	61
	Republican	–	–	–	–	–	55	48	41	44	35	27	28	34
	Independent	–	–	–	–	–	15	8	4	–	–	–	–	–

Source: "Election Results 2008," "President Exit Polls," and "Election 2016: Exit Polls," *New York Times*, November 8, 2016, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html>; <http://elections.nytimes.com/2012/results/president/exit-polls>; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/08/us/politics/election-exit-polls.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/exit-polls-president.html>.

senior counselor and (for a period of time) as a member of Trump's National Security Council. In September 2016, Trump's vice-presidential running mate, Gov. Mike Pence (R-IN), in the midst of a heated national debate about whether the police shooting of unarmed Black suspects constituted anti-Black racism among the police, stated, "We ought to set aside this talk, this talk about institutional racism and institutional bias," and in his view recognize that "police officers are human beings and in difficult and life-threatening situations, mistakes are made." Even though the Obama and Trump administrations have very different stances when it comes to questions of civil rights and the persistence of racism, the most recent 117th U.S. Congress is among the most ethnically and racially diverse Congresses ever. As of 2020, 38 percent of the U.S. population is comprised of non-White Hispanics and other racial or ethnic minorities, and together 23 percent of the U.S. House and Senate are comprised of such minorities.¹⁰ We reiterate the opening quote by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun that "we must first take account of race" in order to figure out when, why, and how it still matters in U.S. politics.

We believe race still matters in several *substantive* ways, meaning it can still structure opportunities and outcomes that determine the quality of life for U.S. citizens and residents alike—their education, housing, health, and so on. For instance, the criminal justice system has long produced discriminatory outcomes. In the early twenty-first century, African Americans were 13 percent of monthly drug users, but they represented 55 percent of all persons convicted on drug charges and 77 percent of all those who served prison sentences related to drugs.¹¹ On the jobs front, Latinos and Blacks routinely have jobless and unemployment rates twice that of their White counterparts. In 2020, during the first surges of the COVID-19 economic slump, the jobless rate was 7.3 percent for White workers, while it was 10.4 percent for Latinos and more than 11 percent for Blacks. The above figures reflect the "structural inequalities" President Obama implied still existed and Vice President Pence argued matter less.¹²

Race also still matters in several *symbolic* ways that involve words, ideas, and images that shape public attitudes and opinions. It shapes how persons and groups are influenced by and identify with various racial attitudes and what, if any, racial lens they use to "color" even their nonracial views. This was evident during the Obama administration's nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court. She was a highly experienced federal judge and the first Latina and the third woman to be nominated to serve on the High Court. Sotomayor, however, was sharply criticized by several conservatives because she once remarked during a University of California, Berkeley, forum, "I would hope a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experience would more often than not reach a better conclusion [as a judge] than a White male who hasn't lived that life."¹³ Former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich said that her "new racism is no better than old racism."¹⁴ Talk radio personality Rush Limbaugh charged that Obama's nomination of Sotomayor was a form of "reverse racism" akin to nominating Louisiana Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. In other words, one symbol—*Sotomayor as an admirably hardworking and intelligent Latina*—was being countered by other symbols—*Sotomayor and Obama as*

racialethnic minorities who are racist and trying to unfairly guilt Whites into supporting her nomination. Some Republican members of the U.S. Senate said that such comments by fellow conservatives went too far. But the current six to three conservative supermajority on the Supreme Court—as created by President Trump’s appointment—are likely to rule against several precedents that uphold the voting rights and civil rights of various racial/ethnic minority communities.¹⁵

When, Why, and How Race Matters

This book examines the four major groups that have experienced and endured sustained, multigenerational exclusion from the full rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship or residency based on their race, ethnicity, or ancestry—African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. Each has traveled an uneven road toward U.S. citizenship and opportunity, especially when compared to the experiences of White/European Americans. While we use the metaphor of a road to describe the racial or ethnic status of various groups, this does not mean that groups have always experienced forward progress (some roads double back); and certainly, different groups have experienced different rates of progress when they do move forward. This is the reason why we describe U.S. racial and ethnic politics as a series of uneven roads. The legacies of the group experiences we examine continue in today’s society, providing a compelling reason for us to understand when, why, and how race and ethnicity matter, which in turn informs us about the contour, construction, and context of the uneven roads traveled.

- **When race and ethnicity matter** provides us with *context*, the time and place—the beginning, middle, or most current leg of its journey—in which a group is most likely to experience advantages or disadvantages.
- **Why race and ethnicity matter** permits us to understand society’s rationales behind the differing *contours* of various groups’ experiences. For instance, think of a smooth decline as representing opportunities and advantages, and a bumpy and steep climb representing barriers and disadvantages.
- **How race and ethnicity matter** allows us to understand the specific *processes* that maintain a group’s advantages or disadvantages, as well as government and group norms or laws, actions, and institutions responsible for the construction of a group’s road.

Throughout our discussion we assume that the interactions between society, minority communities, and the **polity** (the broad governing framework within which political and economic interaction occurs)—what we label the factors of racialization—ultimately shape a group’s destiny or the outcomes of racialization.

DEFINING RACE, ETHNICITY, AND RACISM

Before we analyze American racial and ethnic politics, we need to define what we mean by the terms *race*, *ethnicity*, and *racism*. We will present a broad definition of these terms as well as several theories to explain and provide contrasts to our definitions. Although the common U.S. conception is that race and ethnicity are fairly distinct, they have also been used interchangeably. Although this volume focuses specifically on how race, ethnicity, and racism shape American politics, we will weave the concept of intersectionality throughout our explanations. **Intersectionality**, as we will further explain, is the presumption that more than just one group identity, group experience, or form of discrimination matters in explaining an individual's or a group's citizenship status and opportunities. In short, race and/or racism may combine with gender and/or sexism as well as class and/or class inequality to produce a very specific form of discrimination for a community. An example we will further discuss in Chapter 5 is the experience of Chinese American women in the early 1900s. They suffered from the gender stereotypes imposed by men from inside and outside their communities who viewed them as properly assuming submissive and docile roles. They also suffered the racial stereotype of Whites viewing them as "alien" intruders whose foreign norms and practices were threatening to Whites while they and their communities struggled against the poverty created by the severe immigration and job/economic restrictions placed on them by law. Again, this text highlights the political consequences of race, ethnicity, and racism. It is quite possible, however, that in various instances race, gender, class, and/or other forms of discrimination *simultaneously* matter.¹⁶

A Working Definition of Race

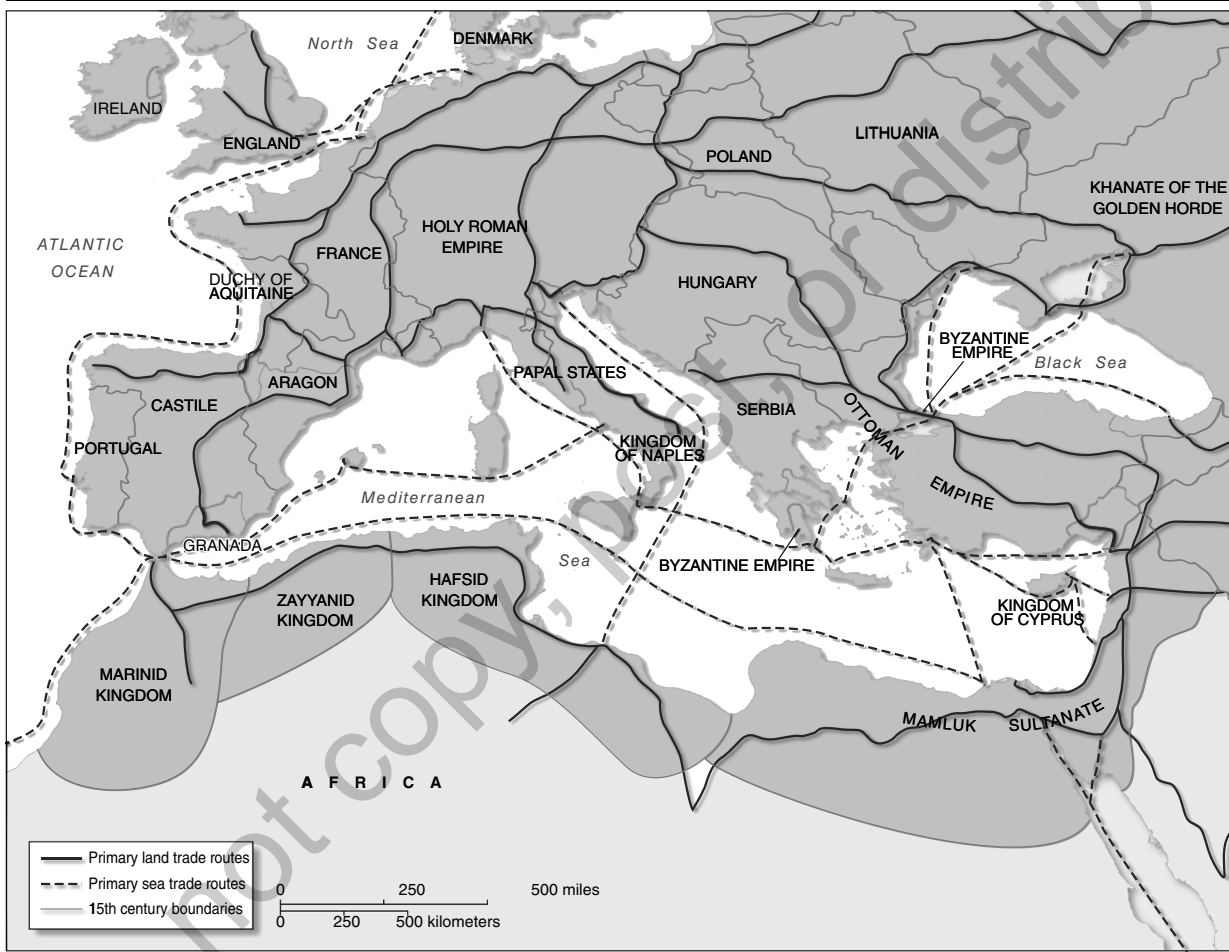
In the United States, **race** refers to the macro-categories society assigns and the significance it attaches to perceived groupings of human physical distinction such as skin color, hair color and texture, lips, nose, eyes, and body shapes (called phenotypes), as well as sometimes cultural differences including language, music, dancing, food, and family customs. We presume we can know how to classify individuals based on their appearance, which is a fallacy political scientist Melissa Nobles calls **racial essentialism**¹⁷—that one's racial essence is obvious from one's outer appearance. In reality, race is much more of an idea or a set of assumptions and practices that are rooted in our history rather than a physical reality that scientists can verify. (Race and science will be discussed later in the chapter.)

The contemporary macro-categories we most often use in the United States include Whites/European Americans, Blacks/African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders, though these categories have greatly changed over time.¹⁸ When American society and individuals use these macro-categorizations to make assumptions about a person, a group, or a condition, they racialize this person, group, or condition, and the outcome of this process is **racialization**.¹⁹ For example, if you presume a fellow student you have never met whose last name is pronounced "Lee" is Chinese (as opposed to being of English or Korean ancestry), you have likely racialized this person.

It is important to understand, however, that race often overlaps with—but is not exactly the same as—racism or racial oppression. By this we mean that merely considering the importance and impact of race is not necessarily an act of racism. How we act on race matters. **Racism** uses race to not merely classify perceived differences but to use these perceptions to rank and order which group(s) enjoy full citizenship rights and opportunities according to where they fall within a system of racial classification. **White supremacy** or **White nationalism** are concepts that stem from the broader concept of racism. These concepts presume that persons who are racially classified as White are the superior, reference group, as well as the primary citizens whose interests the society, the economy, and the polity must serve, whereas all other non-White persons and citizens are secondary or second-class at best. Social anthropologist Audrey Smedley explains that in the United States, Australia, South Africa, and other parts of the world, racism turns race into a hierarchical worldview “that divides the world’s peoples into biologically discrete and exclusive groups. The racial worldview holds that these groups are by nature unequal and can be ranked along a gradient of superiority to inferiority.”²⁰ For example, in 1882 California politicians helped to successfully pass a federal law, the Chinese Exclusion Act, that denied Chinese workers (and eventually other Asians) the ability to immigrate into the country. These workers were viewed as alien intruders—part of a “Yellow Peril”—that threatened the livelihoods of Whites. This use of race to exclude Asian immigrants directly contrasted with the experience of White immigrants at that same time, who were permitted to immigrate more freely. White immigrants were also the only group allowed to become citizens under the Naturalization Act of 1790. Alternately, race can be used to try to remedy past instances of racism, such as when Congress in 1988 issued an apology and paid \$20,000 each in reparations to Japanese American survivors of World War II internment camps.²¹

The Changing Concept of Race. The concept we in the United States have of race has not remained the same over time and is not perceived the same way everywhere in the world. The modern concept of race as understood in the United States stems from English thinking from the 1700s, emerging at the same time that the American institution of chattel slavery (an enslaved person as another person’s permanent property) was formalized. Political scientists Ali Mazrui, Audrey Smedley, and other scholars have speculated that during the evolution of the modern European nation-state and capitalism from the 1400s forward, the English Isles and other Teutonic groups like the Dutch and Germans of Northern Europe were more isolated from the multicultural conquest and exchange of the Mediterranean Sea when compared to Southern Europe. As a result of centuries of closer exposure with people of different skin colors, among other differences, Southern Europe, especially Spain and Portugal, came into more contact with others through exploration, military conflict, conquest, trade, scientific and cultural exchange, and even intermarriage (see Map 1.1). Thus, Southern Europe more readily had firsthand knowledge of Africans, Arabs, the Chinese, Persians, and many other people whose cultures not only differed from theirs, but who also, by our modern U.S. standards, differed in their physical features from those of Southern Europeans.²²

MAP 1.1 ■ The Multicultural Mediterranean



The more extensive trade routes through Southern Europe, North Africa, and points east contributed to greater contact in these regions with different races and ethnicities and therefore a different perception of human physical differences that was not shared by Europeans farther to the north, where trade routes were not as varied.

By the mid-eighteenth century, when many European powers competed for colonies in the New World of North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean, many Europeans embraced notions of **racial superiority (and later the idea of White supremacy)**, or the belief and practice that their race (however defined) was morally, culturally, and intellectually more advanced than others. This thinking justified their economic interests in the early conquest of Native American lands and the later enslavement of Africans as a workforce. On the one hand, Southern Europeans like the Spanish and Portuguese extended the Old World, Mediterranean belief in cultural or **racial assimilation**—the practice of often intermarrying with “inferior races” but also demanding that they abandon their religions and cultures and assume those of the dominant group. On the other hand, Northern Europeans like the English and Dutch had developed a xenophobia, whereby they feared the outsider who was physically different. They saw racial superiority as a matter of maintaining **racial separation**—very strict lines of division between the dominant and subordinate races; thus, they forbade intermarriage and various kinds of contact. The English first developed their notions of racial separation by racializing the Irish during their long conquest of Ireland from the twelfth century forward. They later racialized American Indians for the purposes of taking their lands and Africans for using their labor. (See Chapters 2 through 6.)²³

Until recently, the U.S. Census treated race as an unchangeable category in which most often respondents were assigned, or selected, one racial identity, such as Black, White, or Asian. In contrast, the former Portuguese colony of Brazil recognizes race as a flexible, fluid color gradient—from *branco* (White) to *preto* (Black)—with a wide range of variants in between. Such differences between North American and Latin American views on race spring from the differing religious, political, and cultural values the former inherited from Northern Europeans and the latter inherited from Southern Europeans as the explorers, conquerors, and slave traders of both justified the subjugation of non-White populations.²⁴

Race as a Social Construction

Many biologists, geneticists, and anthropologists have concluded that it is extremely difficult to isolate groupings of biological or genetic similarities that perfectly fit our U.S. Census categorizations of race (and the census admits this). In fact, Stanford University biologist Marcus Feldman concludes that for the purposes of scientific predictions like one’s future likelihood of disease, the concept of ancestry groups, or where we geographically come from in the world, is more useful than race. Thus, many scholars of race have concluded that race is a **social construction**; in other words, society believes that these categories are a result of birth, biology, and/or nature, and a government acts upon them as though they were natural. Race has much more to do with the political, cultural, and *social significance we assign to perceived physical differences* than to any actual scientific basis for those differences. Whether or not race is a social construction, political leaders have acted as though it were very real. This is of paramount importance because often political rights and access to economic resources and opportunities have been allocated based on this concept.²⁵ True to the U.S. assumptions of race outlined here, Whites, as the dominant group in the United States, have imposed the view that race has obvious boundaries or lines based on physical distinctions, such as Whites have variations of white skin and Blacks have variations of brown skin. The so-called **one-drop rule** emerged during the era of Jim Crow racial segregation in the

South (1890–1960) and asserts that anyone with even the smallest traces of African ancestry or “Black blood” clearly falls on the Black side of a color line separating Whites and Blacks. Often, this rule was applied in ways that made racial distinctions appear arbitrary, as evident in the 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.²⁶ Homer A. Plessy was a thirty-eight-year-old shoemaker who claimed only one-eighth Black ancestry, what census takers labeled the racial category of “octoroon.” For all intents and purposes, due to the social constructions of race, Plessy could have passed for or claimed to have been White because he had straight hair and a light complexion. But he did not. As part of a test case to determine the status of mixed-race people, he boarded an East Louisiana Railroad passenger car in New Orleans reserved only for Whites rather than the train car reserved only for Blacks. The conductor called the police to eject Plessy from the train because he proudly claimed he was “colored” (had some Black blood). Plessy eventually appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in a challenge of the Jim Crow law requiring the segregation of Whites and Blacks. He lost his appeal as the Court concluded that the Fourteenth Amendment, which requires “equal protection under the law” regardless of color, nonetheless permitted states and businesses to segregate all facilities and communities by race, what the Court termed a **separate but equal doctrine**. Nearly one hundred years later, in 1982–1983, a woman named Susie Guillory Phipps sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records because it claimed her one-thirty-second “Negro blood” made her Black when she had presumed all of her life that she was White. She lost the case even though a Tulane University professor found that most Whites in Louisiana had at least one-twentieth Black ancestry. Again, the presumption that physical markers indicate one’s racial makeup—one’s racial essence—is the fallacy of racial essentialism.²⁷ Groups such as Hispanics or Latinos are highly diverse populations and, partly because of the complexities of race, class, and color in Latin America and the Caribbean, do not embrace American conceptions of being identified as either Black or White—the so-called Black/White paradigm. According to the U.S. Census, Hispanic or Latino is an ethnic identity and not a racial identity. Thus, it is possible from an ethnic standpoint to identify as Cuban, for example, but consider oneself Black, White, or both from a racial standpoint. In fact, demographers Nancy Landale and R. S. Oropesa discovered that Puerto Rican respondents consider their Puerto Rican identity as a race, *la Raza*, when they are on the island of Puerto Rico, but think of their race as White and ethnic identity as Latino/Hispanic when on the American mainland. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva speculates that this more fluid, Latin American view of race (grounded in racial assimilation) is influencing our U.S. racial essentialism (grounded in racial separation) and causing U.S. notions of race also to become more fluid. The old Black/White color lines are breaking down to create a new order according to color, class, and culture/ethnicity.²⁸

A Working Definition of Ethnicity

While race in the United States is most often based on physical distinctions, **ethnicity** is the label we use to organize and distinguish peoples based primarily on their cultural practices or national or regional ancestries. The most common ethnic identities are based on national origins such as Italian American or Mexican American. When the ancestral connection is to a region, rather than to a specific nation, we consider this a **pan-ethnic identity**. The ethnic identity of American Jews is pan-ethnic because it is derived from the Middle Eastern region

but has a worldwide dispersion. In contemporary America, Latino and Asian American are pan-ethnic identities because they are derived from the regions of Latin America/the Caribbean and Southeast, South, and East Asia/the Pacific Rim.

Differing systems of racial and ethnic categorization, however, are not mutually exclusive. For instance, if someone in the United States racially identifies as being Black or White based on physical appearance, she may also identify ethnically as Nigerian or Irish. There has often been significant overlap between definitions for race and those for ethnicity. For reasons we will discuss later, the U.S. government understands Hispanic/Latino to be an ethnic identity while it considers White, Black, Asian, American, and Native American to be racial identities. Consequently, the U.S. Census asks people to identify their race and whether or not they are Hispanic.²⁹ Sociologists Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann note that ethnicity has a long history as a concept dating back to the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning “nation,” and assuming particular meaning among the fifteenth-century English whereby an “ethnic” was someone who was neither Christian nor Jew—in short, a “heathen.” But famed German sociologist Max Weber classically defined ethnic groups as “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in the common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs of both, or because of memories of colonialization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation.”³⁰ Thus, in Weber’s view, ethnicity stems from the collective belief in a shared cultural origin. Political scientist John Hutchinson and sociologist Anthony D. Smith elaborated on Weber and identified common characteristics across ethnic groups:

- a common *proper name*, to identify and express the “essence” of the community;
- a myth of *common ancestry*, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin and place and that gives an [ethnic group] a sense of kinship;
- shared *historical memories* of a common past or pasts, including [heroines/heroes], events, and their commemoration;
- one or more *elements of common culture*, which need not to be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language;
- a *link* with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation by the [ethnic group], only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with Diaspora peoples;
- *a sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the [ethnic group’s] population.³¹

There is little popular consensus in the United States about the definition of ethnicity. From the perspective of this book and its authors, the most important difference between ethnic groups and races is that while an ethnic group’s identity tends to be constructed both by the individual and by others, a racial group’s identity is constructed only by others.³² In other words, ethnic identities may be those that groups internally assume, and racial identities may be those externally imposed, even though they can also be internally embraced.

From this perspective, American society might see some groups as more purely ethnic at various points in time (contemporary Latinos or Hispanics), some groups as more purely races (Negroes and Whites in the mid-1700s), and other groups as a mix of both (the post-1965 Asian American community). Today, it is quite conceivable that to be Black—meaning someone of

African ancestry (whether one is African American, Nigerian, Jamaican, etc.)—is to have an ethnic identity, because it entails pride in one’s cultural heritage, as well as a racial identity imposed by American/Western assumptions about race and the practices of racism. Likewise, to be Asian American can mean one embraces both an ethnic and racial identity; for, like Hispanics or Latinos, younger generations of Asian Americans embrace a pan-ethnic identity to approximate the U.S. macro-categories of race.

Just like race, ethnicity can also be a social construction. There are many terms that have been used to describe U.S. communities of Spanish-speaking and/or Latin American ancestry including Hispanic, Latina/Latino, Latinx, or Latine. As the coauthors of this text, we interchangeably use the terms of Hispanic and Latina/Latino, due to their historical and regional significance as well as wider usage. Do you think there is an equitable and inclusive way to decide what term or terms to use when respectfully referring to these communities? How can this be applied to other racial/ethnic groups?

A Working Definition of Racism

Like the concepts of race and ethnicity, the concepts and practices of racism have changed throughout U.S. history. There are a multitude of definitions and theories for the concept of racism. A vital feature of this chapter is that it familiarizes you with these theories—the debates of liberal and conservative thinkers—so that you can decide for yourself when, why, and how race matters in U.S. politics.

We argue that one of the ways present-day racism is detectable is when government and/or society uses race to allocate benefits or sanctions and legitimacy or neglect to persons and groups in ways that reinforce a system of racial privilege or racial ordering. We borrow from the thinking of Beverly Daniel Tatum, former president of Spelman College in Atlanta, and others who argue that racism is “a ‘system of advantage based upon race,’” that “racism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology based upon racial prejudice, but a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices [especially those of government] as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals.” She adds a controversial claim that we will unpack in this book: “In the context of the United States, this system clearly operates to the advantage of Whites to the disadvantage of people of color.”³³ The concept of **White privilege** means a person is more likely to automatically have or inherit greater opportunities and more advantages—for example, longer life expectancy, higher median income, and much greater wealth—than those afforded to racial/ethnic minorities (on average) simply if society perceives/classifies that person as White.³⁴ Of course, this begs the question of whether people of color have the power to be racists because they can or cannot deny essential rights and privileges to Whites. In fact, this is precisely the point that conservative thinkers argue about contemporary aspects of civil rights policy and affirmative action. Such policies enforce reverse racism because, as stated in the Supreme Court decision of *Ricci v. DeStefano* (2009), Whites are denied job promotions if so-called racial preferences require Blacks to be better represented in certain job categories.³⁵ U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas,

as part of what conservatives consider victimology, once argued that such preferences lead to a dangerous pattern:

The “We/They” mentality of calling oneself a victim of society breeds social conflict and calls into question the moral authority of society. The idea that whole groups or classes are victims robs individuals of an independent spirit—they are just moving along with the “herd” of other victims. Such individuals also lack any incentive to be independent, because they know that as part of an oppressed group they will neither be singled out for the life choices they make nor [be] capable of distinguishing themselves by their own efforts.³⁶

Thus, Thomas advocates that any government intervention that takes steps to address disparities between racial groups (other than blatant discrimination) violates the spirit of American self-help and free thought. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s definition is a direct challenge to Thomas’s perspective and akin to the classic liberal definition of racism that 1960s Black nationalist leader Stokely Carmichael and political scientist Charles Hamilton offered in their 1967 book *Black Power*: “By racism we mean the predication of [political, social, economic, and belief systems] on considerations of race for the purpose of *subordinating* a racial group and maintaining control over that group.” Carmichael and Hamilton make a distinction between individual racism and institutional racism, whereby the latter is more destructive. In their view, only dominant groups have the capacity to be institutional racists, for only they have the power to reinforce and benefit from a racial order.

Racial theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant slightly counter Carmichael and Hamilton when they assert that “a racial project” or any effort to shape the use of race in society “can be defined as racist if and only if it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on*



Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Supporters of the Black Lives Matter Movement protest the police killing of George Floyd at the Brooklyn Bridge on June 4, 2020. The racial justice protests that killing of Floyd sparked were often multiracial and occurred in cities and towns around the United States and the world.

essentialist categories of race.” They go on to say that “there is nothing inherently White about racism,” though they add that “all racisms . . . are not the same” and cannot exert the same amount of political power.³⁷ For instance, even if one believes that all forms of racism are morally indefensible, the current number of White racial hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi skinheads, have a capacity for antiminority racial violence that far outweighs the number and capacity of Black and other non-White groups that observers also classify as hate groups. (See the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “hate map” at www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map.)³⁸

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva notes that in this post-1965 period, overt, government-sanctioned racial discrimination has been outlawed through civil rights law. Yet the legacy of discrimination makes it possible for racial inequalities to exist even if there are fewer institutions and persons in power actively placing barriers in the path of minorities. He calls this “new racism,” or a covert form of racial discrimination whereby a racial structure exists within American society and is supported by different forms of racial inequality. They include (1) institutional racism, or “the maintenance of racial disparities through routine governmental practices” that claim race neutrality, such as the achievement gap between Whites and some minorities on the SAT; (2) latent racism, or “the more concealed and coded racism” often found in ordinary language and practices, including use of terms like *illegal aliens* or *welfare queens* as implicit references to all Mexican American workers or the African American poor; (3) residual Jim Crow racism, or the recognized practices and stereotypes that stem from America’s past of sanctioned, racial segregation and White supremacy, as illustrated by some southern states outlawing public schools and colleges teaching students about race, racism, and slavery; and (4) color-blind racism, or the assertion that any attention to race is inherently racist, as indicated in Supreme Court cases that have charged reverse racism when affirmative action programs call for the hiring or promotion of minorities over Whites.³⁹

BOX 1.1 ROAD SIGN

RACE, SCIENCE FICTION, AND POLITICS

The Road Sign boxes that appear in some chapters of this book highlight current events, developments, and debates. In this box, we consider how science fiction reflects race and racial issues. The genre of science fiction can imaginatively discuss (but just as often neglect) issues of race in politics as relevant to American society. By definition, science fiction is a form of storytelling that imagines possible futures and alternate realities. Its story lines of aliens, monsters, or talking apes, such as in the film series *Planet of the Apes* (1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 2001, 2011, 2014, 2017), are often symbolic representations of human conflicts such as xenophobia (fear of outsiders) or racism.

The popular film series *The Matrix* (1999, 2001, 2003, 2021) created a world in which all of those in authority within the machine-ruled cyberreality of “the Matrix” appeared to be White and many of the human characters who resisted the machine’s dominance were racial minorities, as shown in the multiracial human refuge-city, Zion. In the film *District 9* (2009), a world government segregates an alien race that has landed on Earth in one enormous

quarantine zone called District 9. It makes contemporary references to South African apartheid, as well as to the war on terrorism and U.S. policies of racial segregation and anti-immigration. The film was praised for smartly showing that sometimes the “hostile aliens” are we humans, who apply our views of race to other beings; but it was also criticized for its not-so-subtle references to Africans (Nigerians, in particular) as gangsters and cannibals.

In another depiction of racial issues, the movie series *Avatar* (2009, 2022) set its story more than a hundred years in the future in the world of Pandora, in which the blue, ten-foot-tall Na’vi, who live in complete harmony with nature, are attacked by a greedy human corporation and its mercenaries, who want to destroy these “savages” and their gigantic Home Tree in order to mine the Unobtainium deposits under the ground. Among many other themes, critics noted this film’s reference to settler colonialism or the idea that, just like Europeans decimating Native Americans and taking their lands starting in the 1500s and 1600s, an Earth corporation in the future uses military mercenaries to violently take the land and resources of the Na’vi.⁴⁰ In general, science fiction—through film, television programs, novels, and so on—provides an entertaining way to discuss serious issues like race and racial differences as they point to possible multiracial utopias (the *Star Trek* series), to racial apocalypse (*Planet of the Apes*), or to visions of mixed futures in which hope is mingled with racism and social chaos (such as the novels of the award-winning science fiction author Octavia Butler that are being adapted to film and broadcast productions). Director Ryan Coogler’s film adaptation of the Marvel Comic *Black Panther* superhero series (2018, 2022) illustrates a sci-fi genre called “Afrofuturism” that imagines or reimagines a past, present, or future where Black people or other racial/ethnic minorities tell compelling stories involving technoculture, spiritualism, and/or alternative realities. Such sci-fi stories provide us with opportunities to discuss race and racism now (and in the future) if we choose to have such discussions. But if most of us in the viewing public see these stories as only entertainment and nothing else, aren’t we missing opportunities to think more deeply about racism? And therefore, isn’t racism subtly reinforcing a negative form of “color blindness”? You decide. For a discussion of how science fiction can be blind to race, see Adilifu Nama’s *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (2008) or Isiah Lavender III’s *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011).

In the end, Bonilla-Silva concludes that all of the above collude in creating an America in which it is possible to have “racism without racists.” This means old opportunity gaps still persist between Whites and racial/ethnic minority groups, even though most White Americans have become more racially tolerant in their attitudes over the past fifty years, and civil rights laws, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, prohibit blatant, anti-minority discrimination. In the present, however, there is also evidence that many Americans, especially racial/ethnic minority groups, believe that race relations have worsened over the last few years.

Several legal and education scholars have also devised theories to explain the reasons for unequal racial outcomes. **Critical Race Theory**, as initially devised by legal scholars Derrick Bell and Kimberlé Crenshaw, is a broad framework that examines how the historical patterns of laws and institutions have led to systematically unequal outcomes for racial/ethnic minorities—in effect, systemic forms of racism. As indicated by a previous callout box, the critics of the theory have used this term—and, in the view of some advocates, *misused* this term—to argue school

curricula that discuss race and racism are implicitly racist against Whites. Again, our purpose in this text is to equip you with the knowledge you need to reach your own informed conclusions about various controversies involving racial and ethnic politics.⁴¹ Later in this chapter we will explain how our “uneven roads” framework gives you the tools to sort out when, why, and how racism is operating to shape the status of a group.

By 2022, as many as thirty-six state legislatures outlawed or attempted to outlaw public schools and colleges teaching on subjects related to race, bias, and other forms of inequality, or what conservatives have sometimes improperly called “Critical Race Theory.” Where, if at all, should we draw the line between paying too much attention versus too little attention to educating students about race, bias, and other forms of inequality or discrimination?

RACIAL CLASSIFICATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND GROUP STATUS

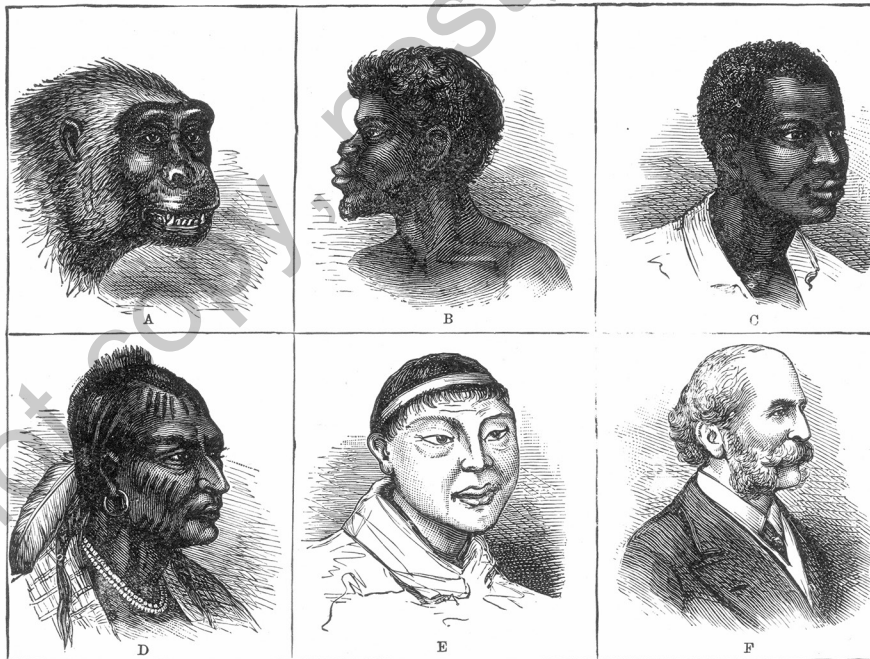
Government can play a central role in determining the ways in which race, racism, and ethnicity matter within a society. No function is more important to that determination than a periodic census of the population. The census collects reams of data about the population and provides the logic and processes the state needs to categorize and classify individuals and groups according to many different characteristics, including perceived racial and ethnic ones. While conventional wisdom says that the census process in the United States is empirical (or objective), political and social biases have been and remain an inherent part of the process. Recall our earlier discussion of race and ethnicity as social constructions. Science, like religion, politics, culture, and other elements of society, has been pivotal in shaping the political uses of these concepts.

Scientific Racism: A Backdrop for Census Categories

The scientific Enlightenment that emerged in the late eighteenth century and throughout nineteenth-century America and Europe also birthed **scientific racism**, the incorrect use of empirical methods to justify assumptions of racial superiority and inferiority. Science is a voice of authority and, when used improperly, can badly mislead and give credence to the false, popular ideas of citizens and governments. In his 1735 work *Systema Naturae*, Swedish botanist Carolus (Carl) Linnaeus was among European scientists who first derived a system of racial classification not too different from the current Anglo-American scheme: Americanus (American Indian), Asiaticus (Asian), Africanus (Black/African), and Europeaeus (White/European). What made Linnaeus’s scheme problematic is that he used secondhand accounts riddled with racist stereotypes and assumed different human “species” had unique phenotypic and behavioral traits. Whereas Africanus had “hair—black, frizzled; skin—silky; nose—flat,” he also reasoned that the group’s “women [were] without shame” and this race was “crafty, indolent, negligent . . . and governed by caprice.” On the other hand, Europeaeus was “white, sanguine, muscular; hair—long; flowing; eyes—blue; gentle, acute, inventive; covers himself with close vestments; governed by laws.”⁴² The work of Linnaeus was followed by that of German

scientist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and his *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind* (1776) and American scientist Samuel George Morton's *Crania Americana* (1839). To varying degrees, each extended upon the idea of scientifically discovering the natural divisions among human races. Scientific racism later shaped the thinking of the founders of the American Republic, most prominently Thomas Jefferson. Not only did Jefferson join others in believing in a myth of White Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, but he once reasoned in his famous *Notes on Virginia* (1787) that the orangutan sexually desired African women because Blacks belonged to a “missing link” race that was halfway between humans and apes. These conclusions are hypocritical, given Jefferson's longtime sexual relationship with his Black slave, Sally Hemings.⁴³ As explained further in Chapter 3, it is no wonder that the framers of the U.S. Constitution could strike a compromise in which enslaved African Americans were counted as three-fifths of a whole person if some of them believed Blacks were subhuman.

Does the requirement on a form to check just one box for racial or ethnic identity create an inaccurate picture of an increasingly diverse America? What would happen if we all checked more than one box with each form?



GRANGER

PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MAN.—(2) EVOLUTION ILLUSTRATED WITH THE SIX CORRESPONDING LIVING FORMS.

This late-nineteenth-century chart on human evolution from apes implies that people of aboriginal and African descent are most closely related to apes as part of the “missing link” theory of scientific racism.

A multitude of similar rationales emerged over the next two centuries, from polygeny (a belief that the different races had entirely different origins), to Social Darwinism (the theory that Whites are the superior race because they are the most intelligent and adaptable), to eugenics (the science of breeding out racial contaminants to the White race). Again, such science was used in order to lend authority and credence to justifications for slavery and notions of a natural racial order. At its height in the 1930s, scientific racism justified the thinking of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party of Germany, which proclaimed Aryan racial supremacy and the necessity of annihilating the so-called Jewish race.⁴⁴

Against this backdrop, the U.S. federal government first began to derive and constantly revise the categories it used to racially classify its population beginning in 1790. Article I of the U.S. Constitution requires a decennial (or every decade) census of the population. Throughout its life, the census has involved a process of racialization to suit differing political as well as scientific and allocational purposes by which communities received public monies for roads, schools, hospitals, and other services. Political scientist Melissa Nobles asserts that the census reflected each period's racial thinking, and thus we have gone through at least four, if not more, racial eras with the census and its racial categories. (See Table 1.3.)⁴⁵

The first period was the “slaveocracy” era (1790–1840), in which the primary consideration was demarcating Whites from enslaved Blacks and American Indians. Thus, in 1790 the categories were Free White Males, Free White Females, All Other Free Persons, and Slaves. Later they included the category of Indians Not Taxed. By the 1840 census, the categories were Free White Persons, Free Colored Persons, and Slaves. As scientific racism took hold, two prominent Southern polygenists, Samuel George Morton and Josiah C. Nott—both medical doctors who believed in the scientific and moral validity of slavery—worked to demonstrate that **miscegenation**, or racial mixing, was problematic because it created a third “weaker race” of mulattoes.

The category of “mulatto” was officially added in the 1850 census, beginning the second racial era of the mulatto and race science (1850–1920). This was a period of great racial anxiety. Not only were slavery and, later, the postslavery emancipation period hotly debated with regard to the South, but in the Western United States the fates of American Indian tribes, Mexican American settlers, and Chinese and other workers were suppressed by claims of White land and economic entitlement. In the East and Midwest, a steady stream of Irish, German, and later Southern European immigrants made Anglo-Saxon proponents nervous about the character of their White racial republic because of the prejudicial views the latter had of these working-class immigrants. By becoming a rising power, the United States demonstrated to Europe in the late 1800s that it too believed in the “White Man’s Burden”, or the civilizing of the so-called darker nations by assuming territory through conquest in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii, among other places.⁴⁶

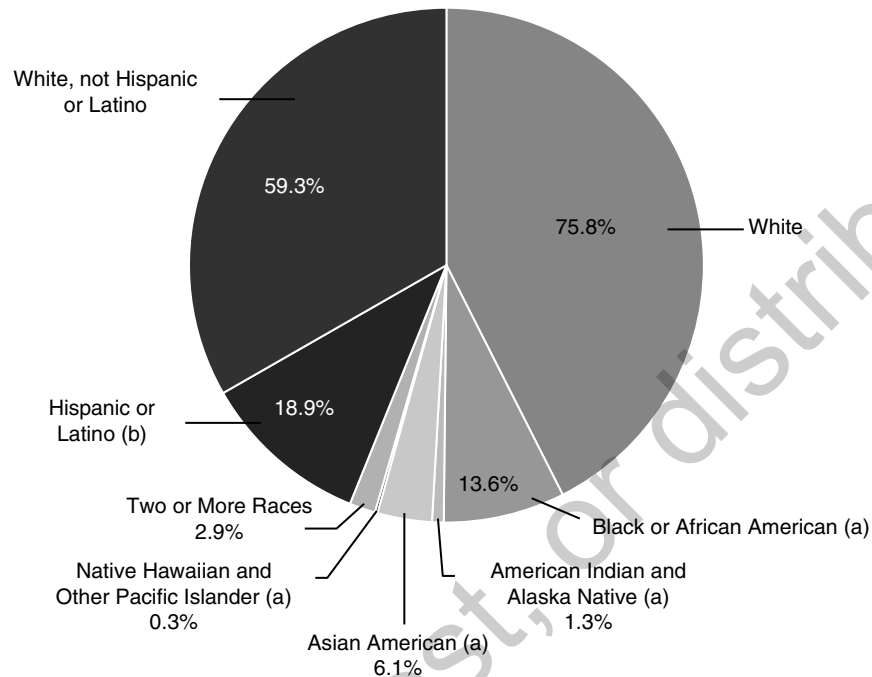
Because of this internal and external racial turbulence and dramatic increases in immigration, census takers in 1880 and 1890 were asked (in quite arbitrary ways) to take note of new categories—Chinese and Japanese. Along with the category of mulatto, the strange gradations of quadroon (one-fourth Black) and octoroon (one-eighth Black) were added to the 1890 census, noting increasingly evident public unease with immigrant ethnicities. In the same period, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, and Homer Plessy lost his 1896 appeal not to be shoved to the subordinate side of the “separate but equal” color line.

TABLE 1.3 ■ Racial Categories of the U.S. Census, 1790–2020

Racial Era	Decade	White	Negro/ Black	Indian	Mixed Race	Mexican	Chinese	Japanese	Asian Indian	Filipino Korean	Korean	Hawaiian	Alaskan	Vietnamese	Other Race
Slaveocracy Era ↓	1790														
	1800														
	1810														
	1820														
	1830														
	1840														
Mulatto & Race Science Era ↓	1850														
	1860														
	1870														
	1880														
	1890														
	1900														
One-Drop Rule Era ↓	1910														
	1920														
	1930														
	1940														
	1950														
	1960														
Post-Civil Rights Era ↓	1970														
	1980														
	1990														
	2000														

Source: Melissa Nobles, *Shades of Citizenship: Race and the Census in Modern Politics* (Stanford University Press, 2000), 28, 44. Composite table created by authors based on Nobles's tables and text.

The 1920s was a period of intense anti-immigration fervor and legislation; thus, the “Americanization” movement emerged, calling for the submergence of non-Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, and the census was directed to take note of the new racial categories of Mexican, Hindu or Asian Indian, Filipino, Korean, and Other. By the 1930s, the nation’s racial and ethnic admixture was so diverse that segregationist thinking made it necessary to clearly demarcate White as the default category for all persons of European ancestry, beginning the third period, the one-drop era (1930–1960).⁴⁷ After the civil rights movement challenged the 1930–1960 period of Jim Crow categories and both race and ethnicity came to be included in the census, the post–civil rights era (1980–present) began. In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget put forth **Statistical Policy Directive No. 15** to devise uniform racial and ethnic categories for the purposes of education, which in turn would be applied across all governmental functions. By this period, census takers were not to presume their definitions had scientific or social scientific validity as much as political legitimacy. The directive read that these racial and ethnic “classifications should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature. . . . They have been developed in response to need by both the executive branch and the Congress.”⁴⁸ At approximately this same time, Hispanic leaders in Congress became concerned that government was inconsistent in the collection of data that allowed for measurement of the status of Latinos in the United States. Congress responded in 1976 with Public Law 94–311, requiring federal agencies to collect and publish statistics on the social, health, and economic conditions of Americans of Spanish origin or descent (the term used in the law). Most important among these federal agencies was the Department of Commerce, which is responsible for the collection of U.S. Census data. The implementation of this law led to the standardization of federal racial and ethnic data, with four recognized racial categories (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, White, and Black) and two ethnic categories (of Hispanic origin and not of Hispanic origin). Latino leaders in the 1970s organized to ensure that “Hispanic” was categorized as an ethnic rather than a racial category, partly because race, color, and ethnic nationality are such fluid notions in Latin American identity.⁴⁹ It is quite interesting that the notion of being mixed-race emerged again with the 2000 census, which permitted persons to identify themselves by more than one racial or ethnic category. In fact, there has been a vigorous debate about the use of multiracial categories within the census movement because of concern by some civil rights leaders that it would dilute the numbers counted as discrete, racial minorities. Figure 1.1, however, indicates that for most Americans, at least as of 2010, race is still a very fixed concept—the overwhelming majority of census respondents (about 98 percent) picked only one race: 74 percent selected White; 12 percent marked Black; and fewer than 5 percent chose all of the others. But there is a fairly significant percentage, 6 percent, who picked “Other” and thus refused to check the traditional boxes. In addition, the percentage of people who selected the ethnic category of “Hispanic” or “Latino” was 14 percent across all races. The vast majority of Hispanics or Latinos self-identify as White alone or some other race alone. Only 710,000 out of 50 million identify as Black/African American alone. This indicates the flexibility or permeability of the Latino category. Latinos are now the largest ethnic or racial minority in the

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Race as a Percentage of Total Population, 2020**Fact Notes**

(a) Includes persons reporting only one race

(b) Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI625220#RHI625220>

United States, surpassing Blacks. But again, it is important to keep in mind that “Latino/Hispanic” is a pan-ethnic label composed of many different ethnic-national and racial identities. In 2020, the census changed the criteria it used to code the questions measuring race and ethnicity. After these design changes were made, the number of people who were categorized as reporting multiracial backgrounds increased from 2.9 percent in 2010 to 10.2 percent in 2020. This serves as an important reminder that defining race and ethnicity is dependent on the measurement of how people express their understanding of their identities.⁵⁰

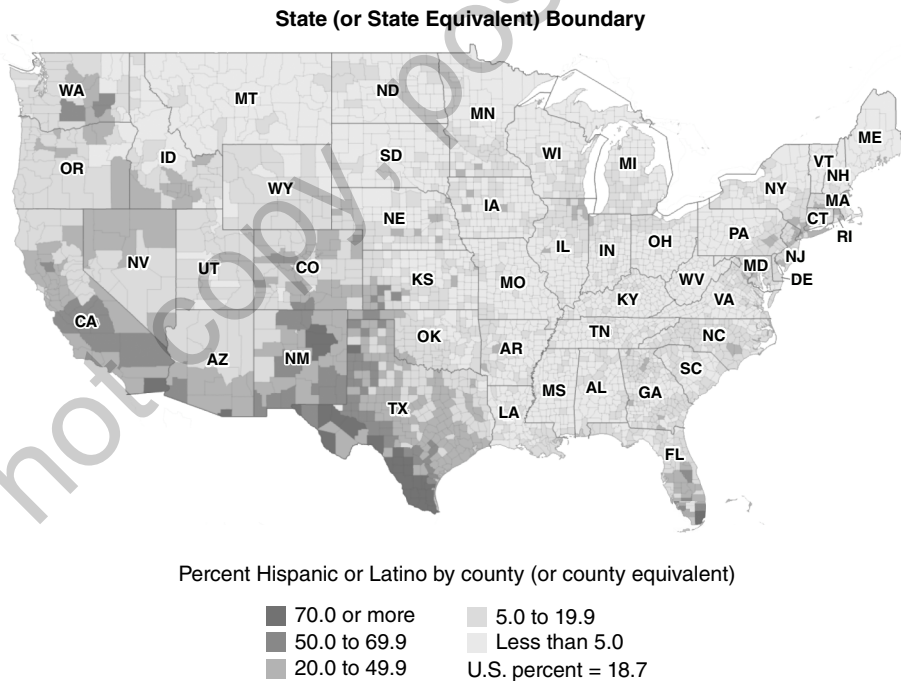
Group Economic and Demographic Differences

One of this book’s major objectives is to provide you with the ability to understand how government actions matter in the creation of persistent opportunity gaps. According to projections, by the year 2050 (and possibly sooner) immigration and demographic changes in the United States will result in there being no absolute racial majority. Whites will make up only 49 percent of the total population, just as they now do in California. In 2000, Whites (or Anglos—non-Hispanic Whites) were 75 percent of the U.S. population and generally

speaking were doing much better economically and educationally than most other racial/ethnic groups. By 2020, this population figure dropped to just above 61 percent. Of all ethnic and racial groups, Latinos/Hispanics experienced the absolute largest increase in their percentage of the population—from just above 12 percent in 2000 to over 18 percent in 2020. Maps 1.2 and 1.3 illustrate where the two largest racial/ethnic minority populations—Hispanics/Latinas/Latinos and Blacks—are most concentrated in the nation. But a group’s share of the total population is only one measure of its standing. Asian Americans, who were just under 6 percent of the total population, had a median family income in 2020 higher than that of Whites (\$94,903 versus \$74,912) and one and a half times as many college graduates. At no point in the 2010s did African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, or Hispanics economically catch up with Whites, except with respect to high school graduation rates.⁵¹

MAP 1.2 ■ Hispanic Origin or Latino Population as a Percentage of County Population, 2020

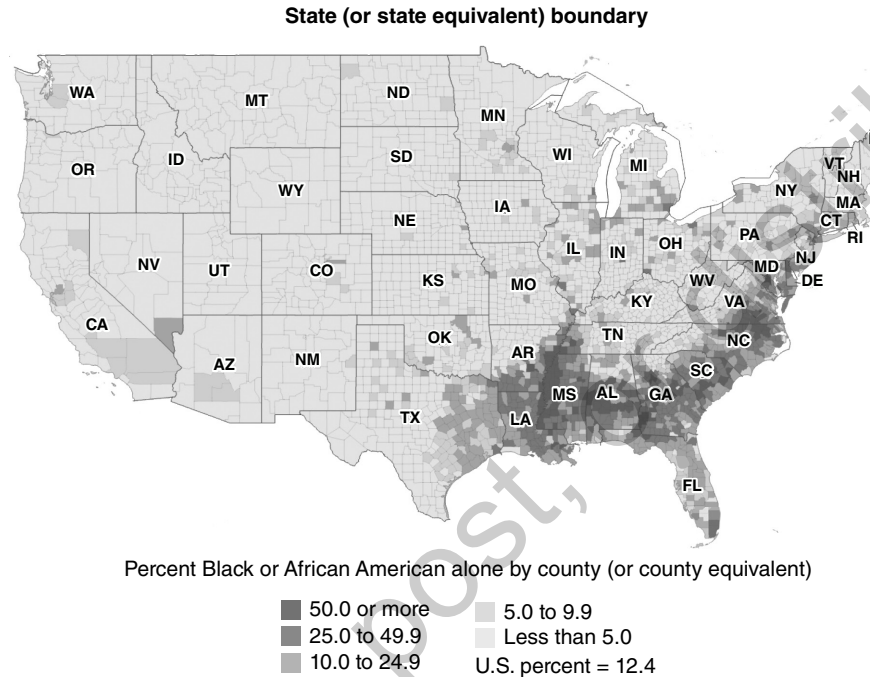
Hispanic populations are most commonly found on the West Coast, the Southwest, and parts of Florida and the Eastern Seaboard. While the Mountain and many other states have smaller concentrations of Hispanic or Latino populations, demographics continue to shift from natural population growth and immigration. The U.S. government estimates that by 2050, there will be no true majority race or ethnicity in the United States.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2566121a73de463995ed2b2fd7ff6eb7>.

MAP 1.3 ■ Black Population Alone as a Percentage of County Population, 2020

Black populations are most commonly found in the South and Southeastern states or a region historically labeled “the Blackbelt” as well as the lower Eastern Seaboard. While other regions have smaller concentrations of Black populations, demographics continue to shift from natural population growth and immigration. The U.S. government estimates that by 2050, there will be no true majority race or ethnicity in the United States.

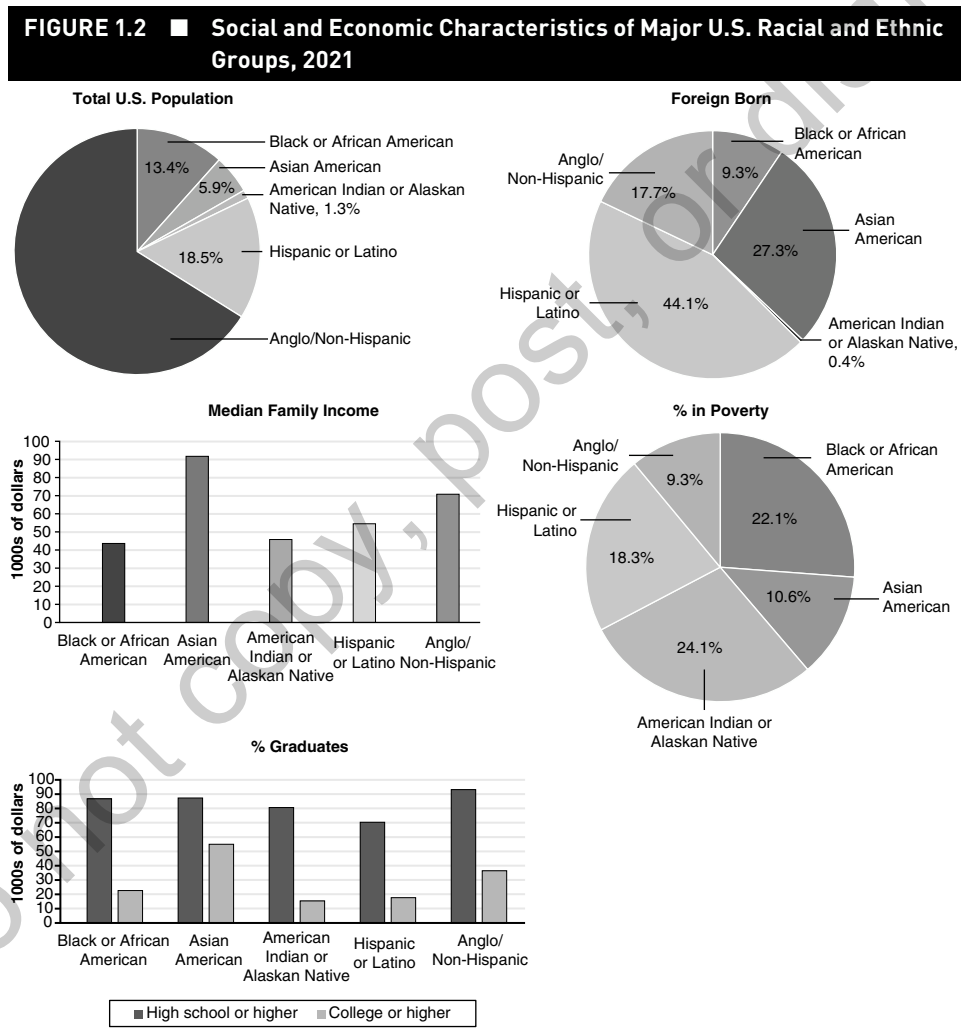


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2566121a73de463995ed2b2fd7ff6eb7>.

Our larger point with these data is that government matters because it can determine when race and its opportunities are not experienced in exactly the same way across racial/ethnic minorities, despite important similarities. There is a general impression that asserts Native Americans economically benefit from land trust annuities, or payments the U.S. government makes to tribes in return for the use or taking of native lands and resources, as well as from the emergence of Indian-run casinos. Yet between 2015 and 2019, Native Americans had the lowest median family income (on par with African Americans), the highest rate of individual poverty, and nearly the lowest rate of college graduation. While there are some positive benefits derived from the more than two hundred tribes who by state and/or federal agreement are permitted to run casinos, the effects are not equally beneficial in every locale, and in a few cases, true to all casinos, there are negative effects, including increased “bankruptcy rates, violent crime, and auto thefts.”⁵²

Despite Latinos and Asian Americans being lumped into large, pan-ethnic groupings, there is enormous diversity between and within different pan-ethnic groups that also stems, in part, from government policy. Mexicans are by far the largest Hispanic group in the United States, with Puerto Ricans and Cubans a distant second and third. As we will explain in subsequent chapters, the economic differences between the groups, especially since Cubans had median family incomes

nearly \$10,000 higher than the other two groups in 2019, is partly explained by U.S. policy favoring Cuban immigrants in ways not true for Mexican immigrants or by domestic policies directed toward Puerto Ricans, who already are U.S. citizens. Large levels of stratification exist among Asian, Indian, and Native Hawaiian (Pacific Islander) groups. On the high end of the economic ladder are Indians and Japanese persons (whose median family incomes increased to a range between \$85,000 and \$126,000), with Vietnamese, Koreans, and Native Hawaiians making about \$30,000 less in median family income across the decade. (See Figure 1.2 for demographic differences in social and economic characteristics.) In Chapter 5, we will address the greatly different resources and barriers each group has confronted as part of this larger story.⁵³



Source: All data are from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Population Estimates and have been tabulated by the authors. Population estimates for 2021, July 1, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/>. 2020 five-year estimates for foreign-born population, family income, poverty, and graduation, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>.

Overall, the emergent differences between these groups have led racial theorists to wonder if we now have a system of stratification that recognizes not only race/color but class as part of a system of advantages. Mindful of these very important variations, a 2013 report by a number of senior researchers concluded racial disparities actually impose costs on all of us by subtracting from the economy. If in 2020 the average 30 percent gap between the income of Whites and that of racial/ethnic minorities did not exist, “total U.S. earnings [by all individuals] would increase by 12%, representing nearly \$1 trillion today,” and nearly \$2 trillion more would be added to the gross domestic product, or the total output of the economy minus exports.⁵⁴

Race and American Citizenship

Because the United States and its politics are becoming increasingly driven by racially and ethnically diverse constituencies, many have asked, What does it mean to be an American? And by paying attention to race and ethnicity, are we eroding the commonality we as U.S. residents should share? There are many answers that politicians and ordinary citizens have offered to these questions, and two major opposing views in particular are highlighted here. By exploring these perspectives, our goal is to provide you with the objective tools and facts to reach your own conclusions about what role, if any, race does and should play in U.S. politics.

The **multicultural view** is argued by many scholars, including the prominent voice of historian Ronald Takaki. In his book *A Different Mirror*, Takaki asserts the belief that various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups in the United States should mutually coexist and maintain their distinct identities. In political science, this view somewhat approximates pluralist theory, or the belief that the American political system is fairly open and accessible; but current scholars of race and politics have greatly modified this theory. Like many other adherents of this view, Takaki believes that since America’s founding it has been racially and ethnically diverse, though racist. He is critical of those who would argue that the United States should become one large melting pot in which all ethnic differences ultimately are submerged or assimilated into one larger American identity. Multiculturalists believe that to argue so in a society ordered by race (among other inequalities) only places racial/ethnic minorities at a distinct disadvantage in advocating for equality. Thus, they support government policies along the lines of bilingual education (or initially teaching immigrant students in their native, non-English tongue), liberal immigration policies, affirmative action, or a degree of racial redistricting to achieve minority representation in legislative bodies.⁵⁵

On the other hand, the **transcendent view** argues that American society represents universal values—individual liberty, equal opportunity, democracy—that shape American identity and transcend all differences. It might otherwise be labeled the assimilationist approach. Historian Arthur Schlesinger once concluded in a book titled *The Disuniting of America* that ethnic attachments to “hyphenated” identities, such as Italian American, African American, and Japanese American, are understandable at one level, but ultimately subtract from our common American identity. Schlesinger feared that ultimately emphasis on group differences would lead to chaos: “America in this new life is seen as preservative of diverse alien identities. Instead of a nation composed of individuals making their own unhampered choices, America increasingly sees itself as composed of groups more or less ineradicable in their ethnic character. The multiethnic dogma abandons historic purposes replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by separatism. It

belittles *unum* [unity] and glorifies *pluribus* [diversity].”⁵⁶ Toward this end, the transcendent view approves of government policies of “English only” in schools, restrictive immigration policies, and the limiting or elimination of affirmative action (which it considers unfair racial quotas) and is more likely to oppose the use of race to achieve minority–majority legislative districts.

Based on the current levels of political division in the United States, is it possible to foster greater unity and understanding in the United States by stressing a common American identity? Or should we instead embrace diverse American identities because a common identity is too difficult to create right now? What do you think would be the effects of taking either approach?

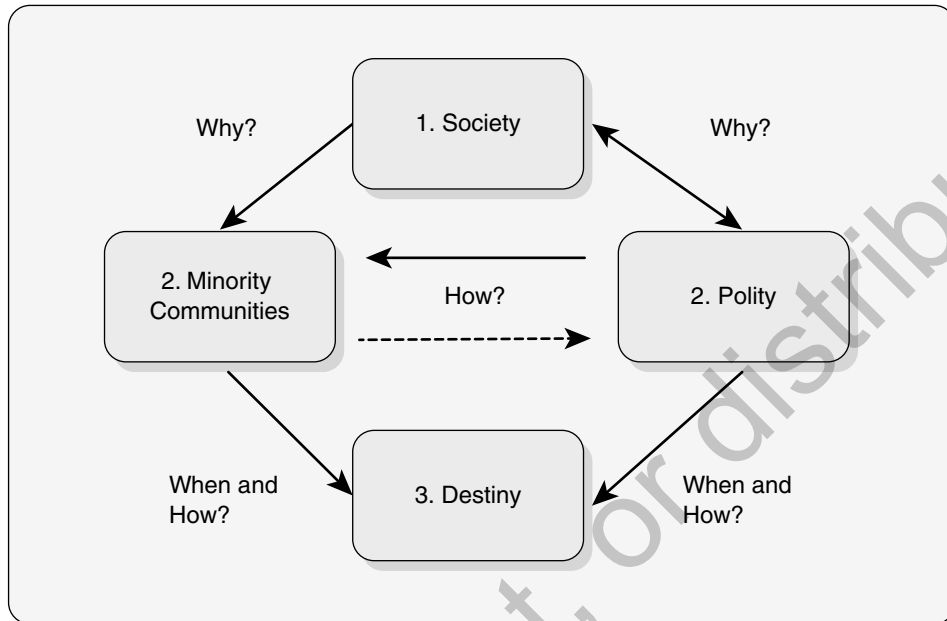
THE UNEVEN ROAD OF RACE: OUR FRAMEWORK

We began this chapter by posing the main questions of when, why, and how race has mattered as various groups pursued full citizenship rights and opportunities. We return to the image of the uneven road to fully demonstrate how our framework helps readers grasp why racial/ethnic minorities have had to travel different and often more difficult roads in comparison to Whites. Our answers to these when, why, and how questions inform readers of the relationships between three key factors of racialization—society, the polity (government), and minority communities—whose interactions result in a specific outcome (destiny). Figure 1.3 illustrates the relationship between these key factors and outcome.

Society in Figure 1.3 represents the dominant/majority group and its social as well as economic institutions, such as churches, neighborhood groups, and businesses. The Minority Community refers to a specific ethnic or racial minority at a certain point in time—for example, Blacks today or Italian Americans in the 1900s. The Polity stands, broadly conceived, for the government and its related institutions—for example, the U.S. Congress, the Federal Housing Administration, and U.S. political parties. Finally, Destiny signifies a specific status outcome, such as higher college enrollments, expanded voting rights, and lower infant mortality rates, which indicate what level of racialization a group currently experiences. These levels of racialization range from Absolute, to Decisive, to Insufficient, to Inconsequential.

Remember that why race and ethnicity matter explains the specific reasons for or rationale behind a group’s advantage or disadvantage. Answers to this question depend on the degree to which the dominant society perceives a minority community as a threat or as a benefit. It tells us why the dominant society believes the contour or the shape of a group’s road should be bumpy versus smooth, a steep climb versus an easy roll downhill, twisted versus straight—especially as society and government place ramps (opportunities) or roadblocks (barriers) along a group’s path. For example, were those who argued in 2013 that the Washington Redskins football team retain its name, despite its being a strong racial stereotype of Native Americans, subtly relying on past justifications for racial caricatures of Native Americans?

How race and ethnicity matter explains the specific processes that create or maintain a group’s racial advantage or disadvantage. The answer to this question tells us how government creates and uses certain laws, actions, and institutions in the construction of a group’s road partly as shaped by the laws, actions, and institutions a group has to use along its journey. For

FIGURE 1.3 ■ When, Why, and How Race Shapes a Group's Status

example, African Americans have lower rates of homeownership than do Whites today. This is at least partly due to the legacy of discriminatory federal government and private lender laws and practices that, until the early 1970s, denied many Black families loans, whether privately or federally subsidized, that would have made home purchases much easier.

When race and ethnicity matter explains the specific periods in time or places in which a group's racial advantages or disadvantages are more likely to matter. The answer to this question provides us with the context of a group's road, meaning we can better identify when and where events occurred to gauge certain outcomes to determine how far along a group is on its journey. For instance, Italian immigrants in the early twentieth century arrived during a strong anti-immigrant period of American history and at times were racialized by Whites of Northern European ancestry as dark-skinned and lacking a work ethic. The early twenty-first century is a different context, where ethnic barriers to Italian Americans have been replaced by ethnic barriers to Latino Americans.⁵⁷

The Outcomes of Racialization

In our framework, we include ethnicity alongside race because it can overlap with but at times also be quite distinct from race. The society and the polity can treat racial/ethnic minorities differently in the same period. So while race may mean everything in the way of advantages and disadvantages in a specific period, ethnicity could be considerably less significant in that same period. Table 1.3 summarizes the potential outcomes as to when, why, and how race matters. The fourth column explains four possible levels of racialization resulting from the combined factors of society, the polity, and minority communities. The levels represent how significant

a role race plays in a group's advantages or disadvantages: absolute, decisive, insufficient, and inconsequential.

1. **Absolute: Race or Ethnicity Is Everything.** This first level of racialization occurs when a racial or ethnic minority has no citizenship rights and opportunities due to racial ordering. The dominant society decides that the contour of a minority community's road will be extremely bumpy and full of roadblocks, identified in Table 1.3 as very strong barriers. The minority community in question has very weak to no empowerment from the types of laws, actions, and institutions at its disposal; and neither timing nor place (context) is on its side. The polity likely colludes with society in the construction of the minority community's road and thus offers laws, actions, and institutions, as well as disadvantageous times and places (context), that lead to very weak or no empowerment of the minority community.

A perfect example of such an outcome is the period of African American enslavement from roughly the 1640s to the 1860s, when the vast majority of African Americans were enslaved and the members of a tiny, mostly Northern freedmen class had few beneficial laws, actions, or institutions that they could use to promote their interests. One fundamental roadblock was that many Whites believed that African Americans were subhuman and indeed even fit for slavery; only a relatively small number of abolitionists within the dominant society believed otherwise. Until the 1850s, when tensions between slave states and free states boiled over, the federal government struck a series of compromises (laws) that perpetuated slavery, and thus very weak incentives for change existed.

2. **Decisive: Race or Ethnicity Matters.** This second level of racialization occurs when a racial or ethnic minority has very limited citizenship rights and opportunities as a result of racial ordering. Not quite as bad as the "absolute" condition, the dominant society establishes many roadblocks, or strong barriers as identified in Table 1.4, that contour a minority community's road to equality with twists and turns. The minority community in question has weak empowerment from the types of laws, actions, and institutions available to it, and neither timing nor place (context) is on its side. Government or the polity likely colludes with society in the construction of a minority community's road and thus offers weak laws, actions, and institutions at disadvantageous times and places (context), which leads to the weak empowerment of the minority community.

Examples of this outcome include the period of Jim Crow segregation (the 1880s to the early 1960s) (timing or context), when only a minority of African Americans were permitted to register and to vote in the South (place) despite the Fifteenth Amendment. In the same period, there also emerged a form of decisive exclusion that adversely affected the political and economic well-being of Hispanics, especially Mexican Americans. From the late nineteenth to twentieth centuries, Mexican Americans were often segregated by Anglos according to custom or law. They were frequently mistreated by law enforcement officials and the courts, often

TABLE 1.4 ■ Outcomes of the Uneven Roads Framework

The Questions/Factors of Racialization			The Outcomes of Racialization
Society (<i>Why this contour for the road?</i>): Does society believe/act as if a minority community should have racial/ethnic barriers (roadblocks, steep climbs, twists and turns) on its journey toward full citizenship rights and opportunities?	Minority Community (<i>How is the road constructed/when does context matter?</i>): Is a minority community empowered by strong laws, actions, and institutions (as well as advantageous times and places) to overcome any barriers on its journey toward full citizenship rights and opportunities?	Polity (<i>How is the road constructed/when does context matter?</i>): Does a polity empower a minority community with strong laws, actions, and institutions (as well as advantageous times and places) to overcome any barriers on its journey toward full citizenship rights and opportunities?	Destiny: What is the specific group status result of racialization based on the combined questions/factors of racialization?
Very Strong Barriers	Very Weak to No Empowerment	Very Weak to No Empowerment	1. Absolute: <i>Race or ethnicity is everything.</i> A racial/ethnic minority has no citizenship rights and opportunities due to racial/ethnic ordering (e.g., slavery, American Indian annihilation).
Strong Barriers	Weak Empowerment	Weak Empowerment	2. Decisive: <i>Race or ethnicity matters.</i> A racial/ethnic minority has very limited citizenship rights and opportunities due to racial/ethnic ordering (e.g., Jim Crow segregation, Japanese internment, anti-immigrant views against Hispanics).
Moderate to Weak Barriers	Strong Empowerment	Strong Empowerment	3. Insufficient: <i>Race or ethnicity is not enough.</i> A racial/ethnic minority has fundamental citizenship rights and opportunities though inequalities persist (e.g., Obama election, Harris election, Asian American educational gains).

(Continued)

TABLE 1.4 ■ Outcomes of the Uneven Roads Framework (Continued)

The Questions/Factors of Racialization			The Outcomes of Racialization
Very Weak to No Barriers	Very Strong Empowerment	Very Strong Empowerment	4. Inconsequential: <i>Race or ethnicity doesn't matter.</i> A racial/ethnic minority has equal citizenship rights and opportunities due to no racial/ethnic ordering or inequality (e.g., current status of Irish or Italian Americans).

concentrated on the so-called Mexican side of towns and cities, and isolated on small, impoverished farms, and they faced dual systems of public education that segregated Mexican children from Anglo children. Many confronted perilous political and labor conditions as a result of ethnic and racial stereotypes that characterized them as illegal aliens, despite many families having several generations of U.S. citizenship. Some citizens faced the threat of mass deportation “back” to Mexico, as occurred in the 1930s. Beginning in the 1940s, immigrants could face difficult and unhealthy labor conditions as part of guest worker programs demanded by large growers. Not until after World War II were Mexican American and other “Spanish-speaking” labor, civic, religious, and civil rights groups able to effectively use their growing community resources and access to the ballot to challenge their relative exclusion from the political process.

- 3. Insufficient: Race or Ethnicity Is Not Enough.** This third level of racialization is one in which race is one factor in a group’s ability to exercise the rights and opportunities of American citizenship, but it is not significant enough to determine the final result. It occurs when a racial/ethnic minority has fundamental citizenship rights and opportunities although inequalities persist. In this instance, the dominant society has allowed the minority community’s road to be flat and broad in many places; some roadblocks exist, but generally a group faces moderate to weak barriers, as noted in Table 1.3. The minority community in question enjoys strong empowerment from the types of laws, actions, and institutions at its disposal; and both timing and place (context) are often on its side. Government coordinates with society and offers moderate to strong laws, actions, and institutions at advantageous times and places. All of this leads to the strong empowerment of the minority community. To reiterate our earlier point, race and racial politics are present but do not determine the ultimate outcomes of a group, which may also be determined by other factors such as class/economics, gender, and religion.

We argue that this is precisely what occurred in the presidential election of Barack Obama and the vice-presidential election of Kamala Harris, although arguably the present 2000s is a period of race that is both decisive and insufficient. During the 2008 primary campaign, Obama had the strong community resources of solid African American and other minority voter support once he demonstrated his superior organizational, rhetorical, and financial prowess. Race presented his campaign with some roadblocks (such as when Obama's former pastor was accused of having made racially charged statements), but there were also opportunities in Obama's ability to use his biracial identity and his understanding of American racial dynamics to demonstrate his leadership abilities, as he did in his "More Perfect Union" speech in Philadelphia that we referred to earlier in the chapter. Clearly, there was also a climate of change within the polity (timing), for the Democratic Party had a unique opportunity to challenge the George W. Bush administration and the Republican Party as a result of policy failures and economic woes. Likewise, Biden selecting Kamala Harris as his running mate for the 2020 presidential election came on the heels of him being pressed by various Black leaders (most especially Black women's groups) to rally women of color as a vital part of the Democratic Party coalition for an election when there was widespread disapproval of how the Trump administration had handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

Race (or racism) was also not sufficient to determine the outcome of the U.S. Senate confirmation of Sonia Sotomayor as the first Latina justice of the U.S. Supreme Court nor Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, despite conservative objections to both of their perceived racial views. But precisely because the exercise of race and ethnicity is undergoing significant changes, some of the old barriers and problems that previously plagued minorities who enjoyed full citizenship and opportunities are likewise undergoing change. With today's climate of racial and political polarization, immigrant and civil rights leaders are worried about current and future retreats from civil rights progress and therefore the real prospects that immigrants as well as racial/ethnic minorities will confront a new, decisive form of racialization.⁵⁸

4. Inconsequential: Race or Ethnicity Does Not Matter. Last, there have been instances in which a racial or ethnic minority has equal citizenship and opportunities due to the absence of racial ordering or inequality. As scholars of American racial politics, we believe that U.S. society does not consider the impact of race often enough, although we do not contend that race can explain every unequal outcome. There are groups (non-Hispanic Whites, in particular) who currently are not racialized in ways that greatly disadvantage them. In fact, we will later discuss how White privilege may still exist in U.S. society. In this sense, the dominant society's decision that a group will have very weak to no barriers on its road to equality may in fact be because the group is or is not part of the dominant society. Specific communities in this case experience very strong empowerment from the types of laws, actions, and institutions at their disposal;

and both timing and place (context) are on their side. The polity agrees with society and offers very strong laws, actions, and institutions at advantageous times and places that lead to the very strong empowerment of the community.

We will further discuss in Chapter 6 how, according to the thinking of historian Stephen Erie, Irish Americans have been fully assimilated into American civic, economic, and political life. The same could be said of Italian Americans, even though for many decades they economically lagged behind Irish Americans. But White American Jews represent a quite complex example of a group with significant empowerment (thus sometimes race and ethnicity are not consequential) that still can be subjected to substantive racialization (race and ethnicity as decisive). At different times they face different levels of racialization. Jews endured extremely violent antisemitism historically in Europe and instances of resurgent violence in the United States, as evident from the “Jews will not replace us” chant of the 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia, White nationalist protesters. Still many White American Jews enjoy civic, economic, and political inclusion in the American Dream. Although antisemitism can still fuel extremist rhetoric and actions in the United States, anthropologist Karen Brodtkin attests to either how in some cases groups can submerge their ethnic identities to assimilate, or how ideas of race—in this case, Whiteness—can expand to include previously excluded groups.⁵⁹



Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Immigrants from around the world stand for the National Anthem during a naturalization ceremony at Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island, in New York City. Throughout U.S. history, race and ethnicity have mattered to varying degrees when it comes to the rights and opportunities that individuals receive.

CONCLUSION: THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Going forward, we will use the framework laid out in this chapter to compare when, why, and how race has had an impact on a racial or ethnic group's status. The book is divided into three parts. Part I, comprised of this chapter, provides an introduction and a discussion of themes as well as theories of race, ethnicity, and racism in American life and politics. It provides the groundwork for understanding how the concepts of race and ethnicity developed in the United States.

Part II, Historical Foundations, presents in Chapters 2 through 6 the histories of the five major macro-categories of racial/ethnic groups in the United States: Native Americans, African Americans, Latinas/Latinos, Asian Americans, and White Americans. This historical focus allows us to assess long-term processes and better identify how current issues may be influenced by the past. The historical coverage stops with the 1960s, which marks a turning point when civil rights and immigration began to change and liberalize, making the roads traveled very different from what they were before.

Understanding the past prepares you for Part III, Policy and Social Issues, in which Chapters 7 through 13 analyze the various ways that race, ethnicity, and racism matter relative to contemporary policy questions, political behavior, and ideology since 1965. Among its topics, Part III considers education and criminal justice because we believe that they are key policies that shape citizenship and opportunity. Chapter 13 also serves as a conclusion that brings together all of these roads and, we hope, leaves you with a framework for evaluating race, ethnicity, and politics in the future and an understanding of why race and ethnicity have and still do matter in U.S. politics. We hope you will learn a lot from your journey!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain how race does or does not matter in U.S. politics with the presidential election of Joe Biden following the presidency of Donald Trump.
2. How has the Anglo-American view of race led to race and ethnicity uniquely being defined in the United States as compared to elsewhere?
3. How did race as a social construct develop differently in North and South America?
4. How do the demographic data from the U.S. Census illustrate racial advantage or disadvantage, and what role might the government have played in each group outcome?
5. Discuss the different degrees to which minority communities have experienced roadblocks to citizenship and equal opportunity because of race and ethnicity.

KEY TERMS

Critical Race Theory
ethnicity

Great Replacement Theory

intersectionality

miscegenation

multicultural view

one-drop rule

pan-ethnic identity

polity

race

racial assimilation

racial essentialism

racial separation

racial superiority (and later the idea of White
supremacy)

racialization

racism

scientific racism

separate but equal doctrine

social construction

Statistical Policy Directive No. 15

transcendent view

White nationalism

White privilege

White supremacy

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