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THE MAKING OF RACE AND STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION IN THE UNITED STATES

Vignette: Racism and Access to Voting

State Representative Zephyr McNabb sits on the Elections Committee in their state legislature, which is debating a state-level Voting Rights Act, which lists several changes to state law that the bill's authors believe will make voting easier in the state. In their testimony in front of the committee, one of their constituents supports the bill because the constituent says the current law is racist; as proof of this, the constituent shows evidence that non-White people vote at lower rates throughout the state than White people. After the end of that testimony, another constituent testifies in opposition to the bill. This second constituent argues that the current law as written does not mention race anywhere and therefore is not racist. Representative McNabb turns to you, their new social work intern, and asks for you to do some research and make a recommendation about how they should vote.

1. What kind of evidence might you gather in order to assess the claims of the different constituent groups?
2. How might you recommend Representative McNabb manage these different conversations with their constituents?
 - a. Might your answer change depending on your own racialized identity? Or Representative McNabb's identity?
3. What role might other aspects of the representative's identity, the constituents' identities, or your identity (class, gender, etc.) play in this vignette?
4. How might your state context influence your advice, including factors such as historical context; discourse around race in local media; state political context; and informal environments, such as workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Examine the concepts of oppression, structural oppression, privilege, and intersectionality
- 2.2 Summarize the construction of race and racism
- 2.3 Explain how past policies contributed to structural racism/oppression
- 2.4 Explain how current state and federal policies contribute to structural racism

In our commitment to transparency, in the introduction to our first edition we shared a number of dilemmas and how we resolved them. Among these, we told our readers,

You might [n]otice that we do not have a chapter that focuses specifically on race, poverty, gender, and sexual orientation that are often linked with oppression and discrimination in discussions of social policy. This is because we believe that these issues are so integral to the policies we discuss so we have woven them into every chapter in the book.

When we wrote the first version of this book, we worried that creating a chapter that included a list of oppressions (and their corresponding privileges) would never be complete. Perhaps more importantly, we were concerned about emphasizing one form of oppression when there are so many, often intersecting, forms of oppression, including heterosexism, ableism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, classism, and sexism, to name some of the most written about and widely experienced in the United States as this book goes to press. However, after reflection and feedback, as well as a shift in our own thinking, we decided that the text was incomplete without a chapter that focuses on the deeply embedded racism and anti-Blackness that is foundational and pervasive in historical and current US policy. We are also well aware that discussions of racism have been under attack across the country, and wish here to take a stand that is consonant with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), as expressed in its Code of Ethics, and many other social work organizations to counter the ongoing attempts to erase or downplay racialized harm. This chapter does not *replace* the integration of many forms of oppression, often intersecting, and privilege that is covered in the rest of the book.

We devote this chapter to race and structural oppression in the United States, a country that has promised equality and justice, but was founded and has thrived on colonization, slavery, conquest, and disregard for the humanity of those seen as “other,” while at the same time, has been a land of opportunity for many. In this chapter, we center racism in its many forms, which are also discussed throughout the book. Many of the key terms, such as oppression, structural oppression, and intersectionality, can also be applied across other axes of privilege and disadvantage, and we hope that you will consider both the unique harms of racism as well as the ways these harms may affect other oppressed populations. While this critique may be seen by some as anti-American, we think that holding the United States accountable to the values that were espoused by our Founding Fathers is patriotic. We love the United States and would like to see it live up to its potential. It is our hope that by educating future social workers about the history and policy challenges in the United States, that together, we can make the United States a better, fairer, place for all. We don’t expect this chapter to cover everything you might need or want to

know about race and racism in the United States, but we have structured it to be a starting point for your understanding of these concepts in policy. Look for intersections of this material with what you are learning in other courses and your own lived experiences.

OPPRESSION

As we discussed in the review of ethics in Chapter 1, the profession of social work has an ethical responsibility to address oppression, even though we often work within systems that reinforce or cause oppression. These ethical responsibilities are addressed in the NASW Code of Ethics (2021), the Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles



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Voters standing in line for the 2016 Democratic Iowa Caucus.

(International Federation of Social Workers, 2018), and the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 2022). **Oppression** is “the domination of a powerful group—politically, economically, socially, and culturally—over subordinate groups” (Garcia et al., 2022, p. 1) and involves the use of social power. The process of oppression results in hierarchies among groups of people. Through the process of oppression, the attributes and contributions of groups considered inferior are devalued, and those of the superior group are elevated (Dominelli, 2017). These distinctions are used as justification for the consequences of oppression.

Iris Young's five faces of oppression suggest that oppression is enacted through exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 1990). These forms of oppression are enacted individually or in combination to reinforce status and limit the access to opportunities or resources by “inferior” groups. In their discussion of historical and intergenerational trauma, which results when communities are affected by ongoing oppression over multiple lifespans, Walker and Devereaux (2021) remind us that trauma such as that experienced by Native American/Indigenous populations in the United States is “intentionally and structurally asserted over time” (p. 1). **Structural oppression** refers to oppression maintained over time and integrated into social norms and customs and enforced by institutions. Oppression is more than individual actions or the results of a specific policy, but consists of a larger system of beliefs and practices that systematically disadvantage some groups and advantage others (Kim, 2021; Young, 1990).

Oppression can be based on an individual's membership (or perceived membership) in a number of groups, including groups based on gender identity, race, ethnicity, immigration status, language spoken, sexual orientation, religion, country of origin, socioeconomic class, age, physical health, mental health, and ability status. In their classic 1966 book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann suggest that the social world is created and interpreted by humans. Many things that we take for granted, such as race, are actually ideas created by, and through, human interaction. This means that many of our ideas about whether an identity exists or what status connects to it are socially constructed. The concept of oppression connects to that of **privilege**, which consists of the advantages that a person might have based on their membership (or perceived membership) in a group that is viewed as having high status (Williams & Franks, 2021). Privilege is generally unearned and unasked, and often invisible to those who hold it. It is often easier for us to see the areas in which we lack privilege than to see the areas in which we hold it, which seem “normal” or “natural” if not thoughtfully examined. Privilege provides a boost to some groups, although certainly not a guarantee of success or an easy life, and rests on structural barriers to those in oppressed groups. Other than those listed, what group membership can you think of that might result in oppression or privilege for some people? How has this concept affected your own life?

Oppression must also be examined through an intersectional lens. **Intersectionality** is a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the ways in which systems of oppression can overlap to create experiences for individuals depending on more than one group in which they are located. Crenshaw defined the term as part of her scholarship on the ways in which Black women's experiences in the world are different from experiences of Black men (who share a racial identity) or those of White women (who share a gender identity). She says, “intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the women, race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (Crenshaw, 2013, p. 8). The concept of intersectionality has been used to examine multiple ways in which identities can overlap, with identities that connect to all of the groups above, and to examine

complex social problems as diverse as “classism, homophobia, Islamophobia, xenophobia, nativism, ageism [and] ableism” (Carbado, 2019, p. 203).

Oppression leads to **structural inequality**, which refers to inequalities that are perpetuated and maintained by institutions and systems (Williams & Franks, 2021). The policy process is often one tool to create and maintain structural inequality and structural oppression.

Responding to Oppression

Social workers may respond to oppressive systems by *accepting* the status quo, internalizing the norms and values about different groups that are presented to them. They may choose to *accommodate* the existing system by doing their best to maximize the best compromises they can within the systems, without changing those systems. Or they may *reject* the current systems and *resist*, working to challenge and change those systems (Dominelli, 2017). Anti-oppressive social work practice follows the latter path. It works to address injustice, deconstruct oppression, and create new systems, policies, institutions, and relationships based on equality (Dominelli, 2017).

In the remainder of this chapter, we will take a deep dive into the construction of race and racism in the United States. Throughout the book, we will continue to highlight ways in which policies and the policymaking process create and reinforce structural oppression for these and other groups, and ways in which social workers can work at all levels of social work practice in an anti-oppressive approach. While it might sound intimidating to change these systems, we want you to remember that there is a community of social workers and other advocates who are on this path with you. We also want to acknowledge that conversations about racism and other forms of oppression are challenging for everyone, including for social workers. Of course, as social workers, we tackle many difficult topics. We recommend checking in with yourself, your professor, and with trusted colleagues as you work through the implications of these ideas.

REFLECTION: WELFARE “REFORM”

Read the debate from the Senate floor between Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, Phil Gramm of Texas, Don Nickles of Oklahoma, and Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, regarding the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, sometimes referred to as “welfare reform.” The debates around this legislation (also discussed in Chapter 1) used both coded and explicit messages that implied that recipients of public benefits were overwhelmingly Black. Many speculated that invoking racist images were key to the success of punitive measures and a reduction in benefits (Schram, 2003).

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY)

“Today, I continue to hope for the best, even if I fear the worst. As I have stated on this floor many times, this legislation does not reform aid to families with dependent children; it simply abolishes it. It terminates the basic Federal commitment of support for dependent children in hopes of altering the behavior of their mothers. We are putting those children at risk with absolutely no evidence that this radical idea has even the slightest chance of success. In our haste to enact this bill—any bill—before the November elections, we have chosen to ignore what little we do know about the subject of poverty. . . .

According to the Urban Institute, 3,500,000 children will be dropped from the rolls in 2001. By 2005, 4,896,000 children will be cut off. The Urban Institute has also estimated, in a report released just last Friday, July 26, that this bill will cause 2.6 million persons to fall below the poverty line; 1.1 million of those impoverished will be children. To say nothing of

those persons already living in poverty. They will be pushed even further below the poverty line. The average loss in income for families already below the poverty line will be \$1,040 per year. . . .

For the best part of two years now, I have pointed out that the principal, and most principled, opponents of this legislation were conservative social scientists who for years have argued against liberal nostrums for changing society with the argument that no one knows enough to mechanistically change society. Typically liberals think otherwise, to the extent that liberals can be said to think at all. The current batch is in the White House, now busily assuring us they were against this all along, are simply lying, albeit they probably don't know they are lying. They have only the flimsiest grasp of social reality, thinking all things doable and equally undoable. As, for example, the horror of this legislation" (142 Cong. Rec. S9328–S9329, 1996).

Sen. Phil Gramm (R-TX)

"We are going to pass here in the Senate tonight a welfare reform bill that has the promise of dramatically changing a system which has failed in America. And let me begin by talking about the failure. In the last 30 years, we have spent \$5.2 trillion on welfare programs; programs where we were trying to help poor people. . . .

No society in history has ever invested more money trying to help needy people than the United States of America has invested. Yet, what has been the result of all those good intentions? What has been the result of that investment? The result of that investment, 30 years later, is that we have as many poor people today as we had 30 years ago. They are poorer today, they are more dependent on the government today, and by any definition of quality of life, fulfillment, or happiness, people are worse off today than they were when we started the current welfare system.

When we started the War on Poverty in the mid-1960s, two-parent families were the norm in poor families in America. Today two-parent families are the exception. Since 1965, the illegitimacy rate has tripled. . . . Our current welfare program has failed. It has driven fathers out of the household. It has made mothers dependent. It has taken away people's dignity. It has bred child abuse and neglect and filled the streets of our cities with crime. And we're here today to change it.

Let me outline what our program does. I think if each of us looks back to a period where our ancestors first came to America, or back to a time when those who have gone before us found themselves poor, we are going to find that there are two things that get individuals and that get nations out of poverty. Those two things are work and family. And I think it is instructive to note that those are the two things that we have never applied to the current welfare program of the United States of America.

The bill before us asks people to work. It says that abled-bodied men and women will be required to work in order to receive benefits. It sets a time limit so that people cannot make welfare a way of life. It seeks to change the incentives within the welfare system. And I believe the time has come to change those incentives within the welfare system.

So, what we have done in adopting this bill is make some very simple changes. Number one, we have said that unless you are disabled, welfare is not a permanent program. It is a temporary program. We are going to help you for up to five years. We're going to train you. But at the end of five years, you are going to have to have to work" (142 Cong. Rec. S9352–S9353, 1996).

Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK)

"When candidate Bill Clinton made the statement, "We need to end welfare as we know it," I applauded. I thought he was exactly right. Unfortunately, I think welfare had become a way of life for far too many families. Maybe that was their fault, maybe it was Congress's fault. I think most of the welfare programs that we've had have been well-intentioned, but many of which have had very suspect results.

In addressing the issue of welfare, Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 4, 1935 said that: “The lessons of history, confirmed by the evidence immediately before me, show conclusively that continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration of fundamentally destructive to national fiber. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of human spirit. It is inimical to the dictates of sound policy. It is a violation of the traditions of America.”

That was in his second annual message to the country. He was right. Maybe he was a little bit prophetic because if you look what’s happened in our welfare system, we now have, under the Federal Government 334 Federally controlled welfare programs.

The Federal Government determines who’s eligible, for how long, for how much they will receive. We have 156 job-training programs tacked on top of each other, all with good intentions but a lot with results that are not very desirable. Results that in many cases have not helped a lot of the intended beneficiaries and certainly have not helped taxpayers. . . .

Is the bill perfect? No. But it is a good, giant step in the right direction. I’m pleased that the President will sign it.” (142 Cong. Rec. S9355–S9356, 1996).

Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN)

“[T]he evidence is irrefutable and irreducible: This legislation, once enacted into law will create more poverty and hunger among children in America. That is not reform.

. . . [W]e have here about \$28 billion of cuts in nutrition assistance. I believe when the President spoke yesterday he was trying to say that does not have anything to do with reform, and he intends to fix that next Congress. But I worry about what will happen now. . . . 70 percent of the citizens that will be affected by these cuts in food nutrition programs are families with children, 50 percent of the families have income under \$6,300 a year. Our incomes are \$130,000 a year.

[T]here will be a \$3 billion cut over the next six years in food assistance, nutrition assistance, even for families who pay over 50 percent of their monthly income for housing costs. So now we put families in our country—poor families, poor children—in the situation of “eat or heat,” but they do not get both. At the same time, my colleagues keep wanting to cut low-income energy assistance programs. This is goodness? This is goodness?” (142 Cong. Rec. S9333, 1996).

1. Was race explicitly mentioned in this policy discussion?
 - a. If so, by whom and what did they say?
2. Were there any places in this policy discussion that you understood that race was implicitly being discussed?
 - a. If so, by whom and what did they say?
3. Given this debate and what you know about welfare, what role do you think race played in the overall discussion?
4. Why do you think race is so hard to talk about within policy discussions?

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE AND RACISM

Before we talk about race and racism, let’s spend a few minutes examining ideas about race and understanding how these concepts came to be. In this section, we will discuss the definitions and origins of race and racism, discuss the related topic of ethnicity, and look at the ways in which the US Census and theory intersect with race. We will then briefly examine the history of oppression against several groups that have been defined as non-White races within the United States, in preparation for discussion of the different ways in which policies examine and affect these groups later in the book.

Definitions and Origins of Race and Racism

Race is a social construct used to describe physical and sometimes behavioral and cultural characteristics. While physical characteristics are a visible marker of race, our experience of race often connects to shared social status or the way in which society responds to shared physical or perceived social characteristics (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008). As mentioned above, race is an idea created by, and through, human interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In other words, though the physical characteristics that define race do not have any biological meaning, the social meaning that has been attached to them are significant (James, 2008). Scholars in multiple fields, including evolutionary biology, anthropology, and psychology, argue that distinctions that are perceived as racial (meaning caused by race) are on closer examination, seen to be “not genetically discrete . . . reliably measured . . . [or] scientifically meaningful” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 16). Instead, the differences between people that are perceived as racial differences are in fact caused by “social attitudes and institutions that perpetuate the idea of race” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 23). It is these social attitudes that often lead to and reproduce racism. **Racism** is a concept that is generally understood to include discrimination based on perceived or ascribed racialized identities, as well as a stressor that contributes to disparities in racial and ethnic groups’ outcomes in areas such as mental and physical health (Brondolo et al., 2009).

Medical researchers have demonstrated that the DNA of people who are perceived as belonging to different racial groups is 99.9 percent the same. There are very few (if any) genetic differences between people of different racial groups (Angier, 2000). Some diseases are more prevalent in specific racial groups, such as the higher incidence of sickle cell anemia in Black individuals, but many scientists argue that these correlations might be better studied by looking at geographic origin rather than race (Gannon, 2016). Yet despite this similarity at a genetic level, when we examine outcomes for people by race in the United States, we find differences. Structural racism provides an explanation for these differences.

Beliefs about race can be traced back to the Crusades (around 1096). According to noted historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014), there was no mention of race prior to that time. During the Crusades, Jews and Muslims who were forced with violence to convert to Christianity and those with parents who were not Christian remained under suspicion because their bloodline was not “clean.” Spanish people who were Christians prior to the Crusades were seen to have had a superior status than the newer Christians. Arguably, this meant that lower and higher class Christian Spanish people could unite against those with “less clean” blood, which neutralized the tensions between the wealthier classes who owned land and the peasants (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). This concept of race has continued to be used to bond together people from different social and economic classes in an effort to exclude and dominate those who are deemed to be of different racial groups, thereby undermining economic affiliations (e.g., class-based struggle).

Racism has been used by colonizers, including those who conquered and settled what we now call the United States, to forcibly take land from those who were already living there and to enforce structural inequality over Indigenous people. It has also been used in the United States to keep White and Black people living in poverty from uniting against those who controlled power and resources. According to Mary and Thomas Edsall (1991), “race was used, between 1880 and 1964, by the planter-textile-banking elite of the South to rupture class solidarity at the bottom of the income ladder” (p. 5). Racialization enabled those in power to maintain their wealth and status and to exploit and oppress other groups. Indentured servants, by associating with Whiteness, could feel that they were superior to Black people of any standing. They were encouraged—through the centering of racialized identity—to ally with White people in power,

despite their economic standing, rather than to unite with Black people who shared their economic struggle and powerlessness.

Ethnicity refers to a social identity “often assumed to correspond to a racial group, but to expand beyond more than the group’s assumed external characteristics of physical appearance” (Samuels, 2014, p. 3). Ethnicity includes identity markers that are learned through family and social networks. Markers of ethnicity might include “language, food, values, religion, dress, and customs” (Samuels, 2014, p. 3). Samuels notes that every person has ethnic heritages, but not everyone identifies with those ethnic heritages. The terms we use to identify ourselves and others are often contested. They can also change over time. The number of people who have heritages from multiple races or identify with multiple ethnicities is also significant, and can add to the complexity of this situation (Samuels, 2014). Sometimes terms are ascribed by members of a dominant group about others and sometimes terms come from within the groups themselves organically or through processes of cooptation and resistance. This means that we need to be as intentional and transparent and remain as aware as we can about the evolving social context and particular meanings, especially when we consider the terms of groups whose identities have been marginalized, such as racialized minorities. As a starting point, we must be open to how people prefer to self-identity, particularly if they are members of different identity groups than the ones we belong to. It is important to listen to others and be open to feedback. We must also acknowledge that any group is heterogenous, and that within and between groups, or over time, the terminology that is used to describe a group or multiple groups will change. The term, **people of color**, or the acronym **POC**, has been used since the sixteenth century and has generally referred to people who have skin that appears “not White” (Aceves, 2022). Today, in the United States, it is used to refer to “a broad set of individuals from distinct racial and ethnic groups who are not members of the white community” (Aceves, 2022, p. 84). The term’s use is challenging both because that group includes a wide variety of people who have likely had many different experiences, and because the definition of “White” is “also neither monolithic nor static” (p. 84). A related term, **Black and Brown people**, is often used to describe shared experiences among people who are not considered White. These terms have also been criticized for homogenizing or failing to recognize different experiences of racialization and discrimination. A related term that has been in use since 2013 is **BIPOC**, which stands for Black and Indigenous people of color. Some use it to be inclusive of the experiences of all people of color while ensuring that Black and Indigenous people are not erased. Others argue that it is a product of colonialism to assume all people who are not identified as White can be lumped into one group (Garcia, 2020).

Advocates recommend that we be specific about the group of people we mean, and use the general terms when we need to be more inclusive. The term **Black** or, when referring to people of African ancestry from the United States, the term **African American** may be preferred by some or used interchangeably. The racialized term **White** has also been contested, and who is deemed to fall within or outside of it has changed over time (Aceves, 2022). Ignatiev was one of the first scholars to point out the evolving US expansion of the category of White to include Irish and Jewish immigrants as a concession in order to separate working class interests through creating racialized categories and stoking racial divisions and hatred (Kang, 2019; Ignatiev, 1995). The common failure to include White as a racialized category has been challenged. Academic, media, and activist sources have revealed this omission as evidence that Whiteness is assumed to be a normative or default category to which all other racialized categories are compared (Bazon, 2018; Denby, 2016; Havey, 2021). This awakening is both a sign that White Americans are being called to task, as well as a product of reflection and a desire to challenge White privilege, which manifests for example by networking opportunities provided by predominantly White institutions and being given the

benefit of the doubt. Acknowledgment and discussion of Whiteness also distributes the burden of challenging racialized discrimination to all groups rather than placing it squarely on racialized communities that have long shouldered this imposed burden.

It is often not clear what is meant by race. Adolf Hitler, known to be obsessed by racialized categories, considered Jewish people a race even though many might consider Jews an ethnic, religious, and/or cultural group. Hitler also believed that there was such a thing as an Aryan race that was genetically superior to other “races” such as Jews and Roma, as well as people with disabilities (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). Although none of these racialized categories had any basis in science, Hitler and his Third Reich’s racial categorization had very real consequences. Such categorization has historically been used to justify atrocities such as the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide (Genocide Studies Program, 2023), all of which were based in socially constructed racialized identities.

Counting the Population: The US Census, Race, and Ethnicity

The **US Census** is an attempt to completely count the population of the United States and is conducted periodically by the federal Census Bureau. While the Census Bureau collects data in many different ways, the decennial US Census happens every ten years and is used to determine political power (such as how many representatives a state gets in Congress) and to decide how to distribute hundreds of billions of dollars of federal funding among local communities (US Census Bureau, 2022b). This process includes gathering social and economic data and has been used as a tool to define race within the United States. Viewing Census data highlights the ways in which social context influences the definition of a person’s race. For example, in the 1870 Census, people who had one White and one Indian parent were labeled as “White” if they lived with White people in a majority White community, or “Indian” if they lived among mostly Indians in an Indian community (Rodriguez, 2000). Therefore, a person’s perceived race was based as much on the community in which they lived as on their parentage. This Census included the first category for people who were Chinese, and shortly preceded the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as the federal government curtailed immigration from China among massive anti-Chinese sentiment (Anderson & Fienberg, 1999; US Department of State, n.d.).

The US Constitution included stipulations that enslaved persons would be counted for purposes of political representation, but only be counted as three-fifths of a person. Native Americans who renounced tribal rule were counted as Indian but those who maintained their tribal identity went uncounted (Anderson & Fienberg, 1999). Based on data from the 1910 Census, authors HG Wells and Frank Julian Warne warned about “an invasion of Slavonic, Latin, Italian and Jewish races” (Roediger, 2018, p. 7). At the same time, the American Jewish Congress successfully lobbied to keep inter-European races (one that would identify all Europeans as one race) out of the 1910 Census. This was done in large part because wealthy German Jewish people did not want to be counted with newer, poorer arrivals from Russia and Eastern Europe (Roediger, 2018). In the 1920s, Jewish scholars began to define themselves as White and began using the term *ethnic* to refer to culture and linguistic differences. Gradually, White ethnic groups used the term *ethnicity* to define their differences in contrast to the differences associated with race and to ensure that they were not categorized with Black and Latinx people (Brodkin, 1998). The 2000 Census allowed people to self-identify rather than selecting from a prechosen list of identities for the first time (James, 2008), and also allowed people to choose more than one race (Samuels, 2014). In an ironic twist, in Los Angeles, politicians encouraged community members to identify themselves as only Black, rather than identifying as multiracial, because of a belief that there was strength in numbers and politicians would be more likely to respond to the

concerns of Black people if they had Census numbers to identify them as a significant percentage of the population (James, 2008).

These are a few examples of the ways that changing views of racial and ethnic groups have been expressed through the language of the Census or have used Census data in order to justify oppression or exclusion. Censuses have been used for many purposes, including taxation, military conscription, a way to keep colonized peoples under control, mapping for electoral districts, and allocation of government benefits (Population Reference Bureau, n.d.). In this book, look for examples of attempts to under/overcount particular populations for purposes of resource allocation and calculation of voting districts, as well as the impact of the erasure of categories on marginalized populations. For example, consider the fight over inclusion of sexuality and gender orientation categories in the survey of older adults that we discuss in Chapter 12.

7. What is this person's race?
 Mark one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

White – Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc. ↴

Black or African Am. – Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc. ↴

American Indian or Alaska Native – Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc. ↴

Chinese Vietnamese Native Hawaiian
 Filipino Korean Samoan
 Asian Indian Japanese Chamorro
 Other Asian – Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc. ↴ Other Pacific Islander – Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc. ↴

Some other race – Print race or origin. ↴

2020 US Census Race Question

US Census Bureau. (2021, August 3). Improvements to the 2020 Census Race and Hispanic Origin Question Designs, Data Processing, and Coding Procedures. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2021/08/improvements-to-2020-census-race-hispanic-origin-question-designs.html>

US HISTORY, RACE, ETHNICITY, RACISM, AND OPPRESSION

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the social work profession must be understood in the context of our shared history. In our brief history chapter, we incorporated some examples of structural racism that are a part of the major policy events in US history. In this chapter, we focus on the events

that have helped to shape structural racism in the United States. We will examine key historical events that have affected Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Black and African Americans, Asian Americans, Muslim Americans, and immigrants in general. All of these different types of discrimination are based on socially constructed ideas of race and connect to policies and policy outcomes. As social workers, it is important for us to understand how inequality was created in the United States and why it continues so that we can work to challenge it. While it is impossible to cover every important event in this short chapter, we hope the description here gives you a sense of the ways in which oppression and discrimination based on race and ethnicity have played out within US history.

Indigenous Populations

In 2020, the US Census identified 3.7 million people as American Indian or Alaska Native from 574 distinct tribes (US Census Bureau, 2022a). As with many other groups of people, there are various terms that can be used to describe the groups that are Indigenous to the land that is now considered the United States, and you will likely find a diversity of opinions, and some regional differences, regarding what terms are preferred. The term *American Indian* is generally used by the federal government and in the Southwest, *Native American* is common in the Northeast, and *First Nations* is used in Canada and gaining popularity in the United States (Weaver, 2021). Throughout this chapter and book, when we are referring to an individual or members of a particular tribe, we use that tribal affiliation as a descriptor (Native American Journalists Association, n.d.; Weaver, 2021). When referring to members of multiple tribes, we will use the terms *Indigenous*, *Native American*, and *American Indian*.

Native American scholars describe the United States as a nation built on genocidal settler colonialism noting that the colonial period “entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removal of Indigenous Americans from their ancestral territories, and removals of Indigenous children to military like boarding school” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 9).

In the 1700s, the land that is now the United States was populated by around 150 million Indigenous people (Europe at the time had fifty million). The many nations here had infrastructure, including towns and complex trade routes. Many of the roads in use today are based on the routes that the Native populations had used (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Colonization of Indigenous peoples, starting in New England and then the West, previewed the use of slavery that would engulf Africans and persevere in the United States (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Reséndez, 2016). Through enslavement, brutality, overwork, and communicable diseases, the Native population shrank considerably over the decades following European colonization. By the time smallpox arrived about twenty years later, the Native population was particularly weak and vulnerable and many more members of Native communities died (Reséndez, 2016). The Spanish royals attempted to end slavery over the Native populations. However, other laws were passed that created some de facto slavery, including debt peonage, vagrancy laws, and convict leasing (Reséndez, 2016). In the 1840s, the Indian agent for New Mexico noted that



Memorial marking the one-year anniversary of the discovery of 215 Indigenous children buried at Kamloops Indian Residential School in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Image/Alamy Stock Photo

Native slaves were not called slaves but rather “peons,” which he said was just another word for slaves. A California settler in the mid-1800s wrote about the wonders of California and Oregon but noted that “the only disquieting aspects of California was that the local Indians ‘were in a state of absolute vassalage, even more degrading and more oppressive than that of the slaves in our south’” (Reséndez, 2016, p. 251).

Native Americans continued to be targets of discrimination and attempted genocide throughout the next two centuries. In 1819, the federal government provided \$10,000 to the War Department to educate Native Americans through a law called the “Civilization Fund Act” (Barnhardt, 2001). This money went to churches, primarily Catholic, to create schools for Native populations, which was formalized in a contract school system with Catholic groups in 1869 (Webb, 2009). While the Indian Appropriations Act in 1896 called for the end of public funding for religious schools for Native children, seventy-three are currently open, fifteen as boarding schools (National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, 2020). Native boarding schools worked to eliminate Native languages and cultures. Children were forcibly removed from their parents, forced to speak only English at school, to do hard labor, subjected to harsh physical punishments, physically and sexually abused, and often meagerly fed leaving them hungry and sick.

In Utah Territory, primarily Mormon legislators objected to the way that many Native women and children were treated and determined the need to convert or “civilize” Native populations. The Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners in 1852 allowed White residents to purchase (or “adopt”) Native Americans to be indentured for up to twenty years. Victims of this law who were between seven and sixteen years of age were required to be given three months of schooling per year and clothing, but otherwise were treated as slaves. In the following fifty years, the Native population of Utah shrank from 20,000 to 2,623 due to the results of this slavery, as well as other biological and manmade factors (Reséndez, 2016).

In the 1800s, the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory from the French, which included land inhabited by thousands of Indigenous people from dozens of tribes (National Archives, 2022). As more White settlers desired to move west, conflict with members of tribes increased and Native Americans were forced to move to reservations. One example are the Osage people, who were forced to sign a treaty moving them from a large territory in Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma to Kansas. The federal government then pressured the Osage to sell that land in the late 1800s and move to rocky land in Oklahoma, which they purchased for seventy cents an acre. In the 1890s, in an effort to assimilate Native populations, the federal government was forcing tribes to divide tribal property into allotments and then allowing White people to try to claim pieces of the property that were “uninhabited.” It was harder for the federal government to do this to the Osage because they had purchased their land and had not received it in a treaty (most of which were ultimately not respected). Finally, however, the pressure became too great, and in 1906, the chief, James Bigheart, negotiated with federal authorities to ensure that only tribal members would receive land allotments and that settlers would not be able to claim any of the Osage lands as they had when the Cherokee lands were divided. Also, knowing that there was oil under the land, he also added a provision that all mineral rights were reserved for the Osage. As a result, the Osage became very wealthy when oil mining began. Unfortunately, the local government basically claimed that because they were Native, they needed guardians to oversee their money. This led to a tremendous amount of theft, exploitation, and the murder of hundreds of Osage community members between 1917 and 1935. Local governments and respected businesspeople in Osage County stole millions of dollars and were actively involved in murders, many of which occurred by poisoning, and then corrupt doctors and coroners were

hired to present false results or make evidence disappear. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was brought in to help solve the murders, and did solve a few but was complicit in hiding evidence of others. Many were never investigated. In 2000, the Osage sued the federal government for mismanaging their oil money and ultimately, the federal government settled for \$380 million dollars in 2011 (Grann, 2017).

The Osage's poor treatment at the hand of the US federal government is one of many stories. In 1890, the Wounded Knee Massacre saw the murder of hundreds of Lakota men, women, and children as the US Army attempted to quell a religious movement called the Ghost Dance movement within Plains Indian communities. An estimated 300 Lakota people died and were buried in a mass grave. The army awarded its highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, to twenty of the soldiers who contributed to the massacre (Blakemore, 2021).

It is estimated that before contact with European colonizers, there were 2.5 million Indigenous people from 300 tribes in what is now the United States. By 1890, the year of Wounded Knee, approximately 250,000 Native Americans lived here (Fleming, 1992). In 1949, the Hoover administration issued a report on the state of Indian Affairs, noting the low life expectancy and poverty of the Native population (average life expectancy was forty-four as compared to seventy for White people at the time) (Hoover Commission on Indian Affairs, 1949). This led to several new laws. In 1953, Public Law 280 authorized states to have criminal and civil jurisdiction over Native lands unless, of course, those lands were stolen by the federal government. Prior to that time, Native tribes had control over law on the reservations. According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), this law had several negative impacts on tribes including (1) violating tribal sovereignty, (2) denying federal funding for tribal law enforcement, and (3) allowing states sovereignty over minor crimes that had previously been under control of the tribes (NIJ, 2008).

In 1956, ostensibly in an effort to improve the lives of Native Americans, the Indian Relocation Act was passed. Native families were given a few hundred dollars and a one-way ticket to a city without any additional support or skills training. Many Native practices were also deemed to be illegal once tribal members left their reservations. This was part of a larger effort to destroy Native culture (Nesterak, 2019). As a result of this Act, between 1953 and 1964, 1.3 million acres of Native land were removed from trust and turned into private property, 750,000 Native Americans were relocated to cities, and many of the treaty responsibilities for those who remained on the reservation, including access to health care and education, were ended. The legal recognition of more than one hundred tribes was also ended (Estes et al., 2021).

Alaska Natives

While there is much overlap between the history of Alaska Natives and mainland Native Americans, the unique “historical, political, cultural, economic, and geographical context of Alaska are distinct enough from other states” (Barnhardt, 2001, p. 2) that it is important to consider the experience of Alaska Natives as a separate entity, one which includes diverse members of twenty different Alaska Native groups (including Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut), speaking twenty distinct languages (Barnhardt, 2001). Alaska is the size of one-third of the rest of the United States, with a low population density and significant geographic isolation from the continental United States. The ownership of the land that is now Alaska was transferred from Russia to the United States in 1867.

The US federal government's treatment of Alaska Natives was often influenced by whether a person was considered to belong to an “uncivilized tribe.” Although Alaska was not a part of the United States when most treaties were negotiated between tribes and the US government (more

than four hundred were negotiated between 1778 and 1871), the same attitudes and beliefs about interactions with Indigenous people shaped the relationship between the federal government and Alaska. Some acts like the 1819 Civilization Fund Act were used as justification to work to “civilize” Alaska Natives, primarily with a Christian religious focus. Starting in 1905, a dual system of education was created, where the federal Bureau of Education (within the Department of the Interior) ran schools for Alaska Native children, and the Territory of Alaska and its towns operated schools for White children and children of mixed blood leading a “civilized life.” These separate schools (both day schools and boarding schools) were run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, hosting significant numbers of Alaska Native children, until 1986.

It wasn’t until 1932 that Alaska Natives were given a similar category to other Native Americans in regard to the responsibilities of the federal government toward them. The federal government was able to control “nearly all aspects of American Indian life, including education, religion, medicine, law, hunting and fishing, as well as land acquisition and use” (Barnhardt, 2001, p. 9) and held responsibility for the social welfare of rural Native people, provided education and medical services, introduced reindeer herding, and maintained an orphanage.

Alaska was recognized as a state in 1959. Since then, laws such as the 1980 Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act were designed to protect the ability of rural Alaskans to practice a subsistence lifestyle as their communities had traditionally done, but these laws were ignored as part of a long tradition of broken treaties between Native Americans and the US government (Barnhardt, 2001). Differences between various groups within Native Alaskans or between Native Alaskans and other Native Americans were assumed to be unimportant in their treatment and in policymaking.

Native Hawaiians

Today, there are 690,000 people who identify as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHPI) in the US Census, and an additional 900,000 who identify as NHPI in combination with another race (Monte & Shin, 2022). Hawaii was settled by sailors and rowers from Polynesia around the twelfth or thirteenth century AD, making it the last major land area to be settled, and irrigation systems and terracing developed by those settlers are still in use in today’s taro fields (La Croix, 2019). These communities brought significant cultural transfer from Polynesia but were generally isolated from the rest of the world for 250 to 400 years. This isolation resulted in power to a few chiefs and a group called the *ali’i* (about 1 percent of the population) with high rank and privilege and much larger groups of *kamaka maoli* with low status (La Croix, 2019), and a political structure that included large states and a state religion. Estimates of the population at the time colonization started in 1778 range from one hundred thousand to one million (Hope & Hope, 2003).

Western colonization started with the arrival of Captain James Cook from Great Britain. The interaction with the outside world led in the short run to significant centralization and the unification of several Hawaiian states under King Kamehameha, which was also marked by a redistribution of lands to favor the *ali’i* (La Croix, 2019). Cook and subsequent visitors introduced international trade, including crops such as sugar and pineapple instead of traditional crops like taro and sweet potatoes. Sugar interests were often owned by foreigners or White residents of Hawaii with ties to the United States. The introduction of infectious diseases contributed to “the virtual obliteration of the Hawaiian cosmology, customs, beliefs, land occupation, spirituality, medicine, population, values, social infrastructure, language, and lifestyle” (Hope & Hope, 2003, p. 1). The death rate from new diseases, for which there was no existing immunity, was significant, contributing to a 60 percent to 70 percent decline in population by 1832 (La Croix, 2019). The population decline resulted in legislation that allowed sugar plantation

owners to bring in laborers to work at fixed wages, mostly from China, on short contracts. Anti-Chinese sentiment followed, and an inflow of Japanese workers took their place—eighty thousand on three-year contracts by 1900.

The state religion was abolished and within a few months, Protestant missionaries arriving from New England established churches; created an alphabet for the Hawaiian language, which they used to print religious and secular materials; founded religious schools where they taught this new written language; began to suppress traditional Hawaiian religious and cultural practices; and developed power within the government. Their influence helped to spread Western ideas about political representation, land and property ownership, and the rule of law. King Kalakaua and Queen Lili'uokalani in the 1870s revived cultural traditions. The 1893 overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani was followed by restrictions by the US government on the use of the Hawaiian language and a decrease in cultural activity and language use, which lasted until after World War II (La Croix, 2019). Forces within the United States who desired the annexation of Hawaii led to the Bayonet Rebellion, which coerced changes to the Hawaii Constitution in 1887; the McKinley Tariff in 1890, which dropped the sugar tariff and pushed the Hawaiian sugar market into depression; and the overthrow of the monarchy in 1893 as Queen Lili'uokalani worked to restore the Constitution and limit the influence of foreigners. The “Committee of Safety,” made up of a group of foreigners and assisted by the US minister to Hawaii and US Marines staged a coup and created an autocratic “Republic of Hawaii” from 1893 to 1898 headed by Sanford B. Dole, cousin to the founder of Dole Plantation. Despite the opposition of Hawaiians and two rejections by the US Senate, annexation of Hawaii to the United States was approved by Congress in 1898, which allowed the US president to appoint a territorial governor and Supreme Court justices to rule Hawaii, and allowed Congress to veto legislation passed in Hawaii and pass laws that applied to Hawaii but not the rest of the United States. Over the next sixty years, this setup ensured that power was held within Hawaii by the US military, the “Big Five” sugar corporations, Native Hawaiian and White voters, and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. US law did not allow immigrants from Asia to be US citizens, and therefore they were not allowed to vote (La Croix, 2019).

The 1941 Pearl Harbor attack during World War II ushered in a time of military control and martial law, including internment of Japanese Americans in Hawaii. Hawaiian statehood followed Alaska later in 1959 and increased the power of Hawaii's people, who still struggle with the aftermath of colonialism, particularly in relation to the ownership of lands by the federal government that had been the property of Native Hawaiians. These lands are a symbol for many Hawaiians of their losses from colonialism (La Croix, 2019).

The long-term impact of colonization on Hawaii continues to unfold. Water from defunct sugar farms is now diverted to luxury resorts, timeshares, short-term condominium rentals, and golf courses, which leaves Native Hawaiians with little water (Wang, 2023). In a recent victory, Indigenous taro farmers won a landmark water rights case that allowed farmers to return to ancestral lands to grow taro. The damage caused by 2023 wildfires that decimated Lahaina and the



Queen Lili'uokalani in 1917.

Niday Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

island of Maui left more than 100 dead and thousands more without homes, education, or employment. The magnitude of the damage was a result of the erosion of natural projections by unscrupulous and extractive pineapple farming without knowledge of and regard for the land and climate that was home to an Indigenous community that preserved Hawaiian heritage (Wang, 2023).

INTERSECTIONALITY: RACE AND AGE

TREATMENT OF NATIVE AMERICAN, ALASKA NATIVE, AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN

In 2021, international news covered the discovery of the bodies of 200 children who had been counted as missing. These children from the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation had been buried on the grounds of a former residential school in Canada (Zabriskie, 2023). As all of Canada wrestled with these findings, US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland addressed the need to find out whether similar atrocities had occurred in the United States. In her request to Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland to produce a report documenting the conditions in US boarding schools, Haaland acknowledged, "[o]ver the course of the [Indian boarding school] Program, thousands of Indigenous children were removed from their homes and placed in Federal boarding schools across the country. Many who survived the ordeal returned home changed in unimaginable ways, and their experiences still resonate across the generations" (Haaland, 2021, p. 3).

In response to this request, Newland (2022) reported that between 1819 and 1969, the United States operated or supported 408 boarding schools for Indigenous children. These included twenty-one schools in Alaska, seven schools in Hawaii, and thirty-seven in other states and territories (Newland, 2022). Newland stated,

This report confirms that the United States directly targeted American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children in the pursuit of a policy of cultural assimilation that coincided with Indian territorial dispossession. It identifies the Federal Indian boarding schools that were used as a means for these ends, along with at least 53 burial sites for children across this system with more site discoveries and data expected as we continue our research. (p. 3)

Black and African Americans

In 2021, forty million US citizens (about 12 percent) identified as Black or African American, the third largest group in the United States after White and Hispanic/Latino (Office of Minority Health, 2023). Prior to the Civil War, which ended in 1865, in the United States it was legal to enslave Native Americans and Blacks. As most people know, Africans were forcibly removed from Africa, taken on dangerous transatlantic voyages to the United States, and subjugated to the power of White people. In addition to labor farming in the South, such as cotton picking, enslaved people were also forced to cook, watch children, and perform many other manual tasks both in the South and across the country. They were also forced to labor, though not to the same extent as in the South, in Northern and Western states. In the West, many of those who were enslaved were Native Americans who were captured and forced into slavery. Because there were slave markets in the South and the sale and purchase of enslaved people was taxed, the number of Black people who were enslaved was well documented. Following the Civil War, there were many laws created by states that disadvantaged Black communities. For example, in 1934 the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) restricted places where the government could grant

loans to homebuyers, a process called “redlining” that is discussed more in Chapter 16. This process targeted neighborhoods with large Black and immigrant populations, which made it virtually impossible for African Americans to get housing loans from banks to purchase homes. This structural barrier has historically prevented targeted communities, including Black Americans, Native Americans, and some immigrant communities, from building equity in their homes to gain wealth, move up in socioeconomic class, and pass resources on to the next generation.

As you have gathered from this chapter and our framing from the outset, the United States has a long history of biased and discriminatory policies that have adversely affected nearly all racial and ethnic minorities. Critics of more generalized categories challenge the homogenization of experiences of different racialized groups through the use of terms like *people of color* (Sexton, 2010). Scholars propose adoption of anti-Blackness to call out fear of Black bodies that are embedded into all areas of policy and public life and that are a driving force for segregation in all its forms (Dumas, 2016). This singular and pointed form of discrimination as worthy of emphasis is underscored by the concept of **anti-Blackness**. Dr. kihna miraya ross (2020), in a protest following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police, described the meaning and rationale for the term *anti-Blackness* in the context of the twenty-first-century catalog of continued violence and dehumanization in the United States:

To be clear, “racism” isn’t a meaningless term. But it’s a catch-all that can encapsulate anything from black people being denied fair access to mortgage loans, to Asian students being burdened with a “model minority” label. It’s not specific.

Many Americans, awakened by watching footage of Derek Chauvin killing George Floyd by kneeling on his neck, are grappling with why we live in a world in which black death loops in a tragic screenplay, scored with the wails of childless mothers and the entitled indifference of our murderers. And an understanding of anti-blackness is the only place to start.

Anti-blackness is one way some black scholars have articulated what it means to be marked as black in an anti-black world. It’s more than just “racism against black people.” That oversimplifies and defangs it. It’s a theoretical framework that illuminates society’s inability to recognize our humanity — the disdain, disregard and disgust for our existence.

We answer ross’s call to underscore the particular horror of anti-Blackness by naming it (PBS, 2018). We invite our readers to consider the meaning and ramifications of using a lens of anti-Blackness to review current and future social work practice, and the policies that inform and shape it, at all levels. This is in line with critical theories, such as feminist theory and intersectionality, which encourage perspective-taking through particular lenses. Critical race theories invite us to put on a lens of race in identifying the ways in which race is constructed, understood, and deployed in policy (for our purposes), and the very real (and often deadly) ramifications of this evolving and socially constructed categorization of people over time.



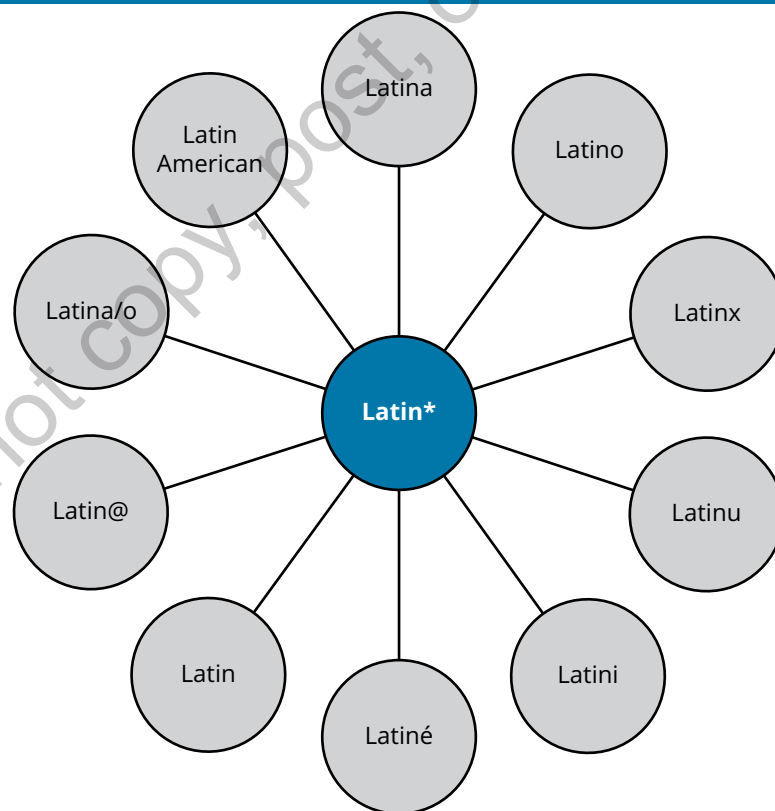
Memorial to George Floyd

KEREM YUCELI/AFP via Getty Images

Hispanic and Latinx Americans

In 1930, “Mexican” was included as a racial designation in the Census, but met pushback that objected to Mexican Americans being considered non-White. The term *Hispanic* was created in 1975 to refer to people in the United States who are of Spanish origin or descent, specifically those who identify themselves as coming from a Spanish-speaking background and tracing their origin or descent from Spanish-speaking regions, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central America, and South America. It was used in the Census for the first time in 1980. Critics of the term dislike the ties to Spanish colonization. Latino was proposed as an alternative and used in the 2000 Census for the first time (Calvo & Figueroa, 2022). Some argue for the term *Latino* that would include people from Brazil, who are from Latin America but are not considered Hispanic because the official language is Portuguese rather than Spanish (Lopez et al., 2022). Critics of the terms *Latino* and *Latina* dislike the lack of gender inclusivity and raise concerns that it “erases the indigenous and Black heritage of people from Latin America” (Calvo & Figueroa, 2022, p. 1) Figure 2.1. In one study, when people were asked what term they prefer, half used Hispanic and Latino interchangeably, one-third referred to their specific country of origin, and the remainder used the term *American* (Lopez et al., 2022). Recognizing that all these terms are limited and contested, we will use whichever term the group referred to in that context generally prefers, unless we

FIGURE 2.1 ■ History and Evolution of the Term *Latinx*



Source: Salinas, C., & Lozano, A. [2021]. History and evolution of the term Latinx. In E. G. Murillo, D. Delgado Bernal, S. Morales, L. Urrieta, E. Ruiz Bybee, J. Sánchez Muñoz, V. B. Saenz, D. Villanueva, M. Machado-Casas, & K. Espinoza [Eds.], *Handbook of Latinos and education* (2nd ed., pp. 249–263). Routledge. https://diversity.sonoma.edu/sites/diversity/files/history_of_x_in_latinx_salinas_and_lozano_2021_s_.pdf

are referring to people from a specific language or geographic grouping, in which case we will use the most specific term that is relevant.

The complexity of identity for this group is significant. The US Census defines Hispanic/Latino identity as an ethnicity, not a race, although in 2015, 17 percent of people who identified as Hispanic identified their Hispanic identity as a race (Lopez et al., 2022). The Census Bureau noted in 2023 that 44 percent of people who chose “Hispanic or Latino origin” in the 2020 Census did not choose any of the options for race that were offered, and they were actively seeking public feedback on better ways to collect this data (US Census Bureau, 2023). Only examining ancestry is also not sufficient: 11 percent of US citizens with Hispanic ancestry do not identify as Hispanic (Lopez et al., 2017). Today, the majority of US citizens who identify as Hispanic/Latino have Mexican ancestry (62 percent, with about 20 percent from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, 10 percent from Central America, and 7 percent from South America (Calvo & Figueroa, 2022).

Hispanic/Latinx people have been in US territory longer than another other ethnoracial group other than Native Americans. Around 100,000 Mexican Americans lived in Mexican territory that the United States seized after the Mexican-American War and became US citizens by default (Calvo & Figueroa, 2022; Gregory, 2022). Land that used to be part of Mexico includes Florida, Louisiana, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Texas. Latinx migration to the United States is really a series of migrations, many of which included a backlash of discrimination and violence. Hispanic individuals and families moved to the United States or within the United States because of gold rushes, agriculture, or railroad construction (Gregory, 2022). They moved from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Panama because of US annexation and political upheaval. Economic slowdowns like the Great Depression saw xenophobic hatred and deportation campaigns. When the economy improved, like during World War II, the need for workers jumpstarted guest worker programs with Mexico and Caribbean countries/colonies. The 1965 changes to immigration law that made migration easier for those from Asia, Africa, and much of Europe made immigration harder for most of Latin America. Puerto Ricans, as US citizens, were not affected. Cubans had special status as refugees from a communist country. Latinx individuals now immigrate from every country in Central and South America in substantial numbers (Gregory, 2022).

The island of Puerto Rico has been under some sort of occupation or “protectorate” status since 1508, making it one of the world’s oldest colonies. After Columbus visited the island, called Boriquen by the Native Taino population, in 1493, rumors of gold attracted Spain, and within a year of Ponce De Leon’s arrival in 1508, the Taino population had been subjugated. The Indigenous people were forced to labor for the Conquistadors, primarily in the gold mines, and many died from European diseases such as smallpox, influenza, measles, and typhus, as well as the dangers from mining. Slavery of the few remaining Taino population legally ended in 1520 while enslaved persons from Africa were brought to the island in 1513; their slavery remained legal until 1873. The United States annexed Puerto Rico in 1898 with an eye on the wealth-generating production of sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee (Schimmer, n.d.). Puerto Ricans stayed on the island, which was under US control, or moved to the mainland; 1.4 million moved to the New York area by 1970. Residents of Puerto Rico still cannot vote in national elections.

Asian Americans

In 2020, 19.9 million US citizens identified as Asian, and 4.1 million identified as Asian in combination with another race. The largest groups within Asian Americans report their heritage from China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan (Monte & Shin, 2022).

The first significant wave of Asian immigration to the United States came in the 1850s when young men from China were recruited as laborers to help in mines, build railroads, work in farms and factories, and fish (Asia Society, n.d.). Asian immigrants have been the subjects of much violence and discrimination. In 1854, a case in front of the Supreme Court, *People v. Hall*, linked Chinese people with African Americans and Native Americans, restricting their right to testify in court. This left them with little recourse against increasing violence directed at them. In 1850, California passed a tax on foreign miners targeting Chinese miners and forcing them to pay a tax on whatever they mined. It was repealed in 1851 but reinstated in 1852 (Foreign Miners Tax Documents, California State Library). In 1882, the first US law to restrict immigration was passed. This law, the Chinese Exclusion Act, was created to keep non-European immigrants from coming to the United States, and specifically banned immigration from China for ten years and excluded Chinese immigrants from becoming citizens (Kristofer, 2003). It was the only US law to prevent immigration and naturalization on the basis of race (Asia Society, n.d.).

Following the Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese laborers, and smaller numbers of people from Korea and India, served as replacement workers for Chinese people. Anti-Japanese sentiment leading to violence and anti-Japanese legislation followed, and in 1907, immigration from Japan was unofficially restricted (Asia Society, n.d.). Korean immigrants who came to Hawaii and the mainland escaping Japanese colonization of Korea faced racist exclusion in the United States. Until 1917, Indian immigrants worked the railroads and farms in Canada, the Pacific Northwest, and California. These laborers were primarily Sikh and were incorrectly and disrespectfully referred to using terms that derided their presumed culture, dress, and practices before India was added to the list of excluded Asian countries called the Pacific-Barred Zone (Asia Society, n.d.). By 1924, all Asian immigrants from China, Japan, Korea, and India were “fully excluded by law, denied citizenship and naturalization, and prevented from marrying Caucasians or owning land” (Asia Society, n.d.). Filipinos, who were not covered under the exclusion of other Asians because the Philippines had been annexed by the United States after the Spanish-American War, came to the United States to work, primarily in farms and canneries. History repeated itself and they faced violence and discrimination, and the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1935 limited immigration from the Philippines to fifty people per year. The immigration limits on Asian countries lasted until 1952, and nonrestrictive annual quotas of 20,000 immigrants from each of the affected Asian countries were one result of the civil rights movement. The 1970s saw refugees from Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos fleeing war, chaos, discrimination, and economic hardship. Among these refugees were members of ethnic minority populations, such as the Hmong, Mien, and Khmer (Asia Society, n.d.). Anti-Asian sentiment and discrimination are still seen today, as when anti-Asian violence ranging from verbal abuse to assault increased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 11,000 incidents of harassment, bullying, and other acts of hate against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) individuals and communities were reported to Stop AAPI Hate between March 2020 and March 2022 (Stop AAPI Hate, 2022).

Muslim Americans

Approximately 3.5 million US citizens are Muslim, which includes a diverse group from South Asia (including Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh), the Middle East/North Africa (including Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, and Egypt), Iran, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the rest of the Americas (Pew Research Center, 2017). As Muslim Americans often experience, oppression can be based on a combination of individuals’ race and religion, or the perception others

have of their race and religion. On September 11, 2001, a horrendous terrorist attack occurred on US soil. Two planes flew into the World Trade Center towers in Manhattan, one flew into the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and another crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, leaving many killed and injured and destroying a landmark. Because this attack had been carried out by Muslim terrorists, it led to reactionary politics and discriminatory policies focused on all Muslims in the United States including racial profiling policies. **Racial profiling** is a term used to describe policing policies where people are targeted because of the way they look, often disproportionately harming Black and Brown people. It has been used to pull people over on the highway who are doing nothing other than “driving while Black,” (or non-White), or in New York City, to stop people on the subway to investigate the contents of their bags. The term **Islamophobia** refers to prejudice associated with unjustifiable fear or bias against Muslims. Following 9/11, there was a significant increase in hate crimes against Muslims (Abdelkader, 2016). In 2010, 48 percent of Muslims reported that they had experienced religious discrimination in the past year. Self-report data in 2018 indicated that many Muslims experience persistent discrimination (Abu-Ras et al., 2018). In 2022, Mohammed Tariq Awan conducted a critical analysis of mainstream American media and found that most articles that mentioned Muslims created and perpetuated Muslim bias.

Racism and Anti-Immigrant Beliefs

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies have often been couched in racial terms. Immigrants from Ireland and Italy have been considered on the edge of “Whiteness” in different time periods, and Italian Americans are still considered a protected class by the City University of New York (Campanile, 2021). One of the clearest ways to see that race is socially constructed is to look at the ways in which our ideas of who belongs in different races has changed over time. For example, under Hitler, the Nazi Party persecuted those they classified as non-Aryan races, including the Roma or Romani people and people who they identified as Jewish, whether or not those people practiced Judaism (United States Holocaust Museum, n.d.). These racist ideas were codified in the Nuremberg Race Laws, which created a “biological” definition of Jewishness, and led to countless atrocities including murder and attempted genocide.

Antisemitism couched in racial terms is not unique to Nazi Germany. In 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant issued a General Order (quickly rescinded by President Abraham Lincoln) of expulsion against Jewish people from the portions of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi that were under his control. The 1924 Johnson-Reed Act effectively restricted the immigration of Jewish people to the United States during World War II. And the anti-immigration sentiment was so strong that in 1939, the United States forced a ship full of nine hundred Jewish individuals who had been refused entry into Cuba and were escaping the Holocaust to return to Europe where many were ultimately killed (Lanchin, 2014).

In the early to mid-twentieth century, there were many laws that differentiated and discriminated against non-English/German people from Europe. Local laws called restrictive covenants limited Jewish access to certain neighborhoods and clubs (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1959). These restrictive covenants generally also excluded Black people and immigrants. There were also quotas restricting Jewish people from admission to many institutions of higher education (Karabel, 2006). These types of discrimination had implications for the ability of people who were Jewish or perceived to be Jewish to choose where to live, work, and acquire assets.

The Immigration Act of 1924, also called the Johnson-Reed Act, was explicit in its goals to provide preferences to Western European immigrants. It excluded all Asian immigrants, including those from Japan, as well as limited Irish and Italian immigration. This racially based law was designed to keep the US homogenous (Office of the Historian, n.d.).

Anti-immigrant policies have historically targeted groups such as Hispanic/Latinx people, including targeting them for immigration enforcement, banning them from receiving federal services, and requiring them to carry proof of legal status at all times (Calvo & Figueroa, 2022). From 2017 to the present, the US government has separated children as young as infancy from their families at the US southern border (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022). As of July 2023, 3,932 children who had been separated from their families were identified. The number known to be reunited with their families was 3,092, leaving at least 840 still separated (Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families, 2023).

POLICIES TO ADDRESS RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Policy efforts have been made throughout US history to address racial discrimination, with varying successes. Many have been met with a backlash.

Reconstruction and Black Codes

Reconstruction began following the Civil War in 1865 and lasted until 1870. During this time, as noted in Chapter 1, the Freedmen's Bureau was established to address the social rebuilding of the South and to help newly freed Black people to transition from slavery to freedom. Those who had served in the Confederate army were not allowed to vote, thus initially giving Black individuals greater power in Southern politics. This policy progression was followed by a backlash, where local and state policies, called **Black Codes**, were quickly enacted to limit the rights and freedoms of African Americans and ensure that formerly enslaved people would continue to be forced to labor without appropriate compensation. Some of these laws limited Black voting through poll taxes and literacy tests that were disproportionately applied to Black voters. Laws also required separate facilities for Black and White people. Many newly freed slaves had no money or land to farm and were, therefore, forced to work as sharecroppers, basically continuing to endure the conditions of slavery. Efforts to provide support to newly freed Black individuals were hampered by the Southern states who had an economic interest in maintaining the pre-Civil War system (Cohen, 1991).

Native Rights

Ostensibly, in an effort to improve the living conditions and economic status of Native populations, the Dawes Act of 1887 broke up reservations and made private land plots. Though billed as something that would help Native populations, the lots were often too small or too dry to produce sustainable agriculture. Because most farmers relied on loans to get farms started and the Native population was not eligible for these loans, the Dawes Act was a disaster for Native populations (Nesterak, 2019).

More recently, some policies have been created to protect Native rights. For example, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (amended 1994) created a policy that "the United States [would] protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred

objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites.” In 1994, this was amended to allow the use, sale, and transfer of peyote for religious purposes for Native populations. More recently, in the twentieth century, several Supreme Court cases have limited the rights of Native people to freely engage in the exercise of their religion. For example, in the 1988 *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association* decision, the Supreme Court held that the free exercise of religion clause does not prohibit the federal government from harvesting timber on religious Native grounds. A few years later, in 1990, the Supreme Court in *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith* overturned a lower court’s holding that two Native men who were fired for religious peyote use should be eligible for unemployment. The Supreme Court held that this was not a violation of their free exercise of religion because the state law was not designed to discriminate against their religious practice and using the level of strict scrutiny, they found that Oregon had a compelling government interest in combating drug use and abuse.

Civil Rights

Many states have long histories of trying to disenfranchise people from voting based on race. In 1944, the US Supreme Court outlawed a Texas practice called the “White primary,” where the Democratic Party restricted primary voting based on race, essentially restricting Black voters from participating. Following this decision, in 1947, President Harry S. Truman established a presidential committee on human rights that issued a report that laid the groundwork for much of the civil rights legislation that was passed in the 1950s and 1960s, including the development of a Federal Civil Rights Commission, the creation of a civil rights division in the US Department of Justice, the enforcement of federal antilynching laws, and the outlawing of segregation in interstate transportation. In 1948, the military was desegregated (US House of Representatives, n.d.). At the same time, restrictive covenants, rules barring people of one race or religious group from buying or living in a certain area, were commonplace. In *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), the Supreme Court held that restrictive covenants were constitutionally permissible, but that states could not enforce these private agreements.

The Civil Rights Act of 1957 created the Civil Rights Division of the US Justice Department. This law also enabled federal prosecutors to seek injunctions to stop unfair voting practices. Then, in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was updated to also prevent discrimination on the basis of sex and to limit workplace discrimination. Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to further support the elimination of voting discrimination in the South. It “suspended the use of literacy tests and voter disqualification devices for five years, authorized the use of federal examiners to supervise voter registration in states that used tests or in which less than half the voting-eligible residents registered or voted, directed the U.S. Attorney General to institute proceedings against use of poll taxes and provided criminal penalties for violations of the act.” This law required states and localities with a history of discriminatory voting practices to get federal approval before making changes to their voting laws to ensure that the laws were not discriminatory. In 2013, Supreme Court Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority in the case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, argued that there was less racial discrimination in 2013 than in the 1960s so the federal government no longer needed to review state changes to voting laws thereby changing the burden of proof regarding voting restrictions. Now, if voters experience discrimination, particularly race-based discrimination, they have to prove that they have experienced discrimination before they can ask for laws to be found

unconstitutional. This change has led to an increase in laws designed to restrict voting access, particularly for low-income and minority populations (Weiner, 2021). These restrictions include requiring an ID to register to vote and restricting the type of identification needed, thus making it harder to be added to voting rolls and making it easier to take people off voting rolls. Other changes include consolidating or closing polling places and hours without providing notice to the public as well as making it harder to provide support for people with disabilities to vote.

In 1968, the Civil Rights Act was extended to protect civil rights workers and to create fair housing practices by outlawing “discrimination by race, creed, national origin, or sex” in the sale and rental of roughly 80 percent of US housing by 1970. This law required private individuals or advocacy groups to prove there was housing discrimination, so its effect was more limited than other civil rights protections such as the Voting Rights Act.

Policies on Race and Education

In 1896, a Black man challenged the idea that he should have to ride in a separate train car than White people. In this case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court upheld the idea that as long as Black people received equal access to the same services, states could choose to provide separate facilities for Black and White people. This idea was used to support separate schools for Black and White children. This lasted until the 1954 case *Brown v. Board of Education*, which required the integration of US schools. However, because of the way in which schools are zoned and funded, equal access to education has never been a reality in the United States. As a general rule, facilities that provide services to predominantly Black students have continued to receive less funding than those predominantly serving White students. In a 2001 National Institute of Health report, education policy expert and Stanford professor Linda Darling-Hammond wrote, “Few Americans realize that the U.S. educational system is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world, and that students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status. In contrast to European and Asian nations that fund schools centrally and equally, the wealthiest 10% of school districts in the United States spend nearly 10 times more than the poorest 10%, and spending ratios of 3 to 1 are common within states. Poor and minority students are concentrated in the least well-funded schools” (Darling-Hammond, 2001).

A recent report from Erase Racism on Long Island (2022) found that schools in predominantly White districts spent greater than \$10,000 more per student than predominantly non-White districts, had more guidance counselors and social workers per student, while predominantly non-White districts had more poverty and more environmental stressors. This continues to be a problem in much of the country and many have suggested a greater federal role in education could help.

In 2003, in the case of *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the Supreme Court held that the University of Michigan had a compelling interest to use race as one factor in their admissions decision-making process to ensure that their school would have a diverse student body and ultimately that the legal profession would be diverse. More recently, in *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* (2023) and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina* (2023), the Court essentially overturned the decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, finding that racial preference in college admissions violates the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution (equal protection of the law). The Supreme Court’s decision left open the possibility that race could still be used in specific individual cases to explain how it had affected a student’s life, how a student had overcome discrimination, or

how a student's culture had helped to shape a student in some way. The decision explicitly excludes military academies which can, presumably, still consider the importance of diversity in the military. In many states and localities, there are preferential hiring and grant giving programs for women and minorities to make up for preexisting discrimination. This decision suggests that many such policies may no longer be legal if challenged.

Framing: Critical Race Theories

Critical race theories (CRT) are a form of social justice inquiry (Charmaz, 2011) developed by legal scholars and activists to explore the relationship between race, racism, and power. CRT scholars reexamine history in order to consider many voices that have been left out of the narrative. It also suggests that the *impact* of current policy should be understood through a lens of the United States' history of racism. Within this theory are two main schools of thought. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) describe *materialists* as people who believe that "racism and discrimination are matters of thinking, mental categorization, attitude and discourse" and that with appropriate training (such as diversity seminars), we can teach people not to be racists. Critical race theorists who are materialists are concerned with **individual or interpersonal racism**, which includes interactions between people in either institutional roles or as private individuals that are perceived as discriminatory (Brondolo et al., 2009). Critical race theorists who are *realists* focus on structural racism and believe that racism is often used for economic reasons as a method by which "society allocates privilege and status" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 21). Realists are more concerned about the structural aspects of racism. Both types of critical race theorists suggest that in order to address racism in the United States, we must first acknowledge that it exists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). We will return to this CRT in Chapter 4, where we provide examples of key social work theories used in policy analysis.

Anti-oppressive social work practice (Dominelli, 2017) deemed essential by our Code of Ethics and emphasized in the accreditation standards for schools of social work, will require you to develop competency in racism that happens at both interpersonal and structural levels. Given the macro focus of this book, we will focus more on structural racism, although we also include many examples and vignettes that draw out the impact at all levels. Conservative scholars and organizations believe that the racialized lens used in CRT negates individual talent and hard work and, ultimately, threatens personal liberty (Rufo, 2021). They further suggest that CRT reinforces competition between identity groups for the greatest claims on oppression. They suggest that this leads to the creation of a dichotomous thinking and action that categorize people and groups as oppressors and oppressed simply based on their racial identity (or the one given to them by oppressed groups) (Butcher & Gonzalez, 2020). Debates about race in general and CRT in particular have played out in the policy arena over the past few years, including the 2023 Supreme Court decision about affirmative action discussed earlier and debates about teaching of structural racism within K–12 education and higher education. As of May 2023, forty-four states had introduced bills and eighteen had passed bills that addressed outlawing the discussion of CRT or structural racism within classrooms. In 2022, Idaho, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Arizona, and North Dakota prohibited public schools from teaching about bias, privilege, and discrimination related to race (Schwartz, 2023). In the spring of 2023, the Florida Educational Equity Act banned the discussion of CRT and anything related to it in public K–12 schools and in any school receiving state funding, which includes the University of Florida system.

INTERSECTIONALITY: RACISM, PATRIARCHY, AND ABLEISM

THE HISTORY OF STERILIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States has a history of sterilization based on perceptions of who is worthy and should be able to reproduce. Sterilization has often been used as a tool of oppression, often affecting people with disabilities, women, and particularly women of color. Some examples are included here.

Many states had eugenics laws well before the 1950s. In the 1950s, with the advent of Black people having the potential to vote, both North Carolina and Mississippi passed forced sterilization laws largely targeting Black women (Murphy, 2021). California sterilized more than 20,000 people determined “unfit to reproduce” between 1909 and 1979. This program disproportionately targeted women who were Latina, who were 59 percent more likely to be sterilized than non-Latina women. An additional 200 Mexican and Mexican American women were sterilized without their consent at the Los Angeles-USC Medical Center in the 1960s and 1970s (Jimenez J., 2021). In 1978, a US district court ruled in favor of the doctors who performed those surgeries without the women’s consent, saying that the victims’ emotional distress was not because of the sterilizations but because their cultural background said that a woman’s worth was connected to having a large family (Medosch, 2021). California continued to sterilize women in prison through 2013 (Jimenez J., 2021).

Puerto Rican women were subject to sterilization starting in the 1960s. By the early 1950s, 16 percent of women on the island had been sterilized (Presser, 1969). Native women were also sterilized in many parts of the United States into the 1970s (GAO Report, 1976). Between 1970 and 1976, an estimated 50 percent to 75 percent of all Native women were sterilized by Indian Health Services (Estes et al., 2021). Between 1973 and 1976, 3,406 women, thirty-six of whom were under age twenty-one were sterilized by Indian Health Services.

Sterilization continues today, disproportionately affecting Black and Brown communities. A 2015 nationwide study (Schreffler et al.) found that Native American and Black women are more likely to be sterilized and prevented from conceiving children they want than non-Hispanic White women. In 2020, a whistleblower complaint revealed that doctors at a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Georgia were performing unnecessary hysterectomies and other invasive procedures on Latina detainees without the consent or knowledge of the women (Medosch, 2021).

One Family’s Story

On June 12, 2022, the *New York Times* profiled Minnie Lee Relf and her sister, Mary Alice Relf, two women who were sterilized as children in 1973. The girls were young, Black, and poor, and one of them was deemed to be “mentally deficient.” Their parents could not read, and had lived in such extreme poverty that their home was basically cardboard boxes without water or electricity. At the time, the Nixon administration, under the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), had a policy that prohibited the use of its funding for sterilization. Nonetheless, the OEO was sending money to family planning programs in the South that according to Dr. Alexandra Minna Stern of the University of Michigan Sterilization and Social Justice Lab “were twisted by racial and eugenics logic and pre-existing, longstanding racism and disempowerment of Black mothers and Black girls” and which sterilized many young Black girls (Villarosa, 2022, p. 32). Mary and Minnie were sterilized without their parents’ consent though the clinic director claimed that their mother had signed an X to approve the procedure. Jessie Bly, the girls’ social worker, felt responsible because she believed it was her work with the family that had alerted authorities to their existence. She had helped them get food stamps, an apartment, and a monthly welfare check. Ultimately, she connected them with a lawyer who helped to get the procedures outlawed in theory, if not in practice (Villarosa, 2022).

READING ON AND MOVING FORWARD: TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS CHAPTER

You may have gotten to the end of this chapter discouraged by the history of harms and overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of structural hurdles. We have three central suggestions for you over the course of the semester that are intended to balance the need for keeping our eyes open and viewing the world through a social work social justice lens with the importance of sustaining ourselves and our hopes. Social policy advocates—whatever their political or strategic background—often need to fight for their vision over time. We therefore hope that you have also been inspired by some of the changes that people, together, have brought. We encourage you to read this textbook by appreciating the gravity of the challenges we face as social workers and also by taking inspiration from the brave people and visionaries that we profile. We also encourage you to look around you for examples of social workers in all kinds of roles and settings: What are the micro, mezzo, and macro impacts that they have? How do they manage to confront racism, anti-Blackness, and other forms of oppression? Every chapter in this book includes such an example. Of particular note are the many social movements whose demands, protests, and mutual support have brought about change.

One example is activism by groups such as the American Indian Movement and the Red Power Movement that starting in the 1960s helped to draw attention to social disparities and deprivation within Native American communities as well as past atrocities (Blakemore, 2020). Gains from this movement and activists since then have been hard-won, and have included the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (SDEAA), which was designed to give tribes greater autonomy and control over contracts with the federal government so they could direct services to the needs of their communities (Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.). A review of this policy on its fortieth anniversary suggested that “By tribal and federal accounts alike, the self-determination policy embodied in the SDEAA has been very successful in assisting tribes to develop their local economies and build their governmental capacities” (Strommer & Osborne, 2014, p. 4–5). Former Representative Deb Haaland, the first Native American person to oversee a Cabinet-level agency, is the current Secretary of the Interior, which oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs (US Department of the Interior, n.d.).

Additional examples are spread throughout the book, such as Black Lives Matter and the related Defund the Police movement, which we cover in the criminal legal system chapter, as are other resistance to oppression (e.g., the discussion of ACT-UP in the health chapter, or the disability rights movement in the disability chapter). These examples are hopeful, even as they underscore the ongoing nature of fighting to create socially just social policy. We also chose them because they are efforts led by the groups fighting for their own vision. In all cases, social workers from within or outside these communities had the opportunities and sometimes aligned with these movements and other times resisted change. We encourage you to think about whether and how you might use your social work skills when a path opens for you to consider working for change.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Now that you have finished reading this chapter, reread the vignette at the beginning. Based on what you have learned, answer the following questions. Point to specific references in the chapter that helped you answer them.

1. What kind of evidence might you gather in order to assess the claims of the different constituent groups?

2. How might you recommend Representative McNabb manage these different conversations with their constituents?
 - a. Might your answer change depending on your own racialized identity? Or Representative McNabb's identity?
3. What role might other aspects of the representative's identity, the constituents' identities, or your identity (class, gender, etc.) play in this vignette?
4. How might your state context influence your advice, including factors such as historical context; discourse around race in local media; state political context; and informal environments, such as workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods?

KEY TERMS

African American	oppression
anti-Blackness	people of color (POC)
antisemitism	privilege
Black and Brown people	race
Black Codes	racial profiling
Black	racism
critical race theories (CRT)	structural inequality
ethnicity	structural oppression
individual or interpersonal racism	US Census
intersectionality	White
Islamophobia	

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