

Racism

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Introduction

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, several sociopolitical developments in western democracies have suggested the resurgence of overt racism. Many social commentators initially heralded the 2008 election of US president Barack Obama – the country’s first African American president – as the culmination of a centuries-long struggle for full inclusion of racial/ethnic minorities. Yet, Obama’s presidency did little to alleviate racial inequalities in housing, education, and employment. Antiracist movements, such as the Movement for Black Lives, emerged to highlight ongoing issues related to the devaluation of black people, including state-sanctioned police brutality which has been disproportionately targeted at African Americans. Meanwhile, the 2016 US presidential election only served to legitimate resurgent white supremacy: US president Donald Trump and his supporters engaged in widespread racist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim rhetoric, and the number of reported hate crimes targeted at racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious minorities subsequently increased (Levin, 2017).

These developments are not limited to the United States. In Austria, France, Germany, Greece, and elsewhere, far right, anti-immigrant political parties have enjoyed electoral gains. In the United Kingdom, the 2016 “Brexit” vote (for Britain’s exit from the European Union) was split across racial and ethnic lines. And, in Canada, where government rhetoric often focuses on embracing diversity

and inclusion, indigenous/settler inequalities mirror black/white inequalities in the United States. In 2018, for instance, an all-white jury in Saskatchewan found a white farmer not guilty in the killing of 22-year-old Cree man Colten Boushie, whom he had shot in the head with a handgun. The role of the law in legitimating this racialized killing in Canada has much in common with the killing (with impunity) of Trayvon Martin as well as the many black, Latino, and indigenous youth and adults in the United States who have been killed by the police.

With such events in mind, social scientists today are grappling with such urgent and vital questions as: How, why, and to what extent is overt racism returning? What accounts for the resurgence of white supremacist movements? And how are racialized nonwhite groups and allies responding? To place these questions in context, this entry provides an overview of major sociological theories of racism and shifts in the framing of racism over three historical periods in western democracies, with a focus on North America: (1) the early colonial and Jim Crow eras, (2) the civil rights and “postracial” eras, and (3) the current post-postracial era.

Key Terms

Sociological theories of racism draw on common terms such as race, ethnicity, discrimination, racism, and white supremacy, which are often conflated in popular discourse but have specific meanings in sociology. These terms will be clarified before describing the three historical periods.

Race is a social construct used to differentiate people into groups on the basis of mostly immutable characteristics, such as phenotype (e.g., skin color, hair texture, or eye shape) and ancestry. While racial groups are differentiated by physical appearance, there is no evidence that these physical differences are genetically related to differences in behavior or intelligence. Scientists have shown that the amount of genetic variation within socially defined races is greater

than that between them, the physical traits associated with racial groups change across time and space, and the high degree of mixing between humans around the world for centuries indicates that “racial purity” has no scientific basis. Nevertheless, the *concept* of race is a powerful social force. Once a society is organized in racial terms – or once racial categories and meanings are institutionalized and taken for granted – race can have profound effects on one’s sense of identity, health and well-being, and access to jobs, schools, and neighborhoods.

Contemporary racial categories in the west were developed in the context of European colonialism, trans-Atlantic slavery, and the global spread of capitalism. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European scientists, theologians, and other scholars constructed racial categories and assigned them characteristics that were used to justify their status within the emerging racial hierarchy. One notable classificatory scheme was that of physician and zoologist Carl Linnaeus, who classified humans into four races similar to those commonly used today: Africanus, Americanus, Asiaticus, and Europeanus. Europeanus was described as “white, sanguine, muscular [and] inventive,” whereas Americanus was described as “obstinate,” Asiaticus as “haughty,” and Africanus as “negligent” (Golash-Boza, 2016: 131). The traits assigned to these racial categories reveal the sense of superiority that many Europeans felt over non-Europeans and laid the foundation for contemporary racist ideology.

While racial classification of humans has persisted for centuries, the specific groups and physical traits that fall into racial categories have changed over time. The number, names, and types of racial categories thought to exist have varied greatly, along with the boundaries they create. For example, the racial category “white” has transformed substantially over the course of American history. In the nineteenth century, many fair-skinned European immigrants in the United States were not considered white (Roediger, 1991). Irish immigrants, for instance, were discriminated against by Anglo-Saxon Protestants and sought to be accepted as white through their political affiliations and by emphasizing distinctions between themselves and blacks. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern immigrants, such as Iranians, are legally classified as white by the current US

census, despite everyday experiences of nonwhite racialization and discrimination (Maghbooleh, 2017). In addition to racialization between groups, within-group racialization based on variations in skin color and biracial or multiracial lineage further complicate racial categorization (Monk, 2014). These examples underscore the socially constructed nature of race, whose classifications are the result of social, legal, political, economic, and ideological struggles.

While race is based on physical traits which are widely perceived to be immutable, *ethnicity* is based on shared culture or heritage – traits that are often considered to be less fixed and can vary within and across racial groups. In addition, some scholars argue that race is assigned by out-group members, whereas ethnicity is more a matter of self-identification (Cornell and Hartmann, 2006). However, Waters (1990) shows that, in the contemporary United States, white individuals belonging to European ethnicities have greater flexibility than nonwhites in how they choose to identify with their ethnicity. For instance, Irish Americans can choose to celebrate their Irish traditions (or not) while maintaining their dominant status as white. In contrast, black immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean often face racial discrimination similar to that faced by native-born black Americans, despite differences in ancestry, history, and cultural practices. The shifting conceptual, legal, and social boundaries of race and ethnicity further underscore that both categories are socially constructed.

While there is no single accepted definition of racism, most sociologists agree that *racism* entails an ideology of racial inferiority that generates or reproduces racial domination and exploitation. Whether conceptualized as individual-level prejudice, group-level institutional policies, or both, racism is a taken-for-granted belief system which posits that some racial groups are naturally superior to or more deserving of material and symbolic resources than other groups (Clair and Denis, 2015). According to some scholars, racism also involves the power to enforce racial inequalities. In western democracies, racism has taken the form of *white supremacy*, which entails systematic advantages (e.g., access to resources and opportunities) for persons defined as white, and systematic disadvantages (including stigmatization) for others, especially black and indigenous peoples.

Thus, while anyone can be prejudiced (holding negative attitudes toward out-groups), only whites – the racial group currently with the most institutional power in the west – can be racist.

Racial discrimination is defined as unequal treatment of individuals on the basis of their racial group membership. The distinction between racism and racial discrimination lies in the latter's behavioral component. Racism is an ideology that justifies or prescribes the *behavioral act* of certain forms of racial discrimination. Racial discrimination, however, is not always enacted on the basis of racism. For instance, race-conscious preferential treatment for the purpose of rectifying racial inequality – for example, affirmative action in employment or higher education – is a form of racial discrimination but not a form of racism. *Racial inequality*, defined as unequal outcomes between racial groups (e.g., in income, education, health, or incarceration), is often assumed to result from racial discrimination. Yet, in a purportedly postracial era in which overt racism is thought to have declined, many scholars have debated the extent to which contemporary racial inequalities and specific instances of racial discrimination are rooted in contemporary racism. Some scholars and everyday commentators have suggested that disproportionate levels of poverty and/or cultural behaviors misaligned with middle-class white society are primary causes of racial inequality. As we describe in the following sections, sociological approaches to racism in the mid- to late twentieth century were largely concerned with detailing the relationship between racism, racial discrimination, and racial inequalities (Clair and Denis, 2015). The unfortunate resurgence of overt forms of racism appears to make this task less complicated.

Three Phases in the Study of Racism

As described in Clair and Denis (2015), there are distinct phases to the study of racism in sociology that correspond with societal changes, particularly in the United States. The authors differentiate between two phases in western democracies – the period before and the period after World War II (Clair and Denis, 2015: 858). The first phase, which begins with the emergence of sociology in the late nineteenth century and concludes

around the US Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century, largely examined racism as overt, individual-level beliefs and behaviors. The second phase, which the authors outlined as a post-civil rights period, sought to examine subtle forms of racism that can manifest at the individual and group levels, such as implicit bias and institutional racism. It appears that a new, third phase in the study of racism has emerged in western democracies. This phase begins around the US election of Barack Obama in 2008 and continues to the present day, when the scholarship of many critical race scholars, developed in the 1980s, has gained renewed interest and usefulness in explaining racism. This phase is differentiated from the first and second phases in that it seeks to examine subtle forms of racism along with an explicit effort to understand the resurgence of overt racism amid the realities of persistent racial inequality. Thus, the third phase can be understood as initiating a post-postracial turn in sociology that exists not only among critical scholars but also more mainstream sociological analyses.

Phase One: Imperialism, Slavery, and Jim Crow Racism

During the Enlightenment, many scientists and intellectuals in Europe and North America held openly racist beliefs about the inferiority of non-European groups. As noted earlier, the use of biological theories to classify human racial groups served as the foundation of scientific racism. For centuries, philosophers and religious leaders often used religion as a tool to support their claims of the superiority of Europeans and the inferiority of other groups (Golash-Boza, 2016).

Starting in the sixteenth century, European colonizers in North America appropriated indigenous peoples' lands and resources, attempted to destroy their cultures and governance systems, and exposed them to fatal diseases (as detailed, for example, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada). Some Native Americans were captured and sold into slavery. During the seventeenth century, Europeans first brought enslaved Africans to North America, where they were subjected to physical and symbolic violence at the hands of white slaveowners. While slavery had a primarily white/black dynamic in the

United States, slavery was experienced around the globe by various populations.

In the United States in particular, the racialization of voluntary immigrant groups from non-European countries plays a pivotal role in the history of the study of racism. Upon immigrating to the United States in the 1800s, for example, Chinese immigrants were often paid less than non-Chinese workers for the same jobs, exposed to dangerous working conditions, and, at least in California, racialized as “Indian” and prohibited from testifying in court (Tahmahkera, 2008). In 1882, amid rising economic and cultural tension with white Americans, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, preventing Chinese persons from further immigrating to the United States.

In the late nineteenth century, the abolition of slavery in the United States coincided with the emergence of sociology as a social scientific discipline. While the nation grappled with the political incorporation of former noncitizens, including African slaves and other racialized groups, French philosopher Auguste Comte’s “scientific study of society” was taking root in American universities. While the earliest writings in sociology were concerned with status groups (Max Weber), class conflict (Karl Marx), and social solidarity in an increasingly differentiated society (Émile Durkheim), few sociologists studied racism as an object of inquiry. A notable exception was W.E.B. Du Bois, whose Atlanta School of Sociology produced numerous ethnographic descriptions and statistical analyses of racial discrimination, racism, and racial inequality, particularly with respect to African Americans (Morris, 2015). Aside from the work of Du Bois and his colleagues, sociological research during the early twentieth century was often infected with racism.

The mainstream sociological theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often centered on the assimilation of non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Protestant European immigrants to dominant American culture. African Americans and immigrants from regions beyond Europe were rarely considered in theories of immigrant incorporation, or in other core sociological topics, such as crime and deviance. The inattention to nonwhite racial groups undermined theoretical assumptions about assimilation, notably scholars’ belief in the inevitable decline of racial/ethnic prejudice as immigrant groups became upwardly

mobile. Growing non-European immigration after World War II forced sociologists to realize the unique role of racism in shaping assimilation trajectories and persistent racial inequalities among nonwhite immigrants (e.g., Portes and Zhou, 1993). Yet, the unique experiences of indigenous peoples with racism and settler colonialism remained a glaring lacuna.

Around the mid-twentieth century, scholars began to examine racism directed at nonwhite people more systematically. Motivated largely by the failure of Reconstruction and the institutionalization of Jim Crow racism after the Civil War, sociologists examined overt forms of racism that manifest in individual attitudes and behaviors. *De jure* segregation and racial discrimination, supported by white supremacist public lynchings and extralegal forms of violence and intimidation targeted mostly at black Americans, provided irrefutable evidence of racism among white Americans. Moreover, during and after World War II, the confluence of the Holocaust and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement sparked even greater attention to the social problem of racism worldwide. Some social scientists exposed the empirically unsupported and destructive nature of pseudoscientific theories of race and racial hierarchy (e.g., Ashley Montagu). They criticized imperialist, fascist, and ethnonationalist ideologies and began to study the social and psychological conditions underlying these ideologies (e.g., Erich Fromm).

During this period, social scientists developed methods – such as survey questions about prejudice on repeated cross-section samples of the general public – for the systematic study of racism. However, their examinations were often limited to overt forms of racism that manifest in individual attitudes. Some scholars published comprehensive works on the nature of prejudice (e.g., Gordon W. Allport), relations among immigrant ethnic groups (e.g., Robert E. Park), and the contradictory commitment of many Americans to egalitarianism and racism (e.g., Gunnar Myrdal). Nevertheless, these same scholars were reluctant to confront and speak on the role that white Americans played in the oppression of black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the United States, especially at the level of institutional bias. (Some exceptions included E. Franklin Frazier, Monroe Work, St. Clair Drake,

and Horace R. Cayton – African American scholars affiliated with and inspired by the Chicago School and Du Bois’s Atlanta School.)

Phase Two: Civil Rights and the Era of Postracialism

After the Civil Rights Movement, sociologists increasingly documented a decline in openly expressed racist attitudes among white Americans (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, 1997). These observations coincided with the second phase in the study of racism. Approaches to racism in this period have attempted to examine the paradox of continued racial discrimination and racial inequality despite apparent declines in overt racism. While some scholars posited that cultural behaviors or other nonracist factors may account for contemporary racial inequalities, others developed more dynamic and system-level conceptualizations to explicate how racism reproduces racial inequalities in subtle, often taken-for-granted ways. These conceptualizations of racism include “new” racist attitudes (e.g., symbolic racism, *laissez-faire* racism, and colorblind racism), implicit racial bias, institutional racism, and everyday experiences of racism (for a thorough review, see Clair and Denis, 2015). We briefly summarize these developments, detailing how these conceptualizations provided evidence against claims of a postracial society.

According to public opinion polls, the percentage of white Americans who said they supported racial equality in principle increased from less than 50 percent in the 1940s to more than 90 percent on most measures by the 1980s (Quillian, 2006). Although some analysts attributed this to an actual decline in racism, others suggested that it reflected a decrease in the social acceptability of expressing racist views and that racism had taken new forms. Why, for example, did majorities of whites continue to oppose policies designed to rectify racial inequality (e.g., affirmative action and reparations)? For Kinder and Sears (1981), this principle–implementation gap could be explained by “symbolic racism”: many whites sincerely believe in western liberal democratic principles (individualism, egalitarianism, etc.) but also stereotype blacks as violating these principles and resent them for it. For Bobo et al. (1997), “*laissez-faire* racism” entails persistent

negative stereotyping of nonwhite groups and a tendency to blame these groups for their social problems. Unlike symbolic racism, *laissez-faire* racism is said to be rooted in perceived racial group threat, which is “triggered when the dominant group’s sense of entitlement to resources and privileges appears threatened by subordinate group gains or aspirations” (Denis, 2012: 456). Similarly, “colorblind racism” refers to a set of frames, styles, and scripts that are used to explain and justify racial inequality in seemingly race-neutral terms (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

Despite the sophisticated survey items, interview techniques, and critical discourse analyses that provide evidence for these “new racisms,” some scholars still contended that conservative political principles, not racism, provoked the rejection of policies, such as affirmative action. The evidence for this argument is mixed at best (see Clair and Denis, 2015), and, regardless of intentions, resistance to change has helped reproduce racial inequality. Moreover, sociologists continued to identify explicit forms of racism even among white antiracists (Hughey, 2012), and especially in backstage (i.e., all-white) settings (Picca and Feagin, 2007). Thus, racism had not disappeared to the degree that some surveys suggested.

Another scholarly explanation for the persistence of racial inequality amid apparent declines in overt racism is the notion that some persons might subconsciously possess racial bias. Specifically, *implicit bias* refers to unconscious beliefs in the inferiority of certain groups in comparison to others (see Clair and Denis, 2015: 859–860). Hundreds of studies using the implicit association test (IAT), developed by Harvard psychologist Mahzarin Banaji and colleagues, have found that most individuals – even those who score low on measures of explicit prejudice – are faster to associate positive words and images with whites and faster to associate negative words and images with nonwhite groups, especially blacks. Perhaps most insidious, racialized minorities (not just whites) sometimes develop implicit stereotypes and prejudice toward their own racial group despite articulating explicit beliefs in racial equality. Researchers have debated whether implicit bias can impact one’s judgments and actions. Some studies have found significant associations between implicit bias and discriminatory

behavior. However, critics question the reliability of the IAT (the same person's score can change over a short time) and emphasize that the correlation between implicit bias and discriminatory behavior is weak (e.g., Blanton *et al.*, 2015). To the extent that implicit bias matters, more attention must be paid to its sociological roots, including how the media and other institutions help shape both implicit and explicit attitudes.

While social psychologists grappled with the changing nature of racial attitudes and implicit bias, that is, individual-level racism, macro-sociological analyses focused increasingly on institutional racism. A term coined by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in 1967, *institutional racism* refers to the differential treatment of persons due to their race in organizational and policy contexts (see Clair and Denis, 2015: 860–861). Institutional analyses explain racial inequality in terms of the policies, practices, and norms of organizations and institutions, such as the labor market or the nation-state. Institutional racism can be overt, as in a formal policy of excluding job applicants of a given race. Since 1876, Canada's Indian Act has imposed a definition of "Indians" on indigenous peoples and restricted their political autonomy. Social programs on First Nations reserves are so underfunded that in 2016 the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal concluded that the federal government systemically discriminates against First Nations children. More often, institutional racism is the byproduct of seemingly race-neutral laws or policies, and it is often used to explain unequal outcomes within organizations absent evidence of explicit racial intent. Unequal policing and sentencing in the criminal justice system, for instance, has collateral consequences for housing, employment, and health – consequences with worse effects for stigmatized racial/ethnic minorities (Asad and Clair, 2018).

During this period, scholars also centered the voices and experiences of racial/ethnic minorities, affording insight into their own definitions of racism (see Lamont, 2018). Often rooted in phenomenological and microinteractionist traditions in sociology, this research examined how experiences of racism varied between racial groups at the national and global levels (Essed, 1991), across class strata within racial groups (Feagin and Sikes, 1994), and across other intersecting categories

such as gender and sexuality (Collins, 2015). The intimate relationships between white supremacy, settler colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy began to be unpacked. Much of this work has been spearheaded by grassroots intellectuals from racially (and otherwise) marginalized communities. Moreover, this research has revealed the resources and strategies that marginalized racial groups have at their disposal to resist and perhaps even dismantle racism. As indicated in the social movements literature, everyday individuals, policy-makers, and social activists play a crucial role in creating narratives, policies, and tools meant to dismantle racism and improve the worth and dignity of stigmatized racial groups (Lamont, 2018).

Phase Three: The Resurgence of Overt Racism and an Era of Post-Postracialism

Whereas most sociologists studying racism in the post-civil rights era have focused on debating and explaining subtle forms of racism, a growing number of sociologists – many drawing from critical race traditions – argue that racism, whether overt or covert, is an enduring feature of society worthy of sustained inquiry. Critical race approaches to racism and racial inequality that were once on the margins of mainstream sociology are increasingly moving to the center in the wake of sociopolitical events in the United States and abroad. Notable developments in the field include the establishment of the journal *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, an official publication of the American Sociological Association, and a special issue of the *British Journal of Sociology* dedicated to critically analyzing how racism, sexism, and elitism shaped, and are reflected by, the US election of Donald Trump and the Brexit vote. These developments constitute the third phase in the study of racism.

While overt racism did not disappear in the post-civil rights period (1970s–2000s) (see Hughey, 2012; Picca and Feagin, 2007), it has become increasingly renormalized within the political mainstream. Some observers have highlighted the racism undergirding the ideology of the Tea Party movement, a right-wing and populist coalition of the Republican Party that advocates for lower taxes and less governmental

regulation. While sociologists and political scientists have long noted how support for such policies is often associated with racial prejudice (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, 1997; Kinder and Sears, 1981), recent analyses suggest that Obama's election solidified this relationship. Yadon and Piston (2018), for example, find that although prejudiced attitudes appeared relatively stable among a sample of white voters during the Obama presidency, these attitudes became more associated with whites' lack of support for affirmative action and government aid to African Americans.

Sociologists have proposed several explanations for this resurgence of overt racism, as well as its consequences for racial discrimination and inequality. These explanations include: (1) the shifting racial demographics in the United States and in Europe; (2) the reinforcement of moral boundaries between whites and marginalized racial, immigrant, and religious groups; and (3) perceptions of increased economic volatility among whites. These explanations hinge on Blumer's (1958) group position theory, which posits that perceptions of group threat are at the root of racial prejudice. Some estimates suggest that, in a few decades, whites will no longer constitute a numerical majority in the United States. In an experimental study that tested whites' reactions to a projected future in which whites constitute less than 50 percent of the population, white Americans and Canadians felt a sense of group threat and expressed anger and fear toward racial and ethnic minorities (Outten *et al.*, 2012). Awareness of the projected shift in racial demographics has also been found to increase whites' political conservatism, an effect mediated by perceived racial group-status threat (Craig and Richeson, 2014).

Some scholars argue, moreover, that Donald Trump's divisive rhetoric within his electoral speeches blamed immigrant and other groups for the (white) working class's declining social and moral status, strengthening boundaries against Muslims, Mexicans, and other nonwhite groups (Lamont, Park, and Ayala-Hurtado, 2017). Whites' fear of their declining social status and worth in an increasingly pluralistic society has contributed to the establishment of many white supremacist movements (McDermott and Samson, 2005). As with the rise of white supremacist groups in the United States and

Germany in the early to mid-twentieth century, these groups continue to operate under the belief that they are superior to other racial, ethnic, and religious groups.

Third, some scholars have attributed the rise in white supremacy in the United States and in Britain to rising economic inequality and to lower- and middle-class whites' perceived sense of competition with racial minorities for jobs and other resources (Bobo, 2017). Others contend that the widespread emphasis on working-class whites' economic vulnerability downplays and conceals the vital role that race played within the US election and the Brexit referendum, given that a majority of whites voted for Trump and two-thirds of Trump's supporters made more than the median household income of \$50,000 (Bhambra, 2017). Indeed, whites across the economic spectrum may experience a sense of group threat and seek to protect their privileges by supporting right-wing policies and politicians.

The resurgence of overt forms of racism has, perhaps, made the task of detailing the relationship between racism, racial discrimination, and racial inequality less difficult in this post-racial era. Yet, critical race scholars and historically attuned sociologists have continued to examine how ostensibly race-neutral procedures, policies, and practices reproduce racial inequalities *alongside* more explicit forms of racism. These scholars reveal how structures of racial oppression can morph over time in ways that maintain the perceived legitimacy of racial inequalities (Golash-Boza, 2016). For instance, Alexander (2012) argues that racialized mass incarceration has replaced Jim Crow as the latest system of racialized social control targeted mostly at African Americans. Despite (and perhaps even because of) the return of overt racism, mainstream sociological research on racial inequality remains largely hesitant to implicate contemporary racial discrimination and racism absent identification of racial bias through experimental techniques or cross-sectional statistics that seek to control for all "nonracial" variables that might contribute to racial inequality. Critical race scholars largely view such an approach as missing the point; even if racism is not an immediate cause of racial inequality, it is almost certainly a fundamental cause (see Asad and Clair, 2018). These debates, coupled with more sophisticated

and creative conceptual and analytic techniques for measuring racism, undergird this latest phase in the study of racism.

Challenges and Future Directions

Sociological approaches to racism have changed with the times. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the study of racism largely reflected the racist beliefs of social and natural scientists. As the twentieth century progressed and evidence of the destructiveness of racial prejudice reared its ugly head, scholars increasingly developed techniques to measure individual-level racial attitudes. Following the Civil Rights Movement, an era of purported postracialism – marked by scholarly attempts to assess the relationship between subtle forms of racism and racial inequality– took hold within sociological research. Today, sociologists continue to study subtle forms of racism while paying greater attention to critical theories of race, many of which predicted the resurgence – or documented the continued presence – of overt racism. The current sociopolitical moment presents pressing challenges and opportunities for conceptual clarification and methodological innovation.

Current debates among scholars of race and racism include:

1. Whether, how, and to what extent racism explains contemporary political upheavals across western democracies.
2. How racism has developed and interacted with capitalism, colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and other systems of oppression across various contexts.
3. How to best explain the resurgence of overt racism and the degree to which such racism is implicated in struggles over the allocation of scarce material and symbolic goods.
4. What strategies (individual and collective) are most effective for combating racism and the perceived threats to dignity felt among both the targets and perpetrators of racism.

We argue that, although the analysis of whiteness (including white supremacy as well as diversity within the white race) has increased in recent decades, it is important that social scientists take an in-depth approach to the study of whiteness

and its consequences, especially given the revival of overtly white supremacist movements. Revisiting core texts on racial prejudice and group conflict (e.g., Herbert Blumer, Hubert Blalock), and on racism, especially within the pre-civil rights era (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon), may provide useful tools to help frame racism within contemporary society. To develop a comprehensive understanding of racism, sociologists should continue to use a variety of methods, including in-depth interviews, historical analyses, quantitative analyses, and ethnographies – methods which each allow for different lenses through which we can understand the causes and consequences of racism. Additionally, social scientists should seek innovative media for analyzing racism, including social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Given the in-depth engagement with interdisciplinary approaches to the study of racism within fields such as African American studies and indigenous studies, sociologists should engage more with other disciplines to further improve sociological research on racism.

While several hypotheses for the resurgence of white supremacy exist (see Phase Three above), they all contain one crucial commonality: whites' collective fear of a decline in their racial group status. Although the social acceptance of explicit forms of racism has shifted over time, racism (whether subtle or overt) has persisted for centuries and does not appear to be "leaving" anytime soon. An important takeaway from the recent elections, hate crimes, and other political events is that some radical right-wing supporters and white nationalists are middle-class persons – some of them college educated– who may conceal their political and racial views at the workplace, school, and in other areas of their everyday lives (Bhambra, 2017; McDermott and Samson, 2005). Thus, not only working-class whites or those labeled as neo-Nazis, but also middle- and upper-class whites are complicit in the current state of racism. To further develop sociological discourse on racism, scholars must thoroughly address the resurgence of overt racism and its implications for marginalized groups worldwide, while continuing to critically analyze subtle forms of racism, which remains a deeply entrenched structural problem.

SEE ALSO: Boundaries (Racial/Ethnic); Ethnic, Racial, and Nationalist Movements; Intersectionality; Race; Race and Ethnic Politics; Racial Hierarchy; Racism, Structural and Institutional; Social Exclusion; Whiteness

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