Introduction

Whether you are a student learning about sociology, an instructor teaching a topic for the first time, a sociologist delving into a new area of research, or just a person interested in finding out more about the roots of sociology and what it contributes to our social world, *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociology* is for you. It provides a survey of the field of sociology, covering the most prevalent topics in research and teaching. A two-volume work, *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociology* gives an overview of the field that is both comprehensive and up-to-date. The chapters, produced by some of the most respected scholars, teachers, and public sociologists from all over the world, are highly readable and written with a lay, as well as a scholarly, audience in mind.

Sociology is a branch of learning well known for its fragmentation. This handbook, however, provides a unified perspective, showing how each subfield contributes to the overall discipline and to society. In addition to covering key areas in sociology, it offers a history of the field, showing how and why it developed, and entries on related areas of study. In doing so, it works to define the field of sociology and serves as an invaluable resource for all those working and teaching in sociology and related areas.

The first volume of the handbook focuses on core areas of sociology, such as theory, methods, culture, socialization, social structure, inequality, diversity, social institutions, social problems, deviant behavior, locality, geography, the environment, and social change. It also explains how sociology developed in different parts of the world, providing readers with a perspective on how sociology became the global discipline it is today.

The second volume covers specialties within sociology and interdisciplinary studies that relate to sociology. It includes perspectives on race, class, feminist theories, special topics (e.g., the sociology of nonhuman animals, quality-of-life/social indicators research, the sociology of risk, the sociology of disaster, the sociology of mental health, sociobiology, the sociology of science and technology, the sociology of violence, environmental justice, and the sociology of food), the sociology of the self, the sociology of the life course, culture and

behavior, sociology's impact on society, and related fields (e.g., criminology, criminal justice studies, social work, social psychology, sociology of translation and translation studies, and women and gender studies).

Whatever your interest in sociology, you will find it in these two volumes. We hope that *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociology* increases your understanding and appreciation of both the overall field of sociology and closely related fields of study. As this handbook makes clear, all of society benefits from a sociological perspective.

Part I

PERSPECTIVES ON RACE

CHAPTER 1

Racial Formation

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Racial formation is a theoretical framework, first published by sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant in 1986, that has influenced the fields of sociology, political science, law, ethnic studies, and other related disciplines steadily since its inception. One of racial formation theory's central premises is that "race" is a social and political reality that remains unfixed, due to the role of institutions and groups in shaping its meaning (Winant 2000). Many race relations scholars, both theoretical and empirical, have found racial formation to be a useful tool in analyzing the historical and contemporary dynamics of how racial boundaries form and reform. Others, though, have determined the racial formation perspective to be short-sighted, using such critiques as a springboard for their own frameworks about the relationship between race, individuals, and society. Racial formation theory's impact on the field of race relations is thus sizeable. It has assisted social scientists in understanding the extent to which the state and society define and control race, and in fueling debate and critique, it continues to influence future developments.

Breaking with Prior Paradigms

Many analysts agree that the publication of *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* – first in 1986, and again in 1994 – ushered in a much-needed, and perhaps long overdue, shift in sociological thinking on race. Even though ethnic studies had been highlighting how integral race had been in shaping social life since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the more established disciplines in the academy, such as sociology, had been slow to acknowledge this reality or incorporate it into the mainstream (Espiritu 1999; Jung and Kwon 2013). All too often, Omi and Winant (1986) argued, race was subsumed or explained away into other analytical categories in most social theory.

The racial formation perspective was an attempt to break with three major reductionist strains of sociological thought that did not do justice to the centrality of race in social life. The first group of theories, which Omi and Winant call ethnicity-based theories, basically view the role of the state as democratizing by creating laws making discrimination illegal. So the extent

to which various racial-ethnic groups are able to assimilate culturally and politically to the dominant culture determines the degree to which they experience racial conflict and discord (Winant 2000). The second group of theories, class-based, Omi and Winant group together as blaming the capitalist marketplace for racial divisions – whether segmented, dual, or split labor market theories. These perspectives share the tendency to reduce race to a bargaining chip through which the capitalists exploit and divide the working class (Omi and Winant 1986). The third problematic category of theories is nation-based – positing that racial exploitation is exacerbated by a colonial power's decimation of groups' ties to the greater Diaspora, but such perspectives are deemed "retro" in the postcolonial era (Winant 2000).

As a corrective to these three paradigms, Omi and Winant offered their racial formation theory, positing race in itself as an "organizing principle of social relations" (1986: 68) – not reducible to ethnicity, class, or nation. The impact of this shift in sociological theorizing about race was "groundbreaking" (Espiritu 1999: 512), so much so that some of the initial negative reviews to the first edition (e.g., Nagel 1988) have been attributed to the initial resistance to such a major break with prior tradition (Jung and Kwon 2013). By the time Omi and Winant released a second edition in 1994, *Racial Formation*'s assertion that "race is present in every institution, every relationship, every individual" (1994: 158) was heralded as a "welcome" addition to the sociological tradition (Feagin and Elias 2012: 3). Indeed, it went on to become one of the most influential sociological perspectives on race and ethnicity of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Omi and Winant's work *Racial Formation* "has been cited in about 6% of all articles about race in sociology since its publication, making it one of the five most cited publications in this core sociological subfield" (Saperstein et al. 2013: 361). Having to break with major traditions made the initial climb steep, but their work eventually made great inroads into the field of the sociology of race and ethnicity.

Enduring Contributions of Racial Formation Theory

Omi and Winant's insistence that race is a "socio-historical concept" (1986: 60) in a constant state of flux, its meanings "unstable and politically contested" (Winant 2000: 182), is an enduring contribution to the field. As reflected in most race and ethnicity textbooks of the contemporary era, race is commonly now understood as a social construction in this way, in stark contrast to the two pitfalls of defining race that Omi and Winant most wanted to challenge with their work: that race is either a fixed essence, or a complete fictional illusion (Feagin and Elias 2012; Omi and Winant 1986). Racial formation theory clearly defines race as a phenomenon that is constantly in motion.

What we know as race is in perpetual movement because it is "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (Omi and Winant 1986: 68). To elucidate this focus on race as changeable, racial formation theory presented the concept of a "racial project" (Omi and Winant 1986: 64–65). One of many historical examples the authors offer of racial projects in the development of their theory is the formation of racial categories of "black" and "white" that simply did not exist prior to the late seventeenth century in the United States, but were formulated to provide an ideological underpinning to slavery. Africans who identified as Ibo or Yoruba, for instance, and spoke different languages, suddenly were grouped together in a category called "black," while immigrants of many different ethnic heritages, again with diverse linguistic backgrounds, got lumped together and called "white." Omi and Winant propose the concept of "racialization" to describe this "extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" (1986: 64).

When a collective of individuals becomes racialized for the first time, this amounts to a racial project, but there can also be other types of racial projects that attempt to redefine and reshape the meanings of groups that have already been racialized. One such project that occurred during Omi and Winant's major era of focus in their *Racial Formation* text – the 1960s to the 1980s – was the rearticulation of African Americans as "the new racists" through the 1980s backlash against affirmative action. Blacks were framed as preferring to rely upon the notion of "group rights" rather than individualism, and the term "reverse discrimination" was created with the purpose of casting African Americans as preferring an unfair advantage for themselves in contrast to fair-minded whites (Omi and Winant 1986: 134). Such racial projects are thus both political and ideological.

Analysis of race relations can often view the state as neutral and basically well intentioned, positing racism as the result of bigoted actors corrupting the process. Therefore, Omi and Winant's attention to government processes as the agents of the creation and maintenance of race is a major development in sociological race theory (Feagin 2006; Feagin and Elias 2012). Omi and Winant's reference to government as the "racial state" illustrates their intent to cast political institutions as explicitly and nearly always racial. In their analysis of the racial state, Omi and Winant demonstrate how public policy and laws have consistently defined race in ways that ensure unequal distribution of resources. Yet, in order to maintain control over this racial formation process, the racial state must not become static. Even as the state enforces the racial order, it exists at an "unstable equilibrium" (Omi and Winant 1986: 80). That is, institutions within the racial state – such as legislature and the courts – must be constantly in flux, using tactics like including those who were once formally excluded, so that the racial state can keep from coming under attack as racist and thus maintain ultimate control over defining the structure of race (Jung and Kwon 2013). This conception of the state as racial as opposed to a neutral structure corrupted by racist individuals is a major development in race theory.

Racial formation theory asserts that "racial change is the product of the interaction of racially based social movements and the racial state" (Omi and Winant 1986: 83). For example, the creation of "Asian American" in the 1960s – as a political label that united diverse ethnic groups like Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans – came about as an interaction between social movements and the racial state. The racial state was already treating members of these divergent groups similarly, whether it was the census, the courts, the legislature, or the educational system, and this impacted how other Americans reacted to them. As with the aforementioned example, whereby blacks were rearticulated as "new racists," in the case of Asian Americans, the racial state collaborated with the media to wrap racial ideology around its racial formation.

When the United States economy was seen as being threatened by the rapid technological advancements and success of Japan in the 1980s, Americans who were not even Japanese Americans became targets of hate crimes, perpetrated by members of the downsized working class. The brutal killing of Vincent Chin in 1982 is one such example. Although Chin was Chinese American, his attackers' rage was directed at an individual from a group that had undergone the process of racialization to become Asian. The killers Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, were angry at having lost their jobs due to Chrysler downsizing because of competition with Japanese car manufacturers. Their association of Japan with all those who appeared to be of Asian descent could be seen as the result of a racial project that created a scapegoat of this relatively newly formed pan-ethnic racial group (Hwang 2007). As is often the case with social movement ignition, this single incident stimulated the Asian American civil rights movement and further unification across various Asian American ethnic lines. By 1990, the racial state collaborated in this

racial project by adding a US census racial category called "Asian American." This process exemplifies the role of the racial state in a flexible interplay between the micro and the macro aspects of a racial project.

In specifying that race is a social construction as opposed to a fixed essence, racial formation theory made a contribution that solidified in sociology what came to be the accepted conceptual definition of "race," replacing prior formulations that focused on phenotypical characteristics and de-emphasized social, dynamic processes. As noted earlier, racial formation theory also insists that the racial state is a key agent in the creation and perpetuation of racism, in conjunction with micro- and macro-level forces.

A Race Theory to Bridge Macro and Micro

In addition to challenging ethnicity, class, and nationality-based perspectives that tended to dominate the race subfield of sociology at the time of their initial writings, Omi and Winant wanted to more effectively bridge micro and macro theorizing about race. Because a "notable and intriguing feature of race is its ubiquity, its presence in both the smallest and the largest features of social relationships, institutions, and identities" (Winant 2000: 181), Winant argued that sociologists have an "obligation" to address race relations in this multilevel way. Therefore, Winant describes racial formation theory in the following way:

> *(a) It views the meaning of race and the content of racial identities as unstable and politically contested; (b) It understands racial formation as the intersection/conflict of racial "projects" that combine representational/discursive elements with structural/institutional ones; (c) It sees these intersections as iterative sequences of interpretations (articulations) of the meaning of race that are open to many types of agency, from the individual to the organizational, from the local to the global (Winant 2000: 182).*

Thus, the designers of racial formation theory intended it to be applicable to both macro and micro levels of social life. For example, when deindustrialization resulted in high urban unemployment, results of such macro forces became inscribed into racial ideology in a way that targeted the most intimate space of personal relationships and families. A racial project rearticulated black urban unemployment as a "result of defective black cultural norms, of familial disorganization, etc." (Omi and Winant 1986: 66). The racial state with its welfare policy thus affects the lives of individual families by casting suspicion and stigma on African American parents and children, playing out in individual welfare offices around the country, and even in grocery lines, affecting Americans' racialized perceptions of each other.

Despite Omi and Winant's stated efforts to apply racial formation in a multilevel way, most of the historical evidence that Omi and Winant draw upon focuses on how race is defined by "battle between the state and social movements" (Saperstein et al. 2013: 363) and thus remains predominantly macro in its orientation. However, much social science research on the social construction of race at the micro-level that has proliferated since the initial publication of Omi and Winant's work – particularly studies of how people decide to categorize themselves racially and the socio-political influences on those individual variations – can owe an intellectual debt to the racial formation perspective with its emphasis on the fluidity of race and the way it is contested in everyday life. For instance, Rockquemore and Brunsma's study of biracial identities make use of Omi and Winant's "momentary crisis of racial meaning" (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2008: 24) in analyzing respondents' reactions to questions like "what are you?" that ask them to account for themselves in ways that others do not. Likewise, Clara Rodriguez's (2000) study of Latino Americans' changing racial identities draws upon racial formation theory by examining how changes in the US census racial categorization system affect how individuals identify.

Indeed, many of her respondents vary in how they answer the race question depending on who is asking, and for what purpose. Often they check "other" and write in how they prefer to be identified. Although Omi and Winant themselves did not rely upon ethnographic data like this to build their framework, Saperstein et al. (2013) maintain that much of such work builds upon the groundwork that racial formation theory set.

Critiques of Racial Formation

Even critics agree that racial formation theory broke new ground by frontlining the centrality of race in all institutions and emphasizing the role of the racial state. Likewise, few would deny that the racial formation perspective advanced the conversation about what race is, by positing race as fluid rather than static and enduringly relevant rather than mere fiction. Yet, in the twenty-first century, as the work in the subfield of sociology of race and ethnicity has proliferated, some have assessed racial formation theory as having certain blind spots.

One such blind spot concerns the everyday racism among citizenry that is woven into the culture. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva advanced a structural theory of racism in a 1997 article in the *American Sociological Review* that first acknowledged racial formation's important contributions but ultimately found fault with its overemphasis on "ideological and juridicopolitical" (Bonilla-Silva 1997: 466) racial projects. While racial formation perspective's development of the concept of the racial state was indeed notable, scholars like Bonilla-Silva rightly point out that it is not only explicitly political actors like "neoconservatives, members of the far right, liberals" (Bonilla-Silva 1997: 466) who infuse racial ideology throughout culture and society. Bonilla-Silva went on to employ empirical survey and in-depth interview work to emphasize how everyday actors (e.g., college students, members of the Detroit working class, etc.) maintain the ideological structure of racism through their discursive representations (Bonilla-Silva 2009). Many members of society use nearly identical racial frames in their everyday conversations about racial inequality, regardless of individual variations among them. One relevant question might be: If the formation of race is the product of struggles between social movements and the racial state, what is the process by which so many others fall in step?

Another aspect of structural racism that racial formation theory may not address fully is the foundation of material racial advantage. Racial privilege has an intergenerationally transmitted shelf-life that lingers, even long after policies of the racial state shift and rearticulate race in new ways. Although Omi and Winant do analyze the role of the racial state in defining a black race within slavery, Joe Feagin argues that "their historical analyses do not go far enough in analyzing how … European nation-state actors collaborated with elite economic actors to generate the imperialism, genocide, and slavery that created the racial underpinning of Western countries like the United States" (Feagin 2010: 24). To suggest, as Omi and Winant do, that the institutionalized racism that founded the US "lingers like a hangover or a sleepless night that has left us badly out of sorts" (Omi and Winant 1994: 157) may serve to minimize that history as an echo or an aftershock rather than to analyze how those arrangements directly affect the material distribution of resources in the present day (Feagin and Elias 2012: 5). To cast the formation of race as constantly in motion may inadvertently serve to gloss over the rigidity of structural racism.

More to the point, the concept of racism itself is not a central component of racial formation theory, nor is white racism in particular. To theorize racial formation as the outcome of struggles between social movements and the racial state is to leave open the assumption that such struggles occur between similarly socially situated actors. Yet, such a supposition would obscure

"what racial group wins these (often fixed) contests over concrete resources most of the time, and what racial group, fundamentally and usually, has the power to impose most central racial meanings and structures of oppression on less-powerful racial groups" (Feagin and Elias 2012: 14). These critics argue that, by actually naming white racism and white privilege, and using concepts like systemic and structural racism, racial formation theory could go further in explaining how race is formed, reformed, and continues its pervasive influence in the fabric of social life.

Notably, none of racial formation theory's critics evaluate it as incorrect or inapplicable. It remains a useful framework that critics engage because they acknowledge its major contribution to the field. Indeed, the very contributions of racial formation theory that have made it so enduringly influential – that race is fluid and contested, and that race is formed through struggles between social movements and the racial state – are the same areas that some scholars argue are in need of further development. Critics caution that over-emphasis on race's fluidity can obscure the deeply entrenched foundation of systemic racism and white privilege. Yet none would deny that race is indeed a social construction, that the racial state has manipulated it in different ways over time, and that it cannot be reducible to nationality, ethnicity, or class. And although the focus of Omi and Winant's groundbreaking work was predominantly at the macro-level of state institutions and political actors, their theory has inspired other scholars working at both the micro and meso levels (Saperstein et al. 2013). Thus, racial formation theory continues to influence the field of race-and-ethnic relations within sociology, and even other disciplines, such as political science, history and critical race/legal theory (Jung and Kwon 2013). As the changing demographics of the United States and other immigration-friendly societies continue to shift in this age of increasingly global politics and economy, one can only expect that racial formation theory will continue to be relevant and helpful, whether in its current form or extended by the next generation of scholars seeking to add to its explanatory potential.

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