

Part II

Relations, Practices, and Theories of Race in Society

Introduction

The ideas about race discussed in Part I have a messy relationship to the construction and reality of race in society. These ideas and theories are by no means blueprints. If one believes that ideas shape reality, then reality can be seen as the result of those ideas, but there is little evidence that the world works that way. Typically, ideas of race are formed after the facts in reality, so that it is important to consider reality directly and revise settled ideas, come up with new ones, or consider what the settled ideas have failed to take into account.

Chapter 6 provides an examination of the social construction of race, with accounts and analyses of how race has been socially constructed through colonialism and global development; social technologies of race and racism; individual racial identities, including mixed race, and models for resisting and deconstructing race. Behavior and institutional practices that harm racial minorities are broadly recognized to be morally wrong and the term for that is *racism*.

The late twentieth century academic study of racism began with individuals and legal structures. It was assumed that racist actions and exclusions were carried out because individuals had certain beliefs, and that people of color experienced discrimination because the law did not explicitly prohibit it. After the civil rights movement, when experiences of racism continued, new theoretical tools were developed: Individual versus structural or institutional racism; white privilege, micro-aggression, and epistemic oppression.

Chapter 7 provides analyses of these ills. Chapter 8 provides analyses of how race and ethnicity intersect with social goods such as marriage rates and health. As a social construction, race is attached to family genealogy, creating intergenerational groups and identities for individuals. Marriage rates vary with race, although more due to external social and economic factors than ethnic or racial culture or the preferences or values of individuals. In a racially striated society, class includes cultural capital as tastes and preferences and those of whites may determine power structures within institutions, to the disadvantage of racial minorities. Racial and ethnic health disparities are not the result of group cultures or biology but of environmental restrictions on opportunities, as well as stress. Health varies according to race and ethnicity, because health, education, and wealth/income are positively correlated and mutually interactive.

In Chapter 9, political philosophy, law, and public policy are considered in terms of nonwhite race. Written law in democratic societies has been egalitarian, but there has often been a gap between promulgated law and societal practice. Public policy consists of principles and their applications that may either be consistent with egalitarian law or closer to custom as structured by dominant groups. As we have seen in Chapter 1, historically, the philosophical tradition has not been racially egalitarian and anti-nonwhite racism was explicitly expressed by writers such as Hume, Kant, Hegel, and even John Stuart Mill. Nevertheless, there is a consensus about racial equality among contemporary political philosophers. The first part of Chapter 9 takes up several contemporary philosophical/ theoretical approaches to justice and injustice; the second part addresses issues of public policy in Affirmative Action and racial profiling by police officers.

Chapter 10 concludes the book with discussion of race and gender. Philosophical feminism has been welcoming toward diversity but the demographics and history of feminism as political and social movements, have not been racially inclusive. There is, as well, a tension between African American philosophy as practiced by men and Black Feminist philosophy as developed by women. The book closes with discussion of a recent controversy about whether philosophers have an ethical obligation to use scholarly sources written by members of underrepresented groups in philosophy.