

Introduction

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE 2008 presidential election, many people perceived the victory by President Barack Obama to be a symbol of the ways in which the United States had transcended its long-lasting racial challenges and arrived in a post-racial era (Burnham, 2009). However, a plethora of evidence underscores the reality that *race*, the socially constructed phenomenon utilized to categorize people who share similar physical traits, is still a significant factor shaping the experiences of people within U.S. society. For example, since President Obama's victory in 2008, U.S. society has witnessed many high-profile racially motivated incidents and racially charged debates. During this time frame, the racial incidents that have received national media attention include, but are not limited to, the following:

- In 2009, a Black Harvard professor named Henry Louis Gates Jr. was interrogated for breaking into his own home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and arrested, sparking national debates about racial profiling (Thompson, 2010).
- In 2010, the Governor of Arizona banned ethnic studies in Tucson schools under accusations that the Tucson Chicano Studies Program was anti-American, catalyzing national outrage and protest within Arizona's Mexican American community (Carcamo, 2013). The battle over this decision to ban ethnic studies is still being fought in the U.S. court system.
- In a 2012 racially motivated hate crime, a White gunman walked into a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and opened fire, murdering six members of the Sikh community (Romell, 2012).

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- In 2014, a large number of alleged racial profiling and police brutality cases were recorded and distributed online, leading to rising racial tensions across the nation (Barrett, Vilensky, & Jackson, 2014; Davey & Bossman, 2014). These incidents led to protesters filling the streets to express their discontent with police abuse of power and widespread national media attention on racism in law enforcement and judicial systems.
 - In 2014, national media outlets reported a rise in Ku Klux Klan recruitment efforts around the nation (Sgueglia, Marcellino, & Sanchez, 2014).

These are just a few of the many noteworthy racially charged occurrences in U.S. society that have permeated national media over the past few years.

Given that higher education is a microcosm of society, it is not surprising that racially charged events and resulting racial tensions continue to emerge on college campuses around the nation as well. In some cases, students of color and their allies have organized to speak out against these racial incidents at their institutions. Recent examples of incidents that spark racial tension on campuses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- In 2011, a University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) student named Alexandra Wallace posted a racially charged rant on YouTube, in which she mocked Asians and Asian Americans using “*ching chong, ling long, ting tong*” sounds and disparaged these students for talking on their phones in the library and having their parents visit campus. The video prompted a backlash from the Asian American community nationally and at UCLA, eventually leading to Wallace leaving the university (Gordon & Rojas, 2011).
- In 2014, the University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign (UIUC) hired Dr. Steven Salaita for a faculty position in its American Indian studies program. However, after Salaita posted tweets sharing his views about the conflict between Israel and Palestine that some found offensive, the UIUC Chancellor retracted Salaita’s job offer just before he was supposed to assume the position (Hiltzik, 2014). Scholars around the country and both faculty and students across the UIUC campus subsequently spoke out against the decision, resulting in multiple national associations boycotting the campus, the UIUC faculty issuing a vote of no confidence

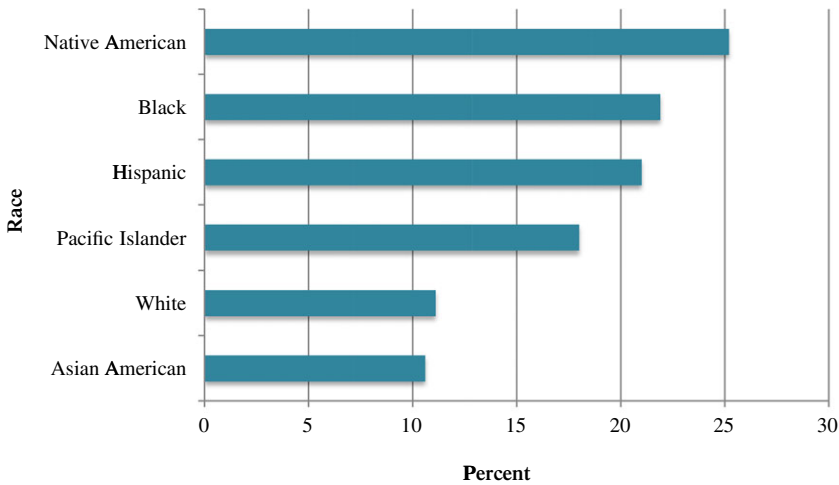
in their Chancellor, and a barrage of student protests against the administration's actions on that campus.

- In 2014, Northwestern University released a report indicating that one of its founders, John Evans, might be partially responsible for the notorious massacre of an innocent community of Native Americans at Sand Creek in Colorado (Northwestern University, 2014). Evans also helped found the University of Denver, where part of the campus community has organized to pressure the institution to acknowledge and address the racial history surrounding their founder.
- Over the past few years, several institutions, such as the University of California, San Diego, and Santa Clara University, have witnessed their students hosting race-themed parties in which students dress up as people of color using face paint and racist costumes (Museus & Truong, 2013).

These examples are just a handful of the many high-profile incidents that have sparked racial tensions in higher education over the past few years, and they signify the reality that college campuses continue to grapple with issues of race in the present day.

The ways in which race permeates higher education discourse are not limited to incidents that spark racial tension on college campuses. National conversations about the ways that race permeates higher education policy and practice also abound. At the policy level, in 2013, the legality of affirmative action at the University of Texas was first challenged before the Supreme Court in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, reinvigorating national debates about the utilization of race-conscious admissions policies in higher education (Resmovits, 2014). In addition, an increasing number of states are adopting outcomes-based and performance funding policies that have been criticized for disadvantaging colleges and universities with high concentrations of people of color, leading to increased conversations about the role of such policies in systemically limiting opportunities for already disadvantaged racial communities and perpetuating racial inequities throughout the system (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2013). Moreover, the plight and fight of young men of color has been given increased national

FIGURE 1
Percent of United States Population Living in Poverty by Race



Source: Data are from the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata System (PUMS).

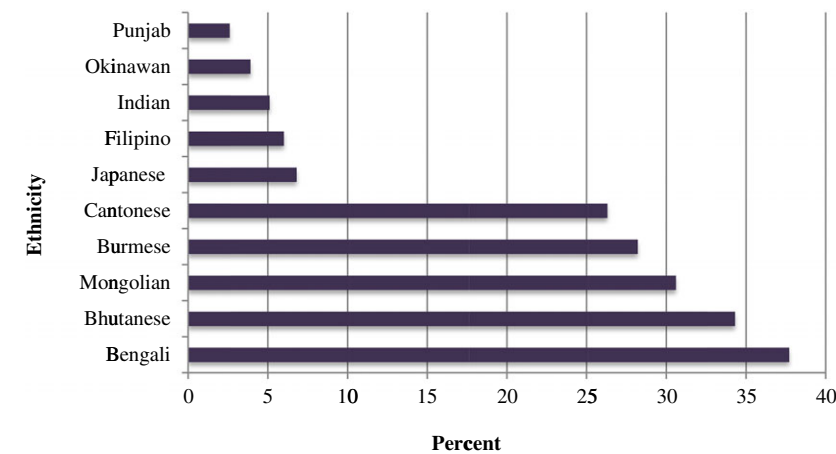
Note: The sample was limited to those 25 years of age and older, and appropriate sample weights were applied.

attention by the federal government, regional policy arenas, and national media outlets (College Board, 2014).

A plethora of empirical evidence also indicates that racial inequalities continue to permeate society (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For example, evidence indicates that people of color are more likely to be born into poverty than their majority counterparts. Indeed, in 2013, approximately 11% of Whites lived at or below the poverty line, while that same figure was 18% for Pacific Islanders, 21% for Hispanics, 22% for Blacks, and 25% for Native Americans (Figure 1). While Asian American communities exhibited poverty rates below 11%, which is a rate lower than all other racial groups, there are drastic disparities in poverty within the Asian American population. In fact, some Asian American ethnic groups exhibit poverty rates well below Whites and others witnessing far higher rates of poverty than the White majority (Figure 2).

These racial disparities in poverty have also been linked to racial disparities in health, with communities of color experiencing more frequent health problems than their majority counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and

FIGURE 2
Percent of Asian Americans Living in Poverty by Ethnicity

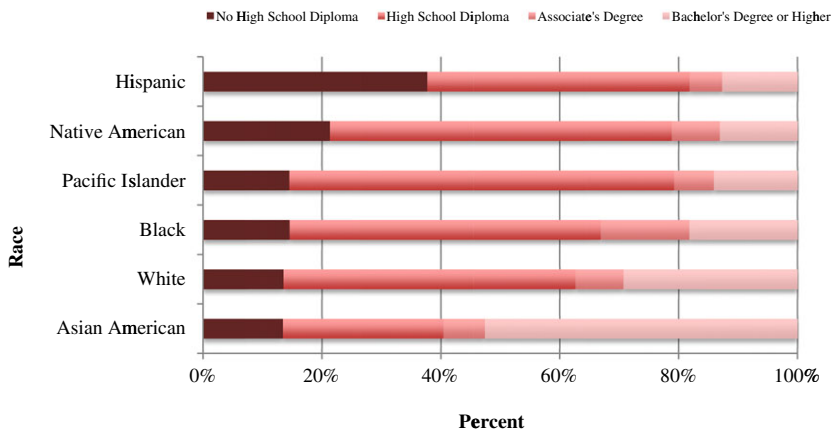


Source: Data are from the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata System (PUMS).

Note: The sample was limited to those 25 years of age and older, and appropriate sample weights were applied. To demonstrate disparities, five ethnic groups exhibiting the highest and five ethnic groups exhibiting the lowest poverty levels were included.

Prevention, 2011). Indeed, communities of color experiencing high poverty rates have also been more likely to witness increased health problems and unable to access adequate health care. Moreover, this combination of increased susceptibility to health problems and lack of access to quality health care has been associated with higher mortality rates among people of color across the nation (Satcher et al., 2005). While President Obama’s universal health care plan is now in effect, the extent of the impact that this plan will have on health disparities among various racial and ethnic groups remains to be seen. It can also be hypothesized that increased susceptibility to health problems and inadequate health care among people of color hinder their capacity to meet basic needs required to focus on academics. Moreover, decreases in the number of students of color applying to and enrolling in medical schools in states with affirmative action bans and the reality that White physicians are less likely to serve historically marginalized populations than their peer physicians of color raise concerns that extant health disparities could be exacerbated (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Garces & Mikey-Pabello, 2015).

FIGURE 3
Educational Attainment Levels by Race



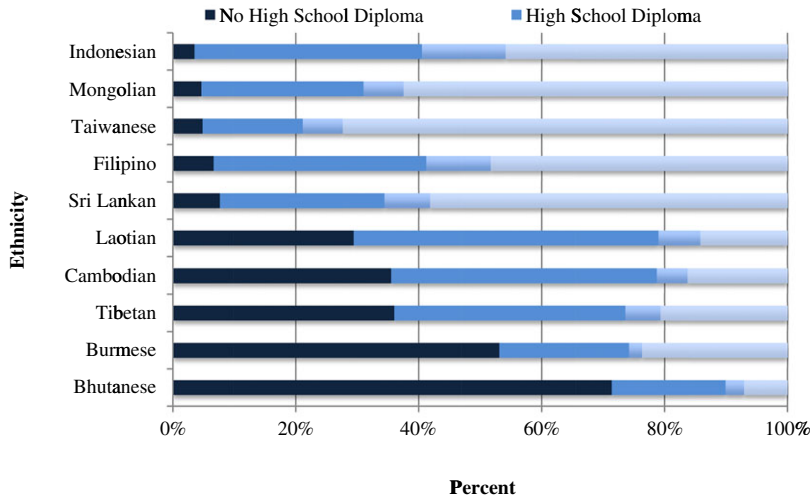
Source: Data are from the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata System (PUMS).
Note: The sample was limited to those 25 years of age and older, and appropriate sample weights were applied.

Within education, racial and ethnic disparities are omnipresent, with people of color being underrepresented among those who attain credentials at every level of education. Indeed, national data from the Department of Education indicate that race is a divisive factor throughout K–12 education. Indeed, students of color are concentrated in underresourced schools, are more likely to be suspended, have less access to high-quality rigorous curriculum, and are taught by lower-paid teachers with lower qualifications (Rich, 2014). Not surprisingly, these inequities channel students of color on a pathway of decreased educational opportunity. Recent data show that approximately 13.5% of Whites have earned less than a high school diploma or equivalent, 16% of Black, 14.5% of Pacific Islander, 21% of Native American, and 38% of Hispanic populations (Figure 3). At the same time, approximately 29% of Whites hold a bachelor's degree or higher, while far fewer of their Black (20%), Pacific Islander (14%), Native American (13%), and Hispanic (13%) counterparts have earned a baccalaureate degree.

While aggregate statistics suggest that Asian Americans exhibit greater levels of achievement than other racial groups, these figures mask substantial

FIGURE 4

Asian American Educational Attainment Levels by Ethnicity



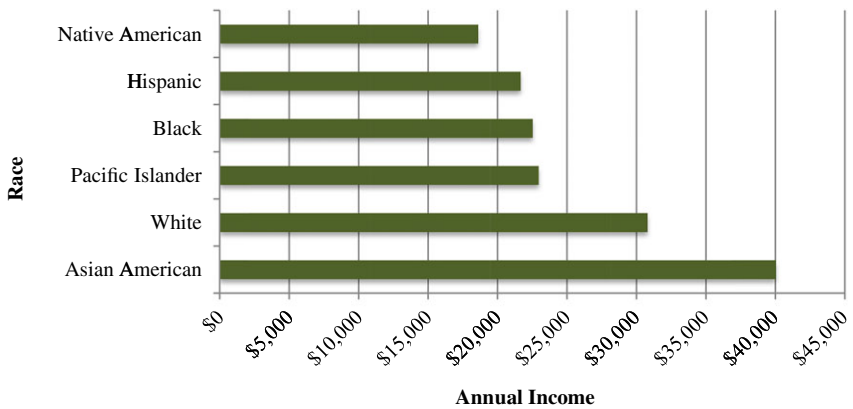
Source: Data are from the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata System (PUMS).

Note: The sample was limited to those 25 years of age and older, and appropriate sample weights were applied. To demonstrate disparities, five ethnic groups exhibiting the highest and five ethnic groups exhibiting the lowest attainment levels were included.

disparities within this racial category. For instance, while over 95% of some Asian American ethnic groups have attained a high school diploma or equivalent, the percentage of Bhutanese (71%), Burmese (53%), Tibetan (36%), Cambodian (35.5%), and Laotian (29%) Americans who have been unable to attain this level of education is twice the rate of the White majority (13.5%) (Figure 4). Similarly, although some Asian American ethnic subpopulations attained bachelor's degrees or higher at over twice the rate of Whites (29%), other groups (e.g., Bhutanese, Laotian, Cambodian, Tibetan, and Burmese Americans) have earned baccalaureate degrees at rates far lower than the majority.

It is important to acknowledge that these racial and ethnic disparities are a national problem, and addressing them is a national imperative. Indeed, higher education policy researchers have noted that, if these disparities are not addressed, they could have devastating economic and social consequences for U.S. society (Carey, 2004, 2005).

FIGURE 5
Annual Income Levels by Race



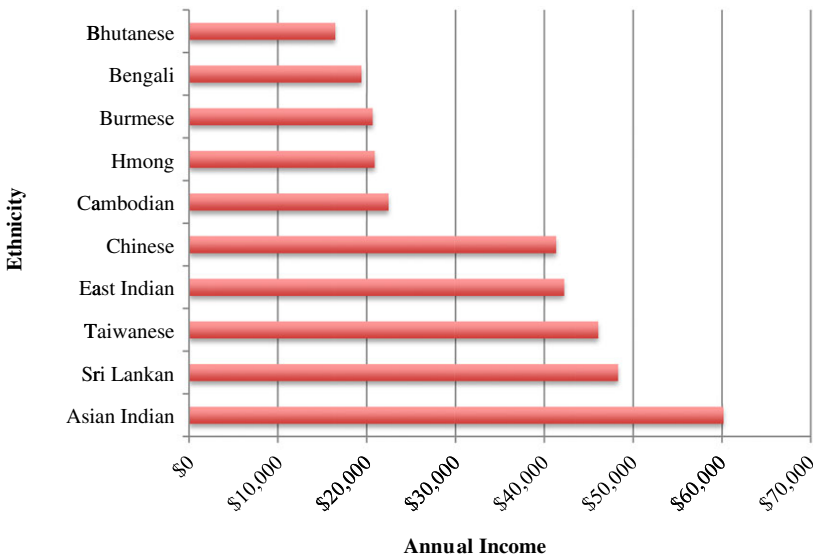
Source: Data are from the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata System (PUMS).

Note: The sample was limited to those 25 years of age and older, income was adjusted, and appropriate sample weights were applied.

Given the continuing significance of race and racial disparities in postsecondary education, it is essential that higher education scholars, policymakers, and practitioners better understand the ways in which *racism* operates in policy-making processes and throughout the walls of the nation’s postsecondary institutions. Such knowledge is necessary for higher education policy makers and institutional leaders to understand how they can address race-related problems on college campuses. Thus, this volume is aimed at providing a much-needed synthesis of theory, research, and evidence that illuminates the ways that racism shapes higher education systems and the experiences of people who navigate and function within them.

Not surprisingly, the aforementioned racial disparities in education are associated with occupational and income disparities in the workforce. In 2013, the mean annual income for Whites was \$30,788, which was significantly higher than the mean yearly income for their Pacific Islander (\$22,950), Black (\$22,524), Latina and Latino (\$21,656), and Native American (\$18,596) counterparts (Figure 5). Although the median income among Asian Americans was the highest in the aggregate (\$40,024), these statistics can be misleading. First, Asian Americans tend to be concentrated in the most

FIGURE 6
Annual Asian American Income Levels by Ethnicity



Source: Data are from the U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata System (PUMS).

Note: The sample was limited to those 25 years of age and older, income was adjusted, and appropriate sample weights were applied. To demonstrate disparities, five ethnic groups exhibiting the highest and five ethnic groups exhibiting the lowest income levels were included.

expensive geographic regions, meaning that they have a higher average cost of living than the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Given that they are concentrated in regions where dollars have lower buying power, even if Asian Americans exhibited higher incomes on average in the aggregate, they do not necessarily translate into higher quality of life. In addition, when these data are disaggregated by ethnicity, several ethnic groups exhibit relatively low annual income levels. For example, the Asian American ethnic groups that reported the lowest average annual incomes in 2013 were Bhutanese (\$16,453), Bengali (\$19,383), Burmese (\$20,659), Hmong (\$20,887), and Cambodian (\$22,442)—all of which were noticeably lower than their majority counterparts (\$30,788) (Figure 6).

Unemployment statistics also illuminate significant racial disparities. In the third quarter of 2014, 6.4% of Whites were unemployed, which is a rate

lower than their Black (11.7%) and Hispanic or Latino (7.3%) counterparts (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Again, Asian Americans (4.5%) exhibited unemployment rates lower than other racial groups, but such aggregated statistics mask significant disparities among ethnic groups within the Asian American racial category (Museus, 2013a, 2013b). And, when those data are disaggregated, they show that some Asian American ethnic subgroups have unemployment rates that are higher than their majority counterparts and the overall national average.

The disparities discussed above have generated an increased sense of urgency among policy makers (Carey, 2004, 2005). This increased urgency is partially due to the reality that people of color who face systemic inequalities represent a growing share of the U.S. population. In fact, people of color are projected to comprise over 57% of the U.S. population by the year 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Scholars have noted that it is likely that the aforementioned systemic racial inequities, coupled with these demographic shifts, will lead to severe economic and social challenges for larger society (Carey, 2004). While we agree that preventing the potential devastating ramifications of persisting inequalities is important, we also underscore that the importance of eradicating racial inequalities in higher education is often couched within this neoliberal framework to signify a sense of urgency, and we emphasize that addressing these inequalities is also a moral imperative. Indeed, the current monograph is based on the assumption that, regardless of the economic implications for larger society, eradicating racial inequities, combating systemic racism, and supporting communities of color that suffer from systemic oppression are an urgent matter in and of itself. In the following section, we discuss the importance of racism in understanding and addressing the aforementioned inequalities.

Racism and Racial Equity as a Framework for Understanding Race in Higher Education

Despite the significance of race, racism remains undertheorized in the field of education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Specifically, there is a shortage of theories in the field of education in general, and higher education in particular, that sufficiently account for the role of racism in the experiences of people of color within the education system.

Prior to the 20th century, higher education research focused almost exclusively on understanding how best to serve an all-White clientele (Cohen, 1998; Karabel, 2005; Thelin, 2004). This focus mirrored the provincial view of the time, which was that institutions of higher education were designed to groom and prepare White “gentlemen” for entry into and leadership in civic and professional life (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Despite the racialized roots of higher education, it can be argued that most of the dominant theories (e.g., Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1987) that have been adopted and utilized by researchers and practitioners to study and understand the experiences of people in college settings have been deracialized and acultural (Museus, 2014).

Over the past half-century, researchers have made significant advances in understanding how racism shapes postsecondary institutions and experiences. First, higher education scholars have adopted and constructed useful conceptual frameworks that are designed to help understand and combat racial oppression (second chapter, “Racial Frameworks in Higher Education”). Second, many researchers have examined how racism shapes policies and the experiences of faculty and students in postsecondary education (fourth chapter, “Systemic Racism in Higher Education”). Higher education scholars have also stimulated discourse about how colleges and universities might begin to eradicate systemic racial inequities (fifth chapter, “Advancing Scholarship and Advocacy to Achieve Equity in Higher Education”). These bodies of scholarship are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

Nonetheless, despite the advances that have been made in understanding how racism shapes higher education, racial advocacy and the study of race in postsecondary education sometimes do not adequately account for the role of racism in causing and perpetuating racial problems (Brown, 1990; Harper, 2012). Indeed, even when postsecondary policy makers and educators seek to explicitly address issues associated with race, White racial frames work to diminish the significance of racism in their understanding and methods of solving racial problems. For example, Iverson (2007) analyzed 21 diversity action plans at 20 U.S. land-grant universities and uncovered how,

despite good intentions, a historical legacy of racism and White supremacy undermined prodiversity policies and practices in postsecondary institutions. She found that, even when universities strove to promote diversity, many of them failed to recognize how their own institutional language worked to further reinscribe minoritized communities as “outsiders” to postsecondary education.

Race scholars have also exposed how higher education researchers fail to give sufficient attention to the role of racism in causing racial problems in higher education (Harper, 2012; Stanley, 2007). For example, one systematic analysis of 255 articles across seven peer-reviewed journals in higher education revealed that researchers who study people of color in postsecondary institutions retreat to majoritarian norms that ignore or dismiss racism as an explanation for the racial problems faced by historically marginalized communities (Harper, 2012). It is also important to note that the reluctance to name racism as a causal factor in racial disparities is likely not due to individually internalized White racial frames alone. Rather, researchers have argued that larger peer-review systems are permeated with dominant White racial frames and narratives as well (Stanley, 2007), making it more difficult for scholars to explicitly center the concept of racism, which is often considered taboo or outside the domain of valid knowledge. These realities underscore the critical role of professional editors and reviewers, who serve as gatekeepers of knowledge within the scholarly arena, in limiting or enabling researchers to utilize and center such critical race perspectives.

To address these challenges, the current volume offers a more coherent and comprehensive view of racial problems in higher education. In this opening chapter, we provided evidence regarding the continuing significance of race by demonstrating the persistence of systemic racial disparities throughout society and within higher education. As we illustrate, most significant social indicators suggest that resources, opportunities, and outcomes vary across racial lines.

Second, in the remainder of this volume we foreground the concept of racism as a conceptual lens that can be used to understand the aforementioned racial disparities. For the purposes of this volume, we define *racism* as a complex social system that functions to allow a dominant racial group to maintain

power and privilege over minoritized racial populations, their conditions and experiences, and their access to opportunities and resources (Harrell, 2000). Under this definition, racism operates at a systemic level to privilege the racial majority's perspectives in the formation and interpretation of policy, the evolution of organizations and their environments, the construction of spaces on college campuses, the development and implementation of (co-)curricula, the delivery of information and support, and the internalized beliefs and perspectives of individuals throughout the system. We highlight how systemic racism contributes to racial inequalities by perpetuating a racially inequitable system of higher education.

Finally, we highlight how research on racial equity can help inform efforts to combat racism and cultivate more equitable postsecondary systems. For the purposes of this volume, racial equity does not simply refer to equal representation of different racial groups among those entering or graduating from higher education. We espouse a systemic definition of *racial equity* as racially equitable systems in which racially diverse perspectives are equally embedded in power structures, policy-making processes, and the cultural fabric of organizations (e.g., mission statements, strategic plans, curricula, etc.) at federal, state, organizational, divisional, departmental, and programmatic levels. We believe that an awareness of the nature of racism must be coupled with an understanding of how to advance racial equity to address higher education's most pressing racial problems. In sum, the current monograph aims to synthesize scholarship on racial inequalities, racism, and racial equity to paint a more coherent and complex picture of the racial state of contemporary higher education than what currently exists.

Purpose of the Monograph

Using the concept of racism as an underlying conceptual lens, we aim to accomplish three objectives. First, we seek to provide a comprehensive synthesis of literature on the ways in which racism shapes experiences of people in higher education. Due to the fact that a plethora of literature that is relevant to this topic has been conducted outside education, an exhaustive review of relevant theory and research is implausible. Therefore, we hope that the current

synthesis and analysis of research primarily serves as a catalyst for ongoing discussions about how systemic racism shapes institutions of higher education and experiences within them, as well as how racial advocacy efforts can be (re)defined and (re)constructed to combat systemic racial oppression.

Second, through the current volume, we seek to take stock of the scholarship that has been generated on racism in higher education, so that we can identify critical gaps and areas that need to be addressed within this body of knowledge. Indeed, although a substantial amount of literature has been produced on the role of race in higher education over the past few decades, much remains to be learned about how these phenomena shape postsecondary institutions and experiences. An assessment of what has been accomplished and what goals need to be achieved in the coming years is useful in informing future efforts to generate knowledge that can help combat racial oppression in higher education and society.

Third, we provide a call to action for racial justice advocates and leaders in higher education. Based on our analysis and synthesis of literature, we provide recommendations regarding how higher education researchers, policy makers, and practitioners can go about addressing systemic racial inequities that permeate higher education. Our aim is to stimulate critical thinking about the racial justice advocacy that is currently taking place, and encourage advocates to rethink efforts to combat racism in postsecondary education.

Outline of Monograph

To accomplish the aforementioned goals, we present four additional chapters. In the second chapter, “Racial Frameworks in Higher Education,” we discuss racial frameworks that have been applied to understand racism and racial equity in postsecondary systems. In the third chapter, “Historical and Contemporary Racial Contexts,” we provide an overview of critical historical and current racial contexts within which higher education exists. This chapter highlights the deeply embedded nature of racism throughout U.S. society. The fourth chapter, “Systemic Racism in Higher Education,” examines the ways in which racism shapes the postsecondary education system and experiences within it. Specifically, we provide an overview of how racism shapes

higher education policies, the experiences of college faculty, and the lives of students in college. In our concluding chapter, “Advancing Scholarship and Advocacy to Achieve Equity in Higher Education,” we utilize the information in previous chapters to construct and offer a set of recommendations for higher education policy and practice that are aimed at advancing systemic transformation toward racial justice.

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