# Chapter 7
# Intersectionality: The Linkage of Racism with Other Forms of Discrimination

Intersectionality is a concept that grew out of the work of black feminists in the United States (Tomlinson, 2013; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012) who asserted that gender and race are oppressive cultural subsets that interact and support one another. Some scholars outside the United States (as cited in Tomlinson, 2013) have critiqued intersectionality as a black feminist phenomenon, minimizing its merit. Their criticisms, however, overlook the black/white binary construct, the foundational basis for the development of intersectionality, which has now been broadened to include all subordinate racial groups, and individual distinguishing subsets, that must deal with the oppressive systems within the society.

The equality-of-oppression paradigm, according to Schiele (2007), "assumes that every source of oppression is equal to others in its severity, frequency, and production of human degradation" (p. 84). It has also been noted by other scholars, for example, Chavis and Hill (2009) and Viruell-Fuentes et al. (2012), although not referred to using that term. This view does not acknowledge racism as the dominant social bias in the United States and, thus, diminishes the importance of race in the oppressive systemic structure and overlapping social subsets faced by people of color. In this book, we acknowledge that racism is only one of the oppressive systems in the society, but reject the equality-of-oppression paradigm and assert that racism is the principal oppressive system. Historically, racism has superseded all other forms of oppression and marginalization in the United States. As we have previously discussed (see Chaps. 1 and 3), the United States was established by whites on a foundation of race-based inequality and this phenomenon still exists today on individual, organizational, and societal levels (see Chap. 6) that are supported by scaffolding rungs and poles (see Fig. 1.1). For example, the racialized institutionalization of slavery, particularly in the South, was supported by components of the *scaffolding* (such as exploitation, violence, and cultural imperialism) and was solidified using an intertwined web of laws, codes, and habits that connected every aspect of life for persons of African descent in the United States (Miller, 2007; Myrdal, 1944; Stampp, 1956) and subsequently for all people of color. The historical impact of legislative operations, norms, and values at the state

and federal levels is reflected across the institutional sectors of society today, and these forces strengthen the links between differences in skin color and language and differences in privilege and power. Intersectionalities elucidate the invisibilities of the countless individuals within American society whose total identity is ignored (Crenshaw, 2015) and intersectionality recognizes that all oppressive groupings are "mutually [constructed] and work together to produce inequality" (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012, p. 2100).

This chapter focuses on structural and institutional intersectionality. Racism, as an overarching form of oppression, is examined by using Critical Race Theory to understand societal institutions that interface with intersectionality. Our analysis of racism illuminates the intersection of social subsets, and discusses how racial oppression is related to power, cultural sway, colonization, and immigration. The intersectionality of various forms of oppression is further explicated by examining the interconnections between cultural subsets and identities and the forces of power, cultural sway, and colonialism.

## Racism: The Overarching Form of Oppression

Oppression has been the galvanizing foundation for every scaffolding pole and rung that has built the American system. Oppression is the underpinning that solidifies, grounds, and exponentially gives significant weight to race and how it intersects on societal, structural, and personal levels within the United States. The social construction of race and its oppressive discriminating affiliate—racism—has been a profound presence in the development of the United States of America. In its formation, the country embraced race ranking and phenotypic racial classifications that encouraged a belief system that devalued people who are not white. Consequently, racism has permeated the structural and institutional identity of the society, the multiple overlapping cultural subsets that exist within the society, as well as the personal identities of those who inhabit the country.

Hardiman and Jackson (1997) and Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin (2013) note a number of concepts that relate to oppression, such as culture, institutions, individual, consciousness, attitude, and behavior. Our analyses build on these concepts to explicate race and its intersection with other forms of oppression in relation to sociopolitical and economic factors and historical themes. These analyses acknowledge the continual construction of color and race as visible stigmas in contemporary society and the ongoing complex and confusing dialogue about race.

### *Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality*

Foldy and Buckley (as noted in Walter et al., 2016) note that societal discussions about race do not take place in the United States. Such discussions are lacking because racism is not accepted as an appropriate issue for public discourse or private conversations

in "mixed company." Consequently, racism often is invisible to the common man or is so nuanced in its existence that it is not recognized (Paynter, Hautaniemi, & Muller, 1994). At times, even when it is blatantly apparent, because racism is so ingrained in the social/structural functions within society, it is ignored, deemed unfixable, or considered irrelevant. We argue that Critical Race theory (CRT) is particularly useful for understanding intersectionality and the complexity of the scaffolding of racism.

CRT (Crenshaw, 2011) examines the normative assumptions that assign privilege and preference based on race and racial politics. CRT recognizes intersectionality as a way of investigating multilevel and multiple systems of oppression. Central to CRT is the insistence that oppression is not a single ideology or occurrence but a fluid phenomenon rooted in power and control. This understanding is essential for resisting the ideology of colorblindness and race neutral policies (Crenshaw, 2011; Espino, 2012). Tactics used by proponents of CRT include: (a) voicing counter stories and identifying counter spaces that resist the stories told by the dominant group; (b) avoiding stereotypes about marginalized groups; and (c) supporting the social construction of stories of the marginalized (Jones, 2015). These actions are considered important because the societal/structural presence of racism seeps down to the person. Recently, black feminism has incorporated CRT as a way of examining the historical and intentional systems of oppression that inform laws and social policy.

An intersectional approach considers "simultaneous and mutually constitutive effects" (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012, p. 2099) on societal/structural occurrences. Intersectionality *as a theory* explicates the ways in which various subsets interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. Contemporary thought about intersectionality posits that classical models of *oppression* within society, such as oppression based on *race/ethnicity*, *gender*, *religion*, *nationality*, *sexual orientation*, *class*, or *disability,* do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate to create a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of, *discrimination* (Collins, 1990). Intersectionality builds on CRT by highlighting the multidimensionality of oppressions and recognizes that, although it is the most prominent, race alone does not account for the continual disempowerment of certain groups in the society.

## *Intersection of People and Societal Institutions*

Racism within the institutional and structural systems of the United States operates as a paradox for individuals of color. Two or more perceptions coexist about people of color: they are looked upon suspiciously, profiled, and stigmatized publicly; *and* they are overlooked, minimized, and not seen. At the turn of the twentieth century W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) had the insight that the experiences of African Americans were veiled by white racism, that their lives were opaque, obscure, and meaningless to whites in mainstream America. This opaque veil, when examined today, hides the inequitable presence of African Americans as well as other non-white groups in society. Invisibility removes from view the presence of racial groups that are not

white, yet this invisibility is contradicted by profiling, and taking note of people of color in negative ways. Everything done by people of color is infiltrated by these conflicting forms of discrimination which are structured on power and privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; McIntosh, 2008; Tourse, 2016). Personal identity, therefore, is created by perceptions of one's personal locations within a racist laden societal system.

Consider the example of a person who goes shopping in a boutique or department store. When the customer is a person of color, more often than not, they are discriminately followed by boutique personnel or a security guard. In contrast, when they are a white person, they generally freely browse through the store without undue scrutiny. In such scenarios, it is the person's racial place or location in society that influences the amount of scrutiny. The scrutiny tends to be further intensified when it is by a white store clerk or security guard who also has deep-seated conscious or unconscious fear or dislike of persons of color. Individual attitudes influence the degree of harassment elicited because of the customer's gender, age, health viability, appearance (presumption of class), and other social subsets. For example, a disheveled white youth might be perceived to be a drug addict who could attempt to steal merchandize and would, thus, receive more elevated scrutiny than a frail elderly African American woman.

One's locus of self or self-identity is constantly under siege by the intersections of socially constructed subsets and the perceptions of others within society. Bonilla-Silva (2014) asserts that "racial analysis [and the inherent intersections of a person is] beyond good and evil…it is akin to an analysis of people's character or morality" (p. 102). This nation's moral character has been formed by an oppressive persona that is highlighted by racial degradation of the "other." It is the structural and institutional practices of the society that, in the past and continuing today, influence life and location for people of color and assist in maintaining the status quo for the power elite. As previously noted, Du Bois (1903) articulated the concept of the "veil." Approximately 100 years later, McGoldrick (1994, 2008), McIntosh (1990, 2008), and Bonilla-Silva (2014) similarly noted that white privileges and benefits have come at the expense of people of color.

## Racism and Its Intersection with Social Subsets

Racial group membership is a core aspect of identity development in the United States because of the country's continual emphasis on racial markers as preliminary credentials for access to reward and targeting for punishment (Helms, 1995). Although race may be phenotypic, it is socially constructed based on racial classification. To understand how the legacy of racism is reflected in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to give nuanced attention to the origins of the American census and to understand how the U.S. Census has categorized race and color. Beginning in 1790, data were collected using the first U.S. decennial census (see Chap. 4). Over time, the U.S. Census has created and changed racialized categories that it uses to identify U.S.

residents. The census has used race and color designations that have excluded First Nation/Indigenous peoples (Braveheart & Deschenie, 2006), dehumanized blacks (slaves counted as three-fifths of a person), divided the black race (mulattoes vs. Negroes) (Du Bois, 1903), reinforced invisibility of the Mexican race (Kilty & Vidal de Haymes, 2000), and expanded the racialization of Chinese persons to a category that includes Asians of all descent (Takagi, 1989). This is related to the issue of denying the distinction between various persons of color and their unique humanity. This has nothing to do with who they are and reinforces the ongoing oppressive processes of the racial scaffolding.

Scholars such as Du Bois (1903), Helms (1995), and Smedley and Smedley (2005) assert that race is not a biological construct that reflects innate differences, but a social construct that captures categories and classifications that served to justify colonialism, white supremacy, slavery, exploitation, and legalized forms of discrimination. Intersectionality is a framework that focuses attention on the degree to which all identities are multidimensional; intersectionality is a nexus of complex arguments about the social subsets (Tomlinson, 2013). Contemplating one's psychological relationship with a particular sociocultural identity can be daunting and make one unsure of who one is. All individuals have psychological relationships with social subsets, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, immigrant or refugee status, socioeconomic class position, religious identification, education status, and others (Sue, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2016). An intersectional perspective underscores the view that human lives cannot be reduced to a single subset, and any one social subset may be more important than others for understanding a particular individual's needs and experiences. Intersectionality does not promote an additive approach that considers the collective impact of gender, race, sexuality, age, and class to be the sum of their independent effects (Hankivsky, 2014). Instead, intersectionality conceptualizes social subsets as interacting with and constructing one another, creating unique social locations that vary according to time, space, and person. These intersections and their effects are what matters in an intersectional analysis. Intersectionality is also focused on understanding effects between and across various levels in society, including at macro levels (global and national institutions and policies/laws), at meso or intermediate levels (state and regional institutions and policies), and at micro levels (community, tribal, reservation, cultural as well as individual). This intersectional approach allows for sociohistorical (including personal history) and sociopolitical context of these identities and recognizes the unique experiences of the individual based on the intersection of all relevant group memberships (Sue et al., 2016). The following example published in the Huffington Post underscores the complex experiences of intersectionality.

> At 17, when Tamara told her mom of her decision to transition from male to female, she was swiftly kicked out of her home, forced to live on the streets and engage in sex work as a means for survival. Later, she developed an addiction to ecstasy, popping 5–10 a week. That is, in addition to smoking weed and drinking. She says her substance abuse was a coping mechanism to help get her though her harsh reality. Eventually, [Tamara] Williams discovered she was HIV-positive when she was 22 after a stint in rehab for her drug addiction. And in the midst of all this, for three years she was involved in an emotionally and physically abusive relationship with a transgender man, who she says never accepted her for who she was. He wanted someone who physically looked like Rihanna, and she just wanted to be loved. (Rosario, 2015, n.p.)

Viewed from an intersectional perspective, Trans, queer, and gender noncon-forming people like Tamara face harassment and discrimination in all facets of their lives, and the combination of anti-trans bias and racism leads trans people of color to experience particularly harmful levels of discrimination. They[1] experienced a profound level of stigma related to their sociocultural identities. On the societal level, they were despised for being black, for being HIV+, and was ostracized in the community for not identifying with their gender and for being a sex worker. On the personal level, their partner was emotionally and physically abusive because Tamara did not reflect the image he desired. In their family, they were cast out for revealing their psychological identity as a woman. This example underscores the multidimen-sionality of oppression and recognizes that skin color singularly does not account for the enormous discrimination and targeting Tamara experienced. However, it is the overlay of their race that makes total oppressive experience so profound. Discrimination and harassment directed at transgender persons is prevalent in schools, workplaces, systems of policing, prisons, parole and probation, health care, and more.

The above example highlights transgender persons, a group that currently is in vogue for discrimination and oppression. However, it is important to understand that target groups are always shifting, generally based on political, economic, and social forces that are imbued with nuanced and sometimes blatant discriminatory laws and actions that have their greatest impact on persons of color. For example, immigra-tion laws and the designation of who is deserving of citizen status also are racialized and socially constructed. Although the legal history of the U.S. establishes the iden-tification and treatment of persons classified as alien, the current social construction of specific racialized, gendered, class, and other sociocultural-based identities as "illegal alien" is now reified in our public discourse, media and everyday practices of immigration policing and surveillance (Kilty & Vidal de Haymes, 2000).

For example, in its first days, the Trump administration released the wide-rang-ing Executive order 13769, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*. The order touches everything from construction of a wall at the US-Mexico border to deportations policy, resettlement program, and a halt to entry from seven majority-Muslim countries (Pierce & Meissner, 2017). Immediately, there were numerous protests and legal challenges concluding with a nationwide temporary restraining order issued on February 3, 2017 and upheld by the United States Court of Appeal. The order was widely criticized by members of society and the judicial system because it was seen as a Muslin ban and because of its human impact on travelers and visa holders (It was revised and reauthorized in early March 2017). More than 700 travelers were detained and up to 60,000 visas were provisionally revoked. The order's focus on immigration, the wall, and the ban clearly demonstrate how historical discriminatory and racist anti-immigration dis-course can move to a new level by labeling and targeting socially constructed immi-grant groups as "bad" persons.

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[1] In our text, we use "they" or "them" or "their' rather than the singular pronoun because this is the pronoun convention currently preferred by members of the transgender community

At the same time, the Trump administration targeted the perceived undesirable criminal immigrant by promising to deport three million undocumented immigrants with criminal records. The concept of criminal records is broadly defined to include traffic violations as a reason to place individuals on deportation status under the Secured Communities program. Donald Trump's presidential campaign popularized an intersectional narrative that vilified all immigrants, specifically targeting Mexicans and Latinas/Latinos, and made little or no distinction between the socially and historically constructed ideal immigrant and undesired immigrants.

## Oppression: The Foundation of Intersectional Racism

Oppression, as noted by Yamato (2004), is benign, malevolent, and unequal systemic institutional treatment which reflects dominance by one group over other groups. The dynamic large structural system of the American culture is *grounded* in a particular type of structure, racial oppression, which is the primary intersectional "essence of our individual and/or collective being" (Tourse, 2016, p. 88). Racial oppression intensifies with the intersections of the numerous subsets assigned to each individual person. Racial oppression influences and infiltrates all other societal constructs so that they also are culture laden, thus exacerbating and stimulating further oppressive interactions. Structural constructs, for instance, the economy or education, become more complex when they are the context for discriminatory acts based on prejudices and ideologies such as classism, elitism, homophobia, xenophobia, and so forth. Socially defined subsets, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and others, elicit discriminatory acts. Consequently, power and its intersection with culture, as well as the colonial and immigration influences of the past and present, reinforce racial oppression.

### *Power*

Oppression symbolizes dominance and power and also is enforced by dominance and power. Focusing on the level of the individual, Pinderhughes (1995) defines power as "the capacity to influence for one's own benefit the forces that affect one's life space and/or…the capacity to produce desired effects on others" (p. 133). Individual power also is reflected in the complex intersectionality that influences one's place in society. This level of power is internal, but represents the collective power that social subsets have on one's internal sense of self. More broadly, power also is having the ability to institute authority and to hold sway within the structural dominions and beliefs that dictate the directions of society (e.g., capitalism, religious ideologies, political ideologies), within the institutional structures of society (e.g., schools, corporations, social agencies, medical facilities) and within the intersection of social subsets (e.g., ethnicity, class, gender). These ideologies, institutions, and cultural constructs are part of the scaffolding that maintains oppressive racial discrimination.

The groups that are more dominant have more power over determining which human values, experiences, and interpretations are valid. Thus, a person can simultaneously experience both power and oppression in varying contexts, at varying times (Collins, 1990). For example, one may be a black college professor with high prestige and power in academia, but be arrested for "driving while black." The focus of intersectionality, therefore, is not just on domination or marginalization, but on the intersecting processes by which power, subordination, and inequality are produced, reproduced, and actively resisted. Intersectionality of power occurs vertically, as well.

Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) propose five levels that reflect the presence of power in societal and cultural constructions and discuss how power is different on each of these levels. These levels are *individual*—mastery and competence; *interactive*—dominance and subordination; *group and family*—status, leadership, influence, and decision-making; *institutional*—authority; and *societal*—group status and political action. Although each level is singularly significant, power does not remain neatly identified on a given level. The tiers collapse and become intermingled and the transactions of the individual are where power *intersects* and makes meaning in their life and identity, both personally and interpersonally. The levels of power also intermingle within the societal and cultural constructions of America and its varied ethnic cultures.

For whites and people of color, these connecting tiers embed in them the specter of racism, which makes, to a greater or lesser degree, oppressive power a significant and distinct part of their lives. For whites, when interacting on any level with persons of color, their sense of power, as well as the privileges that accrue from that power, often are invisible (McGoldrick, 2008; McIntosh, 2008; Paynter et al., 1994; Shetterly, 2016). In contrast, for persons of color, their sense of power is more tenuous and often elusive (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; McGoldrick, 2008; Shetterly, 2016; Tourse, 2016), making it more difficult for them to make positive meaning and to gain deserved recognition in their lives. This is exemplified in the experience of the following fictional person:

> A young Latina just out of college has gained mastery and competence in her chosen field of nursing. In this program, all students were assigned to a study group for academic sharing, understanding, and support. While in her school study group however, she was shunned (subordinate) when she tried to interact with white classmates. When she did interact with the study group it was clear to her she was unwanted (status) by most in the group and her views were not given merit (influence and decision making). In speaking with her advisor (authority and dominance), who was white, she received little support and was told perhaps she was too sensitive. Upon graduating she received an offer from a local hospital because they needed someone who spoke Spanish (group status), and she was told when conversing with another nurse, that this was the hospital's way of meeting their quota (political action). This young woman did well in school despite the oppressive racial barriers she encountered. Her ability to maneuver through scaffolding infused with power and racist dynamics, and to reach her goal, was because of her perseverance and her family resilience. She still however, faced what lay ahead of her at the hospital where she was hired.

This young woman experienced powerlessness at the individual level as well as the institutional level. The relevant social subsets for her in this situation were race, ethnicity, professional status, and (perhaps) perceived immigration status. These levels of power and their myriad intersections represent the ways in which racial groups can find themselves in the best of circumstances or in the worst conditions. Overt or covert tactics on these levels can represent racial domination or subordination and/or influence.

## Cultural Sway

Cultural sway is the intermingled and embedded intersection of power and culture, each of which are comprised of multidimensional elements (Tourse, 2016). For instance, the elements of culture include heritage, mores, and values; and the elements of power include rewards, privilege, status, and coercion. These elements, when connected based on racial and environmental spheres, form the complex institutional and structural societal constructs and social subsets that characterize cultural sway. Cultural sway can be positive or negative based on the multicultural beliefs and attitudes that interface in the societal, cultural, and personal arenas. When the focus is on race and its interface with discriminating social constructs and social subsets, cultural sway is negative.

An incident extracted from the biographical book *Hidden Figures* (Shetterly, 2016) provides an example of cultural sway encountered by the African American protagonist Katherine. Katherine worked at Langley Air Force Base where she computed numbers. She was unceremoniously given the opportunity to work in a different building where engineers did their calculations for space exploration. No one greeted her, she found a desk and seat, was about to speak to her desk mate when he walked away. Her processing of this situation, as reported in the book was as follows:

> Bemused, Katherine considered the engineer's sudden departure. The moment that passed between them could have been because she was black and he was white. But then again, it could have been because she was a woman and he was a man. Or maybe the moment was an interaction between a professional and a sub-professional, an engineer and a girl (p. 123).

Viewed through a cultural lens, this incident depicts several intersectional points and locations that suggest sway. At that time in the 1960s, the Jim Crow culture in Virginia where Langley is located blatantly asserted that whites were dominant and that "negroes" were subordinate. The structural societal power resided in the American cultural understanding that it was whites who were in the position of dominance. The engineer's behavior conveyed to Katherine a lack of respect; it indicated to her that she was invisible to him and that her presence was not welcomed. Katherine's processing of the situation further elucidates how power and culture dynamics were related to gender. In this time and place, it was the cultural norm that men wielded the power and that women were invisible, "thought less than," or spoke

only when spoken to. Katherine also considered whether this incident was based on the implied power differential between the man's position as a professional and her position as a "sub-professional" who had less sway in the culture of the workplace. Each of these processing points were imbued with negative cultural sway and collectively illustrate intersectional discrimination based on race, gender, status, and location that are firmly rooted in the societal and personal dynamics of institutionalized racism. How Katherine made meaning of this situation also speaks to how she located herself within the context of culturally loaded discrimination. Her reflective processing appears to have come from an inner strength that transcended the cultural sway that swirled around her and that intersected three of the social subsets with which she identified. As related in the book, her inner strength also helped her transcend the social structures such as economics, education, and housing locations in which she grew up and now had to reside. Despite apparent racial progress in American society, what Katherine encountered over 40 years ago still occurs today for persons of color as they maneuver contemporary American structural and cultural systems -- perhaps just not as blatant.

The connection of American race-based culture with the power it wields produces a negative "cultural sway" (see Tourse, 2016) that invades the personal identity and structural systems of individuals and groups. The oppression experienced by multiple groups suggests that multiple systems of inequality and their intersections need to be addressed (Chavis & Hill, 2009). The United States is a country of immigrants and therefore a country with multiple cultural intersections which often are dismissed, misunderstood, and/or devalued. When such cultural intersections are noticed, the cultural identities that are different from the "normal" white culture tend to be viewed as "added-on" (Chavis & Hill, 2009, p. 123) features that interface with the mainstream American culture—a culture trying to maintain the status quo through power and control exerted by the historically dominant group.

## *Colonization, Immigration, and Intersectionality*

Intersectionality is an important concept for understanding the oppression experienced by national and cultural groups impacted by colonization and immigration. These cultural identities easily become invisible in the broader U.S. society. Immigrants often are assigned an identity that corresponds to one of the four core groups, particularly black, Chinese, or Mexican.

The intersection of immigration, transnationalism and capitalism determine the experiences of many individuals from other countries and territories. Colonialism, the policy of acquiring full or partial control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically, resulted in colonial settlers changing the character and society of those in the dominated nation or territory. Colonies of the United States always were influenced by interference in economic policy. The political and hierarchical power structures were dominated almost exclusively by a small number of aristocratic families. This largely urban oligarchy tended to be

white or light-skinned and valued its purported racial purity; these aristocrats inter-married and held tightly to their elite status (Hamilton-Mason, 2014). The colonial government was controlled by a small group of people that also controlled the economy, education, and health systems. These are factors that pushed waves of poor and middle-class families to migrate. When they arrived in the U.S., the social subset of race, as it is defined in this country, became part of a new identity for them. For example, although Haitians have a distinct ethnic, cultural linguistic heritage, their particular heritage tends to be invisible to whites in the U.S. who view them in terms of the four core groups. Because their most prominent and noticeable characteristic is their blackness, Haitians are identified as and treated as members of the "black" Core Group in the U.S. regardless of whatever status position they held in Haiti.

Postcolonial theory provides a lens through which to understand identity, gender, race, racism, "color," and ethnicity. More specifically, it underscores how knowledge of the world is generated under specific relations between those who have power and those who do not (Fanon, 1967). Franz Fanon analyzed the nature of colonialism and those subjugated by it. He describes colonialism as a source of violence rather than a violent reaction against resistors, which had been the common narrative (Fanon, 1963). He, in fact, was among the first to discuss the evolution of microaggression and internalized oppression. Fanon (1967) asserts that an integral part of colonialism is the de-valorization of the history and culture of colonized people, that this leads to their negative self-perception and self-portrayal, and that the colonial process promotes a sense of inferiority among the colonized. A postcolonial analysis simultaneously accounts for the current and historical repercussions of oppressive forces, including sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism (Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio, & Parker, 2007). Such an analysis allows us to consistently attend to the diversity of backgrounds, including a community's experience of oppression and privilege, as a fundamental part of the liberation endeavor (Almeida et al., 2007, pp. 176–177).

## Summary

The genesis of thought on intersectionality began in the 1990s. As noted by Crenshaw (2015), this pointing out of how race and gender are connected had a profound influence on people of color, particularly blacks. The theoretical concept of intersectionality became a way, over time, for connecting various ideas and interpretations; as well as a way of viewing life events related to multiple social identities (see for example, Chavis & Hill, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Doná, 2012; Shetterly, 2016; Tomlinson, 2013; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). It explicated the inequity in individual and familial place and status resulting from oppression and privilege that are common forces in the organizations and institutions of the United States.

Intersectional inequality is viewed most often through the lens of major social constructs (e.g., family, education, the economy) and the many social subsets (such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation). These constructs and subsets reflect "an integration of shared but also variant intersections" (Tourse, 2016, p. 88) of heritages, mores, values, social and family traditions, and social norms and beliefs. The inequality of these intersections based on status and place then are transformed into biases such as classism, homophobia, xenophobia, and religious intolerance (see Fig. 6.1). These oppressive disparities become more complex and the intersections more profound when the construction of racism (which is rooted in the developmental history of the U.S.) infiltrates, overlaps, and dominates how oppression and privilege function and dictate the attitudes, behaviors and social directions that prevail in the United States.

Cultural constructs and social subsets have been absorbed into American society through colonialism, capitalism, class structure, legal structures, distribution of privileges and benefits, and prevailing intellectual thought and scientific theories. These are the rungs that form its racial scaffold (see Chap. 1). These rungs help to maintain the status quo and perpetuate the presence of racism as the principal construct by which America operates. The infused presence of intersectionality in these rungs promotes ongoing injustice and inequality and is cultivated further by the construct of racism.

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