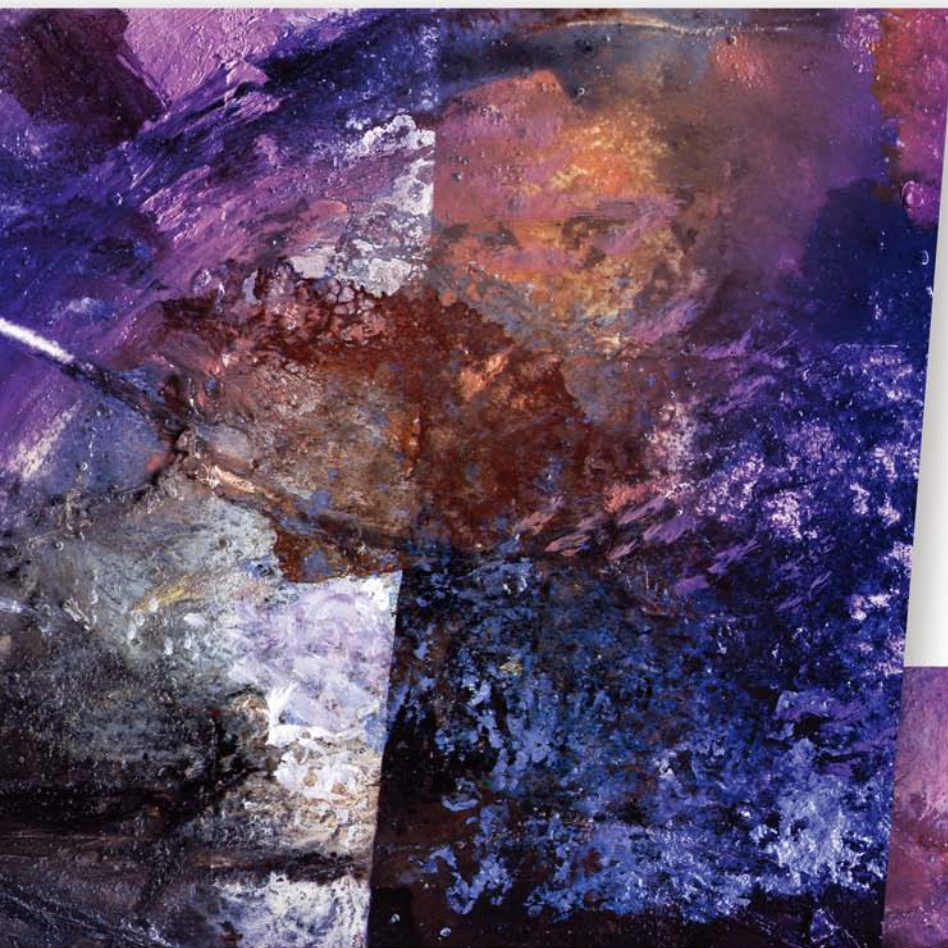


# RACE, CLASS & GENDER

AN ANTHOLOGY



9TH EDITION

MARGARET L. ANDERSEN  
PATRICIA HILL COLLINS



# Race, Class, and Gender

An Anthology





# Race, Class, and Gender

An Anthology

NINTH EDITION

**MARGARET L. ANDERSEN**

University of Delaware

**PATRICIA HILL COLLINS**

University of Maryland



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# Preface

**W**e write this preface at a time when the social dynamics of race, class, and gender are changing. Many believe that race no longer matters as a predictor of one's chances in life. After all, the United States elected a Black president, something that would have been unimaginable not that many years ago. Some would argue that social class matters more than race, especially given the presence of an African American and Latino middle class. Women are now CEOs of major technology companies. Yet, these visible signs of change may cloak the simultaneous presence of highly segregated Black and Latino communities, many of them struggling in the face of poverty. The middle class, long the hallmark of our democratic society, struggles to keep a firm foothold in the American economy. Although women at the top are doing very well, the majority of women still struggle with low wages and the challenge of working and supporting their families, often on their own.

The U.S. economy, though recovering somewhat from the financial crisis that began in 2009, has also left many people in financial distress. People who had worked their entire lives have seen their life's savings disappear as their houses dropped in value and their savings accounts for sending their kids to college or for their own retirement shrank. Homelessness continues to mark our city streets. Even college students, whom you might think of as immune to global economic trends, are seeing rising tuition costs as states reduce their support for public education. Debt and economic uncertainty are the result.

Not everyone experiences these changes in the same way. To explain people's life situations requires understanding how race, class, and gender shape the American opportunity structure. How are race, class, and gender systematically interrelated, and what is their relationship to other social factors?

That is the theme of this book: how race, class, and gender simultaneously shape social issues and experiences in the United States. Central to the book is the idea that race, class, and gender are interconnected and that they must be understood as operating together if you want to understand the experiences of

diverse groups and particular issues and events in society. We want this book to help students see how the lives of different groups develop in the context of their race, class, and gender location in society.

Since the publication of the first edition of this book, the study of race, class, and gender has become much more present in people's thinking. Over the years that this book has been published, there has also been an enormous growth in the research scholarship that is anchored in an intersectional framework. Still, people continue to treat race, class, and gender in isolation from the others; some also treat race, class, and gender as if they were equivalent experiences. Although we see them as interrelated—and sometimes similar in how they work—we also understand that each has its own dynamic, but a dynamic that can only be truly understood in relationship to the others. With the growth of race, class, and gender studies, we can also now better understand how other social factors, such as sexuality, nationality, age, and disability, are connected to the social structures of race, class, and gender. We hope that this book helps students understand how these structural phenomena—that is, the social forces of race, class, and gender and their connection with other social variables—are deeply embedded in the social structure of society.

This anthology is, thus, more than a collection of readings. Our book is strongly centered in an analytical framework about the interconnections among race, class, and gender. In this edition we continue our efforts to further develop a framework of the *intersectionality* of race, class, and gender, or as Patricia Hill Collins has labeled it, the *matrix of domination*. The organization of the book features this framework. Our introductory essay distinguishes an intersectional framework from other models of studying “difference.” The four parts of the book are intended to help students see the importance of this intersectional framework, to engage critically the core concepts on which the framework is based, and to analyze different social institutions and current social issues using this framework, including being able to apply it to understanding social change.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The four major parts of the book reflect these goals. We introduce each of the four parts with an essay we wrote to analyze the issues raised by the reading selections. These essays are an important part of this book because they establish the conceptual foundation that we use to think about race, class, and gender.

As in past editions, we include essays in Part I (“Why Race, Class, and Gender Still Matter”) that engage students in personal narratives, as a way of helping them step beyond their own social location and to see how race, class, gender, sexuality, and other social factors shape people's lives differently. In this edition, we have also included some of the now classic pieces in intersectional studies, and we include two pieces that provide some historical foundation for how race, class, and gender have evolved in American society. We want this section to show students the very different experiences that anchor the study of

race, class, and gender. We therefore begin our book with essays that show their continuing, even if changing, significance.

Part II, “Systems of Power and Inequality,” provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how race, class, and gender are linked together and how they link with other systems of power and inequality, especially ethnicity and sexuality. Here we want students to understand that individual identities and experiences are structured by intersecting systems of power. The essays in Part II link ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality to the study of race, class, and gender. We treat each of these separately here, not because we think they stand alone, but to show students how each operates so they can better see their interlocking nature. The introductory essay provides working definitions for these major concepts and presents some of the contemporary data that will help students see how race, class, and gender stratify contemporary society.

Part III, “The Structure of Social Institutions,” examines how intersecting systems of race, class, and gender shape the organization of social institutions and how, as a result, these institutions affect group experience. Social scientists routinely document how Latinos, African Americans, women, workers, and other distinctive groups are affected by institutional structures. We know this is true but want to go beyond these analyses to scrutinize how institutions are themselves constructed through race, class, and gender relations. As categories of social experience, race, class, and gender shape all social institutions and systems of meaning. In this edition we have added a new section on “Bodies, Beauty, and Sports” to analyze the institutions that shape the bodily experiences of people, especially younger people.

We have revised Part IV, “An Intersectional Framework for Change: From the Local to the Global,” to show students the very different contexts in which an intersectional perspective can inform social practices. Many anthologies use their final section to show how students can make a difference in society, once they understand the importance of race, class, and gender. We think this is a tall order for students who may have had only a few weeks to begin understanding how race, class, and gender matter—and matter together. By showing the different contexts for social change—ranging from group-based education in counseling to global transformation—we hope to show students how an intersectional framework can shape one’s action in both local, national, and global contexts.

This book is grounded in a sociological perspective, although the articles come from different perspectives, disciplines, and experiences. Several articles provide a historical foundation for understanding how race, class, and gender have emerged. We also include materials that bring a global dimension to the study of race, class, and gender—not just by looking comparatively at other cultures but also by analyzing how globalization is shaping life in the United States.

Not all articles accomplish this as much as we would like, but we try not to select articles that focus exclusively on one issue while ignoring the others. In this regard, our book differs significantly from other anthologies on race, class, and gender that include many articles on each factor, but do less to show how they are connected. We also distinguish our book from those that are centered in a multicultural perspective. Although multiculturalism is important, we think that

race, class, and gender go beyond the appreciation of cultural differences. Rather, we see race, class, and gender as embedded in the structure of society and significantly influencing group cultures and opportunities. Race, class, and gender are structures of group opportunity, power, and privilege, not just cultural differences. We search for articles that are conceptually and theoretically informed and at the same time accessible to undergraduate readers. Although it is important to think of race, class, and gender as analytical categories, we do not want to lose sight of how they affect human experiences and feelings; thus, we include personal narratives that are reflective and analytical. We think that personal accounts generate empathy and also help students connect personal experiences to social structural conditions.

We know that developing a complex understanding of the interrelationships between race, class, and gender is not easy and involves a long-term process engaging personal, intellectual, and political change. We do not claim to be models of perfection in this regard. We have been pleased by the strong response to the first eight editions of this book, and we are fascinated by how race, class, and gender studies have developed since the publication of our first edition. We know further work is needed. Our own teaching and thinking has been transformed by developing this book. We imagine many changes still to come.

### NEW TO THE NINTH EDITION

In the years since race/class/gender studies first evolved, a large and growing body of scholarship and activism has emerged utilizing this inclusive perspective. Such work makes the job of assembling this collection both easier and harder: It is easier because there is more intersectional work to choose from, but harder because of having to make difficult decisions about what to include. As in earlier editions, we have selected articles based primarily on two criteria: (1) accessibility to undergraduate readers and the general public, not just highly trained specialists; and, (2) articles that are grounded in race *and* class *and* gender—in other words, intersectionality.

We have made several changes in the ninth edition, including the following:

- 31 new readings;
- a new section on bodies, beauty, and sports;
- a completely revised final section focusing on intersectional change in different contexts;
- more readings with a global framework;
- more empirical research framed by an intersectional analysis;
- continued focus on the media and popular culture, but new readings on youth, social networking, and the Internet;
- four revised introductions, one of the noted strengths of our book compared to others; and,



- new material on race, class, and gender based on important current issues, including immigration, social media, police in poor, urban communities, growing inequality, white privilege, sexuality, jobs, family leave, school segregation, disability studies, and food sustainability.

## PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

We realize that the context in which you teach matters. If you teach in an institution where students are more likely to be working class, perhaps how the class system works will be more obvious to them than it is for students in a more privileged college environment. Many of those who use this book will be teaching in segregated environments, given the high degree of segregation in education. Thus, how one teaches this book should reflect the different environments where faculty work. Ideally, the material in this book should be discussed in a multiracial, multicultural atmosphere, but we realize that is not always the case. We hope that the content of the book and the pedagogical features that enhance it will help bring a more inclusive analysis to educational settings than might be there to start with.

We see this book as more than just a collection of readings. The book has an analytical logic to its organization and content, and we think it can be used to format a course. Of course, some faculty will use the articles in an order different from how we present them, but we hope the four parts will help people develop the framework for their course. We also provide pedagogical tools to help people expand their teaching and learning beyond the pages of the book.

We have included features with this edition that provide faculty with additional teaching tools. They include the following:

- *Instructor's manual.* This edition includes an instructor's manual with suggestions for classroom exercises, discussion and examination questions, and course assignments.
- *Index.* The index will help students and faculty locate particular topics in the book quickly and easily.
- *Cengage Learning Testing, powered by Cognero Instant Access.* This is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions; create multiple test versions in an instant; and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

## A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Reconstructing existing ways of thinking to be more inclusive requires many transformations. One transformation needed involves the language we use when referring to different groups. Language reflects many assumptions about

race, class, and gender; and for that reason, language changes and evolves as knowledge changes. The term *minority*, for example, marginalizes groups, making them seem somehow outside the mainstream or dominant culture. Even worse, the phrase *non-White*, routinely used by social scientists, defines groups in terms of what they are not and assumes that Whites have the universal experiences against which the experiences of all other groups are measured. We have consciously avoided using both of these terms throughout this book, although this is sometimes unavoidable.

We have capitalized Black in our writing because of the specific historical experience, varied as it is, of African Americans in the United States. We also capitalize White when referring to a particular group experience; however, we recognize that White American is no more a uniform experience than is African American. We use *Hispanic* and *Latina/o* interchangeably, though we recognize that is not how groups necessarily define themselves. When citing data from other sources (typically government documents), we use *Hispanic* because that is usually how such data are reported.

Language becomes especially problematic when we want to talk about features of experience that different groups share. Using shortcut terms like Hispanic, Latina/o, Native American, and women of color homogenizes distinct historical experiences. Even the term *White* falsely unifies experiences across such factors as ethnicity, religion, class, and gender, to name a few. At times, though, we want to talk of common experiences across different groups, so we have used labels such as Latina/o, Asian American, Native American, and women of color to do so. Unfortunately, describing groups in this way reinforces basic categories of oppression. We do not know how to resolve this problem but want readers to be aware of the limitations and significance of language as they try to think more inclusively about diverse group experiences.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An anthology rests on the efforts of more people than the editors alone. This book has been inspired by our work with scholars and teachers from around the country who are working to make their teaching and writing more inclusive and sensitive to the experiences of all groups. Over the years of our own collaboration, we have each been enriched by the work of those trying to make higher education a more equitable and fair institution. In that time, our work has grown from many networks that have generated new race, class, and gender scholars. These associations continue to sustain us. Many people contributed to the development of this book. We especially thank D. Stanley Eitzen, Maxine Baca Zinn, Elizabeth Higginbotham, Valerie Hans, and the Boston Area Feminist Scholars Group for the inspiration, ideas, suggestions, and support.

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This book has evolved over many years and through it all we have been lucky to have the love and support of Richard, Roger, Valerie, and Lauren. We thank them for the love and support that anchors our lives. And, with this edition, we welcome Aubrey Emma Hanerfeld and Harrison Collins Pruitt with hopes that the worlds they encounter will be just, and inclusive, helping them thrive in whatever paths they take.



## About the Editors



**Margaret L. Andersen** (B.A. Georgia State University; M.A., Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, Amherst) is the Edward F. and Elizabeth Goodman Rosenberg Professor of Sociology at the University of Delaware where she also holds joint appointments in Black American Studies and Women's Studies; she has also served as the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Diversity. She has received two teaching awards at the University of Delaware. She has published numerous books and articles, including *Thinking about Women: Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender* (10th ed., Pearson, 2015); *Race and Ethnicity in Society: The*

*Changing Landscape* (edited with Elizabeth Higginbotham, 3rd ed., Cengage, 2012); *On Land and On Sea: A Century of Women in the Rosenfeld Collection* (Mystic Seaport Museum, 2007); *Living Art: The Life of Paul R. Jones, African American Art Collector* (University of Delaware Press, 2009); and *Sociology: The Essentials* (co-authored with Howard F. Taylor and Kim Logio; Cengage, 2014). She received the American Sociological Association's Jessie Bernard Award for expanding the horizons of sociology to include the study of women and the Eastern Sociological Society's Merit Award and Robin Williams Lecturer Award. She is a past vice president of the American Sociological Association and past president of the Eastern Sociological Society.



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*Americans, Gender and the New Racism* (Routledge, 2004), which won the Distinguished Publication Award from the American Sociological Association; *Fighting Words* (University of Minnesota, 1998); and *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Routledge, 1990, 2000), which won the Jessie Bernard Award of the American Sociological Association and the C. Wright Mills Award of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. In 2008–2009, she served as the 100th president of the American Sociological Association.



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# Why Race, Class, and Gender Still Matter

MARGARET L. ANDERSEN  
AND PATRICIA HILL COLLINS

**T**he United States is a nation where people are supposed to be able to rise above their origins. Those who want to succeed, it is believed, can do so through hard work and solid effort. Although equality has historically been denied to many, there is now a legal framework in place that guarantees protection from discrimination and equal treatment for all citizens.

Historic social movements, such as the civil rights movement and the feminist movement, raised people's consciousness about the rights of African Americans and women. Moreover, these movements have generated new opportunities for multiple groups—African Americans, Latinos, white women, disabled people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) people, and older people, to name some of the groups that have been beneficiaries of civil rights action and legislation.

We have also now had an African American president; gays and lesbians increasingly have the rights to same-sex marriage; women sit in very high places—as Supreme Court justices and CEOs of major companies; disabled people have rights of access to work and schools and are protected under federal laws. The vast majority of Americans, when asked, say that support equal rights and nondiscrimination policies; indeed, over 90 percent say they would vote for a woman as president of the United States (Streb et al. 2008). Why, then, do race, class, and gender still matter?

Race, class, and gender still matter because they continue to structure society in ways that value some lives more than others. Currently, some groups have more opportunities and resources, while other groups struggle. Race, class, and gender matter because they remain the foundations for systems of power and inequality that, despite our nation's diversity, continue to be among the most significant social facts of people's lives. Despite having removed the formal barriers to opportunity, the United States is still highly unequal along lines of race, class, and gender.

In this book, we ask students to think about race, class, and gender as *systems of power*. We want to encourage readers to imagine ways to transform, rather than reproduce, existing social arrangements. This starts with shifting one's thinking so that groups who are so often silenced or ignored become heard. All social groups are located in a system of power relationships wherein your social location can shape what you know—and what others know about you. As a result, dominant forms of knowledge have been constructed largely from the experiences of the most powerful—that is, those who have the most access to systems of education and communication. To acquire a more inclusive view—one that pays attention to group experiences that may differ from your own—requires that you form a new frame of vision.

You can think of this as if you were taking a photograph. For years, poor people, women, and people of color—and especially poor women of color—were totally outside the frame of vision of more powerful groups or distorted by the views of the powerful. If you move your angle of sight to include those who have been overlooked, however, you may be surprised by how incomplete or just plain wrong your earlier view was. Completely new subjects can also appear. This is more than a matter of sharpening one's focus, although that is required for clarity. Instead, this new angle of vision means actually seeing things differently, perhaps even changing the lens you look through—thereby removing the filters (or stereotypes and misconceptions) that you bring to what you see and think.

## **DEVELOPING A RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

In this book, we ask you to think about how race, class, and gender matter in shaping everyone's lived experiences. We focus on the United States, but increasingly the inclusive vision we present here matters on a global scale as well. Thinking from a perspective that engages race, class, and gender is not just about



illuminating the experiences of oppressed groups. It changes how we understand groups who are on both sides of power and privilege. For example, the development of women's studies has changed what we know and how we think about women. At the same time, it has changed what we know and how we think about men. This does not mean that women's studies is about "male bashing." It means taking the experiences of women and men seriously and analyzing how race, class, and gender shape the experiences of both men and women—in different, but interrelated, ways. Likewise, the study of racial and ethnic groups begins by learning the diverse histories and experiences of these groups. In doing so, we also transform our understanding of White people's experiences. Rethinking class means seeing the vastly different experiences of both wealthy, middle-class, working-class, and poor people in the United States, and learning to think differently about privilege and opportunity. The exclusionary thinking that comes from past frames of vision simply does not reveal the intricate interconnections that exist among the different groups that comprise the U.S. society.

It is important to stress that thinking about race, class, and gender is not just a matter of studying victims. Relying too heavily on the experiences of poor people, women, and people of color can erase our ability to see race, class, and gender as an integral part of everyone's experiences. We remind students that race, class, and gender have affected the experiences of all individuals and groups. For example, gender is not just about women and class is not only about the poor. Therefore, it is important to study White people when analyzing race, the experiences of the affluent when analyzing class, and all people when analyzing gender. Such a perspective focuses your attention on the dynamics of privilege, not just oppression.

So you might ask, how does reconstructing knowledge about excluded groups matter? To begin with, knowledge is not just some abstract thing—good to have, but not all that important. There are real consequences to having partial or distorted knowledge. First, knowledge is not just about content and information; it provides an orientation to the world. What you know frames how you behave and how you think about yourself and others. If what you know is wrong because it is based on exclusionary thought, you are likely to act in exclusionary ways, thereby reproducing the racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, class oppression, and homophobia of society. This may not be because you are intentionally racist, anti-Semitic, sexist, elitist, or homophobic. It can simply be because you do not know any better. Challenging oppressive race, class, and gender relations in society requires reconstructing what we know so that we have some basis from which to change these damaging and dehumanizing systems of oppression.

Second, learning about other groups helps you realize the partiality of your own perspective; this is true for both dominant and subordinate groups. Knowing only the history of Puerto Rican women, for example, or seeing their history only in single-minded terms will not reveal the historical linkages between the oppression of Puerto Rican women and the exclusionary and exploitative treatment of African Americans, working-class Whites, Asian American men, and similar groups. Ronald T. Takaki discusses this in his essay on the multicultural history of American society (“A Different Mirror”).

Finally, having misleading and incorrect knowledge leads to the formation of bad social policy—policy that then reproduces, rather than solves, social problems. As an example, U.S. immigration policy has often taken a one-size-fits-all approach, failing to recognize that vast differences among groups coming to the United States privilege some and disadvantage others. Taking a broader view of social issues fosters more effective social policy.

## **RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER AS A MATRIX OF DOMINATION**

Race, class, and gender shape the experiences of all people in the United States. This fact has been widely documented in research and, to some extent, is commonly understood. For years, social scientists have studied the consequences of race, class, and gender inequality for different groups in society. The framework of race, class, and gender studies presented here, however, explores how race, class, and gender operate *together* in people’s lives. Fundamentally, race, class, and gender are *intersecting* categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life; they *simultaneously* structure the experiences of all people in this society. At any moment, race, class, or gender may feel more salient or meaningful in a given person’s life, but they are overlapping and cumulative in their effects.

In this volume, we focus on several core features of this intersectional framework for studying race, class, and gender. First, we emphasize *social structure* in our efforts to conceptualize intersections of race, class, and gender. We use the approach of a *matrix of domination* to analyze race, class, and gender. A matrix of domination sees social structure as having multiple, interlocking levels of domination that stem from the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations. This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges (Collins 2000). Within this structural framework, we focus less on comparing race, class, and gender as separate systems of power than on investigating the structural patterns that join

them. Because of the simultaneity of race, class, and gender in people's lives, intersections of race, class, and gender can be seen in individual stories and personal experience. In fact, much exciting work on the intersections of race, class, and gender appears in autobiographies, fiction, and personal essays. We do recognize the significance of these individual narratives and include many here, but we also emphasize social structures that provide the context for individual experiences.

Second, studying interconnections among race, class, and gender within a context of social structures helps us understand how race, class, and gender are manifested differently, depending on their configuration with the others. Thus, one might say African American men are privileged *as men*, but this may not be true when their race and class are also taken into account. Otherwise, how can we possibly explain the particular disadvantages African American men experience in the criminal justice system, in education, and in the labor market? For that matter, how can we explain the experiences that Native American women undergo—disadvantaged by the unique experiences that they have based on race, class, and gender—none of which is isolated from the effects of the others? Studying the connections among race, class, and gender reveals that divisions by race and by class and by gender are not as clear-cut as they may seem. White women, for example, may be disadvantaged because of gender but privileged by race and perhaps (but not necessarily) by class. Increasing class differentiation within racial-ethnic groups also reminds us that race is not a monolithic category, as can be seen in the fact that poverty among White people is increasing more than poverty among other groups, even while some Whites are the most powerful members of society.

Third, the matrix of domination approach to race, class, and gender studies is historically grounded. We have chosen to emphasize the intersections of race, class, and gender as institutional systems that have had a special impact in the United States. Yet race, class, and gender intersect with other categories of experience, such as sexuality, ethnicity, age, ability, religion, and nationality. Historically, these intersections have taken varying forms from one society to the next; within any given society, the connections among them also shift. Thus, race is not inherently more important than gender, just as sexuality is not inherently more significant than class and ethnicity.

Given the complex and changing relationships among these categories of analysis, we ground our analysis in the historical, institutional context of the United States. Doing so means that race, class, and gender emerge as fundamental categories of analysis in the U.S. setting, so significant that in many ways they influence all of the other categories. Systems of race, class, and gender have been

so consistently and deeply codified in U.S. laws that they have had intergenerational effects on economic, political, and social institutions. For example, the capitalist class relations that have characterized all phases of U.S. history have routinely privileged or penalized groups organized by gender and by race. U.S. social institutions have reproduced economic inequalities for poor people, women, and people of color from one generation to the next. Thus, in the United States, race, class, and gender demonstrate visible, long-standing, material effects that in many ways foreshadow more recently visible categories of ethnicity, religion, age, ability, and/or sexuality.

## **DIFFERENCE, DIVERSITY, AND MULTICULTURALISM**

How does the matrix of domination framework differ from other ways of conceptualizing race, class, and gender relationships? We think this can be best understood by contrasting the *matrix of domination framework* to what might be called a *difference framework* of race, class, and gender studies. A difference framework, though viewing some of the common processes in race, class, and gender relations, tends to focus on unique group experiences. Emphasizing diversity and multiculturalism, the difference framework will likely examine the different experiences of various groups in society. Valuable as such studies may be, they tend to treat each group separately, or perhaps they focus mostly on the culture of particular groups, seldom looking at the systems of power that link groups together. Such studies are valuable because of how they document unique histories and cultural contributions, but we distinguish our work by looking at the *interrelationships* among race, class, and gender, not just their unique ways of being experienced.

You might think of the distinction between the two approaches as one of thinking comparatively, which is an example of one of the core features of a difference framework, versus thinking relationally, which is the hallmark of the matrix of domination approach. For example, in the difference framework individuals are encouraged to compare their experiences with those supposedly unlike them. When you think comparatively, you might look at how different groups have, for example, encountered prejudice and discrimination or you might compare laws prohibiting interracial marriage to current debates about same-sex marriage. These are important and interesting questions, but they are taken a step further when you think beyond comparison to the structural relationships between different group experiences. In contrast, when you think

relationally, you see the social structures that *simultaneously* generate unique group histories and link them together in society. You then untangle the workings of social systems that shape the experiences of different people and groups, and you move beyond just comparing (for example) gender oppression with race oppression or the oppression of gays and lesbians with that of racial groups. Recognizing how intersecting systems of power shape different groups' experiences positions you to think about changing the system, not just documenting the effects of such systems on different people.

The language of difference encourages comparative thinking. People think comparatively when they learn about experiences other than their own and begin comparing and contrasting the experiences of different groups. This is a step beyond centering one's thinking in a single group (typically one's own), but it is nonetheless limited. For example, when students encounter studies of race, class, and gender for the first time, they often ask, "How is this group's experience like or not like my own?" This is an important question and a necessary first step, but it is not enough. For one thing, this question frames one's understanding of different groups only within the context of other groups' experiences. It can assume an artificial norm against which different groups are judged. Furthermore, such a question tends to promote ranking the oppression of one group compared to another, as if the important thing were to determine who is most victimized. Thinking comparatively tends to assume that race, class, and gender constitute separate and independent components of human experience that can be compared for their similarities and differences.

We should point out that comparative thinking can foster greater understanding and tolerance, but comparative thinking alone can also leave intact the power relations that create race, class, and gender relations. Because the concept of difference contains the unspoken question "different from what?," the difference framework can privilege those who are deemed to be "normal" and stigmatize people who are labeled as "different." Because it is based on comparison, the very concept of difference fosters dichotomous (either/or) thinking. Some approaches to difference place people in either/or categories, as if one is either Black or White, oppressed or oppressor, powerful or powerless, normal or different when few of us fit neatly into any of these restrictive categories.

Some difference frameworks try to move beyond comparing systems of race, class, and gender by thinking in terms of an *additive* approach. The additive approach is reflected in terms such as *double* and *triple jeopardy*. Within this logic, poor African American women seemingly experience the triple oppression of race, gender, and class, whereas poor Latina lesbians encounter quadruple oppression, and so on. But social inequality cannot necessarily be quantified in

this fashion. Adding together “differences” (thought to lie in one’s difference from the norm) produces a hierarchy of difference that ironically reinstalls those who are additively privileged at the top while relegating those who are additively oppressed to the bottom. We do not think of race and gender oppression in the simple additive terms implied by phrases such as double and triple jeopardy. The effects of race, class, and gender do “add up,” both over time and in intensity of impact, but seeing race, class, and gender only in additive terms misses the social structural connections among them and the particular ways in which different configurations of race, class, and gender affect group experiences.

Within difference frameworks, additive thinking can foster another troubling outcome. One can begin with the concepts of race, class, and gender and continue to “add on” additional types of difference. Ethnicity, sexuality, religion, age, and ability all can be added on to race, class, and gender in ways that suggest that any of these forms of difference can substitute for others. This use of difference fosters a view of oppressions as equivalent and as being the same. Recognizing that difference encompasses more than race, class, and gender is a step in the right direction. But continuing to add on many distinctive forms of difference can be a never-ending process. After all, there are as many forms of difference as there are individuals. Ironically, this form of recognizing difference can erase the workings of power just as effectively as diversity initiatives.

When it comes to conceptualizing race, class, and gender relations, the matrix of domination approach also differs from another version of the focus on difference, namely, thinking about diversity. *Diversity* has become a catchword for trying to understand the complexities of race, class, and gender in the United States. What does *diversity* mean? Because the American public has become a more heterogeneous population, *diversity* has become a buzzword—popularly used, but loosely defined. People use *diversity* to mean cultural variety, numerical representation, changing social norms, and the inequalities that characterize the status of different groups. In thinking about diversity, people have recognized that race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity matter; thus, groups who have previously been invisible, including people of color, gays, lesbians, transgender and bisexual people, older people, and immigrants, are now in some ways more visible. At the same time that diversity is more commonly recognized, however, these same groups continue to be defined as “other”; that is, they are perceived through dominant group values, treated in exclusionary ways, and subjected to social injustice and economic inequality.

The movement to “understand diversity” has made many people more sensitive and aware of the intersections of race, class, and gender. Thinking about diversity has also encouraged students and social activists to see linkages to other

categories of analysis, including sexuality, age, religion, physical disability, national identity, and ethnicity. But appreciating diversity is not the only point. The very term *diversity* implies that understanding race, class, and gender is simply a matter of recognizing the plurality of views and experiences in society—as if race, class, and gender were benign categories that foster diverse experiences instead of systems of power that produce social inequalities.

Diversity initiatives hold that the diversity created by race, class, and gender differences are pleasing and important, both to individuals and to society as a whole—so important, in fact, that diversity should be celebrated. Under diversity initiatives, ethnic foods, costumes, customs, and festivals are celebrated, and students and employees receive diversity training to heighten their multicultural awareness. Diversity initiatives also advance a notion that, despite their differences, “people are really the same.” Under this view, the diversity created by race, class, and gender constitutes cosmetic differences of style, not structural opportunities.

Certainly, opening our awareness of distinct group experiences is important, but some approaches to diversity can erase the very real differences in power that race, class, and gender create. For example, diversity initiatives have asked people to challenge the silence that has surrounded many group experiences. In this framework, people think about diversity as “listening to the voices” of a multitude of previously silenced groups. This is an important part of coming to understand race, class, and gender, but it is not enough. One problem is that people may begin hearing the voices as if they were disembodied from particular historical and social conditions. This perspective can make experience seem to be just a matter of competing discourses, personifying “voice” as if the voice or discourse itself constituted lived experience. Second, the “voices” approach suggests that any analysis is incomplete unless every voice is heard. In a sense, of course, this is true, because inclusion of silenced people is one of the goals of race/class/gender work. But in situations where it is impossible to hear every voice, how does one decide which voices are more important than others? One might ask, who are the privileged listeners within these voice metaphors?

We think that the matrix of domination model is more analytical than either the difference or diversity frameworks *because of its focus on structural systems of power and inequality*. This means that race, class, and gender involve more than either comparing and adding up oppressions or privileges or appreciating cultural diversity. The matrix of domination model requires analysis and criticism of existing systems of power and privilege; otherwise, understanding diversity becomes just one more privilege for those with the greatest access to education—something that has always been a mark of the elite class. Therefore, race, class,