PART I

Why Race, Class, and Gender Still Matter

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The 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 because the nation is founded on the principle of equality. 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 minority groups and women. Moreover, these movements have generated new opportunities for multiple groups—African Americans, Latinos, White women, disabled people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gendered (LGBT) peoples, and older people, to name some of the groups that have been beneficiaries of civil rights action and legislation. And, if you ask Americans if they support non-discrimination policies, the overwhelming number will say, "Yes." 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. Thus, despite having removed the formal barriers to opportunity, the United States is still highly stratified 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 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. Thus, 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 their views. If you move your angle of sight to include those who have been overlooked, however, some accepted points of view may seem less revealing or just plain wrong. 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 also 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 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. As a result, we do not think we should talk only about women when talking about gender or only about poor people when talking about class. Because race, class, and gender affect the experiences of all, it is important to study Whites when analyzing race, the experiences of the affluent when analyzing class, and to study men when analyzing gender. Furthermore, we should not forget women when studying race or think only about Whites when studying gender.

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 may 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; furthermore, 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. This is discussed by Ronald T. Takaki in his essay included here ("A Different Mirror") on the multicultural history of American society.

Finally, having misleading and incorrect knowledge leads to the formation of bad social policy—policy that then reproduces, rather than solves, social problems. 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. Thus, 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; thus, 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. And increasing class differentiation within racial-ethnic groups reminds us that race is not a monolithic category, as can be seen in the fact that White poverty 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 equalities 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 as well as related frameworks that emphasize diversity and multiculturalism. A difference framework, though viewing some of the common processes in race, class, and gender relations, tends to focus on unique group experiences. Books that use a framework of difference (or diversity or multiculturalism) will likely include writings by diverse groups of people, but on closer inspection, you will see that many of these writings treat race, class, and gender separately. Although we think such studies are valuable and add to the body of knowledge about race, class, and gender, 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, it frames one's understanding of different groups only within the context of other groups' experiences; thus, it can assume an artificial norm against which different groups are judged. Furthermore, it 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?" this framework can privilege those who are deemed to be "normal" and stigmatize people who are labeled as "different." And 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, this 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, and bisexuals, 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 a situation 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, and gender studies mean more than just knowing the cultures of an array of human groups. Instead, studying race, class, and gender means recognizing and analyzing the hierarchies and systems of domination that permeate society and limit our ability to achieve true democracy and social justice.

Finally, the matrix of domination framework challenges the idea that race, class, and gender are important only at the level of culture—an implication of

the catchword *multiculturalism*. *Culture* is traditionally defined as the "total way of life" of a group of people. It encompasses both material and symbolic components and is an important dimension of understanding human life. Analysis of culture per se, however, tends to look at the group itself rather than at the broader conditions within which the group lives. Of course, as anthropologists know, a sound analysis of culture situates group experience within these social structural conditions. Nonetheless, a narrow focus on culture tends to ignore social conditions of power, privilege, and prestige. The result is that multicultural studies often seem tangled up with notions of cultural pluralism—as if knowing a culture other than one's own is the only goal of a multicultural education.

Because we approach the study of race, class, and gender with an eye toward transforming thinking, we see our work as differing somewhat from the concepts implicit in the language of difference, diversity, or multiculturalism. Although we think it is important to see the diversity and plurality of different cultural forms, in our view this perspective, taken in and of itself, misses the broader point of understanding how racism, class relations, and sexism have shaped the experience of groups. Imagine, for example, looking for the causes of poverty solely within the culture of currently poor people, as if patterns of unemployment, unexpected health care costs, rising gas prices, and home mortgage foreclosures had no effect on people's opportunities and life decisions. Or imagine trying to study the oppression of LGBT people in terms of gay culture only. Obviously, doing this turns attention to the group itself and away from the dominant society. Likewise, studying race only in terms of Latino culture or Asian American culture or African American culture, or studying gender only by looking at women's culture, encourages thinking that blames the victims for their own oppression. For all of these reasons, the focus of this book is on the institutional, or structural, bases for race, class, and gender relations.

Thus, this book is not just about comparing differences, understanding diversity, or describing multicultural societies. Instead, we attempt to develop a structural perspective on the relationships among race, class, and gender as systems of power, the hallmark of the matrix of domination framework. We recognize that reaching these goals will require rejecting the kind of exclusionary thinking that virtually erased some groups' experiences and embracing an inclusive perspective that incorporates neglected groups and themes. Inclusive perspectives begin the recognition that the United States is a multicultural and diverse society. Population data and even casual observations reveal that obvious truth, but developing an inclusive perspective requires more than recognizing the plurality of experiences in this society. Understanding race, class, and gender means coming to see the systematic exclusion and exploitation of some groups

as well as the intergenerational privileges of others. This is more than just adding in different group experiences to already established frameworks of thought. It means constructing new analyses that are focused on the centrality of race, class, and gender in the experiences of us all.

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

We want readers to understand that race, class, and gender are linked experiences, no one of which is more important than the others; the three are interrelated and together configure the structure of U.S. society. You can begin to develop a more inclusive perspective by asking: How does the world look different if we put the experiences of those who have been excluded at the center of our thinking? At first, people might be tempted to simply assert the perspective and experience of their own group. Initially, this claiming of one's experience can be valuable and empowering, but ultimately centering exclusively in one's own experiences discourages inclusionary, relational thinking.

Developing an inclusive perspective calls for more than just seeing the world through the perspective of any one group whose views have been distorted or ignored. Remember that group membership cuts across race, class, and gender categories. For example, one may be an Asian American working-class woman or a Latino middle-class man or a gay, White working-class woman. Inclusive perspectives see the interconnections between these experiences and do not reduce a given person's or group's life to a single factor. In addition, developing an inclusive perspective entails more than just summing up the experiences of individual groups, as in the additive model discussed previously. Race, class, and gender are social structural categories. This means that they are embedded in the institutional structure of society. Understanding them requires a social structural analysis—by which we mean revealing the race, class, and gender patterns and processes that form the very framework of society.

We believe that thinking about the experiences of those who have been excluded from knowledge changes how we think about society, history, and culture. No longer do different groups seem "different," "deviant," or "exotic." Rather, specific patterns of the intersections of race, class, and gender are revealed, as are the connections that exist among groups. We then learn how our different experiences are linked, both historically and currently.

Once you understand that race, class, and gender are *simultaneous* and *intersecting* systems of relationship and meaning, you also can see the distinctive ways that other categories of experience intersect in society. Age, religion, sexual

orientation, nationality, physical ability, region, and ethnicity also shape systems of privilege and inequality. We have tried to integrate these different experiences throughout the book, although we could not include as much as we would have liked.

Because analysis of the historical role of diverse groups is critical to understanding who we are as a society and a culture, we open this section with Ronald T. Takaki's "A Different Mirror." Takaki makes a point of showing the common connections in the histories of African Americans, Chicanos, Irish Americans, Jews, and Native Americans. He argues that only when we understand a multidimensional history that encompasses race, class, and gender will we see ourselves in the full complexity of our humanity. Several readings in this section rely heavily on personal accounts that reflect the diverse experiences of race, class, gender, and/or sexual orientation. We intend for the personal nature of these accounts—especially those that provide personal accounts of what exclusion means and how it feels—to build empathy among groups. We think that empathy encourages an emotional stance that is critical to relational thinking and developing an inclusive perspective.

Arturo Madrid ("Missing People and Others"), for example, shows how his experience as a young Latino student was silenced throughout his educational curriculum, leaving him to feel like an "other" in a society where he seemingly had no place, no history, no culture. For him, this involves more than just acknowledging the diverse histories, cultures, and experiences of groups who have been defined as marginal in society—what we have come to think of as "valuing diversity." But there is something more important than just valuing the diverse histories and cultures of the different groups who constitute society and that is to recognize how groups whose experiences have been vital in the formation of society and culture have also been silenced in the construction of knowledge about this society. The result is that what we know—about the experiences of both these silenced groups and the dominant culture—is distorted and incomplete. Indeed, for that matter, ignoring such experiences also gives us a distorted view of how the nation itself has developed.

How much did you learn about the history of group oppression in your formal education? You probably touched briefly on topics such as the labor movement, slavery, women's suffrage, perhaps even the Holocaust, but most likely these were brief excursions from an otherwise dominant narrative that ignored working-class people, women, and people of color, along with others. For that matter, how much of what you study now is centered in the experiences of the most dominant groups in society? Think about the large number of social science studies that routinely make general conclusions about the

population when they have been based on research done primarily on middle-class college students, or on men. Or, how much of the literature you read and artistic creations that you study are the work of Native Americans; Muslim Americans; new immigrant populations; Asian Americans; Latinos/as; African Americans; or gays, lesbians, or women?

By minimizing the experiences and creations of these different groups, we communicate that their work and creativity is less important and less central to the development of culture than is the history of White American men. What false or incomplete conclusions does this exclusionary thinking generate? When you learn, for example, that democracy and egalitarianism were central cultural beliefs in the early history of the United States, how do you explain the enslavement of millions of African Americans, the genocide of Native Americans, the absence of laws against child labor, the presence of laws forbidding intermarriage between Asian Americans and White Americans?

This book asks you to think more inclusively. Without doing so you are prone to understand society, your own life within it, and the experiences of others through stereotypes and the misleading information that is all around you. For example, Jeremiah Torres ("Label Us Angry") shows us how sometimes the pain of living with stereotypes is very personal and painful. Torres describes how his seemingly trouble-free childhood changed overnight when he became the victim of a hate crime in a community known for its acceptance of multiculturalism.

What new experiences, understandings, theories, histories, and analyses do these readings inspire? What does it take for a member of one group (say a Latino male) to be willing to learn from and value the experiences of another (for example, an Indian Muslim woman)? These essays show that, although we are caught in multiple systems, we can learn to see our connection to others.

This is not just an intellectual exercise. As Haunani-Kay Trask shows ("From a Native Daughter"), there can also be a gap between dominant cultural narratives and people's actual experiences. As she, a native Hawaiian tells it, the official history she learned in schools was not what she was taught in her family and community. Dominant narratives can try to justify the oppression of different groups, but the unwritten, untold, subordinated truth can be a source for knowledge in pursuit of social justice.

Engaging oneself at the personal level is critical to this process of thinking differently about race, class, and gender. Changing one's mind is not just a matter of assessing facts and data, though that is important; it also requires examining one's feelings. We incorporate personal narratives into this opening section of the book to encourage you to think about your personal story. We each have

one that is shaped by race, class and gender. Almas Sayeed's narrative ("Chappals and Gym Shorts"), for example, illustrates the challenges facing a young woman who tries to explain her growing feminist perspective to her father who loves her but who also wants her to focus only on getting married. Unlike more conventional forms of sociological data (such as surveys, interviews, and even direct observations), personal accounts such as those by Sayeed, Trask, and Torres, are more likely to elicit emotional responses. Traditionally, social science has defined emotional engagement as an impediment to objectivity. Sociology, for example, has emphasized rational thought as the basis for social action and has often discouraged more personalized reflection, but the capacity to reflect on one's experience makes us distinctly human. Personal documents tap the private, reflective dimension of life, enabling us to see the inner lives of others and, in the process, revealing our own lives more completely.

The idea that objectivity is best reached only through rational thought is a specifically Western and masculine way of thinking—one that we challenge throughout this book. Including personal narratives is not meant to limit our level of understanding only to individuals. In "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Peggy McIntosh describes how the system of racial privilege becomes invisible to those who benefit from it, even though it structures the everyday life of both White people and people of color. McIntosh's personal narrative about examining patterns of privilege in her everyday life enabled her to develop objective knowledge about domination. As sociologists, we study individuals in groups as a way of revealing the social structures shaping collective experiences. In doing so, we discover our common experiences and see the impact of the social structures of race, class, and gender on our experiences. Much is at stake in our willingness to develop an inclusive perspective. Thinking relationally enables us to see connections that were formerly invisible. Through a discussion of eugenics, the authors of "Race, Poverty, and Disability: Three Strikes and You're Out! Or Are You?" examine how common ways of thinking about disability intersect with similar thinking about race and poverty. Proponents of eugenics believed in so-called higher and lower races and supported state-sponsored programs to control the population of the lower race. The article deals with how eugenics thinking may have disappeared from official public policy, yet its spirit persists in influencing contemporary public policy toward people of color living with disabilities in poverty. This article is a good example of how the kind of relational thinking of race, class and gender provides new angles of vision on important social issues. It also points to why race, class and gender still matter.

We hope that understanding the significance of race, class, and gender as will encourage readers to put the experiences of the United States itself into a

broader context. Knowing how race, class, and gender operate within U.S. national borders should help you see beyond those borders. We hope that developing an awareness of how the increasingly global basis of society influences the configuration of race, class, and gender relationships in the United States will encourage readers to cast an increasingly inclusive perspective on the world itself.

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