
RACE, CLASS, and GENDER

An Anthology

Second Edition



Margaret L. Andersen

Patricia Hill Collins

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Preface

TOWARD INCLUSIVE THINKING THROUGH THE STUDY OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

This book analyzes the interrelationship of race, class, and gender and how these structures have shaped the experiences of all people in the United States. Race, class, and gender are interlocking categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life; they simultaneously structure the experiences of all people in this society. Although at times race, class, or gender may feel more salient or meaningful in a given person's life, they are overlapping and cumulative in their effect on people's experience.

Because of this simultaneity of race, class, and gender in people's lives, we conceptualize them as different, but interrelated, axes of social structure. We use the approach of a matrix of domination to analyze them. In this matrix of domination there are 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 1990).

Approaching the study of race, class, and gender from this perspective is different from the usual additive model in which people study the independent effect of race, class, and gender on human experience. The additive model is reflected in terms like *double* and *triple jeopardy*—terms used to describe the

oppression of women of color by race, as well as by gender and class. We do not think of race and gender oppression in simple additive terms, an implication of phrases like double and triple jeopardy. The effect of race, class, and gender does “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 between them and the particular ways that different configurations of race, class, and gender affect group experience.

The additive model also tends only to look at the impact of race, class, and gender on the experience of their victims, such as women and people of color, rather than seeing them as an integral part of the social structures that shape the experience of all groups. The additive model also places people in either/or categories, as if one is either Black or White, oppressed or oppressor, powerful or powerless. We do not think that people can be dichotomized so easily. First, race is not a fixed category, as Michael Thornton clearly shows in his essay on mixed-race identity; rather, race is a socially constructed category whose meaning shifts over time. Second, the division between powerful and powerless, or oppressor and oppressed, is not clear-cut. One may be privileged by race but disempowered by virtue of gender; thus, White women may be disadvantaged because of gender but privileged by race and, perhaps, but not necessarily, by class. Third, race, class, and gender are manifested differently, depending on their configuration with the others. So, for example, while from an additive model, one might say Black men are privileged as men, this makes no sense when their race *and* gender *and* class are 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 experience of Native American women—disadvantaged by the particular and unique experiences that they have based on race, class, and gender—none of which are isolated from the effects of the other? Finally, White Americans are not in either/or categories—either oppressor or oppressed. Separating White Americans out as if their experience stands alone misses the way that White experience is intertwined with that of other groups.

Approaching the study of race, class, and gender from the perspective of the matrix of domination means that we also see our work somewhat differently than the language of “diversity” or “multiculturalism” suggests. Clearly, our work is part of these movements, but we find the framework of multiculturalism and diversity to be limited and therefore problematic. The concept of diversity has become the catchword for trying to understand the complexities of race, class, and gender in American society. The movement to promote diversity has made people more sensitive and aware of the intersections of race, class, and gender, and we are glad to be part of this. Thinking about diversity has also encouraged students and activists to see linkages to other forms of

oppression, including sexuality, age, region, physical disability, national identity, and ethnicity, but “understanding diversity” is not the only point. The very term *diversity* implies that understanding race, class, and gender means only recognizing the plurality of views and experiences in society, as if race, class, and gender oppression were just the sum total of different experiences. We want readers to be more analytical. Analyzing race, class, and gender is more than “appreciating cultural diversity.” It requires analysis and criticism of existing systems of power and privilege; otherwise, understanding diversity becomes just one more privilege for those with the most access to education—something that has always been a mark of the elite class. Analyzing race, class, and gender as they shape different group experiences is also about power, privilege, and equity. This means more than just knowing the culture of an array of human groups. It means recognizing and analyzing the hierarchies and systems of domination that permeate society and that systematically exploit and control people.

There has been a tendency in recent years to think of race, class, and gender in terms of a voices metaphor—a metaphor that appropriately comes from challenging 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. First, people may begin hearing the voices as if they were disembodied from particular historical and social conditions—a framework that has been exacerbated by postmodernist trends in feminist theory. This perspective sees experience as a matter of competing discourses, personifying “voice” as if the voice or discourse in itself constituted lived experience. Second, the voices framework makes it seem that any analysis is incomplete unless every voice is heard. In a sense, of course, this is true, since inclusion of silenced people is one of the goals of multicultural work. But, an analysis grounded in race, class, and gender can be complete even if centered in the experience of a single group—as long as that group’s experience is situated within a framework that recognizes the influence of race, class, and gender on group experience.

Finally, we see limits to the multicultural movement because we think it is important to challenge the idea that diversity is important only at the level of culture—an implication of a term like *multiculturalism*. Culture is traditionally defined as the “total way of life” of a group of people. It includes material and symbolic culture and is an important dimension of understanding human life. Analysis of culture per se, however, looks at the group itself, not necessarily the broader conditions within which the group lives. Of course, as anthropologists know, a sound analysis of culture situates group experience within these external conditions. Still, the focus on culture frequently ignores social conditions of power, privilege, and prestige. The result is that multicul-

tural studies often seem tangled up with cultural pluralism—as if knowing a culture other than one’s own is the goal of multicultural education. We think it is important to see the diversity and plurality of different cultural forms, but this perspective in and of itself misses the broader point of understanding how racism, sexism, homophobia, and class relations have shaped the experience of groups. Imagine, for example, that we tried to study the oppression of gays and lesbians in terms of gay culture only. It becomes immediately obvious that doing so turns attention onto the group itself, instead of the dominant society. Likewise, studying race in terms of Latino culture, or Asian-American culture, or African-American culture, or studying women’s oppression only by looking at women’s culture, encourages thinking that blames the victims for their own oppression and ignores structural inequalities and systematic oppression.

For all of these reasons, the focus of this book is on the institutional, or structural, bases for race, class, and gender relations. We want readers to conceptualize race, class, and gender as interactive systems, not just as separate features of experience, variables in sociological equations, voices, or cultural experiences. We want readers to see race, class, and gender in an analytical and not just a descriptive way, although we recognize that description of group experience, both historically and now, is an important part of this process.

We have organized the book to follow this thinking. Part One, “Shifting the Center and Reconstructing Knowledge,” contains personal reflections on the ways race, class, and gender shape individual and collective experiences. These articles provide a fresh beginning point for social thought because they put those who have traditionally been excluded at the center of our thought. These different accounts are not meant to represent everyone who has been excluded but to ground readers in thinking about the lives of people who are rarely put at the center of dominant group thinking. When excluded groups are put in the forefront of thought, they are typically stereotyped and distorted. When you look at society through the different perspective of those who are reflective about their location within systems of race, class, and gender oppression, you begin to see just how much race, class, and gender really matter.

In Part Two, “Conceptualizing Race, Class, and Gender,” we provide a basic conceptual grounding for the three major concepts being examined—race, class, and gender. We separate them here only for analytical purposes. Although we do not see them as separate systems, we treat them individually so that students will understand how each operates and then be better able to see their interlocking nature. We also want students to see the continuing effects of race, class, and gender on people’s experiences; our introduction to this section and the articles within document those effects and point to the interrelationships between them.

In Part Three, “Rethinking Institutions,” we examine how race, class, and gender shape the organization of social institutions and, as a result, how these

institutions affect group experience. Social scientists routinely document how different race, class, gender groups are affected by institutional structures. We know this is true, but we want to go beyond these analyses by also showing how institutions are constructed through race, class, and gender relations. It is not just that institutions affect people differently, but that the institutions themselves are constructed through race, class, and gender relations. As contemporary feminist scholars argue, institutions are “gendered” (Acker 1993), “racially formed” (Omi and Winant 1986), and organized as class systems.

Part Four, “Analyzing Social Issues,” uses the inclusive perspective gained from understanding race, class, and gender to analyze contemporary social issues. We examine sexuality, violence, and American identity—social issues that are hotly contested in the public discourse and that we think can only be understood if they are located within a race, class, and gender analysis. Indeed, we think that these social issues are hotly contested *because* they evolve from contemporary race, class, and gender politics; thus, we think that understanding contemporary issues is misguided if we do not situate them within the context of race, class, and gender relations. While specific social issues may change from time to time, contemporary discussions about what constitutes American identity and culture, about sexual politics, and about the causes and consequences of violence are framed by implicit and explicit assumptions that stem from competing ideologies of race, class, and gender; therefore, understanding the social issues on the public agenda requires an analysis of race, class, and gender relations.

Finally, in Part Five, “Social Change and the Politics of Empowerment,” we look at social change. When thinking about race, class, and gender, it is all too easy to think only in terms of how people are victimized and oppressed by these systems. We have avoided a social problems approach because we want readers to move away from thinking only in a problem-centered framework. Race, class, and gender are indeed the basis for many social problems, but a problems-based approach tends to portray people primarily as victims, while ignoring their independent views of themselves and their society. A problems-based approach also tends to see oppressed groups only through the perspective of the more privileged, relegating those who most suffer under race, class, and gender oppression to the status of “others.” This reproduces the hierarchical viewpoints that have permeated traditional thinking. Limiting yourself to a problems-centered or victims framework also leaves you feeling that you have no power to make change in the society.

People are not just victims; they are creative and visionary. As a result, people organize to resist oppression and to make liberating social changes. In fact, oppression generates resistance. In Part Five we examine the meaning of activism and its connection to the conditions in which people live. This section

also includes articles by writers whose ideas are both inclusive and visionary. We see these articles as providing the ideals for change that inform the spirit of this book. Change takes place through new actions, new social structures, and new meaning systems, not just through existing channels, but unless you have an inclusive framework from which to make change, your action is limited. Resistance to oppression on behalf of one's own group is not enough. Truly multicultural change takes place only when people and groups build coalitions with others. Change also takes place over the long run. Short-term actions are needed, but the long-term, institutional changes needed must be sustained by new visions; thus, we include in this final section the statements of several activists who provide a visionary approach to the future.

In selecting articles for the anthology, we tried to find those that would show the intersections of race, class, and gender. Not every piece does this, and we consider it equally important for students to learn to see connections between groups and social structural conditions even when they may not be obvious. We searched for articles that are conceptually and theoretically informed, and also 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 have included personal narratives that are reflective and analytical. We think that personal accounts generate empathy and also help us connect personal experiences to social structural conditions.

We have tried to be as inclusive of all groups as possible, representing the richness of difference and diversity within the United States. It is impossible to include all historically and presently marginalized groups in one book, so we encourage readers to explore the many other works available. We have selected materials that explain the relationships among race, class, and gender in ways that illuminate the experiences of many groups, not just those about whom an article is specifically written. As we begin to untangle the structure of race, class, and gender relations, we can better see both the commonalities and differences that various historical experiences have generated.

We also want students to learn that thinking about race, class, and gender is not just studying victims. We remind students that race, class, and gender have affected the experiences of all groups. As a result, we do not think we should talk only about women when talking about gender, or about people of color when talking about race. Because race, class, and gender affect the experience of all, it is important to study men when analyzing gender, to study Whites when analyzing race, and to study the experience of all classes when analyzing class. If we are thinking in an inclusive way, we will think about women and not just men when studying race, Latinos and people of color when thinking about class, and women and men of color when studying gender.

In addition, we should not relegate the study of racial-ethnic groups, the working class, and women only to subjects marked explicitly as race, class, or gender studies. As categories of social experience, race, class, and gender shape all social institutions and systems of meaning; thus, it is important to think about people of color, different class experiences, and women in analyses of all social institutions and belief systems.

Developing truly inclusive thinking and teaching is a long-term process, one involving both 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 edition of this book and we have found it fascinating to see how race, class, and gender studies have developed in the short period of time since the publication of the first edition. We were pleased to find more articles on African-American men for the second edition that were grounded in a race, class, and gender analysis. We were also pleased to see so much new work on Asian-American and Latino experience, but we know more work is needed. Our own teaching and thinking has been transformed by the process of developing this book; we imagine many changes still to come.

ABOUT THE SECOND EDITION

We have been pleased by the success of the first edition of *Race, Class, and Gender* because it represents the commitment of many people to become more inclusive in their teaching and thinking. We appreciate the reactions people have shared with us, particularly those who have reviewed the book for Wadsworth. We learned from these teachers that we needed more historical grounding in the second edition and that our analysis of class was not strong enough. We have addressed these by including more pieces with a historical perspective, and we have totally revised the section on class. We have also written longer analytical introductions to each part so that readers will get some of the basic concepts and theoretical orientation that the articles do not always directly provide; we think these essays give readers a stronger conceptual grounding and an understanding of what we are trying to accomplish. While this one book cannot do everything people want, we hope that the second edition furthers people's work in this area and assists teachers in the hard work of building a more inclusive curriculum.

The second edition differs from the first in the following ways. First, we have reorganized the book to include the new section on analyzing social issues. Second, we have included more articles that provide a historical perspective. We have also included longer analytical introductions by us; these are intended to enrich the analytical framework of the book. We have added

a new section on sexuality, but because we do not want readers to conclude that heterosexual privilege is only significant when thinking about sexuality per se, we have included articles about gay and lesbian experience throughout the book. We have revised the section on class to include more discussion of different dimensions of the class system. Finally, we have tried to find a balance of different group experiences. Although not every group can be covered on every subject, we hope that the inclusion of different groups conveys a sense of the multiple, but related, ways that race, class, and gender shape American society and culture. We have maintained the theme of linking personal narratives with the analytical study of race, class, and gender in the second edition.

The second edition also includes an Instructor's Manual that shows the different ways that *Race, Class, and Gender* can be used in different courses. The Instructor's Manual includes suggestions for class exercises, discussion and examination questions, and course assignments. We appreciate the suggestion of earlier reviewers that we include such a manual and thank Martha Thompson for her inspired work in developing it. We also thank the different faculty members who contributed materials for the Instructor's Manual. We think it will be a valuable pedagogical aid for those teaching with this book.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

The reconstruction of existing ways of thinking to become more inclusive requires many transformations. One transformation needed is in the language we use to describe and define different groups. The language we use 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 majority culture. Even worse, the phrase *non-White*, routinely used by social scientists, defines groups in terms of what they are not and assumes Whites to have the universal experiences against which all other groups are measured. We have consciously avoided use of both terms throughout this book.

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 realize these are arguable points, but we wanted to make our decision apparent and explicit. For those who are "purists" and like to follow the rules, we are also pleased to see that the fourteenth edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* recognizes that these grammatical questions are also

political ones. This most recent edition suggests that writers might want to capitalize Black and White to reflect the fact that one is speaking about properly named groups.

Language becomes especially problematic when we want to talk about features of experience that different groups share. Using shortcut terms, like *Hispanic*, *Latino*, *Native American*, and even *women of color*, homogenizes distinct historical experiences. Even the term *White* falsely unifies experiences across such factors as ethnicity, region, class, and gender, to name a few. At times, though, we want to talk of common experiences across different groups and so we have used labels like “Latino” 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 we 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 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. This book grows from several of those projects, most notably the Memphis State Center for Research on Women Curriculum Workshops and the American Sociological Association Minority Opportunity Summer Training Program, now the Minority Opportunity Through School Transformation Program. Quite literally, these two programs provided the context for many of our discussions, as well as places to work together. We thank Maxine Baca Zinn, Chuck Bonjean, Marion Coleman, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Elizabeth Higginbotham, Clarence Lo, Lionel Maldonado, Carole Marks, Cora Marrett, Howard Taylor, and Lynn Weber for providing the space and time in which to work. More importantly, we thank them for the companionship, encouragement, and vision that inspires our work. In addition, we also want to thank the Wadsworth reviewers who provided such detailed and extensive commentary on the first edition of the book: J. Q. Adams, Western Illinois University; Tom Bidell, Boston College; Rose Brewer, University of Minnesota; Karen Hansen, Brandeis University; Lee Harrington, Miami University, Ohio; Barbara Heyl, Illinois State University, Normal; Dennis Kalob, Loyola University, New Orleans; Ligaya McGovern, Ferris State University; Ruth Ray, Wayne State Univer-

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Many other people contributed to the development of this book. We thank Heather Smith and Susan Freeman for assisting with library work and helping us locate articles. Tina Dunhour and Rachel Levy, now graduates of the University of Delaware, advised us from students' perspectives about the articles we selected. We appreciate the support provided by our two institutions, with special thanks to Richard B. Murray, Provost, University of Delaware; and Joseph Caruso, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Tony Perzigan, former Head of the Department of African-American Studies, and Norman Harris, Head of the Department of African-American Studies, University of Cincinnati, for their support. We also thank Linda Prusak, Anna Marie Brown, Nancy Benderoth, Sadie Wright Oliver, and Roderick W. Williams for their invaluable secretarial support. We hope they know how much we value them.

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About the Contributors

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Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community (1990), he was honored with the Robert E. Park Award of the American Sociological Association. He has also won the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching at Penn. He is associate director of Penn's Center for Urban Ethnography and associate editor of *Qualitative Sociology*. Other topics with which he concerns himself are the social psychology of organizations, field methods of social research, social interaction, and social organization. He received a B.A. degree from Indiana University, an M.A. degree from the University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. degree from Northwestern University, where he was a Ford Foundation Fellow.

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Peter Blood is a marriage and family therapist for the Institute for Christian Counseling and Therapy. He writes about and leads retreats focusing on men's issues. He is the editor of *Rise Up Singing* and is editorial director for the *Sing Out* publication.

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Johnnetta B. Cole was named the first African-American woman president of Spelman College in 1987, the largest women's college in Georgia. Dr. Cole's scholarship centers on cultural anthropology, Afro-American studies, and women's studies.

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Michael Eric Dyson, who has taught at Hartford Seminary, Chicago Theological Seminary, and Brown University, is presently a Professor of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the author of the widely acclaimed *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (1993). Dyson is presently writing a book on black males, *Boys to Men: Black Males in America*, to be published by Random House in 1997. He is co-editing an anthology of writings about Malcolm X's life with Wahneema Lubiano, entitled *Rethinking Malcolm X*, to be published by Basil Blackwell in