

The first two chapters by Lynn Weber (2010) present a unified picture: **oppression** of the weak by the strong over time. The oppression appears to have two causes: nasty motives (greed or inhumanity) and obliviousness (white privilege, male privilege, class privilege, and heteronormativity). Much privilege is **structural** and not discrimination on a case by case basis. This means discrimination is based on factors such as funding rather than saying “yes” to this individual and “no” to that one. In fact, yes and no are not required to keep privilege in place since races, classes, and gender are funneled into different institutional instances of schools, churches, occupations, and athletic groups. Much structural privilege is hidden or **invisible**. **Marxist** in flavor with her talk of oppression, nonetheless this author flips around Marx’s triumvirate of power; for Marx it was the economic, then the political, and then the ideological structure that held the classes in place—economics always in the lead. Weber leads with the **ideological**, and then **political**, then **economic**, thereby suggesting oppression is due to belief systems rippling through the polity and then the economy. While the “top” echelons of any of the rankings (sex, race, class, and sexual orientations) have blindly or cruelly tried to maintain their power, nonetheless by the **struggles** of the few at the bottom, substantial cracks have been made in the structure of privilege.

We have heard this all before. With the trends and the data provided, one could argue quite the opposite: the structure of America has **allowed** for the breaking down of barriers along every major division: the black race in five generations went from slavery to the Presidency; Asians, once imprisoned, are now recognized as the “model immigrants”; Spanish women are excelling at school, graduating in high numbers, and acquiring more than their share of good jobs. While the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, today ½ of the people living in the US pay no taxes and live in a country with the highest standard of services but are not required to support the system with their own labor. Their health care, such as it is, will continue to be free (i.e., subsidized). Women are now in the corporate world, but many say they do not even wish to ascend to CEO, finding it a dead end for their

health and welfare; women are defining success for themselves and starting small businesses faster than men. While gays once hid their orientation sometimes even from their spouses, kids in high school and even junior high are now encouraged to 'come out' if they want to. Gay politics is mainstream and the President and First Lady as well as all political candidates talk about gayness—which was once unspoken. Hence, the democratic-based American culture has allowed for the restructuring of all the major divisions except age. We still treat the very young and the very old differently—and no one seems to speak up for either of those groups, as if those social divisions are normal.

The **humane** way is not to fall for either “side”, but, rather, to treat each person individually, with a soul like your own soul. Humans have a propensity to “keep to their own” as well as a curiosity to mix with those unlike themselves. W.E.B. DuBois wanted to go to Harvard and instead had to go to all-black Fisk where he reveled in feeling normal, free, and not hidden behind “the veil”. Hillary Clinton went to an all-girls college where she came out of top and has not seemed subservient to men in her professional life ever since. Not that we should segregate, but in groups of like-minded and like-bodied individuals, leaders rise to the top to come out to the world at large and compete among the races, the sexes, the classes, and the private sexual orientations. While fashion once emanated from the top, it now comes from the street. Music and sports allow poor, talented kids to become renowned adults. There was always struggle by women, blacks, the poor, or gays, but America is a context in which the struggle can pay off. Other countries have the death penalty, stonings or naked public humiliation for people who attempt to break out of their caste. Not here: The question is whether one believes in a society that operates with oppression or believes in the **freedom innate to all individuals** and a country that, over time, has opened to allow all to the table. The choice is whether to blame others for the persecution of the few or see to it that in one’s own present moment, moment to moment, one keeps a fair position with **eyes wide open**—both to the potential glory of each individual and to what is hidden in the structure from the past. **Prejudice is just that: pre-judging, before the moment.**

Scantron Questions:

1. The evidence on gender supports which view of America:
  - a. American men have systematically oppressed women
  - b. America has allowed for the systematic liberation of women
  - c. America is just like other societies in oppressing women
  - d. A or B**
  - e. A and C
  
2. Structural discrimination is often
  - a. Worse than case by case discrimination
  - b. Better than case by case discrimination
  - c. Hidden, invisible**
  - d. Broken down
  - e. Favoring the weaker sex
  
3. Intersectionality is
  - a. Discrimination on the street
  - b. The combination of various hierarchies – and where one fits upon them, collectively**
  - c. Dissecting a person
  - d. Characteristic of major cities with heavy traffic patterns
  - e. All of the above
  
4. What (relatively) permanently changed the relations of the sexes
  - a. The law that women could vote
  - b. The pill**
  - c. Allowing women into college
  - d. World War II – when women went to work
  - e. Roe v. Wade