Acknowledgments

This book marks the completion of a transition that began in the summer of 1987. That summer, while I was an organization development consultant, I took my first sociology course, “Introduction to Sociology,” at Northeastern University summer school. I remember driving back from my family’s vacation on Cape Cod with my stepson Pablo in order to take the final exam. Pablo quizzed me in preparation. Given that I had not attended college for many years, and that, even at that, I had attended art school as an undergraduate, this was new for me. This start, followed by a five-year hiatus as I focused on work and parenting and finally a full-time reentry into graduate study has culminated in the work of this book, which began as my doctoral dissertation.

Without the support of my husband, Manuel, this process would not have been possible. His support has taken many forms. Most concretely, his willingness to be the main source of income for our family facilitated my being able to move through my graduate study smoothly and relatively quickly. In addition, while I still accuse him (too often without enough compassion) of being a “recovering sexist,” he has made great strides in assuming equal responsibility for parenting our son, Gabi. For example, he has become an official “hockey dad,” brining Gabi to the cold, cold hockey rink for practice and games each week of the (long)
hockey season so that I could finish up my work on this project. No small accomplishment for a cold-averse person from the Caribbean! This material support was supplemented by his unending moral, emotional, and intellectual support during my career transition more generally. The heart of our relationship is our shared passion for learning, something which imbues us both with curiosity, a sustained sense of wonder, and a willingness to challenge taken-for-granted commonsense both intellectually and in everyday life.

My now thirteen-year-old son Gabi has become the youngest social theorist I know. Being his mother keeps me grounded in the grittiness and immediacy of the everyday. Having conversations with Gabi about what I was studying and writing made me think about explaining my work in a nontechnical, understandable way. It has been satisfying to see his own curiosity, wonder, and critical sensibilities emerge over the several years I have been working on this project. One of my greatest pleasures has been to sit in my office with Gabi playing outside in the parking lot behind our apartment, rollerblading, shooting on his hockey net, or riding his bike. Sometimes he would call up to me with a question, asking for something to drink, or wanting me to see a new trick or skill he was working on. I’d open the window, stick my head out, and we’d talk. I characterize my work as embodying the transition Dorothy Smith speaks of between the local, immediate, and particular and the abstract and conceptual. While it’s often frustrating to move between these modes of thinking and understanding, I think that having to transition has kept me grounded in the “real world” as a sociologist. It has also facilitated a critical reflexivity about the most mundane routines of everyday life. Doing chapter revisions in the warming hut next to the hockey rink as Gabi’s team practice kept this all alive and well.

My cadre of fellow graduate students in the Department of Sociology at Boston College, where this project began as my disser-
tation, provided crucial moral and intellectual encouragement and support. Ongoing phone conversations and e-mail correspondence with Karen McCormack were instrumental in my moving through the early stages of proposal writing, interviewing, and analysis. My many conversations with Steve Farough, Heidi Bachman, Julie Boettcher, and Danielle Egan have empowered me to trust myself as a researcher and writer.

As this study took form, David Karp consistently provided me with encouragement. His feedback helped me work harder at trying to effectively explain complex ideas in a relatively straightforward manner, though I fear I am not always successful. His respect for my work, even those parts of it that are not “his thing,” has been much appreciated. I am also intellectually indebted to Stephen Pfohl. Through my numerous conversations with him, I have tapped into most of the theoretical orientations informing this work. I have learned from him the importance of having a healthy disrespect for orthodox disciplinary boundaries, including the view that social science and art are not necessarily so far apart. Furthermore, he has always made it clear to me that this is my work.

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