White Privilege/
Gender in Everyday Interactions

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http://www.iastate.edu/~soc.134
White privilege

- White privilege: term coined by Peggy McIntosh to describe “an unearned package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious”
  - I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
  - I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind and more.
  - I can be reasonably sure that my neighbors will be neutral or pleasant to me.
  - When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
  - Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance that I am financially reliable.
  - I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
  - I can be reasonably sure that if I ask to talk to “the person in charge,” I will be facing a person of my race.
  - I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested of self-seeking.
  - I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children’s magazines featuring people of my race.

- Whites can act as though they are “colorless” (not having a race)
  - Racial transparency: tendency for the race of a society’s majority to be so obvious, normative, and unremarkable that it becomes, for all intents and purposes, invisible (p. 397)
More benefits of whiteness

- Psychological benefit of not having to experience discrimination—self-report studies show discrimination in:
  - College: including with white students, professors, campus police
  - Military: 75% reported racist encounters in past year, e.g., racist joke (52%)
  - Public: retail (30%), dining out (21%) in last month (Gallup Poll)

- Immediate economic gain—audit studies show discrimination in:
  - Housing: landlords in 53% of cases, real estate agents in 59%
  - Housing insurance in 53% of cases (Memphis 32% —Chicago 83%)
  - Hiring: 20% of cases in FEC DC study, 38% in UI DC-Chicago study
  - Another hiring study: “white” names 50% more likely to get interview

- Non-economic discrimination—studies report discrimination in:
  - Parents visiting schools: whites more likely to speak to principal and get tour
  - Asking for help in public places: blacks less likely to get response

- Longer-term economic gain
  - Incomes vary by race (2002: white mean = $60,166; Black mean = $40,011)
  - Gap has closed slightly; 2002 = 66.5%; 1967 = 62.8%
  - The wealth gap

The wealth gap

Gender in everyday interactions

✓ In our everyday interactions we “do gender”—act to support and bring into creation our belief that men and women are different

✓ Some examples:
  • Establishing gender of interaction participants is crucial
  • Self-segregation
  • Using gendered terms as negative or positive labels
  • Jokes about the differences between men and women
  • Attributing success, failure or preferences to gender