

Sociology Final Paper

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White privilege in Society

Is white privilege really as prevalent in society as it has been made to seem? It may not seem like it to everyone but the advantages of white people are a result of race relations in America. White privilege has been a major topic in American news and media in the past few years. White privilege is a term that describes the undeserved benefits that come with being born white. This type of privilege was the result of colonization of the Americas. Not many people realize but you could have a certain car, job, or house because of your white skin color. In our society, there is an unearned privilege that grants whites an advantage.

People born white might have been given advantages, unbeknownst to them, that give them a leg up in the world. There are many times people choose to make an opinion or choose to side one way because of the color of one's skin. As a white person, I have an obligation to find places and situations where society gives undeserved benefits to white people.

When I was young I lived in a big house and I thought everyone did. I went to a public school and was surprised to find out that some of my friends were not as fortunate as me when I visited their homes after school. It wasn't until a little later in life that I realized my family was wealthy because my father was a dermatologist and my siblings and I were very privileged because of his success. We had multiple cars, a nice house, were able to go on nice vacations, and eventually we were even able to go to a private school. I was always very thankful for my father's success and never once have I taken it for granted. When I was told by one of my friends that my father drove a nice car because he was white, I didn't believe him. It never crossed my

began to realize that some of the things that I have been gifted with may be partly because I am white. Although it may not have been blatantly obvious, there may have been times where someone chose my father over another person because of his skin color. Maybe the car salesman or the real estate agent chose my parents over a black family to sell to because of our skin color.

Although I think my father was given his job based on his skills and knowledge acquired at his time in school and residency, there may be many people that have been chosen over another because of white skin. I used to work at a donut store and there were no employees who were not white. This did not alarm me because that store was in a very white populated part of town. But what did make me uncomfortable was when my black friend from highschool applied for a position there. I thought for sure that they would hire him because he was a smart kid and could do everything I could do and I was disappointed when I found out they never called him back to come work after his interview. Then a week later, a white boy the same age as my friend started in the same position my friend applied and interviewed for. It seemed odd that he wasn't offered the job and I began to suspect that it was because of his skin color. I left the job soon after but I always told people about what had happened. This was the first time I had ever experienced something of that nature and I began to wonder how many more times this had happened in my life without my knowledge.

Dr. Peggy McIntosh states that men have been taught to not realize their own benefits and advantages in the workforce while realizing womens disadvantages, white people have been taught to realize other ethnicities disadvantages all while not realizing their own advantages. In her work; White privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack, Peggy describes how white people are taught to see racism as something that disadvantages black people and are not taught to

privilege. These questions did a good job of putting my own privilege into perspective for me. I answered yes to every question. This made me think about all of the things I take for granted even ‘flesh’ colored band-aids that are just caucasian colored. Another thing that Dr. Peggy touches on in the essay, that I am sure not a lot of white people notice, is how being white we are free from the feeling of daily anxiety or fear because of how someone is going to treat us based on our skin color. We are oblivious to the fact that in settings where we feel safe and secure it may make blacks/latinos/etc, nervous or afraid. Dr. Peggy explains that power from an unearned place (class, race, sex) “can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or dominate.”

Another study, Discrimination is a low wage labor market: a field experiment (by Western, Pager, and Bonikowski), shows just how different the job market can really be between races. Given equal resumes, white, black and latino applicants were told to apply to a few different places and positions. The results showed that, although equal in all aspects, blacks were half as likely to receive a call back than whites were after an interview. Even when reviewed against whites with a criminal background, black and latinos were still not as likely to be offered a job. The call back rates for whites, latinos and blacks, respectively, were as follows: 31.0, 25.2, 15.2. This clearly shows that whites have a systematic advantage when it comes to employment. This study opened the eyes to many people, including whites, and showed proof that there is privilege among white people.

Looking at these documents and research, it is safe to say that there is a good amount of evidence to confirm that white privilege is prevalent in our society. Dr. Peggy teaches us how to look for white privilege in our society and the field experiment shows us evidence that it is real.

white privilege. As Dr. Peggy says in her essay, once you know there is a problem you have an obligation to fix the system that allows it to happen.

White people have an easier time finding jobs, receiving loans or buying houses, because of the systematic racism in favor of the white man. There is an unearned privilege, in favor of white people, that many white people do not realize. To counteract this we need to find the institutions and systems that give advantages to whites while giving disadvantages to blacks. After locating these major areas we can educate people on the matter of white privilege and how it harms other minorities. When you know there is a problem you can help to fix it.