

Sociology

Understanding Race

The way how one looks at race and class is very interesting within the landscape of American society. The concept of "Class in America" by Mantsios and Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege and Racial Formations," offer deep analysis and great insights into the dynamics of power, inequality, and opportunity. While Mantsios delves into the groups of society based on economic class, McIntosh speaks on the invisible advantages that white people possess. Through a comparative analysis of these works and a real world scenario, This essay aims to delve into and compare the intricate interplay of class and race, evaluating their effectiveness in addressing societal issues.

Mantsios' "Class in America" exposes the reality of economic disparity in the United States. He dismantles the myth of equal opportunity, arguing that social mobility faces constraints due to deeply ingrained economic disparities. Mantsios illustrates how class is not just about income but also about access to resources, education, and healthcare. He emphasizes the sustainment of class distinctions through cultural norms and perceptions, speaking on how the American dream remains unattainable for many. Mantsios clearly portrays how these economic divisions result in a system where the wealthiest enjoy access to the best opportunities, while those at the bottom struggle to break free from poverty. He also underscores the intergenerational aspect of class, demonstrating how the disadvantages faced by one generation can be inherited by the next, further stopping upward mobility.

On the other hand, McIntosh's "White Privilege and Racial Formations" delves deeply into the often overlooked advantages that white individuals carry in society. She introduces the concept

people carry with them throughout their lives. This knapsack is filled with numerous advantages, from being assumed trustworthy in professional settings to having greater access to housing and financial services. She exposes how these privileges are not only normalized but deeply embedded in societal structures and interactions. She reveals how white privilege operates in various aspects, affecting everything from educational opportunities and employment prospects to interactions with law enforcement. McIntosh's analysis serves as a powerful reminder of the systemic advantages that benefit white individuals, often at the expense of marginalized communities.

To illustrate these concepts, A scenario in a corporate environment where a job opening attracts applicants from diverse backgrounds. Among them are a white applicant from an affluent background and a Black applicant from a lower income neighborhood. Despite their similar qualifications, the white applicant possesses inherent advantages rooted in both class and race. Growing up in an affluent family, they had access to quality education, networking opportunities, and other resources that the Black applicant lacked. In the hiring process, these advantages give the white applicant an edge, reflecting the unequal distribution of opportunities in society based on economic class.

While the white applicant benefits from the privileges of whiteness, often without conscious awareness, they enjoy a multitude of advantages that stem from societal norms and perceptions. Their resume, bearing a name typically associated with whiteness, is less likely to trigger implicit biases in the hiring process. Moreover, they are more likely to seamlessly fit into the company's existing culture, which is predominantly white, which then enhances their chances of being perceived as a good cultural fit. In contrast, the Black applicant faces a lot of systemic hurdles, starting from the very initial stages of resume screening. Their name may trigger implicit biases

interview process, they encounter subtle discrimination, which can significantly diminish their chances of being hired, regardless of their qualifications. This highlights how race intersects with class, making the ongoing inequality in the hiring process worse

Both Mantsios' and McIntosh's concepts offer invaluable insights into societal structures, but they also have their limitations. Mantsios effectively highlights the economic disparities in America and the ways in which class influences opportunities and life outcomes. However, his analysis tends to overlook the intersections of race, gender, and other forms of identity. In reality, individuals experience class within a complex web of intersecting oppressions, which Mantsios does not fully address. Similarly, McIntosh's concept of white privilege sheds light on the systemic advantages enjoyed by white people. But it oversimplifies racial dynamics. Not all white individuals experience the same level of privilege, and not all non white individuals face the same level of oppression. Moreover, McIntosh's focus on individual acknowledgment of privilege might not lead to structural change without broader systemic interventions.

While both the concepts of "Class in America" and "White Privilege and Racial Formations" offer crucial frameworks for understanding the complexities of power, inequality, and opportunity. By comparing these concepts and using real world scenarios, we see how economic class and racial privilege intersect and shape people's experiences. However, both concepts have their limitations and need intersectional analyses and systemic interventions to address the root causes of inequality effectively. Only through time can we strive towards a more just and equitable society.