Anthropology 104

# **Reading Response 2** | **What Is White Privilege, Really?**

**Name: Svadrut Kukunooru**

**TA Name: Juniper Lewis**

**Discussion Section Number: 320**

**Semester and Year: 2nd Semester, 1st Year**

# Getting Started

Welcome to your second reading response assignment for Anthropology 104! Please add your information to this template (above), rename and save it in Microsoft Word **.docx** or **.doc** format.

Make sure the filename includes **your name** and the **name of the assignment** (RR1).

*(Example)* RR1 Wendy Liu.docx

*Submission:* This assignment template contains all the instructions and questions you need for this assignment. The reading itself (“What is White Privilege, Really” by Cory Collins), is available on Canvas.

https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really

# Background

Despite consistent efforts over the last century by scholars to counter the inaccurate belief that races are biologically real, race has remained a powerful framework through which many people see human diversity. Imagined categories of race shape cultural institutions – schools, places of worship, media, political parties, economic practices, etc. – in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Anthropologists study the ways racism is embedded in the structures of society. In other words, they look at the norms, patterns, and policies that create and reproduce access to power, resources, and opportunities in ways that systematically disadvantage people of color. Related to racism is a system that equally contributes to racial inequities. That system is white privilege. White privilege is not something that white people always do, create, or enjoy on purpose. Rather, white privilege is a structural feature of U.S. society that emerges from the racialization of groups of people.

In this exercise, we’ll consider some of the ways that white privilege and racialization work.

Cory Collins writes as part of the Learning for Justice program to give a historical and contemporary view of how white privilege and racialization operate in the United States. For this assignment you will read the article and reflect on it.

## **Reading Response 2** | Cory Collins’s “What is White Privilege, Really”

### Instructions & Expectations

Before you begin this writing assignment, read “Body rituals among the Nacirema” (available as a PDF on Canvas). Read the article and reflect on it by answering the questions below.

Each answer should be written using full sentences and should be **100 – 200 words**.

DUE DATE: This assignment needs to be completed by **11:59pm the day BEFORE your Discussion Section in Week 2**.

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| 1. **Please give an example of how racial bias and systemic racism work together to racialize people. In other words, what are some of examples of the process of racialization in action?** |
| An example of combining systemic racism and racial bias is in assuming “the benefit of the doubt” for white people. For example, they are less likely to be interrogated or search by law enforcement solely on the basis of them looking “suspicious”, they will not be stereotyped as someone with, say, a bad credit score or financial irresponsibility, and they are less likely to be given a severe sentence and are more likely to be portrayed in a fairer, more nuanced way matter in the media. Additionally, white people and families are more likely to accumulate wealth; a Pew Research study found that the median net worth of a white household was about $140,000, whereas Black and Latinx household had a median income that was more than ten times less; about $11,000 for Black households and $13,700 for Latinx households. |
| 1. **What did you find most interesting, important, and/or confusing about this article?** |
| What I found most interesting about this article was the fact that white privilege is not very explicit at all; it is hard to find a concrete example of it in the real world. Instead, most white privilege are relatively “small” actions, such as being more represented in media, “flesh-colored” bandages that only match with lighter skin tones, grocery stores stocking options that might reflect the cultural traditions of white people more so than other races, and other, more “subtle” things. It is also interesting how systemic racism and white privilege support each other -- systemic racism causes white privilege to surface, and this in turn causes more systemic racism to surface. It’s a devastating positive feedback loop. |
| 1. **How useful do you think this article is as a tool for education about race? What might he have been trying to get readers to think or feel?** |
| I think this article is a very useful tool for race. I think the author may have been trying to get readers to think about white privilege in a different way. Previously, I thought that white privilege was simply another word for racism, such as a man crossing a street to avoid walking next to a black person, or a police officer shooting an unarmed black person because he was “scared for his life”. However, I realized that this was *racialization*, not white privilege. Racialization is the grouping of people based on arbitrary physical differences, such as skin color. White privilege, on the other hand, is a *result* of this racialization. |
| 1. **How might recent events relate to the topics in this essay?** |
| The most relevant recent event I can recall was the January 7th storming of the Capitol by Trump supporters. Many media outletese treated them much more fairly than people (that were majority black) at Black Lives Matter protests. Police used military vehicles and tear gas to disperse the mostly peaceful protests, while Capitol police responded sluggishly to the mostly violent Capitol protests, whose main goals were to interrupt the Capitol session and find and cause harm to certain political officials. In fact, a gallows was erected to the east of the Capitol, with chants of hanging Mike Pence being heard for hours. Even Trump treated the protesters with kindness, saying “We love you. You’re very special people...and I know how you feel”, as opposite to how he treated the George Floyd protests, calling them “a total disgrace” and “mob violence” on part of the protesters. |
| 1. **How does this article connect to concepts discussed in class (i.e. in the lectures, discussion section, or textbook)?** |
| This article connects to what we discussed in class – the history of white privilege. In the early 1700s, white privilege was invented by the government to keep poor whites from joining with enslaved Africans against the white elite. To do this, the government made a set of privileges that only whites could have – the right to own a gun, the right to own livestock and land, the right to get freedom at the end of a period of indenture, the right to discipline blacks, and most importantly, the right to vote. Additionally, the incorporation of these white privileges eventually led to the rise of nativism; that is, the desire to close the US off from new immigrants and favor the current inhabitants. |
| 1. **Have you ever had an experience that made you think about your own “race”? What about that experience brought this aspect to light? How might other experiences have hidden the ways in which racialization might actually be operating?** |
| A couple of weeks ago, I was walking home at around 2 in the morning on Saturday night. About a block away from my dorm, I was approached by about 4 white guys about my age, who surrounded me, pushed me around a bit and told me to go back to my own country. Other than the shock I had, since I had never experienced this type of racism before since I had lived in a very diverse place (Seattle), I began to question my role in this country. I always thought this was my “own” country, since it was where I was born and where I grew up in, but I definitely related to Indian values and customs more. I finally concluded that even if one is born in a country, that does not mean he has to associate with that country. |