Mr. Nelson – Sociology 101

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**Macro vs. Micro Analysis: White Privilege**

So I’ve chosen to dive right into the material with a paper that addresses several things I want you to get out of this course: **first**, I want you to be able to navigate sources from researchers (not just opinion pieces); **second**, I want you to be able to work with difficult, controversial, and complex issues from a number of perspectives without getting angry or misunderstanding their arguments; **third**, I want you to get used to writing in your own voice using such sources and; fourth, I want you to understand the difference (as the title would imply) of Macro vs. Micro analysis. So, in that spirit…

**PART 1 (1 page or more): Identify & Summarize the thesis and key arguments that McIntosh** (at this point, DO NOT take a position on the issue – you can disagree with every word, it doesn’t matter! In this portion you’re outlining what other scholars/research have argued, you’re not offering your own opinion yet). Some guiding questions to help you write:

* How is the social phenomenon of ‘white privilege defined by McIntosh?
* How does McIntosh argue that ‘white privilege’ manifests – meaning, what are some examples of white privilege in different societal situations/contexts – how can see it in the world?
* Offer some critiques (\*not criticisms) of McIntosh’s argument. Be specific.

**Student Exemplar Excerpts (these are examples of papers that scored in high 90’s):**

**“First coined by American feminist and anti-racism activist Peggy McIntosh in 1988, the term *White Privilege* has recently come to the forefront of political, economic, and social headlines. Outlined by McIntosh in a list of 50 observations, White Privilege is demonstrated to be a tendency for systematic racism towards every nonwhite race, especially blacks, from day to day life (McIntosh, 1988). She lists several instances of white privilege ranging from a lack of fear of judgment because of one’s race to seemingly trivial advantages that accompany being white in public places. McIntosh, by publishing this paper, redefines racism altogether by abandoning its former denotation as a single act discriminating against one’s race and instead opts to define it as an institution existing to benefit white Americans. Though this seems to be the staple meaning of the term, others have proposed revisions to the definition.” ---Selena Thomas, Introduction, 2015**

**“While many macro-level perspectives of white privilege and its impact exist today, one perspective relates white privilege to other social hierarchies that dominate contemporary societies. Just as male privilege is denied and often times protected by the obliviousness of males, white privilege is also denied, but rather protected by the obliviousness of whites (McIntosh). The invisibility of privilege of any form results from the lack of education regarding racism and discrimination, ultimately causing the perpetrators to perceive their actions as normal.” ---Maryyam Mian, Introduction, 2015**

**PART 2 (1 page or more) Your Privilege:** Having identified and analyzed McIntosh’s thesis on privilege systems, I want you to think of your own social, economic or political categories. These can include:

* **Gender:** Male/Female
* **Race:** Black, White, Asian
* **Ethnicity:** Hispanic (of all national origins), Caribbean, South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
* **Socio-Economic Status:** upper, middle, or lower class
* **Education:** Advanced Placement student versus non-A.P. student

For this part of the assignment, I want you to define **2 specific social contexts** (for example, your home, with your friends, at your job, being in public, being at school, applying to college, and so forth) and describe, in detail, ways in which your chosen statuses (e.g., male, black) confer an advantage and a disadvantage.

*\*For example, if your choses statuses are ‘black’ and ‘male’, you could argue that being black denies you privilege in your dealings with the criminal justice system, based on higher rates of arrest, incarcerations, and convictions of black males in the United States. Then, on the other hand, you could also describe how being male at your job gives you an advantage over the women at your job, simply because you are male.*

**Resources**

**1.)**[**White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack**](https://psychology.umbc.edu/files/2016/10/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf) **(McIntosh, 1988):** McIntosh is a scholar of gender, race, and education, and her piece is one of the original sources of the discourse on “White Privilege” – her credentials are found here: <http://www.wcwonline.org/Active-Researchers/peggy-mcintosh-phd>

**Supplemental Resources**

**(Extra, you don’t have to use these, but they might help to look at!)**

[**"How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion": Peggy McIntosh at TEDxTimberlaneSchools**](http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/How-Studying-Privilege-Systems)

[**Still Not Allowed on the Bus: It Matters If You’re Black or White! (Mujcic & Frijters, *December 2014)***](http://islandia.law.yale.edu/ayres/mujcic_frijters_busDec2014.pdf) **\*this is the article by the Economists mentioned in the NY Times article above (*When Whites Get a Pass*)**

[**What White Privilege Really Means**](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/11/05/what-white-privilege-really-means/) **(Yancy & Zach, *New York Times*, 2014)**

[**When Whites Get a Pass: Research Shows White Privilege is Real**](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/research-shows-white-privilege-is-real.html) **(Ayres, *New York Times*, 2015)**

**DUE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (by midnight—12:00am), via email, no late assignments**