

Prejudice and Privilege

Every time you enter a room people will use hundreds of pieces of information to judge you. Race, gender, mannerisms, clothing, hair, almost everything they can subconsciously find. Based off of that first impression they will adapt an initial baseline of how to approach interacting with you (or not interacting with you).

There is no escaping this without cutting out parts of your brain and making you a vegetable. This is an innate human quality derived from millions of years of evolution. Not only is it inescapable, it is helpful and beneficial to our existence. I understand the concept of “privilege” within this context. However, I will generally disagree with many people who opt to use the term.

If you enter a room and people assume your trustworthiness (one of thousands of qualities) is at a 9, but in reality, you aren't a trustworthy person—you have a level of privilege. If you are trustworthy at a 9 level but people assume you are really a 5, you are disprivileged. A person who is trustworthy at a level 9 and people assume he is trustworthy at a level 9 isn't privileged—people are merely making accurate assumptions of his character. All of us have many instances in our lives where people make poor assumptions of our character based off of limited information. Sometimes to the positive and sometimes to the negative.

Concepts of white privilege don't really make sense at the individual level. If someone thinks white people are good at baseball at a level of 6, but Bobby is actually an 8, he is being underestimated. If an Irish guy is assumed to be frequently violent, the Irish who are frequently violent aren't disprivileged. The only Irish people who are disprivileged are the Irish people who aren't violent, but have to live under the initial assumption of being a violent person.

White people aren't privileged or disprivileged on first assumption. Neither are black people, women, or any other category of people. Only individuals who are assumed to have more positive qualities than they actually have are privileged, and only individuals who are assumed to have more negative qualities than they actually have are disprivileged.

However, all of this is largely irrelevant.

Very few aspects of our lives are determined by the initial benchmarks people create in their mind on first view. The human brain makes new judgments with new information. It sets new benchmarks and new conceptual understandings. The aspects of our person that gets represented in people's minds is not a pigeonhole and it isn't a curse. 98% of the time you will get a new opportunity to represent yourself in a way that is unique to you.

Sure. There are aspects of life where first impressions are very important: sales,

introducing yourself to a passing stranger, your first several hands at a poker table, and many other places. However, the human mind isn't rigid. These places where first impressions matter is in rare aspects of life for most people.

While we never get to define ourselves in someone else's mind, we will almost always be able to be considered according to our own attributes rather than according to the attributes someone assumes of the categories we fit into.