

## Sociology Study Guide

**From Simple Studies, <https://simplestudies.edublogs.org> & @simplestudiesinc on Instagram**

Unit 1: Race & Ethnicity

Unit 2: Class & Social Stratification

Unit 3: Gender & Sexuality

Unit 4: Government & Politics

Unit 5: Health & Medicine

Unit 6: The Environment

Unit 7: Religion

Unit 8: Education

Unit 9: Intersectionality

**From <https://simplestudies.edublogs.org> & @simplestudiesinc on Instagram**

## But First...Research Process & Methods

Before we dive into the many subjects that encompass sociology, let's begin with the process that allows sociologists to arrive at their conclusions in the first place. Sociologists follow the below scientific method:

1. Sociologists begin the research process by asking a question that is broad enough to apply to a wide range of people, but specific enough to be studied in a location and time frame.
2. Next, sociologists review existing materials pertaining to their question to build on prior knowledge.
3. Afterward, sociologists hypothesize about how one thing affects another thing in order to establish connections.
4. Sociologists then conduct research to put their hypotheses to the test. They do this using **quantitative** and **qualitative** research. Quantitative research aims to obtain and examine numerical data. Examples are surveys and government reports. Qualitative research aims to understand how people perceive and experience the world. Examples are interviews and focus groups.
5. After examining the research results comes the time to draw conclusions. If the results corroborate with the hypothesis, sociologists can talk about what this means for the question they initially proposed. If the results do not corroborate with the hypothesis, the experiment can be redone or a new approach can be taken.
6. The final step in the sociological research process is to report the results to conferences and academic journals. It is here that the results are critically examined by other sociologists. The study is then repeated in the same or different environment(s) before being widely accepted.

## Race & Ethnicity

### Key Terms:

- Race - A categorization of people into groups on the basis of perceived physical characteristics
- Ethnicity - A categorization of people into groups on the basis of shared culture
- Nationality - The status of belonging to a particular nation
- Hispanic - Relating to Spain or Spanish-speaking countries
- Latino - A person of Latin American descent
- Colorism - Discrimination against those with dark skin
- Featurism - Favor shown to those with eurocentric facial features and discrimination against those without it
- Texturism - Discrimination against those with afro-textured hair
- Internalized racism - the internalization of racial oppression by the racially subordinated
- Prejudice - A preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.
- Racism - Discrimination against a person because of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group. Note: Some argue that racism is determined by systematic power and thus white people cannot experience racism. Others argue that racism is based on discrimination and thus white people can experience it.
- Race is a social construct created by white people. Biologically, there is no difference between a person of color and a white person.
  - While the concept of race is technically not real, the discrimination faced by those who are not categorized as white is real. This discrimination includes but is not limited to racial profiling, longer prison sentences, and being subjected to racial stereotypes.
  - The concept of race is strengthened even more when members of the same racial group bond over their shared oppression. This creates a sense of unity and causes people to identify even more with their racial group. This strengthened

identification can lead to the formation of Pan-ethnic groups such as the Black Panther Party.

- In countries that don't use race classifications, people tend to identify with their tribe or ethnicity.
  - This is particularly common among Latinos who are of mixed ancestry (indigenous and Spanish European).
  - The terms Latino and Hispanic are often used interchangeably but there is a difference. Because Latinos are from Latin America and Hispanics are from Spanish-speaking countries, that means people can belong to either or both of these categories. For Example:
    - Haiti is in Latin America and thus Haitians are Latinos, but Haiti isn't a Spanish-speaking country. Therefore, they aren't Hispanic.
    - On the other hand, Spain isn't in Latin America, so Spaniards aren't Latinos. However, Spain is a Spanish-speaking country and thus they are Hispanic.
    - Cuba is in Latin America and it is a Spanish-speaking country. Therefore, Cubans are *both* Hispanic and Latino.
    - There is somewhat of an exception to this rule, however: Mexico. Despite being in North America, Mexico is still considered part of Latin America. In addition, it is a Spanish-speaking country, so Mexicans are Hispanic and Latino.
- There are people who do not fit into any particular racial category.
  - Arabs are an example of this because they are a diverse ethnic group. Brown Arabs who do not fit into any category for people of color are automatically deemed white despite lacking white privilege.
  - There are also Arabs who some may categorize as white, but others would categorize as people of color because of their ethnic features. This subjectivity makes it difficult to give them a label.

- Because race is based on phenotype and not genotype, biracial people who look more like one of their races are categorized as that race.
  - For example, biracials who are half black and half white but look more black would be considered racially black despite also being half white.
- The meaning of white has changed over the years
  - In the early 1900s, people who weren't white Anglo-Saxon Protestants were considered ethnic. For that reason, light skinned people of Italian or Irish descent were not considered white despite having the same physical appearance as those who were considered white.
- The concept of race varies from place to place.
  - For example, Americans consider being Jewish an ethnicity while Europeans consider it a race.
- Racism has also led to the creation of other forms of discrimination such as colorism, featurism, and texturism:
  - Although two people might belong to the same racial group, one of them might experience more privileges depending on their proximity to whiteness.
  - For example, a black person with light skin, small features, or loose curly hair would experience more privilege than a black person with dark skin, big features, or tight curly hair. Both are susceptible to racism, but not the same *level* of racism because one of them aligns more with Eurocentric beauty standards.
  - Examples of these privileges are people with light skin being seen as more attractive, receiving smaller prison sentences, and being employed more than their dark skin counterparts.
- People of color who fall outside of Eurocentric beauty standards can internalize their subordination and pass down those white supremacist beliefs to their offspring. This creates a cycle of inferiority.

- While many define a minority as a small group of people, sociologists define minorities as people who are subordinated in society because of physical or cultural characteristics.
- However, a minority can be *both* a small and subordinated group. This is the case in the United States where white people are the majority and hold most of the systematic power.
- On the other hand, a minority can be a small group but hold the most systematic power. This was particularly the case during South Africa's apartheid, where a white minority ruled over and subordinated the black majority.

### **Class & Social Stratification**

#### **Key Terms:**

- Class/Social stratification - A social order system in which people are divided into sets based on perceived social or economic status.
- Upper class/First Class - Income of one million or more, investors, heirs, and top executives. They have the most money out of everyone in the country and sometimes the world.
- Upper middle class - Income of \$125,000 or more, professionals, and upper managers. They make more than the average middle-class person but not as much as the upper class.
- Lower middle class - Income of about \$60,000. Lower managers and craftspeople.
- Middle class - Combination of both upper and middle class. Are solidly in the middle as far as economic status. They make much less than the upper class but much more than the lower class.
- Working Class - Income of about \$35,000. They work in factories and retail sales.
- Working Poor - Income of about \$17,000. Laborers and service workers.
- Underclass - Income of under \$10,000. Unemployed and part-time workers.
- Capitalism - An economic system in which individual citizens own and run companies. Usually, a company has an individual owner that makes most of the money while their low-level workers are paid minimum wage.

- Communism - A political ideology in which all resources and industries are communally owned or owned by the government who redistributes to the citizens according to their needs. The aim of communism is to eliminate class.
- Socialism - The transition period from capitalism to communism. In a socialist society, there is a mixture of public and private ownership. The government owns most of the means of production, but some businesses can exist. In addition, a socialist government redistributes resources according to how productive a citizen is by contributing to the economy.
- Means of production - The facilities and resources for producing goods.

### Communism:

- The father of the modern concept of communism is a German philosopher and economist Karl Marx. His ideas concerning communism can be found in his book *The Communist Manifesto*, which was co-written by Friedrich Engels.
- Marx formed communism out of a belief that capitalism was a flawed system in which the upper class reaped the most benefits (wealth) from the labor of the working class.
- He believed workers were being exploited because they were being offered low wages in exchange for long hours. The aim of communism is to eliminate class so that no one is being exploited.
- The issue with communism is that it's good as a concept but bad as an implementation. No country has ever managed to successfully turn communism into a reality. Those who have attempted, turned into dictatorships because the state had too much power. This was the case for the Soviet Union and Cuba.
- Communism's flaw is that it fails to take into account how people are or become corrupted with greed once given power. Therefore, they will not redistribute the resources to the people and will instead use their power to silence dissent.

### Capitalism:

- Capitalism has thus far been the most efficient economic system. While communism doesn't allow citizens to accumulate wealth, capitalism allows some to do so.
- The main problem with capitalism is that, as previously stated, workers gain the least from their own labor. They are compensated with low wages while their bosses get to accumulate wealth.
- Another issue with capitalism is that it promotes generational wealth and generational poverty. This means that if someone is born into a rich family, they are likely to maintain that wealth because of inheritance and access to resources. Meanwhile, those born into poverty are likely to remain in poverty. The children of company executives have the most to gain while the children of the working class have the most to lose.

#### Does less pay mean less value?

- It might be easy to think that some jobs are paid less because they don't offer much value. This couldn't be farther from the truth being that every job contributes to society in some way and thus has value.
  - For example, teachers, despite being notoriously underpaid, are the backbone of society. Without them, nearly every other career would cease to exist because no one would be teaching the necessary skills.
  - Another example is janitors and garbage people being needed to keep areas clean. Every job has its purpose.

#### How does one end up in the lower class?

- Besides generational poverty, people can end up in the lower class as a result of an economic recession (a period of temporary economic decline during which trade and industrial activity are reduced). During a recession, it is hard to find a new job if one can get one at all. Once a new job is secured, the pay tends to be low or the person cannot be employed full time.
- Other factors include: not having a college degree, being disabled (physical or mental), not being financially stable enough to pursue other options, etc.



## Gender & Sexuality

### Key Terms:

- Gender - Characteristics of women, men, boys, and girls that are social constructs.
- Sex - The male or female category that living species are sorted into based on their reproductive functions.
- Sexuality - A person's identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are typically attracted; sexual orientation.
- Asexual - Someone who doesn't experience sexual attraction.
- Aromantic - Someone who doesn't experience romantic attraction.
- Queer - Sexuality or gender identity that does correspond to established ideas of sexuality and gender, especially heterosexual norms.
- Non-binary - A person who does not identify as a man or a woman; they are outside the gender binary.
- Intersex - A person who has both male and female organs or other sexual characteristics.
- Gender dysphoria - Discomfort or distress experienced by someone because their gender identity does not match their biological sex.

### Gender Vs. Sex

- To many, gender and sex are the same thing. In reality, they are different things because gender is a social construct while sex is biological because it is based on your reproductive organs.
- Society created the woman identity to mean someone who is feminine, nurturing, submissive, emotional, and domesticated. On the other hand, the man identity was created to mean someone who is masculine, logical, ambitious, aggressive, and strong.

- Gender is traits and behaviors that are associated with a certain appearance despite someone's appearance not always correlating with their behavior or gender identity. Just because you may perceive someone as a woman, that does not mean they actually are a woman. They could be a man with feminine features or they could be a non-binary person that doesn't identify as either gender.
- Cisgender people identify with the gender that they were assigned based on their sex. Transgender people, on the other hand, do not identify with the gender they were assigned based on their sex. It is for this reason that non-binary people are also transgender. Someone may have female genitalia but identify as a man. It is because of cases such as these that sex and gender are different things.

#### What does it mean to be a man or a woman?

- Gender expression and gender identity are different things. A masculine woman is still a woman despite her clothes or behavior. A feminine non-binary person is still non-binary despite their feminine appearance leading you to initially perceive them as a woman. While someone's gender expression does sometimes correlate with their gender identity, that isn't always the case.
- Because someone can still identify as a man or woman despite not matching the traits that are associated with their gender, people may wonder what it means to be a certain gender in the first place. The truth is that gender is what you make it. Human beings are too complicated to fit into simple binaries.
- Just because you identify as one of the gender binaries does not mean you have to limit yourself to the behavior and gender expression that is associated with said gender. You can create your own definition of what it means to be a man or a woman. That doesn't make you any less of one.

#### Sexual Vs. Romantic Attraction

- Similar to how people can confuse gender and sex, the same mistake can be made with sexual and romantic attraction. While some people are only romantically *and* sexually attracted to one gender, that isn't always the case for others.
  - For example, someone can be romantically attracted to women but only sexually attracted to men. They wouldn't technically be bisexual or biromantic because their romantic and sexual attraction is only reserved for one gender. Not everyone's sexuality can be defined by a single label.

### Pronouns Vs. Gender Vs. Sexuality

- People often equate pronouns to gender, but the truth is that the two do not always correspond. While there is a good chance that someone who goes by she/her pronouns identifies as a girl, there is also a chance that they identify as a boy or are non-binary.
- Pronouns are not always indicative of someone's gender. A cisgender woman can only go by they/them pronouns and still identify as a woman. Pronouns are more about what someone feels comfortable being addressed as, not necessarily what their gender is.
- With that being said, someone's pronouns and gender identity are not always indicative of their sexuality either. Many define a lesbian as someone who identifies as a woman and is only romantically attracted to women. However, the actual definition of a lesbian is a non-man that is only romantically attracted to women. Therefore, even if someone was assigned male at birth and is perceived as such, they can call themselves a lesbian if they are non-binary, because they are not a man.
- In addition, a non-binary person who goes by he/him or he/they pronouns can still identify as a lesbian because they are still not a man. In conclusion, pronouns do not equal gender and gender does not equal sexuality, although this can sometimes be the case.

### Social Vs. Systematic Discrimination

- Sexism and homophobia are not only perpetuated systematically but also socially, through social attitudes.

- For example, blaming a woman for being sexually assaulted because of her clothing is sexist and shifts the responsibility away from the person who assaulted her.
- Another example is using gay as an insult. While this might just be a joke to some, little actions such as this contribute to the stigmatization of homosexuality. Similar harm is being done when straight girls pretend to be queer for male attention. Both situations invalidate homosexuality. Social attitudes must also be adjusted in order to eradicate sexism and homophobia. Focusing only on systematic change is not enough.

## **Government & Politics**

### Let's talk about power!

- Many define power as the ability to exercise one's will over others. As mentioned in the communism section, absolute power can corrupt governmental leaders. However, a government's power isn't always limited to its citizens.
  - Examples include Germany's attempt to expand its influence during the Second World War and Britain's history of colonization.
- But the pursuit of power has not always been for exploitative and abusive purposes.
  - For example, Martin Luther King, Jr and Mohandas Gandhi used nonviolent methods in order to gain enough political power to improve the lives of their respective groups.
- Technological advancements have made it easier to resort to nonviolence in an effort to inspire change.
  - Activists can now use cell phones and the internet to quickly communicate information and plans. The internet's efficiency in demanding change is the reason why governments such as Myanmar, China, and Russia ban social media platforms and block the internet.

### Types of government

- Anarchy - The absence of organized government.
- Monarchy - A hereditary government in which a single queen or king rules until they die.
- Oligarchy - A government ruled by a small, elite group.
- Dictatorship - A government ruled by a single person (or very small group).
- Democracy - A form of government that aims to provide all citizens with an equal say in determining policy.

#### Voter participation or lack thereof

- One would think that since African Americans and women have historically been excluded from the right to vote and actively fought to obtain that right, today's Americans would value their power to vote and constantly exercise that power at every election. However, the opposite is the case. Despite many Americans critiquing political leadership, only about half the population votes in every election
- In some elections, less than half the population casts their ballots. According to the 2011 United States Elections Project, only 37.8% of the population voted in elections. A lack of voter participation can lead to drastically different election results than if more people voted. This is especially the case if one particular group participates more in elections.

#### Different perspectives on government

- Functionalism states that the government has the following purposes: plan and direct society, meet social needs, maintain law and order, and manage international relationships. Followers of functionalism believe the government and politics are a way to impose norms and control conflict. They are opposed to change and instead value agreement and order.
- Conflict theory is about the inequalities in society as well as power differences. Notable figures in this theory are Karl Marx and C. Wright Mills.
  - Marx believed that conflict was the only way for the disadvantaged to achieve equality.

- Mills expanded on some of Marx's ideas by creating the concept of the power elite. He believed they were a small group who controlled a lot of society by using the government to create policies that helped to maintain their wealth.

## **Health & Medicine**

### Illness....as a social construct?

- When someone brings up the social construct of health, it can confuse the many people who view health as something that definitely exists and is not man-made. Although there is truth to this belief, it is worth noting that our culture chooses which diseases are stigmatized and which disabilities are legitimate.
- Most can agree that our society treats diseases such as mental disorders and STDs unfairly. The quality of the establishments for these diseases can be lower than average. They can be located in a separate area from other healthcare organizations or be situated in poorer areas. These stigmas can prevent people from getting help and consequently worsen their illness.
- Contested illnesses such as fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome are illnesses that are seen as legitimate by some medical professionals, but illegitimate by others. The inconsistency can impact how someone gets treatment and which one they receive.

### The illness experience

- Different people can view the same illness differently. Some people might deem their illness as a massive inconvenience that is preventing them from living their life to the fullest and completing their responsibilities. Someone else's illness might lead them to change their perspective on life and re-imagine themselves.

### The health of Americans

- The United States healthcare system is both advanced and unadvanced depending on which aspect is being examined.
  - For example, as residents in one of the wealthiest countries, Americans have better health in comparison to the rest of the world. Still, other countries surpass the U.S. when it comes to giving all citizens care.
- The most common mental disorders in the United States are anxiety and mood disorders.
  - Nearly 18% of American adults are susceptible to an anxiety disorder within a year and 28% are susceptible to it within a lifetime.
  - On the other hand, an estimated 10% of American adults are vulnerable to a mood disorder within a year and 21% are vulnerable to it within a lifetime.

### Discrimination against disabilities

- Before the Americans with Disabilities Act, disabled Americans often did not have access to the same opportunities and social institutions as their non-disabled counterparts.
  - For example, a wheelchair user would struggle to use a sidewalk without wheel-chair accessible curbs.
  - Another example is blind people being unable to receive information because of the absence of braille.
- Disabilities can impact a person's employment.
  - A 2011 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics said that people with disabilities had a higher unemployment rate than those without disabilities in 2010. However, this statistic only considers those actively searching for work.

### The different types of healthcare and their effectiveness

- The U.S. offers a variety of healthcare programs: Medicare for people 65+ and people with disabilities, Medicaid for those with low income, the Indian Health Service for Native Americans, the Veterans Health Administration, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

- Despite this selection, however, many Americans still lack health insurance. In 2019, an estimated 8% of Americans didn't have health insurance.

## **The Environment**

### **Key Terms:**

- Global warming - Earth's long-term warming as a result of human activity increasing the temperature. (Note: the Earth naturally warms, but human activity is causing it to warm more than normal).
- Climate change - Both the long-term increase and decrease in Earth's temperature as a result of human activity.
- Pollution - The contamination of the environment.
- Overtilling - Too often turning over and breaking up soil.
- Desertification - The process of fertile land becoming a desert.
- Smog - fog or haze mixed with smoke and other atmospheric pollutants.

### Climate Change

- Despite climate change being a scientifically-proven phenomenon, its existence used to be often called into question. Now, however, most Americans can agree that climate change is a concerning matter. The disagreement is now about how to address the issue.
- Both 2020 and 2021 research reports conveyed that at least 60% of Americans consider climate change a real and immediate threat. Americans are also more supportive of clean energy and partaking in international efforts.

### Water

- It is an undeniable fact that we are in the midst of a water crisis:
  - Each year, thousands of children die from diseases caused by unsafe water.
  - About 3 billion people do not have clean water at home to wash their hands



- The attainment of water can also interfere with other important aspects of a person's life.
  - For example, children who travel long distances to obtain water for their families are unable to pursue their education.
- Despite 70% of the earth being made up of water, much of it can't be used.
- Water near human communities is often contaminated by human waste, chemicals, radioactivity, etc. Water pollution is a result of factories, population growth, and cities.

## Soil

- Some effects of soil pollution are the big disappearance of topsoil and the existence of Brown Zones, areas where nothing can grow. Soil pollution includes but is not limited to over-tilling, soil erosion, and desertification.
- During the 1960s Green Revolution, people worked to bring modern farming methods to developing countries. The good news is that these methods increased food production and resulted in many of the hungry being fed. The bad news is that these methods damaged these areas by leaving traditional farmers with less than they started with.
- Dredging beaches to preserve important beachfront property from coastal erosion has caused shorelines to be more affected by storms and killed lots of marine life by damaging beach ecosystems.
  - Examples of these ecosystems include reefs, seagrass beds, and shorelines.

## Air

- The smog above major cities is sometimes thick enough to prevent grounding aircrafts from navigating through it. It is so bad that citizens have to wear air-filter masks.
  - An example is China. China's rapidly developing economy and industry have resulted in bad air quality.

- Air pollution is a result of the increased use of fossil fuels and the development of cities. Air pollution builds up in the body and results in more chronic illnesses. It also affects crop quality. In addition it influences cooling and heating costs.

## **Religion**

### What is the relationship between religion and society?

- David Émile Durkheim believed that religion occurs once there is a separation between ordinary life and the sacred. To him, sacred meant extraordinary and seemingly connected to the divine. Most importantly, Durkheim believed that religion was about community, that it connects people, promotes consistent behavior, and offers strength during changes and hard times. Religion is a source of social stability.
- Karl Marx noticed that extremely Protestant communities were the most highly developed capitalist societies. He also noticed that their most successful business leaders were Protestant. He wrote in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that the Protestant work ethic affected the development of capitalism.
- Max Weber noticed that particular types of Protestantism supported the pursuit of material gain by encouraging its followers to work hard, be prosperous, and not spend their money on pointless things.
- Karl Marx also examined how religion impacted society. He saw religion as a reflection of the social hierarchy that maintained inequality and continued the status quo.

### Theological perspectives

- Followers of Functionalism believe that religion has many purposes, such as answering spiritual mysteries, providing emotional comfort during a crisis, and forming a space for social interaction and control.
- Conflict theorists believe religion maintains social inequality by convincing its believers that they should be satisfied with their existing conditions because it is what God wanted.

Followers of this theory believe that religion has been used to justify the “divine right” of oppressive monarchs and unequal social structures such as India’s caste system.

- For instance, when the Roman Pope had a lot of money but the same couldn’t be said for his religious followers.

### Types of Religions

- Polytheism - Praise multiple gods.
- Monotheism - Praise a single god.
- Atheism - Does not believe in a god.
- Animism - Praise non-humans such as animals, plants, or the natural world.
- Totemism - The belief that every human has a spiritual connection with another physical being such as a plant or animal.

### Different religions in the world

- Hinduism - The oldest religion in the world and the world’s third-largest religion. Hindus believe in a deity that can appear as different entities, with the three main ones being: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.
- Buddhism - Buddhists are encouraged to live a moral life by accepting the following: life is suffering, suffering is possible by following the “middle way”. The middle way encourages people to live in the present and to practice accepting others.
- Confucianism - Many people consider this to be more of a philosophy or social system than a religion because it focuses on sharing wisdom about moral practices but doesn’t have any specific worship or formal objects.
- Taoism - This religion considers inner peace and harmony to be the purpose of life. The beliefs of Taoism place a lot of importance on compassion and moderation.
- Judaism - The promise of a special relationship with Yahweh (God) is an important aspect of Judaism. Abraham is an important figure in the foundation of this faith and the sacred Jewish text is the Torah. Jewish is both a religion and ethnicity, with Israel having the largest population for this group.

- Islam - Meaning “peace” and “submission”. Followers of this religion believe in the teaching of the prophet Muhammad. Although not considered a divine being, Muhammad is seen as the messenger of Allah (God). The sacred text of Islam is the Qur’an (or Koran).
- Christianity - The largest religion in the world . This religion began with Jesus, who taught his followers about charity and treating others the way you want to be treated. Christians consider Jesus to be the son of God. Their religious text is the bible.

### **Education**

- It should come as no surprise that education, along with its quality, varies around the world.
  - For instance, a country that does have basic amenities such as running water is unable to offer high-quality education or sometimes any education at all.
- International education also differs in how much education is valued, the time dedicated to it, and how education is spread in a country.
  - An example is South Korean students having 220 school days while American students have 180.
- Education analysts noticed that the countries with the best education systems all had well-established standards for education with clear goals for all students. They also hired teachers from the top 5-10% of university graduates each year, which most countries don’t do.
- There are two types of education: formal and informal education.
  - Formal education is taught using an official curriculum and usually takes place in a classroom.
  - Informal education focuses on teaching cultural values, norms, and expected behavior. Rather than learn in a classroom, people are taught these things through their participation in society.

What is taught in schools?

- Schools help students develop social networks through things such as small groups and partner projects.
- Students learn about social issues, social and political advocacy, and respecting views that differ from theirs.
- Some schools teach students to prioritize groups while others teach their students to prioritize themselves.
  - For example, American students learn early on that they are rewarded for excelling in academics or athletics. These awards range from honor roll lists and certificates to trophies to words of affirmation. The pursuit of these rewards creates a naturally competitive environment. Whether one is trying to rank the highest in their class or win a sports game, students are pitted against each other.
- Students in America are also taught to be patriotic by pledging allegiance to the flag every morning and learning about their country's heroes in history classes.
- Schools are also beginning to teach students things that were formerly taught at home, such as sexuality, financial literacy, and career education.

### Problems in the education system

- Many schools are prioritizing getting their students to succeed on standardized tests over making sure that their students are actually learning. Standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT are supposedly used to test if a student is ready for college-level work, but many people also use them as a measure of intelligence.
- The issue with such tests is that a student who is falling behind in their classes can study really hard and score well on the SAT, but that doesn't change the fact that they are barely passing their classes. On the other hand, a student with straight A's can do poorly on the ACT. This is clearly an inaccurate measure of intelligence because students are being tested on how well they can study, not their actual knowledge.
- Another issue with the education system is how some schools are seen as superior to others. When choosing a college to attend, rankings are probably the most considered factor. In addition, the lower the acceptance rate, the higher the respect a school is given. This is in spite of rankings not being an accurate reflection of a school's quality.

- The most well-known example of this is people pedestalizing ivy league institutions or universities of similar prominence.
- There is also the issue of community college not being considered a “real college”. Students who attend these institutions are seen as less intelligent than their peers who attend four-year schools. They are looked down upon, despite avoiding loads of debt and community college classes being of similar quality to four-year college classes.
- The superiority complex lies not only in colleges but also in college degrees. Often people will claim that STEM degrees (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are superior to liberal arts and social science degrees. The main reasons behind this are that STEM degrees tend to be more difficult and time-consuming. In addition, STEM jobs have significantly higher salaries.
- Many people forget that one of the purposes of education is to actually educate and expand someone’s knowledge. While it is true that education is also meant to help equip people with skills needed to land them a job, people act like this is education’s only purpose. The tendency to only focus on this aspect of education is what leads people to look down on liberal arts majors.
- When people ask for advice on what they should get their degree in, they will often hear one of two answers: major in what you’re passionate about or only major in something that will make you a lot of money. Both of these pieces of advice have flaws because one ignores practicality while the other disregards personal interest.
- A lot of schools don’t adequately teach their students financial literacy. They might have one class that usually lasts about a semester, but students soon forget the information they learn in that class. This method of teaching produces a bunch of financially illiterate and financially-irresponsible young adults. Not only are the courses dedicated to teaching this subject too short, but they also lack consistency. If someone only has to take **one** finance class out of their entire four years in high school, they will not have enough time to retain a lot of information.

### **Intersectionality**

In order to accurately address these different aspects of society, it is important to include intersectionality in the conversation. Intersectionality is essentially when race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. are taken into account.

### Intersectionality with class

- When it comes to homelessness in the United States, people of color are over-represented in the statistics.
  - Native Americans have a high rate of unsheltered homelessness, with 56% of them sleeping in locations not meant for human habitation.
  - 40% of black people experiencing homelessness are part of families with children. If families were less represented in black homelessness, the black homeless rate would decrease from 55 to 42 people per 10,000.
  - Despite Hispanics and Latinos having relatively lower homeless rates, their unsheltered homeless rate has grown by 50% since 2016. This is twice the number of the general 25% increase in unsheltered homelessness.
  - 76% of Asian homelessness is found in California, New York, Hawaii, Washington, Texas, and the Northern Mariana Islands.
  - Pacific Islanders are the only racial group with a higher (57%) rate of unsheltered individual homelessness than Native Americans. They are also the only group with a higher representation of families (45%) than black people.
- Contrary to what most would think, most homeless people are men. Some of the reasons behind this are: men being less likely to use mental health services as a result of toxic masculinity (they're expected to always be strong and avoid all emotional vulnerability), men being less social and, thus, being less likely to have strong support networks, many homeless people are veterans (most veterans are men), and men are less likely to get immediate housing because women are more likely to become homeless with children (adults with children get faster housing assistance).
- LGBT youth are 120% more likely to be homeless compared to straight and cisgender people. Despite less than 10% of young people identifying as LGBT, over 40% of homeless people do according to a Chapin Hill study. One of the obvious reasons behind

these statistics is that queer people who don't have a supportive family can be kicked out of their houses. In addition, discrimination faced at work can cause queer people to end up in the streets.

- It is a well-known fact that men are paid more than women, even when doing the same job. This is known as the gender pay gap. In 2022, men will make \$10,381 more than women around the United States. Except for Washington, DC, every state has at least a 10% lower median salary for women in comparison to men. Since 2010, the wage gap has been between 18% and 19% between men and women who are in similar positions. Wyoming has the largest wage gap, where women earn 35% less than men.

### Intersectionality with education

- School districts where the majority of the student body is people of color receive \$23 billion less in education than majority-white districts. School districts that consist of poor people of color, receive about \$2,600 less per student than rich white school districts. This is mainly because wealthier communities have more money to fund their schools while poorer communities have less money to do so.
- Lots of white parents have opposed the teaching of Critical Race Theory (which examines the legal system through a racial lens) out of fear that it will make their children feel guilty. Schools have also been banning books that address racism.
- A similar thing is being done to queer people, with many states passing or proposing variations of the "Don't Say Gay" law. This law bans schools from discussing gender and sexuality with students. This is especially bad because queer people are already excluded from conversations about sexual health. In addition, schools are banning books that discuss queer identities.
- Earlier we discussed how standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT are inaccurate when it comes to measuring intelligence. One of the reasons this is the case is because of class. Students who come from upper and middle-class families are able to afford tutors and thus increase their scores. This is a privilege that most lower-income students cannot afford.



- In addition, lower-income students are likely to have more responsibilities compared to their upper-class counterparts. For example, if a student's parents each work two jobs, then that person probably has to take care of their siblings if they have any or have to provide for themselves in other aspects. For these reasons, this student would have less time to study for tests and would probably receive lower scores.
- Gender also plays a role in a person's education or lack thereof. Universally, 129 million girls are not in school. This includes 32 million that are in primary school, 30 million of lower-secondary age, and 67 million of upper-secondary school age.
- In addition, girls are more than twice as likely to not be in school if they live in a country that has been impacted by conflict. The many reasons behind this include, but are not limited to, poverty, child marriage, and gender-based violence. Many people are aware of the doors that education opens, such as access to a high-paying job. At last, girls being out of school contributes to the gender pay gap.

#### Intersectionality in health and medicine

- When it comes to the risk of dying during pregnancy or the year after:
  - White women: about 7 in 100,000
  - Asian women: about 12 in 100,000
  - Mixed women: about 15 in 100,000
  - Black women: about 32 in 100,000. The main reason black women are at the most risk is because of the misconception that black people have a higher pain tolerance. This is a racist notion that was used to justify the enslavement of black people because it was believed that they could withstand physical labor.
- In many religious households, homosexuality has been deemed a disease despite not technically being one. People see it as filth that one must be rid of and this mindset has led to the development of gay conversion camps: camps that aim to cure gay people of their homosexuality.
- Mental health is something that is not often taken seriously by parents of color. When a child says they are depressed, suicidal, or neurodivergent, parents of color are quick to dismiss it. The typical response, especially in black households, is to pray about it. Some

parents even go as far as to claim that depression is only for white people, further invalidating the feelings of their children.

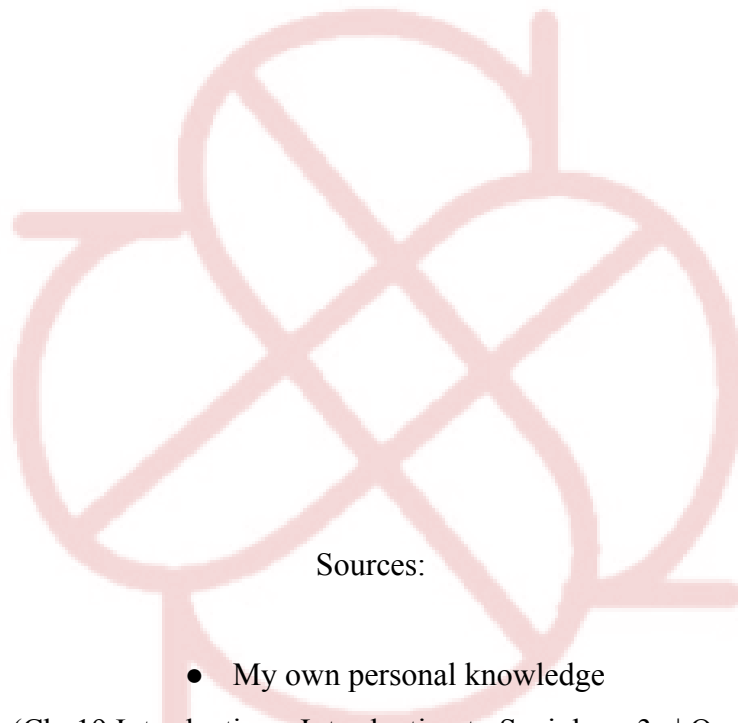
### Intersectionality in the environment

- Environmental racism is about people of color being negatively affected by policies on pollution, housing, and more.
- As a result of harmful environmental policy and exploitation by private companies, Native Americans in particular have been exposed to toxic waste, pollution, and other health risks. Out of all American ethnic groups, Native Americans are the most at risk of toxic exposure.
  - One Navajo woman named Cecilia Joe, said, “they never told us uranium was dangerous. We washed our faces in it. We drank it. We ate it. It was sweet”.
- Native American reservations have historically been used for toxic waste disposal, an issue that the U.S. government has a history of not resolving. Companies exploit Native Americans by paying them millions of dollars in order to dispose of their toxic waste in Native American sites. With Native American reservations having some of the highest poverty rates, they may feel the need to accept the money.
- In the United States, communities filled with people of color are disproportionately exposed to pollution. Refineries, factories, landfills, and factory farms are often built in communities of color. Children have been exposed to lead in drinking water and schools have been evacuated because of low water pressure.

### Intersectionality in religion

- Religion and race go hand in hand.
  - For starters, Christianity was used to justify slavery with quotes such as, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ”

- Christianity is also a religion that was introduced to most people of color through slavery and colonization. Missionaries and colonizers demonized the religion of Natives and viewed them as inferior. As part of Christianity, colonizers also introduced homophobia by deeming homosexuality a sin. It was because of this that countries that had formerly accepted queer relationships began to criminalize them.



Sources:

- My own personal knowledge
- (Ch. 19 Introduction - Introduction to Sociology 3e | OpenStax)
  - Crash Course
  - <https://endhomelessness.org/>
  - <https://caufsociety.com/why-are-most-homeless-people-men/>
  - <https://www.newsweek.com/lgbt-youth-homeless-study-727595>
    - <https://www.business.org/hr/benefits/gender-pay-gap/>
    - <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>
    - <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-59248345>
- <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2021/07/10/the-lasting-harms-of-toxic-exposure-in-native-american-communities/>

- <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/05/1061600376/communities-of-color-face-disproportionate-exposure-to-pollution>
- <https://time.com/5171819/christianity-slavery-book-excerpt/>
- <https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2019-02-26/white-students-get-more-k-12-funding-than-students-of-color-report>

