



Privilege, Power, and Difference

Allan G. Johnson

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Privilege, Power, and Difference is a groundbreaking tool for students and non-students alike to examine systems of privilege and difference in our society. Written in an accessible, conversational style, the 3rd edition links theory with engaging examples in ways that enable readers to see the underlying nature and consequences of privilege and their connection to it. This program has been used across the country, both inside and outside the classroom, to shed light on issues of power and privilege. The Connect course for this offering includes SmartBook, an adaptive reading and study experience which guides students to master, recall, and apply key concepts while providing automatically-graded assessments.

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Privilege, Power, and Difference Details

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From Reader Review Privilege, Power, and Difference for online ebook

Rojo says

For my internship this summer, we're putting together a Diversity Profile which will look at diversity and inclusion in the Minnesota Historical Society and the other historical sites around Minnesota. This is one of the books that I picked to read for research on this project and it is VERY good. Actually, I'd give it 3.5 stars.

Most of the concepts and information are things that I have already heard about and worked with in I Am, We Are so it was not surprising--just surprising that I would find it in a book I was reading for work!

If you're at all interested in learning more about privilege or social justice, this is a good starter.

Fran says

I found the book very readable. The author does a thorough job of wrestling with the issues inherent in diversity as a social concern, without preaching a solution. Sometimes I think that's ok, and this is one of those times.

Gabe says

This book reads like a long opinion piece and does not come across as being authoritative or convincing. My feeling is that people who already agree with him on the issues of race and privilege might find the book encouraging, but people with opposing viewpoints would probably not be moved. I also got the feeling throughout the book that the author was putting words in the reader's mouth and then refuting them. I found this style somewhat frustrating both because I wasn't thinking what he expected me to think and because his typical method of refutation involves simply saying "that's wrong, but this is right." I didn't find the book irredeemable, however. The topic is interesting, and it did get me thinking a bit more about issues of privilege.

Jim Reaugh says

At first glance at the title of this book, I thought it was going to be another of those books: you feel sick & worthless once you get to the end. This couldn't have been further from the truth!

The writing style is engaging & gentle - yet powerful. It was detailed in describing the impact of power & privilege in a way that I understood ...as I am not familiar with sociology studies.

It has motivated me to share with those who have a hard time seeing the lines of power & how they impact all of our relationships in many different ways.

I highly recommend this book both to those who are struggling to understand what it's all about.

Holli Keel says

"It takes very little to make a difference. Small acts can have radical implications. As Edmund Burke said, if the main requirement for the perpetuation of evil is that good people do nothing, then the choice isn't between all or nothing, but between nothing and something."

This book was written by a white, cis, heterosexual, nondisabled man. And I'm still a little bothered that a guy who is most steeped in privilege was the one writing this book. However, I can't deny that he explains the concepts of privilege and oppression really well. Its laid out simply and clearly and in a way that shouldn't put people off from learning about it.

Even though I felt I had a good working knowledge about the topic, I still gained a lot of insights and deepened my understanding of how privilege works in our society. Of particular note was his chapter on capitalism and how this system helped create and now perpetuates class disparity and white dominance.

Nothing bad to say about this book. I'm glad I read it, and only wish I had read it years ago. I would love it if everyone could read this book. It's all the more relevant right now with the racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, and transphobic policies and ideas coming from the White House and stirred up among Americans. We as a society have power to change things for the better, but we have to understand the underlying dynamics in order to do it.

Now I'm off to find another book about the topic.

Umme says

Everyone seems to have loved the book. I didn't think it was that amazing. Yeah, he is a white male heterosexual who sees the inequalities around him and he raised some really good points, but I just thought that the book was extremely repetitive. If you read the first 2 chapters, you don't even have to read the rest of the book because it's the exact same ideas in more or less the exact same words. It's a nice easy read if you're interested in it, but not one I would read again. Really glad I didn't pay for it because I was considering it before reading the book.

Stacy says

This book is an excellent introduction to incredibly loaded topics. You likely won't find it groundbreaking if you're familiar with said topics, but you might find yourself with additional ways to articulate why you think what you think or feel what you feel.

Meen says

Fairly early in my recovery I began to process my own racism, but I was never able to move very far beyond the discomfort of white guilt until my professor/mentor (Nicole Carr) recommended this book. It's a very simple instruction manual for revisioning our individual selves as social entities, for being able to admit where we have benefitted from a racist, sexist, heterosexist, classist, etc. social system which distributes privilege to some while denying it to others WITHOUT condemning ourselves as individual "bad people."

AND I will be eternally grateful to Allan Johnson and this book for introducing me to "woman-of-color" feminism (especially to Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldua) via a reference to *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. THAT book (and its sequel, *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*, totally reshaped my ethical and moral life philosophy.

Josh says

What I like about this book is that it breaks down my defenses as a white male. It doesn't say you as an individual are responsible for privilege but says you have a responsibility to recognize your privilege and work together (not alone) to make the world a more equitable place. In general the book asks lots of questions so the reader can interpret their own emotions and how they're shaped by bigger societal ideas. I agree with some other reviews that the early chapters can be repetitive in a professor-like way of saying something then saying it again in a different way.

Joe says

An excellent introduction to sociological perspectives on race, gender, and class differences. This won't be anything new if you're familiar with progressive thought, but it's to Johnson's credit that it's so well-organized and thorough for its relatively tiny page count. There is a ton of content here considering, and I'd love to see what Johnson has to say if he ever attempted to write a real exploration of these topics. It's clear almost from the outset that he's a bona-fide expert in these topics and understands them inside-and-out, which I appreciate in what usually amounts to a cultural conversation filled with personal opinion but very little fact. Johnson strays away from this and veers toward a matter-of-fact explanation, and it makes "Privilege, Power, and Difference" all the better for it. I'll be gifting this book a lot, I imagine.

Of special note is his concise explanation of how capitalism affects the development of stratification among different classes, thereby leading to varying degrees of racism and sexism. His presentation of these issues is (thus far) the best I've read, and does a fantastic job of framing conflicts of race and gender by bringing them back to their economic origins. Johnson also effectively refutes the argument that fear and hatred follows from personal differences; he explains that historically, this isn't true, and rose about the same time capitalist power structures really began to gain steam (the 18th and 19th centuries).

There are many more moments of clarity hidden in this small volume, but I won't spoil them here. Johnson's book deserves a read by anyone interested in understanding issues regarding privilege, race and gender difference, and class conflict. It's an excellent starting point that most certainly puts you square in the middle of all of it-- and facing the right direction, too.

Kristin says

Somehow books I need to read have a way of randomly appearing in my life. I found out about Privilege, Power, and Difference from a church visitor and, thanks to the awesome San Francisco Library interlibrary loan service, started reading it as a summer project. While this book is denser and less readable than Tim Wise's book *White Like Me* about white privilege, Allan Johnson's theories provide an excellent foundation for thinking about all types of privilege (the flip side of oppression.) He describes how systems of oppression based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status are prevalent in our society and the damage these systems cause. Johnson emphasizes that the American focus on individualism makes it harder to see and understand the dynamic between individuals and social systems. He explains why and how we deny the power of systems of privilege, why this trouble is everyone's problem, and how we can work toward a more equal society by speaking out against oppression and promoting alternatives to the path of least resistance. I learned a lot from this book and strongly recommend it.

Paula Natalia Mejia says

Particularly useful as an introduction to anti-oppression frameworks and ideas on how one might take direct action and become publicly anti-oppression #staywoke. It's a really great, quick read. And even if you've been doing the anti-oppression jig for a while, this is a great reference guide and refresher. For me personally, it really helped bridge some of the understanding between feminist frameworks and womanism.

My mans is mad spiritual for a heterosexual, white man and I fucks with it heavy.

Holly Wood says

So necessary. if anyone asks you to explain what social privilege is, this is the book you put in their hands.

Nora says

"Wouldn't it be tight if everyone was just chill together?" - the author's thesis

erin says

Ever present in the 2nd edition of *Privilege, Power, and Difference* are the ways that structural inequalities impact individual experiences/thoughts. Johnson explores race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status with language that is easy to understand for those new to the field of work around privilege and oppression in this compact tome. Capitalism's oppressive power & contributions to inequality are also interwoven throughout this book, which ultimately helps to cement Johnson's argument that structure and the individual are inexorably linked. It seems that Johnson's main goals in this book are to help the reader understand how privilege and oppression work in relation to society, but also in their own life. And, lest one worry that this is like so many other sociologically-oriented books (which is, to say, simply dredging up problems with no "solution"), the last chapter of this book is solely devoted to helping the reader realize what

can be individually done about privilege and oppression all while dissuading burnout.

This is a great introduction, and because of the wide variety of topics covered it is also a useful tool to those who've done a good deal of work/reading around privilege and oppression.
