

MULTIPLE LENSES

multiple stories

Understanding the full picture of societal issues requires viewing them from multiple lenses and taking in the unique insights from each lens. By overlaying the lenses, we can obtain deeper understanding and create better solutions.

I will explore how societal issues, such as wage inequality, benefit from being viewed through multiple perspectives, including gender, sexuality, race, economic, and postcolonial lenses.

"The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

THE PROBLEM WITH

single stories

Constructivism: “we develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed upon.” (Introduction to Sociology, pg. 22) We apply these constructs to race, sexuality and gender.

Single stories have been used throughout our history to other people, impose tools of colonialism in order to oppress and extort. Through the use of constructs like race, colonizers were able to create strongly held beliefs that allowed them to conquer and justify their inhumanity toward Indigenous and Black peoples, and other marginalized communities and cultures.

Edward Said in his book, *Orientalism*, helped us understand how the West maintained its power by distorting and simplifying Eastern people and their culture. R.L. Jackson wrote in *Scripting the Black Masculine Body*, “The Black body in popular culture often serves as a symbol of power and resistance, but it is simultaneously portrayed as a site of danger and deviance.”

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Societal issues, such as wage inequality, racial discrimination and poverty are complex and multifaceted. No single perspective can fully explain these issues. For a more complete understanding, we must apply diverse lenses to examine the root causes, intersectionality and impacts.

LENSES:

- 1. Gender Lens:** Examines how power, societal roles and expectations based on gender impact how we see ourselves, and how the world sees us. We are all sent messages through media, culture and our community at an early age about what it means to be feminine or masculine.
- 2. Queer Lens:** Explores how sexuality intersects with societal issues. LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly transgender, bisexual and non-binary people, face unique challenges in a culture that adheres to rigid norms. This lens shows us how one's sexuality or gender identity can compound issues in areas like healthcare and employment.
- 3. Race Lens:** Racism is deeply engrained in our society and influences all areas of life. People of color have endured and experience negative impacts due to racism. Indigenous people are still fighting for their sovereignty and Black people still experience unequal access to education and housing due to systemic practices like redlining and segregation.
- 4. Economic Lens:** Focuses on structural issues such as capitalism and class that impact wealth distribution. Wage inequality can be seen as a result of capitalism's focus on profit over people. Where lower wage earners struggle to make ends meet. Globalization is another aspect that influences this area of study.
- 5. Postcolonial Lens:** Explores the long lasting effects of colonialism on modern day society. Histories and systems of oppression have shaped and caused our current problems. Exploitation of labor, people and resources is a common theme. Colonialism impacts our current culture and power structures, and is the underlying source of wealth, health and human rights disparities.
- 6. Environmental Lens:** The intersection of societal issues with ecological and environmental concerns is undeniable, including its impact on marginalized communities. Degradation of the environment significantly impacts low income earners, and people of color. These communities bear the brunt of environmental harm, such as pollution from factories, urban hot spots, limited access to fresh food and displacement due to climate change. Capitalism prioritizes profits over long-term environmental health, magnifying ecological inequalities.

LAYERING LENSES

for holistic solutions

Intersectionality or Intersection Theory: “we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other attributes.” (Introduction to Sociology, pg. 295) They all intersect, some providing privilege and others contributing to disadvantages.

Each of these lenses (gender, queer, race, economic, postcolonial and environmental), are unique perspectives but interconnected. For example, poverty is a multifaceted problem.

A poor Black woman and white man may both experience poverty, however, the challenges and barriers they face can be different. Although economics is the driving factor for both, their gender and race create additional obstacles that make upward mobility harder. Opportunities, representation and access to resources can be greatly enhanced or diminished based on the characteristics of race and gender.

WAGE INEQUALITY

lens worksheet

Use this worksheet to examine how the various lenses below influence wage disparities.

GENDER

How do traditional gender roles, stereotypes and power dynamics shape expectation around work and wages?

QUEER

Reflect on how sexual orientation and gender identity intersect with wage inequality.

RACE

Think about how race and ethnicity influences earnings.

ECONOMIC

How does capitalism drive wage inequality?

POSTCOLONIAL

Consider how America's history of exploitation and oppression continues to shape our modern day labor and wages.

ENVIRONMENT

How do environmental issues intersect with wage inequality?

WAGE INEQUALITY

lens worksheet

Use this worksheet to examine how the various lenses below influence wage disparities.

GENDER

How do traditional gender roles, stereotypes and power dynamics shape expectation around work and wages?

Women, especially women of color, earn less than men for similar work.

QUEER

Reflect on how sexual orientation and gender identity intersect with wage inequality.

LGBTQ+ individuals, especially black trans women face greater wage disparity, discrimination and threats of violence.

RACE

Think about how race and ethnicity influences earnings.

People of color are more likely to face discrimination in hiring practices, lower wages and limited opportunities for advancement.

ECONOMIC

How does capitalism drive wage inequality?

Corporate profits are prioritized over equitable pay, with large bonuses and salaries going to executive leaders who often get to jump with golden parachutes when things go wrong.

POSTCOLONIAL

How does America's history of exploitation and oppression impact wage inequality?

People of color face economic disadvantages due to historical disenfranchisement and unequal access to resources. Including having property stolen (Indigenous Peoples) or not being paid for labor. (Enslaved Peoples).

ENVIRONMENT

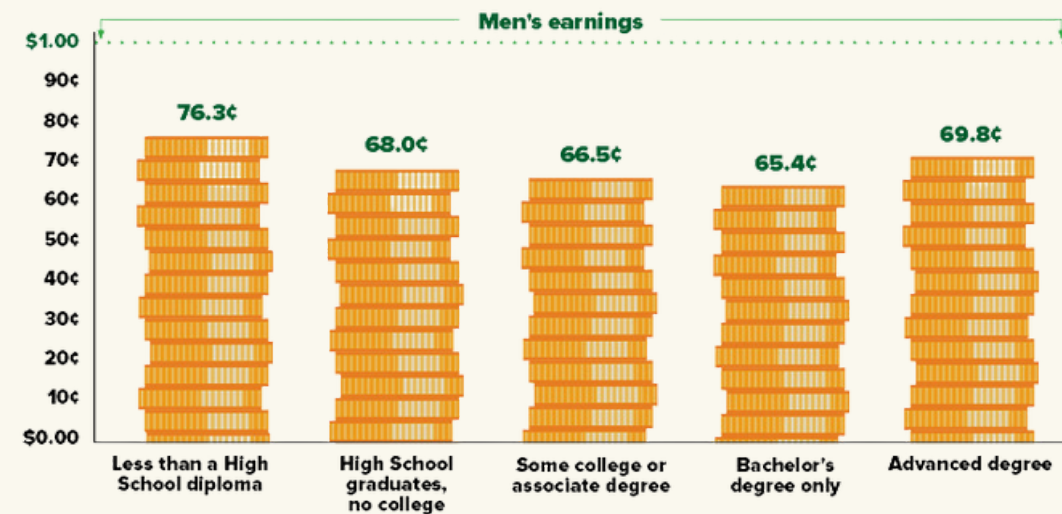
How do environmental issues intersect with wage inequality?

Low income communities have high incidents of pollution which can cause health issues and impact job opportunities. They often are places where jails are placed to capitalize from the prison industrial complex (PIC).

WAGE inequality

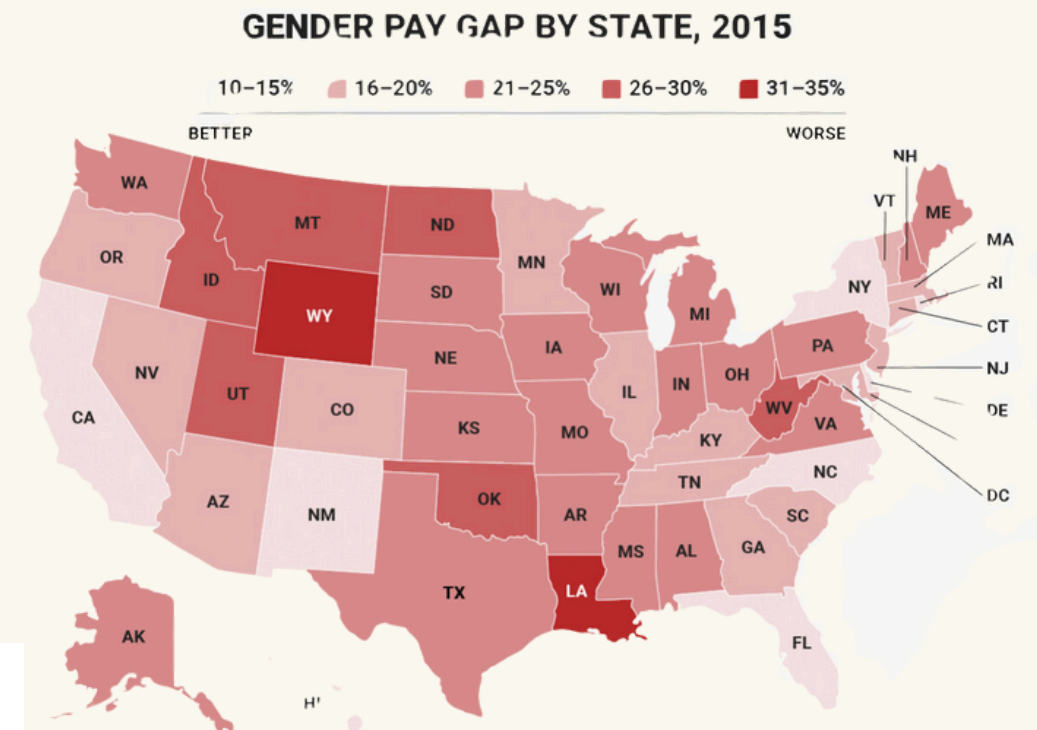
EVEN CONTROLLING FOR EDUCATION, BLACK WOMEN ARE EARNING LESS THAN WHITE MEN

The amount Black women earn, for each dollar earned by non-Hispanic white men with the same educational attainment



Source: Current Population Survey 2020

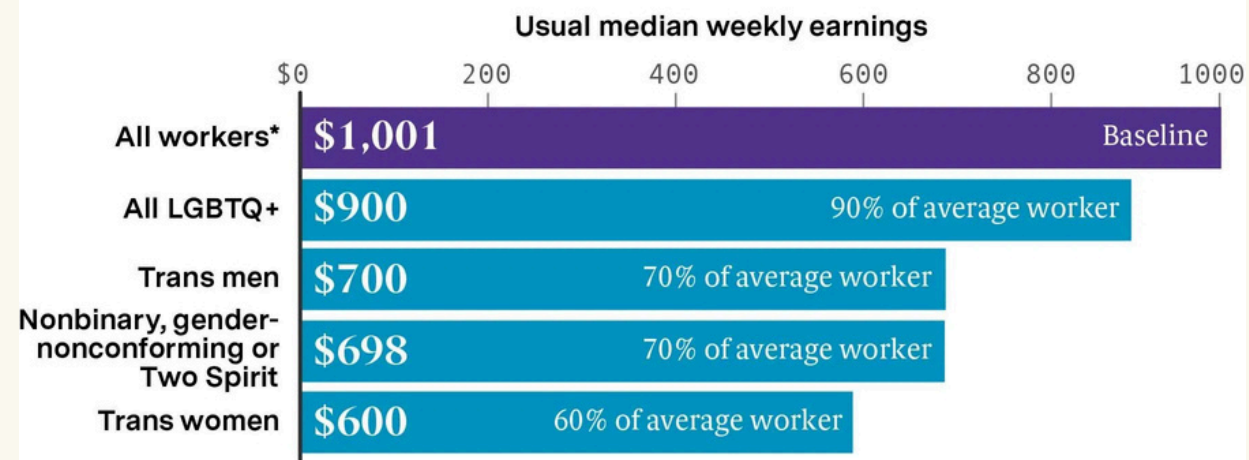
BLACK WOMEN EARN LESS



GAP BY GENDER

America's transgender wage gap

Usual weekly median earnings, not seasonally adjusted, during Q3 2021



*Denotes data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Data represents earnings from workers employed fulltime at nonfarm jobs. Reported earnings are before deductions and include any additional pay usually received. Earnings only encompass each worker's primary job.

Jasmine Mithani/The 19th

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Community Marketing & Insights, Human Rights Campaign

TRANSGENDER WAGE GAP

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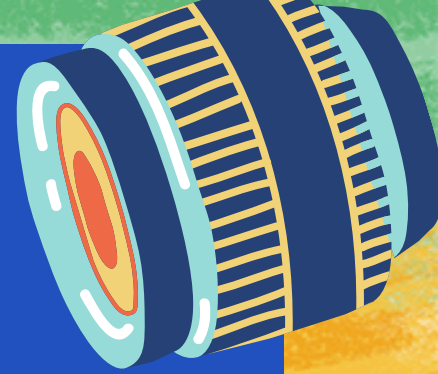
To address our societal issues, we must adopt a multi-lens approach when studying challenges. Like wage inequality, racial injustice, poverty and climate change.

Diverse perspectives not only provide an opportunity for deeper understanding and empathy, but also lead to more comprehensive, inclusive and just solutions.

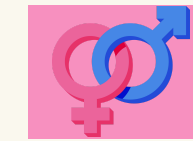


the danger of the single story.

MULTIPLE LENSES MULTIPLE STORIES



"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story".
Ngozi Adichie



GENDER LENS

Explores how women are impacted by societal expectations, ideals and values which are encoded at an early age, and the impact on their wealth (pay gap), health and overall wellbeing.



CULTURAL LENS

Helps us understand how values and our own communities influence and shape our self-worth, identities, success and happiness.



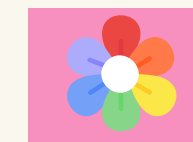
ECONOMIC LENS

Examines issues like social stratification and how wealth, class and capitalism impact us all. When overlaid with race, gender and sexuality - the outcomes and understanding can be vastly different. For example, Sugrue argues that "Economic disinvestment and white flight left African Americans in cities like Detroit trapped in declining neighborhoods with few opportunities for upward mobility."



RACE LENS

Focused on discrimination and systemic racism, and their impacts on communities and individuals; including poverty, environmental justice and economic justice. As Omi states, "Race was created as a way to organize and legitimize systems of power and inequality."



QUEER LENS

Explores how our LGBTQ+ community experience additional challenges because of societal values placed on how we present and sexuality.



POSTCOLONIALISM LENS

Considers how societal issues are rooted in the legacy of colonialism which shaped modern day social, economic and political problems. This lens should decenter European centric perspectives.

Lenses are not separate, they are interconnected. To fully understand and address the impacts of poverty on a culture, we must consider race, gender and sexuality. For more inclusive outcomes approach view societal issues through multiple lenses.

ANNOTATED

bibliography

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story | TED Talk, www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?subtitle=en. Accessed 11 Oct. 2024.

- In this Ted Talk, Adichie explains the pitfalls of relying on one point of view when examining a social issue or trying to understand a group of people.

Keirns, Nathan J., et al. Introduction to Sociology 3E. OpenStax, Rice University, 2021.

- This is our academic book that we relied on heavily this quarter that examines many aspects of social constructs, racism, gender, economics and other valuable insights that helped me in developing my final project.

Omi, Michael. "The theory of racial formation." *Racial Formation in the United States*, 20 June 2014, pp. 105-137, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203076804-12>.

- Omi explains how race is not fixed, but used to shape policy, society and economy. External forces shape race, which is a construct, and people are treated differently based on those constructs.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

- Sugrue walks us through the decline of Detroit after the WWII, and how its downfall was caused by systemic practices.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin, 2021.

- Said explains how the West has used Orientalism as a tool to distort the view of Easterners, simplifying and stereotyping them in a way that seemingly justifies for oppressors, their injustices.

Jackson, R. L. (2006a). *Scripting the black masculine body identity, discourse, and racial politics in popular media*. State University of New York

- Jackson details how media scripts and encodes the Black body with explicit and implicit messaging that has allowed Black men to be fetishized and feared.