

ACADEMIC AND WHITE WORKING CLASS PERCEPTIONS OF THE ECONOMIC  
ASPECTS OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

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by  
JENNIFER HELLER

Dr. Tola Olu Pearce, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

ACADEMIC AND WHITE WORKING CLASS PERCEPTIONS  
OF THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS  
OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

presented by Jennifer Heller,

a candidate for the degree of master of arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Tola Olu Pearce

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Professor Mary Jo Neitz

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Professor Larry Brown

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*To my parents, Ron and Carol Heller*

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# ACADEMIC AND WHITE WORKING CLASS PERCEPTIONS OF THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

Jennifer Heller

Dr. Tola Olu Pearce, Thesis Supervisor

## ABSTRACT

The construction of academic knowledge is a dynamic process. It is the job of social scientists to parse out partial knowledge from every relevant social location in order to present a structural interpretation of social phenomena. In this project an analysis of both an etic and emic interpretation of how lower class whites enjoy white privilege was undertaken in order to discover if a disconnect between knowledge claims exist between the two perspectives. When a disconnect was found to exist, the goal of my project became to offer an explanation for how and why this occurred. A textual and content analysis was performed on both academic texts and internet blogs that discusses white privilege from a lower class white social location to gain an emic and etic perspective. The analysis of emic texts revealed four themes: (1) Lower class whites felt that academics discussions of white privilege contributed a lack of understanding that whites could legitimately be poor (2) Group boundaries were constructed to create distance between racial minorities and non-poor whites (3) White privilege does not exist for lower class whites and (4) some understanding of the intersection with gender and social class was evident. A content and textual analyses of academic texts led to the discovery

of three patterns (1) Class was not held constant resulting in a downward direction of comparison between upper and middle class whites and lower class racial minorities; a horizontal direction of comparison was utilized to compare lower class whites with lower class racial minorities (2) the Etic suggested that lower class whites emically adopted a vicarious status with the help of their racial privilege to improve their material situation (3) the etic suggested that lower class whites emically determined the tolerance of class oppression threshold by looking downward; when the emic considered the gap between lower class racial minorities and lower class whites to be too small, then complaints were made about class oppression. The emic used discussions of white privilege as an opportunity to complain about class oppression. A language of race was used in place of a language of class and gender oppression because that was what the emic perceived was available. The analysis revealed that the emic lower class white perspective included a partial understanding of white privilege because class and gender oppression must be taken into account for a more accurate understanding. An analysis of the etic showed that class oppression was not adequately discussed by academics. Although the etic used data from lower class whites, emic claims to partial knowledge were said to be tainted because of racial privilege. Implications of the study suggest that intersectionality must be incorporated in the etic analysis, and when it is included more effort to parse out partial knowledge must be made.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction**

The production of knowledge is socially constructed and is therefore, subject to partiality when based on preconceived notions. Grave misunderstandings have occurred when scientific notions have been applied to marginal groups in society that are based not on the experiences from the social location of the oppressed, but instead on assumptions, stereotypes, and generalizations. For hundreds of years, women were assumed to be irrational because they were unable to act and think like men. Today we believe that we need to take seriously the impact of their social location(s) in understanding their perspectives. Racial and ethnic minorities were thought to have an inferior intellect, which created a culture that was conducive to poverty and crime (Park 1950).

Contemporary inequality theories have made strides in interpreting the effects of social stratification from the social location of the oppressed. Theorists of racial inequality are finally taking an insight from the activists of the Civil Rights era seriously, that racism is not a black problem but a white problem. The critical study of whiteness suggests that the study of racial inequality in the United States will advance if the cultural practices and privileges of whites were critically investigated.

Significant contributions to our understanding of inequality were made by rejecting an ideological position put forth by dominant groups in society that explained why racial minorities occupied the lowest strata in society (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Winant 1997). More efforts, however, are needed to understand why some whites still hold viewpoints concerning racial and ethnic minorities that maintains or increases inequality.

A more intricate understanding of why and how whites conceptualize whiteness is needed to uncover motivations for regressive racist tendencies. Just as it was an oversight to assume that popular conceptions about racial and ethnic minorities were valid, it is equally mistaken to assume to understand the motivations of whites by relying on generalizations and stereotypes. The critical study of whiteness suggests that academics that study race and ethnicity know little about even ethnically mainstream whites (Wray & Newitz 1997). Yet even in critical race theory, there seems to be gaps that are similar to historical oversights; ironically, special attention needs to be given to prevent history from repeating itself. It is unwise to make assumptions about individuals from social locations which we know little about.

### **Research Question**

Among racial theorists that advocate for the critical study of whiteness it is generally accepted that whites are recipients of white privilege which are special privileges awarded on the basis of skin color that are denied to members of subordinate racial groups. Emic interpretations from lower class whites often cite their own economic struggles as evidence that lower class whites do not always enjoy privileges on the basis of race.<sup>1</sup> Few systematic studies have been done to analyze the disconnect between the academic and white lower class perception of white privilege. As a result, my research question will address two related issues. First, how do lower class whites perceive white privilege as it relates to members of their social location? Second, how do academics perceive white privilege as it relates to lower class whites? Therefore, the goal of my research project will be to understand why these two perspectives differ. To explore these two perspectives it is necessary to uncover and explain any differences.

For instance, when lower class whites say they do not enjoy white privilege what do they mean? How do academics portray the racial privileges of whiteness? What happens when whiteness crosses class boundaries? Does racial privilege remain the same among upper, middle, and lower class whites? A textual and content analysis will be performed to discover how class differences among whites are addressed in discussions of the material aspects<sup>2</sup> of white privilege among academic racial theorists and among internet blogs that speak from a lower class white point of view.

### **Significance**

It is of immense importance that social science research is of interest to both academics and the general public. My study seeks to be of interest on empirical, analytic, moral, political, and personal grounds. Empirically, whites are the largest racial group that live below the poverty line. In 2006, non-Hispanic white households comprise 61.4% of households in the lowest fifth quintile (U.S. Census Bureau of Households). Consequently, a significant number of Americans who identify as lower class would also be white. In light of this, it is essential to uncover how racial theorists address material aspects of white privilege as it applies to lower class whites. In both popular culture and academia, thoughts about poverty invoke images of racial minorities. Studies of class inequality have become less frequent since the War on Poverty ended in the late 1970s. In the 1990s, interest in class inequality reared its head once again. In other words, members of the lower class specifically referred to African American and Latinos. Some areas of sociology are beginning to recognize that it is inappropriate to set up the white experience as the norm to compare all other races and ethnicities. Unfortunately, few sociologists have realized a similar mistake might occur when it is assumed that a middle

class experience is standard. Sociology is a young discipline and is only beginning to realize that all knowledge is socially constructed and is subject to bias. My research will analytically challenge the contention of the general public, and social scientists to some extent, that a racial identification of white is equal to a middle class status.

In addition to empirical and analytical grounds, my research is of moral and political importance. As citizens of the world, we have a moral obligation to investigate every claim of oppression. To refuse to consider a claim of class oppression because it comes from a group that is considered privileged ignores 30 years of work on intersectionality and also suggests a false binary. Lower income whites who claim they do not receive special privileges have been a chronic source of frustration for those committed to racial equality. Historically, discontent toward those who work for equality arises among groups that believe they are being oppressed and their suffering is discounted or otherwise seen as illegitimate by those who claim to be interested in Civil Rights for all.<sup>3</sup> Politically, working class whites could be potential allies with feminists and racial equality activists because they also have a vested interest in a more equal society.

Finally, my research project is significant on personal grounds. My social location is working poor, white, rural, and female. I come from an area of America that is typical of the rural Midwest and West in terms of race and class. Over 95% of my hometown is white; the social class distribution is largely flat with a large working poor and working class majority and a minority middle class. Most people of my hometown denied that racial minorities currently face systematic discrimination. Those that agreed that racial minorities were disadvantaged were often apathetic about what should be

done. Nearly everyone found those who advocated for racial equality to be ideological. My social location creates an interesting paradox between my own experiences and what I believe is the lack of public attention to lower class whites. My research on academic and white lower class perceptions of the economic aspects white privilege strives to be sociologically relevant on an empirical, analytic, moral, political, and personal level.

### **Data Accessibility and Validity**

My data will be collected from three primary sources. First, I will analyze the 15 most popularly cited academic texts on white privilege to see how white privilege among the lower class is addressed by academic scholars when income and employment issues are discussed. When an academic work is highly cited it shows that the arguments have been strongly received in an extremely positive or negative way. The purpose of using the most popularly cited texts is to focus my content and textual analysis on books and articles that have been overwhelmingly accepted. This will give me a sense of how academics on the cutting edge view white privilege among lower class whites. Second, I will use United States census data to determine the income and type of employment of the bottom quintile of Americans and of low income non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>4</sup> This shows that a significant amount of whites can not be classified as middle class. Third, I will use two internet blogs that discuss the material aspects of white privilege as it applies to the white lower classes. Through the use of texts, census data, and blogs I will be able to perform the analysis needed to determine how class differences among whites are included in discussions of the material aspects of white privilege among both blogs that portray a working class white point of view and among academic racial theorists. The result of my analysis will reveal possibilities for why a disconnect exists between the



academic perception of white privilege and the white lower class perception of white privilege.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, whites have only denied they receive privileges on the basis of their race following the Civil Rights Movement. My thesis will focus only on contemporary times and is not generalizable to the past.

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to narrow my focus to income and employment prestige.

<sup>3</sup> During the Civil Rights era, a gender conflict arose because some men belittled or denied the significance of gender oppression among both African American and white women.

<sup>4</sup> I define low income as any person making less than \$14,999 a year.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

Social class is a topic that has generated profound sociological interest in the past and present. The production of knowledge is a process that occurs gradually and may build on previous insights. At times, however, new theoretical insights have forced old paradigm open resulting in dissatisfaction with prior analysis and a reinterpretation of social phenomena. Prior to the discovery of each scientific insight, the social phenomenon in question was unnoticed, unexplained, or considered purely subjective. The academic conceptualization of social class since capitalism began with great conflict between social classes. Over time more social classes were theorized to be important, life chances were assumed to be more gradual, and class conflict perceived to be lessened. Presently divisions that separate each social class's access to life chances are perceived to be fluid. The historical breakdown of social class is relevant to my research question because it demonstrates how academics conceptualize life chances among America's poor. With each new insight, possibilities arose for following theorists to either build upon previous work by extending or critiquing arguments or reinterpret social phenomenon.

The early works of Karl Marx and Max Weber provided theoretical frameworks which are still evident today. Occupation, income, and social status played a key role in how social classes were delineated by theorists in the middle of the twentieth century. The use of participant observation research methods to determine Weber's 'social estimation of honor' resulted in an increasingly complicated view of the division of social

classes. This allowed researchers to determine fine distinction between each social class, including the working class, working poor, and underclass. Criticism arose during the Civil Rights movement because models of social class downplayed the significance of race and ethnicity. These concerns were addressed by the incorporation of multidimensionality and intersectionality. The majority of work on intersectionality simultaneously focuses on class, gender, and racial minorities. As the critical study of whiteness is becoming better known, social scientists are reminded that whiteness is also a race. As a result, recent threads of intersectionality focus on social class and whites.

### **Historical Breakdown of Class**

Influence of Karl Marx. Karl Max began the academic study of social class with his analysis of unequal power relations between members of society during early stages of Western capitalism, resulting in class conflict which was viewed as the driving force of history. Among Marx's many contributions, he recognized that social class was artificially constructed by unequal power relations and had an influence on many aspects of one's life. Although Marx identified numerous classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were the two most important because their conflict provided the momentum for historical progression (Marx 1983:203). On one end of the spectrum, the bourgeoisie owned the means of production; on the other end of the spectrum the proletariat, who made up the vast majority, labored under the bourgeois class because they controlled access to subsistence (Marx 1983:490). The bourgeois' monopolization of capital was the cause of severe misery for the proletariat (Marx 1983:492-493).

A great number of sociologists built on Marx's most brilliant insights; among them were Helen and Robert Lynd, Frank Parkin, and Erik Olin Wright. The Lynds

conducted a participant observation study in Muncie, Indiana, from 1890 through 1925. Like Marx, they found that the town was divided by the two most important social classes which resulted in unequal power relations: a working class (71%) and a business class (29%). The Lynds were also in agreement with Marx that social class bled into almost every aspect of life.

The mere fact of being born upon one or the other side of the watershed roughly formed by these two groups is the most significant single cultural factor tending to influence what one does all day long throughout one's life; whom one marries; when one gets up in the morning; whether one belongs to the Holy Roller or Presbyterian church; or drives a Buick or Ford; whether or not one's daughter makes the desirable high school violet club; or one's wife meets with the Sew We Do Club or with the Art Students' league; whether one belongs to the Odd Fellows or the Mason Shrine; whether one sits about evenings with one's necktie off; and so indefinitely throughout the daily comings and goings of a Middletown man, woman or child" (Lynd & Lynd 1957:254).

Unlike Marx, however, they concluded that the business class did not necessarily own the means of production. The division between the two classes was the result of occupational differences. The working class dealt primarily with things and the work of the business class addressed activities predominantly related to people (Lynd & Lynd 1957:22).

The rising importance of the American middle class has empirically challenged Marx's class system. Employment stock options have resulted in ownership becoming more widely distributed. Erik Olin Wright has answered this challenge by suggesting that a contradictory class occupies a spot between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Managers and supervisors occupy a spot between the bourgeois and proletariat, small business employers are between the bourgeois and petty bourgeoisie, and semi-autonomous employers are in located between the petty bourgeois and proletariat (Wright

1978:88). Grusky suggests that Neo-Marxists have incorporated occupation, autonomy, and authority relations in their model of class (2001:16). Frank Parkin argues that six social classes exist based on cleavages in the occupational structure. The professional, managerial, and administrative classes are at the apex of society and are followed by semiprofessional and lower administrative, routine white collar, skilled manual, semiskilled manual, and unskilled manual laborers (Parkin 1979:19). Occupations with the highest status restrict access to resources, resulting in inequality (Parkin 1979:22). Karl Marx's influence will continue to be strongly felt, even as adjustments are made to account for changes over time and across culture.

Influence of Max Weber. Even though the works of Karl Marx have inspired countless social scientists, American theorists have been more receptive of Max Weber's conception of social class. Weber suggested that social class is determined by one's class situation, status, and party. Life chances replaced class as an integral part of the Weberian conception of class. A social class is made up of people with similar life chances and is determined by one's possession of goods or services that can be converted into income (Weber 1958:181). Weber disagrees with Marx by arguing that a class is not necessarily a community. Status groups, however, are comprised of communities and are ranked by the social estimation of honor. Status groups are rarely linked to class but are more commonly related to occupational groups (Weber 1958:186). Parties are the force behind communal action and are typically motivated by class or status groups (Weber 1958:194). Among class theorists, Weber is perhaps best known for his observation of social status. While Marx reminds us that social class has material manifestations, Weber

adds that class is also socially constructed by members of society through a 'social estimation of honor'.

In an ethnographic study conducted between 1930 through 1934, W. Lloyd Warner applied Weber's notion of status to determine the class structure of American society. Warner found that social class exists because members of the community rank one another in socially inferior or superior positions, which he called evaluated participation (1966:36). In addition to evaluated participation an index of status characteristics was used to determine social class. This consisted of rating by matched agreements, symbolic placement, status reputation, comparison, simple assignment to a class, and rating by institutional membership (Warner, Meeker, & Eelis 1960:37-38). The result of social ranking is that privileges, rights, duties, and obligations are distributed unequally among society (1966:37). By using participant observation and interviews, Warner found that Yankee City had six social classes: upper upper (1.44%), lower upper (1.56%), upper middle (10.22%), lower middle (28.12%), upper lower (32.60%), and lower lower (25.22%) (1966:43).

Peter M. Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan followed on Warner's conception of class as a continuum while continuing to depart from a Marxian emphasis on conflict. Blau and Duncan surveyed the public to determine the prestige and social standing of occupations in society. They discovered that education played a large factor in the determination of social status and income played a significant role in one's economic status (Blau and Duncan 1967:118). Class boundaries were determined by divisions in occupation with white collar being socially superior to blue collar work and blue collar work being more prestigious than farm labor (Blau and Duncan 1967:58). Parkin

critiqued Blau and Duncan's work on occupational prestige because the use of surveys made it unclear whether each person was giving their opinion of how prestigious they felt each job ought to be perceived or if they were answering based off an estimation of what others' thought (1979:41).

Distinctions between the Working Class, Working Poor, and Underclass.<sup>5</sup> The United States has a distinctive interpretation of social class when compared to European societies. In Great Britain unofficial and private images of class suggest a strong awareness of a working class, but a weaker sense of political consciousness or sense of class conflict (Marwick 1980:80). With regard to the United States, Michael Harrington suggests that those living below the poverty line are hidden from the view, because America thinks of itself as a classless society (1967:22). "Here are the unskilled workers, the migrant farm workers, the aged, the minorities, and all others who live in the economic underworld of American life" (Harrington 1967:10). Social scientists who have noticed America's poor argue that the lines between the classes are blurred, but they can be differentiated by analyzing income, employment, education, and housing situation.

W. Lloyd Warner's analysis of Yankee City revealed that a lower lower class accounted for 25.22% of the population. Although he did not differentiate between the working class, working poor, and underclass, his analysis laid the groundwork for later studies that made a finer distinction. Warner observed that employment, income, housing, education, and community status were key factors in the division of social class. He also noted that within each social class demographical patterns were evident. For example, members of the lower lower class were older, had more children, more likely to be married and to marry younger, and were more likely to be a member of a Southern



and/or Eastern European ethnic group (Warner 1966:262). Most were semiskilled and unskilled workers and few were in retail sales and business. A significant percentage were unemployed and worked only part time. Consequently, 1/3 of the lower lower class was on relief, which accounted for 65% of welfare cases in the city (Warner 1966:263). The lower lower class was residentially segregated from other classes, living in neighborhoods with older houses in poor repair. Only six percent owned their own home while the rest rented (Warner 1966:264). Lower lower class children were the most likely to drop out of high school and were more likely to take vocational classes instead of university track courses (Warner 1966:265). Members of the lower lower class rarely socially mixed with members of higher social classes. The males were more likely to join non-auxiliary fraternities and the females were more likely to join female fraternities with auxiliaries and age grades. Churches were segregated by class and lower lower class males were more likely to be arrested than other members of the community (Warner 1966:264). Warner's work set a precedent for future class theorists because members of the community were consulted to determine the subjective aspects of status in analyzing class.

Working Class. Although Yankee City provided a framework from which American social classes are conceptualized, Warner made little distinction between lower social classes in the work itself. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century social class models began to break down the lower class into three groups: working class, working poor, and underclass. Gilbert and Kahl (1982) and Coleman and Rainwater (1978), who were largely in theoretical agreement with one another, suggest that the working class is comprised of approximately 1/3 of Americans.<sup>6</sup> This classification is determined by

using similar criteria as Warner to incorporate material reality with social status. The working class is employed in occupations that are routine and require little skill. These occupations include blue collar factory work and low skill white collar jobs, such as clerks and salespersons (Gilbert and Kahl 1982:352). The working class might also work odd hours or on weekends (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:187). The working class often do not meet the educational requirements to qualify for more professional and higher paying occupations (ibid). The income of the working class is less secure than the middle class, but is enough to avoid welfare (Gilbert and Kahl 1987:352). This group also contains a disproportionate amount of racial and ethnic minorities (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:187). Members of the working class are residentially segregated and live in cheap, undesirable housing, but have the financial means to avoid the worst neighborhoods in town (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:177-178).

Coleman and Rainwater introduce mainstream cultural assimilation as a new factor in determining social class. In determining the degree to which cultural assimilation was achieved by the lower classes, Coleman and Rainwater conducted a widescale qualitative study among various eticly classified social classes. Disagreement was discovered among the different classes because both material and non-material distinctions were arbitrarily drawn. Coleman and Rainwater outline three types of working class families: those who earn enough to pay their bills but have little discretionary income, those who normally would have sufficient income but do not because of special circumstances (e.g. health problems and several young children), and those who have the same amount of discretionary income as the middle class but prefer

the working class subculture (1978:189). Those falling in the latter category do not subscribe to middle class manners, mores, and leisure activities.

Coleman and Rainwater were among the first social scientists to realize there is a discrepancy between how a social class views itself and how it is perceived by higher social classes. This insight is important because it shows that delineation between social classes is a socially constructed reality and is therefore subject to differing interpretations. Higher social classes view the working class as occupying a level just above poverty; their lack of education is the largest factor that prevents social mobility (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:178-179). Coleman and Rainwater disagree with the upper classes that income and standard of living are the largest factors in determining if one is working class.

In telling our story we would, for example, challenge the Middle-American pronouncement that differences of status in their world are almost exclusively matters of income level and standard of living; in doing so, we would suggest that this view has been overtly influenced and simplified by the deep envy which their differences in material well-being arouse. Our basis for this challenge goes beyond that, however, for when we look closely at friendship patterns, organizational memberships, and neighborhood locations of the 600 Kansas Citians and Bostonians whom we interviewed, we find these people associate with one another selectively in ways that suggest that similarity in standard of living does not produce the kind of equality in social standing our respondents were inclined to assume (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:179).

The working class see themselves as having a hard time financially. They acknowledge their lives are undesirable, but not to the extent of the working poor. This is largely because most members of the working class make at least some effort to adopt middle class standards of behavior that govern appearance and attitudes (ibid). Since occupations are not always consistent with income, association and status are added as important emic and etic factors in constructing class boundaries.

Working Poor. The working poor (who Coleman and Rainwater call semi-poor) materially occupy the position between the working class and the underclass. Economically, they are slightly above or just below the poverty line and are on the low end of subsistence standard. Saving money is rarely possible and the working poor depend solely on social security income when retired (Gilbert and Kahl 1982:352). The working poor occupy service jobs and may work in marginal firms that employ low paid operatives (ibid). Their occupations are rarely unionized and often insecure. The working poor are usually not on relief, which is one of the most important factors that separate them from the underclass. Members of the working poor class rarely have any post-secondary schooling and not all members have graduated from high school (Gilbert and Kahl 1982:352). Their housing situation is substandard; they live in rented houses that are old, small, and in poor repair (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:203). About half of the working poor are white and half are racial minorities (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:205).

When considering non-material factors, members of higher classes do not view the working poor in a positive light. The working poor are judged harshly, but the judgment is relative as they are constantly being compared to the underclass. This results in the working poor occupying a low position in society, but not the absolute lowest. The working poor are seen as lazy, but not as lazy as the underclass because they are too proud to live off welfare. The working poor live in inadequate housing but not in 'real slums'. Problems blocking mobility are said to be: too many children, marital problems, and having a present orientation. Linguistic style, a lack of education, and a minority race or ethnic status is also presumed to be a deficiency (Coleman and Rainwater

1978:200-205). How the working poor saw themselves is divided on racial lines. Whites denied being members of the lower class by using three lines of reasoning: they are morally superior to blacks, they are doing better than their parents, and money is not a fair measure of one's class as a human being (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:208).

African Americans acknowledged that they occupied a low social class in a matter of fact way and did not act as martyrs. Racial minorities were less likely to attach a negative moral dimension to living in poverty (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:209).

Underclass. The largest factor that distinguishes the working poor from the underclass are that the underclass is seldom employed and rely on public assistance. Historically, members of America's lowest social class were forced to work in poorhouses in exchange for housing and food (Katz 1986). When employment is secured the work is menial and usually part time (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:199).<sup>7</sup> Most members of the underclass have no formal degree, live in slum neighborhoods, and have an income that is below subsistence levels (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:194). Single mothers and members of racial and ethnic minority groups are overrepresented in the underclass and are victims of sex, racial, and ethnic discrimination (Gilbert and Kahl 1978:352).

Those from higher social classes often compare the underclass to the working poor, but the underclass is judged more harshly. Herbert Gans suggests that the poor are viewed as morally suspect, resulting in the higher classes feeling superior (1973). Whites also presume that nearly all members of the underclass are racial minorities (Gans 1995). The underclass is accused of making no effort to socially advance and lack the skills or talent to do so. When compared to the working poor, the underclass are assumed to be physically and morally dirty and their lives are more chaotic (Gilbert and Kahl

1978:192). The underclass is perceived as the enemy class because they supposedly live better than those who work. They also possess a number of self victimizing vices such as they waste money, are too indifferent to look for work, and are poor examples to their children (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:196-197). The mere sight of the underclass is offensive (Coleman and Rainwater 1978:194). It is interesting to note that higher classes are contradictory in their opinions of the underclass. For example, if the underclass lives better than those who work, then why do they live in slums? If the underclass waste their money on commodities, then why is that not viewed as an attempt to assimilate into middle class culture? This suggests that higher classes spend very little conscious effort reflecting on the lives of the underclass. Coleman and Rainwater were unable to determine how the underclass sees themselves because researchers working in their study were too fearful to visit underclass neighborhoods.

### **New Trends in Studies of Class**

Studies of social class came under scrutiny during the 1960s because they underplayed the significance of race and ethnicity, resulting in widespread reinterpretation of social inequality. Some scholars mentioned that those of subordinate races and ethnicities occupied the lower rungs of society, but few systematic studies explored the connection between race and class. Race and ethnicity was merely viewed as a factor that should be considered in determining social status. David Grusky (2001) outlines three types of responses that resulted from the challenge to consider race and ethnicity when studying inequality. First, race and class should be considered equal factors. Second, class conflict was being replaced by racial conflict and race should be considered a more important factor than class. Third, race, class, and gender must be

studied in connection to one another because it is impossible to experience them separately. It is from the latter response, which is called intersectionality, which I am using as a framework for my thesis.

David Grusky suggests that during the Civil Rights movement, racial, ethnic, and nationalist conflicts undermined studies of social class (2001:28). At the very least, it forced those who studied social inequities to consider the impact race as well as class. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan observed that race was largely ignored in studies of social class and advocated it be considered on equal par with class. “Similarly, we feel that to see only what is familiar in the ethnicity of our time is to miss the emergence of a new social category as significant for the understanding of the present day world as that of social class itself” (Glazer and Moynihan 1975:2-3). Milton M. Gordon was in agreement by suggesting it was a mistake to consider race and ethnicity as one type of status; instead it should not be considered separately from social class (1978:259). Frank Parkin noted that divisions along ethnic lines cut across class lines.

It becomes increasingly less possible to operate with models of class based predominately on categories drawn from the division of labor, property ownership, or the productive system, when the political character of collective action is conditioned by the social and cultural make-up of the groups involved. This suggests not only that ethnicity and communal conflict should be taken at least as seriously as class and class conflict, but that the two sets of phenomena should be closely integrated at the conceptual level (Parkin 1979:42).

E. Digby Baltzell was among the first social scientists to simultaneously consider the effects of both ethnicity and class in his book on social elites that were Jewish and white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (1964).

A number of social scientists observed the events that took place during the Civil Rights movement and concluded that the significance of class was declining. Daniel Bell

argued that the working class was shrinking due to the expansion of white collar and professional occupations. These occupations did not have the same type of history as manufacturing jobs (Bell 1975:167). The result was class was decreasing in its effectiveness as a social tie and race and ethnic ties had risen to take its place (Bell 1975:168).<sup>8</sup> More recently Ulrich Beck argued that individuality decreased the possibility of social class being used as a basis for social identity. Conflicts among resources are more likely to rise among those of a subordinate race, ethnic, gender, age, sexuality, and those with physical disabilities (Beck 1992:101).<sup>9</sup> Feminists also claimed that classical historical materialism has ignored the impact gender has on social class (Wright 2001:30). Erik Olin Wright responded to their critique by arguing that either class or gender may be a more important factor in determining one's material situation depending on the context (ibid).

Perhaps the most progressive trend in the study of inequality is intersectionality. In the late 1960s, Frances Beal suggested that an individual could suffer from more than one oppression at once. Studies of social inequality were directed to simultaneously examine instances of "multiple jeopardy" when they arose for a more accurate perception of oppression (Beal 1970). In the 1980s the Combahee River Collective suggested that systems of oppression are interlocking and an integrated analysis is the only effective mode of attacking inequality (1982:13). Patricia Hill Collins suggests that it is critical that sociological work include interlocking systems of oppression (2000:273). A failure to recognize the interlocking matrix of oppression results in academics and laypeople not realizing that there are few true oppressors and dominators (Collins 1990:229). David Grusky suggests that intersectionality inverts earlier sociological work on individuals



with inconsistent statuses (2001:29). While work on inconsistent statuses was multidimensional, intersectionality differs by focusing more on commonly encountered status sets (Grusky 2001:30).

Currently most work on intersectionality explains the experiences of middle class or working class black females. My study will join the small thread of research on intersectionality that examines whites from a marginal class background. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz have observed that there are very few recent academic works on the class predicament of working class, working poor, and underclass whites. What does exist is largely produced by the mass media and correlates with a blaming the victim public perception (Wray and Newitz 1997:3).

Jim Goad suggests that when poor whites do receive attention from academics it is largely to chastise them for racist attitudes. This leads Goad to question why rednecks are displayed as a symbol of racism by the general public and academics when they apparently have little privilege because they occupy an extremely marginal status in society (1997:23). Michael MacDonald, who was born a member of Boston's white underclass, reflects on his class situation in a memoir about his childhood. After a conversation MacDonald had with a reporter from U.S. News and World Report who was covering a story on the white underclass, MacDonald stated:

The reporter wasn't telling me anything new- I was just stunned that someone was taking notice. No one had ever seemed to believe me or to care when I told them about the amount of poverty and social problems while I grew up. Liberals were usually the ones working on social problems, and they never seemed to be able to fit urban poor whites into their worldview, which tended to see blacks as the persistent dependent and their own white selves as provider. Whatever race guilt they were holding on to, Southie's poor couldn't do a thing for their own consciousness. After our violent response to court ordered busing in the 1970s, Southie was labeled as the white racist oppressor. I saw how that

label worked to take the blame away from those able to leave the city and drive back to all-white suburban towns at the end of the day (MacDonald 1997:3).

A lack of current research on poor whites gives the impression that the whites in the United States are largely uniform. John Hartigan, Jr., conducted a participant observation study among underclass whites in Detroit. He found that intraracial distinctions did exist among whites in Detroit and that the conceptualization of race varies by region and space (Hartigan 1999:16-17).

Thoughts of America's poor elicit images of racial minorities in popular culture. Despite a call for intersectionality, the majority of current academic texts on social inequality do not discuss whites as members of the economically marginal classes. This is astonishing because in sheer numbers there are more whites that live below the poverty line than any other racial group. Statistically, non-Hispanic whites comprise 61.4% (14,039,000) of the households in the lowest fifth quintile, which is comprised of households with an income lower than \$19,178 (U.S. Census, 2006).<sup>10</sup> In 2000, 24.7 million non-Hispanic whites (7.4% of non-Hispanic white males and 12.1% of non-Hispanic white females) earned \$14,999 or less (U.S. Census, 2000).<sup>11</sup> On average, the most common occupations for whites provide a higher status and income when compared to racial minorities. When examining the ten most common occupations for whites, however, it is noted that some non-Hispanic whites occupy positions that traditionally pay low wages and offer little status. For example, secretary and administrative assistant, retail salesperson, cashier, bookkeeping clerk, waitress, and childcare worker made the top ten list for non-Hispanic white females. For non-Hispanic white males truck driver, retail salesperson, carpenter, laborer and freight stock material movers, janitor and

building cleaner, and automotive service technician and mechanics were among the ten most common occupations (U.S. Census, 2006) (see Table 1 and Table 2).<sup>12</sup>

Table 1\*

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10 Most Common Occupations for White Non-Hispanic Women

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1. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
2. Elementary and Middle School Teachers
3. Registered Nurses
4. Retail Salespersons
5. Cashiers
6. Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks
7. Waitresses and Waiters
8. Customer Service Representatives
9. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Salespersons
10. Childcare Workers

\*Source: U.S. Census, 2006

Table 2\*\*

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10 Most Common Occupations for White Non-Hispanic Men

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1. Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers
2. First-Line Supervisor/Manager of Retail Sales Workers
3. Retail Salespersons
4. Managers, all others\*
5. Carpenters
6. Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Hand
7. Sales Representatives, Wholesale
8. Janitors and Building Cleaners
9. Automotive and Service Technicians and Mechanics
10. Accountants and Auditors

\* Does not include managers of correctional officers, police and detectives, firefighting and prevention workers, food preparation and serving workers, housekeeping and janitorial, landscaping, lawn service, and grounds keeping, gaming workers, personal

service workers, retail sales workers, non-retail sales workers, office and administrative support workers, production and operating workers, farming, fishing, and forestry, construction trades, and extraction workers, mechanics, installers, and repairers, or production and operation workers.

\*\*Source: U.S. Census, 2006

Among non-Hispanic white males and females that earn \$14,999 or those who have earned a negative income, nearly all of the top 20 occupations occupy a low status (See Appendix D). Racial minorities and women of all races certainly occupy a disadvantaged status vis-à-vis non-Hispanic whites and men, respectively. It is important to note, however, that numerous occupations in the United States are poorly rewarded with low incomes and status. While women and racial minorities are disproportionately represented in occupations with low pay and status, a significant number whites can also be found in these occupations. Consequently, a large number of whites could economically identify as lower class.

The work that does exist on economically marginal whites largely includes whites who know they are marked. The subject of research on poor whites has been on white trash, rednecks, or hillbillies. It is undoubtedly difficult to convince the general public and academics that poor whites are worthy of attention and research (Wray & Newitz 1997). Perhaps few available books have found a niche because images of white trash, rednecks, and hillbillies come to mind when the middle and upper classes consider that one can be poor and white. It seems doubtful that most economically marginal whites would think of themselves in such degrading terms. Wray and Newitz challenge academics to discover how whiteness varies across class, gender, sexuality, place, and region (1997:3). Over time work will no doubt be produced that will present academia

and the general public with a more representative account of those who are both poor and white.

### **White Privilege**

A familiarity with the academic arguments of white privilege is necessary to understand the emic and etic interpretations of white privilege. While the majority of work on racial inequality focuses on disadvantages associated with being a racial minority, theorists of white privilege challenge that it is equally important to examine the advantages associated with being white in the United States. Briefly stated, it is assumed that identifying as white in the United States is associated with numerous psychological and economic benefits, regardless of whether the individual takes an active interest or is aware of the manifestations of white privilege. In fact, many whites take an active interest in securing the benefits of white privilege by favoring policies that systematically benefit those who are white, but are oblivious to the fact that this increases the advantages they have over racial minorities. The importance of understanding whiteness as a racial identity is essential for understanding the situation of lower class whites.

W.E.B. Du Bois suggested that whites received a psychological wage during Reconstruction, in addition to any economic benefits they might receive due to their race. After the Civil War, Du Bois noted that even lower class whites had an advantage over racial minorities because they could still vote and were not segregated by law from middle and upper class whites (1935). More recently, David Roediger applied Du Bois' concept of psychological wages to suggest that whites occupy a privileged status in the eyes of those who hold authority in society (1991). Rudolph Alexander, Jr. writes that criminal law is often written with either a latent or manifest function of suppressing racial

minorities (2005). Another aspect of psychological wages is that whites universalize their experience, assuming either that people of other colors experience the world as they do or existing differences are irrelevant (Frankenburg 1993; McIntosh 2003). In fact, whiteness is not viewed as a racial identity because it is seen as normal (hooks 1981; McIntosh 2003). Whites continue to psychologically benefit from identifying as white because there is comfort and safety in knowing that one is part of the dominant racial group.

In addition to psychological wages bestowed upon whites, being white also results in various economic advantages when compared with having a racial identity of a racial minority. George Lipsitz suggests that post World War II economic policies benefited whites over people of color, allowing whites to amass wealth with smaller amounts of income than racial minorities (1997). Also, the federal government played an active role in the construction of nearly all white suburbs by providing long term, low interest loans to whites who wished to build a new home in non-integrated neighborhoods. Freeways were constructed by the government by seizing and destroying neighborhoods occupied by people of color in order to provide a quick route of transportation into the city for suburbanites. Successive generations of whites have enjoyed the benefits of the upward mobility and home ownership. Alexander reminds us that owning a home is a chief source of wealth for whites (2005). Whites routinely underestimate how much of their current success is due to their race and a quick to blame racial minorities for their lack of economic success (Wellman 1977). The economic and psychological advantages of white privilege have greatly increased the life chances and quality of living for the majority of whites.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

The production of knowledge is often a process by which previous research builds upon insights from predecessors. Sometimes large gaps exist in existing research which, when recognized, force existing paradigms open. When this occurs, contemporaries are challenged to interpret social phenomenon in future work in order to construct a new paradigm. Over the last 150 years, the academic conceptualization of class has transformed from an emphasis on class conflict and material deprivation to the study of life chances to an etic analysis of emic understandings of class boundaries. When the criteria for class identification rested solely on the material aspects, class boundaries were relatively rigid and class conflict was assumed. The addition of non-material aspects (life chances and status) to class brought about a more fluid interpretation of class divisions and class conflict was not viewed as immanent. Academic efforts to qualitatively investigate the existence of social class resulted in a six class model. Coleman and Rainwater built on a modern multiple class model to provide an emic interpretation of class boundaries. This resulted in a further understanding of class as a material and non-material socially constructed reality. The Civil Rights era provided an opportunity to critique social stratification's neglect of race in their class analysis. Intersectionality built upon previous understanding of race, class, and gender to argue that all relevant types of oppression should simultaneously be considered. The opportunity to research how both the etic and emic suggest white privilege is bestowed upon lower class whites is only possible given the history of social stratification and the new paradigm shift which challenges inequality theorists to incorporate partial knowledge from all social locations.

## Notes

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<sup>5</sup>The terms working class, working poor, and underclass are currently recognized as the class distinctions for those who have fewer life chances than the middle class in a six class model, respectively. Not all historical studies use the terms *working class*, *working poor*, and *underclass* to describe the bottom three classes. In order to avoid confusion, I have used the current terminology to describe the bottom three classes for historical theorists that use a six class model.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert and Kahl (1982) suggest the working class makes up 32% of American society; Coleman and Rainwater (1978) suggest the working class is slightly larger at 37%.

<sup>7</sup> Coleman and Rainwater use the term *the bottom* to refer to society's lowest social class instead of *underclass*.

<sup>8</sup> William Julius Wilson (1980) is one of the few social scientists that argue that class is a more important factor than race. His reasoning for this is in the past few African Americans were able to rise above the lowest social class. In the past few decades blacks have become more mobile, making class a more significant factor than race.

<sup>9</sup> Given that Coleman and Rainwater found that subcultural differences were important in distinguishing a divide between the working class and the middle class, it is interesting that the three lowest classes are not considered to provide a social identity by other theorists. These differences exist and they matter, but are not given the status of providing a cultural identity by Bell and Beck.

<sup>10</sup> Although non-Hispanic whites make up the majority of households with incomes in the lowest quintile, racial minority households are overrepresented (See Appendix A).

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix B for statistics that include all races.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix C includes raw numbers for the 10 most common occupations by the most common race and gender, including the percentage of workers in each occupation that earn less than \$14,999 or those who earned a negative income.



## CHAPTER 3 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will address how the theoretical insights of Alfred Schutz, Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, and Kenneth Pike apply to my project. Next, I will discuss the extent to which academics of social stratification consider class as a social structure. Finally, I will discuss how academics of social stratification specifically frame lower class whites. A broad range of methodological issues are relevant to my thesis. My methodological framework will incorporate questions of epistemology, social phenomenology, and standpoint theory. Americans often take for granted that the perspective from which they view the world is universal. Alfred Schutz suggested that social scientists should combine the various perspectives of those being studied with larger social constructs. Schutz, however, cautions that researchers be aware that combining different sets of knowledge requires a shift in the frame of relevance. Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins extend Schutz's analysis by arguing that standpoint is shaped by one's direct experience with systems of privilege and inequality. I use the insights of Schutz, Smith, and Collins to gain an understanding of how social scientists frame working poor whites. Kenneth Pike's analysis of how perspectives differ between the academic etic and the *native* emic point of views compliment Schutz's suggestions on how the knowledge of social science should ideally be constructed. The poor white emic point of view provides an excellent description of their direct experience but often fails to see larger social structures. The etic point of view is inconsistent in its understanding of oppression because such a position usually neglects to see social class as a significant form of oppression independent of racial discrimination. The realization of the limitation

of how the emic and etic frame the class situation of working poor whites will prevent other researchers from making the same errors.

### **Theory**

The knowledge constructed by individuals about other groups in society is sketchy at best because it seeks to expand beyond the limits of their direct experience. Alfred Schutz suggests that the social world is made up largely of contemporaries, or those who are not in face-to-face contact with an individual but who co-exist in the same time. An individual has to rely on typification when considering contemporaries, which may require looking at artifacts, remembering how a contemporary acted during the last face-to-face contact, or relying on others' accounts (Schutz 1964). The knowledge of each individual depends on a biographically determined situation which is located in a physical and socio-cultural environment. Each individual has a history which is comprised of experiences passed on by processors to contemporaries and of their own personal past (Schutz 1964:9). The combination of these divergent experiences and histories comprises an individual's stock of knowledge, which is information about the social world.

In most social relationships, the goal of each individual is to inform others of how they see the world. The degree of difficulty for achieving this goal varies with intimate face-to-face encounters being the easiest and contemporaries understood through typification being more difficult. As a result, the stock of knowledge is incomplete because people are oblivious to any gaps in their information about others and the comprehension they do have may be incorrect. Automatic habits and unquestioned platitudes constitute the bulk of everyday experience (Schutz 1964). Individuals rarely

reflect on their stock of knowledge; what they do know is assumed to be common sense. From a scientific point of view, however, common sense is not as common or obvious as it appears on the surface. "In other words, the so-called concrete facts of common-sense perception are not so concrete as it seems. They already involve abstractions of a highly complicated nature, and we have to take account of this situation lest we commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (Schutz 1964:3-4). Each individual's stock of knowledge becomes unreliable when imagining how the world is experienced for contemporaries with whom little face to face contact has taken place.

Questions of modern feminist epistemology are rooted in social phenomenology because they start from the premise that individuals from various positions in society will experience the world in different ways. Alfred Schutz suggested that social scientists begin their research by putting themselves in the center of their subjects' world to gain a subjective understanding (1964:81).

Whenever the problem under inquiry makes it necessary, the social scientist must have the possibility of shifting the level of his research to that of individual human activity, and where scientific work is done this shift always becomes possible. The real reason for this is that we cannot deal with phenomena in the social world as we do with phenomena belonging to the natural sphere. In the latter, we collect facts as regularities which are not understandable to us, but which we refer only to certain fundamental assumptions about the world... We want, on the contrary, to understand social phenomena, and we cannot understand them apart from their placement within the scheme of human motives, human means and ends, human planning- in short- within the categories of human action. The social scientist must ask, or he must, at least, always be in a position to ask, what happens in the mind of an individual actor whose act has led to the phenomena in question (Schutz 1964:85).

After gaining a subjective point of view, Schutz suggested researchers shift their focus to include events that empirically affect their subjects' lives but are not directly observable from the emic point of view.

It seems important to me that the scientist keep in mind that each shift in the problem involves a through modification of all concepts and all the types with which he is dealing. A great many misunderstanding and controversies in the social sciences have their root in the unmodified application of concepts and types at a level other than that where they have their natural place (Schutz 1964:84).

It is important to note that the subject is an expert in providing an account of their *own* motives and experiences; the subject is not an expert, however, in interpreting the motivations of others beyond their relevance of experience.

Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins extend Schutz's insights to provide an explanation for various interpretations of reality due to differing positions in the social hierarchy of society. Smith suggests that standpoint is located in an actual historical setting and is determined by one's material reality (1987:108). Smith is in agreement with Schutz by suggesting the discovering phenomenon of oppression requires the researcher to look beyond the direct experience of the subject (1987:107). Collins reminds us that members of each social location possess partial knowledge to understanding inequality. "Each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial, its knowledge is unfinished. Each group becomes better able to consider other groups' standpoints without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own standpoint or suppressing other groups' partial perspectives" (Collins 2000:270). Collins' ideal of partial knowledge sets a standard for social science researchers.

Both Smith and Collins' insights compliment their commitment to producing research on intersectionality and raising epistemological issues. In the past, social scientists did not invite racial minorities and women to provide knowledge about their own lives. The result was a disaster. Some research neglected to include the

perspectives of women and racial minorities as if it was not worth mentioning or they did not exist. When women and racial minorities were analyzed, their actions were assumed to be inferior because they were judged by the standards of white, middle class men. No attention was given to the fact the racial minorities and women had a different set of experiences due to combating racial and/or gender oppression, which limits opportunities and options. Smith and Collins' contributions greatly contributed to epistemological awareness regarding social location and the production of knowledge.

In the field of linguistic anthropology, Kenneth Pike first recognized and outlined the differences between the emic and etic perspectives. The etic point of view reflects the descriptive and theoretical perspective put forth by social scientists to explain the motivations and actions of a group under study. The etic perspective strives for objectivity, although their ideal is never reached due to the complexity and dynamics of social phenomenon. Consequently, social science is largely concerned with theorizing, as opposed to establishing laws. The emic point of view signifies the *native* perspective, or the understanding that a group under study has of their own thoughts and actions. The etic viewpoint is created by the analyst and the emic perspective is discovered by the researcher (Pike 1967:38). The emic point of view exists prior to the scientific interest in the group mainly through the means of cultural reproduction and socialization. Pike reminds that, although the etic ideally uses data from the emic to construct theories, the etic perspective should never strive to be a carbon copy of the emic. Problems of focus and differing hierarchies of which social actions are significant separate the emic and etic perspectives. For example, the etic often finds interesting what the emic takes for granted and may make light of what the emic considers to be of immense importance (Pike

1967:39). When Pike's insights are applied to my research question, it is important to note that the perception of how white privilege benefits lower class whites will differ according to the emic and etic perspectives.<sup>13</sup>

Although academic discussions of the etic and emic compliment standpoint and partial knowledge, it is an extension and has its own theoretically distinct contributions. First of all, etic and etic theory is not theoretically identical to the feminist insider/outsider debate. On the one hand, feminist scholars suggest that insider and outsider are not dyadic concepts because academics may be partial insiders. Nancy Naples suggests that insider and outsider status is dynamic, depending on shifting relationships between the researcher and subject of study. Although researchers may feel as part of a community that is under study, they can never have a complete insider status because of experiential and power differences between academics and subjects (Naples 2003:49). On the other hand, Pike suggests that the etic position characterizes the subjects' perspective, but not from the subjects' point of view. As stated above, academics often focus on structures, or patterns of behavior, that will differ in focus and significance from that of the subjects (Pike 1967:39). Therefore, an academic that has the same social location as the subjects under study will not represent an emic nor insider perspective if they use social structures in their analysis.

### **Social Class as Social Structure**

It is essential to understand how academics theorize the constraints of social class among the lower classes. Capitalist economic systems require some members of society to be unemployed so they can fill jobs during economic expansions; during recessions some workers will be laid off because the economy is contracting. The selection of who

will be society's expendable workers is not a random phenomenon. Women and racial minorities are disproportionately represented in society's lower classes. Whites, however, make up the largest percentage (61.4%) of America's lowest fifth income quintile (U.S. Bureau of Households, 2006).<sup>14</sup> Social mobility is blocked due to inequalities in education and cultural capital, making it difficult for the lower classes to obtain a job that pays living wages. The poverty structure is also supported by ideology that creates antagonistic attitudes toward the poor and apathy among higher classes about correcting inequality. Although women and racial minorities face additional structural barriers, mobility is still difficult for poor males of every color, including low income whites.

In capitalist societies, poverty itself is not caused by possessing a set of subordinate characteristics; instead, it is caused by the structure of American capitalism itself. Wachtel reminds us that poverty is normal in capitalistic societies (Wachtel 1974:180). As a result, studying attributes of the poor to find out what causes poverty is necessary but not sufficient (Roby 1974:12; Wachtel 1974:181). The American version of capitalism produces an overabundance of low wage jobs. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century one in four workers or 30 million Americans earned less than \$8.70 an hour (Shulman 2003:5). Many workers with low wages also receive few benefits such as health care, sick and disability pay, vacation time, and private retirement packages (Shulman 2003:7). Low wages and poor working conditions are not inevitable. Corporate elites produce inequality by denying the majority of workers living wages while they collect enormous profits.

One reason the American class system is held in tact is because a relatively successful campaign of ideology convinces members of higher classes to blame the poor for their lack of economic success. Americans are aware of class differences, but openly discussing class inequality is rare, and perhaps even un-American (Mantsios 2003:34). The media largely ignores the underclass, working poor, and the working class. In the print media and television news when members of lower classes are included, they are portrayed as human interest stories. The media rarely include larger structural issues when analyzing the problems of the poor (Kendall 2005:138-139). This is typical of the larger culture because an achievement ideology exists that tells Americans if they simply try hard enough, they can do whatever they want with their life. Consequently, American's poor receive little sympathy from upper classes.

Mainstream Americans believe the poor, especially racial minorities who are poor, are suffering economically because of immoral values. The middle and upper classes believe that the poor are parasitic, when in fact elite classes are actually dependent on the poor to provide services for less than living wages to supplement their exuberant lifestyles (Chamberlin 1999:47). Lower class men are believed to be too lazy to work or to secure employment that pays living wages. Women are assumed to be poor because they have too many children at a young age without getting married. These stereotypes about the poor lead higher classes to believe that they do not deserve to be helped (Gans 1995:6). William Ryan noted that those who adhere to the American Dream ideology think of themselves as altruistic and humanitarian, despite the fact that their beliefs block social change. A redirected focus on the structural causes of poverty



rather than on individual factors or on the experience of living in poverty is necessary for progressive social action (Ryan 1974:172).

### **How the Poor are framed by the Etic**

It is important to analyze how knowledge is produced about the poor, given that the emic point of view will differ from the etic point of view. Ideally, social class should be considered on the same par with racial and gender oppression because having white or male privilege alone does not ensure that one will be financially secure. When the situations of the lower classes are analyzed, patterns of class oppression become evident that cut across gender and race boundaries. In the most mainstream literature on social inequality, social class as a structure is downplayed when compared to racial oppression. The main emphasis appears to be on the differences lower class people of color experience due to racial oppression when compared to poor whites. Some research uses the emic experience of racial minorities to insist that poverty is less harsh among whites. While it is essential to note that racial oppression exacerbates the misery of poverty, it is also important to acknowledge that class oppression is experienced by poor people of every color which truncates life chances and make social mobility difficult. Etic ethnographies and research that discusses rural poverty are exceptions because it gives equal attention to class oppression experienced by individuals regardless of color without ignoring racial oppression suffered by racial minorities. Little attention is given, however, to how gender interacts with other systems of oppression.

Current theorists of class are doing a poor job with intersectionality because they are rarely able to consider gender or class oppression as it is experienced by poor whites; instead an emphasis is placed on how poor whites are more privileged than low income

racial minorities because they do not have to combat racial oppression. When the structural force of class inequality is ignored, theorists are inadvertently suggesting that the most important aspect of whiteness; experience of poverty is that they are still white. Nakayama and Krizek have noted that whiteness is rarely studied in the context of other social relations, such as gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion (1995:305). In an early study Norman Johnson and Peggy Sanday suggested that the urban poor were not a homogenous group and that both black and white subcultures existed. The black subcultural system resulted from an adaptation to the combination of limited resources and a strategically low status position (Johnson and Sanday 1971:139). Apparently, a poor, urban white subculture existed by default, even though it was not discussed. In a more recent study by of working class young adults Michele Fine and Lois Weis, class as a structure is downplayed. Fine and Weis noted that when looking at cross generational patterns of social classes by race, whites were less likely than blacks and Latinos to achieve more financial success than their parents. Fine and Weis find this trend mysterious because white working class families owned more wealth than the black and Latino working class.

But-and here's the *unacknowledged* impact of U.S. federal government subsidies in the 1940s and 1950s for the white working class/middle class-these young adults often had access to a small house or apartment their parents were able to buy; a small 'nest egg' of cash the family had squirreled away; or the union based pension Dad saved up. In contrast, our African-American and Latino informants are in very tough financial straights but they are not, for the most part, worse off than their parents. Their parents rarely had a home, a stash of small monies, pensions they could pass on. Further, some of our African American and Latino informants who themselves, amassed small amounts of capital over time, at some point lost it, when someone in the extended family bumped into a health crisis, a housing crisis, a problem with the law (Fine and Weis 1998:271).

Apparently working class whites were unable to achieve social mobility, despite having more monetary resources, when compared to their peers of color. Perhaps this can partially be explained by suggesting that class oppression, and gender oppression for women, is not easy to overcome. By failing to discuss the problems that class and gender oppression bring to people, regardless of color, inequality theorists may unintentionally be ‘blaming the victim’ when discussing the situation of poor whites.

When social class as a structure is downplayed, racial patterns that effect whites in a negative way may be overlooked. Howard Winant observed that during the 1980s, whites, along with people of other races, experienced a decline in their standard of living (1997:104). For racial theorists, any pattern that occurs along racial lines should be of interest. An etic interpretation for the decline in the standard of living can be explained by increasing wealth and income among the upper classes. Most white Americans, however, mistakenly placed their blame on social welfare collected by the poor, but specifically by racial minorities. “They represent whiteness as a *disadvantage*, something that has few precedents in U.S. racial history. This imaginary white disadvantage- for which there is almost no evidence at the empirical level- has achieved widespread popular credence; and provides the cultural and political ‘glue’ that holds together a wide variety of reactionary racial politics” (Winant 1997:105 [emphasis original]). On page 104 Winant identifies that as a race, whites experienced downward mobility. On the very next page, Winant forgets that he previously identified that as a race whites did experience a disadvantage. Inequality theorists should try to keep an open mind to the possibility that even though whites experience various amounts of racial privilege, they may still experience negative social mobility as a group. White skin color

may protect whites from racial discrimination, but it does not always protect from downward social mobility.

Another etic mistake occurs when an emic point of view from racial minorities is assumed to systematically describe the experience of low income whites. For example, in her book, Where We Stand: Class Matters, bell hooks projects her own experience as a African American woman to determine that poor whites do not suffer from classism to the same extent that racial minorities do because their skin color blends in with middle class whites (2000:5). This assertion is beyond the interpretation abilities of the emic point of view. Lower class whites might find it difficult to blend in with whites of other classes because their language patterns are different, they have a different sense of taste, they typically have lower levels of education and lower levels of social capital. Class oppression is a real force that poor whites experience along with poor people of color. Considerations of Class and Race. Although the majority of etic examples I have cited ignore class as a social structure, not all social science research that addresses aspects of inequality falls into that trap. For example, Todd Gitlin and Nanci Hollander suggest that class oppression is an active structure that limits life changes and blocks social mobility in the lives of inner city whites from Chicago (1970:433). Gitlin and Hollander argue that attitudes of apathy such as, “You get more than blacks, don’t complain,” are not only unhelpful and inhumane, but could also be harmful to social movements dedicated to erasing inequality (1970:434). Studies of rural poverty are more likely to accept poverty as a legitimate social oppression. Duncan and Sweet suggest that America needs to move beyond stereotypes of rural Americans as lazy, stupid, and shiftless and recognize that rural poverty is a serious issue. A large number of jobs in rural areas are low paying,

seasonal, or part time (Duncan & Sweet 1992:xxii). It is also acknowledged that although whites make up 90% of the rural poor, issues of racial discrimination also affect non-white rural dwellers (Deavers & Hope 1992:13-14).

Etic ethnographies also suggest that few emic lower class whites are able to see class as a social structure. Jay MacLeod's study of the white underclass revealed that the 'Hallway Hangers' observed that social mobility was more difficult for them, as opposed to middle class high school students, but did not relate their problems to class inequality.

For the most part, in the absence of any systematic critique of capitalism, the Hallway Hangers simply are plagued by a sense of unfairness and the uneasy conviction that the rules of the contest are biased against them. Thus, there is a discrepancy between their strongly felt convictions that they are getting 'the short end of the stick,' and their inability to understand fully how this is so. They conveniently fill this gap with racism. The Hallway Hangers seem to believe that if they are stuck with 'the short end of the stick,' it must be because the 'niggers' have the long end. Their feelings of impotence, frustration, and anger are subsumed in the hatred of blacks and in their conviction that their own plight somehow has been exacerbated, if not caused, by the alleged economic and social advancement of black Americans (MacLeod 1987:122).

Moss notes that poor white high school students disassociate themselves from upper class elites, despite the fact that they share a similar racial identity (2003:16). Although white lower class emic interpretations of their own experiences are essential for understanding social inequality, they should not be considered an end in themselves in a systematic analysis.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

After an examination of how the etic frame the situation of lower class whites, it has become obvious that theories of class oppression have not been applied consistently. Theoretical insights about social class are often overlooked when race as a social structure is added. All members of lower classes, regardless of racial identification,

suffer under class oppression. Members of the lower class who are racial minorities suffer under *both* class and racial oppression. This etic oversight has unfortunate consequences because the insights of social science concerned with social inequality often attract attention to issues considered unjust. Since theories of social science sometimes expose patterns of inequality, then the etic perspective may lend more credence to a group that claims they are being oppressed. If social class as a social structure is sometimes overlooked, then it may seem illegitimate to members of larger society for members representing a lower class emic position to complain about class oppression because they currently have little support from the etic. By applying Patricia Hill Collins' insight of partial knowledge, the white lower class emic perspective can offer partial knowledge concerning the manifestations of white privilege. Therefore, the emic claims to truth that lower class whites make concerning material hardship should not be treated as completely tainted due to racist intents because they may contain aspects of partial knowledge.

Using the theoretical insights of Schutz, Smith, Collins, and Pike will allow theorists to analyze how privilege is constructed along lines of differences and similarities both between and within races while maintaining my focus on intersectionality. Understanding how lower class whites frame themselves is significant because it has alerted me to the limitations of an emic analysis. A reliance on racism to explain economic difficulties is often used in place of class oppression. An awareness of etic shortcomings in framing the white lower classes will hopefully prevent other researchers from making the same mistakes. By emphasizing social class as a structure,

while not ignoring the significance of gender or racial oppression, I will be able to accurately analyze my various sets of data.

## Notes

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<sup>13</sup> The blogs under study will represent an emic perspective on how lower class enjoys white privilege and the academic texts will represent an etic position. It is important to note, however, that my analysis of the blogs will be another etic interpretation because I will be using a sociological framework to interpret the results. My etic understanding of how lower class whites enjoy white privilege will differ from the academic etic understanding because I am directly focusing on lower class whites.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix A.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODS

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will discuss the following: methodological issues specific to my project, sample selection, time frame, and content and textual analysis. A textual analysis will be performed on internet blogs<sup>15</sup> that speak from a poor white point of view and on academic texts discussing white privilege; these two sources will provide an understanding of how lower class whites receive the manifestations of white privilege from both an emic and etic or academic viewpoint. All data were collected in an unobtrusive manner from publicly available sources. Obtaining data from the internet means that the authors have more time than is usually allowed at interviews, resulting in responses that better articulate their point of view. Also, the anonymity of blog respondents may increase the subject's confidence levels resulting into a deeper look in the subjects' backstage than would be allowed in face-to-face communication. Concerns about the honesty of subjects are lessened when we are reminded that researchers can only work with representations of reality and that race and social class are socially constructed realities. My sampling procedures are non-random, but were purposive. It must be stated that the bloggers do not reflect the general population of low income whites. I am suggesting that many low income whites Americans are probably unaware of sociological discussions of white privilege and would not be appropriate subjects for my research. The type of lower income whites who use the internet represent a younger sample of individuals with the means to gain access to the internet. Also, I selected the 15 most commonly cited texts on white privilege. Therefore, the results of my project are not generalizable but are representative of the blogs and academic sources under study.



## **Issues Concerning Internet Research**

Thoughts and words are intrinsically connected. Although analyzing the spoken word through interviewing is perhaps the most conventional method of qualitative methods, analyzing written words to gain an understanding of social phenomena has historically provided important insights. W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki analyzed letters to and from Polish immigrants at the turn of the century to understand how immigrants adjusted to life in the United States (1971). Jean Kilborne studied advertisements in the media to gain an understanding of gender relations and female socialization (1999). Previously, the majority of internet research was used for commercial purposes in order to obtain the demographics of its users (Jones 1999:xii). As use of the internet has become widespread, social scientists have begun realize its potential as a rich research source. For example, Norman K. Denzin used data from ALT.RECOVERY.CODEPENDENCY, an online newsgroup for individuals who are battling addictions, to interpret gendered narratives of the self (1999). Recent advances in internet research suggest that text emanating from the internet does not exist independently from life off-line (Jones 1999:xiii). Correspondingly, my research from internet blogs will reflect race, class, and gender relations in wider society.

Presentation of the self is a key component of interaction among human beings. Individuals are constantly making decisions regarding sharing or withholding information both on and offline (Man & Stewart 2005:210). Data coming from internet sources have their own authenticity and depth. Blog respondents have a greater opportunity to carefully choose their words because it takes longer to type than it does to verbally

communicate. Also, internet blogs allow for a greater flexibility in the frequency and time allowed for each response. Internet blogs can be an extremely slow mechanism for dialogue because users chose to respond only when they are online. In terms of speed of dialogue, internet blogs closely more resemble e-mail than verbal communication.

Therefore, impression management may be accomplished with more ease because more time is allowed to plan the presentation of the self. The anonymity of blog users may increase confidence, allowing for more opportunities to access a subject's backstage (Goffman 1959). In face-to-face communication, individuals with a middle class American socialization carefully consider how others will interpret their words. Efforts are made to censor comments that may be perceived as offensive or marginal.

Individuals who participate in anonymous internet communications may feel less of a pressure to censor their comments because their identity is not known, lessening the chance that social control will be effective. Even if a response is considered so offensive an individual is banned from future postings by the administration, he or she has endless opportunities to participate on other blogs that are similar or to change their e-mail address and try again. When compared to face-to-face communication, ending a blog dialogue is easier because respondents can simply choose not to post. As a result, blog respondents may feel less pressure to choose their words based on what others will want them to say. Therefore, numerous advantages exist when using internet blogs as sources of data.

A possible weakness of using internet blogs as a source is that the researcher cannot be sure that the subjects are not purposely misrepresenting their social class and racial identification. First, social scientists theorize about representations of realities,

rather than one objective version of the Truth. Second, no matter what type of research is conducted, it is difficult to discern the honesty of subjects. Researchers are largely dependent on what subjects tell them. Third, just as it is difficult for individuals to maintain a persona in face-to-face communication that is at odds with the certain dimensions of their social location, Kindall also suggests the same is true for online interactions (1999:61). Social scientists often validate claims of authenticity among research subjects by visually observing their appearance. The issue with the internet then becomes: how are claims validated? One must begin by noting that race, gender, and social class are socially constructed realities. Boundaries that separate different social locations are fluid. Although individuals operate on visual assumptions, not every individual will possess every stereotypical attribute concerning race, social class, and gender. For example, some whites have tight curly hair, some members of the lower class excel in school, and not all men like football. Attempts to visually confirm the social location of respondents, is therefore contradictory to the contention that social inequality is a socially constructed reality. This study is in fact attempting to understand the constructed reality of lower class whites.

Another possible weakness of using internet blogs as a source is that the researcher will be unable to detect aspects of non-verbal communication. Markham suggests that there is a way of detecting non-verbal communication in internet communication (2005:806). Electronic based media can easily be manipulated to provide a desired conversational content and style. Choices made to represent the self online represent a powerful measure of control (Markham 1998:124). Markham noted the most common examples were graphic representations of nonverbal communication and signs

that demonstrated a lack of convention. For example, Markham observed non-verbal communication by observing symbols that represented emotion☺, LOL (laugh out loud). A lack of convention was demonstrated by phonemic spellings of certain words and not capitalizing first person pronouns or the beginning of sentences (Markham 1998:124). It is important to remember that because internet users cannot rely on visual cues, attempts at communication cannot be considered random. In my dataset nonverbal communication<sup>16</sup> and symbolic references<sup>17</sup> were applied to obtain a deeper meaning conveyed by the subjects.

### **Sample Selection**

A research question must be carefully constructed in order to narrow parameters and find relevant sources. My research question is designed to answer two intricately related questions. First, how do lower class whites perceive elements of white privilege that are bestowed upon them? Second, how do academics perceive white privilege that is said to be bestowed on lower class whites? The goal of many qualitative studies is not to make broad generalizations but instead to provide in-depth interpretations of the specific issues under study. I have selected two sources of communication that will address each research question.<sup>18</sup> Academic sources of white privilege were selected based on the number of citations. The fifteen most commonly cited texts were selected on the grounds that those books made the largest impact in theoretical circles.<sup>19</sup> The following key words were used to bring up texts concerning white privilege on two search engines which include Google Scholar and Web of Science Citation Index<sup>20</sup>: *white privilege*, *critical study of whiteness*, *whiteness*, and *critical race theory*<sup>21</sup>. Initial attempts to locate books and articles using only the key word *white privilege* led to the realization that the

search engines were biased toward texts which did not have *white privilege* in the title. Books without *white privilege* in the title were considered relevant if the text concentrated on how whites benefited from the current and historical state of racial hierarchy. Edited chapters from books were not excluded from the list because of the high number of citations they received, leading me to believe that edited books play an integral role in the academic discussion of white privilege. Within the chosen text, only references of income or employment advantages for whites of various classes were used. Although my thesis focuses on what academics of white privilege specifically have to say about lower class whites, a comparison of references to whites of every class was necessary for perspective.

Two internet blogs were non-randomly selected based on their appropriateness of fit to my research question. An advantage of using an internet as a means for collecting data is that participants can be selected based on their fit with my research question, rather than their physical proximity to the researcher (Markham 2005:801). Therefore, using the internet as a research tool allows for the possibility of subjects from multiple geographic locations (Mann & Stewart 2000:79). The blogs were selected based on the following criteria: the purpose of the blog was for the discussion of the white privilege, evidence of references to the economic aspects of white privilege were present, and at least some blog respondents self-identified or gave clues which suggested that they were lower class and white. The search parameters were set so narrowly in order to answer my research question, only two blogs fit the criteria. The first blog was found on AlterNet.com and is in response to an article posted by Robert Jensen, author of The Heart of Whiteness (2005), who suggested that discussions of white privilege make

whites feel threatened because they do not want to give up racial privileges. During the four day span in which users actively responded, 334 comments were posted on the following website:

<http://www.alternet.org/story/36892/?comments=view&cID=133264&pID=132587#c133264>.

The second blog I found was much smaller, but was still used because it fit the search parameters. A blogger on [www.amptoons.com](http://www.amptoons.com) posted a prompt about white youth receiving second chances after criminal offenses, while children that identify as racial minorities are treated harshly. The specific web address for the blog is the following:

<http://www.amptoons.com/blog/archives/2005/12/28/race-class-and-second-chances/>.

Although this blog prompted only 9 responses, some fit the search parameters. Both AlterNet and [www.amptoons.com](http://www.amptoons.com) are progressive websites where various social issues are discussed. The majority of respondents on each site seem to have a politically liberal orientation.

Time Frame. Since the internet may change daily, it is important to specify the time frame in which my data was collected. Data were collected for the citation list for academic sources, which was determined by using Google Scholar and Web of Science Citation Index, on October 29, 2006. The search for internet blogs that fit the parameters of my research question was conducted on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) on September 30, 2006.

Within the two blog sources that were found, respondents posted over the span of a few days. Members of AlterNet posted from June 7, 2006, through June 11, 2006. The blog is still open for users to post responses, but respondents apparently grew tired of the blog and moved on to one of AlterNet's many other blogs. On [www.amptoons.com](http://www.amptoons.com)

respondents posted over a two day period on from December 28 through December 29 in 2005. Like AlterNet, the blog on [www.amptoons.com](http://www.amptoons.com) is still open for comments but new participation is non-existent.

### **Content Analysis**

After my data were collected, content and textual analysis research methods were utilized for purposes of analysis. Content analysis is a tool used by social scientists to systematically analyze text by identifying frequently used key words or phrases in order to observe larger themes of the communication content (Chadwick, Bahr, & Albrecht 1984:239). Content analysis is used across all disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, but it appears with most frequency in studies of public relations and the media. Chadwick, Bahr, and Albrecht outline four steps that are necessary in order to perform content analysis: statement of the problem, selection of communication relevant to the research question, selection of a unit of analysis, and a verification of adequate inter-rater reliability (1984:249).

The process of content analysis seeks to identify, code, and categorize the data in order to recognize patterns. Data was gathered in an unobtrusive manner to determine which blog respondents were poor and white. In terms of income, words that indicated a poor white perspective were as follows: *poor, never had much money, earning sub-poverty wages, low-income, being broke and consequently not afraid to lose material advantage that are not possessed, minimum-wage job, and never earning more than \$7.25/hour*. For employment, blog respondents were identified as poor and white who used the following key words: *minimum wage job, never earning more than \$7.25/hour, and having a crappy service-industry job with no benefits*. The only key word used by

low income respondents indicating a European Americans racial identification was *white*. Respondents that did not use key words associated with poverty or lower class employment were excluded. In order to narrow my focus, the analysis was performed only on comments that alluded to economic or income aspects of white privilege from those identified as poor and white. After my selection criteria, 11 subjects fit the criteria of coming from a poor and white social location.

A unit of analysis must be selected so that categories used for coding do not overlap and that all data fit in a category.<sup>22</sup> The selection of my unit of analysis will be a theme. Ole R. Holsti defines a theme as a “single assertion about some subject” (1969:116). As patterns stemming from the unit of analysis emerged, codes were constructed. Reliability among various raters matching the theme unit of analysis with codes will not be an issue for my project because I am the sole investigator. Once the coding is complete, the number of times each theme occurs will be noted.

### **Textual Analysis**

After completing the content analysis, the next step in my investigation will be a textual analysis. Textual analysis differs from content analysis in that the former focuses on meaning, intentionality and the latter focuses on quantifying the unit of analysis into statistical data. Holsti notes that the goals of textual analysis are to make inferences about the antecedents of communication, describe and elucidate on the characteristics of communication, and to offer explanations about the consequences of communication (1969). In order to make inferences about the antecedents of communication, an identification of the authors will need to be established. Any stereotypical suggestion or inference found in academic texts will need to be grounded and unpacked, because it



reflects a cultural bias against the poor. Characteristics of lower class whites will be carefully analyzed in order to infer cultural aspects stemming from the material aspects their social location.<sup>23</sup>

The next step is to describe and make inferences about the characteristics of communication. This can be accomplished by analyzing the techniques of persuasion and style, describing patterns in communication content, and relating known characteristics of the source of the data to the text they produce. By analyzing the text, identification of the target audience should be obvious. The text should then be compared to known characteristics of the target audience to check for patterns of communication regarding the target audience. Finally, inferences should be made about the consequences of communication. The effect that the communication had can be analyzed by examining the level of readability and exploring responses to the communication by the target audience. Presumably, lower class whites would partially represent a target audience for academics.<sup>24</sup> For blog participants, their target audience would be other respondents on the blog from various social locations.

Qualitative research is especially useful when studying groups in society in which little is known. The strengths of content and textual analysis are that both methods are non-reactive and it can be used when the research is prevented from observing an entire population (Chadwick, Bahr, & Albrecht 1984:245). Weaknesses of content and textual analysis are that locating sources that are relevant to a specific research question can sometimes be demanding (ibid). Data gathered from the internet rarely reflect demographic patterns of society at large (Hewson, Yule, Laurent, & Vogel 2003:30). Many research questions do not, however, require a sample that perfectly matches the

target population (ibid). My target population is not representative of lower class whites as a whole. Instead, it consists of low income whites who are familiar with theories of white privilege and have access to the internet. Therefore, my sampling procedures are appropriate because they will likely over represent low income whites who at least some university education. Subjects are identified as having a poor, white social location if they use key words which are associated with the economic situation of the lower classes or if they have self-identified as poor, and if they have self-identified as white. Also, my selection of only 15 texts concerning white privilege are not a statistically significant sample of all texts on white privilege, but that should not be considered a serious limitation because my thesis is largely qualitative. In addition, it would be unwarranted to include case studies and pedagogic suggestions in a textual analysis when the purpose of such article is not theoretical. Given that studies of white privilege which are cited less often tended to be case studies or suggestions on how to teach the concept of white privilege to university students, it would be inappropriate to include those texts in my analysis.

### **Ethics**

The sources used in order to conduct my research do not raise ethical issues. Both the internet blog data and academic texts were unobtrusively collected from publicly available sources. As a result, Institutional Review Board approval is not necessary because the subjects and texts have unrestricted access. I did not participate in the blog discussion nor did I attempt to contact any of the participants. No effort was made to contact any authors of the academic texts to discuss my research project. The academic

texts on white privilege are neither anonymous nor confidential because each source that I use has been published and is relatively well known.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Data were gathered from internet blogs and theoretical texts discussing white privilege in order to answer my research question: how lower class whites and academics theorize the extent that white privilege is bestowed on lower class whites. My sampling criterion is not reflective of the population of lower class whites but is an appropriate method for selecting a sample of poor whites that are familiar with the idea of white privilege. My selection of the 15 most commonly cited academic texts allows for the possibility to conduct a textual analysis on the most widely received theoretical sources. Conducting research using the internet allows subjects more of an opportunity to present backstage aspects of their beliefs when compared to face-to-face communication. My unobtrusive research methods do not pose ethical problems because my dataset is publicly accessible.

## Notes

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<sup>15</sup> The word *blog* is derived from “web log”. Blogs can either be user-generated websites that provide news or a commentary on particular subjects or an online journal (www.wikipedia.com). No online journals were used for my analysis. Users are encouraged to post comments to blog entries and in response to other users’ remarks.

<sup>16</sup> SHOUTING, sarcastic language (rhetorical questions that negate a previous point), and humor were the most common means of non-verbal communication.

<sup>17</sup> If a subject used their personal experience to negate that white privilege existed for all whites, I assumed that the subject was implying that their experience was part of a larger pattern in which would be familiar to other low income whites. Adults rarely attempt to negate theories by claiming that because it does not apply to one person the entire theory is invalid. Those that responded to comments made by poor whites who did not identify as poor and white applied a symbolic representation to personal anecdotes as well, because the experiences of those who identified as poor and white were not rejected on the basis that it only came from the experience of one person; instead the *interpretation* of those experiences were said to be invalid by respondents from other social locations.

<sup>18</sup> The selection of internet blogs for a emic source limits my interpretation to an analysis of the economic aspects of white privilege, because there was little discussion concerning the social, psychological, and political manifestations of racial privilege. Although this is a limitation, it should not be considered a fault because my research questions deals specifically with the economic aspects of white privilege.

<sup>19</sup> Academic texts that are used for pedagogic purposes can make a large impact in academic circles but not highly cited. I have chosen to limit my research to the most commonly cited texts because I am not aware of any records that indicate the number of times academic writings have been used as a trade book or were cited in classrooms. Also, the etic selection of the most commonly cited sources could disproportionately represent white academics due to white privilege. Unfortunately, discourse is less likely to be constructed by the margins. Although the analysis is not generalizable to etic works that are infrequently cited, it is noted that a study of such work is sorely needed.

<sup>20</sup> Web of Science Citation Index only contains citation indexes for journal articles.

Google Scholar contains both journal articles and books.

<sup>21</sup> A list of the books and articles I have selected for analysis is available in Appendix E.

<sup>22</sup> Chadwick, Bahr, and Albrecht suggest that it is appropriate to have a miscellaneous category for items that occur infrequently (1984:249).

<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, it could be argued that the authors of the academic texts presumably represent a social location of middle class. On the other hand, members of a middle class social location usually do not list oppressive social structures as reasons for any type of inequality. In fact, those with a middle class social location often reject structural explanations when they are offered. Although the insights of social science are subject to cultural bias, it is important to make the distinction between an etic perspective and social location. Etic analyses often make efforts to distinguish themselves from common sense understandings, particularly in the field of sociology which is almost always counterintuitive of mainstream understandings.

<sup>24</sup> Ideally, individuals from every social location are the target audience for academic works of inequality. In reality, few people who are not social scientists read academic

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works. For the purposes of my thesis, my examination of the target audience for academics is limited to lower class whites who are familiar with the concept of white privilege.

## CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

### **Introduction**

The goal of etic interpretations is to include all relevant social locations in their analysis. It is assumed that academic work represents a more complete understanding of social phenomena because they obtain partial knowledge from a variety of social locations. When this does not occur problems arise regarding the legitimacy of partial truth from social locations that are overlooked. In other words, emic perspectives on reality that were either overlooked or purposely not included by the etic are assumed to lack partial knowledge. The inclusion or exclusion of an emic position has effects on the perceived legitimacy of specific social locations in wider society. For example, an emic perspective that is excluded from an etic analysis may seem to members of wider society to be thoroughly biased and ideological. Negative manifestations may arise if an excluded emic position does in fact contain a grain of partial knowledge because it is unlikely that academics and members of wider society will accept the claim of partial knowledge. From the emic perspective, if their claim to partial knowledge is rejected it could increase the possibility that the emic will view the etic as ideological and will therefore, be suspicious of emic social locations that the etic has suggested possess partial knowledge.

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of the content and textual analysis from both the white lower class emic blogs and from the etic academic sources that theorize about white privilege. I will begin by summarizing my findings in a quick overview. My research question seeks to discover if a disconnect occurs between the etic and emic

perceptions of how white privilege is enjoyed by lower class whites. If a disconnect does occur, then where exactly does the disagreement lie and why is this so? An analysis of two internet blogs that discussed white privilege revealed four themes that explained how lower class whites perceived how discussions of white privilege applied to them. First, white privilege contributed to legitimization issues that surround the fact that whites could in fact be lower class. Lower class whites suggested that academic discussions of white privilege assumed that all whites were at least middle class. Therefore, lower class whites felt that their class position was deemed illegitimate partially due to an oversight among academics of white privilege. Second, group boundaries were constructed to differentiate themselves from lower class racial minorities and non-poor whites. Third, they did not believe that lower class whites enjoyed white privilege. Fourth, some awareness of the interaction between gender and class oppression was present, with the double jeopardy of gender and class oppression taken as further evidence that lower class whites did not enjoy white privilege.

In the analysis of academic sources three themes were discovered. First, class was not held constant when comparisons were made between racial minorities and whites, resulting in a downward comparison between social classes. The only horizontal comparison was between lower class whites and lower class non-whites. Second, lower class whites adopted vicarious statuses with the help of their whiteness to improve their economic situation. Lower class whites compared their material situation to racial minorities in order to insist that whites should enjoy racial privilege and that their economic situation should be improved. Also, lower class whites attempt to enjoy class privileges by claiming that they are actually middle class. Third, lower class whites

determined the threshold of their tolerance of class oppression by comparing their economic situation to that of racial minorities. If it was perceived that the gap between lower class racial minorities and lower class whites was too small, then whites would complain about class oppression.

### **Lower Class Whites**

As stated in the previous chapter, a white lower class perspective on white privilege was obtained from two internet blogs. In the AlterNet blog, respondents were reacting to an administrative post by Robert Jensen, the author of The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege (2005). Jensen suggested that whites find the concept of white privilege threatening because they do not want to lose their unearned racial advantages. In the [www.amptoons.com](http://www.amptoons.com) blog, respondents were reflecting on a comment posted by a user that suggested that white youth often receive second chances after being accused and/or convicted of legal crimes when compared to young people of color. This post generated responses on various observations of white privilege.

A content and textual analysis of the two internet blogs revealed that participants who identified themselves as white and poor used their own experiences of economic hardship to determine that lower class whites receive little or no white privilege. First, 11 statements suggested legitimization issues were present stemming from an academic lack of acknowledgement that some whites are poor. Second, 16 emic references indicated poor whites constructed a group boundary in opposition to both people of color and non-poor whites to interpret how they perceived white privilege. Third, 12 references from respondents suggested white privilege loses its validity when applied to lower class



whites. Fourth, 4 references indicated that gender discrimination and oppression create economic hardship for both white lower class males and females. My findings are consistent with Schutz's insights in social phenomenology because the blog respondents struggle to understand the social world beyond their own system of relevance. The analysis is also consistent with Dorothy Smith's standpoint theory and Patricia Hill Collins' theory of partial knowledge because lower class whites can offer a partial understanding of how white privilege is experienced among various social locations.

Legitimization. Low income whites indicated on internet blogs discussing white privilege that a lack of legitimization concerning the existence of poor whites was problematic. Statistics reveal that non-Hispanic whites comprise 61.4% (14,039,000) of the households in the lowest fifth quintile (U.S. Census, 2006).<sup>25</sup> It should not be surprising that low income whites exist. Poor white respondents, however, felt that discussions of white privilege ignored or downplayed their economic situation. Personal examples were shared by subjects to demonstrate that it is possible for whites to be lower class. "i [sic] joined the army in 2000. since [sic] then I've never held a job that pays more than \$7.25/hour. my [sic] ancestry is swedish, irish, french, and german [sic]. what [sic] am I supposed to be afraid of again?"<sup>26</sup> i say this so that you may see that even white people can be stereotyped" (zombi, blog respondent). In other words, zombie is suggesting that individuals with European ancestry may still be poor. Here, we see that subjects use their individual experience to inductively generalize that their situation is not unique. From these statements it is clear that zombie feels that it is incorrect to *stereotype* as whites are financially secure because zombie is low income. Apparently, there are others like zombie because "white people" is plural. Zombi inverts our usual

understanding that racial stereotypes concern and harm only people of color; zombie suggests that the assumption that whites are financially secure do not accurately portray the reality of low income whites.

Construction of Group Boundary for Poor Whites. When reflecting on the amount of white privilege low income whites receive, a group boundary was constructed to differentiate from the rights or privileges bestowed on non-poor whites and racial minorities.<sup>27</sup> Non-poor whites were said to have a class advantage and racial minorities have benefits from the fact that racial discrimination is acknowledged by society, meaning they receive sympathy and assistance from those dedicated to ending social injustice.<sup>28</sup> Blog respondents who were poor and white claimed that either they or their ancestors had suffered in a similar way to racial minorities, but they receive little or no sympathy or assistance from larger society.

As I say, no offense meant.<sup>29</sup> I'm just asking because I am descended [sic] from white slaves (bond servants) but I have no plans to hunt down the people who brought and sold my great-great-whatever grandfather and get "payback." But if I did, I don't think I would stop there. Why not go on back to England and hunt down the ancestors of the judge who originally sentenced him to servitude. And then, what about the jailors [sic]? I could build up a pretty good list I think (gar, blog respondent).

Gar suggests because he or she has descended from bond servants, his or her family has suffered in some way through the generations because they are still poor.<sup>30</sup> Gar is distancing himself or herself from other whites, because not all European Americans were bond servants. Presumably, descendants of individuals who were neither slaves nor bond servants are the true beneficiaries of generational advantages. A boundary is also constructed to insist that poor whites are in a different situation from racial minorities because their claims of generational oppression are not seen as legitimate;

therefore, descendants of bonds servants are not in a position to claim oppression, even though gar believes many people played a role in their generational inequality.

In addition to generational inequality, poor white respondents constructed boundaries vis-à-vis racial minorities because people of color are able to complain about the current direct manifestations of discrimination whereas poor whites are not.

Who screams “Racist” when a white person is forced to pay for their crimes or treated unfairly in the job market or denied food stamps.... Inequality isn’t limited to everyone who isn’t white. I’m a low-income white and probably always will be, but I am a tax-payer who has seen people of other races get more out of my government than I ever will, yet I don’t stand up and yell “Racism” (whiteboomer, blog respondent).

In other words, whiteboomer suggests that lower class whites are unable to voice complaints regarding unemployment or the availability of food stamps. Here whiteboomer recognizes that she or he shares the skin color of the individuals who run the government. On the one hand, whiteboomer pays taxes to “my government”. On the other hand, whiteboomer perceives that more than a racial identification of white is needed to receive sympathy and economic assistance to combat poverty. Whiteboomer suggests that a racial identification of white may work against low income European Americans because it leaves them unable to claim they are victims of discrimination when they receive harsh prison sentences, are treated unfairly in the job market, and are denied the right to food stamps. Apparently, it has not occurred to many poor whites that they can complain because it is perceived that society is unaware that whites can be victims of discrimination.<sup>31</sup> Whiteboomer is not denying that racial minorities suffer from various manifestations of inequality. She or he merely wishes to state that being a racial minority is not a sufficient prerequisite for economic hardship. It is

important to note that whiteboomer complains about the social and economic suffering of poor whites only in the language of race. Class is certainly present in her or his comments, but the language of class oppression is absent.

Poor whites made it clear that they do not wish to be compared to non-poor whites because they do not receive the economic or social benefits of being at least middle class. “‘White privilege’ may indeed exist but if it does, it only exists for Upper Class Whites, not us ‘white-trash’ on the bottom of the rung” (gar, blog respondent). In sum, Gar argued that white privilege does not exist for lower class whites but may exist for upper class whites. Gar suggests a distinction should be made between upper class whites and poor European Americans or “white-trash” who suffer social stigma and economic difficulty because they occupy the “bottom of the rung”. It is also suggested that upper and lower class whites are separated by a great social distance. Some of the statements mentioned by bloggers closely mirrored Schutz’s suggestion that emic knowledge about others in society is based on typification, which is subject to error. Yesman believes that upper class whites could gain a better perspective on white privilege if they made a greater attempt to understand the social world from the poor white perspective. “My prescription: Go out and get a real job—one where you have to work your ass off for squat—and perhaps you won’t have enough time and energy left to be so self-absorbed and ruminate about any unextripated [sic] inner prejudices” (yesman, blog respondent). In other words, yesman suggests that upper class whites are not aware of the reality of lower class whites. Yesman argues that upper class whites may be projecting their experiences onto poor whites, resulting in inaccuracy and

misunderstanding. Yesman suggests that whites of higher classes scapegoat poor whites to reduce the level of guilt which results from practicing racial oppression. Thus:

They're [white, upper class liberals] so effete, self-deluded and helpless that they can't even pay for their own sins themselves—they even have to get someone else to do THAT for them. As much as I hate the vicious, criminal neo-conservative regime which rules this country, I have even greater contempt for the simpering “liberals” who will f\*\*k you over in the worst way again and again in order to make themselves feel “good and righteous”. It's not the white people who are evil, it's these degenerate, parasitic bourgeois scum (yesman, blog respondent).

To summarize, yesman suggests that liberals attempt to blame lower class whites for social inequality when they should actually be held responsible. Apparently, yesman considers there to be little solidarity between liberal, upper class whites and lower class whites. In fact, yesman argues white, upper class liberals shift responsibility for creating and perpetuating the structure of racism onto lower class whites, who apparently receive little benefit from white privilege. Also, yesman differentiates between white people and “degenerate parasitic bourgeois scum”. Most of the upper class is white, but yesman believes the lives of wealthy whites differ so much from the rest of the European American population that it is a reification to lump them together under the same race. Blog respondents speaking from a social location of poor and white suggested that they are qualitatively different from racial minorities and upper class whites.

White Privilege does not exist for Poor Whites. Schutz suggests that individuals are the center of their world. The validity of social phenomenon is judged from an individual's personal experience or from their stock of knowledge. Low income whites stated they do not believe they receive benefits from white privilege. This assertion is made by examining their own experiences and concluding their lives are undesirable and lack privilege.

Let's see what I've gained from decades of "white privilege": the ability to have a crappy servant-industry job where I work for sub-poverty wages with no benefits whatsoever (no health care, no retirement, no paid leave, etc.), despite the fact that I have an advanced university degree. (Oh, I know, it must be my fault, right?) (yesman, blog respondent).

In other words, yesman says he or she has not benefited from white privilege because of a failure to obtain a professional job. Despite a university degree and white skin color, yesman could not obtain employment that was fulfilling, paid a living wage, or provided benefits. Yesman implies that his or her personal experience does not validate the existence of white privilege for all European Americans. It is clear that yesman detects a blaming the victim attitude from those dedicated to eliminating racial injustice that many feel is directed toward poor whites. Yesman sarcastically blames himself or herself, by using the reasoning that if all whites received white privilege, then members of his group have no excuse to be poor. Gar emphatically denies that he or she is the recipient of unearned privileges.

Anyway, whatever I've got, I got it the old fashion way. I worked for it. My parents and my whole family were too busy picking and hoeing other "white" men's crops to bother much about having a fear that we would lose our "status" to someone of a different color. Frankly, I can't think of anyone who would have wanted our status. We did jobs even the illegal aliens wouldn't do (gar, blog respondent).

To summarize, gar indicates that his or her family earned what little they had by working at jobs that are traditionally considered to be reserved for exploited undocumented labor. Like yesman, gar uses his or her personal experience to suggest that his or her family received few benefits because of white privilege. In fact, gar indirectly suggests her or his family had a lower status and fewer employment options than undocumented workers. As stated above, gar believes it is possible that white privilege exists, but he or she is doubtful it exists for those who obtain income "the old fashion way". In general, blog

respondents that came from a poor and white social location were skeptical that white privilege existed for all whites.

Gender and Class. Some respondents connected the effects of gender oppression with social class to conclude that gender had an effect on both the realities and stereotypes of whites. Bobsays, who grew up white and poor states, “I have never been the ‘man’ nor was my mom”. zombi tells a childhood narrative about the effects of gender oppression:

when i was 4 years old my parents divorced [sic]. i didn't see my dad for years after wards [sic]. my mother was forced to support us by either living w/ her parents (grandpa was on disability) or by getting a string of minimum wage jobs (she was a high school dropout) [sic]. when he popped back up, dad took us to live in a dump in LA that was sandwiched between two factories and a low income housing project (but we had a dairy queen nearby) [sic].... in '85 my mother remarried to a factory worker (a good man who worked 80+ hours a week (and still does) for around \$6.50/hour [sic]. i have four younger brothers [sic]. in '91 we moved to fresno california (oohhh, rize) because of the low cost of housing (my father had been recently arrested for selling drugs) [sic] (zombi, blog respondent).

In this quotation, zombi argues that his mother was unable to support her family without the assistance of a male family member.<sup>32</sup> It is evident that zombie and his or her mother have experienced the effects of a patriarchal social structure. Zombie's mother had a difficult time supporting her five children. The only time she was able to provide housing for her children was when a man helped her (either a partner or her father). Women are expected to be married and have a male breadwinner to take care of the family. In the event of a divorce, mothers are expected to support their children, but for fathers it is optional. Perhaps zombi partially admires his or her stepfather because he was able to financially support the family. After all, zombi noted his stepfather was a good man who worked 80+ hours a week.

When race intersects with class, blog respondents have indicated that whiteness is not always an advantage because society does not have sympathy and is not interested in assisting whites who are poor. Low income whites who are male indicated that the same thing is true gender and class. It is assumed that because white men have a racial and gender advantage they should not be poor. Yesman denotes that his gender and race may sometimes be a disadvantage for poor, white males.

This author [Robert Jensen] seems proud to work at a university which is dedicated to “racial justice.” Now, what does that REALLY mean? It means that if you’re white and male, you need not apply—your race and/or gender disqualify you. And ESPECIALLY if you come from a working class background, don’t even think about applying. You won’t have the right appearance and demeanor—that is, you probably won’t be haughty and presumptuous, and you probably won’t have been able to afford the surgeries, spa treatments, etc., to look enough like them. They’ll be able to tell that you’re not a member of the bourgeois class, and you’ll be excluded immediately. If you’re poor and white and male, your dreams and aspirations are being sacrificed to soothe the bad conscience of the white bourgeois class (yesman, blog respondent).

In this quotation, yesman argues that affirmative action discriminates against lower class white males. Yesman’s statements indicate that he or she has accepted the racialization of affirmative, which is a program designed to assist women, the lower class, and racial minorities. To yesman, affirmative action is unfair to poor, white males because it assumes people like him do not suffer under any type of discrimination because of their gender and racial privilege. As stated above, in patriarchal societies men are supposed to be autonomous, providers. The assumption that men never need financial assistance is merely an extension of problematic gender norms. Yesman points out that class discrimination can affect the opportunity structures of poor, white males. Therefore, yesman believes that affirmative action further limits his already pathetic options for employment.



Themes in blog responses regarding an emic perception of how poor whites receive aspects of white privilege reflected some doubt that white privilege exists for economically marginal whites and resentment stemming from perceived misrepresentations. Emic blog respondents attempted not only to talk about themselves, but to generalize their experiences to other lower class whites. First, respondents indicated that problematic legitimization issues were present because both larger society and advocates against white privilege ignore the fact that whites can suffer economically. Second, poor whites constructed themselves as a group in opposition to people of color and upper class whites. Racial minorities differed from low income European Americans because they were legitimately considered poor. The experiences of upper class whites were perceived to be over generalized by those assuming white privilege. Third, white privilege should not be accurately applied to the lives of low income whites; personal experiences were used to conclude that they receive few special privileges. Fourth, some respondents indicated that gender oppression works in a different way against both women and men. Adult children of low income, white women stated that their mothers found it difficult to maintain a household without the economic support of men. Poor white males found affirmative action policies to be problematic because they felt that their race and gender had not given them an advantage over women and racial minorities. Low income blog respondents interpreted the validity of white privilege through their own experiences of poverty and gender oppression; poor whites concluded that their opportunity structure has not been enhanced by white privilege.

## Academic Texts

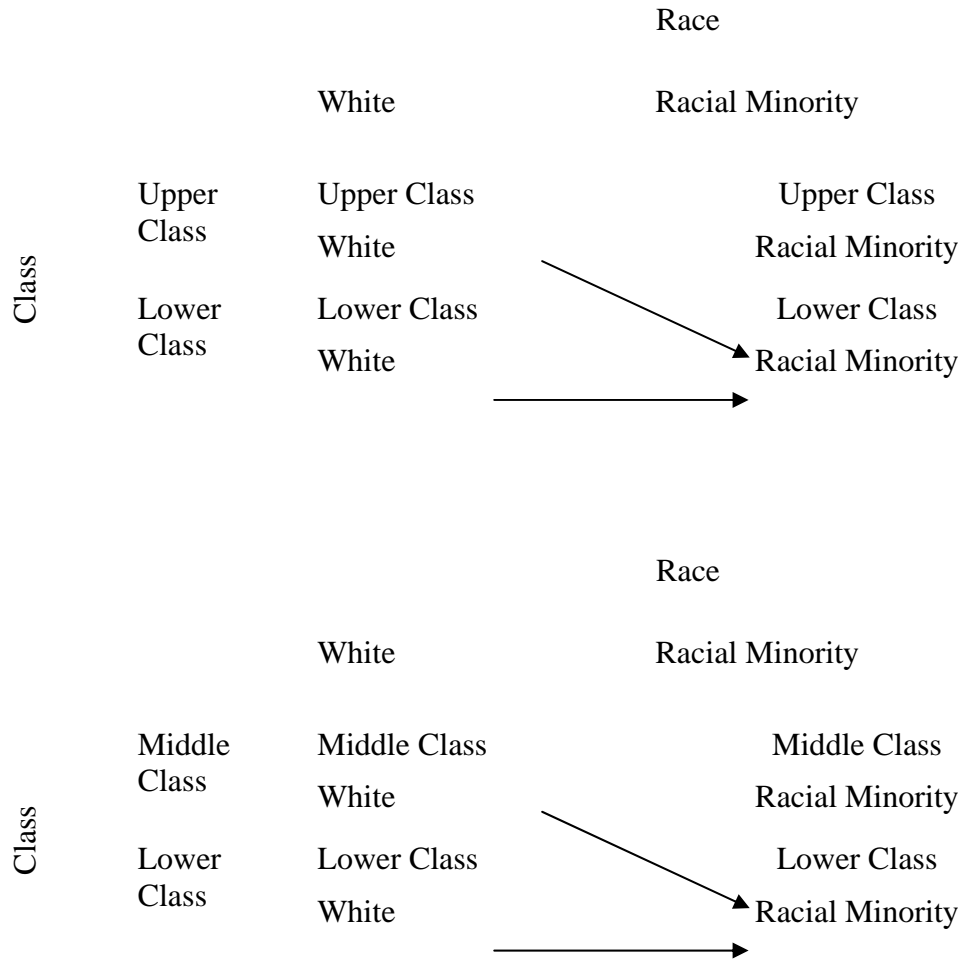
The second portion of my analysis consisted of performing a content and textual analysis on academic texts that theorized about white privilege. Since the project under study concerns how the economic aspects of white privilege is bestowed upon lower class whites, a technical account of exactly how lower class whites enjoy white privilege would result in a circular argument. If the analysis rested only at the level of technical content, a textual analysis would be impossible because my research question would be answered by the way the data were collected. For example, lower class whites enjoy economic aspects of white privilege because they receive slightly better jobs and higher wages. A better way to respond to my research question is to focus on how the arguments are made rhetorically, rather than technically. In most instances, the goal of the academic work was not to specifically address the experiences of lower class whites, but rather to theorize about whites in more general terms.<sup>33</sup> A content and textual analysis of how an argument is rhetorical lead to insights about how academics come to the conclusion that lower class whites enjoy white privilege.

I will now summarize my general findings. The analysis revealed three patterns regarding the way academics theorized white privilege was bestowed upon European-Americans, and specifically how white privilege was enjoyed by lower class whites. First, because social class was rarely held constant, the direction of comparison between the social classes of whites and racial minorities was downward, with the exception of lower class whites who were horizontally compared to racial minorities of the same class. *Upper and middle class* whites were compared with racial minorities of a *lower class*. *Lower class* whites were compared with *lower class* racial minorities. Second, academic

theorists suggested only lower class whites emically made an effort to adopt a vicarious status in order to improve their material situation. Academics argued lower class whites emically accomplished this by attempting to identify as middle class in order to enjoy class privilege. Also, academics insisted that lower class whites emically suggested that their economic situation was too similar to lower class racial minorities in order to improve their material situation. Third, academic theorists argued that lower class whites emically judged the threshold of their tolerance of class oppression by comparing their material situation to that of lower class racial minorities. When it was judged that the gap was closing between lower class whites and lower class racial minorities, complaints were made about class oppression by lower class whites. In Appendix F, a summary of the citations for the academic texts used is available.

Direction of Comparison<sup>34</sup> Since racial privilege is a relative concept that differs by society, a comparison between the dominant and subordinate racial identities is necessary to give white privilege meaning. A total of 20 comments from academics discussing the economic aspects of white privilege were put in this code only if nothing else beyond the direction of comparison was directly stated. This includes 7 upper class references, 1 middle class reference, and 12 lower class references.<sup>35</sup> Academic theorists chose to compare whites of various classes only to *lower class* racial minorities. In most cases the direction of comparison was downward (upper class whites vs. lower class racial minorities, middle class whites vs. lower class racial minorities). The only example of a horizontal comparison was with lower class whites and lower class racial minorities (See Table 3).

Table 3: Direction of Comparison between Race and Class



In the only example of horizontal comparisons across races between social classes, academic theorists suggested that lower class whites were better off than racial minorities of the same social class<sup>36, 37</sup>. Academics made twelve references (the most references of any social class) that referred to a direction of comparison between lower class racial minorities and lower class whites. Perhaps lower class whites had the most references because economic racial privilege among lower class whites may be perceived as ambiguous by the general public, given their undesirable economic situation. In all instances, lower class whites were compared to lower class racial minorities. Ruth Frankenberg states:

As working-class white women, Donna and Louise both had personal experience of economic hardship and inequality. Both made an explicit connection between class and race as axes of hardship – both insisted that racism had a specificity of its own, so that the working-class people of color they met were even worse off than their white counterparts (Frankenberg [1993] 1999: 111).

In other words, Frankenberg states that white lower class subjects are in a slightly better material privilege due to their race. Frankenberg shows us that although working class white women struggle economically, they are still seen as white, which gives them some sort of a boost. Their economic situation is perceived as not as dire as working class racial minorities. The direction of comparison is horizontal because an example of white privilege is identified while class is held constant.

Academics made a total of four references (1 middle class and 7 upper class) which indicated a downward comparison between the class position of middle and upper class whites and lower class racial minorities. In all 15 texts under analysis, only examples of lower class racial minorities were used as a comparison to discuss the economic aspects of white privilege. In other words, the experiences of middle and upper class racial minorities were not used as a foil upon which to demonstrate that European Americans received white privilege. The following is an example of a downward comparison between middle and upper class whites and lower class racial and ethnic minorities. “The truth in California in 1994 was that the standard of living enjoyed by the state’s middle and upper classes increasingly depended upon the desperation of immigrants, especially low-wage women workers from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, China, the Philippines, and other sites in Latin America and Asia” (Lipsitz 1997:53). As shown in Table 3, academics were not consistent in their direction of comparison because the social class of racial minorities was not held constant.

Adopting a Vicarious Status. Lower class whites were said to benefit from white privilege by using their agency to attempt to identify with middle class whites and lower class racial minorities. Lower class whites vicariously enjoy class privileges by claiming a middle class status on the basis of their race. A comparison with lower class racial minorities shows evidence of the expectations of white privilege because lower class white people tend to assume that they should not have to live like racial minorities. White skin privilege is like property because whites can eventually exchange their skin color for more money.

Lower class white vicariously enjoy class privileges by claiming a middle class status on the basis of their race. Identifying with lower class racial minorities is based on white privilege because lower class whites argue that it is unjust that they should have to live like racial minorities because of their race privilege. Few references are made that indicate that whites of other class background attempt to adopt vicarious statuses in an effort to enjoy white privilege (Harris 1993:1759).

A total of 14 references point to instances of lower class whites emically attempting to adopt a vicarious status to obtain the economic aspects of white privilege.<sup>38</sup> Two references were made concerning the upper class, zero regarding the middle class, and 12 citations were made in reference to the middle class. Roediger suggests that any presumed solidarity with minorities among lower class whites was superficial. “Moreover, it should be obvious that for all but a handful of committed abolitionists/labor reformers, use of a term like *white slavery* was not an act of solidarity with the slave but rather a call to arms to end the inappropriate oppression of whites” (Roediger 1991:68). In sum, Roediger argues that the emic attempted to increase their standard of living by suggesting that their working conditions were akin to slavery.<sup>39</sup> In this example, lower class whites historically suggested their material conditions were similar to that of slaves.

The purpose of this feigned solidarity was an excuse to improve their own class position.

Lower class whites also emically appeal to white privilege by claiming a higher class identity than what the etic suggests they have.

Lower class whites attempt to identify as middle class and white in an attempt to pass as middle class. Thus, for some, the assertion of middle class status was at times a metaphor for race privilege. And Ginny Rodd , having described how to maintain an entire family for months at a time on flour and milk alone, disavowed in a different way the image of her rural smallholding family as “poor” when she stated: “We were all the same. There were no rich where we lived. Or rather, no rich, no poor. You couldn’t get poor as long as you enjoyed your life. You were rich if you loved your family. No rich, no poor. We all worked.” (Frankenberg [1993] 1999:24).

In other words, Frankenberg suggests that the emic attempts to identify as middle class, even though the etic considers them to be lower class. In this example the etic suggests that white racial solidarity exists in the minds of lower class whites, because they willing insist they occupy a class position that is higher than what the etic thinks it should be. Identification with a group in society requires that members of the higher class accept the classification, otherwise the vicarious identification would be meaningless given that certain demarcations of class are made subjectively. In order for this to be an example of white privilege, lower class whites must in some way benefit from claiming to be middle class and white. If it is that easy for lower class whites to pass as middle class and white, then it follows that class as a structure does not affect European Americans as much as racial minorities. Consequently, class as a social structure loses legitimacy when combined with a dominant racial identity with regard to whites.

Tolerance of Oppression Threshold. Regardless of whether it is from race, class, or gender oppression, subordinate members of society never suffer complacently. There is always a limit or threshold that if crossed, will result in widespread, vocal complaints

among the subordinated group. In total, 8 references were made with 3 upper class, 2 middle class, and 3 lower class citations concerning the economic aspects of white privilege.<sup>40</sup> Below is one of the three etic references that suggest that the white lower class use the situation of minorities to gage their own status or attempt to keep from falling further.<sup>41</sup>

Nor is it odd that the white workers of textile mill villages, protected in their poverty by color bars and often, as W.J. Cash observed, unfamiliar with Blacks, took particularly quick and sharp offense when middle-class reformers seemed to treat 'mill people' as a separate, less-than-white caste. But even in biracial workplaces there were constant temptations to attempt to capitalize on whiteness and to shed the stigma of 'nigger work', whether by erecting full color bars, by creating a structure of white and 'nigger' jobs or simply by participating in racial abuse (Roediger 1994:138).

In this quotation Roediger offers an etic interpretation of the lower class white emic. In sum, Roediger suggests that white workers attempted to distance themselves from racial minorities when it was feared that middle class white reformers classified lower class whites as having a materially similar situation to racial minorities. Lower class whites are motivated to take action and make complaints about they class situation when they compare themselves to racial minorities and perceive that the gap is small.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

A content and textual analysis was performed on academic texts on white privilege and internet blogs to gain an understanding of how the etic and emic theorized how white privilege was bestowed on lower class whites. The analysis of emic texts revealed four themes: (1) White privilege contributed a lack of understanding that whites could legitimately be poor (2) Group boundaries were constructed between racial minorities and non-poor whites to differentiate from privileges bestowed upon other



groups (3) White privilege does not exist for the emic and (4) Some understanding of the intersection with gender and social class was evident. From the analysis of the etic texts three themes emerged. First, a downward comparison was used to interpret the manifestations of white privilege in all cases except lower class whites. Second, lower class whites adopted vicarious statuses in order to capitalize on white privilege. Third, lower class whites constructed the threshold of their tolerance of class oppression by looking downward at the situation of lower class racial minorities. If the gap was perceived to be too little, lower class whites would complain about their class situation by appealing to their whiteness. The etic analysis of how lower class whites enjoyed racial privilege rarely used the lower class white emic as a perspective which contained partial knowledge. Consequently, the failure to identify partial knowledge from a lower class white social location results in an academic lack of legitimacy that has implications in larger society.

## Notes

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<sup>25</sup> Non-Hispanic whites comprise 71.7% (82,000,003) of total United States households. Households of racial minorities are overrepresented in the lowest fifth quintile (See Appendix A).

<sup>26</sup> This question is in response to Robert Jensen's suggestion that the concept of white privilege is threatening to whites because they are afraid to lose benefits accrued by white privilege.

<sup>27</sup> The subjects did not elaborate on which non-poor social classes they were specifically referring. This is not surprising, given that a six class model reflects etic academic theorizing and may not be evident from a lower class white emic standpoint.

<sup>28</sup> One respondent stated that he or she had been a victim of classism, but that racial minorities had to cope with both racism and classism. Her or his response was atypical because it was suggested that the subject's experience as a white is different because of his or her race and similar to racial minorities that are poor because of poverty (drumgurl, blog respondent).

<sup>29</sup> This comment is in response to a prior comment posted by another blog respondent which suggested that all whites receive some white privilege because of institutional racism, beginning with policies that date back to slavery.

<sup>30</sup> gar does not clarify if he or she believes his or her family has suffered from government or workplace bureaucratic laws or rules in the way that racial minorities have, which help maintain an economic and status inequality. Consequently, gar only partially addresses the question of whether descendents of bonds servants suffered from institutional discrimination.

<sup>31</sup> Classism is difficult to combat in the United States due to a history of social Darwinism, meaning that those who are not economically successful experience economic deprivation because of either innate or character flaws.

<sup>32</sup> Markham (2005) argues that in internet communications, a failure to capitalize the beginning of sentences indicates a lack of conformity because rules of mechanics are purposely ignored.

<sup>33</sup> David Roediger's two books were an exception; in his work he is specifically analyzing the experiences of lower class whites. The two books I am referring to are: Toward the Abolition of Whiteness (1993) and The Wages of Whiteness (1991).

<sup>34</sup> The determination of which direction a relation runs is dependent on the standpoint from which one is looking. A comparison of lower class racial minorities to middle class white is upward from the perspective of the lower class racial minority. Since the texts I am analyzing focuses on how whites benefit from racial inequality, the direction of comparison is determined by from the perspective of whites.

<sup>35</sup> The following references were found:

*Upper Class:* (Lipsitz 1997:17; Lipsitz 1997:54; Lipsitz 1997:48-49; Lipsitz 1997:52; Lipsitz 1997:53; Lipsitz 1997:54-55; Lipsitz 1997:56)

*Middle Class:* (Lipsitz 1997:53)

*Lower Class:* (Harris 1993:1717; Harris 1993:1758-1759; Harris 1993:1759; Roediger 1991:4; Roediger 1991:12; Roediger 1991:60; Roediger 1994:137; Lipsitz 1997:98;

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Frankenberg 1993:66; Frankenberg 1993:111; Frankenberg 1993:238; Leonardo 2004:145).

<sup>36</sup> A determination of etic delineation of social class was determined only if references of social class were made by academics. Academics only once used categories suggesting a six class model when referring to social class. Instead more general phrases such as working class, lower class, middle class, upper class, and wealthy were used. Consequently, I used a simplistic three class model of upper class, middle class, and lower class. Since the working class struggles economically to some extent, I considered the working class to be part of the lower class. I also considered the wealthy to be part of the upper class.

<sup>37</sup> In approximately 15 instances, only occupation was named. It is difficult to determine social class by only having knowledge of the occupation so these data were not used for my study.

<sup>38</sup> The following references were found:

*Upper Class:* (Hurtado 1996:147; Wildman 1996:16-17)

*Middle Class:* (no references)

*Lower Class:*

(a) Adopting a Vicarious Class Status: (Roediger 1991:118; Lipsitz 1997:5; Chennault 1998:305-306; Frankenberg 1993:24; Frankenberg 1993:123)

(b) Historical Comparisons to Slaves: (Roediger 1991:27; Roediger 1991:49; Roediger 1991:68; Roediger 1991:73; Roediger 1991:74; Roediger 1991:77; Roediger 1991:180)

<sup>39</sup> In most cases, use of the term “white slavery” historically refers to white women who worked as prostitutes. Recent historical data indicates, however, that the term “white slavery” had more general implications regarding all lower class workers, including those who were white.

As Eric Foner has recently observed, radical labor’s comparisons of ‘white’ and Black slavery often found the latter less oppressive than the former. Radicals argued, on shreds of evidence, that Southern masters worked their Black slaves far fewer hours per day – perhaps only half the number required by Northern employers. They computed rates of exploitation that putatively showed that a much greater proportion of the value produced by a Black slave was returned to him or her than was returned to the white slaves in the North. Even writers who argued that white and Black slavery were roughly equal nonetheless showed a sharp tendency to cite only comparisons favorable to this latter (Roediger 1991:77).

<sup>40</sup> The precise citations for the references are as follows:

*Upper Class:* (Lipsitz 1997:48-49; Lipsitz 1997:54-55; Lipsitz 1997:188)

*Middle Class:* (Hurtado 1996:163; Frankenberg 1993:131)

*Lower Class:* (Roediger 1994:138; Roediger 1991:69; Fine 2004:252)

<sup>41</sup> This particular etic perspective is a mixture of how (1) academics perceive the lower class white emic and (2) the academic perception of the etic position of lower class whites. While academics suggest that lower class whites (emic) claim they occupy a similar economic position in society as racial minorities of the same class, the etic

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suggests that the white lower classes are materially better off than racial minorities of the same social class.

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

This study attempts to analyze both an etic and emic perspective on how white privilege is enjoyed by lower class whites by analyzing academic texts on white privilege and internet blogs written by those who identify as lower class and white. One blog was in response to Robert Jensen's suggestion that whites find the concept of white privilege threatening because it places their unearned privileges in jeopardy. In the second blog, participants responded to the privilege white delinquents experience because they receive second chances more often than racial minority youth who break laws. A textual and content analysis revealed four patterns found in discussions of lower class whites concerning white privilege. First, academic analyses of white privilege contribute to a societal misconception that whites can be lower class. Therefore, lower class whites feel a lack of legitimization from academics and society regarding their racial and class intersection. Second, lower class whites constructed group boundaries to separate themselves from racial minorities and non-poor whites. Lower class whites claimed that they are different from racial minorities because at least some people in society are sympathetic to complaints of discrimination made by racial minorities. Non-poor whites differ from lower class whites because they have more material resources at their disposal. Third, material deprivation was cited as evidence that white privilege did not exist for lower class whites. Finally, some awareness of the intersection between race and gender was present. Female headed households faced enormous economic challenges and males who were lower class were said to negatively suffer from affirmative action.

Three patterns emerged when a textual and content analysis was performed on academic texts of white privilege. First, class was not held constant when comparing the situation of racial minorities and whites, resulting in a downward direction of comparison in most cases. The only exception is when lower class whites are compared to racial minorities of the same class. All comparisons were made between whites of various classes and lower class racial minorities. Second, lower class whites attempted to adopt a vicarious status in order to take advantage of their racial privilege. Lower class whites historically compared their material conditions to racial minorities as a strategy to suggest that their standard of living was too similar to people of color. Also, lower class whites often attempt to pass as middle class and white in an effort to vicariously enjoy class privileges. Third, lower class whites construct a threshold of tolerance for their own class oppression by looking down at lower class racial minorities. If the gap is judged to be too small then complaints are made about class oppression.

Standpoint theory (Smith 1986) and partial knowledge (Collins 2000) argue that every social location provides a different view and partial truth on the structure of domination. Combined insights from Alfred Schutz's (1964) social phenomenology and Kenneth Pike's (1967) etic and emic theory suggest that the etic perspective should strive to incorporate all relevant viewpoints. The lower class white emic perspective offers partial knowledge by reminding us that the majority of the poor in the United States are white. Since poor whites perceive that negative effects of class and gender do not garner a legitimately marked status of oppressed, it is difficult for them to voice complaints in a straightforward manner. Poor whites use the language of race in place of a more accurate language of class and gender oppression, because that is what poor whites perceive is

available. Denying the validity of white privilege is used as a means to complain about class and gender oppression because discussions of race reflect a more legitimately marked oppression. I am suggesting that by emphasizing the irrelevancy of race privileges or denying it, poor whites are drawing attention to the fact that being white and poor is different than being middle class and white. The etic perspective of how lower class whites enjoy white privilege fails to adequately address social class in their analysis by ignoring experiences of middle and upper class racial minorities, and at times minimizes the significance of class oppression as experienced by lower class whites. The treatment of social class oppression by academics of white privilege reflects a broader pattern of a lack of class consciousness in the United States. The data suggest that discussions of racial inequality in popular culture and academic discussions of white privilege should take more seriously the experiences of poor whites and incorporate the intersection of race, class, and gender. When that occurs, the standpoint of lower class whites will increase in its legitimacy because its partial knowledge will be noted.

### **Social Phenomenology, Standpoint, and Partial Knowledge**

In order to understand social phenomenon, it is essential to gain perspectives from each relevant social location. An emic perception of how poor whites perceive white privilege represents a partial knowledge and cannot be uncritically accepted at face value. On the one hand, low income whites fail to see how their racial identification may have benefited them. On the other hand, it is important to consider how the manifestation of white privilege may vary depending on social class and gender. It is also important to note that having a dominant racial or gender identification may not always provide an expansion of opportunities (King 1988). The partial knowledge provided by lower class

whites is that a lack of legitimization of the existence of their economic struggles is tragically problematic.

Social scientists are trained to interpret social reality from multiple standpoints, but most non-academic individuals judge validity based on their own experiences, which sometimes means they do not see the forest through the trees. Blog respondents used their own experiences as members of marginal social classes to conclude that discussions of white privilege do not apply to them. From a broader sociological perspective, this is doubtful. Sociologists would agree that many poor white males have historically been beneficiaries of job discrimination and unequal wages resulting from racial and gender discrimination. This history is less likely to be taken into consideration by poor white males. That factor is overlooked by emic poor whites and poor white males because it is beyond their direct experience. It seems unlikely that those responsible for hiring decisions, wages, and raises would publicize examples of racial and gender discrimination because it is illegal and it might offend whites who genuinely believe they were the best candidate for the job or that raises are solely rewarded for superior job performance. The insistence of low income blog respondents that they do not receive any manifestations of white privilege is an example of how knowledge coming from particular social locations needs to be included in a more comprehensive pool of information.

Low income white blog respondents have some understanding of class as a social structure, but feel uncomfortable with making a direct claim that they are suffering as a result of class oppression. The blog respondents demonstrated that they definitely had some understanding of class oppression. This is evident because they made an attempt to



construct group boundaries to differentiate between upper class and poor whites. From my analysis, examples of the manifestation of class oppression were found in nearly every blog entry from poor whites, but no direct claim that social class as an oppressive social structure was made. Class demarcation and its impact remain a much muted discussion in the United States. While an effort was made to include women among those who suffer from poverty, the references that the bloggers made to racial minorities that were also poor almost always assumed to suffer solely from racial discrimination and not from class oppression. Also, middle and upper class whites were presumed to have benefited from race privilege, not gender or class privilege. American ideology suggests that we live in a classless society where economic mobility and security is a matter of merit instead of luck or happenstance of birth. In addition, there seem to be few recent studies in social inequality concerning the intersectionality of class oppression, gender, and whiteness.

Ideally, as Alfred Schutz reminds us, the etic position should parse out partial knowledge from all relevant social locations in an effort to provide a balanced perspective on social phenomenon. Since white privilege is a relative concept, the life chances of whites need to be compared with the material situation of racial minorities. If we turn to the texts from academics, 12 references concerned the upper class, 3 references were found on the middle class, and 27 references were made in relation to the lower class. When analyzing etic data, this undoubtedly contributes to the lower class white emic perception that liberals scapegoat them for the current state of class relations because more references were made regarding lower class whites than were made concerning middle and upper class whites combined. When a social class of whites was

specifically mentioned, it was always compared with lower class racial minorities. The absence of middle and upper class racial minority experiences used for comparison to European Americans is problematic because it contributes to the emic stereotype that all racial minorities are poor. For example, Aida Hurtado argues:

White women also suffer economically, but their economic situation is not as dire as that of women of Color. More specifically, white women's relationship to white men (the highest earners in society) as daughters, wives, or sisters gives them an "economic cushion". Given these data, when I discuss feminists of Color I will treat them as members of the working class, unless I specifically mention otherwise. When I discuss white feminists, I will treat them as middle class (Hurtado 1996:5).

To imply that all whites are middle class and all racial minorities are working class is problematic because the emic position of lower class whites reveals that they believe that others in society assume that whites should not be poor.

Ironically, a failure to address the experiences of racial oppression among middle and upper class people of color could possibly lead to a wrongful substitution of class with race to complain about racial oppression. Minorities with class privilege, particularly African Americans, are constantly being accused of 'not being black enough' because they enjoy class privileges.

The etic assumption that lower class white emic can easily adopt a vicarious status of middle class on the basis of their race is problematic because it also contributes to the stereotype that all whites are middle class. The material aspects of class oppression cannot be overcome by lower class whites by pretending to be middle class. Also, socialization patterns and styles of communication differ by class making it difficult for the lower class whites to successfully pull off a middle class performance. This may also partially contribute to the feeling among emic lower class whites that European

Americans cannot claim a marked status of class or gender oppression. The limitations of the etic analysis suggest that the academics were influenced by typifications surrounding lower class whites. Their analysis is limited because it mirrors the ‘common sense’ understanding among Americans of various races and ethnicities that the experiences of whites fails to offer insights on racial inequality.

### **Implications of Etic Interpretation of White Privilege**

In studies of deviant behavior, groups that possess a marked status are subject to stigma and mistreatment by the non-marked majority. For example, racial minorities, the poor, and women are marked groups which are subject to abuse from unmarked groups which may include members that identify as whites, the upper classes, and men. Brekhus suggests that sociologists disproportionately select members of marked social groups for study when compared to those who are unmarked (1998: 26). “Yet when studies we conduct *in* specific settings are viewed as studies *of* these settings, we may not realize that the particular sociohistorical configurations we examine are but specific manifestations of more general social patterns” (Zarubavel 2004:21). This is unfortunate because focusing too heavily on a marked status may result in not seeing how marked individuals are part of other social structures. For example, people of color and women belong to different classes and racial groups.

Since class differences are downplayed in the United States, white lower class individuals may experience the stigma of being marked, are not afforded the status of being a member of a marked group. In contrast, women and racial minorities are treated as marked and also are categorized as such. If women and racial minorities wish to make a public complaint as a group about the inequality they suffer, unmarked members of

society may deny the validity a particular claim but will probably not challenge the legitimacy of the entire existence of gender and racial inequality. The status and acknowledgement of having a marked status is an essential prerequisite to being able to make a claim of oppression. As poor white blog respondents remind us, most Americans deny the very existence of class oppression. This makes it almost impossible for lower class whites to feel that they can directly make claims complaining about class oppression.

In a study of the temperance movement, Joseph Gusfield observed that social groups may select targets to critique on symbolic, rather than institutional grounds. “It is make-believe in that the action need have no relation to its ostensible goal. The effect upon the audience comes from the significance which they find in the action as it represents events or figures outside of the drama” (Gusfield 1986:166). Perhaps an additional motivation for lower class whites to deny they receive white privilege manifests itself via symbolic purposes. If poor whites wish to make a complaint about social class oppression, they might favor an indirect strategy given their options. Blog respondents took great care to demonstrate that the manifestations of class oppression were real. When marked status and symbolic crusades are applied to social stratification, the group *status* of a marked identity gives subordinate groups leverage to at least be allowed to make claims concerning their maltreatment. Perhaps poor whites use the leverage provided by the legitimacy of race as a marked social status to complain about their class oppression. Lower class whites insisted that they received no aspects of *white* privilege given their *economic* insecurity. A language of racial inequality (white privilege) is adopted as a means to complain about economic hardship caused by the

manifestations of class oppression. Discussions of social class are absent in the larger culture and few current systematic studies exist in which social class among poor whites is analyzed. If poor whites do not feel they have the opportunity to complain about their inequality because the language of class is absent, then the language of race may be used because that is what is available. If this is the case, then researchers should be attuned to what subjects say as well as what is left unsaid.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Limits and Extensions of the Study. Knowledge is a never ending process; no one work could ever be finished or complete. The results of this project include several caveats and also suggestions for further research. The generalizability of my research is limited to lower class whites who are aware of discussions of white privilege and have access to the internet. This presumably represents a proportion of lower class whites who are relatively literate and have greater access to resources, given that white privilege is not frequently discussed in everyday conversation and not everyone can afford internet access. Qualitative interviews are recommended with a more representative sample of lower class whites because of a greater chance for generalizability. Also, interviews could increase the likelihood of dialogue which would provide a richer data set. An analysis of etic sources could be extended if infrequently cited sources were incorporated into the study. Presumably, this would allow for a greater representation of academics of color. The research project could be expanded to include an etic and emic comparison of racial minorities of various classes' understanding of white privilege. This would be worthwhile because it would extend our knowledge of other emic standpoints and partial knowledge. In addition, white privilege includes much more than merely economic

advantages of whites. A study which included emic and etic understandings of psychological, political, and social advantages would be fruitful. Finally, the research project could be extended by broadening the focus to include an examination of etic and emic interpretations of male privilege among both men and women of various classes.

White Privilege. Unintentional social control and social inequality is exerted over low income whites when their class oppression is downplayed or considered illegitimate by society. In studies of racial inequality that inadequately discuss class or gender oppression, the suggestion that lower class whites enjoy manifestations of white privilege is threatening from the emic point of view. This latently and unintentionally suggests that whites who are poor despite a racial and/or advantages have no excuse for their poverty. The simplest suggestion is to give lower class whites an outlet to express class frustration by incorporating intersectionality in studies of racial inequality. A failure to address class and gender oppression in discussions of white privilege may make a stronger case for racial oppression but should be avoided because it borrows negative manifestations of class and/or gender oppression without giving *credit* to them. For example, middle class white men enjoy their position in society due to class, race, and gender privilege; to attribute privilege primarily to whiteness is empirically incorrect and takes away from the legitimacy of gender and class privilege. On the one hand, several academics already incorporate intersectionality in their work (Roediger 1991; Roediger 1994; Frankenberg 1993; McIntosh 1993; Hurtado 1996). Consequently intersectionality is necessary but not sufficient. Perhaps future works on intersectionality could search for partial knowledge that is unique to each standpoint, instead of merely citing subaltern perspectives and completely discounting them. If it is true that no one social location can

see all, then maybe it is also valid that no one social location fails to see anything. The purpose of my thesis is not to discount or belittle the strides that academics that incorporate intersectionality have already made, but merely to make a suggestion for future improvements. It could be argued that the results of the efforts from academics who use intersectionality are evident in the emic comments regarding the feminization of poverty. Greater efforts toward intersectionality in the study of white privilege would certainly make it more difficult for lower class whites to argue that they do not experience white privilege because they are poor.

## APPENDIX A

### PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS, SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS WITHIN INCOME QUINTILE AND TOP FIVE PERCENT IN 2005

#### Race and Hispanic Origin of Household

	Total	Lowest Fifth	Second Fifth	Middle Fifth	Fourth Fifth	Highest Fifth	Top Five Percent
All Races	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
White A.O.I.C.**	83	74.9	82.4	83.8	86.1	87.7	88.9
White Alone	81.8	73.6	81.2	82.6	85.1	86.7	88
White Alone, Not Hispanic	71.7	61.4	68	71.3	76.6	81.2	83.6
Black A.O.I.C.	12.6	21.1	14.4	12.2	9.2	6	3.7
Black Alone	12.2	20.6	14	11.9	8.9	5.8	3.5
Asian A.O.I.C.	3.9	3.1	2.6	3.5	4.2	6.1	7.5
Asian Alone	3.7	3	2.4	3.3	4	5.8	7.1
Hispanic (of any race)	10.9	13.4	14.2	12.1	9	5.9	4.8

#### Distribution of Households, by Selected Characteristics Within Income Quintile and Top 5 Percent in 2005\* (Number in Thousands)

#### Race and Hispanic Origin of Household

	Total	Lowest Fifth	Second Fifth	Middle Fifth	Fourth Fifth	Highest Fifth	Top Five Percent
<b>Lower Limit of Income</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>19,178</b>	<b>36,000</b>	<b>57,658</b>	<b>91,705</b>	<b>166,000</b>
All Races	114,384	22,876	22,872	22,879	22,880	22,878	5,721
White A.O.I.C.**	94,910	17,136	18,885	19,162	19,704	20,054	5,087
White Alone	93,588	16,839	18,568	18,890	19,467	19,824	5,034
White Alone, Not Hispanic	82,003	14,039	15,548	16,311	17,529	18,576	4,785
Black A.O.I.C.	14,399	4,834	3,290	2,792	2,101	1,383	209
Black Alone	14,002	4,719	3,206	2,718	2,030	1,329	199
Asian A.O.I.C.	4,500	717	605	802	969	1,406	429
Asian Alone	4,273	693	559	757	925	1,338	409
Hispanic (of any race)	12,519	3,075	3,252	2,776	2,065	1,352	273

\*Source: U.S. Census Bureau of Households, Current Population Survey, 2006. Annual Social and Economic Supplement.  
Selected Characteristics Within Income Quintile and Top Five Percent in 2005. Households as of March the Following year.



## APPENDIX B:

### EMPLOYMENT BY EARNINGS, SEX, AND RACE FOR U.S. TOTAL

Sex	Earnings	Total	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic Asian	AIAN*
Total	Total Employed at Work	127,156,415	94,186,628	12,986,742	12,411,820	4,639,070	776,748
	No Earnings	3,533,795	1,994,169	728,784	516,921	166,123	34,882
	\$1-14,999 or loss	32,963,077	22,741,519	4,659,341	3,530,718	1,132,642	251,677
Male	Total Employed at Work	67,923,160	50,606,042	7,602,303	5,699,441	2,464,647	391,502
	No Earnings	1,649,964	882,413	388,277	243,220	76,267	15,694
	\$1-14,999 or loss	13,132,199	8,560,435	2,327,855	1,371,897	489,530	103,101
Female	Total Employed at Work	59,230,848	43,580,586	5,384,439	6,712,379	2,174,423	375,246
	No Earnings	1,883,831	1,111,756	340,507	273,701	89,856	19,188
	\$1-14,999 or loss	19,830,878	14,181,084	2,331,486	2,158,821	643,112	148,576

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulation

\*American Indian and Alaskan Native

#### Employment by Earnings, Sex, and Race for U.S. Total in Percent

Sex	Earnings	Total	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic Asian	AIAN*
Total	Total Employed at Work	100	74.1	10.2	9.8	3.6	0.6
	No Earnings	2.8	1.6	0.06	0.4	0.1	0
	\$1-14,999 or loss	25.9	17.9	3.7	2.8	0.9	0.2
Male	Total Employed at Work	53.4	39.8	6	4.5	1.9	0.3
	No Earnings	1.3	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.1	0
	\$1-14,999 or loss	10.3	6.7	1.8	1.1	0.4	0.1
Female	Total Employed at Work	46.6	34.3	4.2	5.3	1.7	0.3
	No Earnings	1.5	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.1	0
	\$1-14,999 or loss	15.6	11.2	1.8	1.7	0.5	0.1

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulation

\*American Indian and Alaskan Native

**APPENDIX C:  
10 MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS FOR WOMEN AND MEN OF VARIOUS  
RACES**

10 Most Common Occupations for Non-Hispanic White Women and Men

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Non-Hispanic Whites	Total Number of White Non-Hispanic Females	Percent of White Non-Hispanic Females	Number of White Non-Hispanic Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0	Percent of White Non-Hispanic Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0
1. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,667,405	2,966,435	2,874,250	78.8	764,605	20.9
2. Elementary and Secondary School Teachers	3,034,075	2,508,400	1,981,400	65.3	336,925	11.1
3. Registered Nurses	2,180,750	1,760,415	1,633,225	74.9	156,830	7.2
4. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	2,550,270	1,316,085	39.8	865,775	26.2
5. Cashiers	2,599,870	1,666,020	1,269,210	48.8	933,710	38.3
6. Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,678,375	1,362,130	1,239,815	73.9	359,570	21.4
7. Waitresses	1,606,490	1,212,745	947,440	59	736,735	45.9
8. Customer Service Representatives	1,951,080	1,353,580	936,535	48	277,775	14.3
9. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers	2,703,120	2,174,900	890,780	33	262,070	9.7
10. Childcare Workers	1,293,835	879,210	839,445	64.9	654,790	50.6

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Non-Hispanic Whites	Total Number of White Non-Hispanic Males	Percent of White Non-Hispanic Males	Number of White Non-Hispanic Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0	Percent of White Non-Hispanic Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0
1. Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	3,018,605	2,209,855	2,080,350	68.9	400,090	13.3
2. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers	2,703,120	2,174,900	1,284,120	47.5	152,810	5.7
3. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	2,550,270	1,234,185	37.3	430,295	13
4. Managers, all others*	1,903,000	1,572,405	1,048,790	55.1	67,340	3.5
5. Carpenters	1,304,505	1,005,875	988,205	75.8	229,845	17.6
6. Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Hand	1,733,210	1,128,710	917,170	52.9	354,215	20.4
7. Sales Representatives, Wholesale	1,370,005	1,196,530	903,385	65.9	72,410	5.2
8. Janitors and Building Cleaners	1,818,565	1,059,710	757,895	41.7	292,440	16.1
9. Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	987,430	724,530	712,885	72.2	155,670	15.8
10. Accountants and Auditors	1,707,165	1,336,900	604,790	35.4	49,750	2.9

\*Does not include managers of correctional officers, police and detectives, and firefighting and prevention workers, food preparation and serving workers, housekeeping and janitorial, landscaping, lawn service, and grounds keeping, gaming workers, personal service workers, retail sales workers, non-retail sales workers, office and administrative support workers, production and operating workers, farming, fishing, and forestry, construction trades, and extraction workers, mechanics, installers, and repairers, or production and operation workers.

## APPENDIX C: CONINUED

### 10 Most Common Occupations for Hispanic Women and Men of all Races

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Hispanics	Total Number of Hispanic Females	Percent of Hispanic Females	Number of Hispanic Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0	Percent of Hispanic Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0
1. Childcare Workers	1,293,835	879,210	839,445	12.6	654,790	10.1
2. Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,083,275	309,545	273,420	25.2	210,130	19.4
3. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,667,405	264,175	252,330	6.9	72,925	2
4. Cashiers	2,599,870	342,360	250,180	9.6	196,995	7.7
5. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	229,735	156,980	4.7	110,460	3.4
6. Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	1,610,120	165,760	144,165	9	82,905	5.1
7. Customer Service Representatives	1,951,080	198,175	133,840	6.9	50,485	2.6
8. Elementary and Secondary School Teachers	3,034,075	163,985	126,720	4.2	25,335	0.9
9. Janitors and Building Cleaners	1,818,565	361,480	118,580	6.5	85,025	4.7
10. Office Clerks, General	1,377,965	140,080	112,435	8.2	48,485	3.7

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Hispanics	Total Number of Hispanic Males	Percent of Hispanic Males	Number of Hispanic Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0	Number of Hispanic Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0
1. Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	3,018,605	352,095	336,955	11.2	84,610	2.8
2. Construction Laborers	884,445	312,115	305,725	28.6	143,115	13.4
3. Grounds Maintenance Workers	1,818,565	273,602	264,375	29.9	155,835	17.6
4. Janitors and Building Cleaners	1,818,565	361,480	242,900	13.4	114,270	6.3
5. Misc. Agricultural Workers, Including Animal Breeders	682,145	298,640	238,490	35	154,930	22.7
6. Cooks	1,628,690	345,975	234,120	14.4	132,935	8.1
7. Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Hand	1,733,210	263,410	215,860	12.5	104,990	6.1
8. Carpenters	1,304,505	195,374	192,370	14.7	74,750	5.7
9. Other Production Workers, Including Semiconductor Processors and Cooling and Freezing Equipment Operators	1,271,860	236,305	159,065	12.5	57,150	4.5
10. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	229,735	142,755	4.3	68,235	2

**APPENDIX C:  
CONINUED**

**10 Most Common Occupations for Black Women and Men**

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Blacks	Total Number of Black Females	Percent of Black Females	Number of Black Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0	Percent of Black Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0
1. Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	1,610,120	484,420	429,025	26.6	197,040	13.2
2. Cashiers	2,599,870	370,190	298,265	11.5	238,215	9.2
3. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,667,405	297,895	285,000	7.8	55,300	1.5
4. Customer Service Representatives	1,951,080	293,735	222,165	11.4	62,025	3.1
5. Elementary and Secondary School Teachers	3,034,075	269,735	214,660	7.1	36,310	1.2
6. Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,083,275	215,705	180,785	16.7	135,670	11.7
7. Registered Nurses	2,180,750	187,135	173,405	8	17,400	0.8
8. Childcare Workers	1,293,835	182,690	169,805	13.1	114,295	8.9
9. Office Clerks, General	1,377,965	177,235	149,310	10.8	49,345	3.7
10. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	261,705	148,045	4.5	98,325	3

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Blacks	Total Number of Black Males	Percent of Black Males	Number of Black Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0	Percent of Black Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or less and \$0
1. Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	3,018,605	350,930	331,475	11	65,255	2.2
2. Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers, Hand	1,733,210	263,910	217,375	12.5	95,675	5.6
3. Janitors and Building Cleaners	1,818,565	302,050	211,945	11.7	98,080	5.4
4. Cooks	1,628,690	258,435	132,695	8.1	85,890	5.3
5. Security Guards and Gaming Surveillance Officers	706,615	174,290	125,925	17.8	44,600	6.3
6. Other Production Workers, Including Semiconductor Processors and Cooling and Freezing Equipment Operators	1,271,860	183,555	114,980	9	119,250	2.2
7. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	261,705	113,660	3.4	51,278	1.6
8. Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	1,187,650	162,800	110,605	9.3	55,270	4.6
9. Construction Laborers	884,445	93,305	89,610	8.4	37,155	3.5
10. Industrial Truck and Trailer Operators	470,310	92,025	84,835	18	21,855	4.7

**APPENDIX C:  
CONINUED**

**10 Most Common Occupations for Asian Women and Men**

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Asians	Total Number of Asian Females	Percent of Asian Females	Number of Asian	Percent of Asian Females
					Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0	Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0
1. Registered Nurses	2,180,750	124,435	112,100	5.1	65,255	2.2
2. Cashiers	2,599,870	129,320	81,295	3.1	95,675	5.6
3. Accountants and Auditors	1,707,165	124,900	78,705	4.6	98,080	5.4
4. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	112,235	62,325	1.9	44,600	6.3
5. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,667,405	70,045	62,245	1.8	85,890	5.3
6. Waitresses	1,606,490	76,290	46,350	2.9	119,250	2.2
7. Sewing Machine Operators	415,865	53,245	46,205	11.1	51,278	1.6
8. Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,678,375	56,120	44,600	2.7	55,270	4.6
9. Office Clerks, General	1,377,965	53,770	39,620	2.9	37,155	3.5
10. Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	1,610,120	50,960	39,515	2.5	21,855	4.7

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of Asians	Total Number of Asian Males	Percent of Asian Males	Number of Asian	Percent of Asian
					Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0	Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0
1. Computer Software Engineers	700,330	102,415	102,415	14.6	7,555	1.1
2. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers	2,703,120	107,975	70,340	2.6	12,735	0.5
3. Physicians and Suregons	692,520	102,885	67,750	9.8	2,560	0.4
4. Cooks	1,628,690	84,325	57,415	3.5	30,510	1.9
5. Computer Programers	635,085	80,935	53,960	8.5	6,030	1
6. Postsecondary Teachers	1,110,195	84,825	52,710	4.7	18,720	1.7
7. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	112,235	49,910	1.5	23,550	0.7
8. Computer Science and Systems Analysts	688,290	68,850	49,665	7.4	5,550	0.9
9. Cashiers	2,599,870	129,320	48,025	1.8	29,695	1.2
10. Managers, all others*	1,903,000	72,720	47,015	2.5	4,370	0.2

\*Does not include managers of correctional officers, police and detectives, and firefighting and prevention workers, food preparation and serving workers, housekeeping and janitorial, landscaping, lawn service, and grounds keeping, gaming workers, personal service workers, retail sales workers, non-retail sales workers, office and administrative support workers, production and operating workers, farming, fishing, and forestry, construction trades, and extraction workers, mechanics, installers, and repairers, or production and operation workers.

**APPENDIX C:  
CONINUED**

10 Most Common Occupations for American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) Women and Men

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of AIANs	Total Number of AIAN Females	Percent of AIAN Females	Number of AIAN Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0	Percent of AIAN Females Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0
1. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,667,405	20,428	19,545	0.5	5,660	0.1
2. Cashiers	2,599,870	22,850	18,080	0.7	14,180	0.6
3. Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	1,610,120	15,709	13,675	0.8	7,540	0.5
4. Elementary and Secondary School Teachers	3,034,075	13,659	10,709	0.4	2,185	0.1
5. Childcare Workers	1,293,835	10,069	9,290	0.7	7,399	0.6
6. Retail Salespersons	3,306,885	15,115	8,975	0.3	6,520	0.2
7. Cooks	1,628,690	15,620	8,795	0.5	6,710	0.4
8. Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,083,275	9,933	8,430	0.8	6,765	0.6
9. Registered Nurses	2,180,750	9,294	8,365	0.4	865	0
10. Waitresses	1,606,490	10,185	8,245	0.5	6,545	0.4

Occupations	Total Number	Total Number of AIANs	Total Number of AIAN Males	Percent of AIAN Males	Number of AIAN Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0	Percent of AIAN Males Earning between \$1-14,999 or loss and \$0
1. Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	3,018,605	20,025	18,150	0.6	4,245	0.1
2. Carpenters	1,304,505	12,854	12,490	1	4,610	0.3
3. Janitors and Building Cleaners	1,818,565	17,415	12,360	0.7	6,235	0.3
4. Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	1,733,210	12,849	10,385	0.6	5,030	0.2
5. Construction Laborers	884,445	10,240	9,645	0.9	4,255	0.4
6. Cooks	1,628,690	15,620	6,825	0.4	4,900	0.3
7. Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	987,430	6,605	6,405	0.6	2,220	0.2
8. Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Workers	592,930	6,814	6,380	1.1	1,305	0.2
9. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Construction, Trades, and Extraction Workers	894,780	6,488	6,285	0.7	910	0.1
10. Security Guards and Gaming Surveillance Officers	706,615	8,390	6,265	0.9	2,390	0.3

**APPENDIX D:  
MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS FOR WHITE MEN AND WOMEN WITH  
WAGES BETWEEN \$14,999 AND LOSS**

20 Most Common Occupations for Non-Hispanic White Women with Wages between \$1-14,000 or Loss

Occupation	Number	Percentage of Workers
1. Waitress	690,190	43
2. Childcare Workers	588,490	45.5
3. Teacher Assistants	424,415	49.1
4. Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Care Aides	364,250	22.6
5. Cooks	322,090	19.8
6. Elementary and Middle School Teachers	313,565	10.3
7. Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	291,010	26.9
8. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers	249,395	9.2
9. Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	225,425	35.4
10. Janitors and Building Cleaners	186,825	10.3
11. Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers	175,985	42.1
12. Other Teachers and Instructors*	161,890	30.8
13. Registered Nurses	144,740	6.6
14. Food Preparation Workers	142,020	29.6
15. Medical Assistants and Other Healthcare Support Occupations	135,360	24.1
16. Postsecondary Teachers	114,895	10.3
17. Combined Food Preparation and Service Workers, Including Fast Food	108,450	35.4
18. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	107,105	6.5
19. Designers	106,505	15
20. Host and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	102,015	54.8

**APPENDIX D:  
CONTINUED**

20 Most Common Occupations for non-Hispanic White Men with Wages Between \$1-14,999 or Loss

Occupation	Number	Percentage of Workers
1. Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Driver	367,620	12.2
2. Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers	319,565	18.4
3. Cooks	286,035	17.6
4. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales Workers	249,395	9.2
5. Janitors and Building Cleaners	269,305	14.8
6. Grounds Maintenance Workers	184,040	20.8
7. Farmers and Ranchers	180,000	31.6
8. Waiters	163,045	10.1
9. Automotive Service Technicians	139,990	14.2
10. Security Guards and Gaming Surveillance Officers	117,030	16.6
11. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	107,105	6.5
12. First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Construction Trades and Extraction	95,825	19
13. Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	84,865	7.3
14. Other Production Workers, Including Semiconductors and Cooling and Freezing Operators	82,795	6.5
15. Postsecondary Teachers	80,290	7.2
16. Food Preparation Workers	77,140	16.1
17. Cleaners of Vehicles and Equipment	74,910	23.5
18. Dishwashers	72,640	30.6
19. Managers, All Others*	61,580	3.2
20. Bartender Helpers, and Miscellaneous Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers	61,515	22.4

\*Does not include managers of correctional officers, police and detectives, firefighting and prevention workers, food preparation and serving workers, housekeeping and janitorial, landscaping, lawn service, and grounds keeping, gaming workers, personal service workers, retail sales workers, non-retail sales workers, office and administrative support workers, production and operating workers, farming, fishing, and forestry, construction trades, and extraction workers, mechanics, installers, and repairers, or production and operation workers.



APPENDIX E:  
FIFTEEN MOST COMMONLY CITED ACADEMIC TEXTS ON WHITE  
PRIVILEGE<sup>1</sup>

1. White Women, Race Matters – Ruth Frankenberg (1993), **368 citations**
2. The Wages of Whiteness – David Roediger (1991), **368 citations**
3. “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences’ Through Work in Women’s Studies” – Peggy McInosh (2003), **268 citations**
4. The Progressive Investment in Whiteness – George Lipsitz (1997), **257 citations**
5. “Whiteness as Property” – Cheryl Harris (1993), **130 citations**
6. White by Law – Ian Lopez (1996), **98 citations**
7. “White is a Color!: White Defensiveness, Postmodernism, and Anti-Racist Pedagogy” – Leslie Roman (2004), **66 citations**
8. The Color of Privilege – Aida Hurtado (1996), **61 citations**
9. “Witnessing Whiteness” – Michele Fine (2004), **58 citations**
10. Toward the Abolition of Whiteness – David Roediger (1993), **58 citations**
11. Racism without Racists – Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003), **54 citations**
12. “Behind Blue Eyes: Whiteness and Contemporary US Racial Politics” – Howard Winant, (1997)<sup>2</sup>, **23 citations**
13. “The Color of White Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of ‘White Privilege’” – Zeus Leonardo, (2004) **11 citations**
14. “Making Systems of Privilege Visible” – Stephanie Wildman & A.D. Davis (1996), **11 Citations**
15. “Giving Whiteness a Black Eye: An Interview with Michael Eric Dyson” – Ronald E. Chennault (1998), **10 citations**

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<sup>1</sup> This list includes only texts that fit the parameters of my research questions.

<sup>2</sup> This is the second citation listed under Winant, 1997.

APPENDIX F  
ACADEMIC ETIC REFERENCES OF THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF WHITE  
PRIVILEGE IN REFERENCE TO LOWER CLASS WHITES<sup>3</sup>

Comparison Strategy

1. Upper Class: (Lipsitz 1997:17; Lipsitz 1997:54; Lipsitz 1997:48-49; Lipsitz 1997:52; Lipsitz 1997:53; Lipsitz 1997:54-55; Lipsitz 1997:56)
2. Middle Class: (Lipsitz 1997:53)
3. Lower Class: (Harris 1993:1717; Harris 1993:1758-1759; Harris 1993:1759; Roediger 1991:4; Roediger 1991:12; Roediger 1991:60; Roediger 1994:137; Lipsitz 1997:98; Frankenberg 1993:66; Frankenberg 1993:111; Frankenberg 1993:238; Leonardo 2004:145)
4. Totals: Upper Class – 7; Middle Class – 1; Lower Class – 12

Adopting a Vicarious Status

1. Upper Class: (Hurtado 1996:147; Wildman 1996:16-17)
2. Middle Class: (no references)
3. Lower Class
  - a. Adopting a Vicarious Class Status: (Roediger 1991:118; Lipsitz 1997:5; Chennault1998:305-306; Frankenberg 1993:24; Frankenberg 1993:123)
  - b. Historical Comparisons to Slaves: (Roediger 1991:27; Roediger 1991:49; Roediger 1991:68; Roediger 1991:73; Roediger 1991:74; Roediger 1991:77; Roediger 1991:180)
4. Totals: Upper Class – 2; Middle Class – 0; Lower Class – 12

Tolerance of Oppression Threshold

1. Upper Class: (Lipsitz 1997:48-49; Lipsitz 1997:54-55; Lipsitz 1997:188)
2. Middle Class: (Hurtado 1996:163; Frankenberg 1993:131)
3. Lower Class: (Roediger 1994:138; Roediger 1991:69; Fine 2004:252)
4. Totals: Upper Class – 3; Middle Class – 2; Lower Class - 3

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<sup>3</sup> McIntosh (1993); Lopez (1996); Roman (2004); Bonilla-Silva (2003); and Winant (1997) all make references to the economic aspects of white privilege but they are not class specific.

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