

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

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ABSTRACT

One job of social scientists is to parse out partial knowledge from every relevant social location in order to present a structural interpretation of social phenomena. A textual and content analysis was performed on both academic texts and internet blogs that discuss white privilege from a lower class white social location to gain an emic and etic perspective and to discover if a disconnect between knowledge claims exist between the two perspectives. 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 (3) White privilege does not exist for the emic and (4) Some understanding of the intersection with gender and social class was evident. A content and textual analyses of academic texts lead to the discovery of three patterns (1) Whites from various classes were compared only to lower class racial minorities (2) Lower class whites emically adopted a vicarious status with the help of their racial privilege to improve their material situation and (3) the emic complained about class oppression is it was judged that the gap between them and racial minorities was too small. 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. 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.