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Hoosiers, Hicks, and Hayseeds: The Controversial Place of Marginalized Ethnic Whites in Multicultural Education

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Poor white children, often with roots in Appalachia, can present puzzling and intractable challenges for the multicultural educator. These students are not considered in multicultural textbooks, yet they face language and dialect issues, low educational attainment, under-representation in curriculum, and negative cultural stereotypes. This article details the history, language, dialect, and school experiences of marginalized ethnic Whites; explores problems inherent in representation related to race, class, and marginality; and discusses action research on pre-service education intended to strengthen teachers' perception of the special problem of marginalized Whites. This work highlights the importance of problematizing and expanding "basic" categories and terms such as "black," "white," "urban," and "rural" to consider important differences of experience—an imperative in an education profession committed to diversity and social justice.

Educating pre-service teachers around issues of diversity remains a considerable challenge (Banks, 2001; Boyle-Baise, 2002; Rosaen, 2003), but progress in spreading multicultural values has been made. Teachers are increasingly aware of the ways in which ethnically diverse children experience inequality, from unequal school funding patterns to damaging cultural stereotypes. More teachers are becoming aware of the need for culturally responsive teaching that acknowledges inequality and the needs of specific groups of children (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Still there are new areas to pursue in theory, research, and education. I have been a teacher educator in the Midwest for a number of years. During multicultural education field experiences, my pre-service teachers and I have routinely struggled with questions about the ways in which culture, ethnicity, economic status, and language influence students, education, and the curriculum. In our region, in urban and rural settings, poor white children with roots in Appalachia have presented the most puzzling and intractable challenges. These students speak with heavy "hoosier" accents, using "ain't" and the word "y'uns" as the third person plural, and they do not appear in our multicultural textbooks as a category of children we need to understand. They are consistently ostracized by successful students and are often objects of scorn and contempt among teachers. One elementary school principal, known for her support for progressive curriculum and multiculturalism quite unselfconsciously reported, "We have a big group of trailer trash in this school," when orienting a new group of pre-service teachers. Similarly, an urban Indianapolis teacher insidiously confided, "These city hillbilly kids are the *real* bottom of the barrel, if you know what I mean." This article describes marginalized ethnic Whites, explores problems inherent in representation related to race, class, and marginality, and discusses action research on pre-service education intended to strengthen teachers' perception of the special problem of marginalized Whites.

WHO ARE MARGINALIZED ETHNIC WHITES?

History and Geography of the Marginalized Ethnic Whites

Marginalized white student populations in our region include poor people of Scottish Appalachian descent from an identifiable Appalachian region and rural Whites originally from the English underclass, poor urban students of Irish descent, and poor urban students of Eastern and Southern European descent. The Irish and those of Eastern and Southern European descent have tended to settle initially in Northern urban areas; Scottish Appalachians and poor rural Whites of underclass

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English origin have more commonly lived in the rural South and Midwest. The Irish and those of Eastern and Southern European descent have typically had a stronger sense of collective group determination and have pressed for their rights through the Catholic Church, labor unions, the Democratic Party, and through culturally based organizations. Also, Catholic immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe gained power through affiliation with longer settled American Catholics (Barrett & Roediger, 1997).

By contrast, Scottish Appalachians and poor southern Whites had a weaker sense of collective ethnic group determination and were less successful in working for rights to education and employment through formal organizations associated with their groups. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, while the Irish and Eastern and Southern Europeans were typically employed as laborers and in service and manufacturing work, Scottish Appalachians and poor Southern Whites were most often employed in agricultural and mining activities. Rural work is often isolated and involves sharecropping, so that migrant labor and subsistence farming have not easily fostered collective group determination or group solidarity. Furthermore, in Appalachia, wealthy, educated elites and corporations came to control a disproportionate share of the region's wealth and natural resources, especially fossil fuel resources (Billings & Blee, 2000; Drake, 2001) and the long history of violence against union movements further discouraged collective action. As Jensen (2001) describes, "Many such rural areas reflect a two class system in which the "haves" wield their power over jobs and opportunities to maintain their privilege, while subjugating the have-nots, who are desperately poor, socially isolated, and, in fact, a world apart" (p. 145).

Though poor rural Whites may have a Protestant Northern European ethnic heritage, their arrival in North America followed a very different pattern than that of more privileged white groups. It is common in multiculturalism to follow Ogbu's (1978, 1992) distinction between immigrants as "voluntary" and "involuntary," in which voluntary immigrants are described as Whites, while involuntary immigrants are understood to be Black and Native American. Voluntary minorities are immigrants who came to the colonies or the United States of their own free will, while involuntary minorities are those who were enslaved, conquered, or colonized. In fact, some Whites were involuntary immigrants during the colonial period. Early during the colonial era, both Blacks and Whites experienced relatively similar treatment and social status as slaves and indentured servants (Axtell, 1992; Franklin & Moss, 1988) and were held in what Lerone Bennett (1982) calls "equal contempt" (p. 39). In fact, it is estimated that at least half of white colonial immigrants were slaves or indentured servants. Though some of these people willingly entered indenture, many were kidnapped or were convicts, often in prison for debt or poverty-driven petty theft. Whites provided the majority of non-free labor until the late seventeenth century. The recognizably black slave contributed to the dramatic growth of black slave labor over white (Higginbotham, 1980; Omi & Winant, 1994). Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century, white convict laborers still comprised an estimated quarter of all white colonial immigrants (Ekirch, 1987).

Once released from bondage, "the statistical probability for rising to even middle-class position was very slight" (Nash, 1970, p. 220). Freed indentured servants fared better in the North. In the South, for a landless, typically illiterate free laborer in a slave economy, poverty was almost inevitable. Many worked as unskilled laborers or as tenant farmers. Urban and industrial work was much less available in the Southern and Southern-Midwestern agricultural economies. Many of these underclass Whites moved toward what was then the frontier to settle as squatters on unproductive, marginal, or mountainous lands. This is the origin of some of the Appalachian settlers and of some of the white, Southern rural poor often called "white trash." Others were Scotch-Irish and German pioneers. Even during early settlement, land was distributed inequitably. "By 1810 three quarters of the region's acreage was absentee owned, and distant speculators laid out towns, sold or leased farms to settlers, and engrossed areas believed to offer wealth in minerals" (Dunaway, 1995, p. 67). Later, mining, logging and textiles industries encroached upon farm land. Eller (1982) explains that in 1880 the average mountain farm was 187 acres, while in 1930 it was only 76 acres. "The small marginal farm usually associated with the stereotyped picture of Appalachia was in fact a product of modernization—that is, a more recent development not associated with the purported isolation of the region." (p. 6).

Negative social opinion of this group seems to have arisen immediately and has carried on consistently from colonial days to the present. In 1737, the Governor of North Carolina described these people as, "the lowest scum and rabble . . . [who] build themselves sorry huts and live in a beastly sort of plenty" (Bailyn, 1988, p. 117, cited by Goad, 1997). They were almost always viewed as morally depraved, "devoted to calumny, lying, and the vilest tricking and cheating; a people into whose heads no means can beat the notion of a public interest or persuade to live like men" (Bailyn, 1988, p. 117, cited in Goad, 1997). The 1860 work, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* features a chapter called "Poor White Trash" (Hundley, 1860, cited in Goad, 1997), which described poor Whites as follows:

> They are about the laziest two legged animals that walk erect on the face of the Earth. Even their motions are slow, and their speech a sickening drawl . . . while their

> thoughts and ideas seem likewise to creep along at a snail's pace . . . [They show] a natural stupidity or dullness of intellect that almost surpasses belief (p. 97).

Poor Southern Whites and Appalachian people are still stereotyped as poor, violent, crude, and ignorant (Billings, Norman, & Ledford, 2001), and this stigmatization carries over to cultural interpretations of related poor, rural Midwestern groups. For example, there are many jokes directed at poor rural Whites featuring people from Oklahoma and Kentucky.

Other marginalized white groups, including the Irish and Eastern and Southern Europeans, also were described as intrinsically and irremediably inferior. During the nineteenth century, large numbers of Irish arrived in the United States in the wake of the potato famine after 1848. The Irish had been sophisticated farmers who did not rely on one single crop for sustenance. The British, however, had pushed the Irish onto smaller and smaller parcels of land, seizing the best land for their own purposes and compelling the Irish to labor for them. Many Irish people exclusively grew potatoes on their tiny plots simply because potatoes were the crop with the most caloric yield per square yard. Even before the famine, many Irish were deeply impoverished. When blight struck the potato crop, there was no recourse but emigration or starvation for millions. Throughout the potato famine, the British continued to import large quantities of food from the land they had seized from the Irish (Scalley, 1996) while 1.5 million died and another million were forced to emigrate. By the nineteenth century, to justify 700 years of oppression, the British created a racialized depiction of the Irish as inferior, as the following quotes illustrate, "This is a race of savages: I say again a race of utter savages . . . all their ways are brutish and unseemly" (Barnard's translation of a twelfth century text by Giraldus Cambrensis, cited in Shanklin, 1994, p. 3). In 1860, British writer Kingsley said of the Irish, "To see White chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were Black one would not feel it so much" (quoted in Cahill, 1995, p. 6) Froud, in 1845, wrote, "[They are] more like squalid apes than human beings" (cited in Shanklin, 1993, p. 4). Even Darwin, writing in 1898 in the widely-read, *The Descent of Man*, referred to Celts as a "less favored race" and wrote, "The careless, squalid, unaspiring Irishman multiplies like rabbits" (Darwin, quoted in Shanklin, 1993, p. 5).

The Irish initially occupied a very low social rung in the Unites States, just above African Americans, and were systematically excluded from all but the lowest occupations. Into the twentieth century, it was not uncommon to find businesses with signs reading, "No Irish, No Dogs." One of the strategies used by the Irish to escape their racial labeling, however, was ostensibly to highlight their whiteness as compared to the black man. A majority of Irish gradually assimilated, abandoning most hallmarks of their Celtic culture (Ignatiev, 1996).

Between 1870 and 1920, almost 26 million people came to the United States. The new immigrant Mexicans, East European Jews, peasant Italians from the Mezzogiorno and Sicilians, Poles, and Slavs were similarly understood to be biologically and racially inferior to white Anglo Saxon Protestants, and were victims of discrimination in employment, education, and law enforcement. The meaning of whiteness was debated because immigrants were valued by industrialists for cheap labor, but this need conflicted with republican and also nativist ideas about who should become citizens (Jacobson, 1998).

> A whole range of evidence—laws; court cases; formal racial ideologies social conventions; popular culture in the form of slang, songs, films, cartoons, ethnic jokes, and popular theater—suggests that the native born and older immigrants often placed these newer immigrants not only above African and Asian Americans, for example, but also below "White" people. Indeed, many of the older immigrants and particularly the Irish had themselves been perceived as "nonWhite" just a generation earlier (Barret & Roediger, 1997, p. 7).

In many urban Northern, Eastern, and Midwestern regions, descendents of Irish, Hungarian, Polish, Slavic and Italian immigrants remain poor or marginally working-class. They retain the hallmarks of their "in between status." Though the descendants of many of these immigrants, after three to four generations, have achieved social mobility, not everyone has been able to become middle- or upper-class. The lowest status Whites are still typically those who were unable to overcome the inter-generational effects of inferior education, housing, and employment based at least in part on racialized class and cultural prejudices.

Marginalized Ethnic Whites in K-12 Field Classrooms

My pre-service teachers and I first talked about these issues as social class issues alone, but as we began to learn more about these young students, it was clear their experiences were cultural as well as class-based and that their ethnic identity varied depending on location in the state. Large recognized populations of urban Appalachian students exist in Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky cities and also in suburban and rural areas where they are less recognizable as members of a distinct ethnic group. In some schools in northern Ohio and Indiana (closer to Chicago), similar groups of marginalized students exist with origins in Eastern European and urban Irish cultures. The composition of marginalized ethnic white subgroups varies according to geographic location. For example, in Louisiana, certain French Creole groups qualify as marginalized Whites (Henry & Bankston, 1998). Stereotypes can make it especially hard to identify

marginalized ethnic Whites. For example, Russian Jewish immigrants comprise a marginalized ethnic white group in New York. Yet the stereotype of Jews as successful can make such marginalization difficult to recognize.

Marginalized ethnic Whites can be identified by the following common (and interrelated) definable features. Students are descendants of a historically marginalized constituent from a specific ethnic group, though they often may have no sense of being from a distinctive ethnic group (Alba & Logan, 1997). Their social class status is low, either working class or poor. Their speech and writing patterns (Eller, 1987) reflect dialects or accents of English that are associated with poverty and lack of education and sometimes treated as communicative disorders (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1998). Levels of educational attainment among family members are low (Macleod, 1995). Students have generally negative beliefs about school, teachers, themselves, and their job futures (Brantlinger, 1994, Fiene, 1991). Students are also socially and educationally marginalized in schools (Macleod, 1995; McNeal, 1998; Oakes, 1992).

In the classrooms in this study there were large identifiable subgroups represented in the specific Indiana K-12 student populations of the field observation schools where research took place. They included poor people of Scottish Appalachian descent from an identifiable Appalachian region, poor urban students of Irish descent, and poor urban students of Eastern and Southern European descent. Furthermore, each group had been stereotyped as crude, lazy, unintelligent, prone to alcohol abuse and violence, and sexually loose or deviant. Derogatory nicknames included hillbillies, hicks, hayseeds, rednecks, crackers, Oakies, white trash, Micks, Pattys, Polacks, Hunkies, Ginnies,[1] Spics, and Wops.

Beyond historic descent and poverty, the extent to which students and their families have remained in oppressive cultural and economic configurations is significant to understanding marginalized ethnic white students. Some have "mixed" ethnic heritages. Equally important, history and culture are connected to current oppression, and to the symbolic language use, values, and outlooks that define marginalized ethnicity. Status as a marginalized ethnic White is thus not merely an economic label, even when ethnic Whites who have been left behind and remained marginalized do not consider themselves culturally and historically distinctive.

Economics, however, are crucial. Chronic generational poverty is a significant identifying factor. The U.S. Census Bureau (2003) reports that in 2001, among white children (under 18), 13% lived in poverty. Among white female heads of households with children under 18, 22.4% lived in poverty. As the Children's Defense Fund (2003) highlights, "There are more poor White Non-Hispanic children (4.2 million) than poor Black children (3.5 million) or poor Hispanic children (3.6 million), even though the proportion of Black and Hispanic children who are poor is far higher." Also, poor children are more likely to live in suburban and rural areas than in central cities.

MARGINALIZED ETHNIC WHITES AND THE QUESTION OF REPRESENTATION

The research described here argues that marginalized ethnic white students can be an under-recognized population in many seemingly homogeneous communities such as Midwestern urban and rural white working-class communities. They also can be under-recognized in diverse urban settings. Learning how to meet the educational needs of these students is crucially important and also serves the purpose of honing pre-service teachers' multicultural skills in areas where no diversity is said to exist. In seemingly racially homogeneous rural communities, teachers sometimes fail to engage with multicultural issues because they do not see them as relevant to their pre-service field placement settings (Cook & Van Cleaf, 2000) or to their in-service classroom teaching. As Irwin (1999) describes, "Teachers in rural areas may not view multicultural education as seriously as their urban counterparts. They may perceive multicultural education as an urban concern" (p. 42). They miss the chance, therefore, for opportunities to put learning into practice and to experience dispositional change. Yet, there is often unnoticed diversity and oppression.

Many of the issues facing marginalized ethnic white students, such as class stigma, discrimination due to language and dialect use, low educational attainment, under-representation in the curriculum, and negative stereotypes are shared by other marginalized groups. Because of social discrimination, "low class" dialect, and poor education, these marginalized ethnic Whites do not experience higher scores on standardized tests, positive encounters with realtors, shop keepers or the justice system, access to well-funded schools, and an absence of discrimination in hiring patterns. If "race" is understood to be an historical and social construction with no biological reality;[2] and the white "race" is "a historically contingent and socially constructed racial category . . . defined by privilege and power rather than by marginalization and domination" (Rodriguez, 1999, p. 21), it can be argued that these students are not fully "white."

The uncertain meaning of whiteness and blackness, of race and marginality, the situated social construction of knowledge and identity, and the resultant challenge of representing the "other" has been increasingly problematized within educational research (Britzman, 1995; Denizin, 1997; Lather, 1991; Luttrell, 2000; Parker & Lynn, 2002) and across the disciplines (Donald & Rattansi, 1992; Hollinger, 1995; Marable, 1992). Such

perspectives on race and representation are consistent with postmodern and poststructural explorations of the relationships among power, knowledge, and ways of knowing and being that analyze processes in which subjectivity and identity are constructed through discourses and the discursive practices they help produce and legitimate. The concept of "race" is now understood as a social construct created to rationalize oppression. Scholars in philosophy, literary theory, cultural studies, history, anthropology, and geography have demonstrated how constructions of both "blackness" and "whiteness" are unstable, situated products of particular historical, political, and cultural moments. What it means to be a member of a group is different for each person and differs across time and place. Also, as Hollinger (1995) asserts "Racism is real but races are not" (p. 39). Cornell West (1982) traces how techniques of natural history have been inappropriately applied to people creating a comparative analysis "based on visible, especially physical, characteristics . . . [which] permit one to discern identity and difference, equality and inequality, beauty and ugliness among animals and human bodies" (p. 55).

The reification of biological ideas of racial and ethnic category have led to essentializing—the tendency to reduce complex persons, including children in school, to stereotypical racial labels. Though race and racism have an unavoidable cultural reality, identity and oppression are both deeply complex. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues that oppression is structured along multiple lines, including race, gender, and social class. Rigid and simplistic discourses of race and marginalization that simplify these issues mask not only the complexity of oppression but also, in some cases, the actual *simultaneity* of oppression and privilege. Collins notes, "White feminists routinely point with confidence to their oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them" (p. 229).

Since blunt labeling of group membership ignores such subtleties, another way to think about oppression is to consider the way it actually functions in society. Instead of basing oppression on a category of signifier, Iris Marion Young (1990) details the "five faces of oppression" as follows: (1) exploitation that transfers the results of the labor of one social group to benefit another, (2) marginalization that occurs when whole categories of people are expelled from useful participation in social life, (3) powerlessness when persons lack authority or professional status, (4) dynamics of cultural imperialism involving the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm, and (5) violence including physical attacks, harassment, intimidation, or degrading ridicule (pp. 47–61). According to Young the experience of marginalized Whites is clearly that of oppression. A single-category mode of analysis such as race alone viewed in isolation from class or other stigmatizing factors obscures the real-world complexity of intersecting multiple-categories of domination or subordination.

A review of the multicultural research and major teacher education textbooks suggests that marginalized ethnic white students are rarely considered in multicultural education courses. An exception is Joel Spring's (1999) text, *The Intersection of Cultures: Multicultural Education in the United States and the Global Economy*, that considers some of these issues in several chapters and was used as one of the resources in the pilot marginalized ethnic white curriculum. Whiteness Studies is a burgeoning field that "attempts to trace the economic and political history behind the invention of 'whiteness,' to attack the privileges given to so-called 'Whites,' and to analyze the cultural practices (in art, music, literature, and popular media) that create and perpetuate the fiction of 'whiteness.'" Although the weakness of monolithic categories of analysis, such as "black" and "white," and critiques of the concept of "whiteness" separated from social class and linguistic issues of accent and usage have gained increasing prominence in history, sociology, and cultural studies, such perspectives have only recently entered research and discourse in education (Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe, 1999). Also, although there are resources describing the historical research on whiteness (Kolchin, 2002) the political evolution of whiteness (Lipsitz, 1998) and particular marginalized white sub-cultures, these most commonly focus on historical experiences (Anbinder, 2002; Billings, Norman, & Ledford, 2001; Brodkin, 1999; Guglielmo, 2003, Ignatiev, 1996; Jacobson, 1999; Lopez, 1996) rather than contemporary experience. Currently, there is no resource that provides systematic and scholarly attention to the education and school experiences of marginalized ethnic Whites. A general acceptance in American culture for the vilification of the poor and those of low socioeconomic status as well as mainstream scholarly perspectives on multiculturalism appear to contribute to a lack of research on or support for this inquiry—a blind spot if there ever was one.

Discussions of whiteness in education focus more on the construction of white privilege rather than white diversity, marginalized Whites, or the difficulties of representing the "other" or the marginalized. For example, in much writing in education there still appears to be a conflation of whiteness with undifferentiated membership in the dominant culture as the following quote illustrates: "Not seeing color blinds White teacher interns to their own dominating culture and behaviors" (Valli, 1995, p. 122).

Also, whiteness is described as a uniform, monolithic category and is most often described as a quality of teachers rather than of students. "In general, Whites stick together on common definitions of issues that involve race relations, and behave accordingly. We live largely with other Whites, socialize mainly with Whites, consume

white media, vote for Whites, etc." (Sleeter, 1994, p. 35). Indeed *most* of the literature on whiteness in multicultural education focuses on whiteness as a social construction of power and privilege (McIntyre, 1997; McLaren, 1995; Scheurich, 1993; Sleeter, 1995). Yet, if all Whites are considered to be "dominant culture," there is no room to consider the existence of marginalized ethnic Whites—that is, Whites who are not dominant. Ann Louise Keating (1995) stresses that to "shift from 'Whiteness' to 'White people'... draws on false generalizations and implies that all human beings classified as 'White' automatically exhibit the traits associated with 'Whiteness'" (p. 907).The question that one pre-service teacher in this study asked, "Could a marginalized ethnic white male Appalachian student have less privilege than an upper middle-class black female?" seems to be taboo.

Importantly, Blacks and other minorities are not considered by sub-groupings that acknowledge comparable privilege or marginalization. Unfortunately, blunt and loose definitions and labeling have contributed to the invisibility of the 40% of Blacks who are middle-class (or higher) and has contributed to the invisibility of marginalized ethnic Whites. It also lends credence to reductionist, intrinsic, or biological ideas of race. As hooks (2000) observes, "Poverty in the White mind is always primarily Black. Even though the White poor are many, living in suburbs and rural areas, they remain invisible" (p. 4). As Elizabeth Ellsworth explains about whiteness:

> I and other white people are never just white. We are also always positioned within gender, language, sexuality, class, ability, size, ethnicity, and age... At some times and in some places, those [white] privileges that come with white skin can be temporarily and problematically overridden by oppressions and discriminations. Whiteness is always more than one thing. And it's never the same thing twice (1997, p. 266).

In educational research, differences among Whites that suggest the presence of a subgroup with significant and different educational needs are not highlighted even when compelling data is available. For example, the study, "Gender and Racial Difference in Mathematics Performance," by Hall and Davis (1999), reports, "White students scored significantly higher than the Black students" and "there were no significant gender differences" as the main findings (p. 677). The authors mention in passing. "Parents' highest level math course and parents' education level were that the least educated subgroup of White parents transferred their negative experience to their children more comprehensively than Black parents" (p. 681). Yet, this finding revealing that a subgroup of white children was doing worse than Blacks was not discussed.

The need for specific educational attention to poor and working class ethnic white students is thus an appropriate focus of study in multicultural education, which argues against oppression and in favor of acquiring cultural knowledge to serve culturally different, oppressed and marginalized children (Banks & Banks, 1989; Gay, 1994). Multicultural education research indicates that multicultural coursework in both pre-service and in-service education should both build knowledge and address attitudes and beliefs (Banks & Banks, 1989; Cochran-Smith, 1995; McDiarmid & Price, 1993; Pohan, 1996). In addition, McDiarmid and Price and Hollingsworth (1989) have argued that not only do many pre-service teachers need to expand their knowledge and explore their beliefs but they also must have opportunities to put this learning into practice in real classrooms. Classes with seemingly non-ethnic rural and urban white students can potentially serve as real multicultural contexts, which provide such powerful experiences.

This research, however, is somewhat controversial. It can arouse powerful feelings as it may seem inappropriate to research marginalized white students when traditionally recognized minorities of color clearly continue to need the attention of teachers and researchers (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Yet, dominant and non-dominant groups vary by neighborhood and regional geography. In many mid-western rural and urban schools Appalachian ethnic white children occupy a low social rung. And yet these "southern crackers" are not always fully white because they lack the privileges and connotations that this signifier entails. They are oppressed according to Young's delineation. They experience exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, even cultural imperialism and violence. They are ridiculed and stigmatized. Yet, they cling to whiteness, reject solidarity with other marginal groups and accept their marginalized status with the sole consolation that they are not black. (The implications of this paradox are more fully explored in the conclusion.)

White ethnicity is rarely understood to be composed of numerous groups, and is not often understood as "different" or as "marginalized." "Whiteness" is typically described exclusively as dominant culture in much work on multiculturalism, and social class receives little attention. As hooks (2000) writes "class matters." The research described here has been carried out with commitment to the principle that the purpose of education is to prepare *all* children to be full, active, critical participants in a democratic society. Similarly, teacher education must be democratic, critical, and courageous and committed to exploring diversity in all its complexity.

METHODOLOGY

As my students increasingly puzzled over issues related to the complexity of race and marginality and whiteness I knew our course, Multiculturalism and Education, needed to adapt to accommodate their

inquiry. This responsiveness was imperative to me as a constructivist teacher committed to the integration of theory and practice. The constructivist teaching-learning process honors the social and cultural dimensions of teaching and learning and supports the collaborative construction of knowledge in context and through social negotiation. Our course also was explicitly intended to increase knowledge and understanding of the ways in which students experience the world, both within and outside of school, as it is influenced by ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, and social class, and to use this knowledge for classroom decision making and foster education for a more democratic, just society. With these goals, I identified the following research questions: What is the history, experience, language, cultural status, and education of marginalized ethnic Whites? How can pre-service teacher education help future teachers understand the complexity of representation and the reality of marginalized ethnic Whites in classrooms and society?

This research on my teaching and on students' understandings and beliefs was conducted as critical action research, which reflects both a philosophical commitment to democracy in education and to improved pedagogy (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995; Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Schuyler & Sitterly, 1995). The research pursued two related lines of inquiry. The first phase involved a literature review of the history, experience, language, cultural status, and education of marginalized ethnic Whites and of the concept of whiteness. I reviewed literature problematizing race, representation, and whiteness, literature on whiteness in education, and literature on the experience, culture, and history of specific marginalized ethnic white groups.

The second line of inquiry was a critical action research case study in which data were gathered in my role of teacher-researcher as I introduced curriculum on marginalized ethnic Whites into two consecutive required sections of Multiculturalism and Education that met three hours a week. As Yin (1984) asserts, when research questions seek to uncover "how" and "why" answers, it is best to use non-experimental methods. Observations are important because, as Carspecken (1996) reminds us, "the significance of a study on . . . constructs lies in the situated social acts produced by people who hold to the constructs" (p. 39).

Participants and Context

Participants were elementary and secondary pre-service teachers attending a Research I Midwestern university located in a city in Indiana surrounded by rural areas. The pre-service teachers were primarily in their sophomore year at the university and, consistent with national demographic profile of teachers, were mostly white, middle-class females. One class included 26 students, the other 28 students, roughly 65% of who were female. Among the 54 students, 49 were from the Midwest. Only 7 of these pre-service teachers had ethnic backgrounds typically identified with marginalization or minority status. These students had Asian (1), Hispanic (1), African American (3), and Jewish ethnicity (2). With the exception of one student in her thirties, all were 19 to 21 years of age. As the course progressed, two additional students in each class (4) came to identify themselves as marginalized ethnic Whites. All students spent one half day per week engaged in multicultural field experiences in five different schools, including rural, suburban and urban environments, near the Indiana city in which the university was located. The schools ranged from 77% to 91.4% white and from 14% to 46% free or reduced lunch, an indicator of poverty levels. Pre-service teachers identified marginalized ethnic whites in all five schools (see Table 1).

Table 1
Field site school demographics

Type of school	% white	% free/reduced lunch
Rural high school	91.4	24
Small city high school	81	14
Rural elementary	87	46
Rural/suburban middle school	90.5	26
Small city elementary	77	38

Qualitative data were gathered from multiple sources including (a) detailed field notes documenting class discussions and activities, (b) field notes during field classroom observation school visits, (c) students' reflective course assignment writings including field experience reports and a Cultural Self-Analysis paper, and (d) students' written in-class responses to course materials and published research. Data collection and analysis took place simultaneously, focusing on understanding students' ideas and developing effective teaching strategies. Thus, the early analyses of students' responses affected the further development of teaching strategies.

Teaching strategies focused on an integrated approach to classroom instruction and curricular concerns for marginalized ethnic white students, consistent with multicultural education strategies for other populations. These included:

1. Factual overviews, including an historical review and historical readings
2. Education on language and dialect issues
3. Guided field experience observation to consider the educational experiences of marginalized ethnic Whites
4. Consideration of wider social, cultural, and economic factors
5. Narrative and autobiographical readings by marginalized ethnic Whites
6. Personal reflection

The following discussion describes the history, language and dialect, and school experiences of marginalized ethnic Whites, while detailing the ways in which pre-service teachers seem to understand these issues in the two courses. The historical overview is summarized below since it refers to a literature with which some readers may not be familiar. Pre-service teachers began with a broad introductory overview emphasizing that many teachers in the United States will have a significant numbers of their students from groups that are colloquially referred to as Hoosiers, hicks, homeboys, grits, white trash, seeds, hayseeds, and Oakies.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH LOCAL MARGINALIZED ETHNIC WHITE HISTORY

Not one of the pre-service teachers with whom I worked had prior knowledge of the history we studied, and many initially had trouble conceiving of marginalized ethnic white students as a group with compelling educational needs. However, 11 students were able to bring their emerging knowledge of this history into the curriculum of their field placement schools. Eight students introduced this history as part of elementary social studies units in which fourth grade children studied local and family history. These students were in a rural school in which they identified during the course of the family history unit that at least 25% of the children were from marginalized ethnic white families that had migrated out of Appalachia. Three pre-service teachers incorporated this historical information into secondary education; two in history of the Depression Era migration, the other in a literature unit on the origin of stereotypes. As Kelley explained, "When I was able to teach the whole class about discrimination against Southern Europeans, I think it helped Emily and Martin. They both have a Polish background and are not popular or well off kids."

All of the pre-service elementary teachers and just under half of the pre-service secondary teachers thought this historical knowledge would be relevant in their classrooms. The pre-service teachers were more interested in using history as curriculum than as a basis for understanding current students or social divisions. As one future secondary teacher explained, "I will be math teacher so I don't see how this relates." Another interesting result of this focus on history was that in each class students wondered if they might have had ancestors who had experienced ethnic discrimination, asking questions such as, "I'm Irish. Could this have happened to a relative of mine?" Though ultimately only two students (in this class) came to identify as marginalized ethnic Whites, students who thought discrimination was likely to be part of their personal family history began to see discrimination in a new way. They were more likely to see discrimination as a social pathology rather than something related to the characteristics of a specially targeted minority group, targeted, that is, on the basis of social class or accented, idiomatic speech. As Nathan explained, "When society has a cultural value that says some group is inferior they are able to exploit them more easily. It can happen to any group, even white people, but in American history Blacks have been the biggest victims of this kind of thinking."

Language Issues of Marginalized Ethnic Whites

In the K-12 school field placements, students observed that some children, both black and white, used dialects of English. Yet, in the field placement schools there was little recognition among teachers that many marginalized ethnic white children speak a dialect with its own internal consistency and distinct cultural and historical origins. The teachers instead pointed out that many children did not speak "properly." The term "dialect" is commonly used pejoratively to describe a distortion of "real" language, although linguists use the term to describe any consistent functioning variety of a language system (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998). One old joke asserts that "the only difference between a language and a dialect is that a language has an army to back it up," which emphasizes that power, not any internal linguistic feature, is what draws the line. In both school and social settings, the marginalization of certain white groups is reinforced by the students' use of dialects of English (Lippi-Green, 1997). The particular dialect varies by group. For example, Appalachian children have well-recognized and distinctive speech patterns. Yet there are many other dialects in use by marginalized ethnic Whites. For example, in Indiana and Ohio, a "Hoosier" dialect is common among marginalized ethnic Whites. As these pre-service teachers noted, this dialect includes the use of constructions such as "y'uns," originating from "you ones," for a third person plural. Pre-service teachers observed that in one of the more urban high school placements, many marginalized ethnic white students spoke in what is commonly considered to be a black dialect. In class, we discussed patterns in which marginalized white students are bi-dialectic, speaking in Appalachian influenced "hoosier" dialect at home, and in the more "hip" black dialect English at school. In all cases, the dialect is clearly perceived to be low- class and non-standard, and also marks low levels of education and culture (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998).

As the teachers in these K-12 schools explained to pre-service teachers, marginalized ethnic white children typically struggle with writing and testing in Standard English. For example, the construction "ain't," a feature of several marginalized ethnic white dialects, is a popular

wrong answer on standardized tests. As Lippi-Green (1997) argues, children who speak dialects of English are not using their form of speech as a matter of choice. Their linguistic choices are part of a complete language paradigm and are also a means of identity expression and negotiation. Thus, the expectation that dialect speakers of English should be forced to change their modes of speaking in important contexts such as school is unconscionable, however common the practice. Students who are low literate in "standard" English can be highly literate in other dialects or languages (Heath, 1983).

Linguist Walt Wolfram (1998), reflecting on the controversy and misunderstanding surrounding the Ebonics debate, highlights the recommendations of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (1997). Their publication, *Resolution on the Application of Dialect Knowledge to Education*, suggests actions that can be applied to marginalized ethnic white dialect speakers as well as to other linguistically marked social groups: All students and teachers should learn scientifically-based information about linguistic diversity and the social, political, and educational consequences of differential treatment of dialects and their speakers; teacher education should systematically incorporate information about language variation and its impact on classroom interaction and about the ways of applying that knowledge to enhance the education of all teachers; and research should be undertaken to develop and test methods and materials for teaching about varieties of language and for learning Standard English. Pre-service teachers' field observations suggest that the same types of misunderstandings about African American Vernacular English are often applied to speech by marginalized ethnic Whites.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF MARGINALIZED ETHNIC WHITE LANGUAGE ISSUES

The pre-service teachers were less successful in making connections to language issues and dialects than they were in making connections with history. Even *after* field observations and follow-up discussions of the nature of dialect and the types of dialect used by marginalized students, emphasizing that dialects are not intrinsically bad, and showing the need for educational attention, the pre-service teachers in this study, when asked the question in writing, "What do you know about their [marginalized ethnic Whites] speech and writing?" most commonly responded by describing marginalized ethnic Whites' language use as *inferior*. In addition, although no mention was made in these students' "Multiculturalism and Education" course curriculum of poor ethnic Whites' intrinsic lack of ability, or emotional problems, a number of students (≅58%) made such observations. Also, more pre-service teachers commented on educational failure as a fact (17%), rather than the need for support (10%), although educational support was stressed. These poor results may have been influenced by the fact that the teachers in the K-12 field placement schools did not view dialects as different but instead identified them as deficient English. Their comments (total 48) were categorized and calculated to the nearest percent are presented in Table 2. Pre-service teachers sometimes wrote more than one comment.

Table 2
What do you know about their speech and writing?

Sample comments	Percentase
Describes MW speech and writing as inferior	≅ 77%
Describes a specific linguistic feature	≅ 73%
Describes MW mental or emotional disability/ school trouble (in response to the question about only language and speech)	≅ 58%
Emphasizes variety among MW groups	≅ 47%
MW speech is stereotyped as inferior	25%
MW students may have trouble in school	≅ 17%
MW students need educational support related to language	≅ 10%

MW abbreviates marginalized ethnic white.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS LEARN ABOUT MARGINALIZED ETHNIC WHITES' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

As the pre-service teachers observed, marginalized ethnic white students are typically segregated from other students through grouping and tracking techniques in the school setting. This often begins in the early grades, as students with less experience reading and writing, and less exposure to Standard English, are perceived by their teachers to be less academically competent or talented. In one elementary school, pre-service teachers observed three marginalized white students in the second grade who were tracked into the lowest reading group in spite of average or above reading skills. In the high school setting marginalized white students were typically tracked into the lowest of three tracks. As students learned, this type of disadvantage can be cumulative, as research shows that low-tracked students receive less teacher attention, less challenging and engaging curriculum, and more attention to behavior and discipline (Oakes, 1992).

In addition, these ethnic white students were socially marginalized in school settings (Macleod, 1995; McNeal, 1998). They were perceived as less desirable companions by their middle-class and upper-class classmates and rarely participated in sports and in peer activities by the time they were in high school. According to pre-service teachers' field placement observations among

social grouping labels in their particular Midwestern high schools were the terms, Hoosiers, hicks, homeboys, burnouts, hayseeds, and trash. The experience and the label, of course, differ depending on the geographic region and the make-up of the student body. The pre-service teachers in this study were predominantly sophomores, only a year and a half away from their own K-12 school experiences. Thus, in addition to reflecting on their course field site observations, they also wrote about and discussed this issue in light of their own high school education. The following is a sampling of written observations about marginalized ethnic white students' school experiences, based on field observations and recollections.

What are they like in school?

- They are seen as class clowns, attention getters, and disruptive.
- They don't interfere with the clubs and sports and activities that other kids do. They have a separate world within the school.
- They are rebels and they stick together.

How do you think they feel about school, teachers, themselves as learners, and their job future?

- When someone keeps telling you that you are this or that, after a while you start believing it yourself.
- School, etc. is not important, just go back to the farm.
- They feel dumb and they feel like they have no future.
- School is something they must suffer through until they can follow in their parents' footsteps.

These pre-service teachers' observations about marginalized ethnic white students in their field placements are consistent with research on poor and working class students in general. The marginalized K-12 students in the field placements had generally negative beliefs about school, teachers, themselves as learners, and their job future (similar to findings of Brantlinger, 1994, Fiene, 1991). These beliefs were reinforced by their parents and their school and peer environments. Levels of educational attainment among family members were low among marginalized ethnic Whites (Macleod, 1995). The parents of marginalized ethnic white students did not participate in school activities or in advocate for their children at nearly the same rates as middle-class dominant culture parents. Research has shown that white middle-class mothers not only participate more but also they press administrators for additional tracking, which further marginalizes low status populations (McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999). Marginalized ethnic white parents often have negative feelings about education and about their own experiences with education, and these attitudes toward education have a significant effect on their children's educational aspirations (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Henderson, 1987; National Center for Education Statistics, 1982).

Marginalized ethnic Whites, like many working-class people, have experienced some of the "hidden injuries of class," (Sennett & Cobb, 1972), resulting in low expectations about their status and chances for success. Rubin (1976, 1994) observed that the working-class families she studied did not have educational role models or access to information concerning college admissions, nor did they try to gain this information because their educated children would be lost to an alien way of life. Also, working-class children and marginalized ethnic Whites as a subgroup consider their chances of upward mobility to be slight and either drop out of school or attend school without engaging it, or attend school while resisting it (Macleod, 1995; Ogbu, 1978; Willis, 1977).

CONCLUSION

Without explicit curriculum that addresses the historical experiences, local culture, language, dialect, learning styles, school experiences, and even popular cultural representations of marginalized ethnic white students, pre-service teachers can easily transmit cultural and social class bias and are at risk of neglecting or misinterpreting the needs of many students. The efforts described here to infuse issues related to marginalized ethnic Whites into curriculum in pre-service "Multiculturalism and Education" courses were only moderately successful. As the data described above reveals, most pre-service teachers retained stereotypes despite such efforts. Some of these future teachers were from lower-middle-class backgrounds and may have been resistant to the idea of accepting marginalized Whites, because it required an acknowledgment of a "white" groups' earlier racialization, acknowledgment of their own current white privilege, and the need to question ideas of race.

If such efforts are to succeed, these concepts must be wrestled with and issues related to ideas of race and whiteness need to be addressed throughout teacher education, and critically explored in educational policy and research. Since the pre-service teachers in this study had such difficulty with the devaluation of the dialects of students in their field placements, they clearly need to learn more about it. Cultural discourse variations should be carefully addressed in pre-service literacy instruction (Au, 1993; Heath, 1983). This did not occur. The moderate success of the pre-service teachers' history field instruction suggests that subject area methods instructors such as social studies teachers, should consider the ethnic compositions of local areas and become knowledgeable about ways to bring critical thought about history and culture into curriculum.

Also, if, as a range of psychological research (i.e. Brown, 1995; Kleinpenning & Hagendoorn, 1993) suggests, status as a marginalized ethnic white may

contribute to the development of racism, careful attention to these specific students as learners and attention to ideology of race and class in the curriculum, may also help prevent adult racism. Fascist white supremacist ideology offered by skinheads and the Aryan brotherhood offers a message that can be appealing to marginalized Whites. Ideally, marginalized Whites should learn to understand how social and economic injustice functions and how specific groups are marginalized. This understanding would instead promote solidarity and social action among different marginalized "races." The alternative is that the reality of marginalized Whites' bad experiences with schooling and employment can be interpreted through a twisted racial logic that is dangerous. The Ku Klux Klan (2003) tells marginalized Whites that:

> Enemies from within are destroying the United Stares of America. An unholy coalition of anti-white, anti-Christian liberals, socialists, feminists, homosexuals, Jews and militant blacks have managed to seize control of our government and mass media. This gang of criminals and degenerates has declared war on the hard working, tax paying white citizens. White Americans have become second class citizens.

White alienation and marginality is typically avoided by mainstream liberal scholars. The marginalized ethnic White is actually an unlikely research subject for many multiculturalists because the "redneck" is an unsympathetic character in general and may even be the archetypal racist enemy of the multicultural researcher. As Schwarz (1996) points out:

> Among those who would never issue a racial slur or denigrate a foreign people in polite conversation, flaunting one's prejudice against rural Americans is not merely acceptable, it's helpful in establishing one's "progressive" bona fides (p. 28).

Clearly, cultural stereotypes of poor rural Whites as racist and violent people contribute to unsympathetic perspectives on this group. Furthermore, white researchers rarely have any personal experience or understanding of the marginalized ethnic white student because of their typically middle-class status or regional origin. A white urban or suburban middle-class researcher may have no context for understanding rural or urban marginalized ethnic Whites.

This research highlights the importance of problematizing and interweaving the otherwise overly simplistic categories and terms such as "black," "white," "urban," and "rural" to consider their sometimes dramatic, but often neglected, interactions in daily experience. The construction of dominant culture can more effectively be understood as hegemonic, differentiated, and complex rather than as simply "white." This study does not suggest that there are *not* important relationships between color and dominance, but instead asks researchers, teacher educators, and policy makers to be aware of complexity, and of the dangers of reifying racist categories. When this occurs, we can use theory and research to take an honest look at how children in school are faring, who needs support, and who falls behind in preventable ways. We also can make progress towards preparing our teachers to support the learning of *all* students. The paucity of research in the area of educational policy and marginalized ethnic Whites suggests that more needs to be done. Such research is an imperative in a democratic society and in an education profession committed to diversity and social justice.

NOTES

1. "Guinea" originally referred to Northwest coast Africans, but has been used to describe Greeks, Italians, Portuguese, and Puerto Ricans. Similarly, "Hunky" originally referred to Hungarians, but became a "pan-Slavic slur" (Barret & Roediger, 1997, p. 3).
2. Differences between what we call races are so small that it is inconsequential, less than .012% of DNA (Day, 1998).

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