

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH

General Editors: Amy L. Best, Lorena Garcia, and Jessica K. Taft

This series aims to elaborate a set of theoretical and methodological tenets for a distinctive critical youth studies approach rooted in empirical inquiry. The series draws on the following as some of the key theoretical elements of critical approaches: the socially constructed nature of childhood and adolescence over and against the universalizing and naturalizing propensities of early developmental theory; the centering of young people's social worlds and social locations as the starting point for analysis; exploration of how the meaning and experience of youth is shaped by other important axes of social difference, including but not limited to race, class, gender, place, nation, and sexuality; the recognition that youths' worlds are constituted through multiple processes, institutions, and discourses and that central to understanding youth identity and experience is understanding social inequalities; engagement with the dynamics of global transformation in the experience of childhood and youth; and the relevance of these elements for policy and practice.

Books in the series:

Fast-Food Kids: French Fries, Lunch Lines, and Social Ties

Amy L. Best

White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America

Margaret A. Hagerman

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Racially Divided America

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when in 2014 when a 22-year-old white man shot a BB gun at police officers in Concord, New Hampshire—their lives remained intact. Young black people are murdered in seconds by the police even when they are simply suspected of criminal behavior, such as 12-year-old Tamir Rice playing with a toy gun in a public park or 14-year-old Cameron Tillman, who entered an abandoned house with a BB gun. Research shows that even though white youth are more likely to use illegal drugs, arrest rates do not reflect this reality.²⁶ Studies also show that teachers are more likely to designate white children as “gifted and talented” and perceive them as smarter and more capable than peers of color.²⁷ When doctors think black children need less pain medication, they demonstrate their belief that white children need more, suggesting white children are more fragile, more innocent, and more important to protect from physical pain. These are the privileges of whiteness.²⁸

I believe that it is important to examine empirically how white children, such as those in this book, not only are going to have power in their futures as white adults but also already have power and influence in the present moment, as young white people, in their families and communities. Pushing back against the notion that children lack agency or free will or power to shape adults around them, this book explores the power of white kids in their families, their schools, their peer groups, their extracurricular spaces, and public discourse about who is “innocent” and who is not, who is “special” and who is not, and who is “deserving” and who is not. White childhood is a place where power and privilege take on not only ideological significance but also material significance for white youth, which is why it ought to be studied.

Of course, the children in this book are not at personal fault for their unearned advantages—certainly, their power is tied directly to the social structure of the society into which they are born and to their position within the structural hierarchies that they neither asked for nor can control. I am not interested in demonizing these kids or their parents, and I am not suggesting that they are individually at fault for racial inequality in the United States. However, I am interested in confronting honestly what is going on beneath the surface within affluent, white families and communities that serves to perpetuate racism and racial inequality in the United States.

1

“Race Really Doesn’t Matter Anymore”

Growing Up with Privilege

One wintery afternoon, I drive 12-year-old Edward home from basketball practice. He is sitting in the backseat, sweaty despite the frigid temperatures outside. Snowflakes are just starting to fall from the sky, and I turn on my windshield wipers to brush them away. Edward leans forward and asks if we can stop at McDonalds for a snack. I reluctantly agree and think about where the nearest McDonalds is located. As we approach the restaurant, Edward looks out the window and says, “Hey, this isn’t where we usually go. We usually go to the one over by the mall!” Not thinking much about his comment, I tell him nicely that this is the most convenient location and that this is where we are going. He does not respond, so I glance in the rearview mirror to check his expression. Edward is looking out the window.

Because it is snowing, I opt to go to the drive-thru. I place his order and fumble around in my purse for some cash as we wait to pull forward. As I do so, Edward continues to look out the window. He watches a group of seven children walk across the parking lot in front of us. The kids all look to be the same age as Edward, likely in seventh or eighth grade. They are wearing clothes like Edward typically wears—winter coats, hats, jeans, boots, and gloves—and they are black. The kids are laughing, joking around, and carrying their school backpacks. As we wait for his milkshake, one of the girls makes a snowball and throws it at one of the boys, all of the kids laughing when the snowball hits the back of the boy’s coat. Watching the kids goof around, much as I had seen Edward goof around with his own friends on previous occasions, Edward states definitively, “This neighborhood really isn’t all that good, is it?”

“What do you mean?” I ask, wondering what he will say.

“I dunno,” he replies. “It just seems like there are a lot of poor people around here. We don’t usually stop here. My mom says it’s dangerous.”

"Oh," I say nonchalantly. "Why do you think she says it's dangerous?"
 "Well, I don't think she would say it unless it was true," Edward tells me matter-of-factly.

It is our turn to pull up to the window. As soon as I pass back the milkshake to Edward, his attention shifts, and he starts talking about his snowmobile. But even as I listen to him chatter on and on, I am reminded of something Edward told me—not this day at McDonalds in the drive-thru but another day a few weeks prior. "We are all the same," he had said. "Race doesn't really matter anymore." We continue on into the snow.

I often hear my students, my friends, and even my own family members talk about how they "were socialized" or about "how kids are socialized these days." This word, "socialization," is one that social scientists use to refer to the process of how new members of society learn about the social world. Traditionally, this term refers to the role that families play in transforming children into social actors who know the norms of a society and are able to interact with other members of that society. At the core of these understandings of socialization—both my students' understandings and many social scientists'—is an assumption that kids will become members of society as the adults around them see fit. And yet anyone who has spent any time with children knows that kids do not simply take the ideas of adults and make them their own; kids constantly break rules, challenge adult authority, disagree with parents, form their own opinions, create their own make-believe games, build their own youth culture, produce their own imaginative artwork, disregard social norms, and so forth. Given this reality, scholars adhering to what is called the "New Sociology of Childhood" argue that this term "socialization" does not adequately take into account children's active participation, or agency, in social learning processes.¹ The word "socialization" removes the active role children play in their own lives. "Socialization" implies that children are passive, blank slates to be written on by adults in a deterministic fashion, empty vessels to be filled with whatever adults determine, or "sponges," rather than, as the childhood sociologist William Corsaro argues, "active, creative social agents who produce their own unique children's cultures while simultaneously contributing to the production of adult societies."²

This same terminology of "racial socialization" is used to explain how children make sense of race. And this term carries with it the same problems just described involving limits to children's agency, or free will. As the African American studies scholar Erin Winkler argues, the term "racial socialization" "refers exclusively to how *parents* teach their children about race and racism, . . . indicating something that happens to children."³ Not only does this term reflect a lack of recognition of the role that children themselves play in forming ideas about race and racism, but it also assumes that parents are the sole providers of these racial lessons. In fact, common definitions of "racial socialization" are typically limited to "*parents'* race-related communications to children"⁴ or "an adaptive strategy *parents* use to prepare children to negotiate experiences associated with social position."⁵ These definitions are adult-centric and ignore children's participation in this process altogether. For instance, many studies of racial socialization focus on the kinds of approaches parents take to conveying messages to their children, such as counts of how many times particular topics are brought up in conversation. As a result, much of what we know about how children learn about race does not come from children themselves but rather from the adults in their lives. This quantitative work is much different from ethnographic work that uncovers the interpretive processes involved in how kids make sense of the messages conveyed to them in their everyday lives. While of course we can learn much from existing research, children's active participation in racial socialization processes needs further empirical analysis if we truly want to understand how commonsense ideas about race are formed by the newest generation themselves.⁶

In order to take account of the richer and more complex ways that kids learn about race, Winkler argues for the use of a new framework that she calls "comprehensive racial learning." This is a term that refers to "the process through which children negotiate, interpret, and make meaning of the various and conflicting messages they receive about race, ultimately forming their own understandings of how race works in society and their lives."⁷ This framework moves beyond simply what happens within the family and includes all aspects of a child's life, such as neighborhood, school, peers, activities, travel, and media. This framework also embraces the theory that children learn through their interac-

tions with and interpretations of the surrounding social environment. Rather than passively "being socialized," children actively engage their own interpretive process of learning and making sense of the social world around them. I embrace Winkler's theory of comprehensive racial learning in the pages to come, using this framework as a starting place from which to develop further theoretical work on how this process operates for children who are *white* and *affluent*—children such as Edward and the 35 other kids in this book.

Growing Up in a Racialized Social System

US society is and always has been structured by race.⁸ Race shapes the lives of everyone in the United States, whether people believe this to be true or not. Race organizes society, race influences how people think about themselves and others, and race is tied to power and inequality. More than just a country with a few bigoted individuals, the United States is what Bonilla-Silva refers to as a "racialized social system."⁹ "This term refers to societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races."¹⁰ In a racialized social system, people are classified into different groups based on a set of socially defined physical characteristics, such as skin color. While it is commonplace to think of race as biological, race is "an invented political grouping" that "has been disguised as a biological one."¹¹ As the legal scholar Dorothy Roberts explains,

We know race is a political grouping because it has political roots in slavery and colonialism, it has served a political function over the four hundred years since its inception, and its boundary lines—how many races there are and who belongs to each one—have shifted over time and across nations to suit those political purposes. Who counts as white, black, and Indian has been the matter of countless rule changes and judicial decisions. These racial reclassifications did not occur in response to scientific advances in human biology, but in response to sociopolitical imperatives. They reveal that what is being defined, organized, and interpreted is a political relationship and not an innate classification.¹²

In other words, race is a political category created by human beings and state practices and does not have a genetic basis. This process of racialization, or "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group," has occurred throughout the history of the United States.¹³ The classification process, or the process by which racial categories are socially constructed, happens when people fill out their census forms or when children are born and their race is marked down on birth certificates. Historical examples of racialization include the prerequisite cases of immigrants such as Takao Ozawa, born in Japan in 1875, who petitioned the US government to be classified as "white" so that he could gain citizenship rights.¹⁴ Antimiscegenation laws, Jim Crow laws, and immigration laws—all of these laws draw on some collective and/or legal understanding of what race is despite the reality that these definitions are created by people, that they change over time or across different contexts, and that power is often connected to them.¹⁵ So too are privileges and punishments, such as the right to own land or being targeted by the police, distributed along the lines of this racial order.¹⁶ Though race is socially constructed, it is very real in its consequences.

The process of racialization in the United States is rooted deeply in history. From the genocide of American Indians to the stealing of their land to the enslavement and exploitation of African people, the United States of America was established from its colonial roots as a racialized society, or a society structured by a racial hierarchy.¹⁷ This structure was perpetuated by the exploited labor of Chinese and Japanese immigrants and the military acquisition of half of Mexico's land, among other innumerable acts of racial violence over time. Indeed, the concept of race itself and the desire to establish this way of politically grouping human beings is the very product of racism, rather than racism emerging from the creation of race.¹⁸ Although this history of European colonial domination and the emergence of US white supremacy may seem part of the distant past, the legacy of this history—that is, the continued subordination of members of racial groups defined legally and socially as not *white*—continues to shape the most basic of institutions in US society.

In order to make these structural roots seem natural, and in order to justify the continuation of this racialized distribution of privileges and

punishments, particular frameworks, or ideologies, that serve to rationalize one's own privilege are produced and reproduced, beginning in childhood. Ideologies serve a very particular purpose in a racialized and class-stratified social system such as the United States. As the sociologist Heather Beth Johnson writes, "Ideology is a critical component in the contemporary United States because ideology—in how it helps to mask and justify systems of inequality—contributes to the collective denial and thus maintenance, of structural inequalities."¹⁹ For example, ideologies such as that of meritocracy, or the American Dream, justify the superior position of the wealthy by claiming that the rich worked harder than everyone else and therefore deserve their privilege and the social rewards that accompany it. Similarly, as the sociologist Amanda Lewis writes, "In a society riddled with social inequality, ideologies must naturalize a system that ensures subordination for millions."²⁰ Religion, capitalism, and science each played their own role in the formation of dominant ideological explanations that justified the racial hierarchy, making it seem "natural" that white people were in positions of dominance over all other people. Forms of racism that have been used across time to justify the mistreatment of people of color by whites have certainly mutated as times have changed, but the material consequences of racism still exist alongside reworked racial ideology. Without understanding how people learn dominant ideologies and how these ideologies are reproduced and reconstituted, we cannot entirely understand how racism (racial ideology) both persists and mutates into new forms in the United States. Importantly, these ideological discourses and practices are not simply expressions or outcomes of a hierarchy; rather, they are central to "the constitution of social and political life" in the first place.²¹ In other words, how white, affluent children make sense of race not only reflects but also reproduces and reinforces the existing racial order.

Understanding how white children produce, reproduce, and sometimes even reinterpret racial ideologies is central to larger understandings of how structures of white supremacy endure in a society such as ours. As the sociologist Tyrone Forman writes, "Clearly our efforts to eradicate racial and ethnic inequality will not be successful until we better understand the precise mechanisms reproducing it."²² We cannot fully understand the reproduction of racism without considering the active role that children play in this process.

Examining Privilege

Often researchers focus on the experiences and conditions of marginalized groups in order to understand inequality. Numerous important ethnographies, for instance, document the lived experiences of people of color, youth growing up in poverty, homeless women, gang members, street artists, the working poor, and so forth. This book is instead an ethnographic study of an aspect of inequality from the vantage point of the privileged, of families and children at the top of race and class hierarchies. This book focuses intently on questions related to how comprehensive racial learning operates for white children growing up in affluent families. But this discussion is rooted in a broader sociological question: how do ideologies get socially reproduced by children who benefit the most from the maintenance of these ideologies, and how do ideological positions themselves shape choices involved in raising a child?²³

The study of racial socialization has focused on families of color and how parents of children of color raise their children in a racialized society. This body of research responds critically to early developmental theories that made problematic assumptions about what the "normal" American family constituted (i.e., white, middle-class, heterosexual married parents) and instead acknowledges how inequality in society fundamentally shapes children's lived experiences. Research on racial socialization examines the "messages and strategies used by black parents to teach their children about black American culture, prepare them for potential experiences with racism and prejudice, and promote healthy mistrust of non-blacks."²⁴ Although this area of research has been ongoing for the past 30 years, it continues to grow in new and urgent ways in the present moment and is generally conceptualized as a strategy of resilience that parents use when raising kids in a racist world. For instance, following the shooting of Trayvon Martin, researchers interviewed parents of black youth, exploring how this tragic event shaped the conversations parents had with their black children about racial violence and the police and how to keep themselves safe.²⁵ The bulk of this literature has examined how, where, and when messages about race and racism are communicated to kids,²⁶ what these messages include,²⁷ why parents choose to send the particular messages they do,²⁸ how social class impacts the process²⁹ as

well as other socio-demographic factors,³⁰ how current racialized events such as shootings of young black and brown people shape these messages,³¹ and, perhaps most commonly, what kinds of child outcomes can be linked to particular parental racial socialization practices, such as positive racial identity formation, increased self-esteem, strong mental health, resilience, cognitive development, and academic achievement.³² Over the past two decades, studies of racial socialization have broadened in scope, documenting racial socialization as an important and "influential component of childrearing"³³ among black, Latinx, Asian American, and multiracial families.³⁴ In conjunction with previous work with black families, this new body of research shows that "minority socialization" usually includes direct and explicit messages conveyed from parents to children about race, particularly as parents prepare their children for living in a hostile racial environment.

The critical study of how white children learn about race and racism within the family is underdeveloped. This is largely due to the assumption or "the fallacy that only non-Whites 'have' race."³⁵ As the sociologist Linda Burton and her colleagues describe, "Our review of the decades' literature found that studies of racial socialization assumed that people of color will encounter racism but did not fully examine the socialization processes among Whites that lead them to discriminate."³⁶ Thus, it is not that white families should be placed at the center of family research as in the past; rather, the private worlds of white families should be studied critically as racialized places where ideas about race get reproduced and reworked by children with racial privilege. White families ought not to be disconnected from the study of race and racism. Indeed, white families are the first places where the newest generation of whites learn ideas about race, racism, privilege, and inequality in the United States. As such, how racial ideologies shape the private lives of white families in the United States and how white children reproduce these ideologies are important questions to interrogate if we hope to do the work of challenging the racial status quo.

The very few but important studies that have examined aspects of racial socialization within white families illustrate that some white parents do not even think about race when it comes to raising white children³⁷ and that white parents do not believe it is necessary to talk to their white children about race.³⁸ For instance, the sociologist Megan R. Underhill

finds that during the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, following the police shooting of Michael Brown, white, middle-class parents generally reported not speaking with their kids about the racial tension in ways that addressed power and inequality.³⁹ As the sociologists Joe Feagin and Eileen O'Brien explain by drawing on elite white men's retrospective accounts of their own childhoods, "the way that whites think and feel about racial matters as adults is commonly shaped by family and school contexts in which they grow up."⁴⁰ While of course these accounts are important in that they explore how these men make sense of their privileged childhoods, observing how these processes unfold in the moment for children, rather than how they are remembered by adults 30–50 years later, tells us much more about the nuances and details of how white kids learn about race. Overall, there are no studies to my knowledge that examine white racial socialization as it happens, take seriously white children's own perspectives on race produced by kids in particular social contexts, or interrogate race privilege as it intersects with class privilege in the everyday racial meaning-making processes of children.

Over the past few decades, a handful of race scholars have suggested as part of broader theories of new forms of racism that whites' ideas about race form in childhood. For instance, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "habitus,"⁴¹ the sociologists Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Carla Goar, and David Embrick theorize that white children experience a "racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters."⁴² This socialization process is described as "comprehensive and begin[ning] early in life" and is understood to "normalize and legitimate social closure . . . justifying inequality and maintaining the existing racial hierarchy."⁴³ These scholars extend Bourdieu's notion of habitus in new and fruitful ways but disregard children's agency in this process.⁴⁴

Whether social psychological models, social structural models, or political models, theories of contemporary racism offer mostly unexplained assertions about how white children "pick up" or "adopt" the racial ideas they discuss, ideas imagined to be shaped by the racialized social system into which they are born and "hard to reverse" once adopted or taken up. As the political scientists Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders write, "Prejudice is an acquired taste. Children enter the world

free of any such animosity, but their innocence is temporary, for they are born into a world in which socially significant distinctions are already in place."⁴⁵ Similarly, the social psychologists David Sears and P. J. Henry claim that "common cultural values [are] presumed to be acquired in the pre-adult years."⁴⁶ Here, the assumption is again made that children "acquire" commonsense ideas about race, yet no interrogation into how this process works is offered. In general, while scholars appear to be growing more interested in the topic of white racial socialization—and the role that it plays in the reproduction (and reworking) of dominant racial ideologies—very little empirical, ethnographic research examines the role that the white family plays in this process. Similarly, little work has been done to examine the mediation of factors such as social class in this process.

There are reasons to suspect that the content and process of comprehensive racial learning in white families is quite different from that documented in families of color. To begin with, many white people resist talking about race or racial socialization. In fact, research on contemporary whiteness shows that many whites talk about race in elusive and contradictory, roundabout ways, often avoiding the discussion or sometimes even refusing to engage with the subject.⁴⁷ This suggests that the intentional and deliberate strategies of racial socialization often at work in families of color—such as having an explicit conversation with a black child about interacting with authority figures—might look quite different in white families. In addition, given the group position of whites within the racial hierarchy that structures US society, the content of the messages conveyed to children, regardless of how they are conveyed, is likely different from the messages researchers have documented parents of children of color conveying to their kids. While some parents of black children are teaching their kids how to navigate racism to stay alive, some parents of white children are teaching their kids that race no longer matters in the United States.

There are also reasons to suspect that the content and process of comprehensive racial learning is different across white families, much as we know differences exist across families of color and mixed-race families.⁴⁸ As Amanda Lewis writes, "Whiteness works in distinct ways for and is embodied quite differently by homeless white men, golf-club-membership-owning executives, suburban soccer moms, urban hillbil-

lies, anti-racist skinheads, and/or union-card carrying factory workers."⁴⁹ In other words, though all whites benefit from their whiteness, whether they want to or not, whites act, think, or raise their children in different ways.⁵⁰ I show in the following pages that even within one class grouping, variations on a theme emerge.

Methods

For nearly two years, I conducted ethnographic research with white, affluent families in a metropolitan area in the Midwest. In addition to conducting in-depth interviews with 36 children between the ages of 10 and 13 and parents from 30 families, I also observed white families in their everyday lives, attempting to access the "everydayness" of whiteness⁵¹ and the "distinctive interpretations of reality" of white children and their parents.⁵² I observed public spaces and private spaces, drove children to sports practices, attended school and community events, and read the local newspaper. I spent countless hours watching video-game playing, preparing food and eating with kids, monitoring play dates, hearing phone calls with peers, listening to kids talk about friendships and fights at school, playing board games, playing backyard sports, painting nails, practicing the violin, and struggling through homework assignments. I sat on the sidelines, in gym bleachers, and in auditorium seats with parents, talking with them, listening to them talk with each other, and watching the children interact with their peers, coaches, music teachers, and other kids' parents. I spent a day at a private country club, many days at a private pool; I attended parties at families' homes; and I went to events with children, such as Little League practice, volleyball games, science fairs, and summer-camp celebrations. I listened to kids talk to each other in the backseat of my car as I drove them home from school, I hung around with the Boy Scout dads while they watched their sons play laser tag, and I accompanied children and their families to political protests.

Overall, by immersing myself into the communities in which these white, affluent children spent their time and by getting to know these kids and their families, I learned that these kids make sense of the world around them through the observations they make and the interactions they have within the confines of their everyday lives—what happens

at school, soccer practice, birthday parties, clarinet lessons, and in the backseat of a car driving home from summer day camp shapes children's ideas about the social world. As Winkler argues, "Children develop their ideas about race in the context of systems, structures, institutions, government, and culture, all of which are racialized within the US context."⁵³ When thinking about white comprehensive racial learning, then, we ought to consider the particular racial context in which white children are growing up and how these contexts are racialized.⁵⁴

Plan of the Book

This book is a story about how affluent, white kids interpret the racial context of childhood designed for them by their parents. A racial context of childhood is the social environment surrounding a child that shapes how that child make sense of race. This environment is designed by parents, and the design choices are often shaped by dominant racial ideologies. Racial contexts do not include the entire ecological system or the total "environment of nested structures" surrounding a child or arbitrary factors within a child's life.⁵⁵ Rather, my research shows that certain aspects of a child's local environment, especially one's neighborhood but also one's school, peers, siblings, travel, volunteering, and media, influence one's ideas about race. In this way, the choices their parents make about how to set up the racial context in the first place influence, though do not determine, the messages kids receive, interpret, and produce in everyday life. In order to show how this process works, important patterned variations in this process, and the outcomes of this process, this book is organized in the following way.

Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for understanding children's interpretive processes by focusing on choices made by these children's parents. Although this book intends to privilege the voices of the children rather than adults, the rationalizations for why parents set up their children's social environments in the ways that they do are central to understanding this process. Therefore, this chapter explores how and why affluent, white parents make particular choices about where to live and how these choices serve as the foundation to a racial context of childhood. Because parents in this study tend to make what I refer to as *bundled* decisions about their child's lives—that is, because neighborhood choice is

so closely tied to school choice, which shapes peer interactions in extra-curricular spaces and so forth, neighborhoods are, in many ways, proxies for a child's racial context. Focusing on three different white, affluent neighborhoods within the Petersfield metropolitan area, I demonstrate how the perceptions that shape neighborhood choice are informed by shared, local ideas about race. Thick descriptions of the neighborhoods, their relation to segregation and public schools, notions about how community demographics are changing, and the political identities of these neighborhoods are presented as well as the perspectives of what it means to live in these three distinct places, according to the people who live here.

Chapter 3 explores what it means to be a private school kid from the perspectives of private school children themselves. Here too I explore how private schooling, like neighborhoods, helps form a child's racial context. In addition to understanding various types of private schools and how children make sense of attending them, I also examine how and why affluent, white parents make these private schooling choices in the first place. Specifically, I consider why these decisions are made in the context of a community with strong public schools. I explore the justifications that affluent, white parents give for why their child attends private school and the impact these justifications have on children's views of themselves as more special and deserving than other kids.

Chapter 4 describes how interactions with other kids shape how white children produce ideas about race. Here, I look not only at classmates but at peers with whom the children in the study interact, such as best friends, enemies, classmates, and especially siblings. I describe how children talk about their peers, but I also provide observations of white children interacting with each other as they produce ideas about race and racism together. I also consider parents' role in facilitating and encouraging friendships as well as examples of how kids push back against their parents, challenging rather than adopting the racial views of their parents.

Establishing yet another component of a young person's racial context of childhood, chapter 5 examines how these families interact with people of color through volunteering and traveling specifically. I show how children learn about who they are as well as how they are different from others from these interactions but also how some parents purposefully

design these experiences to teach their children lessons about race and privilege. I interrogate the power dynamics between affluent whites and people of color in other parts of the world (travel) as well as locally (volunteer work).

By examining the role that media and extracurricular activities play in these families lives, chapter 6 documents how even families that do not see themselves as talking about race very often communicate about race all the time. I explore the subtle and explicit ways that children receive messages about race, and I illustrate differences in how parents understand the role of media in shaping their children's views as well as how these differences link to parents' racial ideological positions. This chapter also explores how these messages are often conveyed through watching the news, reading the newspaper, and watching television programs or films, as well as in spaces such as soccer fields, science and technology clubs, and so forth. Finally, this chapter examines the role parents play in these interactive spaces as leader or coaches, and it looks at how parents observe their children in these extracurricular spaces in order to assess aspects of their racial socialization.

Chapter 7 presents the children's actual views on race, racism, inequality, and privilege. I present the views of white kids on a range of topics related to race and racial inequality in the United States and show patterns across groups of these children. I examine the role of children's agency in racial socialization, documenting that white kids' perspectives may align in some important ways with their parents', their views are also uniquely their own. Finally, the relationship between children's agency and the broader social structure in which they live is considered.

Lastly, the conclusion to this book offers a brief look at the young people's perspectives as high school students, or approximately four years after the initial ethnography was completed. I discuss recent shifts in public dialogue about race in the United States and how these shifts matter for white comprehensive learning. I close with some final thoughts about how white families participate in the reproduction of racism and argue for the importance of rethinking "good" white parenting.

While this ethnographic account focuses on the everyday details and meaning-making processes of children and shares their unique perspectives, this book also offers some broader insights into how white kids may rework racial ideologies and transform them in new ways to fit new

social conditions. Through this process, white kids participate in the reproduction of white supremacy but in new and unpredictable ways. As the sociologist and African American studies scholar Lawrence Bobo writes, "It is not enough to declare that race matters or that racism endures. The much more demanding challenge is to account for how and why such a social construction comes to be reconstituted, refreshed, and enacted anew in very different times and places."⁵⁶ This book embraces Bobo's challenge and endeavors to present new information about the role that white, affluent children and their families intentionally and unintentionally play in the social reproduction of racism.