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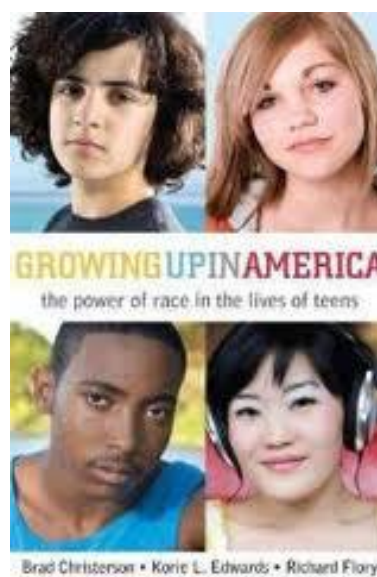
Christerson, Brad; Edwards, Korie L. & Flory, Richard. (2010).
Growing Up in America: The Power of Race in the Lives of Teens.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

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Issues of race, social justice and uncovering the covert ways in which race impacts Americans lives is at the forefront of recent scholarship for many disciplines. While much educational literature has focused on the outcomes of living in a racialized society, not enough attention has been given to the intersection of socialization, race and teens in America.

In *Growing up in America*, Christerson, Edwards and Flory attempt to tackle the complex issue of social inequalities in the United States by creating a framework for understanding the connection between socialization of race in teenage years and outcomes of social inequities found in adulthood. Their hope is that by understanding the role race plays in American



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teens' lives, we can better understand sources of inequality adults face.

The authors drew data primarily from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) taken in 2002-2003. Telephone surveys were used to determine the differences and similarities between white, Asian America, African America, and Latino teens. Interviews gave depth to teens experiences within the four institutions used to structure the book: family, peers, school & religious organizations.

The main aim of the book is to complexify socialization to include racialization. The authors argue teens of different racial and ethnic backgrounds are socialized differently, because institutions such as family, peers, school, & religious organizations are themselves racialized. These institutions, arguably the most significant in teens' lives, produce distinct cultures and structures that mirror the racialized contexts different groups face. The advantages and disadvantages teens experience as a result of these cultures and structures lead to unequal outcomes as youth and subsequently as adults.

Family, peers, school, & religious organizations do not merely reproduce cultural values or roles, but also work as agents in guiding teens toward creating their own "capital portfolios." Capital portfolios are composed of different forms of capital: social, cultural, human and religious, and are used by teens to navigate American society. In framing capital portfolios, the authors expand upon Amanda Lewis' notion of capital as a resource to advance one's position within particular social contexts (Lewis, 2003) and modify Ann Swindler's "cultural toolkit" (Swindler, 1986).

The authors conclude that capital portfolios significantly impact teen opportunity. Capital portfolios establish parameters by which teens can and cannot take advantage of given opportunities and contexts. As the authors note, through capital portfolios, "networks either exist for teens or they don't; teens have been taught culturally valued information or they haven't" (p. 149) through the racialized socialization process. For example, white families socialize their teens "to develop a sense of autonomy and entitlement" (p. 39). Such familial institutional cultural capital positions white teens to make

demands of public institutions and see themselves as potentially equal to their superiors. Compared with youth of color, white teens are given the most freedom to pursue outside interests. Having the lowest levels of family contact puts whites in position to “seek meaning, belonging and fulfillment in formal organizations” (p. 40). In contrast, racial and ethnic group families tend to be more protective and emotionally supportive. Thus, white teens’ capital portfolios make them prime candidates for aligning with the dominant system.

The institutions of peers, school, and religious organizations similarly show how the socialization of white teens’ capital portfolios place them at a comparative advantage above teens of color in most instances. Looking at peer socialization, “concerted cultivation” in connection with white’s focus on autonomy, magnifies the importance of peers, appearance and success while making them more susceptible to deviant behavior. In contrast, peer socialization is less significant for teens of color. The strong mediating influence of family protects teens of color from negative peer influence with the exception of third and fourth generation Latinos. Building from such examples, the authors further complexify the racial socialization process.

The authors conclude by expanding upon the frame of capital portfolios to highlight possible negative consequences. For example, white capital portfolios, which emphasize individualism, independence, and separation from family, may be aligned with dominant systems leading to more economic success. However, white capital portfolios can also lead to a lack of commitment and selfishness resulting in egotism and substance abuse. In contrast capital portfolios that emphasize family and local communities over individualism can result in insular individuals disconnected with modern social life. Only by understanding the positive and negative consequences of different forms of capital can we as a nation develop teens who thrive not just educationally and economically, but also emotionally and spiritually.

There are several areas of value found within *Growing Up in America*. In challenging the dominant narrative of meritocracy in the U.S., Amanda Lewis’ expansion on

sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's "capital" did much for unpacking notions of success and failure in educational settings (Bourdieu, 1973; Lewis, 2003). In its original form, capital is assumed to be only a positive trait which should be ravenously sought after by all. By expanding the notion of capital to include negative as well as positive consequences, the authors cast a critical eye on the notion of which capital is holistically "good" outside of traditional economic and educational measures.

A second significant value includes the firm and central emphasis on race. The authors' begin their work by explaining their steadfast belief that "race and ethnicity have been the main factors organizing human relations and social outcomes in the United States" (p. 8). Throughout the work, the authors are explicit in their awareness of the profound impact of class, and frequently control for income levels to highlight how race and ethnicity have an effect independent of class. Such attention leaves little room for critique by skeptics while retaining the focus on race.

The careful attention given to class is not paid to gender. The comparative experience of males and females throughout the work appears to be taken for granted, with the exception of sexual patterns. While the NSYR's random sampling method does insure equal gender representation and the authors do present short narratives of each racial group connected with each institution, it is the difference in experiences of males and females of each racial and ethnic group that is missing. In analyzing the educational aspirations of African-Americans, no analytic distinction is made between males and female teens. Considering the stark high school graduation disparity among African American females at 59% and males at 48% in 2003 (Greene, Winters, 2006) or college graduation rates of 47% for females 36% for males, (Saporu, 2009) it seems the conclusions drawn are oversimplified given the complexity different genders face among differing racialized groups.

Despite the few limitations, *Growing Up in America* advances our understanding of the intersection between race and society in the U.S. Scholars will certainly benefit from revised theoretical notions such as capital. Teachers would certainly benefit from a more nuanced

understanding of the impacts school socialization has on teens. As such, *Growing Up in America* will remain a valid work of scholarship, even after the NSYR conducts their follow-up study in five years.

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About the Reviewer

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